INTRODUCTION: DIRECTIONS TO BAROQUE NAPLES

Helen Hills

Abstract

How have place in Naples and the place of Naples been imagined, chartered, explored, and contested in baroque art, history and literature? This special issue revisits baroque Naples in light of its growing fashionability. After more or less ignoring Naples for decades, scholars are now turning from the well-trodden fields of northern and central Italy to the south. This is, therefore, an opportune moment to reconsider the paradigms according to which scholarship has – often uncritically – unrolled. How has scholarship kept Naples in its place? How might its place be rethought?

Biographical note

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Introduction

This special issue investigates artworks, literature, and histories of baroque Naples through a critical interrogation of their relationship to place. It aims to consider 'baroque Naples' as a critical question, not in terms of periodisation, stylistic moment, or place set in time, as if these things are already known and settled, but in terms of convulsion, shifts, differences, and disparities. What are the dislocating effects of baroque interventions? How have place in Naples and the place of Naples been imagined, invented, chartered, explored, and contested in baroque art, history, and literature? By what means – scholarly, cultural, social, political, and economic – has Naples been kept in its place and with what consequence for the interpretation of its culture? In what ways might 'Naples' be usefully thought, less in terms of reassertion of identity or of city as given and place in terms of continuity, than in relation to displacement, difference, and disjunction? What hitherto obscured aspects of Neapolitan baroque culture might thereby be allowed to emerge? The aim is not to interpret the particular in terms of the general, nor to essentialise either 'Naples' or 'baroque'. Instead, we wish to bring the terms 'baroque' and 'Naples' together percussively and generatively. The term 'baroque' is thus not posed as description, style, or period; nor does 'Naples' simply designate place as given. Indeed, one issue explored here is the extent to which 'baroque' and 'Naples' have been held apart or collapsed into each other without sufficient consideration of ellipses or friction between them. Baroque Naples and its forging, discursively, materially, technologically, and aesthetically are here examined in innovative essays by seven scholars. They investigate baroque Naples in relation to architecture, marble, painting, prints, written texts, maps, geology, power, and privilege in order to bring the relation between material transformation and place into focus.

An interrogation of the terms 'Naples' and 'baroque' necessarily foregrounds the problem of place. What possibilities for rethinking baroque Naples are opened, if one resists assumptions that 'the city' is a given, or that place secures continuity or is a passive container that accommodates interventions that take place *within* it while leaving the 'container' unchanged, apart from

mere expansion? It is important to acknowledge the inability of linear narrative either to accommodate effectively the spatiality of historical processes or to interrogate that spatiality. An assumption that place is *a priori* tends to occlude the politics of place. If place is not assumed to be fixed and stable, what part does it play? What happens when place is thought, not only in terms of extension, but in terms of contestation, discontinuity, and dislocation? What, then, emerges as at stake in the place and places of Naples?

Recent scholarship has provided innovative approaches to materiality and the processes of transformation in art and architecture (Lloyd Thomas, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Benjamin, 2011). On the whole, however, art-historical engagement with the material turn has been limited to objects, materials, and techniques (Anderson, Dunlop & Smith, 2015). The question of how materiality might relate specifically to *place* has fallen out of focus. Historical scholarship and art and architectural history tend to take the place of Naples for granted, treating it as passive backdrop to more spectacular or momentous events that are understood to unfold within it or even on it, such as the 'arrival' of Caravaggio which suffices to explain his 'influence'. Space and place are thus conceived in terms of measurable extent. Yet, such approaches have been challenged by scholarship in geography and philosophy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2002). Space, by these accounts, is intensive as well as extensive. While such scholarship focuses on film, maps, and contemporary issues, it has opened the question of how place might be thought in intensive terms historically in relation to art, architecture, and texts of all kinds. This collection aims to bring place, displacement, materiality, and transformation into relation. The city of Naples is approached here as provisional, in production, under pressure, contested, and riven with contradiction and conflict, rather than as a fixed, stable place or circumscribed location.

The questions raised above are explored in divergent ways in the essays presented here. Below, I introduce those essays, before moving to a wider discussion of the salient issues by which the field is riven: excess and ornament, the viceregency and colonialism, and *meridionalismo*.

Individual Essays

In a brilliant essay Sergius Kodera explores Giovan Battista della Porta's performative natural philosophy in relation to the topography of Naples in which the fate of human beings is inscribed topographically, physiologically, and somatically. Della Porta's

Chirophysiognomia (1677), an extraordinary treatise on palmistry, probably written between 1599 and 1608, is interpreted via Naples' topographies and geographies. Body and place are seen to be co-implicated, not in terms of embodiment, but in terms of metonymy and the unravelling of fate. Della Porta's treatise purports to make sense of the palms of hands and soles of feet of criminals, a process of discerning the hidden laws of nature that Kodera relates to Naples' theatrical topography of criminal management, by tracing the ways in which bodies, texts, and places were produced relationally and topographically. He relates the upper-class discussions that took place in della Porta's palace to the stages and traces of criminalisation and cadaverisation of bodies across the city. Convicted criminals were paraded through the streets of Naples before their execution in Piazza Mercato; corpses were then transferred beyond the city limits to a gallows at Ponte della Maddalena, where they were left to rot. Distinct places were activated to punish criminal bodies and to reduce human beings to corpses and signs. Thus, the manipulation of appearances and audiences in the theatrical marvels that della Porta sported in his palace had an analogous counterpart in the streets and squares and 'limits' of Naples. The study of nature and the marvellous display of elite knowledge worked in a metonymic relation across bodies, texts, and places, which also operated synoptically. Along the way, what emerges forcefully are both the ostensible gulf and the intimate interweave between magus and multitude, nobles and criminals in baroque Naples. 'Naples' emerges from this essay as the horrible embroiling of the cultural formation of noble elites and processes of criminalisation.

Helen Hills' essay examines the depiction of the city of Naples and specific locations within it, in relation to the presence of the divine and protector saints, to investigate the ways in which the politics of colonialism enter in that relation. It suggests that the relationships between city and viceroy and city and protector saints were productive in metonymic and analogous relation to each other. Spanish colonial rule over Naples opens a doubling in terms of rulership in the figure of the viceroy, who represents the absent King, that is seen here as generatively analogous to the relationship between protector saint and heavenly court. The relationships amongst the divine court, the city of Naples, and protector saint, explored in paintings in seventeenth-century Naples, are interpreted as informed by analogous relationships amongst monarch, viceroy, and the city. Hills suggests that paintings by Micco Spadaro, Jusepe de Ribera, and others encompass the holy or saintly dimension of the politics of baroque

Naples. Rather than treating these artworks as if they represent a pre-existing political contract (viceregency), it is argued that they interrogate the legitimacy of what is held in place. Hence the fracturing and scattering of place is related in the essays by both Kodera and Hills to the fracturing of bodies and their regulation. Both Kodera and Hills are concerned with place in terms of metonym, edges, limits, and what is posited as beyond the edge of representability. It is the margins from which things are defined. Early modern maps of Naples do not show the gallows outside the city, observes Kodera. The place falls off maps. The Ponte della Maddelena represents the furthest limit of the city, but the stinking corpses at the gallows on its further side showcased a first and unforgettable view for *forestieri* on their way into Naples. The festering pit and gallows in Kodera's essay find a counterpart in the Largo Mercatello during the plague discussed by Hills.

Joris van Gastel considers marble inlay in light of a historiography that in various ways has seen it as troubling and has sought to marginalise it. His essay takes up Naples as a place of 'excess' as construed by art historians, alighting on Justi's 1922 characterisation of Neapolitan baroque ornament as 'overgrown' or 'added on'. By refocusing on Naples where ornament is emphatic, he suggests that it is possible to trace the potential of a material approach to materials. To that end, van Gastel turns to the fabulously coloured and sculptural inlaid marbles that adorn many chapels and churches in Naples, and which have long been regarded as one of Naples' most distinctive art forms. Their material richness and visual complexity have often been treated as overwhelming or vulgar, as obstacle to interpretation and 'excessive'. Van Gastel questions the schemata by which such inlaid marble adornment has been studied to suggest that it might more usefully be read in relation to radical material transformation, brought about by nature and artists, related intimately to place, locality, and resources, to the history of images, and to social and technical histories. Thus, marble inlay can be related to specific currents in Naples, geological, artistic, artisanal, and their inter-relationships. Materials and technique – including the mobilisation of groups of workers – are part of this. This essay thus joins a current in recent scholarship that investigates the inter-relationships amongst materiality, telluric philosophy, geology, and the socio-political history of Naples (Cocco, 2013, pp.453–475; Hills, 2016, pp.136–173), which is also pursued here by Alfonso Tortora and Sean Cocco.

While Vesuvius has habitually been conceived in terms of cosmopolitanism and the Grand Tour, viewing the volcano from Naples and northern Europe, as it

were, Tortora and Cocco investigate the *città vesuviana* ('Vesuvian city'), the Neapolitan hinterland encircling Vesuvius, in terms of inter-relationships between geological and historical transformations. Their essay attempts to track geological and socio-historical inter-relationships through the lens of the Somma-Vesuvius volcano and the settlements around it after 1631. They seek to trace transformation in terms of the co-shaping of cultural formation and geoformation, and of stochasticity, rather than linear configuration.

Art history has traditionally tended to dichotomise 'native traditions' and 'foreign currents' or 'taste' and adhered to the notion that cultural 'influence' between Spain and Italy was homogeneous and unidirectional, with Italian renaissance ideas spreading to the Iberian peninsula and native Italians resisting (or embracing) 'Spanish culture'. It is partly for these reasons that Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), a Spaniard living in Naples, has assumed a pivotal role in Neapolitan art history. The 'Spanishness' or otherwise of his work is assumed to be key to its interpretation. This issue is interrogated here in radically divergent ways in the essays by Bogdan Cornea and Edward Payne. Payne treats Ribera as 'a hybrid figure' and 'a man between two countries'. He argues that the signature he sometimes used, *Jusepe de Ribera español*, inscribes Ribera textually, pictorially, and corporeally into the fabric of Naples. Ribera's repeated returns in painting and prints to certain themes, including St Jerome and Silenus, forms part of a characteristic working that repeats, reverses, turns, doubles and mirrors images. This habitual doubling might be seen as informed by the complex cultural politics of viceregal Naples and its relation to Madrid and the Spanish monarchy, itself a form of mirroring and doubling. Ribera's interest in the great translator Jerome may be seen in analogous terms.

Cornea turns to the question of violence in Ribera's work. Ribera's many depictions of the flaying of saint Bartholomew, like those of other forms of violence including hanging, have repeatedly been explained as a 'reflection' of Naples' supposedly particularly violent nature, which, in turn, is usually blamed on the blood-thirsty Spanish. Ribera's violent subject matter is thus seen as 'reflection' of the violence of Spanish Naples. Cornea rejects the claims that violence in Ribera's work is an index of physical violence in seventeenth-century Naples and that it is best interpreted in terms of representation of such putative realities. He argues instead that Ribera's violence runs deeper in his canvases. A refusal to square subject and technique allowed him to produce and explore forms of violence that are pictorial and material. Hence canvas, paint,

flesh, and skin worked, not in literal reference to a 'reality' outside the canvas, and not in alignment or identity with each other, but in violent relations of displacement in relation to figure and surface. Thus, Cornea seeks to locate violence in terms, not of pictorial materiality working in identity with subject, but as a dislocation between meaning produced by materials and the subject depicted.

Neapolitan still-life painting offers fascinating depictions of fish, flowers, silver vessels, and food. Christopher Marshall tracks a shift in the critical – and market – fortunes of still life from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Domenico de' Dominici's *Vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani* (1742–5) accords particular interest to 'talented painters of flowers, fruit, fish, hunting scenes etc', which Marshall claims to be a first attempt at a 'schematic outline of a regional school of Italian still life painting'. Marshall's investigation of prices of paintings and payments to artists has unearthed useful information on patrons and collections, and evidence of increasing specialisation. Collaborative painting emerges as significant. It appears that the discrepancy in Naples between the value of still-lifes and history painting was less marked than in Rome. Why this may have been so, the distinctive qualities of Neapolitan still-life, beyond price and size, and the ways in which, for instance, the Recco family workshop managed to maintain dominance from the 1650s on are usefully opened up for future research. How might paintings of fish be interpreted? Marshall observes that Luca Giordano and Giuseppe Recco's *Riches of the Sea with Neptune and Two Sea Nymphs*, c.1683–84, which was probably sent to Madrid by Neapolitan Viceroy Marques del Carpio, effectively offers southern Italy up to the king as bounty. Might the marine world, including coral and fish, be opened up for interpretation in a manner analogous to that undertaken for geological resources and their capacities?

Why baroque Naples?

Baroque Naples is the focus of this special issue for three principal reasons. First, Naples affords particular potential for rethinking both baroque and place. Viceregal Naples and the baroque were powerfully framed teleologically by nationalistic history, most notably in the work of Benedetto Croce, and in oppositional and hierarchical terms to what came after or what took place elsewhere. Thus a supposedly ignorant superstitious population, an aristocratic class obsessed by honour, a corrupt and all-pervasive Church, a viceregal government dependent on ignorance, division, and misery was replaced by a

rationalised and effective government under the Bourbons in the early Enlightenment; southern Italy was seen as inferior to northern Italy in economic terms; and Naples was regarded as inferior to Florence, Rome, and Venice in terms of the arts. The history of southern Italy as passive, backward, belated, and a series of 'failures' is a story told in relation to 'modernity', imagined as singular and identified with northern centres, that fails to allow for multiple pasts. This story has its counterpart in art history. Such entrenched perspectives require urgent reconsideration in relation to new specialist scholarship and in light of renewed critical interrogation of the legacies of colonialism and *meridionalismo*.

To counter negative stereotypes of baroque Naples, it is tempting to urge its celebration. But a celebration of Neapolitan art and architecture – a simple reassertion of its 'materiality', for instance, floating on the present current of the 'material turn' in the humanities and social sciences – fails to address the ways in which visual culture is implicated in systems of rule, regulation, domination, and exploitation, the ways in which hegemony depends on culture, and the ways in which teleological conceptions of art history continue to operate. Hence, the story of 'baroque Naples' must be told slant. The field is now ready for a more critical approach to baroque Naples that engages with the politics both of viceregal rule and of art history.

Second, as a colonised capital city, baroque Naples occupied a crucial cultural role, which has not yet been effectively examined. While European colonisation outside Europe has received intense scholarly attention, intra-European colonisation remains under-explored. To date, Spanish rule has been studied in predominantly political and economic terms. The complex and often subtle implication of the arts in the processes of Spanish colonialism requires urgent investigation. In spite of sophisticated art, literature, music, and architecture, which afford tremendous resource to scholars, and in spite of an energetic and developing scholarship on Naples, driven by the impressive efforts of local scholars in particular, the arts of Naples remain under-examined in this regard.

Third, baroque Naples is becoming a fashionable target for art historians, a turn of events that offers great potential, but also opens deceptively alluring traps. After more or less ignoring Naples for decades, scholars are now turning from the congested fields of northern and central Italy to the south. This is, therefore, an opportune moment to look back as well as forward in order to interrogate the paradigms according to which scholarship has – often uncritically – unrolled. Art history is implicated in the hegemonising processes that stratify places and peoples to distribute them according to concepts of nation, class, skin colour, and locality. Cultural markers are rooted in art history. Thus it is not simply a matter of recuperating what has been ignored, as if the problem were one of mere oversight, but of revisiting more critically the terms on which attention was and is bestowed. Insights from subaltern studies, developed from a dissatisfaction with the existing historiography of South Asia in the early 1980s as an effort to rethink colonialism in India, are useful here.[1] The term 'subaltern' in this context derives from Antonio Gramsci, whose analysis of the failure of national consolidation in Italy served as a model for rethinking the nationalist legacies in India (Gramsci, 1973; Spivak, 1998). Subaltern studies shifted from an initial rejection of elite histories in search of the subaltern voice to locating fragments of subalternity within the folds of dominant discourse. The arts in viceregal Naples might usefully be explored in such terms.

The relative scarcity of scholarship on Naples, compared to Florence, Venice, and Rome, is not simply a 'lack'. It is also an opportunity. Naples need not, cannot, and, indeed, should not be addressed in analogous modes to the scholarship of those cities. There are far greater possibilities if it is approached differently and in terms of difference – and, crucially, not in terms of simple 'celebration' of the very terms of its denigration. It is vital to interrogate academic knowledge that justifies or sustains processes and discourses of subordination, such as those which continue to pervade European art history in general and Italian art history in particular. A point of view from Naples and the south is a better vantage point than that of 'the centre' for the tracing and addressing of disciplinary, conceptual and material privileges and prejudices. This is essential, if Neapolitan art is not to be reinscribed into stagnant taxonomies of originality, style, influence, and centres and peripheries, and in order to allow the potential of post-colonial and post-meridionalist approaches to be embraced.

If historians have recently engaged with Neapolitan history predominantly in terms of revisionism and periodisation (Imbruglia, 2000; Marino, 2011), art historians have tended to accept well-worn paradigms of style to investigate individual artists' oeuvres while keeping period and place firmly in place as 'context'.[2] Characteristics found in artworks produced in Naples are by this model deemed to be 'Neapolitan'. Against this backdrop, individual artists are seen (usually teleologically) as responding to the demands of patrons, influencing each other, working faithfully to their own 'style', while that style is seen as developing subject to

the 'influence' of others. These moves are questioned here. The aim is not to deliver categorical definitions or stable characterisations, to re-periodize, and even less to reconcile divergent interpretations and settle arguments. Rather, the aim is to allow each term – 'baroque' and 'Naples' – to destabilise the other. Naples is thus emphatically that which is *not* shared, but rather that which is contested and is discursively produced through those very contestations. Rather than treat baroque Naples as a descriptive apparatus that explains what it supposedly contains, the essays gathered here disrupt notions of containment and continuity in order to complexify assumed homogeneity, whether temporal, geographical, spatial, or within the oeuvre of a single artist. Naples is seen here, not as 'context' or as passive, if also changing, *background* against which cultural events took place, but as itself an event, at once fractured and multiple, subject of and subject to cultural interventions and transformations that were partial, contested, discontinuous, imperilled and unfinished. Thus, the aim is not to *unify* Neapolitan baroque, but to explore baroque Naples in relation to fragmentation, fracture, disjuncture, and dislocation. What does Neapolitan art history look like if it allows place to be discontinuous and open to the forces of contingency, chance, and contradiction, at least as much as to those of structure and purposeful design? Such an approach, more aporetic and elliptical, less triumphalist and celebratory, also permits art history's own continuing pernicious politics to be addressed.

While the focus on 'Naples' may seem to invite a consideration of its art and architecture in terms of 'representation' of a people or place that preceded it, it is precisely such an assumption that this issue interrogates. The production of an image is seen here as a process that is creative and alive, and that produces something that is also creative and alive. Architecture is not simply three-dimensional and static, nor is it reducible to a literal building. Architecture and art maintain the characteristics of a human activity, operate as such, and therefore may usefully be perceived as embodied forms (Bredekamp, 2014, p.31). Texts, paintings, and architecture are not fixed, static objects, but bodily and intersubjective interpretative processes that are also materially implicated. Thus, place and displacement, subject and colonial subject, emerge as intimately connected in relation to materiality and material processes of transformationality.[3] The place of Naples, like the baroque, is anything but stable.

Naples is therefore not the container or explanation to which artworks may be referred. Always changeable and permeable, it must be examined *relationally*. Thus Ribera's violent figures cannot be interpreted as simply 'reflecting' 'violence in Naples', nor simply as reflections on violence informed by his experience of living and working in Naples. Thus 'Naples' (much less 'violent Naples') cannot be assumed (and thus overlooked), but precisely how 'Naples' is brought into play must be investigated.

Art history and baroque Naples

Naples has languished outside the art historical golden triangle of Venice-Rome-Florence, receiving at times barely an obligatory nod of recognition.[4] This is not due to an absence of research on the arts in Naples, as if often claimed, but to two inter-related problems. First, the institutional conservatism of art history, which tends to consolidate the early formation of art history by Vasari, which elevated Florence to its centre, and depended on an interpretative narrative of periodization.[5] Second, insularity in some Neapolitan scholarship has tended to close the field to unorthodox approaches. Both problems are perpetuated, wittingly or not, by notions that the south is inferior culturally, economically, and socially to the north.[6]

Neapolitan scholars, from Gaetano Filangieri in the 1880s to N.F. Faraglia, Giuseppe Ceci, Raffaello Causa, Raffaele Mormone, Roberto Pane, Eduardo Nappi, Gaetana Cantone, Franco Strazzullo, Vincenzo Rizzo, Elio Catello, Teresa Colletta, Renato Ruotolo and many others, have undertaken heroic toil in challenging conditions in archives and libraries to publish documents relating to all aspects of Neapolitan early modern art. A host of recent publications explore Neapolitan urbanism, palace and church architecture, painting and sculpture. Recent initiatives aimed at drawing together disparate approaches and fields focused on 'Naples' (Warr & Elliott, 2010; Calaresu & Hills, 2013; Astarita, 2013) are signs of a developing wider interest. They also demonstrate the need for comparative studies and research that does not pull up the drawbridge at the edges of the city. Indeed, there is a good deal of such work undertaken and underway (d'Agostino, 2011; Guarino, 2010; Carrió-Invernizzi, 2007; San Juan, 2013; Dauverd, 2015, pp.55–80; Visone, 2016).

The splendid exhibition 'Civiltà del Seicento a Napoli', held in the Neapolitan museums of Capodimonte and Pignatelli in 1985 was significant in its ambitious range and impact. In addition to essays on predictable topics, such as collecting, painting, and architecture, the catalogue was enriched by studies of cartography (Alisio, 1984), magic and science (De Giovanni, 1984), music (Bossa, 1984, pp.17–26), silver (Catello, 1984), and textiles (Portoghesi, 1984). Bold

though this was, Neapolitan art history has tended to remain within the precepts and paradigms it sketched out. Much scholarship remains tightly focused on the literal object, restricted to a given medium or by specific material, while some materials, such as stucco, are unduly neglected. While there has been productive engagement with early modern science (Bertucci, 2013, pp.149–75), art and architectural history remain, on the whole, cordoned off from potentially productive engagement with religious history, philosophy, and literary studies. Still-life painting is locked into paradigms familiar from early scholarship on Dutch flower painting, but shorn of the more critical and politicising readings that have enlivened that field in recent years, and that have challenged the assumption that still-lifes are mere representations of 'reality' by considering them as artworks that challenge given realities and open up new possibilities.[7] Architecture and art are persistently treated as responding to, addressing, and even solving problems or exigencies encountered by patrons and artists. The generative capacity of art and architecture and the extent to which they reconfigure new worlds have barely been glimpsed.

Baroque Naples came to be characterised and interpreted retrospectively. The historiography of Naples has approached the city in terms of explanation for its 'failure' to develop in accord with particular conceptions of 'modernity' and with other places in Italy, with blame directed variously at Church, state, or the people (Rao, 2013, pp.203–23; Marino, 2013, pp.11–14). In turn, a defensive affirmation of the value of Neapolitan art and architecture has followed, without a critical examination of the terms on which it is made.

Art historical scholarship focused on Naples tends to remain somewhat insular, in terms of analysis, disconnected from ideas and approaches developed in other disciplines or in relation to other cities and countries. Despite its richness, local scholarship often takes for granted local points of reference, neglecting to make concessions to readers from elsewhere, while failing to interrogate its own assumptions. Well-worn geographical, chronological, epistemological, and conceptual boundaries are too readily rehearsed. But the problem is not principally home-made. Despite the tremendous wealth of scholarship on the arts in Naples, little of this work has permeated into wider studies of Italian art and architecture. Neapolitan art continues to be treated as exceptional, subaltern, or of merely local interest. While regionalism continues to divide scholarship on art and architecture throughout the Italian peninsula, Neapolitan art – and southern art in general – are persistently treated as less significant

than the art of Rome, Florence, Venice, and elsewhere, largely as a result of being viewed through the lens of renaissance Florence, baroque Rome, classicism, and even 'modernity'. Wittingly or not, many art-historical approaches to Naples, albeit well-intentioned, inadvertently reproduce stereotypes of the south. Hence it is not enough to revisit 'materiality' in the south without a careful examination of how matter has been subordinated to ideas in art history and how that hierarchy maps on to hierarchical distinctions between 'northern' and 'southern' Italian art. The 'South', like the 'Orient', is a constituted entity, discursively produced in relation to 'the centre', 'the North', or 'the West'. The crucial issue for a sophisticated art history of Naples is thus how the south and 'Naples' have been and are discursively produced, which necessarily entails engagement with *meridionalismo*.[8]

In the history of art, 'style', and the artist conceived as autonomous individual persist as predominant and unquestioned modes by which Neapolitan art is conceptualised, investigated, and discussed.[9] Anthony Blunt's ground-breaking *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture* periodised baroque as style in teleological terms (1975, p.124). For Blunt 'originality' (1975, p.67), 'local traditions', 'foreign artists', 'taste' (e.g. 'French taste') and 'influence' (p.3) were engines for style change in Naples. Such paradigms survive intact.[10] Neapolitan art has too often been treated as homogeneous, with insufficient attention to conflict and contestation. Thus, what is retrospectively designated as 'style' is rarely prised open to expose what was at issue in a specific presentation of peculiar forms. A focus on individual artists does not serve well the great complexes, such as the Certosa, the Gesù, or the Palazzo Reale, in which many artists and workshops worked over extended periods of time. Nor does it help to understand relationships between individual building and wider social and urban issues. Indeed, it reproduces an art history that tends to be static and staccato.

Neapolitan baroque art demands investigation across media, field, and materials. That challenge has been taken up in recent years. While classic studies, such as Blunt's, depended on a sharp distinction between 'strictly architectural qualities' and 'decoration' (1975, p.67), architectural history no longer shrinks from interrogating the splendid marble altars or wall decorations of churches and chapels (De Cavi, 2009; d'Agostino, 2011; Napoli, 2015; De Divitiis, 2015; Hills, 2016). However, more genuinely interdisciplinary scholarship is now required. Important scholarship on palaces, on collecting, and museums might usefully now be related to dress, dance, music, the role of servants,

and religious practices, for instance. Recent research into Naples' remarkable banking systems should be related to cultural practices. Institutions apart from churches and palaces have received relatively little attention. Naples' remarkable hospitals and their complex economies require studies that extend far beyond technical issues of site, patronage, and authorship to embrace questions of gender, sexuality, governmentality, social organisation, political and emotional affect. A focus on nobles and elite court life has left exposed unexplored territory in relation to artisans and workshops. How was the material of silver, for example, imagined and understood? How was it imported into Naples and subsequently distributed? What were the processes of its working, the training of silversmiths, and the organisation of their workshops? While alchemy and freemasonry in Naples are frequently invoked as sweeping explanations for arcane art, they yet to receive critical investigation.

Naples is frequently characterised as a place of particular 'popular piety', 'superstition', or 'religiosity', indicating assumptions that Neapolitan religious practices lack sophistication and are unchanging. Such primitivising assumptions have hampered effective study of its art and architecture. Indeed, religious and intellectual ideas have too hastily been treated as distinct from art and architecture, though with some important exceptions (Lenzo, 2015). More critical examination of the so-called 'Counter Reformation', which is itself not an explanation but a label, is required. The super abundance of protector saints in Naples, for instance, may be better understood as inflected by Spanish rule, rather than mere consequence of a resurgent Catholic Church (Sallmann, 1994, pp.71–7; Hills, 2016, pp.215–69). Art and architecture are more than manifestations of the Council of Trent's decrees. How important was apophaticism to the arts in Naples? were there distinctive Carthusian 'spiritualities' and how were they implicated in the complexities of institutional politics at San Martino and beyond? The Theatines were particularly significant in Naples as confessors to grandees, especially to noble women, cloistered and lay. Why was this and what were its artistic, social, political, and institutional consequences?

The essays here explore ways in which art is both distinct from that which precedes it and how it is productive. Attention is paid to peculiarities of material form, rather than engaging in swift stylistic designations. Thus Bogdan Cornea's essay interprets Ribera's painting, not in terms of a supposedly all-encompassing religious movement, but in relation to surfaces, pigments, and theories of lifelikeness; Sergius Kodera's essay highlights analogies in the treatment

of the bodies of saints and those of criminals; Joris van Gastel interprets ecclesiastical adornment in relation to the geological; and my own essay interprets depictions of saints in Naples in terms of the politics of place. It is not so much that boundaries between secular and religious, interior and exterior are blurred in the baroque city, but that possibilities of place and the city itself are produced through their dynamic inter-relation (Hills, 2016, p.488).

Meridionalismo: Keeping Naples in place

The South is far more than a geographical entity, it is an imaginary and mystical one, associated with both hell and paradise.

(Gribaudi, 1997, p.84)

Interpretations of Neapolitan culture intersect with the 'southern question', with debates about 'missed opportunities' and under-development in the south (Rao, 2013, pp.203–23). The southern question posed by a group of intellectuals to the ruling class of Italy in the decades after Unification was a national question concerned with nation building and Italy's new sense of identity (Dickie, 1997, pp.125, 127). As John Dickie has observed, Naples is the place in which 'the quintessentially patriotic act of knowing Italy' has been carried out (1997, p.128).

Renato Fucini's *Napoli a occhio nudo* (1878) presents a view of the miserable condition of Naples' plebeian class, a denunciation of the government and the rich nobles who had reduced the people to 'miserie scimmie a due mani' ('miserable monkeys with two hands'). Naples is the place of the bizarre, of incomprehensible contrasts, the place, in short, of the obscene of Italy. The terms in which nineteenth-century *meridionalisti* describe Naples resound in those of the discussions of the baroque, which, in turn, was the underside of the rational and the classical:

'A strange country this! What bizarre fusion of the very beautiful and the horrendous, of the excellent and the worst, of the pleasant and the nauseous!'

(Fucini, 1976, pp.6–7).[11]

Thus the discourse of 'the south' runs parallel to, intersects with, and is confused with 'the baroque' in particularly productive – and pernicious – ways:

No other city in the world I believe equals Naples in conserving such paltry and insignificant architectural remains from the successive dynasties that followed one another in ruling it [...] Of the Byzantines and Normans there is the occasional and shapeless relic. The Swabians and Angevins have left a few churches but their solid palaces resemble sturdy fortresses rather than princely residences. To the Spanish is owed an abundance

of awkward looking churches and the odd obscenely baroque obelisk.

(Fucini 1976, p.10)[12]

Naples is little more here than a wasteland strewn with vestiges of civilization brought from afar. Fucini's orientalizing approach makes sense of Naples in terms of the 'Orient', Spain, and De Amicis' *Costantinopoli,* as somewhere that would strike *an Italian* as 'millions of kilometres from his homeland' (pp.5–6). Italians do not come from Naples.

Naples, according to these claims, is unfathomable, neglected by and unknown to its inhabitants. Not only did Naples lag historically behind the north, its inhabitants were evolutionarily retarded. Alfredo Niceforo's 1898 *L'Italia barbara contemporanea* claimed that the southern mainland, Sicily, and Sardinia were stagnating at a level of social 'evolution' well behind that of northern and central provinces and explained this in terms of their inhabitants: 'The people of the south are still primitive, not completely evolved, less civilized and refined than the populations of the north and centre of Italy' (p.3). Statistics on crime, education, birth rate, mortality, suicide rate, and the economy, along with craniometric data justified this position. Niceforo and others saw their investigation of southern Italy as the victory of science over two opposing taboos: a short-sighted regional pride on the part of those who refused to consider the problems of other areas of the country and a cult of national unity, which sought dogmatically to fit all of Italy's diverse regions into one administrative model (Dickie, 1997, p.118).

Meridionalismo brought together disciplines including agronomy, economics, geography, and sociology to explain the peculiarities of the south in relation to the rest of the country (Gribaudi, 1997). The southern economy was explored in contrast to the north within a dualistic framework. A dichotomised image of the Mezzogiorno emerged. *Meridionalismo* exercised a strong grip on subsequent scholarship on the 'Southern problem' that identified lack of resources – from good soil and water to entrepreneurial skills and civic spirit – the problem of urban poverty, a peasantry bound to large estates and mafia violence. For Croce the 'Neapolitan nation' consisted of an intellectual elite, capable of playing a 'national' role in the Italian south, but which, even at its peak at the end of the seventeenth century and the age of Enlightenment, failed to build a nation (1925). *Meridionalismo* was generally conceived with regard to 'modernity' (Galasso, 2011, pp. 411–16; Musella, 2005). And 'modernity' was imagined in terms of the development of northern Italy. Temporality and geography were collapsed: the south was 'backward'.

Not only was the south backward, it was entrenched in mere matter, materials, and nature, as opposed to the culture and ideas of the progressive north. Pasquale Villari's *Di Chi è la colpa ò sia la pace e la guerra* of 1866 is paradigmatic in treating Naples as both symptom and enigma. Naples was defined by contrasting the ugliness of its culture and bestiality of its people to the natural beauty of the city's setting. Benedetto Croce gave new legs to the sixteenth-century proverb that Naples was 'a paradise inhabited by devils' (1956, pp.5–10). Auguste François Creuzé de Lesser contrasted the magnificence of Naples' site and 'the very mediocre beauty of the city [...] This Naples, so vaunted, hardly possesses any beauty which is not [nature] [...]. The architecture of her palaces and churches is generally in the worst style' (1806, pp.73–4).[13] While Naples had nature, it lacked culture.

The picturesque named, aestheticised, and exoticised the south's anomalous position between Italy and the Orient, between the world of civilised progress and the spheres of rusticity and barbarism, a world of supposedly free instinct and exaggerated sensuality. Art historian Carl Justi's characterisation of Neapolitan baroque as 'wanton' is part of this and does not simply belong to a supposedly distinct art historical discourse. Colonial and oriental images surface intermittently in Villari's attempts to define the south and its problems as a national concern to reveal the thinking of the south, and particularly the southern peasantry, as being beyond Italy. Italy's identity was to be constituted in terms that Villari identifies as simultaneously the south's Other and its most intimate self, 'its greatest moral danger and its ultimate salvation' (Dickie, 1997, p.128–9).

The assumption that southern society was incapable of self-rule and that endemic corruption could only be corrected through powerful initiative from central government was established by the tradition of nineteenth-century *meridionalismo* and survives to the present. Debate over the extent to which development in one region had been at the cost of the other dominated the historiography in the decades after the fall of fascism (Morris, 1997, p.3). In the 1980s, new scholarship challenged the premises of *meridionalismo* on the grounds that it risked distorting the realities of the Mezzogiorno by interpreting the south through explicit or implicit comparison with the north. The region's identity was based on measurement against cultural and economic models based on profoundly different societies, and thus on negation, on its *lack* of a bourgeoisie, individualism, or group solidarity (Gribaudi, 1997, p.85). Historical specificity slipped quickly into geographical and historical characterisation. Instead of

emphasising the variation across the south in its very different regions and diverse dynamics of historical change, *meridionalismo* highlighted a lack of dynamism compared to the north, producing an image of an unchanging backward world, such that the history of the south was the history of the southern problem, while Italian history was made elsewhere (Bevilacqua, 1993, p.vii). Instead revisionists sought to analyse the 'Mezzogiorno without *meridionalismo*' (Giarrizzo, 1992, pp.x–xx), not to deny the peculiarities of the mezzogiorno but with a greater alertness and readiness to consider them in terms other than that of a failed version of somewhere else.

Renato Fucini was not alone in indulging in a topographical determinism:

> After the social reasons for such architectural poverty, another reason, more powerful and compelling, you will find walking on a calm day along the magical shores of the Gulf, when, with agitated soul, you will feel forced to exclaim: 'What point is there in struggling with our little mortal brains against the most beautiful work of nature?' Imagine to yourself Brunelleschi's cupola in the shadow of Vesuvius, and think about that.
>
> ([1878] 1976, p.11)[14]

The common element in such stereotypes was the construction of the south as an Other to Italy. The barbarous, the primitive, the natural, the violent, the irrational, the material, the feminine, the African were repeatedly located in the Mezzogiorno as foils to definitions of Italy. This 'Other' is not simply distinct from, but is an essential part of 'Italy'. And this 'Other' continues to inhabit art historical interpretations of Neapolitan art in its designation as 'violent', 'irrational', or 'material'.

Baroque Naples, viceregency, and colonialism

In what ways were visual culture and the discourses of art and architecture implicated in Spanish colonial rule in Naples? While the cultural politics of Spanish colonialism have received great attention in Latin America, comparable analysis is lacking for Spanish rule in Naples, as it is for Spanish rule elsewhere in Europe. While Spanish rule outside Europe and the art of its Latin American domains are readily interpreted in terms of colonialism, there is resistance to considering Spanish rule within Europe and the art of its European domains in those terms. In so far as Neapolitan baroque art has been considered in relation to Spanish rule, this has been in either nationalist or in incidental terms. That is, in terms of 'barbaric Spaniards',

or art made for individual patrons who happened to be Spanish, or art, architecture and urbanism that shaped a city that happened to be governed by Spain. These models have occluded the cultural politics of sovereignty and the complex implication of the discourses of art and architecture in governmentality. A more critical examination of the cultural politics of Spanish rule will permit the operations of government in and through cultural formations and art to emerge. At issue is not 'Spain', but the cultural implications of Spanish dominion, the sophisticated ways in which art was implicated in government – beyond military fortification or 'propaganda'. Emphasis on Spanish rule here is important – not as background against which art must be seen, but instead, as a question that is crucial for baroque Naples. How does culture enter into, inform, structure, and enable Spanish colonisation and rule? In what ways do buildings and artworks generate, sustain, explore, and contest that rule?[15]

Following its recapture from the French by the royal house of Aragon in 1504, Naples was ruled in tandem with the kingdom of Aragon. The Aragonese kingdoms (including Sicily and Sardinia) shared their monarch with the kingdoms of Castile, Leon, Navarre, Granada, Valencia and the territories associated with them. From 1517 until 1700 the common ruler of these kingdoms was a Habsburg, who was often referred to as 'king of Spain', although the title had no formal status. Naples was ruled by the king of the Sicilies. The Castilian jurist Juan de Solórzano Pereira's *Politica Indiana* (1647) enunciated a principle that each kingdom was to be ruled *aeque principaliter*, 'as if the king who holds them all together were king only of each one of them' (Elliott, 1992, pp.52–3). By contrast, the kingdoms of Mexico and Peru were subordinate to and incorporated within the kingdom of Castile alone.[16] Nevertheless, formal independence was more complex in practice. Naples was a junior partner to the kingdom to which it belonged and at the heart of rule of Naples was the absence of a resident monarch and court, a significant absence in an intensely dynastic monarchical world.

The relation between Spanish rule and the arts in baroque Naples has been framed since the late nineteenth century in predominantly nationalistic terms. Sharp condemnation of supposedly essential 'Spanish' characteristics took precedence over a critical investigation of the dynamics of power and governmentality in a model of history that reduced the arts and culture to passive product or representation of national or moral qualities (Croce, 1925). Thus, in his 1854 study of the Carafa of Maddaloni, Alfred de Reumont described Caravaggio's work as 'more

dreadful than demonical, with that predilection for that which was horrible and bloody, which is chiefly to be ascribed to Spanish influence, in as much as it is more in accordance with the hard and melancholy nature of the Spaniard, and with his extravagant love of painful subjects' (p.14). Caravaggio, morally susceptible, succumbed to both low-class culture and to Iberian influence, both moral maladies. Art history has been slow to change course. Even today Naples is depicted as a sort of soft target for Caravaggism, a place where Caravaggio's 'influence' was taken up and absorbed into darkness.

Baroque Naples has been framed as the chaotic and superstitious period to which the Bourbon dynasty majestically put an end. The 'Enlightenment' thus casts a dark shadow across the preceding era from which it has retrospectively been distinguished.[17] Luigi Del Pozzo's 'Preface' to his *Cronaca civile e militare delle Due Sicilie sotto la dinastia Borbonica* ([1857] 2011) is paradigmatic in its justification of Bourbon rule by contrasting it to the 'humble and depressed condition' of the viceregency that it replaced (p.vi).[18] The Bourbons inherited a sterile and oppressed kingdom, in which vast *donativi* extracted by the viceroys were sent direct to Spain, the *gabelle* and other taxes hit the poor, while barons enjoyed all kinds of immunities and were not held to account, while the Consilio Collaterale struggled beneath an unwieldy accumulation of disparate Norman, Swabian, Angevin, and Aragonese law (Del Pozzo, 2011, pp.vii–x): 'It was as if the gold of Naples took the form of an everlasting and inexhaustible fountain, that poured itself out on the soil of Spain' (p.viii).

Recently, the peculiar implications of Naples' role as cadet branch to a worldwide imperial power has been identified by John Robertson as an important factor in the development of the Neapolitan Enlightenment. He argues that thinkers in eighteenth-century Naples and Scotland, prompted by the onset of political crisis, shared a particular commitment to understanding 'man's place in the world', understanding and advancing the causes and conditions of human betterment and the possibility, but not the inevitability, of progress in the present world (2003, p.78). He identifies 'the common factor' to be 'the kingdoms' status as junior partners in larger composite monarchies' (2003, p.148). While acknowledging that 'its adherents needed careers and recognition, along with outlets for their writings', Robertson insists that a 'cosmopolitan' Enlightenment with 'intellectual coherence' is not bounded by place ('ideas, books and men of letters were able to travel across Europe and not only to Paris') (2003, p.80). Asserting that 'ideas should not be

reduced to cultural discourses', he claims that 'their priorities remained intellectual, and they looked to public opinion to confirm their intellectual authority' and that 'the same Enlightenment existed in both Scotland and Naples' (2003, pp.80, 82, 86). What, then, is the meaning or legitimacy of the term 'Neapolitan' in 'Neapolitan Enlightenment'? Do Neapolitan ideas only really matter if they transcend the city and the south? Is the place where they lived merely a necessary but irrelevant backdrop to these men's ideas? How does such a conception of 'ideas', stripped of all cultural embeddedness, also impoverish the power of 'place'? Were the 'careers', 'recognition', and 'outlets' for their writing in Naples simply necessary but irrelevant, or did they sustain, inform, and challenge those ideas? After all, the 'intellectual' priorities on which these men focused were political economy, agrarian improvement, and an enquiry into the historical progress of society (Robertson, 2003, p.83). Such issues are necessarily implicated in the local conditions of farming, political rule, and the distribution of wealth and resources, in short, the socio-political and economic circumstances of eighteenth-century Naples in which these men lived and in relation to which their ideas developed. The specifics of the place and politics of Naples, from which Robertson seeks to distinguish ideas, have been treated as contaminatory in scholarship since Croce at least. Robertson's wish to distinguish between ideas and 'cultural discourse' finds an interesting analogous position in Croce's desire to locate true art apart from 'practical considerations', which lies at the heart of his discussion of Neapolitan baroque (1929, pp.25–9).

Croce's *Spagna nella vita italiana durante la Rinascenza* (1922) excoriates the 'barbaric Spanish invasion' of Italy, the inferiority of Spanish literature, Iberian love of honorific titles, pomp and duels, and concludes with a chapter on 'Hispano-Italian Decadence'.[19] Assuming that culture has its pivot in philosophy, Croce asserts that Spain contributed little or nothing to the progress of ideas, but exerted a reactionary influence constrained by Scholasticism and the 'Counter Reformation' (1922). Croce's *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia* (1929; 1944; 1953) interpreted the culture and costumes of baroque Italy as distorted by the values of absolute monarchy and Catholic Reform. His characterisation of Naples at the mercy of the Spanish Counter-Reformation, imbued in religiosity, suffused by bloody violence and baroque decadence, has cast a long shadow.[20]

Given this nationalistic tradition, it is perhaps not surprising that the suggestion that Spanish Naples might usefully be thought in terms of 'colonialism' has met with shrill resistance. While 'Spanish dominion', 'artistic influence', patronage, and the passage of art

objects from Naples to Madrid or vice versa are readily accepted, the terms 'colonial' or 'empire' are not (Pestilli Rowland & Schütze, 2008). The magnificent art and architecture produced under Spanish rule is even adduced as evidence of the beneficence of that rule (see Hernando Sánchez, 1994; Bosse & Stoll, 2001; Hernando Sánchez, 2004, pp.43–73; Colomer, 2009). It has even been claimed that intermarriage between Neapolitan and Spanish aristocrats demonstrates the inappropriateness of the term 'colonial' to describe Spanish rule. In point of fact, however, this merely naturalises the dynamics of monarchical and aristocratic dynastic power, and their implication in colonialism.

Thus Spanish rule has, on the whole, been treated primarily in terms of geographical extent and its art and architecture – unless explicitly concerned with Spanish government or military force – as innocent product whose relationship to empire is purely incidental. To rethink Spanish rule in Naples in terms of the *cultural politics* of empire, however, requires careful attention to the implication of the arts. Resistance to this springs in part from a desire for Naples to be recognised on a par with other more celebrated artistic centres. Hence the resistance to any approach that is seen as undermining a hard-won cultural legitimacy. Meanwhile, a fiercely hierarchical approach to the arts and an insistence that quality, style, 'taste', and individual artists' biographies and oeuvres are adequate paradigms for interpreting art continue to render opaque art's involvement in politics, power, and exploitation, except where this is literally explicit.

In the kingdom of Naples the viceroy, generally chosen from the ranks of the highest Castilian nobility, substituted for, replaced and represented the person of the king. Indeed, the viceroy was the simulacrum of royal status. Viceroys were moved at the first sign of significant local trouble to avoid criticisms reflecting on the king (Koenigsberger, 1951).[21] Two councils at the heart of the Spanish monarchy, the Council of State and the Council of Italy oversaw the viceroy. The first appointed viceroys determined policy and strategy for the monarchy as a whole; the second was concerned with the internal affairs of the states ruled by the Spanish Habsburgs in Italy and drew its members from those states. In Naples itself, the Consiglio Collaterale (Collateral Council), staffed by Spaniards and Neapolitans, was the highest governmental authority in the Kingdom; under it were the Sacro Regio Consiglio, the highest court, and the Cameria della Sommaria, which controlled the kingdom's finances. Beneath them, a sprawl of councils constituted as tribunals proliferated this division of functions such

that jurisdictional conflicts were endemic (Villari, 1993, pp.10–18).

Spanish rule relied on and strengthened, instead of replacing, the power of indigenous elites. Inhabitants of Naples of all levels were not simply passive recipients of colonial schemes. On the whole, Spanish rule depended on local barons who, in return, secured confirmation and extension of their privileges, immunities, and powers. Consequently, the heaviest burdens, including taxation, fell disproportionately on the poor and those locked out of such deals. Taxes rose through the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, as war with France and Protestant powers sharply intensified the Spanish monarchy's fiscal demands. More money, recruits, and military supplies were extracted from Naples. By 1636 the public debt reached 40 million ducats and the interest alone exceeded ordinary income. The crown granted a virtual monopoly over the entire financial system to Bartolomeo d'Aquino, a financier, who, together with his associates, raised a further 36 million ducats between 1637 and 1644. By this time, Naples had become a sophisticated financial centre (Calabria, 1991). Since the financiers received generous commissions of 50% on the taxes they farmed, crown revenues fell in real terms. Consequently, yet more taxes were inflicted (Villari, 1993, pp.74–97). Eventually, in 1647–8 escalating pressures from the monarchy provoked open rebellion, drawing on anti-Spanish sentiment across Church, barons, and the poor (Musi, *La rivolta di Masaniello*). That combination of disparate interests was also responsible for undermining it and the rebellion was ruthlessly put down. The kingdom returned within the Spanish monarchy, but taxation never returned to the rates of the 1630s and early 1640s. Successive viceroys duly accepted the privileges of the noble and legal elites, and the feudal nobility and *togati* profited from their renewed acquiescence to Spanish rule.

That compromise between Spanish and Neapolitan elites effectively immobilised the kingdom politically for the remainder of Spanish Habsburg rule. Membership of one of the city's Seggi (to which 130 families belonged by 1700) provided vital access to urban power.[22] Membership of a noble Seggio combined with possession of a rural fief, with its extensive economic and social powers, marked out the real urban elite, at the top of which were the great noble clans of the Carafa, Caracciolo, Sanseverino, Avalos d'Aquino, Pignatelli and the Orsini (Astarita 1992, pp.37–40; Visceglia, 1993). Thus, the barons ruthlessly extended their power. This was the elite who built palaces with fine inner courtyards, fabulous portals and staircases,

interiors adorned with sumptuous furniture, hangings, and pictures, and who commissioned sculptors and painters to decorate their family chapels in churches (Labrot, 1977). That art work has not yet, on the whole, been adequately interrogated in relation to baronial manipulation of power or struggles over political domination due to Spanish colonialism and the complex roles of city, court, and visual and literary culture in relation to it.

Naples' vast population appears to place it in a league with Amsterdam or London, but unlike these cities it did not stimulate the economies around them and, unlike them, it was not at the head of a pyramid of cities.[23] It was alone in a kingdom in which no other city had more than 20,000 inhabitants. And its relationship to the Kingdom was parasitic, a place of consumption more than production or trade. It was not integrated into a commercialised economy, but was sustained by the transfer from Kingdom to capital of rents, payments, taxes, and legal fees. Thus, by 1690 there were about 800 tolls in the kingdom, mostly levied by the nobility (de Rosa, 1996). Naples' high population, the influx of nobles, and their building of palaces within easy reach of the viceregal court are facts that are frequently repeated, but rarely interrogated in relation to the politics of Spanish rule. In what ways did competition or alliances amongst aristocrats impact on the architecture and organisation of their palaces, their collections, their patronage of the arts and their involvement with religious institutions? In what ways were devotional practices inflected, not only across monastic orders and institutions, by gender and social rank, but by political affiliations, financial interests, and courtly rivalries?

Spanish viceregal patronage has generally been conceived narrowly, in terms of works directly commissioned by viceroys, hence fortifications, castles, palace building, new city walls and streets (Pane, 1984; De Cavi, 2009; Pessolano, 2015). Rule by this model depends on defence, fortification, and representation ('propaganda'). This overlooks the ways in which culture is interwoven with governmentality in more subtle and complex ways, the ways in which the arts produce, sustain, inform, and reform changing identities and social relations that are crucial, not secondary, to any dominion. It overlooks, too, the ways in which Spanish government skilfully deployed and exploited its court in Naples to advertise its power on a wider European stage. For Naples was not only location, but capital and instrument of royal power. Military forces and fortifications were self-evidently modes of rule; the ways in which tribunals, courts, churches, hospitals, and palaces formed part of the web of sovereignty and governmentality requires more subtle elaboration (see Agamben, 2011; Rossi, 2015).

The Spanish monarchy secured privileges for the capital in order to consolidate its power over the Kingdom and beyond. These included exemption from state taxes and obligation to pay only city taxes, less expensive bread, a more reliable food supply during times of scarcity. The concentration of aristocrats in Naples, swarming round the royal palace, advertised loyalty to the king, while being on hand to take rewards. Wealth was concentrated here through royal grants and feudal revenues, the centre of business affairs, contracts, public works, private and public loans, and banks (in the early sixteenth century some provincial banks survived; by the end of the century they were all concentrated in the city). Feudal aristocrats, merchants and the professional classes chose to live in Naples. The manufactures of silk, gold, and silver received impetus. Silk and grain merchants and financiers emerged as powerful pressure groups. For the lower classes the city offered a chance to escape from excessive taxation, feudal demands and unreliable food supplies in the Kingdom.

In general the deals between barons and monarchy have been examined in narrowly economic and political terms. Yet baroque Naples was the centre not simply of a concentration of wealth, but of favour, access to patronage, and cultural distinction, around which developed a culture of abeyance, sycophancy, mimicry, and parody. The arts played a vital role in this and were informed by it, as Kodera's essay here demonstrates. The precise ways in which this took place in other artistic endeavours require further research.

To situate Neapolitan art in relation to Spanish colonial rule is to place it in an orbit radically different from those of style, individual artist careers, and of discourses of materiality imagined in relation to art historical discourses, 'southern identity', and Europe alone. It was a rule that encompassed both sides of the Atlantic. It is telling that subjected peoples in both the Viceroyalty of Peru and in the Kingdom of Naples were referred to as 'Indians' and their country as 'the Indies'. To see baroque Naples in terms of colonialism and coloniality invites closer comparison with the Empire of the Indies and to its own Kingdom, the hinterland that has been treated as relatively inconsequential, lost in the shadows of the glittering capital city.

Ornament and excess

While the southern question tends to be framed in terms of 'lack', cultural commentators have routinely approached the south in terms of ornament and excess. Both share a concern with 'licence' and 'matter', associated with the supposedly sensual south and with its rich, highly coloured ornament. Thus, Naples is figured at once as a place of 'lack' and of 'excess'. In his 1692 guide book to the beautiful, ancient and curious in the city of Naples, canon Carlo Celano described the silver of the aristocratic convent church of San Gregorio Armeno as 'excessive in quantity, weight, and working' (1970, pp.927–33).[24] He locates its excesses in terms not only of extent and number, but also of intensity of elaboration ('lavori'). To Justi everything in Naples from the last two hundred years 'is tasteless to the point of excess' (1922, p.79). For Pane Neapolitan baroque 'expressed itself' in 'the preciousness of the ornamental' (1984, p.18).

Ornament, long associated with *licentia*, is often portrayed as additional, inessential, excessive, or overblown, and it is associated with matter – in short, a material impediment to the Ideal. Baroque ornament is on these terms an extravagant interruption before the enlightenment and a return to the smooth waters of classicism. Rudolf Wittkower, Roberto Pane, Christof Thoenes, Anthony Blunt and Gaetana Cantone followed this broad paradigm. Since excess, vulgarity, and lack of restraint are qualities which art and culture usually suborn, harness, and overcome, Naples emerges as lacking real (Ideal) art, even while it is swamped in material excess. Hence, Naples is too intimately involved with materials, too much entranced by precious metals, too dependent on material colour in its use of marbles, too prone to indulge in ornament and licence, too wantonly *feminine*. Vulgar, sensual, unrestrained, even mercenary, Naples flouts boundaries of taste and respectability to wallow in material 'excess'. Neapolitan baroque has been seen as material encumbrance, a 'covering over' of something beneath it that is more essential, of greater merit, and hence as something added on, supplemental and inessential, even diversionary, bogged down in materials and matter. Recent interest in decoration and adornment within history of art (Necipoğlu & Payne, 2016) offer a renewed impetus to revisit these issues in light of renewed engagement with materiality. Materiality may be understood, in contradistinction to matter or materials, not as essence already given, but as qualities to be discovered excavated and invented, sites of potentiality and part of a process of exploration. Protean activities of stones and metals permitted artists to discern a life in materials, to collaborate with it, productively engaging its potentiality (Smith, 1988, p.3; Hills, 2016, pp.123–73).

The habitual characterisation of Neapolitan art in terms of material excess should not, however, be misread as simply due to a supposed peculiarly intense or widespread use of rich and colourful materials in Naples. Croce's lament, issued in 1925, is telling: 'Beside the masterpieces of Tuscan, Lombard, and Venetian artists that were created or brought here by chance, [visitors] find, for the most part, secondary works, ostentatious rather than of intrinsic worth' (1925, p.335). It is not simply that Neapolitan art is showy. Ostentation substitutes for intrinsic worth. The failing is a moral one, an unrefined ensnarement with vulgar matter.

If Naples has been criticised for its 'excess' and the superabundance and superficiality of its decoration, its ostentatious and wasteful deployment of precious materials including silver, and a vulgar use of colour, what might be gained by focusing on precisely those aspects? Beyond simply gesturing to validate ornament, colour, and rich materials, what are the wider implications of this move? Unless this move is carefully framed, it risks simply reinscribing Neapolitan baroque with matter and materials, as if they were in some way proper to it. The notion that one can simply reverse the paradigm or reaffirm the subordinate term obscures the extent to which the designation of Naples in terms of 'excess', ornament, and materiality *already* depends on an *intersection* of discourses at the heart of both art and architectural theory and 'the south' – and the ways in which these discourses are intimately bound to power relations, including national politics, and the politics of gender and sexuality.

Ornament was a key concern to Renaissance art and architectural theorists and stood as a claim of artistic independence, a claim to *licentia* (Payne, 1999, 6). Ornament's subordination to structure in architectural discourse is long-standing and extends way beyond Naples. In 1992 Mark Wigley brilliantly argued that architectural theory since Leon Battista Alberti has subordinated adornment to structure, treated it as additional and as desirable within limits, but readily given to excess. The effect of architecture's following afterwards to house something that pre-existed it may be seen as one of its ideological effects (Wigley, 1992, pp.330–4). The painted white wall presents itself as a naked unadorned structural truth. Architectural discourse is, Wigley suggests, most ideological precisely when it appears to be most innocent. Gottfried Semper's insistence on textile hanging as first producing spatial divisions, was persistently misread, because it challenged fundamental ideological assumptions

embedded in architectural theory (Wigley, 1992, pp.380–9). Thus, gender and sexuality are staged in architectural discourse as if they precede it, but in fact are produced through it. Adornment is linked by Alberti through architecture with deception, seduction, women, and femininity. If indeed ornament is associated in particular with Naples, and seen as overwhelming, tasteless and overdone, then this needs to be critically explored and understood in relation to architectural discourse as much as to materials.

Thus analysis of Neapolitan baroque decoration cannot simply proceed in terms of 'celebration'. It requires critical engagement with discourses of ornament and matter beyond Naples, with the construction of the south in terms of sensuality, vulgarity, and matter, and in relation to philosophical and historical scholarship on materiality. It is then necessary to go further to ask why the south is seen persistently in those terms: why has the *conjunction* of 'decoration' and 'south' produced a discourse of material abundance? In what particular ways does southern adornment exceed order or threaten subversion? Thus, Naples' saturation in discourses of matter cannot be treated in terms of materials and art history alone, but must be situated in relation to a wider discursive subordination and denigration of southern Italy, across social, political, economic, and cultural fields, to colonial rule, the southern question, and *meridionalismo*.

Hence it is crucial not simply to over identify Naples with material ornament. Marble cladding, wall-to-wall frescoes, elaborate sculpture, inlaid marbles, highly decorated surfaces also abound in Florence, Venice, and Rome. Yet, such ornament in those cities has not persistently been characterised as 'excessive' or in terms of 'materiality' by art historians. To assume that Naples and the south are more materially engaged than the north or that an emphasis on matter is 'southern' is to overlook the politics of the specific conjunction of the terms 'the south', 'ornament', 'material', and 'excess', which is also related to art history's implication in the denigration of the south.

It is a fundamental mistake to assume that there is simply *more* ornament in the south or that the productive use of materials is proper to the south. Instead, the critical question is why have art historians so readily accepted and amplified this characterisation of southern baroque? In what ways have 'matter', 'ornament', and 'the south' been discursively produced to feed such a perception and how has the discourse of 'excess' operated in relation to southern ornament (Hills, 2016)? What anxieties about which social groups lurk behind the designations 'wanton', 'licence', 'excess',

'adornment', 'matter', and 'ostentation'? What is being held anxiously in place?

Thus what is seen as characteristic of the south is already 'out of place'. Hence, it is insufficient simply to 'celebrate' the south's 'materiality', as if it were proper to the south in general, or to 'Neapolitan identity' in particular. It is also necessary to explore what is meant by 'identity' in relation to 'materiality' in the complex situation of Spanish-occupied European territory, a move that in turn requires careful engagement in the politics of Spanish colonial rule. To assume that Naples is best interpreted in terms of tangible and passive matter is once again to produce 'the south' in antithetical and oppositional terms to the 'north' in ways that are discursively and historically over-determined. It is to blithely overlook the fact that art in northern Italy is just as 'material' as that in the south and equally open to materialist interpretations, even if it has long been framed in Idealist terms. Such an approach naively overlooks art history's own involvement in *meridionalismo* and colonialism. Thus, rather than to collapse again the south and matter, it is necessary to approach the conditioning processes of art historical discourse more critically to ask what is the matter with defining art of 'the south' in terms of tangible matter? Which discourses are co-implicated and to what effect in this potent conjunction?[25]

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Subalternism is 'the general attribute of subordination in south Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way', (Gulha, 1988, p.35; see also Beverley, 1999).

[2] Rarely do exhibitions examine architecture or urbanism. The vast majority of exhibitions and books dedicated to Neapolitan art focus on a single artist approached in terms of archival data, style, personality and influences. Useful though these can be, their perspective precludes exploration of many of the issues raised below.

[3] Materiality is not equivalent to either matter or to materials. The essays presented here draw on currents in new materialism to treat materiality not as mere brute matter, passively awaiting form, but in terms of potentiality and the work of the work of art. Thus 'materiality' is not simply the identification and enumeration of materials and techniques used.

[4] The situation is improving, but the tendency remains to discuss Naples in terms of one or two signal artworks, such

as Castel Nuovo, framed in terms of artists and artworks from northern Europe ('Artists on the Move'), even in the vast new surveys of Italian Renaissance art (Campbell & Cole, 2012, pp.264, 185; see also Cole, 2016). It fares better in Italian baroque surveys. (see Del Pesco, 1998, pp.223–48).

[5] Paula Findlen points out that Florence has functioned as a historical laboratory for early modern Italy as a whole, partly because of the ready accessibility and richness of Florentine archives, and partly because of the centrality of the 'Renaissance' in Anglo-American accounts of modernity (2003, pp.13–28). The establishment of national identity in nineteenth-century Italy was undertaken through a history of the medieval city states and the renaissance and Florence of the Medici was evoked as a powerful political ideal. Today the lavish institutional support for research in Florence, Rome and Venice – from national academies, including the American Academy in Rome, to Harvard's Center for Studies of the Italian Renaissance at Villa I Tatti in Florence to The Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice – has no counterpart in southern Italy.

[6] The social, political, cultural and economic marginalisation of Naples both informs and is reinforced by its treatment by historians and art historians. Art historians have been particularly slow to recognise their own prejudices in this regard.

[7] The literature is too vast to characterise here, but for the two extremes, see Veca (1981) and Silver (2006).

[8] The south became an object of special study soon after Giuseppe Garibaldi, having conquered the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, surrendered it to Victor Emmanuel II in 1860. Leading figures in the Liberal movement, who had guided the process of unification elsewhere in the peninsula, strove to understand the territories unexpectedly acquired by the new kingdom. This set the foundations for an intellectual tradition that became known as *meridionalismo* (Gramsci, 2007, pp.12–37; Morris, 1997, pp.1–2).

[9] Thus, in 2016 a rich and wonderful exhibition of Neapolitan baroque art held at the Art Gallery in Wiesbaden, Germany, was accompanied by a conference conceived exclusively in terms of individual artists and style: 'Naples as Laboratory – Stylistic Currents, Artistic Rivalry and Aesthetic Effect in Neapolitan Baroque Painting'.

[10] Baroque was seen as a 'taste' that follows after and replaces 'local tradition', at once transcendent and localised. Thus, Silvia Savarese describes Francesco Grimaldi as 'an artist who, while remaining tied to a traditional vocabulary, marked in Naples a change of taste as the hinge between local tradition and early baroque architecture' (1992, p.120). For Neapolitan art in terms of style, see Abbate (2002, pp.123–60).

[11] 'Strano paese è questo! Quale impasto bizzarro di bellissimo e di orrendo, di eccellente e di pessimo, di gradevole e di nauseante!' For such discussions of baroque, see Hills (2013).

[12] 'Nessun paese al mondo, io creo, conserva al pari di Napoli cosí scarsa e non pregevole quantità di tracce monumentali dlle dinastie che vi si sono succedute nel dominio. [...] Dei Bisantini e dei Normanni qualche rara

ed informe traccia fuor che nei dintorni; degli Svebi e degli Angioini qualche chiesa e le loro solide regge, meglio paragonabili a robusti fortilizi che a principesche dimore; degli Spagnoli molte chiese goffissime e pochi obelischi oscenamente barocchi'. (White, 1877).

[13] 'La beauté tres médiocre de la ville [...] Cette Naples si vantée n'a guere de beau que ce qui n'est pas elle [....] l'architecture de ses palais et de ses églises est en général du plus mauvais style'.

[14] 'Dopo le ragioni sociali di tanta povertà architettonica, altra piú potente ed efficace la troverai passeggiando in un giorno sereno lungo le magiche rive del Golfo, quando ti sentirai forzato ad esclamare con l'animo commosso: "E a che scopo lottare coi nostri piccoli cervelli mortali contro la piú bella opera della natura?" Immaginiati la cupola di Brunellesco all'ombra del Vesuvio, e pensa.'

[15] This is not to think in terms of 'propaganda', which relies on a representational model of art's relationship to power and identifies issues of power only in literal and direct representation of such issues (Hills, 2006).

[16] The papacy had a claim to homage from the king of Naples by virtue of the fact that the kingdom had been established in 1130 as a papal fief, but this did not challenge the king's title.

[17] In turn, interpretations of the 'Neapolitan Enlightenment' often depend on a framing viewed from the perspective of the 1799 revolution and its failure. This interpretation, spearheaded by the Italian historian Franco Venturi (1962) established a persistent historiographical paradigm.

[18] My thanks to Fabrizio Ballabio for this reference.

[19] Risorgimento leaders looked to the Roman Republic and the renaissance for its heroes and to Spanish tyrants, soldiers and prostitutes for its villains. Croce's work was informed by a nationalism which strove to create a strong Italian image. Croce later noted in qualification that Italians were willing participants in the cultural decadence of the 'baroque era' under Spanish domination (Pallotta, 1992; Brancaforte, 1970).

[20] Subsequent scholars have sought to place the 'Black Legend' stereotype of the Spanish as cruel, intolerant, and fanatical in its historical context (Marino, 2011; Dandelet, 2001; Musi, 2011).

[21] For the Neapolitan viceroyalty, see Rovito (2003).

[22] Admission of new families to the Seggi was barred after 1553, apart from cases of 'resumption of status' (Visceglia, pp.822–8).

[23] Baroque Naples is frequently described in terms of its almost unparalleled population growth, as if drawing attention to the size of its population will necessarily prompt scholars to counter traditional neglect.

[24] 'Gli argenti danno in eccessi, e nella quantità, e nel peso, e nei lavori, e particolarmente quelli, che servono per adornare ne' giorni festivi il maggiore Altare'.

[25] The distinction between 'materiality' which offers potential and 'matter' or 'materials' treated as inert and acted upon by 'technique' is important here. For this, see Lloyd Thomas (2007); Hills (2016, pp.65–111, 123–73).

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FROM *PIAZZA MERCATO* TO *PONTE RICCIARDO*, AND ON TO *VIA TOLEDO:* GIOVAN BATTISTA DELLA PORTA'S TRANSLATIONS OF HANDS AND FEET OF EXECUTED CRIMINALS ACROSS EARLY MODERN NAPLES.

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Abstract

In undertaking the research for his treatise on palmistry, the Chirophysiognomia *(written perhaps between 1599 and 1608), Neapolitan polymath Giovan Battista Della Porta (1535–1617) collected plaster casts and drawings of the hands and feet of executed criminals whose corpses were displayed as signs of terror to foreigners. These corpses were deliberately left to rot at the gallows of the Ponte Riccardo, in an eerie place just off the city limits of Naples. This article contextualises Della Porta's collecting activities as part of a set of contemporary discourses on place in Naples. It uses two prototypical contemporary maps of Naples by Lafréri and Du Perac (1566) and Baratta (1629), to trace the itineraries of convicts (and their remains) through specific places. In particular, this article discusses the heterotopia of the gallows out of town – its location and architectonic structure, and the fact that this place was not represented on contemporary maps. Indeed, the gallows at this bridge had a long-lasting impact on the imagination of Neapolitans and foreigners (as can be reconstructed not only from Della Porta, but also from two novellas written by Masuccio Salernitano (1471) and Maria de Zayas (1637)). Moreover, this article argues that Della Porta's method of translating (infamous) corpses into text is related to the ways in which the city of Naples was translated into a text in contemporary guides to the city, for instance by Pietro di Stefano (1560).*

Biographical note

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FROM *PIAZZA MERCATO* TO *PONTE RICCIARDO*, AND ON TO *VIA TOLEDO*: GIOVAN BATTISTA DELLA PORTA'S TRANSLATIONS OF HANDS AND FEET OF EXECUTED CRIMINALS ACROSS EARLY MODERN NAPLES.

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> They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.
>
> Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. iii. 891–896

Introduction

During his research for his treatise on palmistry – the *Chirophysiognomia* (written perhaps between 1599 and 1608, and published posthumously in an Italian translation in 1677) – polymath Giovan Batista Della Porta (1535–1617) claimed to have collected the plaster casts and drawings of the hands and feet of executed criminals and prisoners, as well as of others who had died an untimely death.[1] I use the general term physiognomics to cover the arts suggested by this text, because, at least for Della Porta, the word referred not merely to the faces of human beings, but also to their other body parts.[2] Della Porta maintained that his (empiricist) approach allowed him to decipher and predict the victims' tragic fates scientifically. This story, characteristic of the spectacular *scienza* that Della Porta pursued in his lifetime, is more than yet another eerie story from a particular place – early modern Naples. The Spanish authorities were often unable to control the provinces and sometimes even the capital of the *Viceregno*, and Naples' crime rate was probably higher than that of most other Italian cities. Officials of the *Regno* remarked bandits' tendency of fleeing to the capital for greater security. In 1550, Viceroy Toledo admitted to having executed 18,000

criminals (Rovito, 2003, pp.386–7). In the light of the ongoing unsuccessful governmental struggle against well-organised gangs in the entire *Regno*, it becomes plausible that Della Porta promoted his art as a suitable tool for the identification of devious characters.[3] Physiognomonics links the fates of individuals to their somatic temperaments and the consistency of their bodily fluids, which are in their turn dependent on a specific geographical place.[4] I argue here that Della Porta identified these individual inclinations of the human character with definite locations in Naples that simultaneously served important roles in the 'translation' of the criminal body into a corpse. To this end, I shall follow the itineraries of the human bodies (and their remains) in their various translations through specific places in- and outside town – as they were paraded through the streets of Naples to the gallows (reminiscent of religious processions): their execution in *Piazza Mercato*; the corpses' transfer to the gallows beyond city limits, the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo*, where the bodies were left to rot away publicly as tokens of terror; their collective way back to town, to be finally buried at the *Incurabili*; and the various itineraries that led the images of their hands and feet to Della Porta's *palazzo* on the Largo della Carità in Via Toledo, where another kind of translation of their bodies into a set of abstract signs – that is, into texts – was performed. In discussing these issues, I focus on the heterotopia of the gallows out of town – its location and architectonic structure, and the fact that this place was not represented on contemporary maps, even though it seems to have had a long-lasting impact on the imagination of Neapolitans and foreigners (as can be reconstructed not only from Della Porta, but also from two novellas written by Masuccio Salernitano ([1471] 1990, 296–301, Novella 19) and Maria de Zayas ([1637] 2000, pp.345–71, *La fuerza del amor*)). Moreover, I relate Della Porta's eerie collecting to practices of contemporary Neapolitan necromancers and show that his method of translating (infamous) corpses into text can be related not only to contemporary guides to Naples but also to drawing practices in renaissance academies. These books were dedicated to conceiving the social structure of Naples as a series of interrelated places that could transform the bodies and lives of eminent people into a text.

Della Porta's account

> I began to investigate the dispositions of the hands and the feet of many men of diverse nature and divergent temperament, and particularly those to whom important things had happened. [...] And in order to assist me in

having [access] to a greater number of the men I have indicated above I made an agreement with the Neapolitan hangman, who then was a certain Antonello Cocozza, that when he removed the bodies of the executed [men] from the gallows [in *Piazza Mercato*] and took them to the *Ponte Ricciardo* (this is a place a thousand feet from the city of Naples, where these miserable people are appended in order to induce terror in wicked people who may pass there, until they are rotting and consumed by rain and wind) – so [this man] indicates the time of the transport [of the bodies of the executed criminals]. [And I went to that place], investigated the dispositions of the hands and feet and I drew those with a pen on paper,[5] or I cast their molds with gypsum and filled the molds with wax, so that I had the lineaments for study at night, when I collected/compared/discussed them with others (*cum aliis conferrem*). And after having matched the signs against each other (*collatis signis*) I was [able to] extract the truth by doing always the same [i.e. by repeating this method] until I had singled out all the signs which threateningly indicate that someone is really [destined] to be hanged and I had satisfactory assurance about this. Furthermore, and in order to find out [who is destined to] die a cruel death or to be murdered, I agreed with the deacons of the Cathedral of Naples (whose duty it is to bury those who have been murdered and died without confession in the Church of S. Restituta Vergine) that they would notify me when when one of those people in question were to be buried, so that I, by going to this chapel, and having looked at the hands, feet and the foreheads and having described the number and condition of the wounds, I could in similar ways discuss them at home, together with the others, and from where I was able to distinguish the stronger signs from the weaker ones that proved [the tragic fates of the victims]. Nor did I consider it a burden to visit all the public prisons, where always a large number of wicked thieves, parricides, highway robbers and other men of similar features? (*fattezza*) [are being held] in order to scrutinize their hands; afterwards, by contemplating the feet and hands of animals with those of the men, not without natural reasoning, and by means of the same method which I have used in [my books on Human] Physionomics.

(Della Porta, 2003, pp.5–6)[6]

Ostensibly, Della Porta is describing here a method for conducting empirical studies of the visual features of corpses that his contemporaries would, perhaps, have thought to be less 'superstitious' and more 'empirical' than that of other contemporary necromancers: instead of using body parts of executed criminals for various potions or as amulets for enchantments, Della Porta prepares drawings and plaster casts from the palms and feet of their corpses. Reminiscent of the fragments of excavated sculptures from classical antiquity, as well as of representations of the human body in contemporary anatomical atlases (Vesalio's *De humani corporis fabrica* immediately comes to mind), these artifacts provide the physiognomist with a privileged – i.e. distanced and hence purportedly 'objective' (Daston & Galison, 2007) – access to the individual criminal, victim or ailing body. For, according to Della Porta, it is not the *disgraziato's* corpse as a whole that must be examined. The various lines and shapes of individual palms and feet are sufficient for discerning these fatal biographies, which Della Porta discusses amply throughout the *Chirophysionomia*. These metonymic regions of the body – the lines on the hands and feet that are reduced ('*ridotte*' in contemporary *volgare*) to abstract forms – are then transformed into a set of signs, i.e. a text, to be employed as a prognostic and divinatory tool for predicting individual fates.

Even though Della Porta pokes fun at the simpletons who believe letters or even entire texts can be found on individuals' palms, he nevertheless concedes that certain simple elements can be read from them (those that embody traces or results of celestial or natural forces): for example, cross- or t–shaped forms, stars, circles and triangles. And these simple forms usually bear a remarkably trite meaning: a cross in a certain location denotes a jovial temperament, even occasionally promising an ecclesiastical career.[7]

Lethal itineraries
Yet crucially, Della Porta's translation of ill-fated biographies into sets of portable signs on printed pages is but the end of a long series of movements of human bodies and their remains through gritty and distinct places in Naples. As will become clear below, a distinct sense of place was operative in reducing human beings into corpses and into signs in early modern Naples. Worldly and ecclesiastical authorities collaborated in the production of these signs, with the intention of alerting either local or foreign spectators to the inexorable cogency of their justice. This message was painstakingly inculcated in rituals during which the bodies of criminals were transferred through the city – along itineraries meant to resemble the

festive processions of worldly rulers and saints who were also paraded through the streets and places of Naples.[8] In processions in honor of St. John the Baptist in the early 17th century for example, the saint was paraded somewhat as a tableau vivant. The route of the procession was from west to east of town, as the convicts in the Storace *corteo*. But crucially, St. John's beheading was represented at the beginning of the parade, the Fontana di Piazza del Porto, that is in a place very far way form the Piazza Mercato. Here the procession just did not arrive, for it only went as far east as San Giovanni del Mare (Marino, 2011, p.217).[9] In these regular, complex rituals, a distinct sense of place was not only affirmed but also manufactured with different forms of intensity, as Helen Hills has persuasively argued in a related context, the Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro in Naples (2013, pp.31, 33, 37).

Thus, what will emerge in the following is a keen sense of place and perspective for the context of artful killing. Naples becomes an orchestrated ensemble through which human beings, saints and sinners alike (and their remains) are in transit. This translation of bodies over a series of well–orchestrated thresholds is gruesomely manifested in the way a criminal body was led to its death. On their way to the gallows, convicts were paraded across town to the Piazza Mercato, meeting their death on the eastbound way. Their corpses continued in the same direction to the gallows outside town, over the Ponte Ricciardo, to rest in an undescribed and yet clearly visible, strategically liminal location that marked the city's outermost boundary. It seems that at irregular intervals, these human remains – in whatever state they were in – were eventually moved back to the city, to be buried at Santa Maria Restituta, where they were finally left to rest in peace.[10] Or perhaps not quite in peace: Della Porta's practice aimed at translating these bodies still further west, back through the referential and the system of places comprising the city of Naples, ending at his *palazzo*.

Parading saints and sinners through town: defining the perimeters of the *corteo*

In early modern Naples, these 'translations' of living human bodies into corpses began long before their spectacular executions. In various city prisons – but above all in the dreaded Vicaria (Castel Capuano) – a convict's last days and hours on death row were punctuated by visits from the *confortatori*, a confraternity of priests and laymen.[11] The white-hooded *Bianchi* comprised an influential semi-official body that mediated between the physical application

of the law, on the one hand, and the divine order represented by Church and sovereign, on the other (Romeo, 1993, p.11).[12] This function of social mediation during executions, of extreme official violence, was indeed important. Through their physical presence during the parade of the convict through town and at the execution, the *Bianchi* made a strong case for the idea that a repentant convict could attain spiritual salvation. This assertion amounted to no less than an attempt to eradicate the dishonour of the *mala morte*, the inauspicious and shameful death at the hands of the hangman, that was deeply ingrained in contemporary minds in the face of the apparent lack of compassion of spectators for the sufferings of those that were to be executed (Panico, 1985, pp.12, 50, 53). Members of the high clergy and powerful laymen in disguise, the *Bianchi* could demonstrate succor for those who – as a result of the dishonour of dying at the hands of a *boia* (hangman) – had effectively dropped out of the social order, becoming errant souls and lost bodies. Thus, the *Bianchi* helped to make the figure of saint and criminal appear identical, with executions becoming spectacular re-enactments of the *via crucis*. Cardinal Bellarmine claimed that anyone should consider himself happy to die at hands of the *boia* – if guilty, for the repentance of sins committed; if innocent, in imitation of the Saviour who pardoned those who caused his death (Panico, 1985, p.94). Very much as in Della Porta's *Chirophysiognomonia*, death at the gallows is here considered an inexorable natural law. Yet, the *Bianchi's* noble aspiration to mould the abominable spectacle of public death into an edifying example of Christian charity was often hampered by the delinquents' hardy resistance as they refused to participate in the spectacle of staging their own deaths. Accordingly, in order to quell such recalcitrant behaviour, the *Bianchi* often brutally tortured the convicts until they were willing to play the roles assigned them in the edifying drama of their own deaths (Romeo, 1993, pp.130, 145–6). The public execution of criminals, as well as the spectacle of the death of the saint, was impatiently awaited by the community – causing large rallies for both sorts of occasion. Public executions bore striking resemblance to passion plays (*sacre rappresentazioni*) during which the death of the Saviour or the death of a saint was gruesomely represented on stage. It is important to note that this kind of public self-mutilation – for instance, auto-flagellations by the faithful – was generally inflicted with the intent of commemorating the treatment of Christ as the innocent sufferer of a verdict handed down by a court Groebner (2003, p.107). All these rituals aim at the display of a spectacular death (Sallmann, 1994, pp.285,

291).[13] In fact both the criminal and the saintly body were sources of marvel, as displayed in a complex set of rituals.[14] Katherine Park writes:

> There is in fact considerable evidence for the continuing association of the criminal and the saintly body in Renaissance Italy. Both saint and criminal were exemplary figures, models of all that was to be emulated or shunned. The deeds of both were assumed to be supernaturally inspired, whether by God or the devil, and their bodies were sites of special power. As anatomists themselves demonstrated, the criminal's body, like the saint's, could differ *physically* from that of other people.
>
> (Park, 1994, p.26, author's emphasis)[15]

It was exactly on this intersection between anatomy and the abnormal saintly (or criminal) body that Della Porta's spectacular divinatory science of physiognomonics focused.

The journey from the prison to the *Piazza Mercato* (where the gallows stood) took at least two hours, along a route that usually also visited the scene of the crime. Just as the death of a person with the reputation of sanctity was an eagerly awaited spectacle in early modern Naples, so the *corteo* and execution was watched by a huge crowd, especially in the case of subversive delinquents (Panico, 1985, pp.24–7; Romeo, 1993, pp.193–5; Sallmann, 1994, pp.290, 294). The *corteo* passed through densely populated streets, with no fixed route (Panico, 1985, p.24 and the illustration at p.259).

This *corteo* could however vary with the gravity of the offence: for instance, the convicts in the murder of Storace in 1585 were paraded to their deaths for four hours along an itinerary that could perhaps be called exemplary. Along a tortuous eastbound route, they crossed the town's most populated streets, passing *S. Maria di Piedigrotta*, then *Castel Nouvo* in the north, Via Depretis, and what is today Corso Umberto, before turning into Vicolo di Mezzocanone, uphill to S. Domenico Maggiore, and then east into the Spaccanapoli (*Decumanus inferior*) to *Via della Luce*, turning into *Via dei Tribunali* (*Decumanus maior*), passing the *Castel Capuano*, the *Vicaria* and finally turning south to *Piazza Mercato*. The hands of some of the convicts were amputated in front of the church of the Augustinians, where the *Tribunale della Zecca* was situated: the remainder were amputated in front of the *Vicaria* (Panico, 1985, p.24; illustration in Marino, 2011 p.259).

Piazza Mercato

For the inhabitants of the metropolitan area of Naples, *Piazza Mercato* was certainly the place to view justice carried out. This market was a closely guarded neuralgic area – since popular riots often began here, and also since on Mondays and Fridays the place was populated by foreigners (Summonte, 1675, p.246; Lalande, 1787, p.400). *Piazza Mercato* was 'on the map' in every sense of the trope; the place is invariably represented in the legends of early modern maps among other religious and secular sites of the town. Moreover, 16th- and 17th-century maps of Naples, both of the Lafréri/Du Perac and the Baratta type (on which see below), also depict the gallows at the Piazza's centre (Panico, 1985, p.21). And these events were not uncommon: in the period between 1556 and 1599, about 32 executions were held there annually. These deaths were staged as spectacular events, taking place specifically on Fridays at 2 pm – much to the dismay of local and foreign vendors, since business was liveliest at that time (Panico, 1985, p.14).

Beneath the gallows in *Piazza Mercato*, the convicts were supposed to recite a *credo* in resounding voices, as well as apologise for the inconvenience they had caused the community. Thus, the executions were part of a ritual intended to demonstrate the convict's reconciliation with worldly and ecclesiastic powers. The spectacle of his or her death was meant as a symbolic act that reaffirmed the unity of the community and demonstrated its capacity for divine and secular justice (Panico, 1985, pp.93–9). Depending on the severity of their offences, delinquents' bodies were also sometimes quartered, or their limbs amputated and publicly displayed in locations bearing some connection to the offence.

The carefully orchestrated spectacle surrounding an execution thus did not end with the convict's physical death in a specific place at a specific day and an inauspicious hour: namely the time when Christ was believed to have died on the cross. The corpses were displayed as prominently as possible in their various states of decay, yet access to them had to be prevented. To that end, the bodies were taken to the place described by Della Porta – the other gallows, located beyond the eastern city limits immediately past *Ponte Ricciardo*, along the coastal *Via Regia* to Portici.

Ponte Ricciardo/della Maddalena

It is significant that 16th- and 17th-century maps of Naples never show the gallows outside town beyond the *Ponte Ricciardo* (or *Ponte della Maddalena*, as it was also called). Yet the structure of the bridge itself is clearly visible on maps of both the Lafréri/Du Perac

FIDELISSIMAE VRBIS NEAPOLITANAE CVM OMNIBVS VIIS ACCVRATA ET NOVA
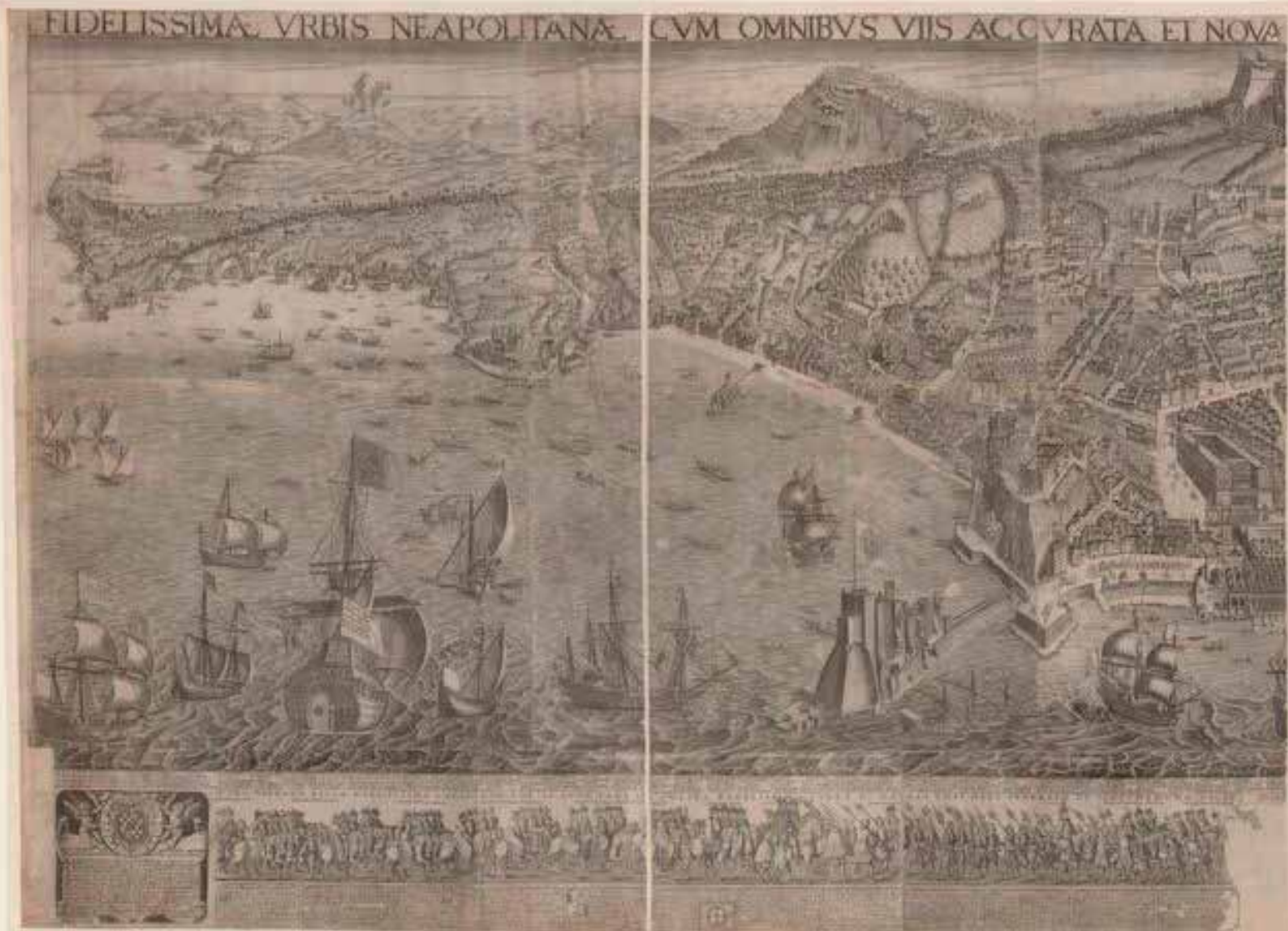
and the Baratta type, where in both cases the *Ponte Ricciardo* is found represented on the easternmost limit.[16] This particular bridge is thus a liminal place in a double sense, not only because its structure spans the two sides of a waterway, the river Sebeto,[17] but also because it is represented as the easternmost limit of the city of Naples. Vladimiro Valerio (2013), a student of these maps, has shown that the cartographic representation of Naples was, in fact, a series of highly conscious and politically negotiated decisions on the part of mapmakers. In spite of the fact that that these mapmakers were actually capable of making very accurate projections, they accorded significantly more space to the *palazzi* in the center of town than to more marginal roads and lowly buildings.[18] Valerio explains that the center of town is 'represented with far greater emphasis than would be produced by applying the rules of curvilinear perspective. Thus the demands of political representation and visibility forcefully shaped the construction of the urban reality drawn by Baratta; power centers are exalted by exaggerating their

perspective and as a result, their actual weight within the urban landscape' (pp.77–8).

The structure of *Ponte Ricciardo* was organised in a series of physical, visual and symbolic thresholds that marked the outermost city limits: it was meant to enclose and at the same time disclose the magnificence of Naples. The area of the *Ponte Ricciardo* was also of some strategic importance: it spanned the Sebeto estuary and was the last bridge before the town walls.[19] General Lautrec had laid siege to the bridge in 1528,[20] where heavy trench fighting took place, in the course of which the old construction was so badly damaged that the entire bridge had to be rebuilt in 1555 by Viceroy Don Fernandino de Mendoza, with funding provided by the provinces (Bacco, [1616] 1991, p.30). It seems its name was at this point changed to *Ponte della Maddalena* (De la Ville Sur-Yllon, 1899, p.154), but, as so often in Naples, the old names Ponte Ricciardo or Licciardo continued to be used well into the 17th century, at least in printed texts, including Della Porta's *Chirophysiognomonia*.

Figure 1.1: Alessandro Baratta, *Fidelissimae urbis neapolitane cum omnibus viis accurata et nova delineatio aedita in lucem*, 1629. (Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France). Piazza Mercato and Ponte Riccardo are located in the rightmost section of the map. Piazza Mercato is just inside the city gates, close to the waterfront. Ponte Riccardo runs along the waterfront. in the lower right corner.

The bridge's span of about 50 metres delineated, as noted, a vast liminal space: a barrier both symbolic and real, and simultaneously a space designed not only for transit but for approaching the town in a highly orchestrated way. On the 1628 Baratta map, one clearly discerns an arched bridge with eight irregular spans supporting a relatively steep and barren ramp on the left bank of the Sebeto, whereas on its opposite side, facing the city, the ramp declines more gently.[21]

The Ponte della Maddalena seems to have spanned two arms of the Sebeto, with three vaults on the right arm and five vaults on its left side. Between the two branches of the river there seems to have originally been an island. In this area, we discern a few houses built into the bridge on the side facing the sea.[22] From the most elevated point of the *ponte,* the visitor must have had a view of the town's heavy fortifications at the Porta del Mercato, the *Castelli*, the *Molo* and the *Arsenale Nuovo*. During the 16th century, this was the most frequently printed view of the city of Naples as it stretches along the coast (Valerio, 2013, p.68).[23]

A visitor's approach to town was interrupted by the customs officers on the bridge, after which the town became visible, framed by its suburbs. The bridge's significance as a showcase for Naples is shown by the fact that its construction was actually quite overblown.

* For a high resolution reproduction of the Lafréri/Du Perac Map, go to: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb406212074; for the Baratta map, go to: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53064622f/f1.item.r=alessandro%20baratta

Even during the 16th century (and apparently well before this), the river Sebeto was no more than a little torrent (Lalande, 1787, p.404). Judging from the Baratta maps, the river's left arm seems to have already entirely dried out – that is, where the bridge reached its most elevated point. Quite beyond its actual function, the bridge's elevation, actually posed a gratuitous impediment for the pedestrian as well as for the cart; it was intended as a spectacular and highly visible threshold, marking the easternmost limit of Naples.

Crossing the Ponte Ricciardo, the visitor would thus discover an attractive, magnificently orchestrated view of the city of Naples albeit just after passing that locus of horror, the gallows outside town where rotting bodies of executed criminals were exposed. This locality testified to the successful elimination of unwanted, disgraced human bodies from the city. The tribune of the gallows, on the side of the coastal *Via Regia* from Portici, functioned as a ghastly visual threshold between the world inside and outside town. This specific heterotopia formed an integral part of the spatial ensemble of the Ponte Ricciardo, precisely as a threshold.[24] The tribune of the gallows formed a stark contrast with the utopian view of the magnificent city of Naples greeting the visitor passing on to the *Ponte Ricciardo.*

Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo

The gallows at the Ponte were *not* included on contemporary maps; the 16th- and 17th-century maps I have seen invariably end with the Ponte Ricciardo at their easternmost margin. It is also very difficult to find even verbal descriptions of the gallows outside town. Early guides to Naples do mention the place, but neglect to describe its architectonic features; strangely, it is also not discussed in recent scholarly literature on the topic (Panico, for example, does not mention it).[25]

My only scholarly source, Ludovico de la Ville-sur Yillon (1899, p.155), probably erroneously, maintains that the gallows at the *Ponte* existed only until the middle of the 16th century. De la Ville-sur Yillon describes the gallows as a sombre stone monument, with a massive door, behind which stairs led to a circular platform, with stone pilasters bearing rings atop them. Hence one may hypothesise that the corpses were prominently displayed *visually* to passersby, yet they could neither be touched nor robbed – either by relatives who would seek to bury them or necromancers seeking certain body parts as *materia magica*. De la Ville-sur Yillon's description of the structure of the gallows would explain why Della Porta needed the assent of Cucuzza, the *hangman*, for his field trips.

The gallows at the *Ponte Ricciardo* thus were a heterotopia that showcased unwanted human material. The site was intended, as Della Porta says, as a first and terrifying view for the *forastieri* on their way to town. In all probability, these 'foreigners' came mostly from the *ville vesuviane*, since both the roads from Portici, Torre del Greco and Torre Annunziata along the coast as well as the road leading down to the sea from Sant' Anastasia (located to the northwest of Vesuvius) proceeded past the gallows. These people probably came to town mostly to sell and buy goods in the *Piazza Mercato*. They were allowed to do so on Mondays and Fridays, so they were doing business in town at the time of the spectacle of the Friday executions.[26] Upon their return home, past the Ponte Ricciardo, these *forastieri*, would then – once again – see the corpses, and thus be reminded of the spectacle of the deaths a few hours ago, in town in the Piazza Mercato. Hence they were exposed to one more drastic visual *memento* of the royal powers of the law extending as far as this location. (The *forastieri*, much to their amazement, might also have the occasion to observe a gentleman standing on the tribune, drawing or making plaster casts of the corpses' hands and feet.)

In various states of putrefaction, the corpses were symbolically participating in and charged with the sovereign power that carried the prerogative to seal their tragic fates. These bodies were not merely abstract signifiers. Rather, their materiality was displayed in a distinct liminal space, a space created to exhibit unburied human remains: errant matter out of its proper place. If there was no rest for these wicked criminals, this was also characteristic for the saintly corpse: at least to some extent in Naples, ways of treating criminal and saintly corporal remains overlapped. In fact, the liminal places they occupied between life and death were especially extensive, both for saints and criminals. Not only were holy men and women, like convicts, believed to die in pre-announced deaths, but parts of their bodies then became valuable talismans, *materia magica*. Belief in their foreordained death seems to have been the driving force behind the peculiar practice of collecting their remains, a practice that naturally corresponded to the official cult of relics. The faithful sought to keep hairs, fingernails, beards or teeth of the deceased santi (Sallmann, 1986, p.150; 1994, pp.301–3).[27] Likewise, the bodies of executed criminals were believed to contain magical properties (Park, 1994, p.26).[28] Not only were a dead man's hand or the skulls of executed criminals believed to be powerful necromantic tools, the belief that a victim's lethal wounds would begin bleeding again once his assassin passed by the corpse served to bolster the most

sophisticated contemporary Neo-Platonic theories of natural magic (cf. Ficino ([1484] 1956, p.250; Della Porta (1658, pp.228–9).[29] Of course, this set of ideas received an important confirmation through the afterlife of the most eminent patron saint of Naples, San Gennaro, in the regularly performed miracle of the liquefaction of his blood. All this points to a commonly shared belief that some virtù continued to live in the human body even after the individual's death. [30]

Like a considerable number of executed criminals, *sante* (especially female divines) were sometimes officially dissected – in this particular case, probably to ascertain their prodigious physical qualities. In early modern Naples, it was believed that the body of a deceased *santa* would show no signs of decay and/ or waft forth a fragrant smell for many days.[31] Thus, the saintly body had to be preserved – ostensibly, it was preserving itself on its own steam! – and it was widely believed that touching the corpse had salutary effects for the living. But the criminal body had to rot away visibly, viewed by as many people as possible. In manifold ways, the liminal place of the gallows affirmed the imperative that human remains must suffer on display beyond their deaths, thus implying that they were still somehow alive. The fact that the corpses occasionally moved in the coastal breeze must have added to this impression with the movement of the passersby themselves reinforcing this kinetic impression of the dead bodies.

Masuccio Salernitano

These contingencies – popular fear and belief that the *appicati* at the *Ponte Ricciardo* could become alive again or simply still be alive – are vividly reflected in Novella 19 of Masuccio Salernitano's *Novellino*, written between 1450 and 1470. With direct reference to the gallows at the Ponte Ricciardo, Masuccio recounts a story of a simpleton – a poor tailor with a sack (*sacco*) of merchandise from Amalfi – on his way to the market in Naples (Masuccio, [1471] 1990). In the middle of the night, the tailor has to pass the gallows. He greatly fears encountering the corpses, yet as he walks by and all remains silent, he starts shouting at them: 'Come with me to Naples!' Unfortunately for the tailor, another man, also on his way to town and unaware of his whereabouts, has fallen asleep in what must have been the doorway blocking the stairs leading up to the gallows' tribune (*Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo*), in the erroneous belief that he had settled down at the doorstep of a closed inn.[32] That second man is woken up by the tailor's shouting, and believes that a friend of his, whom he had left behind, finally caught up with him and is calling him now. Consequently, this second man

answers the tailor and starts running after him. The latter escapes, screaming, towards the town, leaving the sack behind, of which the second man takes possession. The tailor continues to run across the *Ponte Ricciardo* towards the customs officers who are on duty there. In the nearby inns, which seem to be still open long after midnight, his story that the corpses have come after him is immediately believed, the doors are shut, and the rumour that the corpses are alive spreads quickly.[33] Meanwhile, the second man – now together with his friend – returns home with his booty.

Masuccio's *novella* demonstrates the significance of the *appicati's* location and their function in the dramaturgy of entering the town via *Ponte Ricciardo*. Masuccio implies that a description of the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo* is unnecessary, perhaps because everybody knew what it looked like. Here, visibility and daylight are also crucial for appreciating the carefully orchestrated entry into town previously described: the whole *imbroglio* arises for this credulous tailor because it is pitch dark, and the visual aspects marking the itinerary past the gallows and over the bridge are thus not perceptible. Masuccio tells the story from the perspective of a gallant metropolitan inhabitant of Naples, for whom fear of the *appicati* obviously indicated an unrefined, superstitious credulity characteristic of the *forastieri* and of the lowly inhabitants of the *sobborghi* (suburbs) of Naples – whose habits of mind he represents most condescendingly.[34] Della Porta's account betrays a similarly nonchalant attitude towards those human corpses whose effigies he used as material for his studies and as stage props in his nightly shows with friends. Masuccio's *novella* and Della Porta's account, written at least a century later, both testify to the durability of experiences of that infamous place on the road to the city.

Maria de Zayas

Another literary testimony to the Ponte Ricciardo gallows can be found in one of the *Novellas ejemplares* by Maria de Zayas, *La fuerza del amor (The Force of Love),* published in 1637.[35] Here, Laura, a wealthy Neapolitan noblewoman of the Carafa family, seeks to win back Don Diego, her estranged and cruel husband. To this aim, Laura hires a witch who orders her to procure the hair from the head and beard of a hanged man, as well as his teeth (Zayas, [1637] 2000, p.362, 'barbas, cabellos y dientes de un ahorcado'). This devious witch tells Laura that in order for this charm to work, it is essential that she herself rob a corpse of these items. At dusk, on one of the darkest nights of winter, the desperate Laura, summoning all

her courage, finally sets out alone from her *palazzo* in Naples to the gallows (*humilladero*). With her little lantern she arrives at the place – correctly located by Zayas (although strangely, there is no mention of the Ponte Ricciardo[36]) a mile from town on the road that leads up to the *Santuario della Madonna dell'Arco*, past Cercola and Barra.[37] Amazingly, Laura has no difficulty in passing though the door that leads to the tribune; yet she fails in her mission, trying in vain for three hours to rob the corpses – six recently executed highway-men (*salteadores*) whose bodies are dangling on the gallows. Laura's access to the *materia magica* is obstructed by the specific dimensions of the gallows: the tribune is surrounded by a deep pit (*fosa*) about 28 feet deep (*quatro estados*), designed for the rotten bodies to eventually fall into, thereby serving as their grave. Hence, Laura can only approach the corpses by tiptoeing on a slender pedestal under the dangling bodies, half an ell in width (*media vara*); since bodies are appended at the top of the tribune on hooks at a height of about 10 feet (*estado y media*), she is too short to reach their faces. But Laura has to touch the corpses: she has to cling to the bodies in order not to fall into the pit.[38] The specific dimension of the *humilladero* thus becomes a decisive obstacle for Laura. Her struggle with the dead bodies forms the dramatic climax of the *novella,* since Laura's transgression consists not only in entering that forbidden place (even though it is most unlikely she would actually find its door unlocked), but in actually touching the ill-fated corpses. The description of the tribune's architecture, whether genuine or not, nevertheless locates it correctly, and its ensemble of elements reflects the heterotopic quality of the *humiliadero*.

Zayas' *novella* is highly critical of witchcraft, holding these practices as fraudulent and superstitious, and connecting them to the cultural and social context of Spanish Naples: Zayas explains that because Naples lacks a proper (Spanish) inquisition, virtually everybody – even confessors and the Vice-King himself – are in the habit of employing the services of witches.[39] This account testifies to the urgency with which these practices and ideas were negotiated (in Stephen Greenblatt's sense of the term) not only on a local level, but in the entire Spanish Empire.[40] The supernatural is not entirely missing from Zayas' *novella*, nor is witchcraft portrayed as mere harmless superstition: Laura's brother, Don Carlos, is woken up by a telepathic nightmare revealing that his beloved sister is in great danger, and he rushes to her help; yet the horse he mounts at Pietra Bianca heading for Naples halts at the *humiliadero*, and will not move on.[41] Glimpsing the flickering light of a lantern, Don Carlos

immediately realises at which place he has arrived, and he instantly suspects that a witch there is blocking his way.[42] Standing in front of the door of the building with his sword drawn, he eventually makes Laura come out of the *humilladero* and thus rescues her.

Zayas's *novella,* while of course a fictional text, is nevertheless accurately situated in an actual place, and most of the important components comprising the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo* are present: corpses with their significance as *materia magica*, (Italian) witchcraft, deception, the nocturnal setting together with the high daytime visibility of the *appicati* from the street (otherwise, Don Diego could not have seen the light of Laura's flickering lantern).

If we place Zayas' novella in the perspective of Della Porta's account – copying the hands and feet of the corpses with the hangman's consent (or connivance) in providing access to the gallows by unlocking the door – we immediately realise the crucial importance of the location's specific architectonic structure for the *novella*. In all probability, the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo's* structure is incorrectly described, but it still constitutes an indispensable element for *La fuerza del amor's* own structure of dramatic events. Like Della Porta, Laura trespasses the threshold; like him, she does not merely view but also touches the corpses. Had she been only collecting the hands or feet of the *appicati*, as Della Porta was, she would certainly have succeeded: she must have come into direct physical contact with the corpses, because she had to cling to them in order not to fall into the pit. It is exactly this physical contact that creates a problem for Laura: in contrast to Della Porta, the price for transgressing the threshold of the gallows and having touched these corpses is high. In accordance with an inexorable patriarchal logic that victimises women, Laura seems to perceive her traumatic experience as irreversible stigmatisation. Havening degraded herself by trespassing through the door to this heterotopia at night without company or guard, having in fact touched these abject male corpses – and not merely briefly but for hours (her clinging to them is not just touching, but a form of embrace, like necrophilia) – has apparently besmirched Laura, rendering her unworthy of her husband's company: she subsequently decides to enter a nunnery. This in spite of the fact that Don Diego is madly in love with her again, desiring her to return to their common household (Zayas, 2000, pp.368–9). Don Carlos did not enter the *humiliadero* himself: unlike his sister, this loving brother did not commit the transgression of (tres-) passing the threshold, and had no physical contact with the corpses.

Della Porta's account conveys a very different mode

of dealing with the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo*: since he made appointments with the *boia*, who provided for his access to the *appicati* in bright daylight, Della Porta felt at liberty to touch and manipulate the corpses without fear of social ostracism. His intrepid empirical interest in these abject bodies is blithely – even preposterously – nonchalant: at once cartographic, prognostic and scientific. At least, this is the image Della Porta was seeking to present of his activities. Of course, he did not take the *real* body parts back home. He first translated them into images – drawings and plaster casts, effigies which he subsequently transferred back to town, to his *palazzo* in *Via Toledo*. Della Porta was anxious to maintain that he did *not* take the abject matter out of its abject place; even direct contact to the corpses' hands and feet during the process of drawing them or of taking plaster casts was kept to a minimum. But for Della Porta's ominous 'friends' back at his home, as well for his intended readership, his claim that these images came from 'that place' was crucial.

Santa Maria Restituta

Della Porta translated these bodies back to town in effigy; so did the *Compania dei Bianchi*, who eventually buried the real remains *en masse* at Santa Maria Restituta (Summonte, 1675, I, p.178). Lalande mentions one procession involving a large bier, covered with a white pall, on All Soul's Day (1787, V, p.372). Santa Maria Restituta, which belonged to the area of the sanctuary of the Duomo, would merit a separate investigation; here, I would like to remind the reader only in passing that at *Santa Maria Resituta*, some of Della Porta's other field trips began. I take this as an indication of the extent to which these bodies' itineraries and their remains were linked to a keen sense of place evocative of their fates. It was the disposal of the corpses in these places as much as the fact that they had died untimely deaths that transformed them into objects worthy of study.

Via Toledo, Palazzo Della Porta

In Della Porta's *palazzo,* his images of convicts' hands and feet were discussed attentively by a group of his friends, and were eventually meant to find their way into printed versions of the *Chirophysiognomia*. Thus, not only acts of worldly justice and of religious piety had to be exerted on these bodies, but their destinies were also to be rendered legible: their bodies were meant to become texts. In a series of translations, these bodies were reduced (*ridotte*) first into drawings and finally into scripture. As abstract signifiers of a cosmic fate, their traces were meant to become legible components of an all-encompassing *macchina mondiale*, the fabric

of an ordered cosmos where the *Città Partenopea* occupied a distinct place that also bred certain character types, certain personalities.[43]

The act of reducing or translating fragmented corpses into texts, in Porta's *palazzo*, became a theatrical event in its own right, with its special nocturnal setting and macabre subject. In dim candlelight, these gypsum and wax representations of criminals' fragmented bodies certainly must have made for a spectacular and macabre shadow theatre. These imprints were once more displayed and handed about, just as the *disgraziati* had been histrionically paraded through town prior to their execution; and this became a show of body parts, of metonymic signifiers referring to entire bodies and to their astrologically determined fates. This histrionic dimension of Della Porta's practice not only constitutes an intrinsic element in his art of physiognomonics, it also forms the backdrop for his entire textual production (Kodera 2012; 2014). In this context, it is also interesting to note that in classical antiquity, literary description of physiognomical features was linked to the description of certain types of comic actors, such as in Theophrastus' *Characteres* (a text of which Della Porta, as the author of at least seventeen plays, was certainly aware). *Character* is a Greek word denoting the image of a person as imprinted on coins; with this in mind, it is perhaps no far-fetched coincidence that Della Porta's showcasing the images of the delinquents' severed arms had a gruesome parallel in the public life of Naples: arms amputated from money counterfeiters were displayed in a cage outside the *Zecca*, the royal mint in the centre of town, opposite the Church of *Sant'Agostino* (Panico, 1985, pp.42–3, 68–70).[44] Similarly, of course, the hands of saints with their miraculous powers were displayed in churches (Toussaint, 2010).

In Della Porta's mindset, the *characters* – imprints of the drawings and waxen images of hands and feet – bear the marks of cosmic (albeit natural) forces which at least steer the individual to certain habits and destinies. The accomplished physiognomist deciphers, reads and interprets these *characteres*, these signs. It is this capacity to publicly 'read' bodies and to predict their fates by these natural means that constitutes a major practical goal in Della Porta's *scienza* of physiognomy. Viewed from a technological (or, preferably, artistic) perspective, the relationship between gypsum and drawing is here analogous to the relationship of printed text to manuscript – also paralleling the relationship of theatre script to actor.

Della Porta's collection of body fragments in effigy thus delineates an itinerary from the living body via the gypsum mould, to the waxen image (although a

far cry from voodoo!) which ultimately becomes an object for nocturnal 'collationes' in conversations with his ominous 'friends'.[45] Finally, as embodied in the manuscript drawing, it is meant to reach its consummate manifestation as an image: a character in a printed book that would – once again – demonstrate its author's (Della Porta's) already prodigious ingenuity. Della Porta's eccentric visits to eerie places of ill repute in order to scrutinise cadavers of executed criminals, as well as his shadow shows, demonstrate his taste for the rampantly macabre and the spectacular.

In the context of what was probably standard practice in contemporary drawing schools, Della Porta's meetings in candlelight were less eccentric than they might appear today. Della Porta's nocturnal reading classes of the criminal body are actually reminiscent of two famous contemporary prints depicting the studio of the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli. The first version (1531) of this Academy represents a gathering of artists as they are drawing figurines. The group of seven women and men is sitting at a table in a dark room lit by a single candle placed in the centre of the table. The artists are using the resulting shadow lines in order to develop their drawings; this artistic method is also echoed by the shadows cast by other objects in the room, and statues visible in the background of the picture. A second, more complex version of this highly popular image, was published almost two decades later.[46]

Bandinelli's *Academy* prints can be taken as guides for imagining what Della Porta's meetings might have looked like and how these body fragments were translated into images and texts. This form of body translation was also practised in another type of contemporary text dealing with place: early guides to the city of Naples. Tanja Michalsky has pointed to the importance of spatial relationships and the keen sense of place in 16th- and 17th-century guides to Naples (2016, pp.121, 118–24). She argues that these books are ordered by spatial structures into which the social networks of the city are inscribed. Pietro di Stefano's *Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli* (1560) is a case in point, describing the position of churches and chapels both relative to each other and relative to their importance. Accordingly, the text is organized along fictitious itineraries through the city's urban space and its churches (Michalsky, 2016, p.121). Michalsky argues that this method of presentation can be employed towards an astonishingly exact mapping of the spatial and social relations that informed the city of Naples (p.107).[47] Di Stefano's descriptions of single monuments and their reciprocal spatial relationships are intended to accurately represent

individual biographies according to their positions in social hierarchy, patronage and lineage, which in turn construct the city's space (p.121).[48] Michalsky's perceptive analysis indirectly corroborates the above remarks on the function of place with respect to *Ponte Ricciardo* in its relationship to the town, as well as with respect to the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo*. There is another aspect of the *Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli* linking it to the *Chirophysiognomonia* – namely, the precedence text takes over the visual features of the monuments. Di Stefano meticulously transcribes Latin and Italian epitaphs, even when these inscriptions are relatively unimportant. Thus, the *Descrittione* (much to the dismay of today's art historians) comes off as a meandering list of textualised monuments, virtually neglecting the visual qualities of the artwork. When we consider Della Porta's practice of transcribing the visual features of hands and feet into text, this penchant for the word over the visual quality of a monument seems to constitute a striking parallel. I would argue that De Stefano's book exemplifies the urge not only to render legible graves, displayed in their fixed locations in the metropolitan environment, but also to explain their functions relative to the social network of Naples. De Stefano is thus translating funerary monuments, that is, metonymic individual human bodies, into a text. The *Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli* may then be used to commemorate these persons and their deeds – but never entirely independently of the places in which their graves are situated, since these places have to become known to the reader in order that the individual monuments' significance may be understood. In analogous ways, Della Porta translates the metonymic bodies of convicts into text. His chiro-physiognomonic project also entailed inscribing the abject criminal body into the body of the city – of course, not in any attempt to preserve the memory of these individual lives, but rather with the goal of eliminating anybody who would bear similar signs of doom on their hands and feet (Kodera, 2010, pp.255–61).

It is fascinating to observe how the bodies of saints and patron families of churches, with their metonymic bodies and graves, were inscribed into the referential system of places forming the ensemble of the city of Naples in a manner analogous to the metonymic bodies of convicts with their hands and feet. Or at least that was Della Porta's objective.

The affinity between these images and real bodies functions as 'metonymic' or 'synecdochic' representations of cultural practices, for instance, the use of these images to chart the human body, to predict its inexorable fate. We are here confronted

with a form of 'negotiation' between the spectacle of an execution and an emerging practice of experimental science. Porta's *scienza* of marvels and the contemporary stage are thus not related as cause and effect or as source and literary realisation: instead, they 'share a code', a set of interlocking 'tropes and similitudes that function not only as the objects but as the conditions of representation' (Greenblatt, 1988, p.86). Yet such reciprocal representations (here, the imbrication between necromancy and physiognomonics) never *simply* produce identity. Rather, these representations constitute evidence for the claim that human emotions *and* physical motions should be in a relationship *beyond* analogy, beyond *similitudo*. As Andreas Höfele has recently remarked in the context of Shakespeare's theater, this activity amounts not merely to circular reasoning: 'Rather than effacing their difference, the effect [of analogising] could be described as double vision or *synopsis*, in the literal sense of seeing together, of superimposing one image upon the other' (2011, p.15). Such double views never 'simply' re-produce the forms they encompass. In the blurring of distinctions that is concomitant to these double viewings, something *new* is produced. The 'transaction' (again in Greenblatt's terms) between various Neapolitan stages – della Porta's nightly shows at home, the scaffold in *Piazza Mercato,* at the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo* – becomes plausible because it negotiates certain contemporary juridical, ecclesiastical, medical, literary and magical practices. Della Porta's literary and experimental negotiations thus lend legally censured, illicit, 'closeted' magical arts an outlet to display these practices publicly: they become sources for marvel from the safe distance of spectatorship.

Conclusion

In Della Porta's palazzo, the *appicati* came alive again in a fashion vastly different from how Masuccio's simpleton imagined it. In a sense, Della Porta's nocturnal parties with his friends reflect the same issue from his palazzo on the other side of the Ponte Ricciardo – from the nonchalant perspective of a Neapolitan intellectual elite. Della Porta styles his nocturnal shows as spectacles during which the limbs of unruly men must be categorised in a *scienza* that would predict such devious inclinations; through that process, these human remains became the increasingly disembodied object of a scientific *theatrum*. In this best of all possible worlds, his art of physiognomonics, based on empirical evidence gathered at the *Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo*, would have been employed as the most rewarding aspect of the greater contemporary project of mapping the human body, the city, and the natural

world in general: it would allow the speedy detection of the socially harmful individual, whose deviousness was already inscribed into his or her body. Della Porta's activities are an attempt to make legible a definite and hitherto unenvisaged deep examination, as it were, of aspects of Naples' social network; yet his endeavors were thwarted by the religious and political authorities. Despite his countless efforts, Della Porta could not get the *Chirophysiognomonia* past the censors (as Oreste Trabucco has meticulously documented in his introduction to Della Porta, 2003). Abject bodies had to be left to oblivion, not to posterity, just as the place where they were rotting away had to be put off limits and definitively off the map, although it was very much present in the minds of citizens and *forastieri* in baroque Naples.

Notes

[1] See Della Porta (2003, pp.xxi and xlvii–lvi) for a detailed account of the author's unsuccessful efforts to get several versions of the Latin manuscript through the ecclesiastical censorship. For a general account of Della Porta's long and troubled relationship with the Inquisition, see Valente (1997).

[2] Palmistry was a sub-branch of physiognomics, as already becomes apparent in the title of the work (*De ea naturalis physiognomoniae parte quae ad manuum lineas spectat*). On that text, see Clubb (1964, p. 40) and Poma (2010).

[3] Caputo (1982, p.76) suggests that the *De humana pysiognomia* was first published 1586, one year after the execution of Gian Vincenzo Storace; on which, see Vilari (1967).

[4] For a general introduction to the art of physiognomy in early modern European culture see Porter (2005); for a discussion of physiognomonics according to Della Porta, see MacDonald (2005) and Kodera (2010, pp.251–74).

[5] The Italian version adds: 'which were designed for this purpose' (Della Porta, 2003, p.91). Was this supposed to mean that Della Porta used pre-printed outlines of hands? His book gives that impression – the standardised hand onto which lines are added, rather than a whole hand being 'portraited'.

[6] Unless otherwise indicated, translations are the author's. '... multorum hominum diversae naturae variique temperamenti, et illorum praesertim, quibus notabiles casus evenere, manuum pedumque dispositiones observare coepi … Ut ergo maior supradictum hominum copia suppeditaret, cum neapolitano carnifice pacti sumus, qui tunc Antonellus Cucuzza vocabatur, ut, cum in foro boario suspensos a furcis deponeret et ad Riccardum Pontem deferret – locus est a Neapoli mille passus longe distans, quo miselli pendent ad impiorum illac transeuntium terrorem, usque dum marcescentes contabescant–, mihi deportationis horam significaret meque ad eum locum conferens, manuum et pedum dispositiones rimabar easque stylo papyro designabam, aut cera et gypso intertexta lineamenta

imprimebam, ut noctu, cum domi essem, cum aliis conferrem et collatis signis veritatem investigarem, eandem semper operam navando, donec signa omnia, quae certius suspendia minarentur, excernerem et mihimet ipsi satisfacerem. Mox ut atroci clade et vulneribus interituros cognoscerem, cum Cathedralis Ecclesiae diaconis convenimus – quorum munus erat in sacello Sanctae Restitutae Verginis dicato interfectos sine suorum peccatorum expiatione mortuos sepulturae demandare –, ut me eorum morte domi certiorem redderent, ut ad sacellum illud me conferrem, quorum ititem manuum et pedum constitutionibus inspectis vulnerumque locis, numero et qualitate delineatis, eas domi cum aliis conferrem, ex quorum consultu, quae validiores, quae vero debiliores ad demonstrandum fuissent, cognoscerem. Nec minus laboriosa mihi fuit cura publicas fori carceres perlustrare, ubi semper ingens facinorosum turba concluditur, latronum, parricidarum, grassatorum viarum et aliorum eiusmodi farinae hominum, ut eorum manus visere liceret. Deinde animalium per pedes manusque contemplando, earum figuras com humanis contulimus non sine naturalibus rationis eademque methodo, qua in physiognomonia usi sumus.'

7 Della Porta (2003, p.66) writes: 'Cum saepissimae in manuum apicibus aliisve manum locis notas et lineamenta quaedam intrusa reperies, stellas vel cruces vel alios characteres imitantes, non solum coelestium virtutum influxibus impressas, sed quae etiam naturalium causarum concursu contingunt, operaepretium nobis videtur, quid foelicis eventus vel infortunii portendant, accuratius expendere. Crucis character, si Iovis tuberculi sedem occupat absque aliarum notarum consortio, et clara et nitida conspiciatur, Iovias omnis generis dignitates ostendit, etiam fortasse in ecclesiasticis officiis promotiones.' On this topic in general, see Blumenberg (1986, esp. pp.58–85).

8 For a detailed description and discussion of the processions in honor of for St. John the Baptist in the early 17th century, see Marino (2011, pp.211–20).

9 For a summary of the different itineraries for the different processions through Naples, see Marino (2011, pp.110–11).

10 Summonte (1675, pp.177–8 (lib.1. cap.7) reports on the Compagnia di Santa Maria Succurre Miseris who consoled the convict on the way to the Piazza Mercato, a procession of priests all dressed in white with a black flag: '... i quali vanno vestiti di bianchissimo lino a modo di battenti, che con ordine gli antecede il stendardo del crocifisso ornato di velo nero, non rapresentando altro, che morte, gli ultimi dei quali vanno ricordando il povero condennato, il quale tenendo un picciolo Crocifisso nelle mani, e da quelli con esempi de Santi, e con dolci ricordi condotto al luogo del supplicio... eseguita la Giustizia, la medesima compagnia ritorna la sera, o pur il giorno seguente a dar la sepoltura al corpo morto, per' i guistiziati per delitti piu gravi, che i lor corpi son divisi in piu parti, o chi si ritornano ad appiccare a Ponte Ricciardo, (così detto il lougo fuora il Ponte del Sebeto, ove è solito portarnosi) la medesima compagnia con honorata esequie accompagnata con'i frati Cappuccini, … li trasferisce nella Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo, dandoli in quella honorata sepultura; e così si fa due volte l'anno, come nel giorno della Commemoratione delli morti, e nel Giovedì Santo.' Actually Romeo (1993, p.136) says the number of those given a

Christian funeral was very low. In the two decades after 1560 approximately 12 percent of the executed were given a Christian funeral.

11 Bacco ([1616] 1991, p.10) says that there were 1,000 prisoners in the *Vicaria, Castel Capuano,* more than twice as many as in all the other ten prisons together. On the *Bianchi,* see Panico (1985, pp.91–106), (Romeo, 1993, passim) and Marino (2011, p.111).

12 With their far-reaching powers to delay executions for the sake of the spiritual welfare of penitent criminals, the viceroys tended to perceive the *Bianchi* as a threat to royal legislative power. As a result, in 1582 membership to the *Bianchi* was restricted to the priests, amidst protests from clergy and nobility (Romeo, 1991, pp.113–23).

13 See also, Groebner (2003, p.136). In the new *Sacred drama* (tragedia sacra) conforming to classical forms, though, the martyrdom itself is no longer enacted, but merely reported on stage – apparently much to the public's dismay, cf. Clubb (1964, pp.81–2).

14 On the scholarship and role rituals in renaissance and baroque cities, see Marino (2011, p.17 and passim).

15 On the spectacle of early modern executions and their connections with anatomies, see also Friedland (2012, pp.119–31).

16 For an introduction to these maps and the social changes they reflected, cf. Marino (2011, pp.10–16). For a profound analysis of the visual features and perfect renderings of the famous Map of Lafréri and Duperac (1566) and indeed many other maps from the 13th to the 18th centuries, see De Seta (1981, pp.55, 68–79,) who also reproduces a detail of piazza Mercato from that map (p.51) where one can see the gallows; see p.154 for a detail of Baratta's map, 'Fidelissiae urbis neapoletanae ...' (1629). For a high resolution reproduction of the Lafréri/Du Perac Map, go to: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb406212074; for the Baratta map, go to: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53064622f/f1.item.r=alessandro%20baratta.

17 For praise of the Sebeto, the 'Neapolitan Tiber', see Bacco ([1616] 1991, pp.29–30).

18 For the political implications, especially of 16th-century maps (Baratta type), also see Valerio (2013).

19 For a succinct description of the strong fortifications and gates of Naples as well as on the difficulties of maintaining the inner security, see Muto (2001, pp.88–90).

20 For an introduction to the historical context and political consequences of this war for Naples, see Marino (2011, p.20).

21 The detail is reproduced in De Seta (1981) illustration no.100.

22 Here the little inns and the *dogana* must have been located; see the illustration in De Seta (1981, pp.150–1).

23 See for an online example at http://jcb.lunaimaging.com/media/Size4/JCBMAPS–I–NA/1095/29867–026.jpg La Cité Royale de Naples, Ian D'Ogerolles [Jean d'Ogerolles] 1664, Based on *Premier livre des figures et pourtraictz des villes* Guillaume Guéroult. Lyons, 1552.

24 I am using the term in Foucault's sense (1998).

25 Summonte (1675, p.178) says that the worst criminals, who were not quartered, were dispayed there: 'per' i guistiziati per delitti piu gravi, che i lor corpi son divisi in piu parti, o chi si ritornano ad appiccare a Ponte Ricciardo, (così detto il lougo fuora il Ponte del Sebeto, ove è solito portarnosi).'

26 Summonte (1675, p.246): 'Nel Mercato maggiore … i forastieri … concorreno, a vendere, e comporare, nel Lunedi, & il Venerdi.'

27 Of course these were also the objects that were kept in the numerous Neapolitan reliquaries, on which, see Marino (2011, pp.24–5, and n.69 with many references).

28 On the miraculous healing powers of the bodies of executed criminals, see Park (1994, p.26 n.90). Della Porta (1658, p.19) points to this creed when he says that the remains of certain recently killed animals are, from the magical point of view, more effective than the body of an animal which died a natural death.

29 On the so-called armory unguent which developed out of this theory, cf. Weill-Parrot (2013, pp. 31–71) and Parigi (2011).

30 There are reports that repentant criminals would gush forth enormous quantities of blood upon being beheaded (Groebner, 2003, p.111).

31 For instance, in 1616 the remains of a father Bernardino Realino exuded a wonderful odour for 40 hours (Sallmann, 1994, p.292, see also ibid., p.274–5 and 327–30). For Maria Carafa see ibid., p. 306. On bodies that did not decay, see Park 1994, p. 1.

32 '… pur trottando senza sapere ove si fosse, giunse al Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo, del quale vedendo le mura e la porta, si crese albergo, e vinto da stanchezza, e anche per fuggire una minuta pioggia … si accostò al detto uscio, e avendo con un sasso pure assai picchiato, e niuno rispondendo,... sentatosi in terra, e appoggiata la testa all porta con deliberazione insino al mattino ivi aspettare … con debole sonno si addormentò' (Masuccio, [1471] 1990, p.298).

33 '… abbagliato e pauroso che ad ogni passo gli pareva che uno de li appicati gli si facesse intorno, gionto appresso al sospetto loco ed essendo di rimpetto alle forche, e ancho non veduto niuno appiccato muoversi, gli parve avere già gran parte del pericolo passata, e per dar a sé medesimo animo disse: O appiccato, vuoi venire a Napoli? … —— Eccomi che vengo —— L'Amalfitano … buttato via il sacco cominciò fieramente a fuggire verso la Maddalena sempre gridando con alte voci gridando Iesù. Il Cavoto … gridando …: eccomi a te, aspettami, non dubitare … L'Amalfitano con spaventevoli gridi e solluzzi assai, gionse a le Taverne del Ponte, al quale farsi incontro i gabellotti … ai quali lui affermava del certo avere visto un appicato moversi da le forche e dargli la caccia insino all'orlo del fiume: il che da tutti fu facilmente creduto e non meno di lui impauriti il raccolsero dentro, e serrate le porte, e segnatisi di croce, insino al dì chiaro non uscirono di casa.... La novella in pochi dì fu per tutto il paese divulgata, e da vero si raccontava che gli appicati di notte davana la caccia agli uomini che soli passavano per Ponte Ricciardo ...' (Masuccio, 1990, p.299).

34 On foreigners in and the suburbs of 16th-century Naples, see Muto (2001, pp.90–3) and Marino (2011, p.9).

35 I wish to thank Marlen Bidwell-Steiner for introducing me to this particular Novella text and for wonderful discussions on the Novellas ejemplares.

36 Perhaps Zayas omits the ponte because in crossing the bridge, Laura's itinerary would have been impeded by the customs officers on duty at the Ponte Ricciardo?

37 On this 'most popular Neapolitan pilgrimage site', and its ex votos – correlating to cases that could be related to Laura's predicament in the Zayas' novella – see Marino (2011, p.25 with n.70).

38 'Hay en Nápoles, como una milla apartada de la ciudad, camino de Nuestra Señora del Arca, imagen muy devota de aquel reino, y el mismo por donde se va a Piedra Blanca, como un tiro de piedra del camino real, a un lado de él, un humilladero de cincuenta pies de largo y otros tantos en ancho, la puerta del cual está hacia el camino, y enfrente de ella un altar con una imagen pintada en la misma pared. Tiene el humilladero estado y medio de alto, el suelo es una fosa de más de cuatro en hondura, que coge toda la dicha capilla, y sólo queda alrededor un poyo de media vara de ancho, por el cual se anda todo el humilladero. A estado de hombre, y menos, hay puestos por las paredes unos garfios de hierro, en los cuales, despues de haber ahorcado en la plaza, los hombres que mueren por justicia, lo llevan allá y cuelgan en aquellos garfios; y como los tales se van deshaciendo, caen los huesos en aquel hoyo que, como está sagrado, les sirve de sepultura. Pues a esta parte tan espantosa guio sus pasos … Laura, donde a la sazón había seis hombres que por salteadores habían ajusticiado pocos días había; la cual, llegando a él, con ánimo increíble, que se lo daba Amor, entró dentro, tan olvidada del peligro cuanto acordada de sus fortunas, pues no temía, cuando no la gente con quien iba a negociar, el caer dentro de aquella profundidad, donde si tal fuera, jamás se supiera nuevas de ella. … con estar bajos los miserables hombres, jamas consiguió su deseo, desde la diez que serian cuando llegó allí, hasta la una ...' (Zayas, 2000, pp.365–6). Zayas means the road that leads down from the Santuario della Madonna dell'Arco, which is south of Sant'Anastasia, down to the Ponte Ricciardo; Pietra Bianca seems to have been a locality situated still farther northwest of Sant'Anastasia near Pomigliano d'Arco, which explains why Laura and her brother would arrive there only early in the morning (see below). '… con el mayor tiento que pudo, por non caer wn la fosa, salió, arrimandose al as paredes, y tal vez a los mismos ahorcados; ...' (Zayas, 2000, p.368).

39 'Hay en Nápoles, en estos enredos y supersticiones, tanta libertad que publicamente usan sus invenciones, haciendo tantas y con tales appariencias de verdades que casi obligan a ser creídas. Y aunque los confesores y el virrey andan en esto solícitos, como non hay el freno de la Inquisición y los demas castigos, no les amedrentan, porque en Italia lo mas ordinario es castigar la bolsa' (Zayas, 2000, p. 362). For a qualification of Zayas' claim from the perspective of contemporary popular Neapolitan culture, see Sallman (1986, pp. 73–4, 144–5 and passim).

[40] We are here confronted with a form of 'negotiation' between a literary text and the cultural practice of witchcraft in the political context of the Spanish rule in Naples. See on the term 'negotiation' see Greenblatt (1988, p.86).

[41] Zayas' account of the exact whereabouts of this place is a bit confusing: of course there is a Pietra Biancha with a famous Villa (Bacco, 1991, p. 30–1) on the coastal road, on the Via Regia leading to Naples, but more probably she means a place much farther away, to the northwest of the aforementioned *Santuario della Madonna dell'Arco,* because it will take brother and sister hours to arrive there upon their return from the humilladero. In both cases, Don Diego must have passed the gallows on his way to Naples.

[42] 'Viendo Don Carlos tal cosa, y acordándose del humilladero, volvió a mirarle, y como vio luz que salía de la linterna que su hermana tenia, pensó que alguna hechicera le detenia, y deseando saberlo de cierto, probó si el cavallo quería caminar hacia allá, y appenas hizo la acción cuando el caballo, sin premio ninguno, hizo la voluntad de su dueño; ...' (Zayas, 2000, p.367).

[43] 'Sono di color biondo per lo gran freddo, e perché dal soverchio freddo nasce la bianchezza, dal soverchio freddo vien la biondezza, l'humido molto toglie il poter usar il coito. Aristotele dice ne' Problemi che sono d' aspetto selvaggio, e stravagante, così anchora di costumi; la cagion esser l'eccesso del freddo, che corrompe, e distrugge il temperamento, e così i volti e gli animi ...' (Della Porta, 1613, fol. 22r–v).

[44] Summonte (1675, I, p.179) says that the *Zecca della Moneta*, with the workshops is in a 'Palazzo detto la Regia Zecca della Moneta di rimpetto al Chiesa di San Augostino, ove resedevano un tempo i Mastri Rationali, …'

[45] On the identity of these 'friends', see Eamon (1995), Badaloni (1959/1960) and Gliozzi (1950).

[46] For a discussion of theses images of Bandinelli's workshop in connection with Della Porta, see Kodera (2014, pp.30–3). For a thorough description and many references to the extant scholarly literature on Bandinelli's *Accademia* in their 1531 and 1550 versions, see Hegener (2008, pp.396–412). For an online reproduction of the first 1531 version see http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1444436&partId=1&people=133467&peoA=133467–1–7&page=1 for the later version, see http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works–of–art/17.50.16–35

[47] Michalsky relates this narrative strategy to the visual representations of Naples in contemporary maps (cf. 2016, p.119).

[48] See also the introduction in Marino (2011, pp.2–4).

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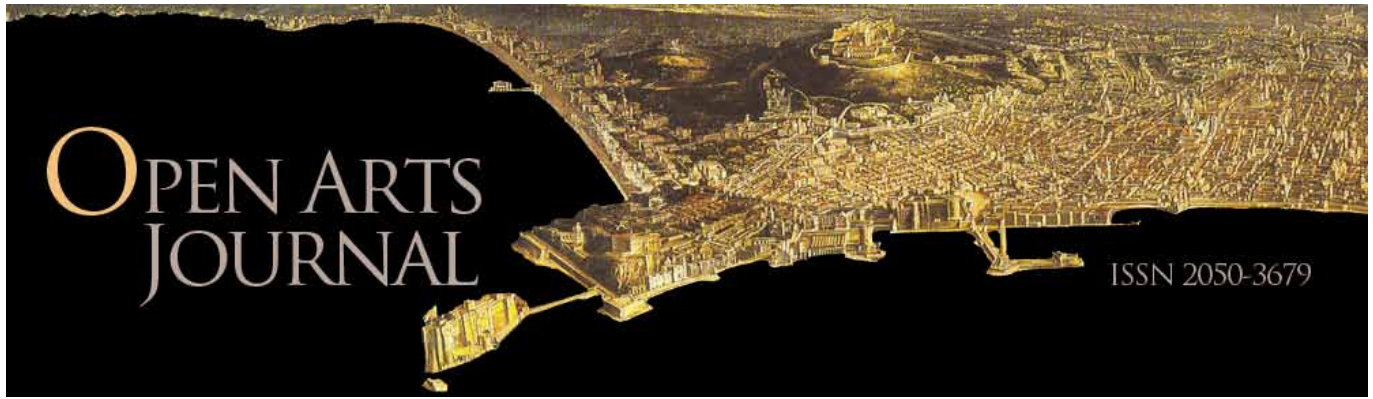
DISLOCATING HOLINESS: CITY, SAINT AND THE PRODUCTION OF FLESH

Helen Hills

Abstract

Just as the making of a patron saint was an important event in baroque devotional and urban history, so the city itself was an event in holiness and sanctity. This article investigates the figuring of saint and city while resisting the tendency in historical scholarship to treat city and saint in terms of representation. Instead I examine the co-implication of saint and city in terms of event in baroque Naples, seeking to treat neither as discrete and thus their relation as more than merely sequential, in order to consider the re-imagining of the city that was implicated in the re-imaging of sanctity. I argue that reconfiguring this relation amounts to a dislocation. That dislocation also entails the question of the subject of the city and indeed of subjectivity, with which city and saint were intimately enfolded.

Biographical note

Helen Hills is Professor of History of Art at the University of York. She has also taught at the University of Manchester and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research probes ways in which architecture and place might be investigated and considered as productive and discontinuous, even disjunctive. She has published on baroque theory, southern Italian baroque art and architecture; religious devotion and social divisions; miracles and materiality; architecture, gender and social class; academic art history's marginalisation of certain places, groups and interests through discourses of style, taste and place. Major publications include: *The Matter of Miracles: Neapolitan Baroque Architecture & Sanctity* (Manchester University Press, 2016), which investigates the relationship between matter and miracle in baroque Naples; *Rethinking the Baroque* (Ashgate, 2011); *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Recent publications include: 'Taking place: Architecture and holiness in seventeenth-century Italy', chapter for *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture: The Companion to the History of Architecture*, (ed.) A. Payne, vol.1, (Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

DISLOCATING HOLINESS: CITY, SAINT AND THE PRODUCTION OF FLESH

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Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p.26

The eternal life to which Christians lay claim ultimately lies in the paradigm of the *oikos*, not in that of the *polis*

Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory,* p.3

By what right (*ius*) were the barbarians subjected to Spanish rule?

Francisco de Vitoria, *De Indis* (1532)

In what way does the urban enter a relation with the divine? How does baroque art reimagine the city of Naples through the relation with the divine via its protector saints?[1] And, in what ways do the politics of colonialism enter into this relation? How is that relation altered when the city's inhabitants are also figured? Depictions of saint and city are modes of imagining that set locality in motion and posit locality

Figure 2.1: Jusepe de Ribera, *San Gennaro in Glory*, before 1636. Oil on canvas, 276 x199cm. Church of the convent of the Agustinas Recoletas of Monterrey, Salamanca. (Image credit: © 2018. Album/Scala, Florence)

Figure 2.2: Domenico Gargiulo, *Largo Mercatello in the Plague of 1656*. Oil on canvas, 126 x 177cm, signed 'DG', inv. Salazar 84336. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

as question. Artworks as diverse as Jusepe de Ribera's *San Gennaro in Glory* (Fig. 2.1) and Domenico Gargiulo's *Largo Mercatello during the Plague* (Fig. 2.2) demand of the viewer/worshipper a reconsideration of 'where' they are and consequently a reconsideration of the sense of being that they draw from where they are in relation to their subjectivity, their condition as subjects and their relation to the divine. They bring the city into focus as location – topographical and geographical – and as transformative and transforming, eviscerated and eviscerating, part of a ruthless economy of sovereignty, secular and divine. A relation with the divine challenges an interpretation of the city as simply extensive location. Place emerges as potential opening away from an historicist affirmation of continuity with the past. This is not simply a dislocation, as it were, but a reconfiguration. That awareness of 'whereness' in the imagining of the city, in terms of saints, reconfigures it. It is to think the city *in their regard*.[2]

This article resists the tendency to approach city and saint in terms of representation, to treat saint and city instead as non-discrete and their relation as more than merely sequential, and the city as more than simply location. Baroque saint and city are involved in a folding that prevents the saint-city relation from following a Hegelian iteration. Thus sanctity is interrogated in relation to place by departing, from both a blanket notion of 'the Counter-Reformation' and from a conception of the saint as located in the city and holiness as located *within* the divine or in the saint, to conceive instead of place, particularly the city, as part of a relationship with or event in holiness.[3] Indeed, that event is better understood in terms of dislocation of place and time (a dislocation in which historicist continuity has no place). That dislocation also entails the question of the subject of the city and indeed of subjectivity, with which city and saint were intimately

enfolded.[4] The ways in which the city as an *event* in holiness and sanctity emerges pictorially is examined here.

Place and saint

Both sanctity and the city were subject to renewed attention in baroque Italy. Hence their inter-relationship is doubly significant. While the development and mapping of early modern cities have received considerable attention, and while saints and sanctity have been energetically pursued, the baroque refiguration of cities in relation to saints has not received the attention it deserves.[5]

In exploring relationships amongst city, holiness and sanctity, art historians have tended to focus on individual ecclesiastical buildings or patrons. While the ways in which the sacred seeped out of 'hot spots' into street shrines, and apparently secular buildings have been examined, the question of how the city *as a whole* was conceived and visualised through its saints has dropped out of focus.[6] Scholarship on protector saints has largely focused on individual artworks and the socio-political aspects of their cults. But how sanctity, including patronal sanctity, affected the visual imagining of a city – and hence shifted 'visual identity' from the Ideal City of the Renaissance of *Tavola Strozzi* (Fig. 2.3) to the holy city of the baroque (Fig. 2.8) while retaining its principal topographical features – has not been examined.

The brilliant scholarship on antique and medieval sanctity has not been matched for the baroque.[7] Historians of the so-called 'early modern' have been concerned more with cults of saints in socio-political terms than with either the heaven-earth or the saint-city relation. Studies of baroque sanctity have been plagued by its habitual inscription into the 'Counter-Reformation' that treats sanctity in terms of

Figure 2.3: Francesco Roselli or Francesco Pagano, *Tavola Strozzi: the triumphal return of the Aragonese fleet from the battle of Ischia*, 1472–3. Tempera on wood, 245 x 82cm, inv.11982. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

representation and as if determined by the Decrees of the Council of Trent, which are, in turn, interpreted in terms of an anti-Protestant impulse.[8] The presence of the sacred in 'localised space' was, indeed, a major issue in theological disagreement between Catholics and Protestants: Catholics insisted on the divine presence in the Eucharist, while Protestants did not. Arrestingly, it was in terms of *place* that Martin Luther criticised the veneration of relics which he associated with indulgences and pilgrimages in the 1537 Schmalkaldic Articles. To Luther, the cult of relics led people to place their faith 'elsewhere' than in God (Joblin, 1999).[9] Nevertheless, an assumption persists that God, to whom the faithful prayed in post-Tridentine culture, was in heaven and that the locus of divine power was supraterrestial and unified. Yet, in the 1970s Richard Trexler challenged modern assumptions about the *place* of religion in Trecento and Quattrocento Italy, rendering obsolete any simple assumption that the numinous was supraterrestrial, that the source of power was one (the Godhead) and that the Quattrocento Italian was 'Newtonian in his religion', with 'no *confusion* as to the locus of power' (1972, pp.7–41, esp.8, my italics).[10]

Even with regard to patronal sanctity, the inter-relationship between cities and saints has received little attention.[11] Indeed, that relationship, as figured in a remarkable number of artworks of the period, has been largely unquestioned by historians and art historians alike.[12] When city-saint relation has come into view, it has mostly been seen in Hegelian terms, extrapolating directly from reading from earthly matter to a spiritual realm.

Hubert Damisch (2002) draws a distinction, visual and discursive, in depictions of saints between an earthly register where the laws of weight obtain and a celestial register in which attraction seems to operate in contradiction to such norms, *da sotto in su*. His insights have been little taken up by historians of baroque art. They have investigated a dazzling variety of images of saints, deciphered iconographies, examined patronage and imaginatively conceived particular audiences for altarpieces.[13] Their explorations of paintings of saints, which focus overwhelmingly on the soteriological economy of the individual, have left exposed the ways in which a saint might interfere with place. While place has been recognised as decisively affected by the event of martyrdom or the presence of a holy body, the way in which a saint's intercession in heaven might alter place on earth, beyond merely conserving it, has not been critically considered. The degree to which redemption was sought in the name, not of individuals or specific social groups, but of a *city*

– and thus the extent to which a city was reimagined in terms of its intercessors – demands attention, especially for Naples, a city unsurpassedly promiscuous in its acquisition of protectors.

Saints did not simply make places sacred; in the visualisation of sanctity, place – whether a particular locale or a major city – was reformulated, made *ganz anders*.[14] Thus, if holiness operated through relics to displace place, it is necessary to ask what this meant for the place of holiness and of the city.

Naples: city of miracles

The relation between the city of Naples and saints was unusually lively. More protector saints were generated to safeguard Naples than any other city.[15] Protector saints were advocates (*avvocati*), charged with pleading the case of their supplicants before the heavenly court, and chosen for their capacity to make their voices heard, along with that of their protected people, to bend to their ends the designs of Providence (Galasso, 1982, pp.213–49). Gifts given to saints, like those to powerful men, were part of an economy of indebtedness, constraining patrons to deliver graces and benefits, while manifesting devotees' support.[16] More than that, they represented the strongest of all religious impulses: to exchange powers with God, in a triangle of *virtù*: devotee, image, protector. That relationship is seen most starkly in *ex-voti* images (Fig. 2.4). The paintings explored below diffuse this relationship of *virtù* onto a city, to take the city hostage, in order, ostensibly, to save it.

While Rome's relationship with sanctity was set in place through soil stained by the shed blood of martyrs, and thus localised and literalised, as in Stefano Maderno's iconic *St Cecilia* (1600) in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (Fig. 2.5), in Naples, by contrast, the place of a saint's death was less significant than the miraculous working of their relics on behalf of the city (see:

Figure 2.4: Ex-voto, 1624. Oil on wood. Madonna dell'Arco, Sant'Anastasia. (Image credit: Santuario Madonna dell'Arco)

Figure 2.5: Stefano Maderno, *Saint Cecilia*, 1600. White marble. Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome. (Image credit: Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo - Soprintendenza speciale per il Colosseo e area archeologica centrale di Roma)

Figure 2.6: Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Eccellentissima Deputazione della Reale Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro)

Caraffa & Massone, 1996; Kämpf, 2001). Through the relic a saint could be present in heaven and on earth simultaneously, thus in the relic both the non-localisable quality of sanctity and the quality of place as intensive rather than extensive, are at their closest. In Naples, particularly under Spanish rule, sanctity was urbanised through miracles undertaken on behalf of the city *as a whole*. Thus, although San Gennaro was neither bishop of Naples and nor did he live or die there, his relationship with the city of Naples was forged posthumously and miraculously.[17] Indeed, the miracle testified that his relics were in their correct place, that place was correctly in place (Hills, 2016, pp.71–7). His relics – skull and blood – were eventually brought together and celebrated at the Treasury Chapel in the Cathedral (Fig. 2.6), but they were not restricted to that chapel. Through processions across the city, they wove together interior and exterior, secular and ecclesiastical, street, *seggio* and church. Indeed, in his relation with Vesuvius, Gennaro's presence pervaded the entire city and beyond.

Freed from the encumbrance of a specific place of burial, the whole city could be claimed as Gennaro's tomb and altar. Or rather, the 'city' became indelibly meshed in the votive bond, as suffering was displaced from inhabitants to city. The city becomes the site of suffering and what is to be transformed, soothed and healed. It is the city that in these paintings, themselves embedded in ex-voto form, is imagined as ex-voto and offered up.

Naples' relationship with its saints was riven by Spanish rule. This complex and profound rivenness deserves further study and can be no more than traced here.[18] Until the late eighteenth century, the Spanish empire was conducted largely as a Church-State venture within a logic of Christian eschatology. Within the lands of the Hapsburg monarchs, the conception and imaginary of empire became 'a constituent of the political cultures of Spain and much of Italy' (Pagden, 1995, pp.31, 40). Even after the abdication of Charles V and the separation of the Imperium from the Monarchia, Spain remained the leading candidate for universal empire. But as Anthony Pagden has argued, since the American possessions were legally a part of the Kingdom of Castile, it was the European states within the Spanish monarchy, which were, and would remain until the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), the crucial factor in all considerations of what kind of political entity that monarchy was or should be (1995, p.46). Tommaso Campanella claimed that it was the Spanish Hapsburgs, as heirs of Augustus, whom God had chosen to be the agents of the final unification of the world (1633, pp.86–93). Naples thus became part of

a wider Spanish project for the creation of an European imperium which would provide defence against the Ottoman empire and against Muslims and Protestants alike.[19] While Spanish monarchy was justified in terms of providing security for its members, its failure to do so became the failure of its subjects to be good Catholics.[20] While the Spanish government skilfully deployed its court in Naples to stage its power on a wider European stage, the effects on the city were local, specific and profound.[21]

Viceregal Naples was part of a knight's move in which the relation between protector saint and city was analogous to that between viceroy and court, and may be seen to work metonymically for it. Thus, the relation protector saint-city was overshadowed by and underscored that of viceroy-viceregal Kingdom. The question, posed by Dominican theologian Francisco de Vitoria in *De Indis*, '[b]y what right (*ius*) were the barbarians subjected to Spanish rule?' had clear resonance for the 'otra Indias', the other Indies, even if it remained hinted at rather than uttered ([1532] 1991, p.233).[22] The city of Naples squints out from the inter-relation between the political economy of rulership inflected through viceroyalty and the divine economy of the protector saint. I examine that squint below.

Heaven-saint-city and Heaven-sent city

Jusepe de Ribera's *San Gennaro in Glory* (Fig. 2.1), painted for Viceroy Count of Monterrey (before 1636), depicts San Gennaro protecting Naples from Vesuvius after the near devastation of the 1631 eruption.[23] The saint is borne aloft by hierophanic clouds and angels between a delicately intimated heaven and earth fleetingly glimpsed far below. The terrestrial occupies a thin strip of the painting's foreground, almost out of sight, diaphanous and insubstantial. In the gauzy distance Vesuvius erupts. To right the wrongs between God and city, the protector saint comes to the fore. His amber garment, radiant with glory, outgleams the volcano. At once substantial and yet light as shifting cloud, earthly yet glorified, his pyramidal solidity sets him apart from his ethereal surroundings and the evanescent city. Kneeling towards the city, he raises his hand in blessing over it, but tilts his head sharply upwards in the glory of God. Twisting and turning, he is in touch at once with God and city, and more solid and dependable than either.

At the bottom of the painting, far below both saint and viewer, the Gulf of Naples extends, illuminated in the hazy beauty of a place seen from somewhere else entirely. Beyond Castel Sant'Elmo in the high foreground, the land drops abruptly to the sweep of the bay where the city is picked out in silver flecks

through a misty haze. It is a place to which one looks back, an irenic place of longing. The saint addresses an elsewhere, more distant than even the lovely unearthly place below. His intercession is a bodily being between, a sort of doubling of the divine, even a heavenly surrogate for the viceroy, who is, in turn, an analogous doubling of the king whose territory this is. The viewer is positioned, not alongside the denizens of Naples, but alongside the saint, in an assumed identification with protector saint-viceroy and Spanish rule.

San Gennaro's relationship with Naples, redefined by Vesuvius in Ribera's painting, is rendered less heavenly, more terrestrial in an engraving in Nicolò Carminio Falcone's *L'Intera Istoria di San Gennaro* (Fig. 2.7). Here, as in Ribera's oil painting, San Gennaro intercedes to defend Naples from Vesuvius in 1631, but now the city's features are readily legible: Castel Sant'Elmo, the Carmine, monastic and conventual complexes, church domes and palaces. San Gennaro almost turns his back to the viewer in his urgent address to the volcano, which towers over the city of Naples and dominates the bay. God and heaven are obliterated by volcanic ashes and smoke: there is only San Gennaro to save the

city. His heaven-directed engagement falls away and the drama is triangulated amongst saint, volcano and city.

When an altarpiece includes saint, divinity and city, the relation between saint and Godhead can be disconcerting. Onofrio Palumbo's *The Intercession of San Gennaro on behalf of Naples* (c.1650) (Fig. 2.8), painted in collaboration with Didier Barra, for the Archiconfraternity of SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini in Naples, depicts an agitated Trinity, with Christ – a sort of baroque Throne of Mercy – threatening the city below with a thunderbolt in which San Gennaro assumes pride of place and seems to deputise for God the Father. Poignantly caught between heaven and earth, San Gennaro, at once vulnerable and strangely ill-equipped for his task as protector, perched on his intermediate cloud, plaintively stays divine wrath. God the Father, marginalised in this heavenly drama, gestures ambiguously in blessing and to stay his son.

Here heaven is the place rent with turmoil, while the city below is Edenic, a place unscathed, outside of history. Naples, delicately delineated between sea and

Figure 2.7: 'San Gennaro Halts the Eruption of Vesuvius', engraving from Nicolò Carminio Falcone's *L'Intera Istoria di San Gennaro* (Naples: Felice Mosca, 1713), facing p.64. Private collection. (Photo credit: massimo velo – napoli)

Figure 2.8: Onofrio Palumbo and Didier Barra, *San Gennaro protects the city of Naples*, 1652. Oil on canvas, 331 x 220cm. Santissima Trinità, Naples. (Image credit: Complesso Museale dell'Augustissima Arciconfraternita della Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini, www.museodeipellegrini.it / Photo credit: Marco Casciello)

distant hills, rests below evanescent clouds, blessed and at peace. Gennaro's hierophanic cloud occupies an intermediate space pictorially, well below the Trinity, close to the viewer at the front of the picture plane. Overlapping with, while distinct from, the gleaming city below, it permits communication between terrestrial and celestial registers that could not be sanctioned by the order of nature or supernatural vision alone. The relational is played out on the level of the representational that shows itself as such. Yet, saint and city are cut from the same cloth. The play of silver on amber of Gennaro's brocade chasuble rhymes with the silver threaded through gold of streets and buildings in the folded city below. He is embroidered into the city; he wears its saintly robe. The city is less glorified through the saint than the other way about. It is the city that provides the saint with purpose and justifies his glory. Here the role of the urban, the presence of the built fabric – more than setting – emerges as participant in the relation with the saint. Yet, the foregrounding of the Pizzofalcone ramparts emphasises Spanish military defences, a fortification akin to that of the protector saint. Thus, the role of the saint as deputy and go-between closely identified with the city works analogously for the figure of viceroy, in place of the monarch, protecting Naples. Indeed, the viewer, invited into the painting level with the saint, sees things from a viceregal point of view. Veneration of the saint becomes at once a civic duty and part of a Spanish ordering.

In contrast, Didier Barra's *Napoli* (signed and dated 1647) dispenses entirely with heavenly figures and stages the city as its own heaven (Fig. 2.9). Unlike baroque domes where light is diverted from illuminating the present toward the summons of the Infinite (Fig. 2.10) and unlike the employment of shadow to confound as in Caravaggio, here light blesses the earth in an anteriority and alterity of an other-than-itself. The painting becomes an instrument of communion. The bird's-eye view seems to constitute a revelation of the nature of the city in the world and to provide access to its sacred truth. This paradisical city has no earthly inhabitants. It dreams in a splendour that inhabitants can neither hope for nor bear, a splendour that only love makes it possible to endure (Romans 5:5). This is a vision of Naples as if imagined by the city itself and offered to its ruler like a lover. The city, thronged by bustling ships, seen from aloft, is the gleam in the eye of the Spanish Crown. Embraced by mountains and the sea, the city is sprinkled with domes, churches and monasteries in a naturally prosperous harmony. But it is also militarised and markedly Spanish. Fortifications at Castel Sant'Elmo, Pizzofalcone and the Quartieri Spagnoli – cogs in the system of Spanish occupation – are at once carefully delineated to

Figure 2.9: Didier Barra, *Napoli* (inscribed on reverse 'Desiderius Barra / Ex civitate Metesi in Lotharingia F. 1647'). Oil on canvas, 69 x 129cm. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.10: Giovanni Lanfranco, *The Glory of San Gennaro*. Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Eccellentissima Deputazione della Reale Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro).

imply objective fidelity and also exaggerated to invite awe. Naples is made visible by splitting viewer from inhabitant – indeed, by treating the city as its own inhabitation. Amnesty, deliverance and pardon are brought into the present. And Spanish rule here takes place in terms of grace.

These paintings depict the city of Naples through buildings and location that make it appear to be a geographical unity, with social unity following from that, implied through the architectural and topographical beauty orchestrated by the divine. The city lies beyond a political, social or historical economy, subject only to a spiritual economy. And yet, that economy is infused by Spanish rule. This is an eschatological vision – to read the allegory is to live in the future, beyond the closure of narrative.

Domenico Gargiulo and the marginalised city

What takes place when Naples' inhabitants enter the picture? Unlike the paintings discussed above, which keep the city at a distance and whose points of view lose human scale, Domenico Gargiulo's *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Fig. 2.11), *The Revolt of Masaniello* (Fig. 2.12) and *Largo Mercatello during the Plague* (Fig. 2.2) are

remarkable in their focus on marginal spaces within and without the city, and in including the city's poorer inhabitants.

Art historians have considered these works principally in terms of art patronage, historical events, and the topography and architecture of seventeenth-century Naples. Of interest here, is their delving into urban fault lines to explore the unstable boundary between the human and the divine. The focus on the poor and on non-canonical buildings is unusual in Neapolitan art at this date, and registers concern for their fate, even advocacy of their interests. But the people become fractions of constellations in which individuals are stripped of meaning, such that the viewpoint of the painting does not emerge from within the conditions as lived by the people, but rather appears above them, detachedly. The tumultuous multitude is part of Naples' cityscape, the viewer suspended above it.

Gargiulo's paintings shrink from presenting either a clearly legible 'cartographic' city, blessed by Spanish order, or an unequivocal narrative of saintly deliverance. The city's features are blemished by malady, whether plague, revolt or volcanic eruption (Figs. 2.2, 2.11 and 2.12). Unlike Barra's blissful vision, Naples is depicted,

Figure 2.11: Domenico Gargiulo, *The Eruption of Vesuvius*. Oil on canvas, 127 x 177cm, signed 'DG'. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.12: Domenico Gargiulo (Micco Spadaro), *Revolt of Masaniello*. Oil on canvas, 126 ×177cm, inv.Salazar 84333. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

not in terms of monumental buildings, viceregal palace, cathedral or main streets, but as margin and marginalised, the outskirts where the city slips into groves and opens up to the foothills of Vesuvius (Fig. 2.11), close to the locus of horror, the gallows outside town where the rotting bodies of executed criminals were exposed: the Largo Mercatello just outside the walls (Fig. 2.2). It is at its limits that the city is redefined, demographically and soteriologically. Here is the chance of a new order, even while the chaos and defects of the present dominate the scene. These margins disturb the circumscribed city that contains and comforts, to let in what cannot be contained: revolt, plague, Vesuvius, death. And in those liminal places ordinary citizens emerge. The *popolo*, invisibilised in Ribera's great drama and Barra's fanfare, is here brought into sight, and its fate and that of the city are enmeshed.

Ambiguities crowd in. Christopher Marshall has pointed out the problems of reading Gargiulo's paintings in simple terms. *The Revolt of Masaniello* (Fig. 2.12) is not simply sympathetic to Masaniello's anti-Spanish revolt of 1647–8 (Marshall, 1998). Indeed, people and square are stained grey, squalid in contrast to the sunlit walls of the buildings around. How can one contain the other? And yet there they are, occupants and denizens, to be recognised as part of the city – even as they go on trading and squabbling, indifferent to the magnitude of events taking place around them. The curious admixture of everyday matters, and matters of life and death allows haphazard contingency to come into view.

The Eruption of Vesuvius focuses on the edge of the city, where the procession of 17 December 1631 has just reached Ponte Maddalena, outside Porta Capuana and is turning back to return the relics to the Cathedral (Pane, 1984).[24] San Gennaro's intervention during the eruption is recounted by many chroniclers (Capecelatro, 1849, pp.4–6; Braccini, 1632, pp.43–5; Ceraso, 1632, pp.B3r–B3v; De Martino, 1632, pp.14–17; Giuliani, 1632, pp.62–94).[25] The painting's everyday details and its accord with such accounts have tempted some scholars to mistake it for 'a faithful visual documentation of that particular natural and historical phenomenon' (Daprà, 1994a, p.37).[26] But the apparent detachment of Gargiulo's style is a powerful pictorial device and should not be confused with objectivity.

Brigitte Daprà claims that interest is focused on the procession which unwinds beyond Porta Capuana (1994a, p.37). But this is to overstate the case. The painting condenses the spiritual economy, the eruption and processing of relics in a frame that is frankly architectural and secular. The city is exposed at the

edge of itself and at its end. 'And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places' (Revelation 6:14) 'and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood' (Revelation 8:8). It lies at the edge of the world, at its end point and annihilation. What was Vesuvius? Was it landscape, territory, instrument of divine punishment or something else? The matter is still open. It engorges, bursts out of itself, threatens to swallow up all that lies before it. It is excess that exceeding itself threatens the teeming excess of Naples.

The procession is hierarchical and fractured, but it is not simply about affirming rank. It is a last-ditch attempt to save the city. Community emerges in the massing in common and sharing a common fate. It is visibilised in relation to crisis and lack, insofar as the intervention with the divine depends on a premise of divine punishment and thus a recognition of sin, penance, remorse – and a seeking to make amends. Community exacts. Associated with the threat of violence, community stands for a reciprocal obligation imposed on individual members to stand to each one in a relation of debt, duty and obligation. The relics are activated by their procession through the city to its very limits, outside the walls, to the reckless edges. It is a turning the inside out. While death is the obliteration of difference in the smothering dark cloud and dust, life is a matter of opening communication between opposites. Here is a glimpse of a seeking of immunity in which things are placed in common and in the opening of communication between opposites. It is at the edges where things are at stake.

The centre of auratic gravity is not in a ruling personage but in the ruled collective: 'Naples' and 'Neapolitans', city and people as one. The people do not so much join in the procession, as animate the square, energise the terraces and rooftops, and mill about (Fig. 2.13). They are not the poorest from the hovels and overcrowded tenements, but of the middling sort. They perch on roofs and ledges, scamper up and down ladders, and peer down on the passing relics. Their homes, an architectural admixture, an improvisation of balconies, jetties, screens and add-ons, are as impromptu as their actions (Fig. 2.14). Architecture and popolo inhabit each other while the procession squeezes through. People burgeon from buildings, sprout from their crevices like vines. Yet along the way, what is endangered is glimpsed: fragments of beauty, everyday pleasures, scintillas of light: a vine-covered canopy offering dappled shade; a balcony to take air, enjoy the view, gossip with a neighbour; a rooftop

Figure 2.13: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *The Eruption of Vesuvius*, showing people milling about. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.14: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *The Eruption of Vesuvius*, showing architecture and people. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

that opens to refreshing air; a potted plant beneath a window sill; loggias where vines creep over timbers, blurring building, nature and humanity in the beautiful complexity of the simple everyday.

Meanwhile volcano, saint and saint's relics are triangulated in a higher-level drama that occupies half the canvas. What is the relationship between that drama and the one unfolding below? The painting leaves open whether the patron saint spontaneously (or by God's will) draws nature, the supernatural and city into salvific relation, or whether it is the veneration of the saint's relics that triggers his intervention, catapulting him across the sky to staunch the ashes and lava. Although the correlation between the movement of relics in the square and that of the interceding saint above implies efficacious causality, the circling procession lacks direction and most people – including grandees – are oblivious to the saint. There is a going through the motions, without insight or awareness. 'Every sacred space implies a hierophany', argued Mircea Eliade, an 'irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different' (1961, p.26). These distinctions inform Ribera's and Palumbo's pictures (Figs 2.1 and 2.8), but Gargiulo's work leaves open the question of what is detached from and what touched by the divine.

The prominence of the archbishop, close to the relics and hence the saint, seeks to scotch memories of his controversial dash to safety at a critical point in the eruption. Thus, it seems to announce, that the *popolo*

should indeed trust and follow their wise rulers. While divine and earthly orders intersect in the patron saint, the Viceroy and the archbishop command by addressing the viewer directly. In looking out of the picture, they are brought into command. The viewer becomes complicit, a nod of recognition.

Catalan writer Sebastián de Cortiada claimed that the viceroy possessed power as the king's living image:

> The viceroy is Alter Nos […] since he represents the royal person of H.M. and is another representation of the king […] For that reason he has the same place as H.M. […] he sits on the same canopied throne as H.M. customarily does when he is in the province […] enjoys all the honours , graces, prerogatives and privileges belonging to His Majesty and […] he is due the same reverence as the king, whose image he is.
>
> (Cited in Cañeque, 2010, p.30)[27]

Indeed, the doubling of saint and relics, and relic head and relic blood, with archbishop and viceroy who was himself a double for the king, establishes the peculiar double matrix of Neapolitan viceregency and the crucial axes within the painting in which the secular, imperial, ecclesiastical and heavenly concord. The viceroy's relation to the king is analogous to that between saint and relic.

But an alternative reading is available. Micco Spadaro's paintings are cinematic: cut, coup, montage, everyone doing their own thing. What is alarming is that no-one knows what is going on. Even viceroy and

Figure 2.15: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *The Eruption of Vesuvius*, showing woman who spots San Gennaro. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.16: Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita, Florence.

cardinal miss San Gennaro's release like a bolt from a catapult over their heads towards the volcano to sort everything out. Instead they directly address the crowd and viewer in expectation of recognition of their own virtue and authority. It is an otherwise unremarkable woman in the middle of the swirling crowd who spots the saint (Fig. 2.15), while a father and child nearby apprehend something of the miraculous intervention over their heads. These insignificant people are easily overlooked in the throng. It is this that is opened up for reconsideration. Their pointing out the saint indicates that things are about to change. While the sovereignty of God is seen in his brutal justice, the saint opens up the chance to stay that punishment and give the people a chance. But between the line of hope opened by the saint and the processing, milling about, flagellating, confessing, and pomp and circumstance no simple equation is drawn. The overhead view is one that purports to make sense of the event, yet this painting subverts its own pictorial means to ricochet meanings like the shouts of panic across the square.

The patron saint is an immanent transcendence situated outside the control of those that also produced it as the expression of their own will. This is the contradictory structure that Hobbes assigns to the concept of representation: 'the one representing, that is, the sovereign, is simultaneously identical to and different from those that he represents. He is identical because he takes their place, yet different from them because that "place" remains outside their

range' (Esposito, 2008, p.60). Thus, while Viceroy and Archbishop are inserted into the divine economy of the protector saint and pictorially secure the triangulation of viewer-veneration-salvation, they engage not with the saint, but with the viewer in what also belongs to an economy of social recognition. In the viceroy-saint-viewer relation a slippage takes place from one economy to another. In that slippage, Naples under Spanish rule takes place.

Aby Warburg argued that in Ghirlandaio's fresco (Fig. 2.16) in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità, Florence, 'the contemporary background emerges as a participant force with great immediacy and in entirely personal terms', observing that Ghirlandaio 'takes the spiritual context as a welcome pretext for reflecting the beauty and splendor of temporal life' (1999, pp.187–8). Elements of the sacred scene are concentrated in the foreground, while the city unfolds behind. That story, he argues, is now that of the city of Florence where the saint's appearance emerges almost as fable. In baroque Naples, the saint and the divine shift to the background, the forceful renaissance protagonist-patrons have no counterpart, while the contemporary city becomes participant force, convulsive and at odds. It is at issue; what will become of it, is at stake. While Ghirlandaio sets his scene at street level, Gargiulo's viewer is raised aloft, detaching viewer from participants. Just above the rooftops, the viewer looks the volcano in the eye, so to speak. Gargiulo's viceroy would almost step into the viewer's shoes. Freed from the relationship with donor, a new register emerges between heaven and the city, one that is more urgent than either. The saint's apparition is loosed, off-centre, a

brilliant flash of hope, engaged elsewhere; San Gennaro turns away from the viewer. Naples is held in place by doubling and mimicry, displacement and deputising. The city is both less and more than participant; it becomes event.

Micco Spadaro depicts not the moment of resolution and safety, but that of crisis, when most hangs in the balance. The eruption is a chronic state of emergency in which order and survival are brought into sharp relation. 'For the great day of his wrath is come' (Revelation 6:17). The vulnerability of the city hangs in the air. Thick smoke threatens to blot it all out. The city does not protect; the delightful houses do not shelter. The world is turned inside out. Inhabitants are in exile on the roofs of their own homes. People without compass, they implore the volcano, beseech the nobles to save them. They are characterised by this: they do not know how to save themselves. Their lack of direction is laid bare. Here is a huge crowd without laurels, whose lives amount to mere anecdote. And yet Gargiulo makes these people appear in a passionate longing for a world in which they, too, can be seen and heard, to permit a memory of those whose disappearance is part of the accepted order of what must appear in future.

Yet it is also a history that remembers the few in the name of the many: the faces that turn to the viewer, the people with names, in an otherwise anonymous throng. The painting's conservatism and its disruptive capacity, are held in close tension, like a spring or a trap.

Gargiulo's *Largo Mercatello in the Time of Plague* (Fig. 2.2) presses harder than *The Eruption of Vesuvius* (Fig. 2.11) at the edge of the city and goes further in undercutting its own apparent claims. Spadaro's last history painting, it is distinct from the thread of many works of art that engaged with the plague of 1656, including *St Gennaro intercedes to save the city of Naples* by Palumbo and Barra (Fig. 2.8), and the cycle of canvases realised by Luca Giordano for the churches of Santa Maria del Pianto (Fig. 2.17) and Santa Maria degli Angeli a Pizzofalcone (see Porzio, 1984). Less a sacred image reinforcing a divine economy, more a testimony to continuing anxiety about the city's merits and fate. The viewer is kept out of the city. Whether indeed something is being defended is no longer clear. Carnage and confusion bear their own incomprehensible logic and what surfaces is the being ill at ease with one's place in the world.

Indecipherability is at the heart of this apparently most decipherable of paintings. Its shiftiness emerges nicely from a comparison with Mattia Preti's studies for the *Ex-voto for the Liberation of Naples from Plague* frescoes, executed between 1656 and 1659 on the

Figure 2.17: Luca Giordano, *San Gennaro intercedes with the Virgin, Christ and Eternal Father*, 1660–61. Oil on canvas. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: Arcidiocesi di Napoli, Ufficio Diocesano Beni Culturali)

city gates (Figs. 2.18 and 2.19). Preti's sketches offer a clearly stratified vision of heavenly figures above, interceding saints in the middle and the horror of plague below – quite appropriate for their location on city gates. On high, the glorious Immaculate Conception, soaked in rich warm colours, is flanked by saints Gennaro, Rosalia, and Francis Xavier.[28] A dazzling angel unsheathes his sword above abandoned bodies lying lifeless on the shore, recognisably near the Molo, Vesuvius is visible across the sea (Fig. 2.18).[29] A dead woman, picked out in icy light, half naked, one arm swung backwards towards the viewer, is the ruthless abandonment of death. A portly fellow shuffles away, abandoning the body again. A confusion of bodies lies entangled on steps, limbs flung wide, while, moving amongst them, people of little substance bring in yet more dead.[30] This is a place of abandonment, on the edge of being the abandonment of place, what Foucault called 'a segmented, immobile, frozen space' in which the individual moves 'at the risk of his life, contagion, or punishment' (1997, p.195). The abjection of Naples is laid bare: 'With the deaths of eight to ten thousand people a day, Naples was reduced to a miserable leper colony, to a horrible cemetery' (Parrino, 1770,

Figure 2.18: Mattia Preti, sketch for votive frescoes for the 1656 plague. Oil on canvas, 127 x 75cm, inv.Q262. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: Museo di Capodimonte)

Figure 2.19: Mattia Preti, sketch for votive fresco for the 1656 plague. Oil on canvas, 127 x 75cm, inv.Q265. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: Museo di Capodimonte)

p.197).[31] Strobic lighting flashes harsh accents across impenetrable dark, slicing through bodies and sense. Yet the vertical engagement between heaven and earth carries conviction. Even while 'relentless death […] closely examines everything' (Tassoni, 2013, p.83), an unassailable eschatological order endures.

Unlike Mattia Preti's protectors, Gargiulo's heavenly figures have shrunk and withdrawn far from the sprawling city square, which gapes vast, spewing problems. Civil society is in chaos, and the only intimation of salvation comes wanly from the protector saint, tiny and remote (Fig. 2.20). That figure, akin to the role of donor portraits in altarpieces, is out of context, scale and order, a trespasser from another vision of the world. It is not the divine alone that has withdrawn, the pictorial viewpoint detaches from the Neapolitan populace. It foregrounds no spiritual drama or individual dilemma, but opens a dizzying scape of people-square-and-buildings in which action,

Figure 2.20: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *Largo Mercatello in the Plague of 1656*, showing interceding saint. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

meaning and sense are confounded and discarded. Place becomes the measure of the fracture between divinity and humanity.

But what 'humanity' is this? Carlo Celano claims the 1656 plague killed 450,000 people in Naples ([1858] 2000, vol.1, pp.85–6). More recent estimates suggest 240,000–270,000 deaths in a population of up to 450,000 (Galasso, 1970, pp.46–7). Certainly, it devastated the city. And it divided it. Overwhelmingly its victims were poor, as much by design as default. And as it played out its deadly course, ideas about what had caused it and how it was spread split the city further along old fault lines.

'It was axiomatic for many observers', writes Brian Pullan, 'that plague was a lethal sickness that flourished chiefly among the poor', a consequence of malnutrition, overcrowding, polluted water and carelessness (1992, p.107).[32] It cut the swelling numbers of poor in a logic that Carlo Cipolla has described as 'Malthusian before Malthus' (1977, p.278). Plague struck the poor harder than the rich who, better nourished and able to flee, had more resources to resist it (Biraben, 1974, pp.505, 518; Pullan, 1992). More than this, poor people were regarded as incubators and spreaders of the disease, the gateway through which it entered and whereby it could destroy everything (Pullan, 1992, p.106–7).

There were two principal medical theories of the plague. First, drawing on Galen, it was conceived as miasmatic, produced by corrupt exhalations emanating from rotting corpses and transmitted through the air. The second theory, informed by Fracastoro and others, held that it spread by simple contact (as with scabies or leprosy) or 'per fomites', that is through carriers of 'semi' of contagion, invisible particles produced in putrescence and given to multiplying, propagation and movement (Calvi, 1981, p.414).[33] Plague was regarded as an urban phenomenon, as if the 'fomites' could only lodge in urban populations.

In Naples, the Galenic notion of miasmas was combined with that of individual disposition. Geronimo Gatta argued that the 1656 plague gripped individuals according to a principle of 'either similitude or sympathy' of their blood with the disease. Predisposition was either a visible predisposition ('a body full of bad humours'), or invisible ('a likeness in blood or temperament') (1659, vol.1, p.23). For this reason, he claims, plague spread within groups which shared blood or temperament. Impurity fomented impurity. Illness and revolt were part of contamination and disorder of the physical and the social body. The analogy establishes relations of equivalence between matter and ideas, and across nature and society. The weakest and most marginal social groups were associated with its transmission, including women, whose bodies were regarded as contaminatory by nature, because of their capacity for menstruation,

pregnancy and giving birth.[34] Thus in Naples a *bando* published on 6 June forbad sleeping with prostitutes.[35] Spadaro's dead woman with a living child at her breast hybridises the figure of Charity with the excessive, multiplying and adulterating female body.[36]

About 150,000 people are thought to have fled from Naples, leaving behind an overwhelmingly poor population (Calvi, 1981, p.430). Physicians insisted on separating those left behind – the dead from the living, but also men from women, rich from poor – to stop the disease from spreading by contact with likeness, proximity and hidden sympathies. Here in the ruined world of Piazza Mercatello, where most markers of social distinction have already been erased, what we see are the poor.

And the poor, yet drained of life, threaten the whole city. For Domenico Parrino, ardent supporter of Spanish rule, plague, closely associated with the lower orders, was further contaminated with sedition:

> [A] certain Masone, who, during the riots of 1647, was the Popolo's representative, returned to the Kingdom [of Naples] on that ship [from Sardinia]; and, falling immediately ill, was taken to the Hospital at the Santissima Annunziata, where after three days, he died from the buboes. Nothing more was required for the contagion to seize Naples; since, assailed by dizziness, Carlo di Fazio, who worked in the hospital, expired twenty four hours later at home, which was in the vicolo del Pero.
>
> (1770, pp.191–2).[37]

Parrino's precision is not casual: that very alley had housed Masaniello. Contagion – revolutionary or pestilential – found lodging in the same dubious bodies and alleys of Naples. Indeed, 'contagio' was the term most used in seventeenth-century Naples, thereby shifting focus from cause to contamination, infecting medical with political discourses.

While the pro-Spanish and rich blamed the seditious poor for the plague, the poor blamed the Spanish administration. Word went around that disinfection programmes were not fit for purpose and that, in order to divert blame from those responsible, royal ministers were spreading rumour that poisoned dust had been deliberately scattered through the city. Animosity towards the Spanish boiled over. A group of Spanish soldiers who went to the lazaretto di San Gennaro were all found dead from suffocation the next day (Calvi, 1981, p.429). Counter-rumour spread as fast as the plague. Stories about disease and dust were part of the deception of subversion, claimed Domenico Parrino. According to him, a few men, key players in

the 1647 revolt, had returned to Naples 'pregnant with their old perfidy to arouse a new sedition amongst the people' by blaming the government for spreading poisonous dust to exterminate them wholesale in revenge for the revolt of Masaniello (Parrino, 1770, vol.2, p.194).[38] Accusations assumed ominously freighted terms.

Yet the crucial distinction was less 'Spanish' / 'Neapolitan' than rich and poor. In 1656, the poor were the first victims of the epidemic and foremost vehicle of the contagion. Plague was generally only recognised as such when it affected the higher echelons of society: 'Up until now there is no indication that those dead from such a blight are only quite ordinary persons' (Calvi, 1981, p.413).[39] The fundamental preoccupation of the well-to-do was that it should be prevented from reaching the 'palaces' (Nunzio Giulio Spinola cited in Calvi, 1981, p.413).

Why Largo Mercatello?

Gargiulo's choice of Largo Mercatello (today's Piazza Dante) for his depiction of the plague is full of suggestion. In setting his *Scene of the Plague of 1656*

(Fig. 2.21) in Piazza del Mercato, Carlo Coppola unabashedly associated sedition and contagion, implying that the horrors of the plague were divine punishment for the Revolt.[40] Gargiulo ducks such an easy contrivance.

Figure 2.22 Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *Largo Mercatello in the Plague of 1656*, showing open wound. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.21: Carlo Coppola, *Scene of the Plague of 1656*. Oil on canvas, 130 x 180cm, signed 'CCA'. Museo Nazionale di San Martino, Naples. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Ordinarily, Largo Mercatello was a place 'where every day the [practice] of horsemanship is constantly undertaken by noble and famous masters, and in which many *cavalieri* gather to learn the art of riding' (Celano, 2000, vol.3, t.1, p.42).[41] Here, too, each Wednesday a vegetable market, known as the 'Mercatello il mercordì' was held (Parrino, 1770, vol.1, p.434). The square thus housed both the artifice of aristocratic life and the run of the mill of the everyday. In the painting, it has become an open wound, a running sore, like a bubo (Fig. 2.22). Bodies of all sorts pile up indifferently, amidst the crumbling walls and smoking fires. The piazza lies exposed, an infected outgrowth of the city, a new locality that is produced by contagion. The city is no longer a place of inhabitation, but of disinhabitation. It is at once history and a dream, a vision of madness and a prophecy.

During the 1656 plague Largo Mercatello was designated a collecting point for plague victims (Daprà, 1994c, p.294).[42] It formed part of a strategy of expulsion of contaminating bodies, advocated by physicians as a means to prevent the spread of the disease. The piazza piled high with corpses can be glimpsed through the arcade from the Certosa in Gargiulo's *Thanksgiving after the Plague* (Museo di San Martino) (Fig. 2.23). Corpses and the dying were taken to the Grotta degli Sportiglioni and the church of S. Maria del Pianto, the cemetery of San Gennaro fuori le Mura, many caves in the hills whence building stone had been extracted, the Piano delle Pigne outside the Porta di San Gennaro and the square in front of the church of San Domenico Soriano outside Porta Reale, 'in addition to an immense number of corpses that were burned and thrown into the sea' (Parrino, 1770, p.199).

This new urban space on the threshold of the city seethes with labour, confusion, decontaminatory and squalid activities on an industrial scale, an admixture of civic and private initiatives fuelled by desperation. It is a place of degradation and the stink of starvation and death, of fetid air, a dumping ground for the bodies that threaten the city. Those bodies are overwhelmingly of the poor, attended by the ghoulish figures of the also poor, the undertakers, *fumigatori*, cleaners, porters, *monatti*, *nettezini* and *picigamorti*. The dead, piled up with two-pronged hoes, were carried away by Turkish slaves and convicts released from the galleys (Parrino, 1770, p.198). A whole industry of death has arisen. Bristling poles, ready for stretchers, announce a brisk logistics (Fig. 2.24), but the enmeshing of bodies and corpses, clothed and naked, unmasked and undifferentiated, that litter the square, undermines the purposeful parade (Fig. 2.22). The Viceroy established a *Deputazione* to organise plague and medical care. Thus, medics were not allowed to leave Naples and each *Ottina* had to elect a Noble or Citizen Deputy, to whom all the sick of the quarter were to be made known (Parrino, 1770, pp.196–7). The gentleman on horseback in the foreground may be Gerosolimitano Carlo Pagano, and the other, on foot, the Eletto of the people, Felice Basile (Daprà, 1994c, p.294). In any case, they represent forms of control imposed by a discipline of segregation. Emblematising civil order, they are also reminders that this hell-hole was managed as a strategy to save the city and protect rich denizens. What was occasion for engagement with the divine for Mattia Preti here becomes exposure to a shaming yet shameless humiliation, a parade of pettiness. In its pale colours and debased forms, in its remorseless banalisation of these lives, in the absence of the inventive horrors usually accorded to hell, this is a particularly hellish vision. Here
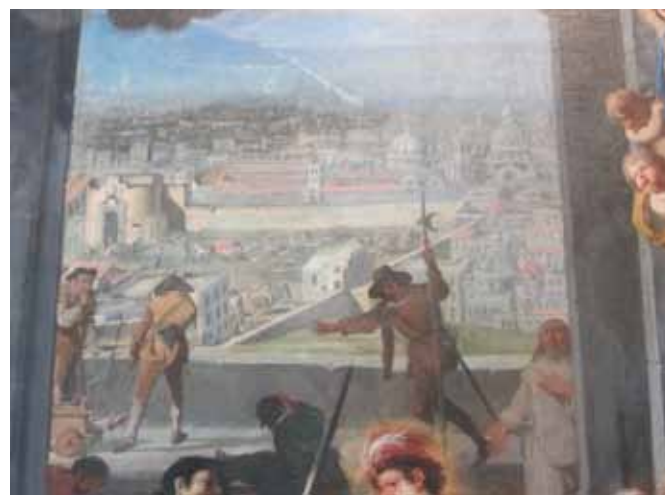

Figure 2.23: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *Thanksgiving after the Plague*, showing Largo Mercatello. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.24: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *Largo Mercatello in the Plague of 1656*, showing poles. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

even acts of mercy are without beauty. This is a city exposed to the loss of divine love, where the expulsion from Eden occurs without shame or remorse.

Largo Mercatello, defined by the city gates, clinging to its walls, is a marker – literal and symbolic – of the limits of Spanish rule. The closing of a city by plague spelled economic jeopardy and risked civil unrest. The city continues to shrivel behind its walls, imperilled by what it has expelled, cut off from trade and labour. Those walls were built by Viceroy Toledo (Buccaro, 2014, p.64). On the left is Port'Alba, commissioned by the Duke of Alba, Antonio Alvarez di Toledo; on the right, the gate of the Spirito Santo, also known as Porta Reale, built by Viceroy Pietro di Toledo, which boasts the arms of Charles V. Hence bodies dumped in the square exceed Spanish rule. They mark and are marked by its limits. The small structure next to the gate is the early stages of the erection of San Michele Arcangelo (Nicolini, 1905). Behind the walls can be seen the dome of San Sebastiano, the bell tower of the Gesù and the little church of Santa Maria della Providenza - and in the far distance Vesuvius. Once there were many houses here, but they were swept away 'during the disturbances' (*tumulti*) (Parrino, vol.1, p.434). This is an edgy place of subversion and repression.[43] Even the Porta Regale, demolished in 1775, was the site of trouble. Its narrowness obstructed the passage of carriages, carts and pack-horses to the prominent via Toledo, prompting 'scandalous disturbances due to the narrowness of the passageway and the unrestrained licence of the *plebe*' (Celano, 2000, vol.3 t.1, p.40). Gargiulo's choice of site does not simply equate contagion, plague and the poor, but suggests that for all its might and pomp, Spanish power cannot shut out the most insidious problems. Indeed, what the Spanish Crown excludes, as excess, comes to define Naples from without.

Bodies and citizens spew out over the wall and through the gates. The city cannot protect them and does not want them, and indeed must be protected from them, expelling them like a sort of defecation. These are contaminatory citizens who threaten the city. What is lost here is order – social, political and divine – though its traces remain. Rotting, stinking corpses are shown in stages of differentiation, undifferentiation and de-differentiation. A child follows a sedan chair; a man bears a child's coffin; a semi-naked man lugs a woman gripped with rigor mortis across his shoulders. It is impossible to tell who is helping whom, who has been brought here to die, who was already dead, whether people are lifting or looting.

Like the putrefying bodies, the architecture also greys and cadaverises (Fig. 2.25). Dark liquids ooze from the city walls, trickle down and stain its surfaces. Corpses lie naked, clothed, bound in shrouds. A pregnant woman, arms thrown above her head, lies where she was dropped, legs haphazardly raised on the body of a stranger, genitals exposed in a cruel mockery of birthing as death. Spadaro opens a vision of a new

Figure 2.25: Domenico Gargiulo, detail of *Largo Mercatello in the Plague of 1656*, showing city walls. (Image credit: By kind permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Polo Museale della Campania)

Figure 2.26: Josse Lieferinxe, *St Sebastian Intervenes on Behalf of Plague Victims*, 1497. Oil on wood, 82 x 56cm. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. (Image credit: The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)

urban economy distinct from earlier approaches to the theme, such as Lieferinxe's *St Sebastian intervenes on behalf of Plague Victims,* commissioned in 1497 (Fig. 2.26), which also focuses on the disposal of plague victims outside the city gates.[44] While Lieferinxe emphasises the unpredictability and speed of the disease – a gravedigger keels over, dropping the body he was about to bury – the presence of chapel, mourners and clergy, albeit overtaken by events, accord dignity to the burial. St Sebastian's earnestness and the tussle between the demon and the angel indicate unequivocally where good and bad lie. Lieferinxe's city, from which white shrouded bodies emerge, is a beautiful place, filled with noble buildings, but it is no longer clear in Spadaro's canvas for what exactly the saint might intercede, what is worth defending. The focus slips from the immediacy of human drama and the loveliness of the city to a place that is punished, where even hope is hard to hope for. And the divine seems to have slipped from its moorings and retreated.

Gargiulo's city is prey to the contagions of plague, rebellion, criminality, living and dying in disorder. Divine judgement is the *undoing* of the urban. Another expulsion, another fall from grace. But a more chilling expulsion in the horrifying absence of shame. A few scratched moments of grief and imploration interrupt the relentless obliteration of death amongst strangers. The dying and the dead are handled impersonally, briskly, as so many problems of contagious flesh, rather than deaths to be grieved. This is the humiliation of a degrading death, inflicted by God, a sort of sacrifice to the wrath of God and an act of propitiation on the part of the city. For the plague was both a natural phenomenon and divine punishment. And only timely intercession might persuade an angry God to be merciful to this people.

The plague thus had what Pullan terms 'a corrective function' (1992, p.104). The horror of what unfolds shows the only source of salvation to be God via intercession. As such, plague is a call for religious and moral improvement, a renewal of devotion. Here, in another Fall, the punishment of plague might have the force of penance and thus act as means of redemption. At the mercy of unpredictable heaven, the citizens are castigated for their sins. Yet, as Daprà has remarked, 'the presence of Virgin and Eternal Father on the cloud does not suffice to confer on the painting the character of a religious painting' (1994a, p.41).

At the upper edge of the painting 'our furious Lord with castigating sword in hand' wields his sword to smite the city (de Dominici, 1742, p.196) (Fig. 2.20). Beside him, a saint (a male saint; possibly an overpainted Virgin) kneels begging for mercy, but receives no response.[45] Even the heavens are at odds over what the city deserves.

Separating contagious bodies from those they threaten was entangled with the practice of punishing again the afflicted. The political economy of the body operating here was the production of bodies as *in excess* of the economy of the city, their expulsion essential to its survival. That expulsion from the city is a form of excommunication. The instruments of the city – churches, walls, gates, houses turn their back. It is the city that is at risk and that must be saved. And this place, in which those who are punished for their sins are dumped and exposed, emerges as a hellish place where dying is at once organised and a matter of abandonment, over which divine figures hover without conviction. And yet they are there. The intercessionary figure offers the only hope there is; the rest is punishment, division and dissolution.

While Carlo Coppola's *Scene of the Plague of 1656* (Fig. 2.21) shows Piazza Mercato like an afflicted body in an ex-voto, complete with banderole, Gargiulo's city has lost its centre of gravity and is cock-eyed and off its axis. Indeed, this is less city than what is expelled to save it. Compared to the carnal immediacy of popular ex-voti, Gargulo's painting steps back to view events with disconcerting dispassion. The relation with God is forged neither through the body of one who is wounded, personal and fleshly, nor through the body of the city as beautiful and fulfilled, but the city as body that replaces the body and that requires its expulsion. This place is disastrous. It is dislocation. And the inhabitants become no longer subjects of direct affliction (my suffering organ, my daughter's lame mule, my father's miraculously restored sight), but those afflicted as a sort of 'collateral damage', the city as carnage. They are responsible for the city's fate through their relation with the divine (civic duty as divine duty); it is their failings for which the city is punished. While on the face of it, the relation with God assumes a collective dimension, the collaborative potential of this dimension is simultaneously dashed by social, political and governmental hierarchical division.

Conclusion

With all respect the results have shown, and continue to show, that the system works badly and is unprofitable to the state. [Explaining that thereby 400,000 citizens of Naples were deprived of all political rights] *I dwell on this no longer as I know that truth breeds hatred.*

G.D. Tassone, *Observationes jurisdictionales, politicae ad Regiam Pragmaticam Sanctionem editam de anno 1617 quae dicitur De Antefato,* pp.102–4

These paintings encompass what may be called the 'holy or saintly dimension of the political' of baroque Naples. That is, the aspect in which politics touches on the intelligibility of the social world, on inhabitants' sense of coherence, continuity, vibrancy in the world, part of what makes people consent to given regimes and determines their manner of being in society. Thus, rather than treat these artworks as if they represent an *already existing* political contract of 'Viceregency' or monarchical rule, they may be seen as intimately bound up with the ultimate question of the legitimacy of that which exists. The presence of the saint above the city conveys an exposure that distinguishes human beings: not exposure simply to the elements or to the fragility and precariousness of mortal finite lives, but to the risk of perdition. The saint may stand in for that missing piece of the world that seems to secure the chance of redemption. The vulnerability of the city and its inhabitants is exposed at a slant: contingent, fragile and susceptible to breakdown.

Baroque Naples is produced through its relations with viceroy and patron saints. Those intermediaries defined Naples' fate in relation to the prodigies of politics, nature and the divine. Vesuvius' eruption was not simply a 'natural' disaster, since the very intercession of San Gennaro indicates that it was a form of divine punishment for a city gone astray. Even nature was not simply natural. The miracle marks a distinction between the natural and supernatural while simultaneously obliterating that distinction. Gargiulo's *Plague* shifts from a reassuring promise of salvation in the protector saint's closeness to the viewer and Spain's military and economic strength, offered by Ribera, to a world in which Spanish efforts are exposed as limits and the presence of the divine is distant and detached. In this divine economy, the city is a means by which the people are punished and, indeed, the city, as much as the people, is punished. The saint's presence announces the chance of amnesty, opens hope for mercy and the painting asks the viewer to believe that this happened and that therefore it could happen again.

Holiness or sanctity, then, is discerned in terms of dislocation; the discovery that holiness is marked in place only shows more clearly that it eludes place. The baroque saint is, then, a form of fold. The saint is veiled and folded in the city. Hence the idea of the *Zweifalt*, a fold that differentiates and is differentiated. When Heidegger calls upon the *Zweifalt* to be the differentiator of difference, he means above all that differentiation does not refer to a pregiven undifferentiated, but to a difference that endlessly unfolds and folds over from each of its two sides, and that unfolds one only while refolding the other, in coextensive movements. Every god entails withdrawal, concealment or absence as its properly divine trait. The sacred in person is the god, but the god by its nature is concealed; it withdraws from the world, whether within the world, in its folding, or outside, in its unfolding: 'It is thus that gods are made: not fabricated by projection, as is often said, but feigned, fictionalized as figures of what has neither figure nor appearance of its own but which emanates, which propagates and communicates itself in singular effects of a particular given, circumstance or encounter' (Nancy, 2005, p.156).

The point is not that the realisation of the world of political theology was organised by fictions and therefore not real or grounded in anything substantial. But rather that in such fictions was made visible or discernible a truth about inner lives, fantasies, moral commitment, political passions and the sense of something more that sustained vital existence. Community emerges in the recognition of its fault, lack and delinquence. Communal fear generates common servitude, which is the opposite of community in which freedom brings separate individuals together (Esposito, 2012, p.16). Gargiulo's paintings show one and open the way to the other. Thus, the community is bound together by the 'task' of addressing its own destruction and setting things aright.[46] A simple appeal to tradition and things as they are was rendered deadly by the eruption. Order had to be re-established; but what sort of order? Remaking the eruption of 1631 into a narrative, not of failed divinity, but of the presence of sanctity concretises that new beginning. The catastrophes of plague, Vesuvius, even revolt deterritorialise the city, open it anew. The city has been touched by a sovereign event, the suffering of revolt, plague, volcanic eruption, a miraculous salvation.

Ribera and Solimena's altarpieces offer the saint as embodiment of a common horizon in which disparate groups may – indeed, must – find accord. Salvation is located elsewhere than in political justice. Gargiulo's work offers instead a split horizon in which the divine keeps its distance and community is held in tension with mere power over flesh. Its political potential lies in its capacity to disrupt an established order, to bring

silenced people and experiences into visibility that has a claim on others (even if it is ignored), a capacity to depict what thitherto was assumed to be undepictable (and perhaps the least welcome of truths), to trouble an established sense of what is and is not allowed to appear. And it offers, too, a sort of poetic presence that is at variance with the attempt to reduce history to the actions and deeds of celebrated men. The paintings deploy the authority of the long Neapolitan tradition of city-as-view, but depart from the view from out to sea, the divine point of view, to hover closer to buildings and people, to try to bring them into the same frame as God, in a device that simultaneously narrows and widens the visible field, and seeks to extend and limit what can be uttered. This is the culmination and destruction of the city-saint salvific economy in which the city becomes votive offering.

Giorgio Agamben, in theorising relations between sovereignty and the vital sphere, the bodies and lives caught up in the political sets articulated by the operations of sovereign power in its multiple forms and guises, remarks that in relation to the nation-state, the 'people', rather than a unitary subject, amounts to 'a dialectical oscillation' between two opposite poles: on the one hand, the set of the People as a whole political body, and on the other, the subset of the people as a 'fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies' (1998, p.1). What is fascinating about Gargiulo's painting is that the powerless people of Naples emerge. These are the people who are erased from Barra's map and from Ribera's golden vision of San Gennaro. At once, they are the people who constitute the political body of Naples and a subset of the people – Agamben's 'fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies'. In the concept of 'people' categorical pairs 'define the original political structure: bare life (people) and political existence (People), exclusion and inclusion, *zoē* and *bios*. The "people" thus always already carries the fundamental biopolitical fracture within itself. It is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a part and what cannot belong to the set in which it is already included' (Agamben, 1998, pp.177–8).[47] In this sense the 'popolo' might be seen to be part of the 'fabric' of the city, yet it is simultaneously set outside it.

Sanctity's orientation towards a spatially rooted public or community allows the reformation of that 'public-place' in the name of the saint. Ribera, Palumbo and Gargiulo seem to memorialise the event, the critical intervention, preserving the deeds and salvaging threads from which triumphalist political narratives can be woven. Spadaro brings death into play in the field of sovereignty and opens anew the question of what the city of Naples – beyond territory – might be. Threat

of death gave power access to the populace beyond taxation and suppression of revolt. At the edges and *in extremis* territory becomes a productive site of flesh. What is at play is the capacity of political power to appropriate a surplus of flesh to shore up its legitimacy, to transform mere power into sovereign power. It is this fundamentally ambivalent materiality that is, in starkly contrasting ways, invested in the body of the sovereign and his deputy the viceroy and in the patron saint.

But Gargiulo's work also disrupts the established order, bringing silenced people and experiences into a provisional and tentative visibility. One can see in the shattered old ways, the emergence of new and common forms of life, being and city. Here that porosity emerges in relation to danger, crisis and the threat of extinction. It is threat that produces the city: 'Naples' is an effect of threat and a state of exception. These paintings drive to unveil a constitutive tension that is set in motion in their embrace of a relationship to the political sphere. These new artefacts show Naples as imperilled, blessed, protected and led, but cobbled together. Something is started anew in a story without heroes in a place that is never one, neither homogeneous, nor totalisable, but divisible and catastrophic.[48]

Notes

[1] The term 'baroque' here designates an emphatic Catholic emotive visual aesthetic. For discussion, see Hills (2011, pp.11–36).

[2] For notions of the 'rhizome' and of space as intensive rather than extensive, see Deleuze and Guattari (1988, esp. pp.3–25, 232–309).

[3] I approach these matters fractally. Rather than reading 'inwards' from 'whole' to part, assuming that the smaller is a 'part' that necessarily fits into a (pre-conceived) whole, rather than assuming that an altarpiece or building is *necessarily* 'part' of 'the Counter-Reformation', I seek to read the whole in the miniature and to resist the fundamentally historicist presumption that the larger picture is already known.

[4] For a discussion of objects and subjects in terms of becoming and as enfolded, and thus as events, see Deleuze (1993, p.22) and Bal (2003, pp.27–43).

[5] The literature on these topics is too vast to summarise here. For mapping early modern cities, see Schulz (1978, pp.425–75), Woodward (1987) and Hills (1996, pp.145–70). For investigations of the city as locus of sanctity in predominantly socio-political terms, see Golinelli (1980) and Bilinkoff (1989).

[6] Important studies of individual buildings include Herz (1988, pp.590–620), for the religious beyond the ecclesiastical, see Camille (2003, pp.250–1). Muir compares

urban dynamics and images of saints in the streets of Venice, Florence and Naples (1989, pp.25–42). For the argument that Catholic urban space had 'hot points and cold points', while Protestants dissolved the link between the sacred and place, see Zemon Davies (1981, pp.40–70).

[7] Brown (1981) remains essential reading. See also Vauchez (1981), Weinstein & Bell (1982) and Gajano (1982, pp.119–36).

[8] A tendency amongst early modernists to analyse sanctity in terms of the 'Counter-Reformation' is a powerful current, almost obligatory these days in studies of seventeenth-century Italy. It is over-inflected in relation to Rome, to Protestantism, to visitors from the north (such as Gregory Martin, an English Catholic recusant) and is overwhelmingly historicist.

[9] Calvin's attack was differently concerned with *locus*. He wanted not the correction of relic practice, but its abolition, firmly rejecting a religion of 'display which grants *an important place* to bodies' (1543, p.24, my italics: 'l'ostentation qui donne *une grande place* aux corps').

[10] One might take issue with the assumption that holiness has a single 'location' and that to think otherwise is a sign of early modern 'confusion'.

[11] Useful scholarship on patronal sanctity, although it does not do justice to the visual, includes: Peyer (1955); Webb (1996), Orselli (1985), Norman (1999) and Fiume (2000). For patronal sanctity as instrumentalism, see Kaplan (1979-80, pp.142–68). For Naples' patron saints in particular, see Sallmann (1994). Engagement with the visual has been invigorated by Kennedy (2014).

[12] The significance of gender in patronal sanctity and its consequences for visualisation of the city have also been overlooked, with few exceptions, see Sluhovsky (1998, pp.9, 58–63, 213–14) and Hills (2010, pp.207–30). For the Virgin Mary as patron of Florence, see Holmes (2013).

[13] For depictions of saints in terms of Trent, see Treffers (2001, pp.338–72). For issues of reception, see Jones (1999, pp.28–48).

[14] See Eliade (1961). Relics and reliquaries were special objects of devotion in terms of place, embodiments of non-homogeneous holy space, especially so in baroque art with regard to the fold (Deleuze, 1993, pp.6–9, 12–18).

[15] By the end of the sixteenth century the city vaunted seven patron saints. By point of comparison, Siena, another city unusually well-endowed with saintly protection, had four 'advocate saints' (*santi Avvocati*). Naples remarkably multiplied its saints: by 1626, there were twelve; by 1680, nineteen; and by 1707, there were no fewer than thirty-one (Sallmann, 1994, pp.104–6).

[16] Jean-Michel Sallmann suggests that the relationship between community and saint symbolised the hierarchical image of aristocratic society of the *ancien regime* and expressed the clientage relationship which bound powerful and lowly reciprocally (1999, esp. p.102). On this relation, see also Trexler (1972) and Sodano (1987).

[17] Gennaro's bones were supposedly taken to the catacombs in Capodimonte in 420 before a series of movements resulting in their return to Naples in 1497. Meanwhile, his skull bone remained in Naples in the reliquary commissioned by Charles II of Anjou in 1305. Gennaro's relics were, like viceregal rule, doubled. When bone and blood were brought together, the miraculous liquefaction might occur.

[18] Political and cultural economies have long been tightly interwoven with the divine. The founding mythology of *pietas* of the Roman empire was readily swept into the Christian empire. Pietas involved the display of *virtus*, a willingness to die for one's belief and community, and the valuing of the *utilitas publica* over one's personal good. Christian emperors had a duty to uphold and protect Christendom and to extend the empire to those who, because of ignorance, had been denied historical access to the 'congregation of the faithful': 'The Christian world order, like the empire itself, had always been thought as identical *de iure* with the world and thus potentially as a culturally moral and finally political order with no natural frontiers' (Pagden, 1995, pp.30–1).

[19] Continuity between ancient and modern *imperia* was guaranteed and legitimated as much by the translation of power from Augustus to Constantine to Charles V, via Charlemagne, as it was by their shared aims (Pagden, 1998, p.41).

[20] The jurist Fernando Vázquez de Menchaca writes in *Controversium illustrium aliarumque usu frequentium* (1563) of the Spanish monarchy's 'cives et subditi' ('citizens and subjects') (cited in Pagden, 1998, p.45).

[21] Devotional matters were far from immune. The Viceroys' growing involvement in the feasts of San Gennaro, Corpus Domini and of San Giovanni a Mare in Naples formed part of a strategy of legitimation of Spanish power in Italy (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2007, pp.392–3).

[22] Neo-Thomist theologians and civil lawyers (not the canonists) were hostile to the claim that the Pope had dominium over non-Christians, because they were unbelievers. Wycliff, Huss, Luther and Calvin held that power (*potestas*) derived from God's grace and not, as Aquinas argued, from God's Law. Their view led to the claim that the ungodly, which had no share in God's grace, could not exercise dominium. Opponents to these views were acutely aware that such political theory used to legitimate the conquest of territories of non-Christian rulers and subjects could equally be used against Christian rulers and subjects.

[23] For the date of Ribera's painting, see Prota-Giurleo (1957, p.148) and Spinosa (2003, p.242, n.119). For this painting as a model for successive works, see Peréz Sánchez & Spinosa (1992, p.285).

[24] It has been suggested that the work was executed in the late 1640s to early 1650s (Ceci, 1920, p.195; Causa, 1956, pp.2–4) and was executed at the same time as *The Revolt of Masaniello* (Daprà, 1994b, p.287). Christopher Marshall (1998) has suggested a later date for both paintings, between 1656 and 1660, a view repeated in Giordano (2002).

[25] Most of these descriptions place the apparition of Gennaro at the outset of the procession from the cathedral, and they attribute the quelling of the mountain to the archbishop's raising of the relics towards it at the outskirts of the city.

26 'una fedele documentazione visiva di quel particolare fenomeno naturale e storico'.

27 'To represent is to contain within oneself the person of another as if he were the same person, in order to follow him in all his actions and rights, as the son "represents" the person of his father'. Michael Schreffler suggests the relationship between king and viceroy was 'intersubjective fusion' rather than a relationship between 'independent entities' (2007, p.73).

28 The protection of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception and of St Francis Xavier were particularly sought. On the eve of the Assumption, a torrential rainstorm swept away rubbish and debris, and marked the beginning of the end of the pestilence, which finally ended on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Parrino, 1770, p.200).

29 Causa proposed that this was a *bozzetto* for the Porta del Carmine (1972, p.993, n.147).

30 This *bozzetto* was for the fresco painted by 1 Sep 1657 on Porta Reale (Clifton & Spike, 1989; Rullo, 2013).

31 'con morte d'otto, e diecimila persone il giorno, si vide Napoli in un momento ridotta in un miserabile Lazzareto, in un'orribile cimiterio'.

32 For Alessandro Righi, Florentine physician in the 1630s, the city poor were like glands or ignoble peripheral organs of the body, far from heart and brain, a depository for noxious substances expelled by the nobler parts and which retained the poison (Pullan, 1992, p.110).

33 For Giuseppe Balestra, head physician of the Lazaretto on the island in the Tiber in Rome, plague 'is a malignant contagious fever, amongst all fevers, the cruellest, which, spreading from one to another, infects with its poisonous quality […] it being communicated through the air' (1657, pp.5–6).

34 Prohibition of sexual intercourse with a woman 'with leprosy or menstruating' formed part of the *Regimen sanitatis* of Salerno which informed Neapolitan medicine (Calvi, 1981, pp.415–16).

35 It prohibited prostitutes from sleeping with anyone ('che le donne di mala vita […] possano dormire accompagnate') on pain of whipping. The men were not punished (Calvi, 1981, p.417).

36 The figure of the dead woman with living baby occurs in Raphael's *Plague in Frigia* and Nicolas Poussin's *The Plague of Azoth*, as well as in Mattia Preti's *bozzetto*.

37 'Comunque sia, egli è certo che un certo Masone, che ne' tumulti dell'anno 1647 era stato officiale del Popolo, tornò in Regno con questa Nave; e ch'essendosi immantinente ammalato, fu condotto nello Spedale della Santissima Annunziata, dove dopo tre giorni se ne morì di Petecchie. Non vi voll'altro per attaccare in Napoli la contagione; poichè assalito da un Capogiro Carlo di Fazio, che serviva nello Spedale, dopo ventiquattr'ore spirò l'anima nella sua casa, ch'era nel vicolo del Pero'.

38 '[V]i furono dieci, o dodici già colpevoli de' popolari tumulti dell'anno 1647 li quali essendo tornati in Napoli gravidi dell'antica perfidia, presero l'occasione de' primi susurri di pestilenza, per eccitare una nuova sedizione nel Popolo'. The districts of Conciaria, Lavinaria and Mercato offered both Masaniello's revolt and the plague most fertile ground.

39 'Fin hora non si è sentito che siano morti di tal male solo persone assai ordinarie' wrote the nunzio Giulio Spinola to Rome on 29 April 1656.

40 The church and convent of Carmine were at the heart of the people's resistance in 1647.

41 Micco Spadaro's *Riding Lesson* (oil on canvas, 64 x 75cm, private collection, Naples) depicts riding lessons near the grain stores just outside Port 'Alba and attests to a fascination with Piazza Mercatello. On horsemanship in viceregal Naples, see Hernando Sánchez (1998).

42 The places ear-marked for plague victims were: 'San Gennaro fuori le mura, the Conservatorio degli Orfanelli of Santa Maria di Loreto, Real Cavallerizza (royal horseground) nearby, and the other outside the Porta di Chiaia' (Parrino, 1770, p.197).

43 Piazza Mercatello is associated with the rebellion in Gargiulo's *Punishment of Thieves at the time of Masaniello* (Museo di San Martino), in which the thieves pass in front of Porta Reale.

44 Josse Lieferinxe's altarpiece was commissioned for the church of Notre Dame des Accoules in Marseilles by the Confrérie de Luminaire de St Sébastien in 1497 (Katz, 2006).

45 One might have expected San Gaetano da Thiene, Francesco Saverio or even suor Orsola Benincasa as intercessor. The latter was much venerated during the plague but, suspected of heresy, was effectively obliterated from the record (Calvi, 1981, p.452).

46 Esposito observes that the term 'community' probably derives from 'cum' 'munus' (or munia). Members of a community are not bound by just any relationship, but precisely by a *munus*, a 'task', 'duty' or 'law'. They are bound by a 'gift' that is to be given (Esposito, 2012, p.14).

47 For Agamben declarations of rights marks the place in which the passage from divinely authorized royal sovereignty to national sovereignty is accomplished. This transforms the 'subject' into a 'citizen' (1998, p.128).

48 I do not mean by 'divisible' to refer, as has been suggested, to the 'multiplicity of points of view of an early modern civic population'. This would be to refer to something in terms not of the 'divisible', but of the 'multiple' and thus different points – and a different point of view entirely.

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THE MATERIALITY OF ENCHANTMENT: RETHINKING NEAPOLITAN BAROQUE MARBLE INTARSIA

Joris van Gastel

Abstract

From Alois Riegl's Stilfragen *to Ernst Gombrich's* The Sense of Order *and beyond, discussions of ornament have focused largely on developments and the perception of abstract patterns, devoid of texture, materiality or presence. With its overt materiality, display of technical virtuosity and sculptural elements, Neapolitan baroque marble intarsia not only challenge this scholarly tradition, but also have been a stumbling block for scholars of baroque art and architecture. Looking into contemporary sources, in particular related to the Church of San Martino, and confronting these with recent more theoretical debates, this essay aims to develop an alternative account. It will explore two theoretical approaches: firstly, Alfred Gell's work on the 'enchantment of technology', in which the author argues that responses to art are conditioned not by art's mimetic faculties, but rather by an awareness of the technological sophistication involved in the radical transformation of materials. And secondly, the definition of image (*Bild*) developed by Horst Bredekamp in his* Theorie des Bildakts, *which stresses the inherent materiality of images, as well as the inherent image-forming activity of inorganic matter. Together, these approaches help to explore aspects of marble intarsia that resonate clearly with contemporary descriptions: that of their material richness and the technical feat involved in producing them. Furthermore, they will help to explore the specificity of these kinds of decorations, that is, the manners in which they are rooted in the specific place that is Naples.*

Biographical note

Joris van Gastel studied Psychology and Art History at the VU University Amsterdam and the Università Ca' Foscari, Venice. Between 2006 and 2011 he was part of the interdisciplinary research project 'Art, Agency and Living Presence in Early Modern Italy' based at Leiden University, in the context of which he wrote his PhD thesis *Il marmo spirante: Sculpture and Experience in Seventeenth-Century Rome*. In addition to shorter fellowships in Florence, Rome, Ferrara and Berlin, he was research fellow at the Kolleg-Forschergruppe 'Bildakt und Verkörperung' (Humboldt University, Berlin; 2011–12), at the University of Warwick (2013) and was part of the research group 'Images of Nature', based at Hamburg University (2014–16). Currently, he is scientific assistant at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, where he works on a project on artistic materials and techniques in baroque Naples.

THE MATERIALITY OF ENCHANTMENT: RETHINKING NEAPOLITAN BAROQUE MARBLE INTARSIA

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In his early homage to Johann Joachim Winckelmann of 1872, the German art historian Carl Justi sketches for his readers an 'impression of Naples':

> Friends of older art used to … feel themselves rather unhappy in Naples. So characterless is Naples' monumental physiognomy that a traveller of the time said: if the old royal palace had not been there, one would doubt if Naples had ever known real architecture. Only those who searched, would, in the end, find some things of value hidden in its chaos. But these high-stacked, statue-rich mausoleums to Aragonese kings, of a romantic beauty, these Giottesque frescoes and a few further offerings of northern- and southern-Italian sculpture, contribute nothing to the city's overall character. As the tropical vegetation has overgrown Indian temples, so the baroque style has covered everything.

> (Justi, 1956, vol.2, pp.202–3)[1]

Without doubt, Justi's own experience of Naples played a central role here. 'Naples', he wrote in one of his letters from Italy, 'has nothing in terms of monuments of antiquity, no architecture of any artistic value; rather, everything it has from the last couple of centuries – churches, fountains, and obelisks – is tasteless to the point of excess' (Justi, 1922, p.79).[2] And yet, the author sketches an image here that, though maybe in less explicitly negative terms, still determines much of the scholarship today. Roberto Pane argued already in 1939 that the Neapolitan baroque 'expressed itself, not so much in monumental forms [*la imponenza delle masse*], but rather in the preciousness of the ornamental' (p.18). The 'specifically Neapolitan sense for the decorative', argues Christof Thoenes (1971, p.24), found its expression not in broad architectural gestures, but in marble and stucco, materials that have gradually 'overgrown' – a reference to Justi – the city's structures. If Pane's and Thoenes' remarks suggest an important shift of attention, they

do not fully annul Justi's negative evaluation. Neapolitan baroque ornament is still seen as something added on, something that, 'as a tropical vegetation', has overgrown the actual fabric of the city, and thus is essentially foreign, essentially out of place.

Only more recently, scholars have picked up on the idea that that which characterises the Neapolitan baroque, and sets it apart from the more extensively studied city of Rome, should be sought in the field of the applied arts (De Cavi, 2012). 'Painting and sculpture', thus argues Nicholas Napoli (2013, p.310), 'were almost always featured in conjunction with other media from silverwork to embroidery, forming a seamless continuity of material and form and blurring the distinction between fine art and decorative art.' In an art history that is mainly concerned with the isolated work of art – that is, isolated from its embeddedness in artistic ensembles – and, as far as architecture is concerned, with ground plans and the question of space, the for Naples so characteristic material and formal continuities have remained largely unexplored (Hills, 2016). This paper aims to focus precisely on such an apparently marginal phenomenon, arguing that it is all but marginal for the Neapolitan baroque, namely the so-called *marmi commessi*, highly complex decorations of inlaid marbles and sculpted forms, decorating numerous Neapolitan churches and chapels.[2] Therefore, this paper deals with one of the most important expressions of the Neapolitan baroque and, at the same time, one of the largest stumbling blocks in its historiography. Typical is the discussion of marble revetment by Cornelius Gurlitt (1850–1938), one of the first architectural historians to take a serious look at the Neapolitan baroque. Though in his *Geschichte des Barockstiles in Italien* of 1887 he speaks of a 'highly justified art form' (p.228), he does not recognise these decorations as actually being a part of the architecture. Rather, in his view, they actually work against architecture. It is deplorable, he writes referring explicitly to Naples, 'when incrustation becomes an end in itself, and the luxuriousness of the materials comes to determine the structure, when the coloured marbles outdo the effect of the spatial organisation, thus impairing the architecture' (p.228).[4] In his discussion of the Church of San Martino this is brought to a point: though clearly fascinated by the impression of the whole, he speaks of 'colours that sound in disarray' and 'wantonly obtrusive materials' (p.422).[5]

This paper seeks to counter such negative evaluations by readdressing the role of materials in Neapolitan marble intarsia. Firstly, it will draw attention to a trend in the study of ornament in which ornament is fully dissociated from its material and technical

implementation. Then, it seeks to indicate why this trend is problematic, and what it would mean to take materials seriously. In doing so, it takes the initial steps of an exploration of Neapolitan marble intarsia as something proper, rather than foreign, something intrinsically bound to local artistic traditions and the geological context, and as a result, as constitutive of the place that is baroque Naples.

The disembodiment of ornament

Even though recent years have seen a growing interest in ornament, including from a more theoretical angle, the scholarly debate is still very much determined by ideas formulated around the turn of the previous century.[6] At times these can, of course, be very insightful. The frequently noted connection between marble intarsia and tapestries easily brings to mind the work of Gottfried Semper, whose ideas about ornament are inherently connected with the textile arts. Moreover, for Semper textiles play a determining role in the history of architecture in general.[7] His concept of *Bekleidung*, 'clothing' or 'dressing', is in fact close to the Italian *vestire*, which is used time and again in seventeenth-century sources to describe marble revetments. Carlo Celano, for example, writes of the Church of San Martino, that it was 'clothed [*vestita*], on the pilasters and in the chapels, by the most gentle marble intarsia [*marmi commessi*]…' (1692, vol.6, p.26).[8] It appears, then, that Semper provides good grounds to discuss Neapolitan marble intarsia as something that is central, rather than peripheral, to the understanding of Neapolitan baroque architecture, and also to give a role to the material properties of this decoration. To understand how this is the case, we'll have to look at Semper's idea of *Stoffwechsel*. Semper writes:

> Every material conditions its own particular manner of formation by the properties that distinguish it from other materials and that demand a technical treatment appropriate to it. When an artistic motive has been subjected to any kind of material treatment, its originating type will be modified, having acquired a certain tone as it were. The type no longer rests at its primary stage of development, but has passed through a more or less distinct metamorphosis. When from this secondary or, according to the circumstances, multiply graded modification, the motive now undergoes a new material transformation [*Stoffwechsel*], the form emerging from it will be a mixed result, one that expresses its primordial type and all stages of modification that preceded the last formation.
>
> (1860, vol.1, pp.233–4)[9]

For Semper, then, techniques are inherent in the material. Yet, in the end, he tries to exclude the physical presence of materials so central to marble decorations. As Alina Payne (2012, pp.45–6) has shown, it was one of the author's central aims to formulate an account of the use of polychromy in Greek architecture. Semper writes:

> the Hellenic building principle had to vindicate and nurture *colour* as the subtlest, most bodiless dressing. It is the most perfect way to do away with reality, for while it dresses the material it is itself immaterial … Polychromy replaces the barbaric dressing of noble metals, incrustations, inlaid gems, panelling, and the other accessories with which Asiatic works are so extravagantly outfitted.
>
> (Semper,1860, vol.1, p.445, in Mallgrave, 1996, p.208)[9]

If Semper thus lays the foundations for a theory of ornament which allows us to thematise its materiality, the author himself, in a profoundly Hegelian move, discards overt materiality in favour of polychromy.

As such, he may be said to close the door he himself opened. The true stab of death to his theory, however, came from art historian Alois Riegl. Even though Riegl explicitly avoids criticising Semper directly, with his *Stilfragen* of 1893 he has written a history of ornament that is no less explicit in debunking Semper's fundamental thesis, namely that of the essential role of *Bekleidung*. In his introduction, he argues that there is 'not only … no definitive ground for assuming that the oldest geometrical decorations were executed with a particular technique, and the textile arts in particular, but also, the oldest, truly historical monuments actually disprove this assumption' (p.viii).[11] This is also the message of the first chapter of *Stilfragen*, in which the author provides an alternative theory of the origins of ornament. His point of departure is a number of then-recent archaeological finds, objects created by what Riegl calls 'half-cannibalistic cave dwellers'. With just two images – a figure sculpted fully in the round and an engraved figure – we have, Riegl (p.20) argues, 'the full ladder of the developmental phases in which, step by step, the physical character evaporates'[12] (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2). Riegl develops this observation into a general principle. Art, including decorative art, has its origins in the 'unmediated reproduction of the beings of nature in their fully embodied appearance.' He continues:

> As one sees the beings of nature always from one side only, one learns to be satisfied with the relief, which leaves just as much of the appearance of physical presence as is required by

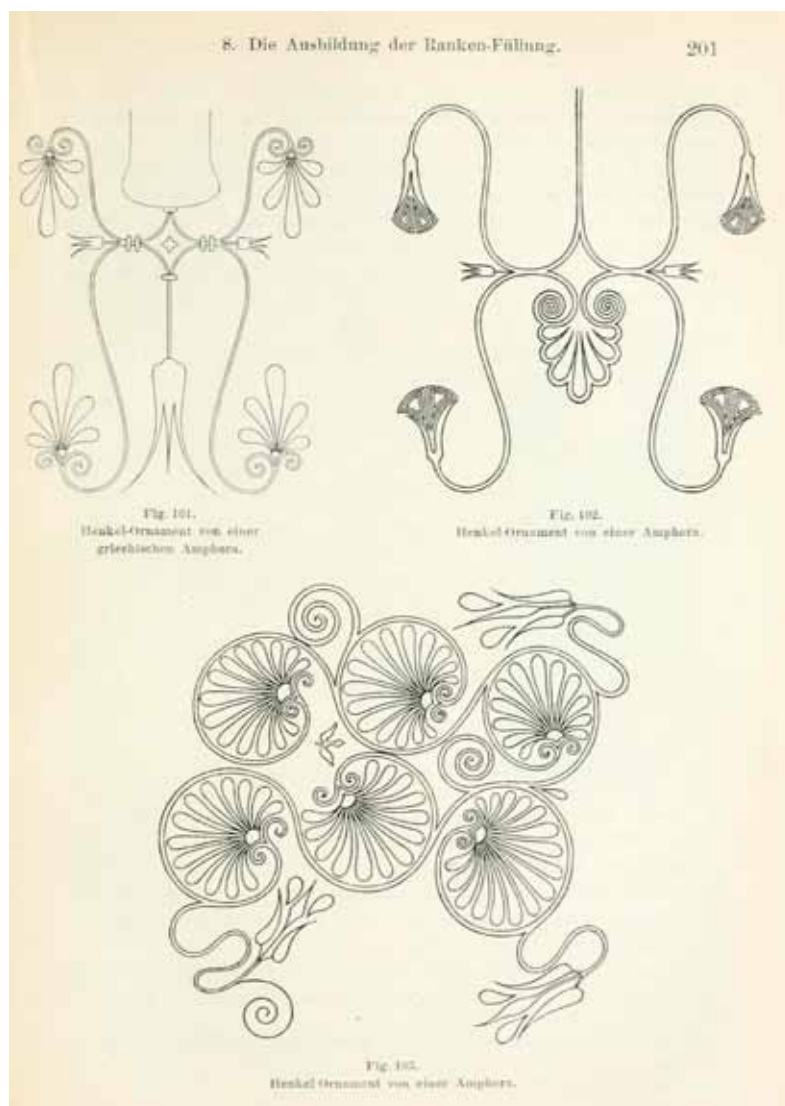Figure 3.1: Image 1 from Riegl's *Stilfragen*.

Figure 3.3: Ornament dissociated from its material carrier from Riegl's *Stilfragen*.
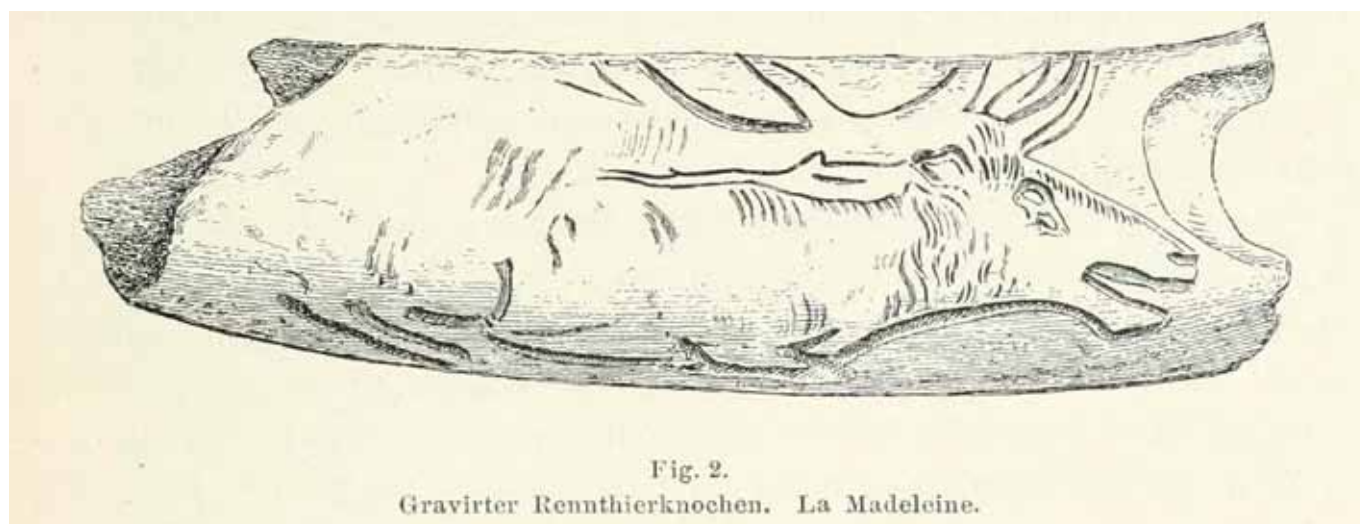

Figure 3.2: Image 2 from Riegl's *Stilfragen*.

Figure 3.4: Greek ornament from Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*.

the human eye. Thus, one gets used to depictions on a flat surface, and starts to comprehend the contour line. Finally, the appearance of physical presence is wholly abandoned, and replaced by modelling through drawing.

(p.20)[13]

Riegl's idea of the two-dimensionality of vision, clearly influenced by Adolf von Hildebrand's *Problem der Form*, allows him to fully dissociate ornament from its material (Gastel, 2013). There was an ulterior motive for Riegl's disembodiment of ornament, however. By reducing ornament to patterns of lines, Riegl could write a history of forms wholly independent from the material carrier. This approach is echoed in Riegl's use of images. Throughout his book, he starts by displaying particular objects and then dissociates the patterns from these objects, depicting them as abstract plays of lines (Fig. 3.3). It could even be argued that images

Figure 3.5: Interior of the church of San Martino, seen towards the right nave, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

contributed significantly to his ideas. In fact, Riegl relies heavily on Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament*, a collection of images that reduces ornament to two-dimensional patterns (Frank, 2001) (Fig. 3.4).

Riegl's conception of ornament was further consolidated by another classic in the study of ornament: Ernst Gombrich's *The Sense of Order*, published in 1979. Indeed, Gombrich openly agrees with Riegl's critique of 'the so-called doctrine of materialism' (p.64) and pays homage to Riegl throughout his book. Still, he realises that material cannot be left fully out of the picture. 'We may not want the material', he writes, 'to deny its identity, wood being turned into a semblance of lace or needlework into painting, but the craftsman's ambition to effect such miraculous transformations cannot be left out of the history of art' (p.66). But what could the role of such an ambition be? This question remains unanswered in the book, and it certainly does not play a role in Gombrich's discussion of the *effects* of ornament. Ornament, here, is no less disembodied than it was for Riegl. The reason for Gombrich's disembodiment of ornament is different from Riegl's, however. As an avid student of experimental psychology, he conceives of the effect of ornament as a problem of visual perception. To facilitate the exchange between art history and psychology,

'ornament' becomes 'pattern', a two-dimensional, purely visual abstraction. Interestingly, as Gombrich turns to ornament in non-Western art in the last chapter of his book, 'The Edge of Chaos', he does deal with its agency beyond the psychology of visual perception. Only the non-Western canon, it seems, requires an anthropological approach, whereas Western art merits a more 'rational' analysis. The line set out by Riegl and Gombrich has continued to determine the direction of the scholarly debate, from Oleg Grabar's *The Mediation of Ornament*, up to the more recent developments related to digital images. Ornament becomes 'pattern', becomes 'image', a two-dimensional, purely visual and immaterial abstraction.

Fanzago at San Martino: Embodied ornament

A consideration of the marble decoration of the church of San Martino, makes clear how problematic such a view of ornament is (Fig. 3.5). Commissioned from the sculptor-architect Cosimo Fanzago (1591–1678) around 1623 and finished only in the course of the eighteenth century, it is evident that, even though patterns play a significant role here, they account for only part of the effect of this ornament. First, it is clear that ornament has significant sculptural

Figure 3.6: Cosimo Fanzago and workshop, Marble decorations, Chapel of Saint Bruno, San Martino, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

qualities. And second, as already hinted by Gurlitt, the materials themselves play a central role (Figs. 3.6 and 3.7). As German art historian Georg Weise has shown in a series of papers published in 1959–60, significant elements of Fanzago's formal repertoire can be related to the elaborately sculpted frames of coats of arms. This connection with the *stemma* allows for a fruitful perspective on the more theoretical aspects of this ornament. Filippo Baldinucci writes in his 1681 *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno*: 'the ornament surrounding [the coat of arms] is created by the artist according to his own good taste; and it is herein that consists the artist's concept and invention' (p.14 [*s.v.* 'arme']).[14] The frame of the coat of arms thus forms a kind of free space, a space that is not subjected to the rules of art and architecture, wholly in the hand of the artist. It is this very ornament – significantly enough, a sculptural ornament – that in Naples turns into architecture.

Weise explicitly excludes marble incrustations from his argument, and one can indeed argue that they have a different origin, namely, with the Florentine tradition of *pietre dure*. Ferdinando I de' Medici gave this tradition an important impulse with the foundation of the *Opificio delle pietre dure* in 1588, a foundation that was directly connected with his commission of the *Cappella*

Figure 3.7: Detail of a pilaster, San Martino, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

Figure 3.8: View towards the main altar of San Domenico Maggiore, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

dei Principi in the church of San Lorenzo (Giusti, 2015). Around the turn of the sixteenth century, numerous Tuscan artists travelled south to seek a future, among them architect Giovanni Antonio Dosio (1533–1611) and sculptor Michelangelo Naccherino (1550–1622), both of whom had worked at San Martino when Fanzago arrived there. More important, arguably, were the stone carvers trained at the *Opificio delle pietre dure*, who brought with them the technical skills that made Fanzago's invention possible.

There is yet another tradition that should be taken into account, one that relates more directly to Gottfried Semper's concept of *Bekleidung*, namely that of the textile arts. An impression of the importance textiles may be gathered by looking at the example of the Neapolitan church of San Domenico Maggiore – even though the nineteenth century re-gothification of the church has left little of the original decorations (Fig. 3.8). Only the richly decorated high altar, created after the designs of Fanzago, is retained, be it with some later modifications (Gastel, in press). In his travel guide *Notitie del bello, del antico e del curioso della città di Napoli* of 1692, Canon Carlo Celano gives an impression of the church's decorations at the beginning of the seventeenth century:

in this church one could see a striking quantity of the richest velvet drapes and of equally precious drapes of gold and brocade *riccio sopra riccio*, that in the middle aisle were hung in three orders per part, and two in the side aisles, and in addition there were those that decorated the crossing, so that the whole church was decked out with drapes.

(p.115)[15]

Religious festivities resulted in a further intensification of the textile decorations, as was for example the case with the canonisation in 1641 of Saint Dominic as Naples' patron saint, an honour he shared with several other saints. A description of the decorations in San Domenico on this occasion can be found in a book titled *Il trionfo di San Domenico*, written by Paolo Caracciolo and published in Naples in 1644:

The altars of the chapels were decorated with rich silk drapes of silver *contratagliato*, and *chermisino* velvet worked in the same manner, all newly made, and on top of them were candelabras, and flowers, with other embellishments: but the main altar formed an almost too outstanding and stupendous spectacle. There were various silver vases with many

Figure 3.9: Cosimo Fanzago and workshop, Marble decorations, Chapel of Saint Bruno, San Martino, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

Figure 3.10: Cosimo Fanzago and workshop, Marble decorations, Chapel of Saint Bruno, San Martino, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

variously coloured artificial flowers, so that it seemed a delightful throne of Spring.

On the altar's front was an extraordinarily rich *paliotto*, of great cost, a most glorious work of embroidery. There were embroidered lilies, hyacinths, roses, and other flowers, so lifelike, that one would have sworn they breathed the sweetest fragrance.

(pp.108–9)[16]

In the hands of Fanzago and his team these three traditions – the frame of the coat of arms, the *pietre dure* and the textile arts – come together, merging into one.[17] Sculptural forms are inlaid with patterns of coloured marble, while they themselves break forth from inlaid marble patterns. The floral motifs of the textile arts are integrated and, at times, the decorations follow a rigid, self-imposed system of tapestry-like frames; elsewhere, however, these frames are broken by spiralling forms of sculptural ornament (Fig. 3.9).

That contemporaries, too, had difficulty in making sense of this intricate interweaving of forms and techniques, follows from an appraisal of the works in San Martino, written by Fanzago's own assistants in order to determine if he was asking a fair price for his work (Napoli, 2009) (Fig. 3.10).

First there are two ornaments where the pictures of Jusepe de Ribera are placed, that is, Moses and Elijah. Because these two ornaments are contained by their frames both above and below, it is understood however that the thin arms of *verde antico* marble, which go up to the *collarino* of the capital, are excluded. All of these are measured, but the ornament one understands as the framing inside and outside, that on one side [outside] has a shell [*gusso, guscio*], and the other side an ovolo with its flat surfaces and its *cimacie* [projecting rings] with studs and triangles, with mischio of breccia di francia, with the background of breccia minuta, which is joined [*fà fuso*] to the framework with drops [*gocciole*], brackets [*menzoletti*], cartouches [*scartocci*], half jars, and a *cimacio* in the framework. And within the jars here and there [on both frames] there are inlays of verde antico marble, with thin strips [*listello*] of white and black, and a background of breccia di francia.

If the ensemble of these ornaments can be appraised all together so as not to confuse the matter, this should be sufficient.

(Napoli, 2009, p.219)[18]

The manner in which the appraisers struggle with trying to explain what should be counted as being part of the ornament and what not is rather striking. And if Ribera's painting is mentioned only in passing, it is interesting to see how the work too is integrated into the decorations. Although not actually part of the ornament as it is described here, the marbles function both as the painting's frame and are part of the architecture. The painting, in turn, responds to the colours of the marble decorations, as is to be seen, for example, in the stone-like grey in the background of the picture, thus becoming an integral part of a decorative whole.

That invention – *invenzione* – forms an important aesthetic category here is, becomes clear from Bernardo de' Dominici's discussion of marble decorations in his *vita* of Cosimo Fanzago:

> having been asked his opinion about the works they were planning to have done…, he promised [the monks] to create something of such a shear novelty, that it would incite marvel and delight to the eyes of the viewers. And indeed, no less were the marble decorations that he, with marvellous invention [*invenzione*], had made for the church, giving daily guidance with his words… [And] these marbles, inlayed so artfully, were the first to be seen to have been worked in this manner.

(2003–14, vol.3.1, p.349)[19]

As if not wanting to leave any doubt of Fanzago's personal involvement in the creation of this novelty, De' Dominici (p.349) adds that Fanzago sculpted 'with his own hands … the large roses with their petals on the pilasters.'[19]

Thus, artistic invention – *invenzione* – is here connected with the technical feat of artful inlay. The commission for the chapel of Sant'Antonio in the Church of San Lorenzo, in which, coincidentally, San Martino is explicitly referred to, makes clear that such technical aspects are central (Fig. 3.11):

> all coloured marbles [*mischi*] should be worked with the utmost perfection, excellence and mastery, both the monochrome, and those with [patterns of] stars and leaves, with the utmost perfection and mastery, without an excessive use of stucco, precisely as in the other works at San Martino. …

Figure 3.11: Cosimo Fanzago and workshop, Chapel of Sant'Antonio (detail), San Lorenzo, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

all the carvings should be of the perfect design and invention by the aforementioned Cavaliere, corresponding to other similar works and models, and particularly those at San Martino, and [they] should be well cut, cleaned, and polished, with the highest possible finish and care.

(Filangieri, 1883–91, vol.2, pp.216–17)[21]

Although the materials themselves might appear to be of a lesser interest here, the contracts for such commissions tell a different story. Almost without exception they contain long lists of the different kinds of marbles and stones to be used, an indication that artist and patron shared an extensive knowledge of the materials involved. The Carthusians of San Martino were evidently concerned about the variety of stones that decorated their church and monastery. The French visitor Alexandre, Sieur de Rogissart mentions in his *Les delices de l'Italie* of 1707 'four oval pearls of exceptional size, four pieces of topaz and other precious stones' in the treasury of the monastery (vol.3, p.199).[22] Another author speaks of 'crosses from amber and engraved rock crystal, altar frontals embroidered with gold and pearls, images from mother of pearl and embroidery, almost outdoing the [art of] painting', and large amounts of silver (Parrino, 1700, vol.1, p.124).[23] The decoration of the main altar of the church should have reflected the riches of the treasury; though never actually executed – what can be seen today in the church is a wooden model after the design of the Neapolitan painter-architect Francesco Solimena – the monks had planned something with 'precious stones and gilded bronze'. Rogissart writes: 'The high altar will be absolutely magnificent. They use exclusively precious stones, diamonds, silver, or gold' (p.198).[24]

That the interest of the monks went beyond a love for splendour, becomes clear when we look at the rich collections of the monastery's library, a catalogue of which was published in 1764 (Fabricius).[25] Surprisingly, there are few books in the catalogue that suggest a particular interest in the visual arts. The only real exception is Carlo Ridolfi's *Maraviglia dell'arte* of 1648 (Fabricius, 1764, p.261), a book that, with its focus on Venice, is somewhat out of place here – though with the *Last supper* by the Veronese workshop installed among the paintings in the church choir, the monks did have something Venetian in their collections (Causa, 1973, p.53). In contrast, the number of books concerned with natural history is striking: Georgius Agricola's *De re metallica* (1621), various works by Ulisse Aldrovandi, Ferrante Imperato's *Historia naturale* (1599), various works by Athanasius Kircher,

Giambattista della Porta's *Magia naturalis* (1650) and so forth. Worthy of note are also the books on the natural history of the New World, as, for example, Willem Piso's *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648) and the so-called *Tesoro Messicano* (1651), the latter a work that was partly edited in Naples itself (Freedberg, 2002, pp.245–74). And finally, there are works that deal specifically with stones and their virtues or powers, such as Anselmus Boethius de Boodt's *Gemmarum et lapidum historia* (1639), Girolamo Cardano's *De subtilitate* (1551) and Giovanni Battista Ardemani's *Tesoro delle Gioie* (1630).

Although this is not the place for a full analysis of these works, two significant points may be made. A returning topic in these books is nature's capacity to create images. Maybe Kircher is here the best known example. In his *Mundus subterraneus* or *Underground World* of 1665 he seeks to explain the images found in nature by referring to formative processes in geology, hereby relating to a longstanding discussion (Felfe, 2015). As such, nature's image-creating force is directly connected with a second important recurrent theme, namely, that of the life of nature. Stones and metals, thus was the common conception, as a part of nature continuously renew, procreate, and undergo ever new transformations. In Naples, such an idea of the earth as living entity was particularly widespread, which had everything to do with the volcanic activity in its vicinity (Hills 2016; Cocco, 2013).

The technology of enchantment
Material and technique are central aspects of the appreciation or even agency of Neapolitan marble decorations – aspects that, however, have received little scholarly attention. In the final part of this paper, some new approaches to these decorations will be formulated, whereby their material presence is put at the core of the argument. For a first point of departure, it is instructive to look outside of the field of art history and turn, for a moment, to anthropology.

In his paper 'The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology,' British anthropologist Alfred Gell (1992) has attempted to explain the fascinating power of images with a phenomenon that he has called the 'enchantment of technology'. Rather than focusing on the formal aspects of art, Gell argues, 'the attitude of the spectator towards the work of art is fundamentally conditioned by his [or her] notion of the technical processes which gave rise to it, and the fact that it was created by the agency of another person, the artist' (p.51). As a result, '[t]he power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody' (p.44). Herewith, technique is

not something secondary, a means through which something else – form, meaning etc. – is achieved. Important for our discussion is Gell's remark about the role of technology outside the domain of 'fine art': 'The kind of technical sophistication involved is not the technology of illusionism but the technology of the radical transformation of materials' (p.54).

Surprisingly enough, when Gell comes to speak of ornament in his book *Art and Agency*, he is still very much indebted to the tradition of Gombrich, a tradition that, as we have seen, denies ornament's physical presence (1998, pp.73–95). To counter the disembodiment of ornament inherent to this tradition, it is helpful to confront Gell's ideas with the concept of image as it has been defined by Horst Bredekamp in his *Theorie des Bildakts* (2010). Referring, significantly enough, to Leon Battista Alberti's *De statua* (c. 1445), Bredekamp writes:

> Following Alberti, we can speak of an image [*Bild*] (*simulacrum*) from that moment onwards, in which natural objects … present a minimum of human manipulation. As soon as a natural structure [*Naturgebilde*] shows a trace of human intervention, it can be defined as image.
>
> (p.34)[26]

'In such a definition', Bredekamp explains, 'non-physical images are not part of the equation, as only the material resistance allows for the peculiar latency that builds the ground for the larger question asked here' (p.34).[27] Thus, Bredekamp gives the materiality of the image a central role, seeing it, moreover, as something that is explicitly made. Here, the 'larger question' refers, of course, to the power of images to affect the beholder, what Bredekamp calls *Bildakt*.

Taken together, Gell and Bredekamp provide the first argument for a new approach to Neapolitan marble decoration, in which the impact, in addition to the *concetto* or *invenzione*, is primarily determined by the technique and the material, as well as its radical transformation.[28] What would it mean to take the role of materials seriously here? In the first place, one would maybe inquire into its religious significance. Visitors often associated the decorations with the Heavenly Jerusalem, a city, as one may read in the book of revelations, of pure gold, with walls of precious stones (Rev. 21:18–21). Moreover, a parallel could be drawn between the treasures of faith and the richness of the church interior. The Neapolitan priest Emanuele di Gesù Maria in a sermon titled *Il doppio tesoro* (*The Double Treasure*, 1681) draws attention to the idea of the body and blood of Christ as treasures, treasures that here form a parallel to the treasures hidden in the earth:

> May it be blessed for all eternity, the mighty hand of the Creator, for while in the works of nature he has achieved such strange miracles – stones producing gems, the earth's bosom fecund with silver and gold, the entrails of mountains hiding treasures – he has done the same in his works of grace: for in the mines of that sphere, in the bosom of that altar, in the entrails of the consecrated host, with renewed marvel, he has hidden the silver and the gold of humanity, and of the divinity of Christ.
>
> (p.173)[29]

Fundamentally, this text deals with a series of miraculous transformations – host becomes flesh, wine becomes blood, but also: stone becomes gem, silver becomes gold. Accordingly, we find also a further explanation for the interest in natural history in San Martino's library: the miracles of faith are directly related to the miracles of nature.

As to the role of technique, it is vital to look beyond the basic inquiries of technical art history. Of particular interest is here the concept of socio-technological system, defined by anthropologist Bryan Pfaffenberger (1992, p.497) as 'the distinctive technological activity that stems from the linkage of techniques and material culture to the social coordination of labour.' In other words, technique is here understood as being embedded in a larger system of social and non-social 'actors', ranging from tools to materials, from hierarchic and political structures to economic concerns, indeed even to geology. That such an idea can be applied fruitfully to the case of San Martino, follows already from De' Dominici's remark, quoted above, that Fanzago guided his workers with his words. These words, it could be argued, are as much a part of the technique as the tools and skills of the stone mason. Indeed, a clear division of labour is central to the mobilising and coordinating of larger groups of workers, as it is central to gaining access to a variety of materials. The decoration at San Martino, though often conceived as the result of a single artist, relies as much on the numerous Tuscan stone masons who, frequently after a training at the *Opificio delle pietre dure*, came to Naples at the turn of the sixteenth century. In 1618 they founded the *Corporazione degli scultori e marmorai*, a guild for sculptors and stonemasons, that controlled the quality of the work produced in the city, but also worked as a social safety net (Capobianco, 1985; Strazzullo, 1962; Ceci, 1897). If it was arguably Fanzago's merit to see the potential of this workforce, the social structures provided by the guild formed a fundamental precondition for the works at San Martino.

Figure 3.12: Balustrade in San Martino, Naples. (Photo: Joris van Gastel)

When the materials and their 'radical transformation' are followed beyond the Neapolitan workshop of San Martino, one gets a sense of the far reach of the sociotechnical system. Lapis lazuli, for example, used extensively in the balustrade of the choir at San Martino, was in all probability imported from Badakshan in what today is Afghanistan, from where it travelled over land to Bagdad, and then over the sea to Italy (Searight, 2010; Bucklow, 2009) (Fig. 3.12). The silver, which was abundantly present in the treasure and should also decorate the altar, in all probability came to Naples from the mines of Mexico and Peru, where it was mined by slaves, who, like the Neapolitans themselves, were subjected to the Spanish crown (Hills, in press; TePaske, 2010). Closer to home, traces of lapis lazuli and also silver were found in the midst of the lava, expelled at the catastrophic eruption of Vesuvius in 1631 (Gimma, 1730, vol.2, p.500). Herewith, the materials are again connected with a moment of radical transformation, one that leads us back to natural history. Referring once more to Bredekamp's Albertian idea about images, it becomes clear that these two moments of radical transformation – that brought about by nature and that brought about by the artist – are intrinsically connected; the artist engages a material that always already has a history, a history that is as much part of the working of the image, as the social and technical history that is inscribed in the material through the artisan. The question then is, how precisely such histories are inscribed in the material and become part of its agency.

Postscript

Art history has been primarily interest in that which takes place within the frame; the frame itself, all too easily gets left out of the equation. And yet, in the example discussed above, it is precisely here that the most important processes take place. If Naples has been allotted only a marginal place in the history of art, particularly in comparison to the 'golden triangle' of Florence, Venice and Rome, this might be due to the fact that it stands out in those areas that often have been banned to the periphery of scholarly inquiry. What could be gained by shifting focusses to these 'peripheral' phenomena? And what, more specifically, could be won by drawing attention to the materiality of ornament? First and foremost, a focus on material and technique may give new insights in the character of the Neapolitan baroque, not as derivative of Rome, but rather as a place with it its own traditions and dynamic, anchored in a specific geological situation. In addition, the approach formulated here may open a way to newly discuss the artistic cultures in further Southern Italian centres, such as Lecce or Palermo, but also in the Iberian Peninsula and, significantly, Latin America. As in Naples, in Sicily, Spain and Latin America, too, one finds the prejudice of the excessive, not infrequently related to colonial ideas of a periphery that is too slow to catch up (Vlachou, 2016). Rather than part of a not un-problematic history of influences and adaptations, these continuities could be more readily understood in terms of materials and techniques, as well as the social structures they embody. Naples could function as a key here, as the city demands a new approach to the history of art and its techniques.

Notes

[1] 'Freunde ältere Kunst pflegten sich freilich in Neapel ziemlich unglücklich zu fühlen. So charakterlos ist Neapels monumentale Physiognomie, daß ein damaliger Reisender meint, wenn der alte Königspalast nicht wäre, so würde man zweifeln, ob Neapel je die Architektur gekannt habe. Nur wer suchte, fand doch noch manches Kleinod in seinem Chaos versteckt. Aber diese hoch aufgetürmten statuenreichen Mausoleen aragonesischer Könige von romantischer Pracht, diese Reste giottesker Fresken und so manche Gaben norditalienischer und südlicher Bildhauerei tragen nichts bei zum Gepräge der Stadt. Wie die tropische Vegetation indische Tempel überwuchert hat, so bedeckte der Barockstil alles.' All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

[2] 'Neapel enthält nichts von Denkmalen des Alterthums, nichts von künstlerisch werthvollen Gebäuden, im Gegenteil, alles wes es aus den letzten Jahrhunderten giebt an Kirchen, Brunnen, Obelisken ist geschmacklos zum Exceß…' Justi was in Naples in August–November 1867 and February–March 1869; cf. Justi (1922, pp.72–131, 258–73). For the earlier critical reception of the Neapolitan baroque, see: Riedle (1977) and Blunt (1974).

[3] For a recent discussion (with further references), see Del Pesco (2016).

[4] 'Schlimmer ist es jedoch, wenn die Inkrustation Selbstzweck und der Luxus mit dem *Material* bestimmend für den Gebilde wird, wenn die farbigen Marmorsorten die Wirkung der plastischen Gliederungen übertönen und somit die Architektur beeinträchtigen, wie dies namentlich in Neapel geschieht.'

[5] 'durcheinander klingenden Farben [und] an sich rücksichtslos aufdringlichen Materialien'.

[6] Among recent publications, see Necipoğlu and Payne (2016), Dekoninck, Heering and Lefftz (2013), Beyer and Spies (2012), Payne (2012), Frank and Hartung (2001), and Raulet and Schmidt (2001). For a comprehensive overview, cf. Raulet and Kroll (2002).

[7] Cf. Semper (1860, vol.1, p.227) 'immer bleibt gewiss *dass die Anfänge des Bauens mit den Anfängen der Textrin zusammenfallen.*' For Semper's ideas about veiling, see Payne (2012, pp.35–46) and Mallgrave (1996, pp.290–302).

[8] 'Viene questa [chiesa] vestita, ne' pilastri e nelle cappelle, di gentilissimi marmi commessi'.

[9] 'Jeder Stoff bedingt seine besondere Art des bildnerischen Darstellens durch die Eigenschaften, die ihn von andern Stoffen unterscheiden und eine ihm angehörige Technik der Behandlung erheischen. Ist nun ein Kunstmotiv durch irgend eine stoffliche Behandlung hindurchgeführt worden, so wird sein ursprünglicher Typus durch sie modificirt worden sein, gleichsam eine bestimmte Färbung erhalten haben; der Typus steht nicht mehr auf seiner primären Entwicklungsstufe, sondern eine mehr oder minder ausgesprochene Metamorphose ist mit ihm vorgegangen. Geht nun das Motiv aus dieser sekundären oder nach Umständen mehrfach graduirten Umbildung einen neuen Stoffwechsel ein, dann wird das sich daraus Gestaltende ein gemischtes Resultat sein, das den Urtypus und alle Stufen seiner Umbildung, die der letzten Gestaltung vorangingen, in dieser ausspricht.' Translation adapted from Semper (1989, pp.258–59).

[10] Semper makes a similar point about Greek sculpture (1860, vol.1, p.236).

[11] 'In diesem Kapitel … hoffe ich dargelegt zu haben, dass nicht bloss kein zwingender Anlass vorliegt, der uns nöthigen würde a priori die ältesten geometrischen Verzierungen in einer bestimmten Technik, insbesondere der textilen Künste, ausgeführt zu vermuthen, sondern, dass die ältesten wirklich historischen Kunstdenkmäler den bezüglichen Annahmen viel eher widersprechen.'

[12] 'Dann haben wir eine ganze Stufenleiter von Entwicklungsphasen, in denen sich der plastische Charakter allmälig verflüchtigt...'

[13] 'Die unmittelbare Reproduction der Naturwesen in ihrer vollen körperlichen Erscheinung, im Wege des durch einen weiter unten zu bezeichnenden psychischen Vorgang zur Bethätigung angespornten Nachahmungstriebes, steht hiernach am Anfange alles Kunstschaffens: die ältesten Kunstwerke sind plastischer Natur. Da man die Naturwesen immer nur von einer Seite sieht, lernt man sich mit dem Relief begnügen, das eben nur so viel vom plastischen Scheine wiedergiebt, als das menschliche Auge braucht. So gewöhnt man sich an die Darstellung in einer Fläche und gelangt zum Begriffe der Umrisslinie. Endlich verzichtet man auf den plastischen Schein vollständig, und ersetzt denselben durch die Modellirung mittels der Zeichnung.'

[14] 'l'ornamento intorno ad esso fassi dall'Artefice secondo il suo buon gusto; ed è quello nel quale consiste il concetto ed invenzione del medesimo Artefice…'

[15] 'in questa chiesa vi si vedeva una quantità maravigliosa di ricchissime coltre di velluti e di ricchissimi drappi d'oro e di broccati ricci sopra ricci, che nella nave di mezzo se ne ponevano tre ordini per parte e due nelle navi minori, oltre quelle che adornavano la croce, in modo che tutta la chiesa veniva adobbata di coltre.'

[16] 'Gli altari delle Cappelle erano apparati di ricchi panni di contratagliato di lama d'argento, e velluto chermisino di un'istessa divisa, fatti nuovamente, e sopra vi erano candelieri, e fiori, con altri abbellimenti: ma l'altar maggiore rendeva uno spettacolo troppo raguardevole, e stupendo. Vi erano diversi vasi d'argento con molti fiori artificiali di variati colori, che sembrava un vezoso trono di Primavera… Nella facciata dell'altare era un ricchissimo paliotto di molto prezzo, gloria maggiore del ricamo. Vi erano trapunti i gigli, i giacinti, le rose, & altri fiori, cosi al naturale, c'havresti giurato di sentirne spirare soavissimi gli odori…' For a further discussion of this source, see Gastel (in press).

[17] A similar point, with regard to Sicilian decorations, was made by Hills (1999).

[18] Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Monasteri Soppressi, fasc. 2143, fol. 315, transcribed and translated in Napoli (2009, p.219).

[19] 'Che però chiamato il Cav. Cosimo vollero udire il suo parere circa quei lavori che avean disegnato di fare, ed egli facendogli animo gli promise fare opere tali, le quali recassero

maraviglia, e diletto agli occhi de' riguardanti per la novità dell'oggetto. Tali appunto furono i marmi commessi che con mirabile invenzione ei fece lavorar per la Chiesa assistendovi quotidianamente per l'impegno di sua parola … questi marmi così artifiziosamente commessi, furono i primi ad esser veduti lavorati in tal sorta…'

[20] 'E per rendersi più cospicui, ed aggiungere magnificenza, e particolarità alla chiesa, vi lavorò di sua mano i rosoni, con le folia, che si veggono ne' pilastri…'

[21] 'Item che tutti li mischi habbiano da essere lavorati de tutta perfettione et eccelenza et bontà tanti li piani come quelli stellati et fogliati siano commessi di ogni perfettione et bontà senza stucchi esorbitanti simili alle altreopere fatte in San Mar[ti]no et cosi anco li marmi lavorati di quella perfettione come sono lavorati in San Martino. … Item che tutti li intagli habbiano da essere de perfetto disegno et inventione del Cavalier predetto conforme alle altre opere simili et li modelli et in particolare fatti a San Martino siano ben lavorati, politi, et specchiati con ogni perfettione et diligenza…'

[22] 'On y voit encore quatre perles ovales d'une grandeur peu commune, quatre topazes & autres pierres précieuses…'

[23] 'vi sono croci d'ambra e cristallo di rocca intagliati, palliotti ricamati di perle ed oro, quadretti di madri perle, di ricamo, che quasi han superato la pittura.'

[24] 'Le maître Autel sera touy-à-fait magnifique. On n'y employe que pierres precieuses, diamans, perles, argent, ou or.'

[25] I have used the copy of the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli (SALA FARN. 62. H 2), which includes handwritten additions and appears to come from the monastery itself.

[26] 'Alberti zufolge ist von einem Bild (*simulacrum*) von dem Moment an zu sprechen, in dem Gegenstände der Natur … ein Minimum an menschlicher Bearbeitung aufweisen. Sobald ein Naturgebilde eine Spur menschlichen Eingriffs erkennen lasse, erfülle es den Begriff des Bildes.'

[27] 'In dieser Definition scheiden nichtphysische Bilder aus der Betrachtung aus, weil erst die materielle Widerstandsfähigkeit die Möglichkeit jener eigenwilligen Latenz begründet, die für die hier verfolgte Fragestellung die Basis bildet.'

[28] Of course, other scholars have shown an interest in materials as well; for an overview, see Cole (2011).

[29] 'Sia ella per sempre benedetta la possente mano del Creatore, poiche se nell'opre della natura hà fatto un così strano miracolo, che le pietre habbino miniere prodottrici di Gemme, che la terra habbi il seno fecondo d'argento, e d'oro, che i Monti habbino viscere da nasconder tesori; Hallo fatto altresì nell'opre della Gratia; Conciosiacosache nella miniera di quella sfera, nel seno di quell'Altare, nelle viscere di quell'Ostia Sagramentata hà egli con nuovo stupore ascosto l'argento, e l'oro dell'umanità, e della Divinità di Cristo.'

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BAROQUE TECTONICS: ERUPTIONS AND DISRUPTIONS IN THE VESUVIAN CITY
Alfonso Tortora and Sean Cocco

Abstract

The Vesuvian city is a neologism that describes parts of the Neapolitan hinterland that have interacted historically with frequent bouts of volcanism. Heavily urbanised today, this territory has a complex and highly varied history shaped by how flows of volcanic rock and debris have altered human and natural environments. Tortora and Cocco argue for the need to expand historical approaches to Vesuvius beyond the traditional focus on the recovery of classical sites and the modern appetite for tourism. They argue for an approach that is attentive to the different histories that emerged when people responded to volcanism's effects on the territory. Eruptions threatened people by burying settlements and roads–but they did so unevenly and sporadically. Likewise, eruptions created new conditions for rebuilding, quarrying, and working volcanic rock out to markets–but did so only in some places.

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BAROQUE TECTONICS: ERUPTIONS AND DISRUPTIONS IN THE VESUVIAN CITY

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The neologism the Vesuvian city (*la città Vesuviana*) describes much of the Neapolitan hinterland because its geologic, biotic and anthropic features have emerged in interaction with eruptive activity since 1631.[1] Naples administered the towns located around Mount Vesuvius throughout the early modern period, so these settlements formed an integral part of the city's territory (Muto, 2013, p.42). Exposure to the effects of volcanism has been a key feature of a history documented by a widening array of sources since the

seventeenth century. Andrea Pigonati's eighteenth-century topographical map of the volcano illustrates how observers recorded the kinds of changes that the Vesuvian city experienced once the volcano began its most recent historical phase of volcanism in the 1600s (Pigonati, 1767). (Fig. 4.1) In this particular representation, Pigonati marked the location of the Vesuvian *casali* (rural settlements) in relation to areas where eruptions were continuing to alter the territory. By depicting the location and the timing of volcanism's disruption of built and natural environments, Pigonati identified the sites of physical transformation as a key topographic feature.

The physical transformations of the lands in the Somma-Vesuvius volcanic complex present an especially interesting case of non-human (geologic) and human (historical) processes in interaction. Our principal claim in this essay is that it is necessary to recognize how geological processes underlying environmental change around Vesuvius could shape different local
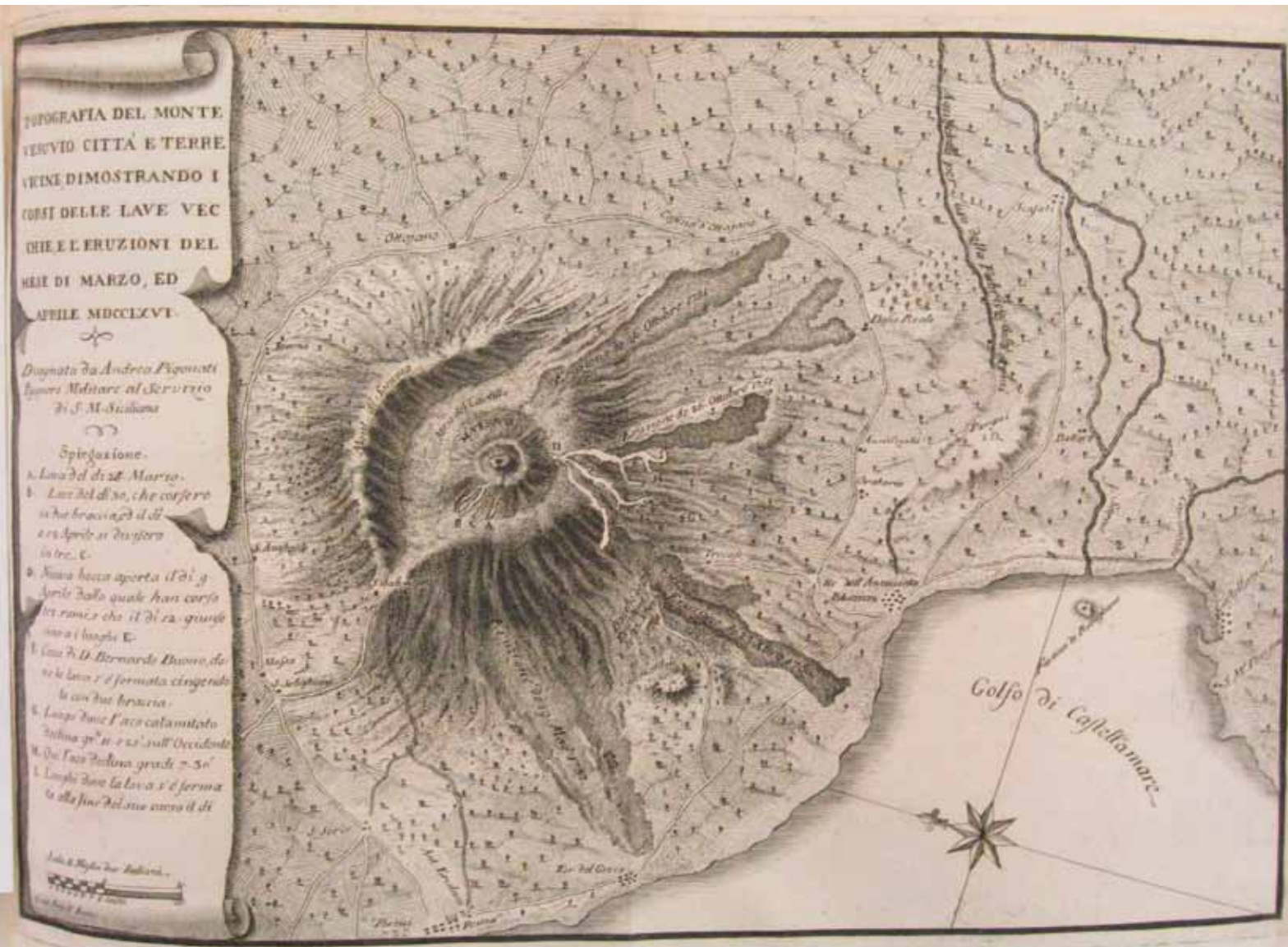

Figure 4.1: Andrea Pigonati, *Topografia del Monte Vesuvio* (Naples, 1767). The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. (Image credit: The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

histories. Federigo Furcheim observed in 1897 that 'the bibliography of Vesuvius begins with the great eruption of 1631' (Furcheim, 2011, p.v). Furcheim highlighted the disaster's significance because it ushered in a new phase in the modern understanding and appreciation of the volcano through an explosion of literary accounts. While this observation remains true, evaluating the importance of this and of ensuing eruptions from the perspective of environmental history requires a distinct approach. Below, we propose examining volcanism as a force capable of sculpting the seventeenth-century territory in ways that deeply influenced its subsequent history. To do so, we will follow the motions of rock.

This analysis incorporates the volcanic complex as well as the built environments that have arisen within and around Vesuvius. The *casali* of the Vesuvian city occupy different kinds of places in relation to the crater, to the Mediterranean coast, and to the surrounding plains and hills. One group of towns along the littoral that is highly exposed to volcanism includes S. Giorgio a Cremano, Portici, Ercolano, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, and Pompeii. Other towns extend their encirclement along an inland portion. These towns are: Volla, Cercola, Pollena Trocchia, San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Massa di Somma, Trecase, Boscotrecase, Boscoreale, Terzigno, Poggiomarino, San Giuseppe Vesuviano, Ottaviano, Somma Vesuviana and Sant'Anastasia (Vella and Barbera, 2001, p.18). All of these settlements developed as part of the Neapolitan conurbation's early modern history, even if the origins of the Vesuvian urban and natural complex are much older (Russo, 1984, pp.15–33). Presently, the entire modern conurbation occupies or borders on the zone of highest exposure to volcanism. If Vesuvius returns to an open conduit state such as the one that existed between 1631 and 1944 (Macedonio and Martini, 2012, p.7) these towns and their inhabitants are in grave danger.

Human and natural archives bear witness to a tumultuous past. When the volcano began its most recent phase of activity in 1631, its eruptions pulsed across existing natural and built configurations. A history of moving land – of moving rocks, specifically should emphasise the stochasticity of the processes that transformed these configurations over their linearity (see De Landa, 2000, p.21; Gaddis, 2002, pp.71–90). Fundamentally, the wide array of human responses to Vesuvius that included flight, observation, description, memorialization, adaptation, building and rebuilding, all addressed a natural phenomenon whose physical force vastly exceeded the human capacity to alter territory.

Geological perspectives are not hard to come by in history, so it may be useful to review those that have been significant of late. Framing human interaction with geologic processes certainly fits big picture views of humans and the environment. The Anthropocene periodization has become especially significant when environmental historians today contemplate relations of geological and historical time. The Anthropocene's scales of interpretation tend to be planetary ones rather than local ones, and for good reason. Given that the acceleration of destabilising human effects on global systems since 1800 is a matter of natural and historical record, many scientists agree on the need for a new period concept for the entire planet (Steffen et al., 2011, p.849). As the Anthropocene has continued to gain currency among scientists, historians of the global environment have adopted the term (for example, McNeill and Engelke, 2014, pp.1–3). They do so to warn of destabilising human effects on global systems and to qualify how the environmental present is creating the conditions for a dramatically different future.

Blending geological and historical terms can nonetheless make establishing historical periodization confusing, as has been the case at these planetary scales. The Holocene epoch, for example, still holds its place on the chronostratigraphical table employed by geologists (Cohen et al., 2013). Furthermore, critiques of the Anthropocene expose its limitations as a useful generalisation about historical change. The Capitolocene alternative proposed by Jason Moore, most significantly, explains the planetary state shift currently underway as the result of political and market systems emerging circa 1450 and not of the *Anthropos* writ large (Moore, 2015; see also: Klunkel, 2017, pp.22–8). The emergence of new period concepts shows that understanding the role of humans as geologic agents capable of altering the physical configuration of the world has become a preoccupation across disciplines especially when planetary scales are involved (Bennet, 2010; Ellsworth and Kruse, 2012). In this essay, however, we suggest that histories that explore human and non-human agency in an inverse direction might employ perspectives that frame the relationship between humans and the non-living environment differently. Histories that are not solely concerned with narrating mounting anthropogenic effects on the natural world, but that tease out instead other patterns of historical change expressed by environments and people together, should adopt perspectives in which places, as well as humans, play a central role (Andrews, 2015, p.2).

Donna Haraway has questioned the value of writing human-only histories of the environment at a time when the biological sciences, foremost, have dissolved the picture of bounded individualism in

nature (Haraway, 2016, p.1). Thus, an insistence on calling the larger question about historical actors and the natural world may be timely. If one response can be to sustain reflection on the flows of non-human and human agency, historians need not generate perspectives commensurate with those of the sciences when it comes to locating humans' relation to environmental change, since our scale of interpretation is most concerned with what people experienced, thought and did (Thomas, 2014, pp.1577–88). Nonetheless, identifying the co-shaping of cultural formation and geoformation (Ellsworth and Kruse, 2012) ruptures the dualistic portrayal in which the vectors of environmental change emanate from people alone. The preindustrial environmental past merits a richer array of perspectives. Explaining the relatively recent environmental past solely as a precursor to the widespread degradation of the modern period should not exhaust approaches to what is traditionally termed the early modern period (Chaplin, 2015, p.285). Historians might tell different stories about different landscapes.

The concepts delineated above suggest how to think about the history of Vesuvius in a different way that emphasizes physical changes in the territory. For three centuries after 1631, alterations of the Vesuvian landscape emanated from different parts of the larger volcanic complex. Specifically, historians might conceptualise how eruptions, acting over time, impelled historical processes by driving rock into human environments. Microhistories cited throughout this essay have already constructed a highly localised specific knowledge of how the landscape changed, so moving out from a reasonably detailed local picture is possible.

What might a more lithic perspective of the changing territory reveal? In general, cultural histories of Vesuvius arrive at modernity by means of an ellipsis of a significant moment of physical change. A feature of seventeenth-century volcanism after 1631 (between 1631 and 1707 in this essay) is its omission from the dominant modes of historical narration. It is possible, starting from the flows of rock and moving out, to historicise the gap between 1631 and the better-known eighteenth-century picturesque, the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum (Scarth, 2009, pp.135–72, p.226), and the nineteenth-century sublime (Scarth, 2009, pp.227–44). Buried histories of Vesuvius only resurface when localised physical transformations become the subject of more serious study.

Volcanism in the seventeenth century created sudden micro-frontiers of physical change around Vesuvius. John F. Richards has conceptualised the

early modern world as a vast frontier, one feature of which were 'intensified human impacts on the natural environment of nearly every region in the world' (Richards, 2003, p.17). In this construct, historical interpretation focuses on human agency and helps to explain how seventeenth-century societies began to increase their capacity to transform environments. It is possible to point out, however, that there is no reason to see specific transactions between people and their environment as moving in any particular direction; the small frontiers along the volcano were places of give and take where Vesuvius generally had the upper hand. What is clear, in fact, is that erupted rocks drove human reconfigurations of the territory. Changes in these labile frontiers remain largely invisible when the interpretative framework is that of cultural reception flowing into Naples. That frame has been the basis of monographic studies more concerned with the development of textual representation (see: Cocco, 2013; Tortora, 2014).

The Vesuvian city was a patchwork of uneven settlements containing prospering towns, cultivated land, but in the first half of the seventeenth century much of it remained sparsely-inhabited and forested land. The *casali,* and the land these settlements occupied, felt the effects of volcanism more immediately than Naples. Indeed, people and rocks moved in dramatic and sometimes extended ways, a fact evinced by the intensified use of lava stone for use in Campania and the larger Mediterranean after decades of eruptions had modified the landscape to create favourable conditions for quarrying and distribution to markets (Tortora, 2004, pp.207–16).

Rock flows had surprising effects, driving histories along different pathways. Understanding that volcanism could have the effects described here goes some way toward explaining why particular regions of Vesuvius, but not others, were normalised by a European and eventually global taste for discovery and delight in the Campanian landscape (Rowland, 2015), while other lands remained marginal borderlands. Here again, different frames might be useful. In the 1990s, Prasenjit Duara proposed the concept of a 'bifurcated history in order to escape both the teleology of nationalist History and the view that history is simply constructed or invented' (Duara, 1993, p.798). More recently, Linda Heidenreich has suggested that the concept of bifurcated history 'first maps out dispersed histories co-existing in time, then turns to the dominant narrative that was used to cover and subordinate many of those histories to map out how such histories became dominant' (Heidenreich, 2007, p.172). The concept of bifurcation identifies the transmission of

ideas through which the meaning of historical events was 'returned to an apparently coherent historical memory' (Duara, 1993, p.799). It becomes more difficult to select which landscapes remain subaltern, and which landscapes belong to the progress of an imagined historical teleology. In the case of Vesuvius, that teleology becomes making the relatively recent discovery of the volcano as an object of cosmopolitan appetite and global tourism a triumph of modernity.

The picturesque characterisation of the human-Vesuvius relationship emphasizes the paradox of human presence, but it would be good to note that the construction of Neapolitan peculiarity and ignorance of danger developed in the eighteenth century through the lens of foreign tourism (see: Hamilton, 1776, 1779; Saint-Non, 1781). From the different perspective of the environmental past, on the other hand, the relationship between danger and opportunity was always a two-way interaction. Vesuvius was a source of peril, but eruptions also created a unique and uneven availability of extruded materials. There were rocks to quarry, use and transport. It is necessary, therefore, to develop a synoptic view of geological and human processes that cannot, in isolation, explain the distribution and settlement of human spaces around Vesuvius, nor fully tell the story of cultural representation (Galasso, 1979, pp.1–10). In such a synoptic view, the locations of volcanism and the locations of historical transformation are spaces of interaction. Identifying the specific human and lithic arrangements that developed in interaction envisions the territory as a context of cultural production and not simply as a place of disasters.[2]

The Vesuvian city that grew in the seventeenth century stacked new layers on to those produced by what the volcano and people had done in the past, but at accelerated rates relative to the volcano's long periods of dormancy (Mastrolorenzo and Rolandi, 1986, pp.55–66). New locations emerged from landscapes composed of vestigial geomorphologies sometimes hundreds or even thousands of years old. The most visible structure reflecting this layering is the lower Vesuvius's two famed humps (when viewed from Naples). This feature is the caldera wall known as Somma (hence the terminology Somma-Vesuvius complex). The 79 CE eruption had been responsible for the destruction of numerous settlements beyond the well-known sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Other sites that remained largely unknown before the modern period included: Tora (likely corresponding today to San Valentino Torio), Veseri (on what once was the river Sebeto), Sola (near Torre del Greco today), Cossa (between Herculaneum and Pompeii), Leucoptera (known today as Pietrarsa), Civita and Taurania (near

Palma Campania) (Tortora, 2014; Rosi and Sbrana, 1987; Alfano and Friendlander 1929, p.10).

Starting with a great pulse of physical motion in the second third of the seventeenth century, transformations rippled through the volcanic complex and its human environments, greatly effecting the peri-urban spaces built into its foundations. While it is necessary first to generalise about a set of relations between geological and historical change, only a localised view sheds light on an environmental and human past that emanated not from Naples per se, but from zones of thickest interaction between volcanism and human settlements.

Transformations and displacements across the Vesuvian city

The topographical map of Vesuvius published by Andrea Pigonati in 1767 shows Vesuvius circled by a road connecting the ring of towns at the base of the volcanic edifice (Pigonati, 1767) (Fig. 4.1). The western portion of the road followed the trace of *via consolare per Ottajano* – better known as the road to Madonna dell'Arco – that worked its way west from the via Marina in Naples, exited the walls, crossed the Maddalena bridge and turned inland to link the city with the *casali* in the interior. Giuseppe Nicodemo described the route in 1892 as a pleasant road flanked by cultivated land and gardens that extended to the communes of Barra, Ponticelli, Cercola, Pollena, Sant'Anastasia, Somma, Ottaviano (1989, p.5). Nicodemo's description confirms the existence of a lively connection between Naples and the peri-urban landscape around Vesuvius in the nineteenth century. The eruption of 1631, however, destroyed this road. Graphic documentation of a re-established road only appeared in maps like Pigonati's in the second half of the 1700s. Seventeenth-century depictions, such as an engraving by the Spaniard Cassiano de Silva appearing in Antonio Bulifon's *Campagna Felice* (1692), still show no trace of the road that appears in the later sources (Fig. 4.2) (Bulifon, 1692; Bulifon 1694; cf. D'Ayala, 1847, p.123).

The disappearance of the road to Ottaviano in seventeenth-century sources reflects the damage caused by volcanic debris between 16 and 18 December 1631. After eruptive fractures emerged on the southern and southwestern flanks of the Vesuvius cone in the early morning of the 16th, an eruptive column began to form over the volcano. Ash fall began soon after. Later that morning, heavy blocks and scoria that were ejected as the eruption intensified began to fall on Ottaviano, likely causing much of the initial damage along the road and farms skirting the northern
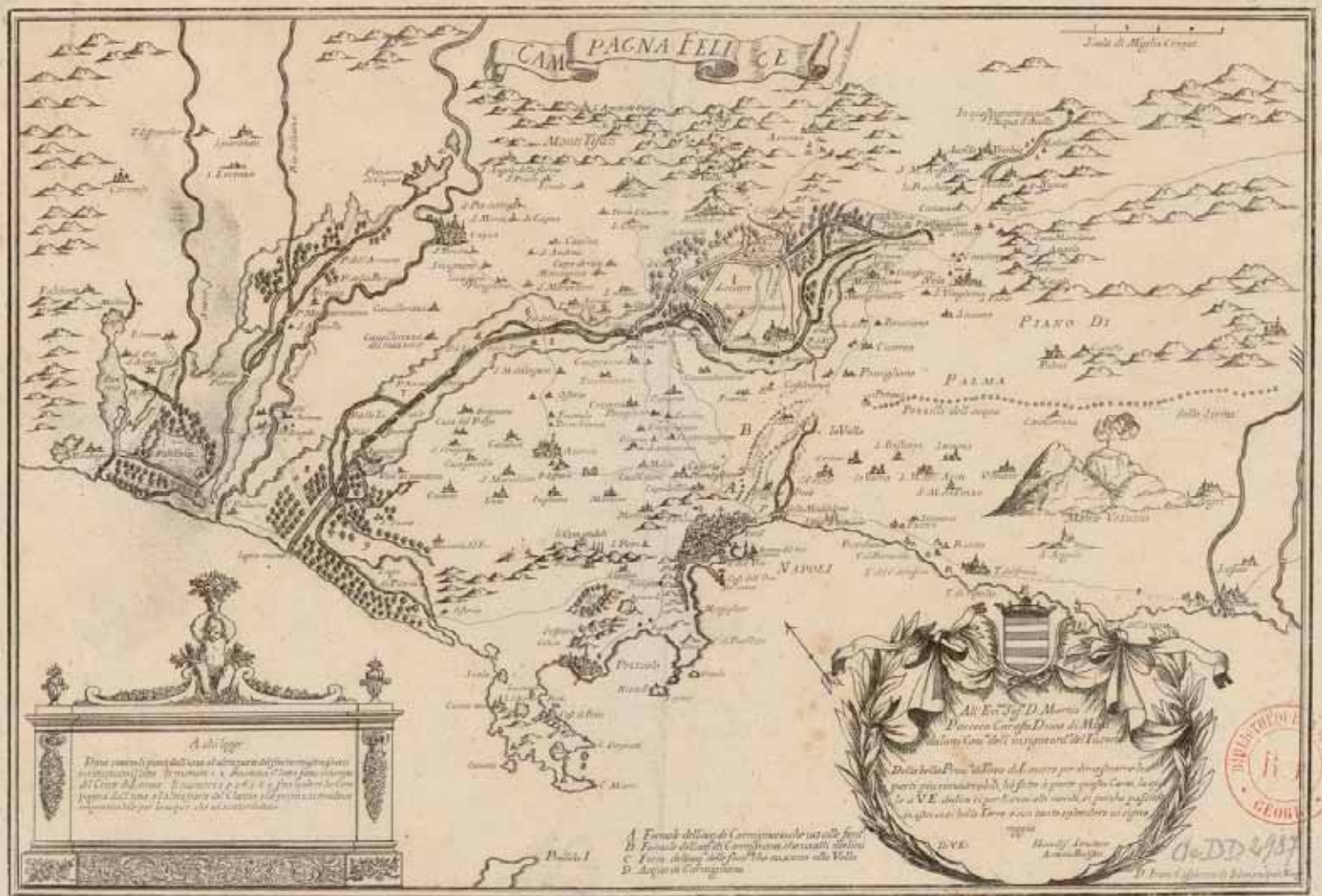
Figure 4.2: Antonio Bulifon, *Campagna Felice* (1692). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. (Image credit: gallica.bnf.fr/ Bibliothèque nationale de France)

flanks of the volcano. Seismic pulses emanating from Vesuvius caused further destruction. Pyroclastic flows surged out and cascaded in at least three major lobes in different directions, including the direction of Torre del Greco on the littoral southwest of the crater. Finally, lahar flows formed as water precipitation created in the eruptive column rained down on the pyroclastic blanket and set it into motion. The shoreline shifted and this movement caused a tsunami to sweep the shore (Rosi, Principe and Vecci, 1993, pp.151–82).

The accounts written immediately after the eruption recorded these physical transformations as shocking. Writing from Naples on 27 December 1631, the Jesuit priest Ascanio Capece described how layers of debris had obliterated familiar features:

> The massacre caused by the earthquakes stemmed from the fire, as well as from the ash and water, though why a large river poured forth from another side of Vesuvius itself is inexplicable. Torre Annunziata, [Torre del] Greco,

Palma, Monteforte, Bosco and other places were almost completely destroyed. Portici is unrecognizable. Nola is abandoned because of the destruction caused by the hail of a great many stones weighing half a *libra* each … I will say nothing of the fortified farms [*masserie*] and terrains of Somma, Ottaiano, Palma, S. Giorgio and S. Anastasio, because whatever I might say is miniscule in face of the reality of what occurred.[3] (authors' translation)

Clearly, massive displacements had shifted materials along vertical and horizontal planes. Islands and peninsulas of debris had formed, redistributing the densities of human and natural materials in ways that stunned observers. Capece described the destruction:

> Ferrante Capece, my relative, used to have three fortified farms [*masserie*] in the places I have mentioned, and having seen it with his eyes tells me that he cannot tell if they even existed, since

the ash above has grown in some places 40, in some 60, and in some 100 *palmi* high. It has covered a tower he possessed in S. Giorgio that was once 60 *palmi* tall, from which one could not previously see the sea, as it was obstructed by the flanks of Somma, and now one sees freely the entire port of Naples, meaning that that the ash is at least 40 *palmi* above the level of the tower […] a new river is flooding all of the terrain in the direction of Nola and Ottaviano, and it must be at least 10 *palmi* deep for a few miles.[4] (authors' translation)

The areas most exposed to destruction were also the most exposed to historical oblivion, as the description above suggests. Significantly, the way in which destruction shaped the territory's subsequent history is more difficult to observe if the vantage point is the view of Vesuvius from Naples.

The urban view was the perspective established early on by seventeenth-century chronicles of the 1631 eruption. Having observed the eruption from the view his palazzo (De Frede, 2005, p.20) afforded just off of the *Decumano maggiore*, Giovanni Battista Manso saw the transformation differently. Manzo wrote on 23 December 1631 that looking in 'the direction of Somma, the *casali* of S. Sebastiano, Massa and Trocchia were destroyed partly by fire and partly by flood. As I explained in my previous letter, Somma itself, S. Anastasio and Pollena did not suffer from fire, but from ash and water, thanks to which many houses are ruined and buried' (Riccio, 1889, pp.71). Descriptions of the eruption expressed the observers' location around an observational perimeter from which multiple lines of sight were possible. The positional aspects of seeing and narrating were, in fact, very important for the literature of historical and scientific observation that developed around the volcano subsequently (Cocchia, 1901, p.20). This feature is instructive. Historians can also move around the perimeter of Vesuvius, making forays into the specific sites of transformation.

Approximately four hundred and fifty metres of the pre-1631 cone structure collapsed during the eruption (Scarpato et al., 2005). The crater was not, of course, a place of permanent settlement and human density. The same is not true of the many *casali* around the volcano. The central feature of early reports was the reference to loss of life, property damage and the depopulation of the peri-urban environment surrounding Vesuvius, but especially in the areas most hit by scoria fall, pyroclastic flows and lahar. These places became unrecognisable to the survivors. Capece explained that everything from the landscape to the presence of people had changed beyond recognition:

All of the areas close to Vesuvius have been abandoned and many, because they delayed their escape, were overcome by ash or by fire, which lifting itself up [as a whole] cascaded down in pieces, sowing death on those it met. The number of dead is said to rise to 150; certainly, many bodies of burned people have been brought in from the fields. The road to S. Maria dell'Arco is now a tongue of water, which we do not know whether it is a river or the sea, eight *palmi* deep, and bearing many stones.[5] (authors' translation)

Livestock, cultivated and uncultivated environments, roads and paths, buildings, demarcations of property, and people with knowledge of place were gone. The destruction of the road to Ottaviano and its reappearance in the sources over a century later illustrates the historical disjuncture that bouts of volcanism could create. Lost places only reappeared on the other side of an ellipsis, but most often new places emerged. Studies of the Vesuvian *casali* give a strong indication that the decades following 1631 were especially difficult, since there are major gaps in parish records showing population. For many *casali*, good demographic information only becomes available for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Russo, 1984, p.42).

Bifurcation
Fragmentary evidence creates a broken image of the lands around Vesuvius most affected by volcanism after 1631. Nonetheless, human presence sometimes intensified, even if the expanding built environment continued to feel the effects of volcanism. The very grave damage caused to buildings and to local economies was a stimulus to renew activity and to reclaim or simply claim land (Avvisati, Casale and Sorrentino, 1996, p.19). Responses included attempts to survey the damage and redraw property lines. More subtle features possibly emerged as well, such as the use of piled volcanic clasts instead of wooden posts as property markers. Intermittent volcanism in the period between 1694 and 1707 actually intensified certain kinds of human activity. For example, the woodlands around Boscotrecase, known as the *Silva Mala*, were mapped for the first time because property disputes had arisen on account of the destruction. Localised mapping of this kind differed from the state-sanctioned cartographic project that would be undertaken by the Bourbons after 1734, a time when the topographic traditions of Naples reached 'the highest levels of European figurative and scientific accomplishment' (Valerio, 2013, p.81) through the efforts of the Duke

of Noja in the 1750s. On a smaller and more modest scale made visible by different archival sources, it is possible to see the wooded lands south of the crater constituted one of the sites of heaviest interaction between the retreat and advance of settlement.

In 1596, Alfonso Piccolomini, Baron of Scafati and owner of Terra di Valle (Pompeii), Torre Annunziata and Bosco Reale, purchased the *casale* of Boscotrecase from the Royal Demesne for 17,500 ducats. Joined to Piccolomini's other properties, this woodland region became part of a vast feudal estate stretching along the base of Vesuvius. The forests lay some way in from the coast below the southern flanks of the volcano. Piccolomini's commercial interests were focused intensely nearby as he was attracted to invest in more commercially active areas just south along the coast. Torre Annunziata, for example, traded on the Mediterranean Sea, as did the bordering coastal towns of Torre del Greco and Castellamare di Stabia. Piccolomini aimed to exploit the hydrological resources in the Sarno River fluvial plain south of Vesuvius (near where Pompeii still lay buried). By late 1629, he had built watermills along the Sarno canal (Pepe, 1887, p.96). The eruption in 1631, however, forced a dramatic reconfiguration of commercial and landed interests that had been stacking on to the land for centuries. Heavy destruction occurred in a number of areas, significantly shaping its future urbanization.

Pyroclastic flows had pulsed from the crater causing the most damage: west toward San Giorgio, Portici (this is relevant to the analysis of bifurcation below), Granatello and Resina, southwest and south toward Torre del Greco, Camaldoli and the royal road (*Strada Regia*); south and southeast (the area considered here) toward Boscotrecase, Torre Annunziata and Boscoreale (Scarth, 2009, p.139). The settlement of new hamlets, investment in mills and quarries, investment in coastal and even longer-range maritime trade, the construction of summer residences for the larger Neapolitan nobility, as well as the continuing practice of extracting feudal revenue from land, frequently brought aristocratic landowners into conflict with ecclesiastical landowners. This stacking of interests complicated reconstruction and recovery. The southern coastal stretches of Vesuvius and the lands moving to the interior had been a small frontier of urban expansion for centuries. Records of this sporadic expansion stretch back into the thirteenth-century Angevin period. Limestone quarries ordered by Charles of Anjou in 1278, established to extract the stone for use in Naples, show that flows of materials from this frontier, still heavily forested, extended to the city (De Angelis, 1967, p.296).

Boscotrecase, in which the settlement of Trecase emerged, stretched along the southern flanks of the volcano (northwest of the still-buried site of Pompeii). The area once had been part of a vaster forest extending from the crater of Vesuvius to the shore. It remained heavily wooded until the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century (Casale and Bianco, 1979, p.8). During the Aragonese period, the land was gradually deforested and populated as people from nearby towns began to settle on the property of three Neapolitan monasteries – Santa Chiara, Santa Maria Egiziaca and Santa Maria Maddalena – who had received the land in concession from Robert of Anjou in 1337. This was the location of the forest known at the *Silva Mala* (Casale and Del Luca, 1994, p.3). Peasant homes built around a rural church around the beginning of the sixteenth century formed the initial settlement of what would become Trecase. In this early period, the village was still dependent on the town of Torre del Greco. In 1596, these lands then became the property of Alfonso Piccolomini, Count of Celano, making them part of the *università* of Boscotrecase (Casale and Del Luca, 1994, p.4; ASDN, *Fondo Benefici*, N.171, fol.35). Parish records show that material conditions across the landscape were widely disparate even before 1631. Only isolated and humble parish churches existed in Boscotrecase, while coastal towns such as Torre del Greco concentrated people and more intense commercial activity. Reconstruction after 1631 tended to reflect the desire for more complex structures that matched religious and architectural ideals with the availability of building materials (Russo, 1984, pp.62–3). Volcanism thus reinforced a pre-existing pattern of localised differences in the scale and quality of construction.

A somewhat clearer picture is possible for the period of the 1694, 1696, 1697 and 1698 eruptions. Areas effected by lava flows and ash fall included San Giorgio a Cremano, Torre del Greco, Trecase, Boscotrecase to the west and to the south of the crater, as well as Ottaviano to the northeast (Ricciardi, De Lucia and Giudicepietro, 2016). In 1698, but also in 1701 and 1707, lava flows and pyroclasts set fire to woods and cultivated fields (Scarpato et al., 2005). Changes to the physical environment complicated the disputes that arose in a patchwork of claims to land identified as underexploited and ripe for expansion. The wooded terrains of Boscotrecase are a good example. In 1696 three Neapolitan monasteries owning land in the area entered into dispute with the Archbishopric of Naples over property lines near the *Silva Mala*. On this occasion, the monasteries petitioned the Spanish viceroy that they be allowed to use the testimony of multiple local witnesses as they attempted to redraw

disrupted property lines. The document confirming the agreement among the parties included a map drawn by Antonio Galluccio and Antonio Caracciolo in early 1697. This map (Fig. 4.3), shown as a facsimile of the original created by Carlo Malandrino, depicts a planimetric representation of Boscotrecase and the *Silva Mala* (Di Lernia, 1986, p.26; ASN, *Monasteri soppressi*, f.2684) dotted by settlements and bordered by the coastal road and various topographical features that include Vesuvius erupting.

In this case, old and new geomorphologies formed a new territorial configuration. The remains of an ancient lava flow, known as the *Vijuli*, endured as one of the borders, for example, but other parts of the terrain had a layering estimated to be eight to ten *palmi* of ash deposited by recent eruptions. A factor that complicated property claims was the question of whether fallow and damaged land was to be exempted from taxation. Ongoing censes in the late seventeenth century catalogued existing constructions, noted their condition and planned for improvement of land based on an evaluation of how damaged portions of the territory had been by volcanic rocks (ASN, *Monasteri*

Figure 4.3: Antonio Galluccio and Antonio Caracciolo, *Silva Mala*, facsimile of the original by Carlo Malandrino, private collection of Angelandrea Casale. (Image credit: By permission of Angelandrea Casale)

soppressi, f.2676). In many cases, censes identified areas simply as broken-up shrub land in disuse. Where settlement and construction occurred, it resulted in, as Di Lernia explains, 'provisional' construction of a uniform sort: square, articulated around family social structure, and made of lava stone (1986, p.27–9).

A wide variety of ignimbrite (pyroclastic) and lava rocks, such as tephrite and basalt, had served as paving stones, mills stones and construction stones for millennia (Formicola, 1987, pp.45–8; Schumann, 1993, p.250). Quarries existed in various locations around the volcano, either on the remains of ancient and more recent lava beds (Rosi and Sbrana, 1987, pp.45–8; Lirer, 1991, pp.145–52). In the 1650s, demand for building material increased as the lands between San Giovanni a Teuduccio and Torre del Greco became the site of villas built by the Neapolitan nobility. Stone was quarried locally following contracts between a *cavamonte* – who quarried the rock – and the various parties undertaking construction. The *cavamonte*, in turn, established contracts with those owning the quarry land based on estimates of how much rock would be quarried. Most of the stone travelled relatively short distances, either over land or by boat along the coast. A small quarry in Portici, located near the fortification known as the *Fortino del Granatello*, grew into the *Petriera del Granatello* from which the bulk of the stone for the *Reggia di Portici* was extracted. The abundant stone, however, also found a market along the Tyrrhenian to the south, where it formed breakwaters (Formicola, 1987, pp.45–8; Fiengo, 1983, p.45). Quarried and commercialised volcanic rock from the region of Portici thus flowed down the Mediterranean coast.

Natural configurations became human ones. Volcanic accidents and human intentions were sometimes difficult to distinguish. The priest Nicola Nocerino chronicled the transformations that had occurred over one hundred and fifty years when he described, in the 1780s, how human activity and subsequent volcanism had modified the landscape that had formed after the 1631 eruption:

> [I]n those days there flowed a great quantity of water due to the depression that split Mount Somma; and Vesuvius, which was in those days covered by a wide swath of hard earth [hardened pyroclastic flows] from 1631, would pour water into the sea in a place called the Lament, or the Stones, on account of the great many rocks carried here by the wash, and which are also presently visible along a long stretch of the shore.[6] (author's translation)

By the end of the eighteenth century, Portici was also the site of a port that Ferdinand IV had rebuilt
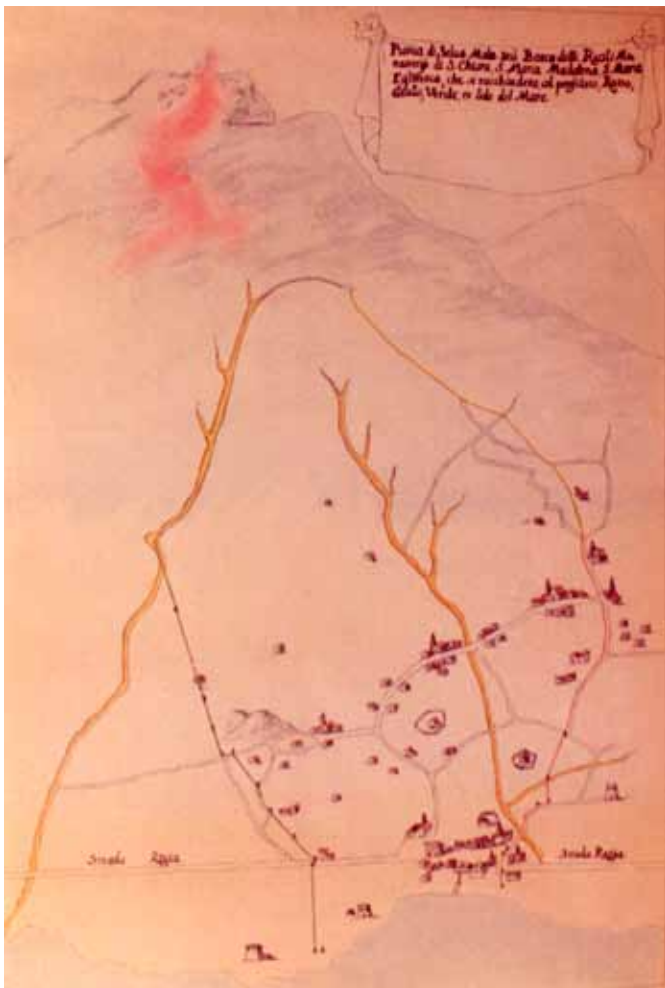
in order to create a safe harbour for vessels in the Bourbon commercial and military fleet. Environmental conditions in the seventeenth century had not been favourable. Nonetheless, adversity proved a stimulus for many decades. Nocerino recalled that a landowner in the area, the Duke of Airola, had ordered the construction of a large wall that the citizens of San Giorgio a Cremano and Portici erected during the seventeenth century in order to protect the territory from the floods that flowed down the hardened pyroclastic blanket of 1631 (Nocerino, 1787, p.131). He noted however, that the eruption of 1694 suddenly relieved people in the area of this concern by altering the landscape to their advantage, thus obviating the need for any further human efforts to stave off flows. Conditions changed yet again:

> Such an outsized torrent ceased altogether since Vesuvius, with the eruption of bitumen on 14 March 1694, and filled the channels and the depression were the water gathered, split its bed, and its flow: and so from that that moment on we have been safe from it, and those areas have been cultivated and lived in, where it once flowed [.][7] (author's translation)

The rocks extruded during the 1694 thus had a surprising prophylactic effect, though probably an illusory one too. They appeared to protect Portici and the environs favoured by the Neapolitan nobility from the vulnerability this part of the territory had suffered since 1631.

The fortuitous interaction between two eruptions – one in 1631 and another in 1694 – created, in Nocerino's estimation, the physical conditions for Portici's eighteenth-century prosperity. Construction of the new port began in 1773, under Ferdinand IV's orders, so that the work – 'only that of a Monarch' (Nocerino, 1787, p.133) – became the foundation of a revival along the coast. Because of the construction of a great pier, that 'which was the deep sea, is now a place of leisurely strolling' (Nocerino, 1787, p.134). For Nocerino, the port exemplified Portici's crowning achievement: its transformation into a 'true maritime city' (Nocerino, 1787, p.134). The material condition for this transformation was the distribution and availability of volcanic rock, which he termed 'bountiful in these places, and from which are built all of the houses of Portici… especially that rock which they call here *terra di fuoco*, erupted by Vesuvius many times, and especially in 1631' (Nocerino, 1787, p.134).

Nocerino's triumphant retrospective of the seventeenth century does not match the narrative of other regions around the volcano. This fact underscores how the built configurations possible in different parts of the Vesuvian city bifurcated its histories. Environmental differences persisted as historical transformations occurred across the territory. It is not difficult to draw attention to the fact that volcanism excited an array of cultural responses beginning in the seventeenth century. A less immediately evident dimension is the environmental stochasticity volcanism produced. Different historical pathways developed from the unevenness of how land was lost and then reclaimed. Indeed, the woodlands of Boscotrecase experienced a different pattern from the growing investment on the part of the Neapolitan aristocracy and the Bourbon monarchy in other lands of Vesuvius, especially those closer to Naples.

Boscotrecase had a heavy forest and a sparse population long before the eruption of 1631. Subsequent volcanism continued to make settling the area difficult. Those seventeenth-century environmental conditions were consequential. As Di Lernia's study shows, the pattern of urbanisation that emerged here was of smaller-scale provisional settlement focused on family nuclei and agricultural production (1986, p.29). These human and historical relations to volcanism become apparent if one looks at a different part of the Vesuvian city. Portici, with its villas, royal palace, port and rock quarry, illustrates a contrasting outcome.

It is crucial to recognise that the movement of Vesuvian rock extended well beyond the impetus provided by the physical force of eruptions. A document recording the movement of materials from the port, dated 3 November 1774, described stone from the quarry at Portici ferried to Calabria as part of a bustling rock industry:

> It was necessary to dig under the mountain in order to collapse different lava masses; … One hundred and three mines were dug on these masses to divide them and extract breakwater stones; … land was cleared along the path the breakwaters were carried to be loaded … there were ninety-three trips by *sandali* [flat-bottomed vessels] to the new piers in Calabria[8] (author's translation)

From the geomorphologies that made up the territory, through various chains of human action, volcanic materials travelled from their source and accumulated in removed strata – here coming to rest as a breakwater on another Tyrrhenian shore. These materials, even the submerged ones, belong to the many histories of Vesuvius. They were part of the flow and transitory hardening of rocks, manipulated by human hand and meaning (De Landa, 2000, p.258) in a land where volcanism shaped history.

Notes

[1] For a discussion of the holocoenotic concept in ecology, see Kruckeberg (2004, pp.16-18).

[2] Exploring the flow and settlement of materials into emergent spaces is an approach that works in different contexts as well. See Helen Hills's interpretation of the Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro in Calaresu and Hills (2013, pp.32–8); cf. Russo (1984, pp.15-33), Luongo (1997, pp.9–26), Musi (2000, pp.63–78) and Vella and Barbera (2001, pp.15–22).

[3] La strage poi fatta dai terremoti parte dal fuoco, come ancora dalla cenere e acqua, essendo per un'altra parte dell'istesso Vesuvio uscito fuora un grandissimo fiume, non è esplicabile. La Torre Annunziata, del Greco, Resina, Ottaviano, Palma, Monteforte, Bosco e altri luoghi quasi affatto destrutti. Portici non si riconosce più. Nola deshabitata per la gran rovina delle case fatta dalla gragnola delle pietre di meza libra l'una incirca e queste erano frequentissime... Delle masserie e possessioni poi di Somma, Ottaiano, Palma, S. Giorgio e S. Anatasio non dico niente, perché qualunque cosa mi dica e di gran lunga inferiore alla verità del fatto. (Riccio, 1889, p.499; cf. Carafa, 1632, p.21)

[4] Il S. r. Ferrante Capece mio parente haveva tre masserie ne' luoghi nominati, come testimonio di vista mi afferma che non può riconoscere si fossero nemmeno, essendo la cenere cresciuta sopra terra dove 40, dove 60, e dove 100 palmi d'altezza; imperciò che ha coperta una torre che lui haveva in S. Giorgio alta palmi 60, dalla cima della qual torre non arrivava a scoprir il mare, toltoli dalla falda della montagna di Somma, hora dal piano lasciato della Cenere sopra d'essa torre vede liberamente tutta la marina di Napoli che bisognasi sia avanzata la Cenere quaranta palmi al meno sopra la sommità di detta torre [...]. Il nuovo fiume d'acqua poi allaga tutte queste campagne verso Nola e Ottaiano, e per lo spatio d'alcune miglia è alta 10 palmi l'acqua. (Riccio, 1889, pp.449–50).

[5] Tutti i luoghi vicini al Vesuvio sono stati dalla gente abbandonati affatto, e molti perché furon tardi a fuggire, sono stati oppressi dalla cenere o dalla fiamma, la quale sollevandosi in alto cascava giù di nuovo divisa in pezzi, con morte di quanti incontrava. Il numero de' morti ascende per quanto si dice a 150, certo è che son stati portati molti corpi da li campi di persone arse. Per la strada di S. Maria dell'Arco corre una lingua d'acqua non si sa se sia di fiume o di mare, alta otto palmi, e porta quantità di pietre. (Riccio, 1889, p.496).

[6] [S]correva in quei tempi una smisurata lava di acqua, causata dal vacuo, che tramezza il Monte di Somma, e il Vesuvio ricoperto allora di dura terra del 1631, la quale essendo di molta larghezza, finalmente si scaricava nel mare nel luogo detto il Lagno, o pure le Petrazze, dalla gran quantità delle pietre, che qui trasportate dalla gran piena, anche al presente a lungo tratto del mare si osservano. (Nocerino, 1787, p.131)

[7] Tal smisurato torrente di acqua cessò dell'intutto allorchè il Vesuvio coll'eruzione di bitume de' 14. Marzo 1694 empì i valloni, ed il vacuo ove radunavasi tant'acqua, e troncò il suo letto, e camino: e perciò da llora in poi ne siamo stati sicuri, anzi coltivati, ed abbitati si sono quai luoghi, ove scorreva [.] (Nocerino, 1787, p.132)

[8] Petriera del Granatello nell'ultimo scorso mese ... si è dovuto scavare sotto la montagna per far cascar diversi massi di lava;... si son fatte centotrè mine sopra detti massi per dividersi e così ritrarne scogli ...; si è dovuto levar la terra per ove si dovevano trasportare li scogli per imbarcarli ...; si son fatti novantatrè viaggi colli sandali per questi nuovi moli in Calabria (ASN, Segreteria di Marina Espedienti, vol.162, f.397)

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NAPLES IN FLESH AND BONES: RIBERA'S *DRUNKEN SILENUS* AND *SAINT JEROME*
Edward Payne

Abstract

Jusepe de Ribera did not begin to sign his paintings consistently until 1626, the year in which he executed two monumental works: the Drunken Silenus *and* Saint Jerome and the Angel of Judgement *(Museo di Capodimonte, Naples). Both paintings include elaborate Latin inscriptions stating that they were executed in Naples, the city in which the artist had resided for the past decade and where he ultimately remained for the rest of his life. Taking each in turn, this essay explores the nature and implications of these inscriptions, and offers new interpretations of the paintings. I argue that these complex representations of mythological and religious subjects – that were destined, respectively, for a private collection and a Neapolitan church – may be read as incarnations of the city of Naples. Naming the paintings' place of production and the artist's city of residence in the signature formulae was thus not coincidental or marginal, but rather indicative of Ribera inscribing himself textually, pictorially and corporeally in the fabric of the city.*

Biographical note

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NAPLES IN FLESH AND BONES: RIBERA'S *DRUNKEN SILENUS* AND *SAINT JEROME*

Edward Payne, The Auckland Project

Introduction

Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652) is usefully regarded as a hybrid figure, a man straddling two countries, Spain and Italy, and two artistic idioms, painterly and graphic. Born in Valencia, Ribera spent most of his career in Naples, where he shaped the course of artistic production in the seventeenth century (Felton and Jordan, 1982; Pérez Sánchez and Spinosa, 1992; Felton, 2011, pp.35–77). Although little is known of his youth, training and departure from Spain, Ribera is recorded in Rome in 1606, in Parma in 1611 and in Naples from 1616 until his death in 1652 (Finaldi, 2016, p.21). After arriving in Italy, he encountered the revolutionary paintings of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), whose distinctive qualities Ribera adopted in his own

work, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of Caravaggesque realism towards a raw, visceral form of representation that is deeply inscribed in the city of Naples.

A Spanish territory during the seventeenth century, Naples was governed by Spanish viceroys who were appointed by the king and were Ribera's principal patrons. They commissioned from the artist works for their own personal collections and also for the king of Spain (Finaldi, 2003, pp.379–87). In a celebrated conversation in 1625, reported by the Aragonese painter and theoretician Jusepe Martínez (1600–1682), Ribera explained his reluctance to return to Spain and why he preferred to stay in Naples: 'Spain is a merciful mother to foreigners but a most cruel stepmother to her own. I find myself well admired and esteemed in this city and kingdom, and my works compensated to my complete satisfaction' (Pérez Sánchez, 1992, p.35; Clifton, 1995, p.128, n.33). Ribera remained proud of his Spanish origins throughout his career. He earned himself the nickname *lo Spagnoletto*, 'the little Spaniard', and when signing his works, he often employed the formula *Jusepe de Ribera español*, consciously fashioning his identity by underscoring his nationality and preoccupation with locationality.[1]

Conspicuously absent from Ribera's oeuvre are images of two shattering events in Naples, the

Figure 5.1: Jusepe de Ribera, *San Gennaro in Glory*, 1636. Oil on canvas, 276 × 199 cm. Church of the Convent of Las Agustinas Recoletas de Monterrey, Salamanca. (Image credit: © 2017. Album/Scala, Florence)

Figure 5.2: Jusepe de Ribera, *Equestrian Portrait of Don Juan of Austria*, 1648. Etching, 35 × 27 cm. The British Museum, London. (Image credit: ©Trustees of the British Museum)

eruption of Vesuvius and the revolt of Masaniello.[2] Instead he represented the figures that intervened and restored peace: San Gennaro and Don Juan of Austria, respectively. *San Gennaro in Glory* (Fig. 5.1) was painted in 1636 for the convent church of the Agustinas Recoletas de Monterrey in Salamanca. It is a luminous work, in which the saint fills the canvas, soaring on a cloud lifted by angels with merely the hint of a flaming Vesuvius in the lower right corner. During his brief viceregency in Naples, Don Juan of Austria commissioned an equestrian portrait from Ribera, who subsequently improved upon the painting in a print of 1648 (Fig. 5.2). In the etching Ribera depicts a more detailed vista of the city and includes the Spanish fleet at anchor, grounding the sitter in the historical context of his victory over the 1647 revolt of the populace. In both the painting of San Gennaro and the print of Don Juan, Ribera visually minimises the implied acts of violence, emphasising instead the celebrated intercessors and incorporating direct references to the city of Naples.

Ribera's concern with the locational is not limited to these works, however, but is revealed even more subtly in two monumental paintings that he signed and dated in 1626: the *Drunken Silenus* and *Saint Jerome and the Angel of Judgement*, now in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples (Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). Both pictures bear elaborate Latin inscriptions in which the artist identifies himself as Valencian *(Valentin)* and prominently states that the works were executed in Naples *(Partenope)*. This essay explores the nature and implications of these inscriptions and offers new interpretations of the paintings. I argue that these mythological and religious scenes that were destined, respectively, for a private collection and a Neapolitan church, may be read as incarnations of the city of Naples. Naming the city in his signature formulae was thus not coincidental or marginal, but rather indicative of Ribera inscribing himself textually, pictorially and corporeally in the fabric of Naples.

Figure 5.3: Jusepe de Ribera, *Drunken Silenus*, 1626. Oil on canvas, 185 x 229 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: courtesy sof Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte)

Figure 5.4: Jusepe de Ribera, *Saint Jerome and the Angel of Judgement*, 1626. Oil on canvas, 262 x 164 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: courtesy of Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte)

Drunken Silenus: satirising artistic creation

Ribera's *Drunken Silenus* is noteworthy for the artist's suppression of narrative elements in order to accentuate the bloated body of the protagonist. Although the patron is unknown, this, Ribera's first major mythological painting, was acquired by the connoisseur-restorer Giacomo de Castro, who then sold it to the Flemish merchant Gaspar Roomer in 1653 (Finaldi, 1992, p.3). The painting depicts Silenus, son of Pan and foster-father of Dionysus, who became the latter's travelling companion. Reclining in the centre of the composition, Silenus raises a shell-shaped cup

to receive wine, while being crowned with ivy leaves by Pan as accompanying satyrs look on and a donkey brays. Pan can be identified not only by his leopard skin and goat horns, but also by his attributes in the lower right corner: a conch shell, which foretells his death; a tortoise, symbolising sloth; and a pastoral staff, referring to Pan as shepherd. In the lower left corner is the detail of a serpent, whose juxtaposition with the figures in the scene permits interplay between themes of creation and destruction, and points to the artist's preoccupation with skin and its removal, revealed most explicitly in his images of Bartholomew and Marsyas flayed alive.

Ribera subsequently translated this painting into an etching, reversing and revising the composition (Fig. 5.5).[3] Reed pipes have replaced Pan's attributes of tortoise and conch shell; the serpent has disappeared; two drunken putti substitute the smiling satyr beneath the donkey; the classical head in profile and outward-staring satyr behind Pan have been recast as a grinning satyr and shadowy figure with a tambourine; the background has been transformed into a spacious landscape with birds in flight; and Ribera's signature on the cartellino in the painting has been fittingly 'incised' into a stone block in the print. All of these changes suggest that Ribera has made the composition more legible for wider dissemination to a Neapolitan audience.

The painting clearly had considerable significance for Ribera, given that he chose to rework it into an etching, and the interpretation of the subject matter has sparked much debate from Ribera scholars.[4] I propose that Ribera's depiction of the *Drunken Silenus* satirises the activity of artistic creation.[5] Focusing on the god's rotundity and his excessive consumption of wine, Ribera seems to draw a parallel between his rendition of this scene and his allegorical representations of the five senses. The artist's interest in bodily perceptions had its roots planted in an early series of the five senses that he produced in Rome for an unknown Spanish patron (*c.* 1615) (Figs. 5.6–10). In these paintings Ribera presents no fixed hierarchy of the senses, given that none of the figures is idealised and all are seated behind tables on which objects symbolising the respective sense are placed. Indeed, he explodes the classical tradition of ranking the senses in his multi-sensory depiction of the *Drunken Silenus*, which offers a commentary on the arts through its allegory of the senses, notably the sense of taste, as the consumption of wine has traditionally been connected to artistic inspiration.[6] An allusion to the sense of smell is suggested by the wine-pouring satyr, who brings his face up to Silenus's shell as if to absorb the aroma of the drink. 'Touch' is symbolised by the tortoise at the lower right, an animal that, when approached, retracts into its shell, resisting touch, and it is also invoked in the corpulent body of Silenus, painted with

Figure 5.5: Jusepe de Ribera, *Drunken Silenus*, 1628. Etching with engraving, 27 x 35 cm. The British Museum, London. (Image credit: ©Trustees of the British Museum)

Figure 5.6: Jusepe de Ribera, *Sense of Sight*, *c*.1615. Oil on canvas, 114 x 89 cm. Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City. (Image credit: © 2017. Album/Scala, Florence)

Figure 5.7: Copy after Jusepe de Ribera, *Sense of Hearing*, 17th century. Oil on canvas, 96 x 76 cm. Private collection.

Figure 5.8: Jusepe de Ribera, *Sense of Smell*, *c*.1615. Oil on canvas, 115 x 89 cm. Private Collection, Madrid. (Image credit: © 2017. Album/Scala, Florence)

Figure 5.9: Jusepe de Ribera, *Sense of Taste*, *c*.1615. Oil on canvas, 114 x 89 cm. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford. (Image credit: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, 1963.194 / Photo credit: Allen Phillips\ Wadsworth Atheneum)

thick impasto and loaded brushstrokes in order to accentuate the palpability of the skin and the interplay between themes of creation and destruction.

The juxtaposition of Silenus with Pan and the classical head in profile, which resembles Ribera's depictions of Apollo in his paintings of the Marsyas myth (Fig. 5.11), suggests a confrontation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian conception of the arts. Richard Spear's observation that the pointing gesture of the satyr behind Pan, who engages with the viewer, indicates Apollo's laurel wreath, implies that the satyr functions as a mediator, relating Apollo's crown to the crowning of Silenus and thereby underscoring contemporary associations of the Apollonian with the Dionysian (Spear, 1983, p.133). It seems that the satirical nature of the painting may not be directed at any one specific source or group of sources, but rather pointed more generally at the classical tradition of depicting the reclining nude, and the artist's preoccupation with rendering surfaces and textures. In addition to the human, unidealised skin of Silenus, manifested by his bulging belly and five-o'clock shadow, animal skin is present in the fur of the donkey and the pelts worn by Pan and the satyr at the far left. Moreover, the figure kneeling above Silenus pours wine from a wineskin, which he carries on his shoulder. As one 'skin' is being emptied, another is being filled.

Figure 5.10: Jusepe de Ribera, *Sense of Touch*, *c*.1615. Oil on canvas, 116 x 89 cm. The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena. (Image credit: The Norton Simon Foundation)

Figure 5.11: Jusepe de Ribera, *Apollo and Marsyas*, 1637. Oil on canvas, 182 x 232 cm, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. (Image credit: courtesy of Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte)

Figure 5.12: Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Silenus*, 1616–17. Oil on wood, 212 x 215 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. (Image credit: © 2017. Photo Scala, Florence/bpk, Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin)

Figure 5.13: Jusepe de Ribera, detail of *Drunken Silenus*, showing belly. (Image credit: courtesy of Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte)

Ribera's fascination with skin emerges sharply from a comparison of this work with Peter Paul Rubens's (1577–1640) *Drunken Silenus* (1616–17) (Fig. 5.12). Svetlana Alpers declares that 'Rubens gives up skin surface differentiated by the play of light in the interest of solid flesh. One can say that flesh on Rubens's account is not surface, but rather the matter or material out of which all human bodies—men's and women's alike—are formed' (1995, p.129). Rubens, indeed, accentuates the matter of flesh in this painting of the *Drunken Silenus*, notably in the detail of the figure pinching Silenus's thigh while penetrating him from behind. Ribera, by contrast, focuses more on the skin of Silenus. At once delineating the crisp contour of the bloated body, he plays on the border between corporeal and pictorial surfaces in his rendering of the belly, which projects out to the edge of the picture plane in an illusion of relief (Fig. 5.13).

The detail of the serpent at the lower left further reveals Ribera's manifold preoccupation with skin. Jeanne Chenault Porter argues that its symbolism 'was probably not of great interest to Ribera', since 'the serpent and paper are eliminated in the print [...]

they too are probably dispensable from a symbolic standpoint' (1979, pp.43–4). But the opposite is the case. The motif of the serpent is saturated with meaning – its associations ranging from death, the hereafter, fame and prudence, to wisdom, sorrow, genius and nemesis – and its slippery connotations can thus be related to the slippery significance of Silenus himself. Given the connection between the serpent and wisdom, its presence in the painting may refer to the duality of Silenus who, like Socrates, is associated with wisdom and vulgarity as well as prophecy and inebriation (Pérez Sánchez and Spinosa, 1992, p.77).

The serpent may have further significance. A reptile which sheds its own skin as it regenerates, the serpent relates to the prominence of Silenus's skin in the picture and to the concept of creation by destruction, 'making' by 'unmaking', a notion which is central not only to interpreting Ribera's flaying imagery, but also to unravelling the meaning of this work (Payne, 2015, pp.92–3). In the Hebrew Bible, the serpent is associated with evil as it tempts Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Denying that death will follow, the serpent convinces Eve that like God, her eyes will be opened and she will know good and evil, a prominent reference both to the powers of vision in giving rise to knowledge and to the dangers of sight in its potential for deception (Genesis 3:1–24). The juxtaposition of the serpent with Silenus, whose swollen belly resembles that of a pregnant woman, appears to allude to Eve and to The Fall of Man, as God subsequently punishes Eve with painful childbirth.

In the lower left corner of the painting is a cartellino on which is inscribed: '*Josephus de Ribera, Hispanus, Valentin / et adcademicus Romanus faciebat / partenope … 1626*' (Fig. 5.14).[7] The cartellino was frequently employed by contemporary Spanish artists. Francisco de Zurbarán's (1598–1664) striking *Saint Serapion* (Fig. 5.15) transforms the motif into a trompe l'oeil device, blurring the boundaries between the sphere of the spectator and the realm of representation,

the artist's hand and the divine brush.[8] Although the cartellino in the *Drunken Silenus* has been repeatedly described in the literature as being 'held' in the fangs of a serpent, closer inspection reveals that the serpent is, in fact, tearing at the parchment (Felton and Jordan, 1982, p.110).

Significantly, the section of paper that is being torn bears the word '*faciebat*' or 'made' on it, and like the other elements in the inscription, the place of production – '*partenope*', Naples – is a notable protagonist. As Gabriele Finaldi states: 'The lengthy signature [Ribera] inscribed on his painting of the *Drunken Silenus*, the masterpiece of his early maturity, indicates that he was keenly conscious of his accumulated inheritance, in which nationality, province of origin, place of formation and city of residence all play a significant part' (2016, p.12). The illusionistic paper support with its prominent inscription, bracketed by artist and city, can be related visually to the pictorial surface of the canvas, on which is portrayed the bloated figure of Silenus. Implicitly, Ribera sets up a parallel between the twinned protagonists of the inscription – painter and '*partenope*' – and the protagonist of the painting. Just as the artist associates himself with the work's place of production, so, too, the figure of Silenus may be connected to the city of Naples. Moreover, the

Figure 5.14: Jusepe de Ribera, detail of *Drunken Silenus,* showing *cartellino*. (Image credit: courtesy of Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte)

Figure 5.15: Francisco de Zurbarán, *Saint Serapion*, 1628. Oil on canvas, 121 × 104 cm. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford. (Image credit: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, 1951.40 / Photo credit: Allen Phillips\ Wadsworth Atheneum)

serpent – a skin-shedding, regenerating reptile – here tearing a parchment on which is signed the name of the work's maker, further accentuates the painting's satire of artistic creation.

Saint Jerome: body as hieroglyph

Ribera's emphasis on the human body and collapse of narrative components may be observed not only in his *Drunken Silenus*, but also, more explicitly, in his images of Saint Jerome. While the classical theme of the *Drunken Silenus* was unique in Ribera's oeuvre, save its return in print, Saint Jerome is the artist's most frequently portrayed subject, suggesting a personal affinity with the figure and a broader popularity for the saint in seventeenth-century Naples. Nicola Spinosa has identified at least forty-seven paintings of Jerome by Ribera or his workshop, almost half of which are certainly autograph works (Tapié, 1990–1, p.112). They span the artist's career from one of his earliest pictures of about 1613 (Fig. 5.16), to what may be his very last work, signed and dated 1652 (Fig. 5.17). Jerome also features in five drawings and three prints by Ribera.

The multiple personae of Jerome – churchman, intellectual, polemicist, hermit and penitent – lend themselves to different types of representation where the saint is focused on different activities, from spiritual contemplation to bodily mortification.[9] Ribera's depictions vary in format – half, three-quarter and full-length figures – and in iconographic type: Saint Jerome at work reading or writing, startled by the Angel of Judgement, hearing the last trumpet and engaged in meditation. It is noteworthy that the artist restricts his portrayals of the saint to these four types, omitting the more common narrative depictions of Jerome.[10] Specifically, Ribera's images demonstrate a shift away from the narrative accoutrements of the classicising versions by his Bolognese contemporaries, Agostino Carracci (1557–1602) and Domenichino (1581–1641). The iconic, non-narrative form that Ribera adopts, transforms the body of Jerome into a kind of hieroglyph in lieu of narrative, while nevertheless presenting the figure at various moments in time and space within the biography of the saint.

During the seventeenth century, Italy and Spain witnessed a proliferation of images of Jerome, a saint whose fashion never waned across the Catholic-Protestant divide (Felton and Jordan, 1982, p.114). Inventories of Neapolitan painting collections attest to the striking popularity of representations of Saint Jerome.[11] It is curious, however, that relatively few churches in Naples were dedicated to the saint (Galante, [1873] 1967, pp.152–3, 311).[12] Jerome was the patron saint of the Hieronymite order, one of whose most important seats was the Monastery of Guadalupe in Extremadura.[13] His role as translator and scholar makes him a figure inherently associated with communication, notably with reading and
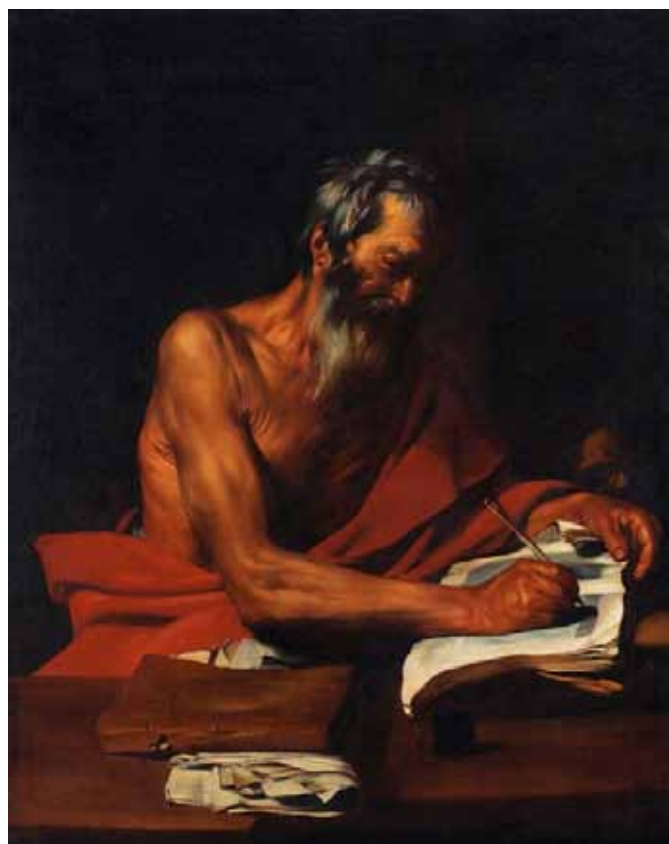

Figure 5.16: Jusepe de Ribera, *Saint Jerome*, c.1613. Oil on canvas, 126 x 100 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. (Image credit: Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Joey and Toby Tanenbaum, 1995, 95/150 / Photo credit: © Art Gallery of Ontario)

Figure 5.17: Jusepe de Ribera, *Penitent Saint Jerome*, 1652. Oil on canvas, 78 x 72 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. (Image credit: Museo Nacional del Prado)

writing. Jerome's most celebrated achievement was his translation of the Scriptures into a standard Latin text of the Bible, which became known as the Vulgate. As a text upon which practically all Christian exegesis was based for over a thousand years, the Vulgate ensured the longevity of the veneration of Jerome. In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent sanctioned the saint's translation as the official Latin Bible for the Catholic Church (Felton and Jordan, 1982, pp.113–14). Ribera would have known Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and the account given there of the Church Doctor's extensive career as a writer, which began in his youth when he excelled in the learning of classical languages and literature. It recounts how Jerome 'laboured day and night in the study of the divine Scriptures, drawing deep draughts from them and later pouring out his knowledge in abundance' (Voragine, 1993, p.212). It was not until after having spent four years in the desert as a hermit, however, that the saint, versed in the Greek and Hebrew languages, undertook the monumental task of translating the Scriptures into Latin, at which he toiled for 'fifty-five years and six months' (Voragine, 1993, p.213). Ribera habitually conflates the personae of Jerome the hermit and Jerome the scholar, depicting him emaciated and at work on the Vulgate.

Furthermore, the artist exploits the subject of Jerome in a non-narrative, non-landscape way in order to highlight the body's own legibility. Bernardo De Dominici comments on Ribera's numerous representations of the saint, applauding in particular his naturalistic treatment of wizened male bodies:

> [Ribera] painted that figure from the live model, having procured some old and decrepit men such as are seen in his pictures, notably Saint Jerome, whom he portrayed ingeniously on countless occasions, perhaps to demonstrate the depths of his fertile imagination through the figure's range of activities, as well as through the individualised skulls, realistically rendered, creating a marvelous effect.
>
> (De Dominici, [1742–5] 1840–6, vol.3, p.137)[14]

De Dominici here refers to the painting of Saint Jerome now in the Museo di Capodimonte and formerly in a chapel on the Epistle (right) side of the main altar in the Neapolitan church of Santissima Trinità delle Monache. Vittoria de Silva, a Neapolitan noblewoman of Spanish origins, founded the convent of the Trinità and its attached church (Pérez Sánchez and Spinosa, 1992, p.83). After becoming a Franciscan nun named Sister Eufrosina in the convent of San Girolamo, she transferred to a new convent, the Santissima Trinità,

where she was mother superior and the first patron to give Ribera a public commission between September 1621 and late 1628 (Farina, 2014, p.478). In addition to *Saint Jerome*, Ribera was also commissioned the large altarpiece of the *Terrestrial Trinity with Saints*.

One of his most striking renditions of Saint Jerome, the Capodimonte painting depicts the saint viewed from below, startled by the sound of the trumpet. Flanked by his attributes – lion, skull, books, parchment and quill – the saint is not set against a tenebrist backdrop (as in Fig. 5.17), but instead against ominous, stormy clouds that break to reveal a patch of blue sky at far left. Jerome throws his arms in the air in a gesture of surprise that heightens the drama of the scene. Ribera creates a visual rhyme of angles in the bent arms of the saint and the angel, who bursts through the clouds. Compositionally, the painting recalls Caravaggio's *Saint Matthew and the Angel* (1601), painted for the Contarelli Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome, which Ribera would have seen (Felton and Jordan, 1982, p.115). The artist depicts the emaciated Jerome with such attention to detail that it later earns him significant praise from De Dominici, notably for his rendering of surface textures:

> Apart from the pose and the fine mass of the figure, it is admirable for the texture of the nude, showing the aged saint withered by his years, macerated by penance and extenuated by his fasting, with his skin clinging to the bones and wrinkled in all the joints of the body, and especially so on the soft part of the flanks, so that it is easier for the eye to take it in than for the pen to describe it: so wonderfully is this picture painted, and so excellently conceived.
>
> (De Dominici, [1742–5] 1840–6, vol.3, p.127)[15]

De Dominici's commentary invokes the artist's practice of working from the live model, recalling Caravaggio's view of a good painter as one who is able to paint nature well. James Clifton further analyses Ribera's depiction of the figure's skin, for Jerome's bronzed right hand and almost lily white arm display a 'farmer's tan' appearance, recalling either the 'realism' of the saint, who wandered the sun-scorched desert wearing long sleeves, or the 'realism' of Ribera's live model, whose hands were tanned by the sun, but whose arms remained covered by garments (1995, pp.113–14). Indeed, the artist's prominent portrayal of Jerome's rough, weather-beaten body contrasts with the soft, smooth flesh of the angel, creating a subtle tension between the earthly and the ethereal realms in the painting. The signature at lower right, '*Josephus de Ribera / Hispanus Valentin / Setaben…Partenope F.*

1626', with its explicit reference to the painting's place of production, is proof that 'Naples' carried a particular significance for Ribera. It further reveals how he grounds this work in its Neapolitan context and cements his reputation as the painter *par excellence* of Saint Jerome in Naples.

Conclusion

In addition to their visual and conceptual complexities, Ribera's paintings of the *Drunken Silenus* and *Saint Jerome* were executed during an especially fertile year of the artist's life (Finaldi, 2016, p.150). Proud not only of his Spanish nationality but also of his status as a Roman Academician, Ribera executed in 1626 his touchstone drawing in red chalk of a *Hermit tied to a Tree (Saint Albert?)* (Fig. 5.18). The only surviving drawing that is both signed and dated by the artist's hand, this sheet parallels Ribera's paintings of the *Drunken Silenus* and *Saint Jerome* in demonstrating his virtuosity as a draughtsman. It may be speculated that Ribera recorded his authorship and the date of execution so prominently because the drawing was commissioned or conceived as a gift (Finaldi, 2016, p.148). Ribera essentially depicted an academic nude in the Roman tradition, which he then transformed into

a hermit saint, exploiting his mastery of the medium through subtle modelling and portraying the figure in a complicated, anatomically impossible position, thus revealing what drawing can achieve that cannot be done in nature.

Similarly, having tested and mastered the process of etching in his images of saints, anatomical studies and grotesque heads, Ribera executed one of his most ambitious prints, the *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 5.19). This elaborate etching is the only one of his prints to bear a dedication. In the lower margin is inscribed: '*Dedico mis obras y esta estampa al Serenis^mo Principe Philiberto mi Señor / en Napoles año 1624. / Iusepe de Rivera Spañol*'.[16] As in the *Drunken Silenus* and *Saint Jerome*, the city of Naples here features prominently, underscoring the artist's alignment with the print's place of production. The dedicatee, Prince Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy (1588–1624), was a nephew of Philip III of Spain, and in 1622 he was appointed viceroy of Sicily. Previously, Filiberto had commanded the Spanish armed forces as admiral of the fleet in naval engagements against the Turks, and he was also employed as an informal minister of Italian affairs (Brown, 1973, p.18, n.8; Salomon, 2012, pp.23–8). If, as this dedication suggests, Ribera was attempting to secure the prince's patronage, it was to no avail, as

Figure 5.18: Jusepe de Ribera, *Hermit tied to a Tree (Saint Albert?)*, 1626. Red chalk, 23 x 17 cm. The British Museum, London. (Image credit: ©Trustees of the British Museum)

Figure 5.19: Jusepe de Ribera, *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1624. Etching and engraving, 32 x 24 cm. The British Museum, London. (Image credit: ©Trustees of the British Museum)

Filiberto died of bubonic plague the same year the print was executed (Brown, 1973, p.18). Notably, an identical inscription appears in a single impression of Ribera's *Saint Jerome Reading* (Fig. 5.20).[17] It seems that the artist subsequently removed the inscription, possibly in response to the prince's death, as it does not appear in any other impressions of the print (Dreyer, 1990, pp.180–1).[18] Since Filiberto was a nephew of Philip III of Spain, and considering the close connections between the Hieronymites and the Spanish monarchy, Ribera's print of *Saint Jerome Reading* would have been a fitting subject for another dedication to the viceroy of Sicily.

In addition to honouring the prince, the dedicatory inscription reinforces Ribera's allegiance to Emanuele Filiberto, viceroy of Sicily and active patron of the arts. Although he here acknowledges a particular viceroy, Ribera also identifies the figure of the viceroy in general as one to which he wishes to be affiliated. The dedication, therefore, reveals that the artist is endeavouring to establish himself as court painter to the Spanish viceroys in the wider kingdom of Naples. Ribera took advantage of his unique role as a Valencian-born artist living in Spanish Naples in order to obtain royal patronage. The printed dedication is at once an advertisement of the dedicatee's importance and self-promotion of the artist's abilities, as it not only features

Filiberto's name, but also Ribera's. His typical signature, followed by a reassertion of his nationality, advertises Ribera's strategic position as a man between two countries.

Naples – city of residence, place of production and centre of the arts – appears textually, visually and symbolically in Ribera's paintings of the *Drunken Silenus* and *Saint Jerome*. On a practical level, its inclusion in the signature formulae suggests that the artist has firmly planted roots in the city, having resided there for a decade by 1626. On a professional level, Ribera has aligned himself with the city of Naples, to which he affords particular emphasis, and which forms as much a part of his identity as his nationality, province of origin and place of formation. On a conceptual level, the figures of Silenus and Jerome, with their bodies carnal and mortified, serve as icons or 'hieroglyphs' for the city, as much indexes of Naples as hallmarks of their maker's attentiveness to the painted body, its flesh and bones, folds and textures.

Figure 5.20: Jusepe de Ribera, *Saint Jerome Reading*, 1624. Etching with some engraving and drypoint, 19 x 25 cm. The British Museum, London. (Image credit: ©Trustees of the British Museum)

* My sincere thanks to Helen Hills for her close reading and astute criticisms of this essay. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Notes

[1] His earliest signed painting is *Saint Jerome*, *c.* 1613. Oil on canvas, 123 × 100 cm. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario.

[2] Although the account is unclear, Ribera may have depicted an *Eruption of Vesuvius* (exhibited in the Palazzo Reale), which Giovanni Lanfranco copied in 1639. See Pérez Sánchez and Spinosa (1992, p.54).

[3] Two later editions of the print bear inscriptions by Giovanni Orlandi and Giovanni De Rossi, the latter dated 1649.

[4] The subject can be traced back to Virgil's sixth Eclogue in which Silenus, bound with his own garlands and forced to sing by two satyrs and a nymph, is both mocked for the vulgarity of his drunken state and celebrated for the creativity of his poetic song (Virgil, 1983, pp.25–8). Richard Spear rejects the interpretation that Pan is supporting the head of Silenus, suggesting that he is, in fact, crowning him with ivy leaves (1983, pp.133–4). Wolfgang Prohaska in turn rejects Spear's reading, proposing instead that Ribera has depicted an event described in Ovid's Fasti where Priapus tries to take advantage of the nymph Lotis, but is exposed by Silenus's donkey, which begins to bray (Pérez Sánchez and Spinosa, 1992, p.77).

[5] Contemporary appetite for this type of visual satire can be further noted in the staging of a burlesque rendition of Orpheus and Eurydice, performed between 1610 and 1616 during the viceregency of the count of Lemos (Trapier, 1952, p.40).

[6] For an overview of the relationship between alcohol consumption and artistic inspiration, see Moffitt (2005) and also Boudier and Desbuissons (2011).

[7] Elizabeth Du Gué Trapier has suggested that the motif of the serpent and the cartellino may derive from a detail at the lower right of El Greco's *Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* at the Escorial (1580–1) (1952, p.39). However, it is questionable whether Ribera is in fact alluding to this one specific painting and if he ever saw it.

[8] The inscription reads: 'B. Serapius. franco de Zurbaran fabt. 1628'. For an analysis of Zurbarán's use of the cartellino, see Stoichita (1995, pp.117–20) and Ostrow (2017, pp.67–96).

[9] For a discussion of Saint Jerome's multiple personae, see Favez (1958), in which each chapter examines a different 'face' of the saint: *Le savant*, *Le lettré*, *L'écrivain*, *Le polémiste*, *Le satirique*, *L'ami*, *Le chrétien*.

[10] These include visions where Jerome is tempted by Roman maidens or where he dreams he is haled before the judge's tribunal when charged with being a Ciceronian and not a Christian. Furthermore, Ribera does not realise images of the saint removing a thorn from the lion's paw, nor portray the last communion of Saint Jerome.

[11] Gérard Labrot lists 124 depictions of the saint, nine of which are recorded as autograph works by Ribera (Labrot and Delfino, 1992, pp.553–4, 622–4).

[12] The pages refer to S. Girolamo de'Ciechi and S. Girolamo delle Monache, respectively.

[13] In the late 1630s Zurbarán received a commission to paint eight portraits of Hieronymite monks and two scenes from the life of Saint Jerome. The Hieronymites became intimately associated with the Spanish crown, as both the order and the monastery were protected by the kings of Castile. The brothers of the order served as councillors and confessors to the kings, and occasionally they were given high-ranking positions in government.

[14] '[Ribera] dipingeva quella figura col naturale presente, avendosi procacciato alcuni vecchi secchi, e decrepiti, come si veggon dipinti nelle sue opere, e massimamente di S. Girolamo, che ne ha dipinti infiniti per un genio particolare, forse per mostrare la fecondità della sua immaginazione nel farli tutti di variate azioni, e con le teste di morte anche diverse, e così vere, che hanno del maraviglioso.'

[15] 'Oltre all' attitudine, e alla bella mossa della figura, ella è ammirabile per la tessitura del corpo, rappresentando il santo vecchio inaridito dagli anni, macerato dalla penitenza, ed estenuato dal digiuno, con la pelle attaccata su l'ossa, e tutta aggrinzita nelle piegature del corpo, e massimamente nel molle de'fianchi; ch'è più facil cosa all'occhio il comprenderlo, che alla penna il descriverlo: tanto questo quadro è maravigliosamente dipinto, ed ottimamente ideato.' See Whitfield and Martineau (1982, p.228).

[16] 'I dedicate my works and this print to the Most Serene Prince Filiberto my Sir / in Naples in the year 1624. / Jusepe de Ribera, Spaniard'.

[17] Brown originally thought this impression to be a trial proof (1973, pp.74–5).

[18] Although Peter Dreyer argues that a later hand may have pasted on the dedication and extended the paper, it is equally plausible that Ribera himself may have added it to this single impression of *Saint Jerome Reading*.

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FLAYING THE IMAGE: SKIN AND FLESH IN JUSEPE DE RIBERA'S MARTYRDOMS OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW

Bogdan Cornea

Abstract

Jusepe de Ribera painted the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew more than any artist of the seventeenth century – more than a dozen works are documented, with six paintings still in existence. While these works have habitually been interpreted as images of extreme violence due to the gruesomeness of the subject, I argue here that they confront viewers with visual paradoxes by refusing to align or to make coherent the relationship between their subject and their technique. I argue that Ribera's Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew *(1634, National Gallery of Art, Washington) and* Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew *(1644, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona) work the potentiality of canvas and oils as flesh or skin in divergent ways, thereby dislodging the possibility of interpreting narrative, temporality and violence in simple alignment or identity. In so doing, Ribera's paintings of flaying produce new relations between figures and surfaces that are capable of effecting new forms of violence.*

Biographical note

Bogdan Cornea is an art historian and writer currently based in Amsterdam. Bogdan studied Art and Literature at the University of Leiden before completing his PhD at the University of York in 2015. His doctoral thesis focused on Jusepe de Ribera's images of flaying. With the aid of a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship from the University of York, Bogdan is currently developing his thesis into a monograph on corporeality and violence in seventeenth-century art.

FLAYING THE IMAGE: SKIN AND FLESH IN JUSEPE DE RIBERA'S MARTYRDOMS OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW

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Mutilated bodies, faces twisted with pain, flayings and ruthless martyrdoms are the subjects that occupy much of Jusepe de Ribera's oeuvre. His name has become synonymous over the centuries with a terrifying art of victims and executioners. Known to his contemporaries and early writers as *Lo Spagnoletto* and *Lo Spagnolo* ('the Little Spaniard', 'the Spaniard'), Ribera's reputation was fanned in the nineteenth century by the Romantics; Lord Byron writing that: 'Spagnoletto tainted / His brush with all the blood of all the sainted' (*Don Juan*, xiii. 71). Most scholarship even today tends to interpret Ribera's violent images as the product of either his supposedly tormented life – as constructed by his eighteenth-century biographer Bernardo de' Dominici – his Spanish origin or/and the purportedly violent nature of Neapolitan society (Felton and Jordan, 1982, pp.35–6; Whitefield and Martineau, 1983, p.22). Ribera was born in 1591 at Xàtiva near Valencia in Spain and travelled to Rome in 1611, where he is documented as having joined the Academy of Saint Luke. In 1616, he moved permanently to Naples where he became one of the leading figures of the art world, having acquired famed during his lifetime for delighting in subject of horror, as de' Dominici states in the artist's biography.

Figure 6.1: Jusepe de Ribera, *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1634. Oil on canvas, 104 x 113cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington. (Image credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)

This essay argues that the violence that pervades Ribera's paintings of flaying stems from the friction of what may be termed 'displacement' that is at work between subject and technique. This can be observed in Ribera's handling of pictorial surfaces in relation to corporeal surfaces: how the texture and consistency of the canvas and paint staged as open flesh and ruptured skin displaces the painting's temporality and narrative. Ribera offers a particularly prolonged and visceral engagement with these issues in his *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.1) (1634, National Gallery of Art, Washington) and *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.2) (1644, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona). In this essay, I show how the extreme

Figure 6.2: Jusepe de Ribera, *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1644. Oil on Canvas, 153 x 202cm, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona. (Image credit: © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (2017) / Photo: Jordi Calveras)

violence of Ribera's two versions of the *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* emerges from their visual paradox of never aligning or making coherent the relationship between the flaying of the saint's body and the treatment of the canvas and paint as flesh and skin. The dislocation between subject and technique produces a shift or rupture in the coherency between time and narrative, identity and materiality.

Art historians have failed to address the displacement at work between subject and technique in Ribera's art, dealing with questions of style, attribution and biography, or attempting to place the artist's work within the Neapolitan artistic milieu.[1] Nicola Spinosa, for instance, accounts for the violence of Ribera's painting, especially his scenes of martyrdom, in terms of a general violence of 'man against man' that supposedly gives visual form to the conflict between spirit and matter, nature and history, and dream and reality (1992, pp.22–4). More recently, Javier Portus explains Ribera's images of violence by attributing them to the artist's interest in depicting emotions in order to convey fervent religious feelings of devotion, piety, cruelty and pain (2011, p.92).

Some scholars have interpreted Ribera's paintings of violence by appealing to philosophical and literary ideas circulating in Naples in the early years of the seventeenth century. Thus Juan Luis González García (2000, pp.214–25) interprets Ribera's chiaroscuro as 'reflecting' the rising popularity in the early seventeenth century of Aristotle's *Poetics*, with its emphasis on tragedy, and Longinus' *On the Sublime*. To Harald Hendrix, the aesthetic of extreme violence permeating early seventeenth-century Neapolitan painting is a response to the dissemination of Giambattista Marino's poetical concept of *meraviglia*, deemed to produce emotions of 'shock', 'wonder' and 'astonishment' (2003, pp.68–91). These studies attempt to explain Ribera's paintings by appealing to literary and philosophical concepts; an approach that risks turning artworks into mere reflections or illustrations of patrons or literati.

Few scholars have specifically addressed the depiction of flesh and skin in Ribera's work. Portus argues that the wrinkles, the aged skin, the ragged attire and even the earthy range of colours belong to a 'theory of realism' that reflects a codified vocabulary dating back to antiquity, and which emerged as an alternative to conventions that supposedly governed painting since the renaissance (2011, p.40). This interpretation of Ribera's art is partly informed by Itay Sapir's useful study of Ribera's engagement with skin and surfaces in relation to the hierarchy of the senses (2014–5, pp.29–39). According to Sapir, Ribera's paintings of the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew create a play between the corporeal, tactile experience of the saint's suffering and his deficient visual perception when looking into the light shining from above – a tension that challenges sight and privileges touch (pp.37–8). Thus, existing scholarship on Ribera does not address the problematic of disjunction at work within his paintings, because their various paradigms focus on providing a coherent stylistic narrative, or assume continuity between paintings and literary or social context in order to account for the paintings' extreme violence. When scholars acknowledge Ribera's painting techniques – heavy impasto, exposing canvas threads and chiaroscuro – they do not set it into a correlative relationship with the subject matter, nor are they concerned with its effect within the process of interpretation.

Ribera's paintings however articulate a relationship between subject and technique that is fraught with tensions, frictions and contradictions. This can be observed by comparing Ribera's *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.2) (1644) with the *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.1) (1634). In the 1644 *Martyrdom* (Fig. 6.2) the violence of the subject – conveyed through the explicit act of flaying and the daunting gaze of the saint – is heightened by the impasto, as well as the ruptures and cuts that appear on the painting's surface as a result of the painting's process of aging. What is more, the restrained intensity of the subject in the *Martyrdom* of 1634 (Fig. 6.1), showing a moment just before the flaying when the executioner stops and stares at the saint with a look that betrays a touch of empathy, is rendered with broad, rough and coarse impasto, especially on the figures of the saint and executioner.

In both paintings, the texture of the canvas, as well as the consistency and layering of paint exceed their roles as mere materials that convey the complexity of a narrative moment by becoming active elements in the violence and drama of the subject depicted. The relationship between corporeal and pictorial surfaces becomes essential as these paintings stage the canvas and paint either as flesh or skin. This dynamic echoes and reinforces the flaying of the saint. It also dislodges the assumed coherency between the meaning produced by materials and the subject they depict. In Ribera's paintings, the violence of the ruptures on the pictorial surface influences the interpretation of the subject's temporality, which, I argue, creates a heightened sense of violence.

The matter of flesh and skin
The manipulation of canvas and paint as flesh or skin was considered problematic in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art-historical discourse since

there was no fixed identity ascribed to either material. Rather, canvas and paint were variously understood as flesh or skin (Pericolo, 2011, pp.446–9; Bohde, 2003; Bohde, 2002). Two sixteenth-century texts address this issue. Giovan Paolo Armenini writes in *De' veri precetti della pittura* published in 1582:

> And then comes the skin, which covers everything, and which Nature created soft and delicate, strewn with a beautiful and alluring variety of tints; as a covering, the skin renders the body's whole composition pleasant, graceful, and marvellous; [the execution of] this part is difficult by all means, but especially so in the representation of those nudes demanding much artifice, which therefore causes knowledgeable scholars to insist ordinarily on an excess upon whatever lies underneath it, which they believe to be accomplished and, always keeping this in mind they hardly tolerate [adding] the ultimate finish of the skin, as if they were displeased to employ [here] their knowledge, which they [instead] strive to express outside [in representing whatever lies underneath the skin] with such hardship.

> (Armenini in Pericolo, 2011, p.488)[2]

Armenini argues that painters should not pay excessive attention to anatomical precision of human figures, conveyed through under-drawings of the human body, as demanded by the art critics of the time. Instead, they should attend to the surface of the figures by covering them with soft and delicate skin in a variety of tints, thus making them look more pleasant and less artificial. Armenini's text goes on to suggest that the surface of the painting is to be interpreted as skin when he mentions that the art critics 'hardly tolerate the ultimate finish of the skin' that covers the under-drawings of the paintings.

Raffaello Borghini in *Il Riposo* (1584) also argues that the surface of paint can be interpreted as skin:

> The good painter must put aside the canvas for many days until the applied colours are dry; then, one must consider it attentively, and amend what needs to be emended, giving it its ultimate skin of finest colour, diluted in little oil, so that they will be always beautiful and lively (alive).

> (Borghini in Pericolo, 2011, p.449)[3]

For Borghini, the thin layers of paint appear as the figure's ultimate skin – the place where they acquire a sense of life and movement. However, Borghini does not assign a fixed identity to paint as skin and canvas

as flesh. Rather he sees skin as colour and life.[4] Indeed, elsewhere the writer interprets the supporting surface – in this case the wall of a fresco – also as skin:

> One must apply this mixture on the wall with a large brush, spreading it with a heated towel in order to cover all the holes of the plaster layer, thereby making a uniform and smooth skin over the entire wall.

> (Borghini in Pericolo, 2011, pp.448–9)[5]

Therefore, skin and flesh have no simple relation to either canvas or paint in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century. Lodovico Dolce points this out in his *Dialogo della Pittura* (1557):

> So he who practices a detailed elaboration of the muscles is really aiming at giving an organized picture of the bone structure, and this is commendable; often, however, he succeeds in making the human figure look flayed or desiccated or ugly. He who works in the delicate manner, on the other hand, gives an indication of the bones where he needs to do so; but he covers them with sweet flesh and charges (fills) the nude figure with grace.

> (Dolce in Roskill, 2000, pp.142–3)[6]

Dolce – echoing Armenini's advice – suggests that painters should not be unduly concerned with anatomical knowledge and drawings, since it risks making the figure look dry and lifeless. Instead, they should concern themselves with the surface of the figures, covering them with sweet flesh – 'ricopre dolcemente di carne' – in order to give them grace. Remarkable in Dolce's account is the use of the term *carne*, which is usually translated as flesh, though here it stands for both flesh and skin.

The interchangeable understanding of canvas and paint as either flesh or skin allows for the dislocation between technique and subject in Ribera's paintings of the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew to emerge more sharply. Thus, in the 1644 *Martyrdom* (Fig. 6.2) the ruptured paint can be interpreted as skin and the visible texture of canvas as exposed flesh, while in the *Martyrdom* of 1634 (Fig. 6.1) the loose brushstrokes of the impasto appear as sections of open flesh and the canvas underneath as submerged skin.

Turning flesh

In Ribera's Washington *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.1) the open brushstrokes of the impasto are staged as sections of opened flesh, but the canvas underneath as submerged skin. The impasto appears to be more rough and open especially on Bartholomew's

hands and face – as the most expressive parts of the body – thus relating the articulacy of the human body with the pictorial technique. Significant is the use of the impasto on the saint's hands when considered in relation to their arrangement. The right hand (Fig. 6.3), positioned deep within the picture, has the thumb touching the forefinger, while the left hand (Fig. 6.4), situated close to the viewer, is open. The distinct visibility of the brushstrokes and the thickness of the paint are staged in this painting as open flesh. This suggests that the body of the saint is turned inside out by the impasto as Ribera's impasto dislocates time from the subject's narrative sequence by opening Bartholomew's body to expose his flesh before the knife of the executioner actually touched the skin.

The complex relationship between impasto and violence in Ribera's art was noted by the biographer Bernardo de' Dominici in his *Vite dei Pittori, Scultori, ed Architetti Napolitani* (1742):

> And so [Ribera] return to his earlier studies, and began to paint with bold innate power and tremendous (*tremendo*) impasto so dense and full of colour, that can reasonably be said that in this respect he superseded Caravaggio himself.
>
> (de' Dominici, 1742, p.3)[7]

De' Dominici associated Ribera's thick and coarse application of paint, his impasto, with a powerful sense of violence by describing it as *tremendo.* In Italian the term *impastare* means 'to slur', 'to make a dough' or 'to mix', while the verb *impastare* translates variously as 'to blur', 'to mould' or 'paste'. Impasto describes a manner of handling materials where the artist, at certain point in the process of creation, gives up the tools of his profession to work with his bare hands. This allows viewers to trace the artist's workmanship and in so doing making them aware of the power of his creative touch.

Ribera's impasto takes on sculptural qualities reminiscent of Michelangelo's *non-finito*.[8] Literally meaning 'unfinished' or 'not finished', the *non-finito* refers to the technique where the artist intentionally leaves certain areas or the entirety of a work in an unpolished rough state. This method emphasises the unevenness of the surface, while suggesting an unfinished process of viewing and interpretation that allows the artwork to continue in the viewer's imagination in decidedly unfixed ways; indeed, the *non-finito* also suggests 'infinity' (as 'never finished'). The *non-finito* was predominantly associated with Michelangelo's sculptures – and thus closely related to the master's
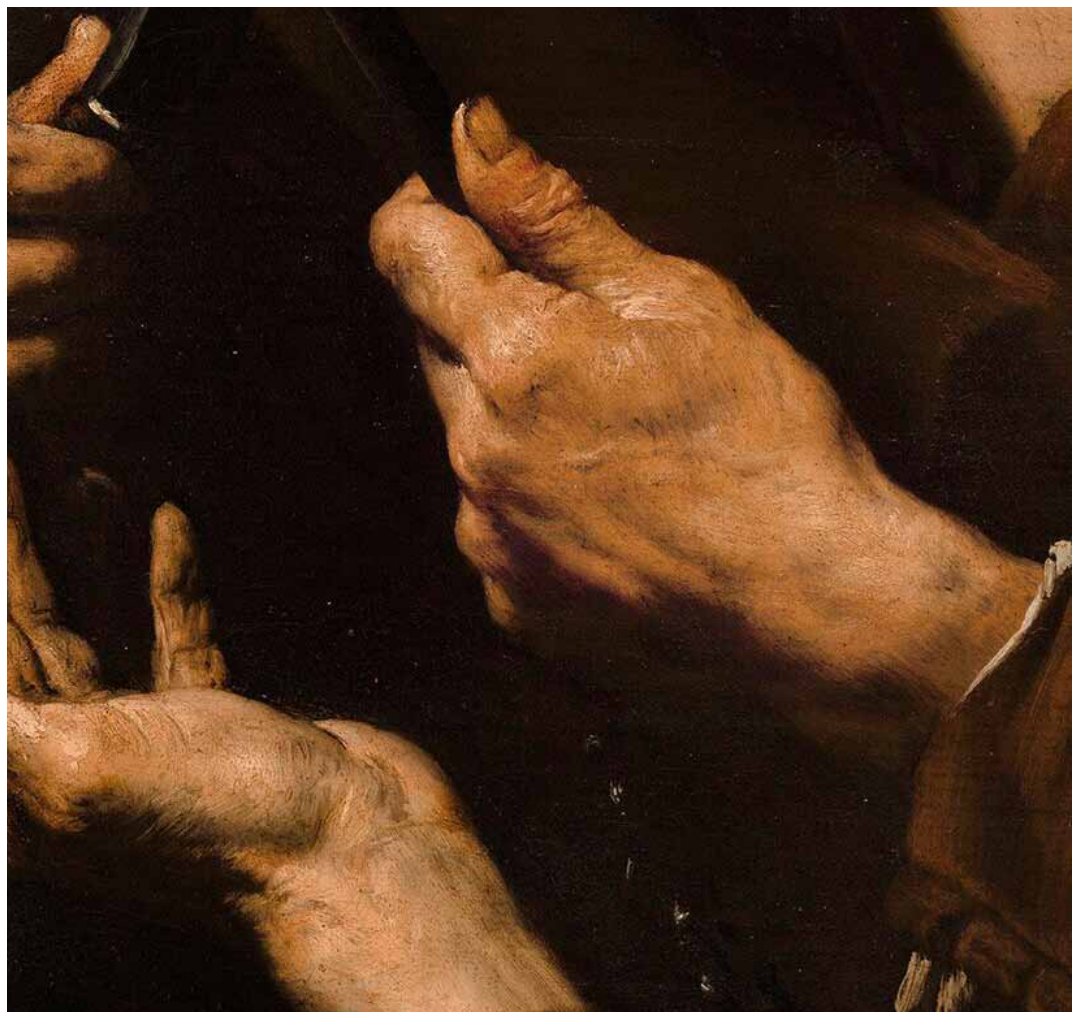

Figure 6.3: Jusepe de Ribera, detail of *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1634. National Gallery of Art, Washington. (Image credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)

terribilità and *furore*. Michelangelo's method of pulling out or extracting bodies from a base mass through his 'divine' touch can be fruitfully contrasted with Ribera's *tremendo impasto*. The adjective *tremendo* – English: *tremendous* – means awful, terrifying, fearsome and unbearable. It suggests a state or moment of extreme tension and intensity, an inspiring awe or dread. Thus de' Dominici's use of the word *tremendo* to describe Ribera's impasto can be seen as a reference to the way the technique in which a certain painting is executed can sense of violence – a terrifying intensity that threatens the integrity of the subject.

Other contemporaneous writers emphasised the relationship between violence and technique in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian painting. The Bolognese essayist and historian Virgilio Malvezzi, for instance, made a similar observation about Titian's technique in his commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*, titled *Considerationi con occasione d'alcuni luoghi delle vite d'Alcibiade e di Coriolano* (1648). While discussing Titian's change of style, from his earliest smooth finish to the late opened brushstrokes named by Vasari *pittura di macchia*, Malvezzi observed:

> Titian, perhaps the most famous of painters, and certainly among the most famous, painted at times with so many and such diligent brushstrokes that it almost seemed as if he wished to make each and every hair countable; and at times he was content to rough in his paintings with few and very rough strokes. The intelligent observer of such diverse styles will recognize in the one the charm of the feminine, in the other robust masculinity. The former will be given passing praise; the latter will hold one fast in admiring contemplation: one will feel oneself gently attracted by the delicate, violently seized upon by the crude.

> (Malvezzi in Sohm, 1995, p.797)[9]

Malvezzi associated Titian's rough strokes of the impasto with a sense of violence and cruelty – an abductive violence. Giovanni Battista Armenini (in Posner, 1993, p.595), in his *De veri precetti della pittura* (1586), advised viewers not to engage too closely with Tintoretto's paintings because: 'his sketches as finished works are so rough that his impetuous and fierce brushstrokes may be seen.'[10] To Armenini *fierezza* – which in English can be translated as *fierce* – again draws attention to the apparent savage and violent nature of the impasto, as something extremely ruthless

Figure 6.4: Jusepe de Ribera, *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1634. National Gallery of Art, Washington. (Image credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)

and terrible. At this point it can be argued that the works themselves acquire a certain violence that may put the viewer in danger.

Similarly, Antonio Palomino was attentive to the relation between corporeal and pictorial surfaces in Ribera's work and their potential to produce violence. In *El Museo pictórico y escala óptica* (1724) he writes:

> [Ribera] did not delight in painting sweet and pious things, but to express horrendous and rough things: which are the bodies of old man, dried, wrinkled and consumed with skinny and haggard face; all done with natural accuracy, as a passionate painter, with force and elegant handling: as it is made visible by the Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew, where he is being flayed and the internal anatomy of his arm exposed.
>
> (Palomino in Spinosa, 2003, p.410)[11]

Palomino connects the violence of Ribera's paintings with the forceful and yet elegant impasto technique. He draws particular attention to worn, dried, creased skin of old men's bodies rendered through open brushstrokes on rough canvas. For Palomino, the textures of these surfaces are horrendous and rough; they bear the excessive violence of the paintings – especially in depiction of Saint Bartholomew's martyrdom.

The violence produced by the impasto in Ribera's paintings is closely related to the paintings' strong sense of corporeality. De' Dominici, in his *Vitae*, points towards the impasto as a source of movement that has the potential to turn and set into motion the surface of the painting. De' Dominici remarks:

> Is it truly a wonder to see how, with his dense impasto so full of colour, he would not only turn [girare] the muscles of the human body, but every small part of the bones and of the hands and feet, always being finished with an unattainable degree of diligence and mastery.
>
> (de' Dominici, 1742, p.115)[12]

De' Dominici use of the verb *girare*, meaning: 'turning' or 'revolving', can be interpreted as moving the figures. This movement suggests an interpretation of the painting in living corporeal terms – as whole bodies – since de' Dominici is careful to point out that Ribera's figures are not only furnished with skin, but also with flesh, muscles, veins and bones. Moreover, there is a paradox in de' Dominici's texts since the impasto that gives figures life and carnality is also exercising a terrifying violence on their internal structure, bringing their flesh to the surface. Thus, Ribera's technique of impasto can be interpreted as endowing figures with physicality that becomes violent as the brushstrokes are so rough that the figures get turned inside out, it ruptures their skin and bring to the surface their flesh.

In Ribera's *Martyrdom* (1634) certain areas of the saint's body – especially the neck, face and hands (Figs. 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5) – are staged as open flesh. Variation in the texture and thickness of the impasto creates narrative foci that disrupt the temporality of the painting. Skin is already torn away from the body to display pulsating living flesh, while the executioner is still sharpening his knife. Impasto therefore has the potential to disrupt the sequential moments of the narrative by making visible simultaneously the moment before the flaying and what is yet to come.

The opening of the body through the impasto is countered by the saint's compositional arrangement in a movement that introduces a paradoxical tension between the painting's technique and subject. Bartholomew's body is shown turning away from the viewer in an ambivalent move of interiority. While Bartholomew's body dominates the foreground, his hands, fastened tightly to the tree now barely visible, form a diagonal starting from the upper right corner of the painting leading down to the lower left. This dramatic axis sharpens the saint's pose by forcing his torso to turn away from the viewer. The viewer is confronted with a body caught in a semi-profiled angle, an inwards facing figure, with his arms opened not towards the viewer in a move of exposition, but turned towards his executioner and the internal space of the picture.

Bartholomew's pose appears in its full eccentricity when considered alongside Ribera's 1644 *Martyrdom* (Fig. 6.2) where the saint is shown in a reclining pose with his arms outstretched and a fixed gaze upon the viewers that engages them directly. The main difference between the two depictions of Saint Bartholomew lies in the figure's physical reference to his own corporeality. While in the Barcelona *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, the saint is vigorously presenting himself to the viewers, seeking their attention and reaction, in the Washington *Martyrdom* the saint seems caught in a paradoxical move where the impasto opens his body towards the viewers while the compositional arrangement of his figure suggests a movement of turning away. Bartholomew's body is staged in a state of intermediacy, as both an opening and a closure, a figure simultaneously positioned in two temporalities, before and after the act of flaying.

Folding skin

Ribera's *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* (Fig. 6.2) (1644) shows the body of Saint Bartholomew's in a movement of folding starting from his upper body and

curving downwards to his feet. Bartholomew's torso, chest, and open hands give the impression of a body stretched and widened so as to resemble a canvas on a stretch bar. The saint's lower body, from his hips down, is engaged in a twisted movement of folding and turning, that echoes that of the white cloth that falls to the ground in sumptuous folds.

The relationship between Bartholomew's body and the white cloth extends beyond their compositional arrangement, to engage also the saint's skin. Thus, on his pelvis, the folds created by the cloth underneath the saint are continued in the folds of his skin and on his hip; the folds of the canvas are continued in the creases of his skin (Fig. 6.6). The body of the saint seems therefore not only folded onto himself, but also folded in a shared entanglement with the white cloth, and indeed even in to the stretching and unfolding of the painting's canvas.

The fold as theorised by Gilles Deleuze resists typical accounts of subjectivity that assume a simple interiority and exteriority, or surface and depth. Deleuze observes:

> The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds

Figure 6.5: Jusepe de Ribera, detail of *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1634. National Gallery of Art, Washington. (Image credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)

Figure 6.6: Jusepe de Ribera, detail of *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1644. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona. (Image credit: © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (2017) / Photo: Jordi Calveras)

and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside.

(Deleuze, 2006, p.80)

Bartholomew's body is staged as a complex surface devoid of a meaningful interior. The relationship between skin and textile – the texture of the canvas, of the white cloth, of paint and of skin – fold the materials upon each other in a corporeal movement that shows the inside of saint's body to be the outside. Bartholomew's body becomes therefore a complex

layering of surfaces. Titian's depiction of Marsyas in his *The Flaying of Marsyas* (Fig. 6.7) (1570–6, National Museum, Kroměříž) does something similar. Marsyas is tied to the tree with red bows – bows which could not possibly support his weight – thus implying a body devoid of physicality, transforming it into a painterly experiment concerned with skin and its relation to paint (Bohde, 2003, p.46). In Ribera's painting, the relation between skin and cloth stages the saint's body as a folding surface.

The folds of cloth and folds formed by Bartholomew's skin are set in a relationship that

Figure 6.7: Titian, *Flaying of Marsyas*, c.1570–6. Oil on canvas, 212 x 207 cm, National Museum, Kroměříž. (Image credit: Courtesy of the Archbishopric of Olomouc)

dislocates time from narrative and folds the viewers in a temporal relation with the painting that creates new forms of violence. This can be observed on the torso of Saint Bartholomew and the white cloth covering his groin that are staged as rough surfaces, ruptured and peeled (Fig. 6.6). During the slow process of drying, the crust of the solidifying paint was broken or cracked by rough textured threads of the canvas. Moreover, the process of aging, and later cleanings and restorations allowed for the weave of the canvas to emerge through the surface of paint.[13] This results in a texture that physically changes Bartholomew's appearance from a smooth and articulate exterior to one that is rough and broken. This material process appears today as an act of violence – a brutal rupture that inadvertently alters the surface of the saint's body.

The folds of cloth and skin engage viewers in a material and temporal relation of anachronism with the surface of the painting. For Deleuze the baroque is a particular 'operative function, a trait. It endlessly produces folds' (Deleuze, 2006, p.3). Moreover, Mieke Bal, commenting on Deleuze's folds, points out that 'the fold insists on surface and materiality, a materialism that promotes a realistic visual rhetoric in its wake. The materialism of the fold entails the involvement of the subject within the material experience, thus turning surface into skin in a relation that I call "correlativist"' (2011, p. 191). Thus, the surface of the cloth and skin – damaged and worn by time and later interventions – fold viewers in a material and temporal relationship that extends beyond the subject's time and narrative.

Viewers are therefore confronted with a complex temporal relationship where the materiality of the surface dislocates the relation between the subject's time and narrative. The ruptures and breaks that enact violence on the saint's skin in turn produce a horrifying endless temporality where time is dislocated from narrative. At this point, the matter of the surface becomes horrible. This is not a violence that will end soon with the saint's demise, but will continue to be enacted forever on the painting's surface. For Ribera's painting confronts viewers with the figure of a saint that stares back at them coldly, offering no sign of comfort since the heavenly bliss that presumably awaits him in the afterlife remains an eternity away.

Notes

[1] For questions of attribution and style, see: Spinosa (2003) and Papi (2007; 2012). Indeed, there is a growing interest in Ribera's early years, between his arrival in Italy and settling in Naples, evidenced by the 2011 itinerary exhibition *Il giovane Ribera* and *El Joven Ribera* in Naples and Madrid; see Spinosa (2011). For studies that contextualise Ribera's art in Naples, see Felton and Jordan (1982), Cassani (1984) and Whitfield and Martineau (1983). For a study that considers Ribera's art in relation to Naples and Spain, see Perez Sanchez and Spinosa (1992).

[2] 'Di poi vien la pelle, che cuo- pre ogni cosa , la quale la natura ha fatto molle e delicata, sparsa di belle e vaghe varietà dei colori; la qual coperta fa che tutto il componimento del corpo riesce piacevole, vago e meraviglioso; la qual parte e difficile in tutte le maniere, ma e molto pui ne gl'ignudi molto artificio, il che ne cagiona la troppo impressioni che gli studiosi si sogliono pigliare delle parti di sotto, le quali essi trovano esser terminate e cosi, tenedo in mente tuttavio, fan che mal pastiscono poi quest'ultimo compimento della pelle, come che siano quasi constretti a dover mostrare quella intelligenza di loro cosi spiacevole, che con tanta fatica si sforzano voler esprimer fouri, dove che molti se ne lavano poi finalmente, tardi accorgendosi quella dover essere maniera pui conveniente ed atta per I sommi principi che per le private persone, alle quail essi pui spesso servono e dove, con piu riputazione e men fatica, fanno I fatti loro.' The author's translation.

[3] 'Il buon pittore (…) dee metter da canto il cuadro per molti giorni, tantoche I colori dati siano secchi; poi lo rivegga deligentemente, e racconci quello che gli pare da racconciare, e gli dia l'ultima pelle si colori finissimi e temperate con poco olio, che d'ital maniera saranno sempre vaghi e vivi.'

[4] On colour and corporeality, see Lehmann (2008). The author's translation.

[5] 'E questa mistura con un pennel grosso si metta sopra il muro e si vada distendendo con una cazzuola infocata che riturera tutti I buchi dell'arricciato e fara una pelle unita e liscia per il muro.' The author's translation.

[6] 'Chi adunque va ricercando minutamente i muscoli, cerca ben di mostrar l'ossature a luoghi: ilche e lodevole; ma spesse volte fa l'huomo scorticato, o secco, o brutto da vedere: ma chi fa il delicate, accenna gliossi, ove bisogna, ma gli ricopre dolcemente di carne, e riempie il nudo di gratia.' The author's translation.

[7] 'Torno dunque a'primieri studi, e si diede col naturale avanti a dipingere di forza con tremendo impasto di color tanto denso, che ragionevolmente puo dirsi che egli in questa parte superasse il Caravaggio stesso.' The author's translation.

[8] The bibliography on Michelangelo's *non-finito* is extensive. For a recent study, see Gilbert (2003).

[9] 'Titiano forse il piu famoso Pittore, e senza forse fra piu famosi, tal'hora dipinte con tante, e cosi diligenti pennellate, che parve quasi volesse far numerabili i capelli: e tal' hora si contento grossamente le pitture di pocchi, e rozzissimi colpi figurare. Spettatore intelligente da cosi diversa maniera nell'una riconoscera il vago della femina, nell'altra il robusto

maschile; Quella passara con lode, in questa si fermara con ammiratione; sentirassi dalla delicata soavemente inclinare, dalla rozza violentemente rapire.'

[10] 'Costui ha fatto più volte senza i desengli opera molto important, lasciando le bezze per finite, e tanto a fatica sgrossate, che si veggono i colpi del pennelo fatto dall'impeto, e dalla fierezza di lui, ue percio sovo poi da essere tropo considerate a minuto.' The author's translation.

[11] 'No se deleitaba tanto Ribera en pintar cosas dulces, y devotas, como en expressar cosas horrendas, y asperas: quales son los cuerpos de los ancianos, secos, arrugados y consumídos,- con el rostro enjuto, y malicento; todo hecho puntualmente por el natural, con extremado primor, fuerza, y elegante manejo: como lo manifiesta el San Bartolomé en el Martyrio, quitándole la piel, y descubierta la anathomia interior del brazo: el célebre Tcio, a quien el Buitre lesaca las entrañas , por caítigo de su insolente atrevimiento: los totmentos de Sisifo, de Tántalo, y de Ixion, expressando (especialmente en este) con tal extremo el dolor, atado á la rueda, donde era continuamente herido, y despedazado.' The author's translation.

[12] 'Fa veramente maraviglia il veder come col suo impasto così denso di colore egli facesse girare non solamente i muscoli del corpo umano, ma eziando le parti minute dell'ossa delle mani e de' piedi, i quali si veggono finiti con diligenza e maestria inarrivabile.' The author's translation.

[13] Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Informe Intern de Prestec, No. 141L131–34/2015. The conservation report details the various interventions on the canvas, from older degradation of the layers of paint to the most recent processes of restoration.

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'MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN NATURE ITSELF': THE EARLY COMMERCIAL AND CRITICAL FORTUNES OF NEAPOLITAN BAROQUE STILL-LIFE PAINTING

Christopher R. Marshall

Abstract

This article considers the early reception of Neapolitan baroque still-life painting by seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century viewers. Although originating as a relatively cheap and critically under-valued picture type, Neapolitan still life nonetheless came to enjoy widespread popularity in baroque Naples. An analysis of primary and early secondary sources (ranging from payment documents, to art inventories, to early writings on art) reveals a surprisingly high value attached to Neapolitan still life from a relatively early date. This contrasts markedly with the situation in Rome where the local specialists were significantly under-priced relative to their Neapolitan counterparts. Neapolitan still life was highly valued in both a critical as well as an economic sense. Early writing on Neapolitan still life is also remarkably free of the commonplace deprecation of still-life imagery in relation to the supposedly more exalted category of history painting that is found so commonly expressed in other European art-theoretical writings. The positive Neapolitan attitude culminates in Bernardo de' Dominici's Vite de' pittori napoletani *(1742–45). While the early Roman biographers tended to downplay the achievements of the Roman still-life specialists or else ignore them altogether, de' Dominici set the seal on the Neapolitan predilection for still life by writing the first systematic account of a regional school of Italian still-life painting.*

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'MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN NATURE ITSELF': THE EARLY COMMERCIAL AND CRITICAL FORTUNES OF NEAPOLITAN BAROQUE STILL-LIFE PAINTING

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Introduction

Neapolitan still life constitutes one of the signal achievements of Italian baroque painting. The standard text on Italian still life by Luigi Salerno, for example, justly describes it as: 'the most important and richest of all such schools in Italy' (1984, p.105). Yet what has long struck the present writer about the early documentation of Neapolitan still life is what it suggests, not so much about the aesthetic distinction of Neapolitan still life per se, as rather about the unique nature of the broader reception of the genre among its early viewers. In particular, de' Dominici and other early sources of information that can be gathered together on the topic seem to assume a high critical status for Neapolitan still life, as both attained within its homeland as well as abroad. As a result, its critical status – as well as its economic value, as shall be shown – was evidently significantly higher than that commonly held in other European centres. Elsewhere, still life was generally regarded as the least conceptually demanding form of painting, and was thus considered the lowest of the genres, to be placed at the bottom rung of a standard hierarchy that stretched upwards to the exalted potential of history painting. The evidence from Naples, on the other hand, suggests a very different understanding. Apparently, the critical fortunes of still life were transformed by the end of the seventeenth century, in Naples at least, from a base metal to gold. The account that follows will trace this development with particular attention to the role of Naples in this alchemical alteration.

Luca Forte and the humble origins of Neapolitan still-life painting

Neapolitan still life did not begin its development as a particularly highly valued genre. Indeed, the opposite seems suggested by the early evidence. This holds true, for example, for the early work of Luca Forte, who is universally recognised as the father of Neapolitan still life (Causa, 1962; Gregori, 1996; De Vito, 2006). His early works coincide with the first Neapolitan

appearance of the genre as an independent artistic category during the opening decades of the century. Forte's paintings tend to be reasonably small – around 50 to 75 centimetres in width (Fig. 7.1). Only rarely do they exceed a metre. This is an important indication in itself since it suggests that, during its initial development at least, still-life painting offered its practitioners only limited opportunities for attracting the kind of deluxe, one-off commissions that were the preserve of large and prestigious history paintings and other specially ordered compositions.

This modesty of scale went hand in hand with a relative modesty of pricing. Still-life painting was one of the cheapest types of painting, for example, in a detailed and carefully compiled inventory drawn up in 1659 by the painter Domenico Gargiulo on behalf of his long-standing patron, Ettore Capecelatro, Marchese di Torella (Labrot, 1992, Inv.16, pp.113–15, also Inv.16, pp.101–4). In this inventory, a series of unattributed still lives are appraised variously at six ducats apiece (for two paintings of vases of flowers), 5.5 ducats each (for 8 compositions of vases of flowers for a total of 44 ducats) and 8 ducats each for three paintings of fruit. This contrasts with the much higher valuations assigned to the most prestigious items in the collection: 280 ducats to a painting by Stanzione of *Jacob and Rachel* measuring around 2.63 x 2.11 centimetres, for example, or 360 ducats to an equally imposing painting of *Fortune* by Van Dyck, whose works were rare and highly prized in Neapolitan collections. These last prices also correspond with the highest prices known to have been paid by Neapolitan patrons for specially commissioned gallery paintings produced by the leading figure painters of the day (Marshall, 2010, pp.126–38).

The relative cheapness of early Neapolitan still life is further indicated in a partnership document of 1630 between Giacomo Recco and the otherwise unknown painter Antonio Cimino (Delfino, 1984, doc.27, pp.159–60). A contemporary of Luca Forte, Giacomo Recco, represents another of the founding figures of early Neapolitan still life (Causa, 1961). He is particularly known for his compositions of flowers set in elaborately decorated vases that offer a Caravaggesque update on compositional models stretching back to precedents by the circles of Giovanni da Udine and Polidoro da Caravaggio from the 1520s onwards (Salerno, 1984, pp.32–3, 263; Fig. 7.2). In 1630, Recco, aged twenty-seven, formed a partnership with Cimino for a period of one and a half years. The contract mentions an annual rent of 30 ducats on a workshop in via Santo Spirito and specifies in some detail the partners' joint obligations for the running of the business. Cimino provided the capital for the two

Figure 7.1: Luca Forte, *Still Life with Apples and Pears*, c.1625–35. Oil on canvas, 26 x 35cm, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples, on deposit from the Museo Duca di Martina, Naples. (Image credit: Pedicini Images)

artists' joint venture. Besides paying the rent and for materials, he provided 50 ducats to acquire paintings (or 100 ducats if he were to be able to raise the money, in which case Recco agreed to contribute 50 ducats). Recco was to use the money

> to purchase from outside the workshop a range of paintings of various types and of varying quality, as will appear pleasing to Giacomo, for the common good and benefit of the partnership, and always having acquired the paintings from outside the workshop and after finishing the transaction, Giacomo must carry them back to the workshop and there they must sell and dispose of them for whatever price they can attain and for the greatest benefit and usefulness [to the partnership].
>
> (Delfino, 1984, doc.27, pp.159–60, my translation)[1]

Figure 7.2: Giacomo Recco, *Vase of Flowers with the Arms of Cardinal Poli*, c.1623–53. Oil on canvas, 76 x 60cm, Pietro Lorenzelli collection, Bergamo. (Image credit: Pedicini Images)

The emphasis elsewhere in the contract on paintings of flowers and fruit suggests that the partners hoped in this instance to capitalise on Recco's specialist knowledge by developing a niche-market in the emerging genre of still-life painting. Recco's capital was his expertise since he was given the money by Cimino to buy other still-life paintings that were then no doubt hung alongside Recco's own and displayed for prospective clients to view in their workshop. In terms of monetary value, Recco and Cimino evidently considered their start up capital of either 50 or a maximum of 150 ducats sufficient to acquire a solid stock of still lives to sell to the public. It was just as well they were specialising in still life since, for the same sum, they would only have been able to acquire one or two large and complex history paintings by the leading figure painters of the day.

Luca Forte and the commissioned still life

Not all early Neapolitan still life was this modest in terms of its scale and pricing. A small but significant number of still lives included large-scale figures by local specialists. The oeuvres of Forte and Recco, for example, include some compositions with figures attributed to Massimo Stanzione and Artemisia Gentileschi (Salerno, 1984, no. 29.8, p.119; Spinosa, 2009-10, cat.1.54, p.138; Bissell, 1999, cat.44, pp.276–7). Some of these collaborative paintings can also be traced back to early Neapolitan collections. The 1654 inventory of the collection of Ferrante Spinelli, Principe di Tarsia, for example, refers to: 'A painting measuring around six hands [c.158cm] with a landscape and figures who sing and play musical instruments, with fruit, by Aniello Falcone and Luca Forte' (Labrot, 1992, Inv.15, item 148, p.97).[2] Spinelli's painting has been associated with a canvas now at the Prado (Fig. 7.3), notwithstanding an alternative suggestion

Figure 7.3: Aniello Falcone and Luca Forte, *Concert*, c.1640s. Oil on canvas, 109 x 127cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. (Image credit: © Museo Nacional del Prado)

Figure 7.4: Luca Forte, *Still Life with Fruit,* c.1640–47. Oil on canvas, 78.9 x 104.7cm, signed with monogram, Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University. (Image credit: The Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University)

that the Prado painting might be identified, instead, with a composition originally in the possession of the Neapolitan viceroy, the Duke of Medina de las Torres (Spinosa, 2009-10, p.169). Either way, the reference indicates the enthusiastic take-up among the leading Neapolitan collectors of this novel form of collaborative output. Although quite rare at this stage, these paintings nonetheless constitute the forerunners of a combined type of still life with large-scale figures that would grow in stature and prominence to encompass the monumental still-life paintings produced by Luca Giordano in collaboration with the still life specialists of the 1680s, as presently to be discussed.

Another indication of the early potential of Neapolitan still life to attain a certain prominence and prestige within early Neapolitan collections are the works produced on a larger and more imposing scale than was otherwise the norm. Luca Forte appears to have periodically produced works of this kind, for example, even when not drawing on large-scale figure painters to help fill out his compositions. A good example is the *Still Life with Fruit* now at the John and

Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida (Fig. 7.4). This painting is larger than normal and contains an unusually ambitious composition that John T. Spike has described as 'a tour de force' of Forte's later, more complex compositional approach (1983, cat.17, pp.60–1). The original owner of this painting can also be securely identified since the painting contains an inscription noting its owner as 'Don Joseph Carrafas'. It can thus be unequivocally associated with one of the 'Two paintings with gilt frames measuring four by three and a half hands [c.105 x 93cm] with an inscription by Luca Forte'[3] that is listed in the collection of the early seventeenth-century Neapolitan aristocratic collector Don Giuseppe Carafa di Maddaloni in June 1648 (Labrot, 1992, Inv.9, item 8, p.76).

How expensive were these larger and more ambitious still lives? In the case of Luca Forte, an unusually detailed correspondence relating to the important Sicilian patron and collector, Don Antonio Ruffo of Messina, provides useful information along these lines. Ruffo commissioned canvases from many of the leading painters, including Pietro da Cortona in

Rome, Guercino in Bologna, Preti in Malta, and Ribera, Stanzione and Artemisia Gentileschi in Naples. He also commissioned a still life from Forte in September 1649 (Ruffo, 1916, pp.58–61). Forte's responses to Ruffo's enquiries regarding the painting's cost demonstrate his high opinion of the value of his work. His first requirement was that Ruffo send him a 50 ducat down-payment before he would commence work on the composition. This price is significant in itself since it compares directly with the customarily high *caparre*, or initial installment down payments, paid to Ribera, Stanzione and the other leading Neapolitan history painters.[4] Two weeks after receiving this money, Forte fended off Ruffo's inquiry about the final price of the painting by noting that the finished work would cost around 200 ducats, more or less depending on the work:

> Padre Tomaso Maria Ruffo [Ruffo's nephew who worked as an agent on Ruffo's behalf] has asked me to provide you with the price [but] in respect [of that] it is not possible to say at this point because I don't yet know how much work will go into finishing the painting, but so as to serve you and the given Padre since you asked me a similar question in the earlier letter, I can say that regarding the price it will be 200 ducats, more or less according to the work that there is in it.
>
> (Ruffo, 1916, pp.59–61)[5]

The paucity of documentary evidence relating to Forte – or indeed to any Neapolitan still-life specialists of the 1630s–50s – renders it difficult to confirm how regularly Forte or his other first-wave colleagues might have attracted prestigious and expensive commissions of this kind. It seems, though, that Forte at least may well have been accustomed to receiving high fees for his largest and most ambitious specially commissioned gallery paintings. On 27 March 1663, the painter Mattia Preti wrote to Don Antonio Ruffo noting that he had seen a very large still life by Forte – measuring around 211 x 290cm, and so evidently one of the most ambitious works ever produced by this artist. The painting was circulating for sale on the secondary market in Malta. Its asking price was 400 ducats – an extremely costly amount for a gallery painting – so much so, in fact, that Don Antonio Ruffo evidently chose not to pursue the lead any further (Ruffo, 1916, p.248).

The cost of early Neapolitan still life in relation to Roman prices

200 and 400 ducats was a lot to pay for gallery paintings by any standard of the period. This is made clearer by comparing these prices to those achieved by the leading still-life specialists active in the neighbouring city of Rome.[6] During the 1650s, for example, the Chigi paid the early Roman still-life specialist Michelangelo Pace (also known as Michelangelo di Campidoglio) a mere 20 scudi on four separate occasions for still-life paintings that were evidently quite large and complex – one measured 9 x 6 palmi (c.201 x 134cm) (Golzio, 1939, docs.2043 and 3396, pp.279, 281; and see further docs. 2080 and 3717, pp.280, 283). Likewise Mario dei Fiori – by far the most popular and successful Roman still-life painter of the day – had four of his admittedly rather smaller still-life compositions (e.g. a *Small painting of flowers* measuring c.56 x 45cm) valued at between 25 and 30 scudi each in a 1671 inventory of the collection of Cardinal Antonio Barberini (Aronberg Lavin, 1975, Inv.IV, pp.310–11). To put these valuations into perspective, the Cardinal owned some of the most prestigious and expensive paintings then in Rome. His version of Lanfranco's *Venus Playing the Harp* (*Allegory of Music*) now at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, was valued at 500 scudi, while Correggio's *Taking of Christ* was valued yet higher at 1000 scudi, one of the highest valuations on record for a painting of this kind (Aronberg Lavin, 1975, Inv.IV, items 366, 379 and 398, pp.310–11; for the *Taking of Christ*, see item 362, p.310; for Lanfranco's *Allegory of Music*, see item 248, p.303).

Other prices recorded for early Roman still-life painting confirm the essential accuracy of Richard Spear's observation that Roman still life paintings were 'remarkably cheap' in comparison to Roman history paintings (Spear and Sohm, 2010, p.107). In 1661, for example, the Chigi once again paid Paolo Porpora 80 scudi for two presumably pendant canvases of animals measuring c.112 x 156cm – including one of sea turtles and another of crocodiles and a hare (Golzio, 1939, p.283; for Porpora's *Still Life with Hares and Crocodile* [formerly Chigi collection], see Zeri, 1989, II, fig.869, p.733). Porpora's work compares particularly closely to Forte and the Neapolitan context, in fact, since he was a recent Neapolitan émigré who had spent the first twenty years of his career in Naples, commencing with an apprenticeship in the early 1630s training under the previously mentioned early specialist Giacomo Recco (Prota Giurleo, 1953, pp.12–13; Damian, 2007, pp.46–7). Finally, in 1638, Giovanni Stanchi received 50 scudi for a painting of a garland of flowers containing an image of the arms of the Barberini family measuring 5 x 4 Roman palmi (c.112 x 89cm) (Lavin, 1975, doc.326a, p.41). In the following year, he was paid 32 scudi for an unusually large still life measuring c.145 x 190cm with some figures of putti added by Camassei (and for which the figure painter was paid, as was usual,

the higher amount of 47 scudi) (Bocchi and Bocchi, 2005, p.324). Stanchi's 1638 garland painting, with its interwoven reference to the arms of its owners, was clearly specially commissioned and thus would have represented the top end of the deluxe products created by this artist for a prestigious private patron. And yet it seems that the highest price Stanchi could ask at this stage in Rome was a quarter of the asking price of Forte's comparable deluxe commissions in Naples.

Giuseppe Recco and the increasing value of later seventeenth-century Neapolitan still life

The growing prestige and costliness of early Neapolitan still life was further consolidated by the ensuing generation of specialists active from the 1650s onwards. In particular, Giuseppe Recco and his family workshop attained a central prominence to the genre and attracted a particularly high degree of international interest and financial benefit for their works. Recco dominated later seventeenth-century Neapolitan still

life not only by virtue of his own prolific and multiform production, but also by dint of his position as the most prominent member of an intergenerational family workshop. Rather like the Della Robbia family in the field of Italian renaissance terracotta production, the Reccos remained leading figures in the development of still life from at least the time of Giuseppe's father and uncle – Giacomo and Giovan Battista Recco – active from the 1630s (De Vito, 2010–11, pp.30–46; De Vito, 2008; Damian, 2007, pp.34–5; Causa, 1961, pp.344–53;). The Recco name remained synonymous with the genre thereafter not only via the model of Giuseppe Recco's own work from the 1650s–90s but further down the family line to Giuseppe's children, Nicola Maria and Elena Recco, who helped extend the family's reputation well into the eighteenth century.

Giuseppe Recco's output was not weighted entirely towards the deluxe end of large-scale specially commissioned work. Indeed, its variety and diversity suggests that one of the key factors contributing to his success rested on his ability to create a range of price points for his work. In particular, his smaller

Figure 7.5: Giuseppe Recco and Luca Giordano, *Marine Still Life with Fishermen*, 1668–9. Signed and dated 'G.ᵉ Recco 1668'. Oil on canvas, 180 x 230cm, Pagano Collection, Naples. (Image credit: Pedicini Images)

paintings could be quite reasonable in cost. In 1673, for example, he was paid 30 ducats for two small paintings 'each containing a jar of flowers' (Nappi, 1992, p.93).[7] The description suggests that these works would have represented an updated version of the relatively simple compositions depicting a single vase with flowers that was a particular specialisation of Giuseppe's father, Giacomo Recco, during the 1630s–50s (see Fig. 7.2). Two years later, Giuseppe was paid 50 ducats for two paintings of fish (p.93). That these paintings were also relatively small and not especially demanding compositionally is suggested both by the relatively modest price, and also by the fact that Recco was able to complete the order in only three and a half weeks.

Increasingly and particularly from the late 1660s, though, Giuseppe Recco became renowned for progressively larger and more spectacular compositions that were also very highly valued in economic terms. In 1669, the Marchese di Noja authorised a payment of 62 ducats towards a total amount of 100 ducats received up until that point for a painting measuring 7 x 9 palmi (c.185 x 237cm). This was to be for a painting 'depicting various kinds of fish and with the figure of a fisherman among other things by Luca Giordano' (D'Addosio, 1912-13, p.493).[8] This can be securely identified with a painting now in a private collection that is signed and dated 1668, and in which the figure of the fisherman is clearly attributable to Giordano on stylistic grounds (Fig. 7.5).[9] Spike, who first published the painting, surmised that the discrepancy between the date of 1668 and the document reference of 1669 was probably the result of Giordano requiring extra time to complete his portion of the commission (1983, p.96, n.2, and cat.33, pp.96–7 for the painting more generally). He also noted that the document attests to the unusually high status of still-life painting in Naples since Recco was evidently awarded the commission in his own right and would thus have been expected to sub-contract Giordano from out of the 100 ducat fee for his work (p.96).

Although Spike's point about the high critical status of still life during this period is valid, it is not certain that Recco would have been expected to pay Giordano from his 100 ducat fee (thus effectively halving his earnings, if assuming an amount of 50 ducats for one of Giordano's figures). This seems unlikely for two reasons. First, it would make this painting under-valued in relation to other documented prices here discussed. Second, it goes against the mode of payment recorded for a directly comparable commission undertaken by the Chigi in Rome that is probably an important precedent for this and other monumental still-life paintings with large-scale figures. In 1659, the Chigi

commissioned an important series of decorations for their villa at Ariccia (Rudolph, 1979, pp.12–20; Salerno, 1984, p.174; Bocchi and Bocchi, 2005, pp.100–6). This included a series of four very large paintings of the four seasons (measuring 195 x 265cm). The figures and background in these works were produced by Roman figure painters while the still-life elements of all four paintings were added by the previously mentioned still-life specialist Mario dei Fiori. The documentation for the commission demonstrates that the figure painters were paid separately for their contributions. Carlo Maratta, Giacinto Brandi and Bernardino Mei were each paid 70 scudi for the figures and backgrounds in *Summer*, *Autumn* and *Winter* respectively, whereas the slightly more junior and less well-known painter Filippo Lauri was paid 60 scudi for his work on *Spring*. Mario dei Fiori was paid separately a flat fee of 100 scudi for his work on all four paintings plus another of the same dimensions: making an average of 20 scudi per painting (Golzio, 1939, docs.2076–7, p.280). Thus, this is further evidence of a higher financial valuation in Naples. In Rome, the leading still-life painter, Mario dei Fiori, was paid 20 scudi for his contribution to a composition that is directly comparable with a Neapolitan commission for which Giuseppe Recco was paid five times more in Neapolitan ducats.

Recco and Giordano's 1668–9 co-painted still life measures 180 x 230cm, equivalent to around 7 x 9 Neapolitan palmi, thus making it a particularly large and imposing canvas on a par with other major gallery paintings of the period. In 1677, by contrast, Recco received an unusually large down-payment of 100 ducats which, the bank-transfer document notes, was to be paid out as an on account fee for two paintings 'of fish'. These two paintings were to measure the even more grandiose dimensions of 12 palmi in width – or around 316cm (Nappi, 1992, p.93).[10] Recco had already received 100 ducats in hand for this commission, so the finished canvases must have cost at least 300 or, more likely, 400 ducats for the two works combined. The patron who commissioned these works was Carlo della Torre, an artist-cum-dealer who was heavily involved in local and international trade in Giordano's and Recco's work (Marshall, 2003; Marshall, 2016, pp.135–8).

If Della Torre was content to pay Recco 200 ducats out of his own pocket for each of these two paintings, then, as a long-standing dealer with a major stake in selling the work of Giordano and his colleagues, he must have been confident that he could turn a profit when it came to selling these canvases on to one or other of the prestigious Neapolitan and international collectors with whom he was in contact. This is confirmed by an appraisal of 1685 of a valuation of

285 ducats per painting made in relation to another group of ten paintings by Giordano and his colleagues – including six very large paintings with still-life elements added by Recco and other local specialists. This group appears to have incorporated a large proportion of Della Torre's earlier stock that the dealer had been forced to deliver back to two of his associates as part of a long-standing debt of 2400 ducats, thus further underscoring the importance of these paintings as financially valuable assets to be bought, sold and used as collateral in complex business deals (Marshall, 2016, p.138).

A large proportion of these documented still lives from 1684 to 1685 were included in a legendary exhibition of paintings held in Naples on 25 May 1684 (Ferrari and Scavizzi, 1992, vol.I, pp.119–22; Lattuada in Zampino, 1997, pp.150–69; De Vito, 2012–13; Marshall, 2016, pp.244–6). This formed part of a temporary exhibition of contemporary paintings by Neapolitan artists to accompany the celebrations of the Festa dei Quattro Altari of 1684. De' Dominici emphasises the exhibition's importance as a turning point in the evolution of the genre, noting that it contained no fewer than fourteen extremely large paintings (said to measure 10 to 14 to 18 palmi – or 263 to 367 to 474 cm in width). The still-life elements were contributed by Recco and the other local specialists – Francesco della Quosta, Giovanni Battista Ruoppolo and Abraham Brueghel (the last artist having recently moved from Rome). The impresario in charge of orchestrating this massive project was none other than Luca Giordano (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, pp.296–8). Giordano and his workshop contributed monumental figures to compositions ranging from imposing images of bucolic pastoral scenes, to bounteous floral and fruit arrangements, to massive and imposing scenes of marine still life. The exhibition was an immediate sensation and overnight success thanks to its physical scale and to the startling innovation of an extended suite of monumental canvases containing large-scale figures set amidst extensive still-life landscape backgrounds – a combination of history painting and

Figure: 7.6: Luca Giordano and Giuseppe Recco, *The Riches of the Sea with Neptune, Tritons and Two Nereids*, c.1683–4. Oil on canvas, 234.5 x 296cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Mary Overton Gift Fund 1997. (Image credit: Art Gallery of South Australia, Mary Overton Gift Fund 1997)

still life that had never before been seen in Naples on such a scale (Marshall, 2016, pp.245–6). Its fame was such that it prompted a panegyric poem by the Neapolitan dramatist and poet Andrea Perrucci that stressed the paintings' power to elicit: 'Applause, praise, honour, acclaim and amazement' on the part of contemporary viewers.[11]

One of the most striking pieces from the series is Recco and Giordano's *Riches of the Sea with Neptune, Tritons and Two Nereids* (Fig. 7.6). This painting has been identified with an inventoried canvas hanging in the Spanish Royal collection in 1700 (Fernández Bayton, 1975–81, II, p.295). It was thus probably a diplomatic gift sent to Madrid by the Marques del Carpio, Neapolitan viceroy from 1683 to 87. Although not necessarily painted with the Spanish royal court in mind, therefore, it is not difficult to appreciate how the canvas might have functioned as a powerfully effective advertisement for the wonders of Naples when placed in this setting. It offers the viewer an almost encyclopaedic distillation of the spectacular bounteousness of the marine produce of the Habsburgs' southern Italian territories. We are presented with a prodigious pile of seafood combining in dramatic fashion the relatively common with the rare and exotic. Scores of bream, sea bass and mullet vie for the viewer's attention alongside progressively more prized local delicacies ranging from red mullet, scorpion fish and conger eels, no fewer than four lobsters, a pair of loggerhead sea turtles (at that stage prized for their eggs as much as for their meat), and, jutting into the composition from the bottom edge, an entire sword fish, still bleeding from the harpoon blow inflicted on it by one of the feluccas plying the Straits of Messina. To the left is an equally extravagant mound of shellfish, including dozens of oysters, sea urchins, scallops, razor shells and yet more exotic varieties, capped off with decorative swags of coral. It is, in short, a prodigious haul that exceeds even the most fantastic catch of the day, and that has been heaped enticingly for the visual delectation of the Spanish King.

The painting evidently functioned highly successfully as a calling card advertising not only the bounty of Naples but also the prodigious talent of the artist responsible for serving up such a dazzling array of still life. Within a decade of its arrival in Madrid, in 1694, the Spanish King went so far as to send out an invitation to Recco to serve as painter to the King. The request represented a signal honour to this artist and a landmark moment in the international recognition of still life more generally. The only other Neapolitan called to Spain in this manner was Luca Giordano, an internationally renowned history painter, whose works were in high demand for decades throughout

the Italian peninsula and beyond. Recco's departure for Madrid thus sets the seal on the success of his career as the first Neapolitan still-life painter to possess a truly international crossover appeal. But this signal distinction nonetheless also carried within itself the seeds of disaster, as it transpired. Then aged sixty and evidently no longer physically robust, Recco caught a fever en route to Madrid and died soon after making landfall at the port of Alicante – a sad end to an otherwise flourishing career (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, pp.296–7).

A decade prior to the untimely cessation of his career, however, back in Naples in the 1680s, Recco further demonstrated his ability to conjure the bounties of Naples in a manner that was also highly appealing to the nascent international tourist market. Recco was particularly favoured, in this respect, by the concerted patronage of one of the earliest international dilettante tourists to the region. John Cecil, the fifth Earl of Exeter (1648–1700), commissioned a number of paintings from Recco during his visit to Naples in early 1684, the very moment when the finishing touches were being made to the exhibition of still-life paintings to be displayed in May that year.

The Earl maintained a keen interest in Recco's still lives. In Naples, he commissioned two extremely large canvases (measuring two and a half metres in height) of floral still lives set in elaborate vases that are still to be seen at Burghley House (Fig. 7.7) (Pagano di Divitiis, 1982, pp.384–5, nn.21 and 27). Recco's strikingly grandiloquent flowerpiece is clearly based on the paintings of flowers in vases produced by his father Giacomo Recco some fifty years earlier (see Fig. 7.2). Yet it clearly attempts to go beyond its earlier source in terms of its greater degree of depth, compositional complexity and scale, produced by the addition of two large-scale figures who struggle to hold the dazzling array of flowers that spill out from the vase. The documentation for the work indicates that Recco's attempt to go beyond his father's earlier achievement in this respect was enacted at both an economic as well as an artistic level. In this respect, it is significant that the Earl paid Recco the princely sum of 200 ducats each for the two paintings. The Earl also went on to commission two more large paintings of fish and four smaller compositions – two of fish and two of game, although these are unfortunately no longer extant at Burghley House (Marshall, 2016, pp.246–7). Had he been active a century later – in the Naples of William Hamilton, for example, and the growing importance of British Grand Tourists to the region – one could well imagine Recco's still lives becoming as acclaimed among English collectors in their way as Canaletto's visually

INSERT. Figure 7.7: Giuseppe Recco, *Flower piece*, 1683–4. Oil on canvas, 265.5 x 201cm, Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire. (Image credit: The Burghley House Collection)

dazzling views of Venice. Instead, his works at the exotic locales of Burghley House, the court of Madrid and elsewhere stand as effective forerunners to the splendidly evocative distillations of the natural bounties of Naples and its bay as subsequently popularised for the foreign tourist market by Joseph Vernet, Pierre Jacques Volaire and others (Causa, 1981, pp.182–212).

De' Dominici and the critical status of Neapolitan still life

The prominence attained by Neapolitan still life by the time of Recco's lavish and dramatic canvases is such that de' Dominici devotes a nine-page section of his early eighteenth-century *Vite de' Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti Napoletani* to 'various talented painters

of flowers, fruit, fish, hunting scenes etc.'[12] (1742–5, III, pp.293–301, quotation p.301). This account is noteworthy as the first attempt to present a systematic outline of a regional school of Italian still-life painting. By contrast, the Roman critical literature is lacking in a comparable endeavour until the modern period. To the contrary, in fact, the early Roman biographers tended to omit all reference to many of the early Roman specialists (such as the Verrocchio and Stanchi families among others, who are not discussed in any of the early sources). In the case of better known artists, like Michelangelo Cerquozzi, on the other hand, the early biographers tended to discuss them in terms of their work in fields other than still life, since the genre was evidently considered not to be of sufficient interest to justify an extended discussion in its own right. Thus both Giovanni Battista Passeri (1722) and Filippo Baldinucci (1681–1728) make only passing reference to Cerquozzi's specialisation as a painter of fruit, while choosing to focus instead on his much more highly-regarded status as the so-called 'Michelangelo delle Battaglie', or the Michelangelo of Battle Scenes (Laura Laureati in Bocchi and Bocchi, 2005, pp.48–9). Pascoli (1730) marginally improved on this by including brief biographies of several still life specialists from the later seventeenth century (Ludovica Trezzani in Bocchi and Bocchi, 2005, p.399), but this was still far short of a systematic account of the development of Roman still-life painting. De' Dominici, by contrast, includes biographies of most of the major Neapolitan practitioners, including Luca Forte, Paolo Porpora, Giuseppe Recco and Giovan Battista Ruoppolo. He also discusses foreign specialists resident in Naples (such as Abraham Brueghel), as well as brief sections on the later followers of Giuseppe Recco and his contemporaries.

One of the key elements running throughout de' Dominici's *Vite* is an emphasis on its subjects' wider intellectual attainments and a recognition of their worth from prestigious individuals and institutions. This underscores de' Dominici's claims to the inherent nobility and high critical value of Neapolitan painting more generally. In the context of still life, de' Dominici thus emphasises that Paolo Porpora was a fully accredited member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, and that Onofrio Loth was both an able civil administrator and fully accredited Doctor of Law, as well as one of the leading still-life specialists of the end of the century (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, p.300). As the most successful still-life practitioners of the period, de' Dominici is particularly careful to provide Recco and his family with a detailed list of honours received. This includes a knighthood supposedly granted to Giuseppe

by the Spanish king (de' Dominici, 2008, III/1, p.548, n.19, for a discussion), 'as many honours as any qualified personage could desire,'[13] that was awarded to Elena Recco by the Spanish royal court, and an 'honourable provision in Naples for their household when they returned,'[14] that was granted to Recco's children upon their return to Naples from Madrid (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, pp.296–7).

De' Dominici was also evidently concerned to highlight the power of still-life painting via an emphasis on its ability to provoke powerful reactions from its contemporary viewers. A particularly striking instance of this occurs in his life of Giuseppe Recco. He concludes a passage noting the presence of Recco's paintings in the city's most prestigious collections – including those of the previously mentioned Principe di Tarsia and the Duca dei Maddaloni – with the following words: 'So there is evident from Recco['s hand] so many paintings of sweet things that have been painted with such life-likeness and truthfulness that they would bring about the miscarriage of a pregnant woman, as occurred once with one of his paintings of fish' (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, p.297).[15]

Leaving aside the obvious gender bias that the passage contains,[16] de' Dominici's reference to the perils of viewing still life is nonetheless highly revealing. De' Dominici draws on a deliberately hyperbolic claim to foreground the sheer sensorial power of Recco's still lives. In so doing, he creates a vivid metaphor of Recco's early viewers being duped into mistaking the objects depicted in his paintings for actual food or at least, duped at the primal level of their own uncontrollable appetites.

This reference, in fact, draws on a long-standing theoretical tradition stressing the verisimilitude of the most celebrated examples of still-life imagery that stretches back to Pliny the Elder's account of the birds that flew down to peck at a bunch of grapes painted on a wall by the legendary artist Xeuxis (Mansfield, 2007, pp.26–9). More specifically still, de' Dominici should also be recognised as developing an earlier account of the dramatic power of a famous history painter – namely Ribera and his spectacular depictions of figures undergoing torment. In his *Teutsche Academie* of 1675, von Sandrart described a sensational painting of *Tityus* shipped by Ribera to Amsterdam for the rich Flemish merchant and collector Lucas van Uffel (Sandrart, 1675, p.278; for discussion, see Marshall, 2016, pp.223–5). *Tityus* depicts the ancient subject of the eponymous Titan who was punished eternally by the gods by being chained to a rock so that his liver can be eaten again and again by a vulture (Fig. 7.8). Ribera's treatment of the subject constitutes a tour de force of his violent

Figure 7.8: Jusepe de Ribera, *Tityus,* signed and dated 1632. Oil on canvas, 229 x 301cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. (Image credit: © Museo Nacional del Prado)

figure paintings. Wishing to stress the painting's power along these lines, von Sandrart accordingly notes that it was so horrendous that it frightened van Uffel's wife into miscarrying and giving birth to a deformed child.

Bizarre though this analogy might appear today, it nonetheless would have struck de' Dominici's early readers as both highly suggestive and serious in intent. It would have highlighted de' Dominici's wish to present still life as possessing an affective power that was every bit the equal of the greatest Neapolitan manifestations of history painting. This attitude, of course, stands at complete odds to the deprecation of still life painting that is commonly encountered in other contexts and that appears elsewhere as a standard feature of European baroque art theory. In other accounts, still life is habitually assigned the lowest rung on the hierarchy of the genres by virtue of its supposedly more descriptive and naturalistic emphasis (Jansen, 1999, p.51). It was considered less intellectual – and thus less financially valuable as we have also seen in the case of Roman still life – than all the other modes of painting. The idealist theory of art accordingly positioned

history painting at the furthest remove from still life. In his highly influential *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture pendant l'année 1667,* Félibien accordingly praises those artists who

> occupy themselves with things which are more difficult and more noble, they escape from that which is more base and common, and ennoble themselves with a more illustrious labour. Thus someone who paints landscapes perfectly is superior to another who only makes fruits, flowers or shells. Someone who paints living animals is more to be esteemed than those who only represents things which are dead and motionless; and as the figure of man is the most perfect of God's works on earth, so it is also certain that whoever makes himself the imitator of God by painting human figures, is much more excellent than all the others.
>
> (Félibien, 1725, pp.310–11).[17]

This bias is equally evident in Dutch and Flemish art criticism, the birthplace and home of still life (Jansen,

1999; Taylor, 1995). Netherlandish theorists, who might otherwise have been expected to express sympathy for still life, were nonetheless inherently critical of its supposed paucity of intellect and creativity. Thus for van Hoogstraeten, writing in 1678, 'however handsomely a flower piece, fruit piece or other still life, as we call it, is painted, it can never be placed higher than in the first rank of art... The paintings which belong to the third and highest grade are those which show the noblest emotions and desires of those creatures which are rational, that is, of human beings' (p.87).[18] De Lairesse is yet more damning. Picking up on an opinion voiced earlier in the previously cited comments of Félibien, he reserves his harshest condemnation for so-called 'dead' still life. As far as he was concerned, paintings of vegetables and fish, in particular, were not even worthy of the definition of art: 'Those who desire them may go to the market' (De Lairesse, 1740, II, p.260).[19]

One man's meat is another man's poison, as the old saying goes. One can but imagine De Lairesse's extreme disdain at the sight of Recco's previously discussed canvas of abundantly heaped dead and dying seafood. And yet the opposite sensation was clearly experienced by de' Dominici when gazing upon paintings of this kind – as well as by the original viewers of the 1684 exhibition of Neapolitan still life in which Recco's canvas was originally displayed – and ultimately by the King of Spain himself as he came to contemplate the painting in Madrid. These early audiences evidently perceived Neapolitan still life from a very different perspective to that of De Lairesse. They appreciated its novelty while remaining remarkably free of the well-worn prejudices of the idealist tradition so prevalent in other centres. As a result, de' Dominici and his contemporaries were able to view Neapolitan still life not so much for what it was not, as rather for what it truly aspired to be: highly wrought creations graced with the potential to become 'more beautiful than nature itself' (de' Dominici, 1742–5, III, p.299).[20] This last phrase was also used by de' Dominici in order to emphasise not simply the vivid naturalism that is so evident in these paintings, but also equally the transformative power of the sophisticated processes of creativity that are so much at the forefront of the efforts of generations of Neapolitan still-life painters.

Notes

[1] 'in compra de diversi quadri de diverse pitture et qualità fuora della botecha conforme ad esso giacomo parerà et piacerà per commune utile, et beneficio et sempre che esso giacomo haverà fatta compra de quadri fuori detta botecha dopo sequita la compra debbia esso giacomo portarli alla botecha et là si debbiano vendere, et smaltire a qualsivoglia prezzo si potra convenire con maggior utile, et beneficio sarà possibile...'

[2] 'Un quadro di sei palmi in circa con paese è figure che sonano, et cantano con frutti d'Aniello falcone è luca forte'.

[3] 'Dui quatri di quattro palmi e tre e mezo con cornice in[d] orata, et historiate di mano di Luca Forte'

[4] Ruffo paid Ribera 50 ducats on 1 March 1649, for example, for a large painting of the *Pietà* that cost him 270 ducats in total plus an in kind 'present' said to be worth 30 ducats (Ruffo, 1916, p.46). For further discussion of Ruffo's prices in relation to other Neapolitan figure painters, see Marshall (2017).

[5] 'il quale ha comandato instantemente accosare a V. S. Ill. ma il prezzo di detto quadro per quanto non è possibile poter dire per a punto perchè non posso sapere sin tanto sia finito la fatica venirà in detto quadro ma per servire tanto al detto R. Padre quanto a V. S. Illma già cortesissima sua lettera me lo attende similmente mi ha parso di farline avisato, che appresso a poco il suo prezzo sera da D.^{ti} 200 più e meno secondo la faticha che vi serà in esso ...'

[6] At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Neapolitan ducat and Roman scudo were set as more or less equivalent one to one currencies of account. As the century progressed, however, a series of destabilising economic and social conditions in Naples meant that the Neapolitan baroque ducat became progressively devalued in international exchange rates in relation to the more stable Roman scudo. For the most part, though, Neapolitan artists and commentators appear to have been oblivious of such higher order issues of foreign exchange and to have continued to perceive the scudo/ducat as equivalent one-to-one currencies of account (they are referred to interchangeably in the Neapolitan letters of Artemisia Gentileschi, for example, as well as throughout de' Dominici's *Vite*). I have accordingly chosen not to convert the prices in scudi over to ducats according to international exchange rates but have rather treated them as notional one-to-one currencies rather than as strictly converted sums (for further discussion, see Marshall, 2010, pp.119–20).

[7] 'per il prezzo di due quadri con una giarra di fiori per ciascheduno.'

[8] 'di varie sorte di pesci con la figura di un Marinaro et altre mani del sig. Luca Giordano'

[9] The attribution of the figure to Giordano was subsequently accepted by Ferrari and Scavizzi in their standard catalogue of Giordano's work (1992, I, cat.A203, p.283).

[10] 'Da Carlo della Torre D. 100 a compimento di D. 200 in conto di due quadri gli sta facendo di palmi dodici di pesce.'

[11] 'Per li quadri di erbe, frutti, fiori, pesci, e figure, de' cinque famosi pennelli de Signori Francesco la Questa, Giovanni

Battista Roppoli, Abram Brueghel, Giuseppe Recco e Luca Giordano', stanza 2, line 4: 'Applausi, encomi, onor, lodi, stupore' (Perrucci, 1695, p.253).

[12] 'vari virtuosi pittori di fiori, frutta, pesci, cacciagioni etc'.

[13] 'ricevè tutti quelli onori che può desiderare qualsisia qualificato personaggio'.

[14] 'ottennero onorata provisione in Napoli per loro casa, ove fece ritorno.'

[15] 'Si veggono di Recco molti quadri di cose dolci somigliantissime e dipinte con tanta verità, che cagionaron l'aborto ad una donna gravida, come avvenne ancora con un suo quadro di pesci.'

[16] This bias, of course, conforms to the well-worn antinomy of the contrast between the ostensibly sensory and impulsive female as versus the supposedly more rational and controlled male, for which see Maclean (1980, pp.49–52) and Sommerville (1995, pp.12–14).

[17] 'il est constant qu'à mesure qu'ils s'occupent aux choses les plus difficiles et les plus nobles, ils sortent de ce qu'il y a de plus bas et plus commun, et s'anoblissent par un travail plus illustre. Ainsi celui qui fait parfaitement des païsages est au-dessus d'un autre qui ne fait que des fruits, des fleur sou des coquilles. Celui qui peint des animaux vivans est plus estimable que ceux qui ne representent que des chose mortes et sans movement; et comme la figure de l'homme est le plus parfait ouvrage de Dieu sur la terre, il est certain aussi que celui qui se rend l'imitateur de Dieu en poignant les figures humaines, est beaucoup plus excellens que tous les autres.'

[18] 'Echter state di vast, dat hoe overaerdig eenige bloemen, vruchten of andere stilevens, gelijk wy't noemen, geschildert zijn, deeze Schilderyen evenwel niet hooger, als in den eersten graed der konstwerken moogen gestelt worden … De Schilderyen dan, die tot den derden en hoogsten graed behoorten zijn die de edelste beweegingen en willen der Reedewikkende schepselen den menschen vertoonen.'

[19] 'die zullen wy voorby gaan: die ze lust, mag zich na de markt.'

[20] 'più bello del naturale medesimo'.

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