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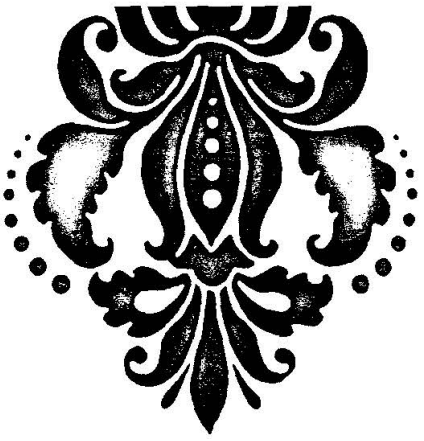

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Contents

In Defence of Baroque: The Wölfflin-Frankl-Giedion Tradition

Lino Bianco - University of Malta

If there was a style which took long to be academically and stylistically respected, it was the Baroque. The text which made it worth intellectual appreciation is *Renaissance und Barock,* translated into English as *Renaissance and Baroque*, by Heinrich Wölfflin.[1] This publication, issued in 1888, had rendered Baroque an acceptable theme for scholarship. Until then, it "had been considered too pathological to be worthy of serious study".[2] Wölfflin had established a tradition of systematic, comparative, empirico-analytical research which was developed further from teacher to student. He, who in 1893 was appointed professor of art history at the University of Basel to succeed his teacher Jacob Burckhardt, the lead authority in the historiography of art and culture at the time, had taught the Czech scholars Paul

1 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock.* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1965); reprint of 1888 ed. The translation by Kathrin Simon, *Renaissance and Baroque* (London: Collins, 1964), was used in this essay.

2 Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Reading Aalto through the Baroque.* In *'AA Files'*, no. 65 (2012), 72. This publication was expanded further in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Reading Aalto through the Baroque: Constituent Facts, Dynamic Pluralities, and Formal Latencies*. In Andrew Leach, John Macarthur and Maarten Delbeke, eds., *The Baroque in Architecture Culture, 1880-1980* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 139-150. This chapter elaborates the themes and issues included in Pelkonen (2012) in terms of Baroque sense on time, Baroque as latency, Baroque space and (Neo-)Baroque Architecture. It also includes a number of photos of Aalto at the drawing board.

Frankl and Sigfried Giedion. The former, later Wölfflin's assistant, had critically challenged and developed his master's ideas in his publication *Die Entwicklungsphasen der neueren Baukunst*, translated as *Principles of Architectural History: The Four Phases of Architectural Style, 1420–1900*, hereafter shortened to *Principles of Architectural History*.[3] This text was instrumental 'to induce his reluctant contemporaries to approach Baroque architecture sympathetically'.[4] It was published in 1914, a year earlier than Wölfflin's publication *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, translated as *Principles of Art History*.[5] Unlike his teacher, Frankl was 'reluctant to use this term [Baroque], which was then still so charged with negative overtones'.[6] As James Sloss Ackerman observed, this Wölfflin-Frankl tradition was continued by Sigfried Giedion through his publication *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*.[7] This paper aims to outline the contributions of the main protagonists of this tradition through their respective above-mentioned text, in defence of Baroque.

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3 Whilst acknowledging the association between the two scholars, James F. O'Gorman, the translator into English of the *Entwicklungsphasen der neueren Baukunst*, chose the title *Principles of Architectural History* to distinguish it from Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (Paul Frankl, *The Principles of Architectural History: The Four Phases of Architectural Style, 1420–1900*, translated by James F. O'Gorman and with a foreword by James Sloss Ackerman, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973 edition).

4 James Sloss Ackerman, *Foreword*. In Paul Frankl, *Principles of Architectural History: The Four Phases of Architectural Style, 1420–1900*, James F. O'Gorman (trans.), xi.

5 Martin Warnke notes that the literal translation of the original German text is *Fundamental Art-Historical Principles: The Problem of the Development of Style in Recent Art* (Martin Warnke, *On Heinrich Wölfflin*. In *'Representations'* 27 (1989), 174 and 185, fn 11). Warnke's essay was translated into English by David Levin.
Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, translated from 7th German Edition (1929) into English by Hottinger (New York: Dover Publications, 1932, and reprints).

6 Ackerman, ix.

7 Ibid, xi.
Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Birth of a New Tradition*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949).

The prime mover

Wölfflin had studied at the universities of Basel, Berlin and Munich under the leading authorities of the time.[8] At the University of Basel, he studied art history under Burckhardt. He read philosophy in Berlin under the Wilhelm Dilthey, the heir of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's chair. He was also influenced by the neo-Kantian philosopher Johannes Volkelt and the classical archaeologist Heinrich Brunn.[9] Wölfflin completed his doctorate in 1886 at the University of Munich where his father was professor of classical philology. The title of his dissertation was *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, translated into English as *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*. In his study he relates empathy to architectural form, a theme developed from Theodor Lipps.[10] Wölfflin argued that architecture had a basis in form through the empathetic response of the human figure.

An attempt to reconstruct Wölfflin's intellectual development based on unpublished journals, correspondence and other manuscripts at the University of Basel, was undertaken by Joan Goldhammer Hart.[11] The objective of this investigation was to comprehend Wölfflin's contribution in its original socio-historical context, and includes an extensive study of his doctorate, a study that included

> ... the germ of his later ideas is already present. The young author suggested that architecture derived its forms from the idealized human body: by identifying ourselves with architectural forms, that is by empathy, we receive their esthetic message. [12]

8 Joan Goldhammer Hart, *Heinrich Wölfflin*, In '*Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*' (Oxford: Oxford Univerity Press, 1998), Vol. 4, 472-6.

9 Hart includes philologists August Bockh and the artist Adolf von Hildebrand as other notable influences on Wölfflin (Joan Goldhammer Hart, *Heinrich Wölfflin: An Intellectual Biography*. (Berkeley: University of California, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1981). Also see Joan Goldhammer Hart, *Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo Kantianism and Hermeneutics*. In '*Art Journal*' 42, no. 4 (1982), 292-300.

10 Kirsten Wagner and Jonathan Blower, *Animating Architecture: Empathy and Architectonic Space*. In '*Art in Translation*', 6:4 (2014), 399-435.
This essay by Wagner and Blower addressed the psychological and physiological perception of space and the variation of both through empathy theory.

11 Hart, 1981.

12 Wolfgang Born, *Heinrich Wölfflin 1864-1945*. In '*College Art Journal*', 5, no. 1

Besides *Renaissance und Barock* and *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* which left a lasting impact on art history, Wölfflin published another work entitled *Die Klassische Kunst,* translated as *Classic Art.*[13] Throughout all these publications Wölfflin interpreted the transition from realism of the fifteenth century to the idealism of the sixteenth century in terms of a shift from the bourgeois to the nobility.[14] Furthermore, he employed the same research methods, systematically and consistently, to explore the characteristics of art of a given period, namely the comparative method, inductive logic, and formal analysis. However, Hart notes that the reasons that he advanced for the shifts he identified from one epoch to another varied, gradually developed from simplistic to more elaborate and complex ones.[15]

Renaissance and Baroque was the result of two years of travelling in Italy after his doctoral studies. In this work, Wölfflin,

> ... for the first time succeeded in establishing objective criteria in esthetics by developing his psychological observations into a system of comparative analysis. Contrasting the architectural characteristics of the seventeenth century with those of the sixteenth, he defined a group of complementary concepts which elucidated the significance of the two periods. The structural character of the Renaissance (*tektonisch*) and the flowing character of the Baroque (*atektonisch*) he interpreted as legitimate expressions of artistic tendencies which unfold consistently in the lapse of time.[16]

Stilwandlung, meaning transition of styles, is a fundamental theme in Wölfflin's scholarship: 'Why did the Renaissance end?'[17]

(1945), 44. This publication is effectively an *obituary* for Wölfflin by a former student at Munich. Wolfgang, through his father's first marriage, is the half brother of the Nobel-prize-winning physicist Max Born.

13 Heinrich Wöllflin, *Classic Art. An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance.* Translated from the 8th German Edition (Basle: Benno Schwabe & Co, 1948) by Peter and Linda Murray (London: Phaidon Press, 1952, 2nd edn 1953).

14 Warnke, 176.

15 Hart, 1981.

16 Born, 44.

17 Alina Payne, *Wölfflin, Architecture and the Problem of 'Stilwandlung'.* In '*Journal*

This was the point of departure in *Renaissance and Baroque*, his *Habilitationsschrift*. His interest was not in the history of artists but in the history of art; he was not interested in describing how the Baroque evolved, but to comprehend its beginning.[18] *Stilwandlung* was associated with architecture in Wölfflin's work

> ... because its discourse offered what he needed, and that was so because at the time it interacted with a host of human-based sciences that could be productively blended with the theories from philosophy and psychology that he was working with.[19]

Long conceived but born out of agony

In *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin 'developed his art theory in a fully matured, definitive form, and which soon gave him international fame'.[20] It this text he outlines and discusses the development of the Renaissance and Baroque, the styles discussed in *Renaissance and Baroque*, with special reference to painting.[21] Wölfflin derived a scheme by noting changes in the development from one style to another. He then generalised his scheme into a theory. In *Principles of Art History* he had identified ten fundamental notions found in paintings produced over the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. He classified them in terms of the five pairs of characteristics listed hereunder.

Renaissance		Baroque
linear	↔	painterly
plane	↔	recession
closed form	↔	open form
multiplicity	↔	unity
clearness	↔	unclearness

of Art Historiography', no. 7 (2012), 2.

18 Ibid, 2-3.

19 Ibid, 2.

20 Born, 45

21 Wolffin's work was widely available following the publication of the 1932 English translation.

Warnke had investigated what Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* stood for and achieved in its time. He noted that the first reactions to this publication were negative.[22] Oskar Walzl, in 1917, was the first to introduce Wölfflin's theory in his comparative study of art. Why was Wölfflin not immediately appreciated by art historians and theorists? It was due to the historical timing of the publication, a point that Wölfflin makes in his preface to the text where he also laments that the war had conditioned a number of reproductions included in the text. Warnke put it succinctly thus:

> The outbreak of the war inspired the bureaucrats of German academia to publish a slew of patriotic gushings on behalf of the emperor and the *Vaterland* and against the cultural barbarism of the Franco-English enemy.[23]

To support his statement, Warnke cites Wölfflin who in 1914, according to Lotte Warburg, had stated:

> Why are all of the oldest artists and professors rallying to the flag? Apparently, only the very few feel comfortable with themselves. I can understand it as far as art historians go, but it's the same everywhere! And the speeches that scholars make in favor of the war! So this is the unity everyone's making such a big deal about - everyone losing his mind![24]

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22 See the positions, published in 1917, of Oskar Wulff and Rudolf Kautzsch in the *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaf* and in *Der Begriff der Entwicklung in der Kunstgeschichte: Rede zur Kaiser-Geburtstagsfeier am 27 January 1917* respectively (Wanke, 172-173). The *Principles of Art History* was also reviewed by Wilhelm Waetzoldt in *Kunst und Künstler,* 14 (1916): 468-71, and by Erwin Panofsky in 1915, '*Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst*'. In *Zeitschrift für Asthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaf,* 10 (1915): 460-67. Warnke observed that the latter was based on Wölfflin's theory rather then on the publication itself (Warnke, 184, fn 5). A list of other reviews and articles with respect to the *Principles of Art History* are listed in Warnke (ibid.).

23 Warnke, 173.

24 Joseph Gantner, *Heinrich Wölfflin 18 64-1945: Autobiographie, Tagebücher, und Briefe.* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1982), 288. Quoted in Warnke, 173.

With respect to the contemporaneity of the date of the publication of the *Principles of Art History* at the commencement of the war, Warnke questions whether the timing was coincidental or intentional.[25] By the end of 1913, Wölfflin's ideas as inferred from his notes with respect to *Principles of Art History*, are indicative of 'unsettling uncertainty and disorientation'.[26] To support his claim, Warnke further cites the numerous titles which Wölfflin considered for his publication, which are tabulated below.

Warnke attempted to investigate whether political developments in Europe at the time stimulated Wölfflin to complete the work. He cites and notes that the political scenario did impinge on the completion of the text:[27]

> This general critical estimation of the political situation, which was of course not unique but is nonetheless striking, did not fail to leave its mark on the *Principles of Art History*. There is a series of excerpts from letters that make it clear that for Wölfflin the work of a teacher and art historian were directly related to contemporary events.

This backed his claim that Wölfflin completed his book as his personal reaction to military service:[28]

25 Warnke, 173.

26 Warnke makes the following observations (ibid, 173ff):
The ideas contained in the *Principles of Art History* were presented in a lecture entitled 'Fundamental Principles of Art History', delivered by Wölfflin in Berlin in 1906-7; In 1910, Wölfflin delivered a lecture at the Prussian Academy of Sciences entitled 'Style in Visual Art', a title which he considered for the *Principles of Art History* (ibid, 174); In 1911, he delivered another lecture at the Prussian Academy of Sciences entitled 'Formal Analyses as an Introduction to the Artistic Development of Recent Times', which lecture was published a year later; By 1913, his ideas were disjointed and without any clarity. Warnke cited Wölfflin's entry in his diary of September 1913: 'Upon reading old notebooks, shocked by the erratic, superficial, disjointed management of my life' (Joseph Gantner, *Heinrich Wölfflin 1864-1945: Autobiographie, Tagebücher, und Briefe*. (Basel and Stuttgart, 1982), 276; cited in Warnke, 174); and Wölfflin, stated: 'ten years of nothing. Everybody's waiting' (On this point, Warnke makes reference to Hart, 1981, n.221).

27 Warnke, 175.

28 Ibid, 174. Making reference to Gantner (276), Warnke quotes Wölfflin's entry in

It does indeed appear that Wölfflin finished up his book as a personal version of military service, and that he finally wrote it out with incredible concentration in the months after the outbreak of the war.

Date	Titles considered for the text published as *Principles of Art History*
1902	*Style: Introduction to Recent Art History*
1903	*The Concepts of Art History*
1904	*The Principles of Art History*
1909	*Developmental Laws of Recent Art;* *Exercises in the Comparative Consideration of Art;* *Art-Historical Analyses*
1910	*Style in Visual Art*
1911	*Formal Analyses as an Introduction to the Artistic Development of Recent Times;* *The Problem of Style*
1912	*The Form of Development in Recent Art*
1913	*The Problem of Development in the Visual Arts: A Consideration of the Fundamental Principles of Style in Recent Art History*
1914	*The Fundamental Principles of Art: Art as Expression, Art as Representation [Darstellung], Art as Quality*
1915	*Fundamental Principles of Recent Art History: Developments in Art;* *Principles of Art History*

A loyal critic and his evolution of Wölfflin's *Renaissance and Baroque*

Frankl's academic interest shifted from architecture to history of art. He graduated as an architect from Berlin in 1904. Four years later, he enrolled to read philosophy, history and art history at Munich under Wölfflin and Berthold Riehl, the latter his academic supervisor for his

his diary of September 1913: 'The book-like military service, ... the compulsion to consolidate one's powers, goal-conscious self-discipline' (ibid).

doctoral dissertation which focused on fifteenth-century glass painting in the southern region of Germany. Following completion of his doctorate, he took up a teaching post under Wölfflin. His post-doctoral thesis was influenced by Wölfflin's stand with respect to architectural development but did not endorse his views with regards to formalism. He presented his *Habilitationsschrift* to Wölfflin in 1914.

Other major works besides *Principles of Architectural History*, are *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft*[29] and *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries*.[30] In *Principles of Architectural History*, he proposes four major categories of art history, a scheme which he used in his later writings. *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft* is a comprehensive history of art based on phenomenology and morphology. *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* builds on his research interest in medieval architecture and his study of European cathedrals supported by a Guggenheim Grant which allowed him to travel and teach in Europe after the Second World War. Through these works, Frankl

> ... searched for the principles and categories, visual and otherwise, which realize and determine artistic creation and perception: the work of art; the artist; the patron and the viewer; and all these in relation to their time and place.[31]

In the preface of *Principles of Architectural History*, written in June 1913, Frankl states that it is a response to Wölfflin's publication *Renaissance and Baroque*. According to Frankl, the issue of style had not been resolved by Wölfflin. Thus, the *Principles of Architectural History*[32]

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29 Paul Frankl, *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft* (Brünn und Leipzig: R.M. Rohrer, 1938).

30 Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). Frankl had worked on another text, *The Gothic*, which was published posthumously (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962).

31 Richard Krautheimer, *Paul Frankl.* In *'Art Journal'*, 22, no. 3 (1963), 167. This is Krautheimer's obituary for Frankl.

32 Frankl, xiv.

> ... contains the tentative results of a study that began when I first picked up Heinrich Wölfflin's *Renaissance und Barock* more than a dozen years ago. Although I did not consider myself capable of investigating the problem of stylistic development as fruitfully as Wölfflin had, and although, as a mere novice, I could do no more than try to see buildings through his eyes, I felt from the beginning that he had not completely solved the problem. Since then I have studied his book intensely at least once a year, acquainted myself with the material by travelling and by reading other works, and tried to clarify the problem myself. My most important tools were the analysis of buildings according to four basic elements: space, corporeality, light, and purpose, and the conception of the Renaissance and Baroque as polar opposites.

The scope of the *Principles of Architectural History* is stated in the opening paragraph of same text which reads:

> To study stylistic changes in architecture, that is, to establish the polar opposites separating the successive phases of one epoch, which is our main aim here, we must focus upon the comparable elements in the art of building and determine categories of similar features that remain constant over a period of time.[33]

The foreword to the translation of the *Principles of Architectural History* by James F. O'Gorman, penned by James S. Ackerman, gives an accurate exposition of Frankl's arguments. Ackerman outlines concisely the two interlocking systems, one critical and the other historical.[34] The former establishes four categories to study architecture: spatial form, corporeal form, visible form and purposive intention.[35] Within

33 Ibid, 1.

34 Ackerman, vii-x.

35 Frankl states that 'Space, light, corporeality, and purpose are the most general concepts .... They best characterize the differences between buildings. They are so different that there is no danger of repetition' (Frankl, 1-2). Ackerman respectively

each of these categories, the four historical phases of post-medieval architecture, namely, the periods 1420-1550, 1550-1700, 1700-1800, and 1800 to 1900, were analysed.[36] Whilst the first category is indebted to Albert Brinckmann, Alois Riegl and August Schmarsow, the second focuses on Wölfflin's system in *Renaissance and Baroque.*[37] The third category draws on the psychology, mostly that of the emerging Gestalt school. In Frankl, the experience of the observer is 'kinetic' rather than 'motionless'. The fourth category is a response to the emerging relation between architecture and the social sciences. In all the historical phases, the architect does not account for the dynamics of style:

> ... the true protagonists of Frankl's four phases are immanent style-forces (Riegl's *Kunswollen*). 'The *development* of style is an intellectual process over-riding national characteristics and individual artists.' But the development is not simply linear: it proceeds by the action and counteraction of 'polar opposites'. An instance of this Hegelian scheme at work would be the transition from the organisation of spaces by *addition* in the first phase to organisation by *division* in the second.[38]

The lasting objective of the *Principles of Architectural History* was "to achieve insight into the organism of stylistic development by comparing all epochs and their development".[39] Crucial to comprehend

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re-states these four categories as spatial composition, treatment of mass and surface, treatment of light, colour and other optical effects and the relation of design to social functions (Ackerman, vii). He notes that these categories depart from Vitruvius, *Firmitas*, *Commoditas*, and *Venustas*; 'Frankl de-emphasizes *Firmitas*; retains *Commoditas* in his fourth category. *Venustas* he expands into three categories' (ibid). Ackerman also remarked that Riegl's distinction between 'haptic' and 'optic' experiences had influenced Frankl's distinction of 'corporeal' and 'visible' form (ibid, viii). He also notes that 'purposive intention' is the English translation of the German term '*Zweckgesinnung*' (ibid.).

36 With respect to the first phase, Frankl mainly makes reference to the architects from Brunelleschi to Antonio da San Gallo the Younger. He does not differentiate between the 'Early' and 'High' Renaissance (ibid, ix).

37 Ibid, vii.

38 Ibid, ix-x. Ackerman quotes from Frankl, 3.

39 Frankl, 3.

Frankl's position is his critical assessment of a given piece of art or monument and its respective contextual place in history. The individual work was the source of his attention:[40]

> Philosophy, religion, politics, and science – the whole of Renaissance culture – had to be ready before the fine arts could give them expression. 'Renaissance Man' preceded the Renaissance artist.[41]

Space, Time and Wölfflin

Introduced to the study of Baroque by Wölfflin, Giedion's doctoral dissertation, completed in 1922, was entitled *Spätbarocker und Romantischer Klassizismus*, translated into English as *Late-Baroque and Romantic Classicism*.[42] The significance of his research suggests that 'baroque had a universalism, an 'unconscious' ability to 'recall' earlier primitive and '*völkisch*' forms that resonated through to the present'.[43] Giedion formally acknowledged Wölfflin and Burckhardt for his intellectual formation. He credited the conception of *Zeitgefühl* to Wölfflin, whose major contribution Giedion argued was 'the process of *Stilwandlung* that he accessed by contrasting epochs the better 'to grasp the spirit' of each'.[44] From Burckhardt, Giedion absorbed the notion of culture, 'how a period should be treated in its entirety, with regard not only for its painting, sculpture, and architecture but for the social institutions of its daily life as well'.[45] To Giedion, 'baroque manifests itself as a new power to mould space, and to produce an astonishing and unified whole from the most various parts.'[46]

From the chapter on Alvar Aalto included in the second 1949 edition of *Space, Time and Architecture*, Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen notes that

40 Krautheimer, 167-168.

41 Frankl, 2.

42 Sigfried Giedion, *Spätbarocker und Romantischer Klassizismus* (Munich: F. Brückmann, 1922).

43 Pelkonen, 72; cited Giedion, 1949, 14.

44 Payne, 2.

45 Ibid. Payne notes that '*Zeitgefühl* literally means 'feeling of the time' or 'period feeling' though neither formulation is in use in English (ibid, fn. 3).

46 Giedion, 1949, 109.

one may infer other sources which may have influenced Giedion in his work.[47] Most notable are the works relating to baroque scholarship by Eugenio d'Ors[48] and Henri Focillon,[49] especially through their approach to comprehend historicity in architecture:[50]

> In Giedion, as in d'Ors and Focillon, the emphasis throughout is on the human being, whether an artist, historian or a perceiving subject. Interweaving the viewpoints of the artist and of the beholder, they all make the case that the subject is inseparable from the world they live in, the objects they encounter and the buildings they occupy. Art is an integral part of life, or as Focillon puts it succinctly 'a work of art is situated in space'.[51]

Giedion traces the undulating, curvilinear motif found in Aalto and other architects to the Baroque period, in particular to the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane by Francesco Borromini.[52] Pelkonen notes that Giedion's reference to Borromini should not be read as a call to revive Baroque as a historical style. She argues that

> [Giedion] treats the baroque as a state of mind tending towards a synthesis between inside and outside, not just in architecture but also in human terms, as it marked a moment when the external world was shaped by our inner desires, and vice versa. In this sense, the resurfacing of the key formal trope of the baroque was read by Giedion as a sign of the reappearance of this synthetic mindset.

47 Aalto had occupied a prominent position not only in architecture but also in historiography of the international modern movement (Pelkonen, 72). He had 're-established a union between life and architecture' (Giedion, 1949, 565).

48 Eugenio d'Ors, *Lo Borroco*, trans. in French as *Du Baroque* (Paris: Gallimard, 1935).

49 Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942).

50 Pelkonen, 72.

51 Ibid, 74. Her quote is from Focillon, 65.

52 Pelkonen, 72.

Final Comments

Renaissance and Baroque was the first treatise which outlined a detailed morphology of Baroque thus demonstrating that it is a stylistic category worth scholarly research. For Wölfflin, Mannerism is part of the Baroque aesthetic, a position that leading scholars of the time, including Burckhardt, dismissed. In *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin proved how the transformation of the Renaissance into Baroque was actually not revolutionary but evolutionary, a theory equally valid to interpret other periods. This position 'ran counter to the Hegelian notion of the zeitgeist, by then entrenched in the foundational ideas of the modern movement'.[53] This is another 'political' reason why his reading of the Baroque took longer to be appreciated.

Wölfflin's theory still aroused emotions in the study and assessment of a work of art.[54] His theory was further developed by Frankl and Giedion. Frankl's work is 'essentially an attack on, or at least a vigorous criticism of Wölfflin's thesis and method'.[55] Giedion applied Baroque comprehension to one of the leading architects of the international modern. This Wölfflin-Frankl-Giedion tradition is an illustration of how academic scholarship critically develops ideas, thoughts and theories of one's predecessor(s) and/or mentor(s). This is just one of the instances in the history of academia whereby a scholarly tradition is clearly traced/inherited by a student from his teacher, by a disciple from a learned master. It is a tradition based on a multidisciplinary, scientific approach to art history grounded not in art itself but in the psycho-philosophical theory developed through a simple, yet rigorous, deductive method based on a number of case studies, in this case paintings.

Although Wölfflin's writings were, and are still interpreted as formalist, he thought of himself otherwise. Prior leaving the chair as professor of art history at Munich, he told his students:

I am thought of as a formalist, as cool. I'm not. I wrote the

53 Pelkonen, 72.

54 Warnke, 172.

55 Ackerman, vi.

> *Principles of Art History* not in order to mechanize history, but in order to render judgment exact. Arbitrariness, the sheer, uncontrollable eruption of emotion, has always disgusted me.[56]

Wölfflin's standing as a formalist has proved to be more useful to historical accounts of artistic forms than any number of socio-economic analyses. [57] His scheme for charactering art was the subject of the seminal publications by Cornell[58] and Arnheim.[59] It has been extensively applied by art historians and psychologists to describe spatial systems in images.[60] Reference to the psychological application of Wölfflin theory stems from his own work; his theory and scheme is grounded in the psychology of perception, a reference to Kantian philosophy through his influence of Volkelt.

Cornell's discussion formed the basis of the empirical research by Goude and Derefeldt, professors of psychology at the University of Uppsala, funded by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Their study included four experiments to assess the aspects ratings and similarity estimates, each with respect to trained and untrained observers.[61] They concluded that Wölfflin scheme is reliable

56 Gantner, 368; cited in Warnke, 183.

57 Warnke, 172.

58 Henrik Cornell, *Karakteriseringsproblemet i konstvetenskapen.* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1928).

59 Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception.* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1960).

60 John Willats, *The Rules of Representation.* In Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde, eds., *'A Companion to Art Theory'* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 411-425.

61 Gunnar Goude and Gunilla Derefeldt, *A Study of Wölfflin's System for Characterizing Art.* In *'Studies in Art Education'*, 22, no. 3 (1981), 32-41. The methods used in their study, and their appropriateness for the characterization of art, have been validated over the last half century (see Gunnar Goude and Gunilla Lindén, *An experimental psychological technique for the construction of a characterizing system of art painting and an attempt at physiological validation.* In *'Uppsala universitet Psykologiska institutionen'*, 33 (1966), 1-28; Gunnar Goude, *A multidimensional scaling approach to the perception of art.* In *'Scandinavian Journal of Psychology'*, Vol. I, 13, no. 4 (1972a), 258-271; Gunnar Goude, *A multidimensional scaling approach to the perception of art.* In *'Scandinavian Journal of Psychology'*, Vol. II, 13, no. 4 (1972b), 272-284).

to both types of observers:

> ... it seems relevant to say that our investigation not only indicates that students can use Wölfflin's system in a theoretically correct way, but also serves as a verification of this system and theory.[62]

62 Goude and Derefeldt, 36.

A Painter of Pain: Games of Wit and Ambiguities in Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*

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Looking at Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (fig. 1), what strikes us initially is the femininity of the hand gestures of the youth at the centre and his agonized expression. His effeminate elements are complemented by the flower in his hair and the loose garment exposing his shoulder. Reacting to being bitten by a lizard while reaching for two red cherries, the boy is posed against a greyish wall. On the table in front of him are various fruits of a similar greyish colour, which highlights the cherries, and a glass vase with flowers. The lizard, the cause of the boy's reaction, is barely visible. The boy is dressed in a Roman outfit— a white tunic beneath a brown toga. The red of his lips corresponds to that of the cherries. Red is the only colour that does not blend with the greyish-brown of the rest of the painting.

Boy Bitten by a Lizard is a good indication of Caravaggio's unconventional, nonconformist, and independent approach on the one hand, and his reliance on artistic trends popular at the time of his arrival in Rome, on the other hand.[1] This study seeks to explore the painting in its cultural context and to suggest that Caravaggio created itas a self-advertisement and in order to reveal his abilities as a painter.

1 For Caravaggio's arrival in Rome, see Lothar Sickel, *Sull'arrivo di Caravaggio a Roma: Lo zio Ludovico Merisi e Pandolfo Pucci*. In Michele Di Sivo and Orietta Verdi eds. *Caravaggio a Roma: una vita dal vero*, exh. cat. (Rome: De Luca Editori, 2011), 77–81.

In it, moreover, he proved his flair for wit and his gift for painterly puns. All this he achieved by accentuating obscurity, ambiguity, and the blurring of boundaries related to gender, space, self-portraiture, and realistic depiction. He thereby endowed the painting with multifaceted meanings.

It should nevertheless be emphasized that from this blur rises a clear notion of pain. The boy in the painting is coping with a painful experience, manifested in his facial expression and posture. This particular element will become a noticeable trademark in Caravaggio's artistic development.

At present there are two known versions of *Boy Bitten by a Lizard.* After much dispute, it is still not known unequivocally whether Caravaggio was responsible for both versions or for only one. And if he authored one only, which of the two is the authentic version? One painting (fig. 1) is part of the Roberto Longhi collection, the other is at London's National Gallery. Andrew Graham-Dixon suggests that the Longhi version was made in 1594/5 and that the National Gallery version is a copy made by the painter in 1600. Accordingly, this study focuses on the Longhi version.[2]

In attempting to present his abilities using self-representation Caravaggio was neither alone nor original.A famous precedent is that of Parmigianino, whose *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (fig.2) was proffered as a gift in the hope of receiving a commission from the Medici Pope Clement VII. Parmigianino sought to show his virtuoso

2 For a current reference to this unresolved issue, see Marco Grassi, *The Real Caravaggio?*. In *'The New Criterion'* 31 (2012), 28. For the acceptance of both versions as authentic, see Michael Kitson, *The Complete Paintings of Caravaggio* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), cat. no. 4; Alfred Moir, *Caravaggio and His Copyists* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 34; Mina Gregory, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard.* In *The Age of Caravaggio*, exh. cat. (New York and Milan: The Metropolitan Museum and Electa International, 1985), 237–8; Keith Christiansen and Denis Mahon, *Caravaggio's Second Versions.* In *'Burlington Magazine'* 134 (1992), 502–4; Linda Bauer and Steve Colton, *Tracing in Some Works by Caravaggio.* In *'Burlington Magazine'* 142 (2000), 434; Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), 93; Rossella Vodret, *Caravaggio e Roma*, exh. cat. (Milan: Silvana editoriale, 2010), cat. no. 3.

abilities, on the one hand, and his own image on the other—probably to promote himself and familiarize his image at the pope's court.[3] Caravaggio's aims were apparently very similar. It would be reasonable to assume that he wanted his painting to be noticed by someone central in the Roman art world.

The information we have about the painting derives mainly from the testimonies of Giulio Mancini and Giovanni Baglione, two of Caravaggio's seventeenth-century biographers. In his *Considerazioni sulla pittura* Mancini writes that Caravaggio 'painted for sale a boy who cries out because he has been bitten by a lizard that he holds in his hand...',[4] and mentions that the painting was sold for one and a half scudi.[5] It is doubtful that Mancini actually saw the painting, given his distorted description of it.

With Giovanni Baglione we are on safer ground, since he knew the painter personally. Baglione writes in his *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti* that Caravaggio 'painted a boy bitten by a lizard emerging from flowers and fruits; you could almost hear the boy scream, and it was all done meticulously'. He adds that Caravaggio 'painted some portraits

3 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, 9 vols., ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1878-85), vol. 5, 221–2; Sydney J. Freedberg, *Parmigianino: His Work in Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 202; Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 133; David Franklin, *The Art of Parmigianino* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 11–3; David Ekserdjian, *Parmigianino* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 129–132; Zoltán Kárpáti, *The Alchemy of Beauty: Parmigianino, Drawings and Prints*, exh. cat. (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 16–8; Faye Tudor, *All in him selfe as in a glass he sees: Mirrors and Vision in the Renaissance.* In John Shannon Hendrix and Charles H. Carman eds., *Renaissance Theories of Vision* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 176–7. For Cecil Gould Parmigianino's self-portrait was 'a witty visual conceit, typical of its century'. Cecil Gould, *Parmigianino* (New York and London: Abbeville Press, 1994), 53.

4 '*...un putto che piange per esser stato morso da un racano che tiene in mano,...*' Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* 2 vols. (Rome: Accademia Nationale dei Lincei, 1956), vol.1, 224.

5 '*...come si vedde nel Caravaggio che vendè il Putto Morso dal Racano per quindici giulij,...*' Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura,* 140.

of himself in the mirror', and although he does not say so explicitly in regard to *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, this seems to be one of them.[6] Neither Mancini nor Baglione mention a patron, and for this reason, together with the absence of surviving documentation concerning the painting and its original function, it is believed that Caravaggio created the work with the idea of selling it to the highest bidder.

This unconventional and provocative self-representation generated many interpretations and evoked a wide variety of opposing responses.[7] For Posner the painting represented homoeroticism and the devastation of love.[8] Costello saw it as an allegory for the sense of touch.[9] Slatkes focused on the symbolic elements in the work and suggested a relation to the element of fire.[10] Maurizio Calvesi found

6 Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti, dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 in fino a' tempi di Papa Urbano Ottavo nel 1642*, 3 vols. (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1995, reprint of the 1642 edition), vol. 1, 136. For Caravaggio's use of mirrors, see John Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 8–10; Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio: The Artist and His Work* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum. 2012), 85.

7 For the vast literature on the painting, see John T. Spike, *Caravaggio: Second Revised Edition* (New York and London: Abbeville, 2010), 42–4. For an overview of the different attempts to interpret the painting, see Richard E. Spear, *The Critical Fortune of a Realist Painter*. In *The Age of Caravaggio* exh. cat. (New York and Milan: The Metropolitan Museum and Electa International, 1985), 25–7; Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *The State of Research in Italian Painting of the Seventeenth Century*. In *'Art Bulletin'* 69 (1987), 496; Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 7–9.

8 Donald Posner, *Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works*. In *'The Art Quarterly'* 34 (1971), 305. For other references to the centrality of love in this painting, see Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 43–6; Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism*, 65–8; Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 96; David Franklin, *You Know That I Love You: Music and Youth in Caravaggio*. In David Franklin and Sebastian Schütze, eds. *Caravaggio: His Followers in Rome* (New Haven and London: 2011), 136.

9 Jane Costello, *Caravaggio, Lizard, and Fruit*. In Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler, eds., *Art, the Ape of Nature* (New York and Englewood Cliffs: Harvey N. Abrams, 1981), 377–383; Catherine Puglisi, *Caravaggio* (London: Phaidon Press,1998), 61.

10 Leonard J. Slatkes, *Caravaggio's Boy Bitten by a Lizard*. In *'Print Review'* 5 (1976), 153.

religious implications in the painting.[11] Luigi Salerno gave it an emblematic explanation,[12] and John T. Spike regarded the painting as a practical joke, a wicked satire aimed at the type of paintings that were produced in Cavalier d'Arpino's workshop.[13] The interpretations cited here represent only a fraction of what has been published to date.

That the work provides opportunities for many interpretations demonstrates how well-versed Caravaggio was in artistic matters, not to mention his inherent ingenuity and wit. The different angles of inquiry, interpretation, and explanation beg the question: Was the painter's intention in producing a painting with so many different aspects to call attention to each and every one of those aspects? Or was there an all-inclusive intention which can only be perceived by taking note of its multiple connotations? The painting may take on additional meaning if we consider that it was meant to be understood as a complex, multifaceted work—an idea reinforced by the knowledge that it was not a commission; that the painter had to pay all the expenses related to it from his own very limited means, without knowing if he would ever be able to recover those costs.[14]

At first glance what is being depicted in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* is quite simple. It is only a thorough examination, bearing in mind what we know about art in the late sixteenth century, that illuminates its complexity. Thus the many interpretations are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of it. They explain first and foremost that this multifaceted work is patently suited to a society that appreciated

11 Maurizio Calvesi, *Caravaggio o la ricerca della salvazion'*. In *'Storia dell' arte'* 9/10 (1971), 107.

12 Luigi Salerno, *Poesia e simboli nel Caravaggio: I dipinti emblematici*. In *'Palatino'* 10 (1966), 108; John F. Moffitt, *Poisoned Love Posited in an Emblematic Lizard by Caravaggio*. In *'Gazette des Beaux-Arts'* 140 (2002), 11–3; John F. Moffitt, *Caravaggio in Context: Learned Naturalism and Renaissance Humanism* (Jefferson NC and London: McFarland, 2004), 156–9; Clovis Whitfield, *Caravaggio's Eye* (London: Paul Holberton, 2011), 85.

13 Spike, *Caravaggio*, 43.

14 For the expenses involved in producing a painting, see Richard E. Spear, *Rome: Setting the Stage*. In Richard E. Spear and Philip Sohm, *The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 63–113.

witty and erudite subtexts, complex metaphors, and emblematic devices.

The artistic trend that flourished when Caravaggio arrived in Rome favoured a sophisticated and complex approach to artistic creation, which the Bolognese bishop (later archbishop) Gabriele Paleotti denounced in his 1582 *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*. In his seminal book on mannerism, John Shearman focuses on the complexity, multiplicity, obscurity, and abundance that characterize sixteenth-century art, quoting Paolo Pino's advice to painters in 1548 to 'introduce' into their works 'at least one figure that is all distorted, ambiguous and difficult...'.[15] Paleotti reacted to this approach by attempting to turn the artistic conception and perception of the religious painting in the direction of clarity and simplicity. He believed that the best way to make a religious painting was to imitate nature. There is no idea, he proclaimed, that cannot be explained in a naturalistic manner with the help of Holy Scripture and stories from the lives of the saints.[16] In 1596 Paleotti was appointed, together with Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, to the role of protector of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome.[17] This position enabled him to make his opinions

15 *'almeno una figura tutta sforciata, misteriosa e difficile...'* Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura* (Venice: Pauolo Gherardo, 1548), 16; John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 138. In his *Paragons and Paragone* Rudolf Preimesberger uses Pino's reference in his discussion of Caravaggio's *Entombment* and its witty connections to Michelangelo's early *Pietà*. Preimesberger argues that Nichodemus' hunchback in Caravaggio's painting refers to Vasari's anecdote in which Michelangelo added his signature to his early *Pietà* after he heard someone attributing it to the 'little hunchback from Parina'. Preimesberger also points out that Nichodemus' head resembles known portraits of Michelangelo. According to Preimesberger, this is a manifestation of Caravaggio's response to Pino's call for distorted and ambiguous figures. Caravaggio plays with the figure of Nichodemus as representing both Michelangelo and himself. Rudolf Preimesberger, *Paragons and Paragone: Van Eyck, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bernini* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 84 and 101–6.

16 Paola Barocchi, ed., *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento: fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, 3 vols. (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960/2), vol. 2, 218–20. See also Anton W. A. Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna: Visible Reality in Art after the Council of Trent* 2 vols. trans. R. R. Symonds (The Hague: Government Publication Office, 1974), vol. I, 127.

17 Melchior Missirini, *Memorie per servire alla storia della romana academia di S. Luca fino alla morte di Antonio Canova* (Rome: De Romanis, 1823), 69; Luigi

known to painters working in Rome. In a way, Caravaggio may be seenas implementing Paleotti's ideas, in that he depicted even the most important religious and holy men of the past as if they lived in the poor villages of contemporary Italy.[18]Some scholars have laid special emphasis on this aspect of his art. 'No one would doubt', wrote Irving Lavin, 'that the revolutionary naturalism and proletarian content of his great religious paintings served a deep moral and spiritual purpose'.[19] And Troy Thomas wrote: 'Through his choice of models and his presentation of them, he created in his paintings his own version of the simple Christianity of the ancients'.[20]

Yet it seems that although the ideas reflected in Paleotti's treatise were appreciated, they did not create the desired effect. Contrary to Paleotti's ideology, what continued to prevail was an admiration for witty and sophisticated artwork. Two of the most appreciated and respected painters in Rome at that time were Cavalier d'Arpino and Federico Zuccari, neither of whom seem to have followed Paleotti's idea.[21] Caravaggio himself, referring to the two, used the term *valenthuomo*, which indicates his appreciation of their work.[22]

Salerno, *The Roman World of Caravaggio: His Admirers and Patrons*, in *The Age of Caravaggio*, exh. cat. (New York and Milan: The Metropolitan Museum and Electa International, 1985), 17; Sandra Gianfreda, *Caravaggio, Guercino, Mattia Preti: Das halfbfigurige Historienbild und die Sammler des Seicento* (Emsdetten and Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2005), 49.

18 Charles Dempsey, *Caravaggio and the Two Naturalistic Styles: Specular versus Macular*. In Genevieve Warwick, ed., *Caravaggio: Realism, Rebellion, Reception* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 93; Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism*, 75–6.

19 Irving Lavin, *Divine Inspiration in Caravaggio's Two St. Matthews*. In '*Art Bulletin*' 56 (1974), 59.

20 Troy Thomas, *Expressive Aspects of Caravaggio's First Inspiration of Saint Matthew*. In '*Art Bulletin*' 67 (1985), 640.

21 For Zuccari's success and fame, see Walter Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969, reprint of the 1955 edition), 65–9. For Cavalier d' Arpino, see Spear, *Rome: Setting the Stage*, 70–1.

22 Walter Friedlaender, *The Academician and the Bohemian: Zuccari and Caravaggio*. In '*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*' 33 (1948), 28;Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 276; Keith Christiansen, *Caravaggio and L'esempio davanti del naturali*. In '*Art Bulletin*' 68 (1986), 421; Clare Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2008), 136; Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 156.

According to Keith Christiansen, imitating nature was not the sole artistic consideration for Caravaggio; there were additional aspects of painting that he valued, otherwise he would have been less impressed by d'Arpino and Zuccari. Christiansen cites Vincenzo Giustiniani's famous letter to Teodoro Amayden, in which he wrote of his admiration for a complex artistic presentation that combines naturalism with stylization in a work of art.[23] This would certainly fit Caravaggio's unique approach.[24]

Caravaggio produced *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* in Rome precisely while seeking recognition, success, and perhaps even a wealthy patron. Each painting he produced in the absence of a commission was done with these objectives in mind.[25] This is especially true in paintings containing his own image, as is the case in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*. From a material cultural point of view, Caravaggio was producing commodities for sale on the open market. From the point of view of a young painter trying to make his mark in the local art industry, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* can be seen as a commercial poster, an advertisement, a business card meant to obtain publicity and exposure.Caravaggio was building his reputation in terms of the quality of his products. This may explain his sophisticated approach.Elizabeth Cropper has remarked on Caravaggio's outstandingly aggressive public assertion of his own value.[26] Sybille Ebert-Schifferer claims that Caravaggio learned much about marketing in Cavalier d'Arpino's workshop.[27] And indeed,

23 Christiansen, *Caravaggio and L'esempio davanti del naturali*, 421–2.

24 Jacob Hess asked with regard to the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew* why Caravaggio regressed to mannerism, adding such figures as naked men in the lower corners. Troy Thomas, writing about Caravaggio's *serpentinata* pose of the angel in his first *Inspiration of St. Matthew*, claimed that it derived from mannerist sources. Jacob Hess, *The Chronology of the Contarelli Chapel*. In '*Burlington Magazine*' 93 (1951), 197; Thomas, *Expressive Aspects of Caravaggio's First Inspiration of Saint Matthew*, 646. For mannerist tendencies in Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of St. Matthew*, see also Franca Trinchieri Camiz, 'Death and Rebirth in *Caravaggio's Martyrdom of St. Matthew*. In '*Artibus et Historiae*' 11 (1990), 93.

25 Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 17 and 21; Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 75.

26 Elizabeth Cropper, *The Petrifying Art: Marino's Poetry and Caravaggio*. In '*The Metropolitan Museum Journal*' 26 (1991), 194.

27 Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 62.

Caravaggio's early paintings accomplished their mission. According to Baglione these paintings attracted the attention of no less a man than Cardinal del Monte, who was, as mentioned above, protector of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome together with Gabriele Paleotti.[28] Joachim von Sandrart claimed in 1675 that it was *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* that made Caravaggio famous throughout Rome.[29]

Elizabeth Alice Honig refers to Dutch still lifes as commodities, and to Frans Snyders' paintings of market stalls piled with worldly goods as purchasable objects.[30] This idea can be interestingly applied to the still life objects in Caravaggio's painting as analogous to the painting itself. The boy reaching towards the cherries (and being caught in the act by the lizard) could thus be seen as analogous to a potential buyer reaching for the painting. Taking the analogy one step further, could the patron-seeking painter himself be seen as a purchasable commodity? At first perceptionthe still life suggests the common message of Memento Mori, yet it can also be viewed as a sophisticated way of addressing the real purpose of this painting—seeing the painter, if ever hired by a patron, as that person's 'commodity'.

For a talented young painter such as Caravaggio, trying to find his way at the outset of his career in Rome, it would have seemed natural to enter the workshop of a successful painter like Cavalier d'Arpino and to try to attract those precious potential patrons who still dominated the Roman art scene in the last decade of the sixteenth century.[31] In this Caravaggio was no different from his fellow painters, and his early paintings should be assessed in this historical and cultural setting.

Obscure, complex, and witty ideas, as well as a blurring of

28 Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti*, vol. 1, 136. For Baglione's reliability, see Hess, 'The Chronology of the Contarelli Chapel', 193; Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 229. See also Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 98.

29 Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 264.

30 Elizabeth Alice Honig, *Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life*. In *'Res'* 34 (1998), 172.

31 Salerno, *The Roman World of Caravaggio*, 17–8; Genevieve Warwick, *Allegories of Eros: Caravaggio's Masque*. In Peter Gillgren and Mårten Snickare, eds., *Performativity and Performance in Baroque Rome* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 145.

boundaries, were popular in painting when Caravaggio arrived in Rome with the aim of becoming a successful painter. These games of wit were much appreciated by members of the upper classes. Sybille Ebert-Schifferer mentions these complex semantic games as popular in the Milanese cultural environment at the time when Caravaggio embarked on his professional journey.[32] Elizabeth Cropper comments on the witty and playful *concetti* in Caravaggio's *Sleeping Cupid* and *Medusa*, as seen through Marino's poetic lens.[33] David Stone also remarks on the period's appreciation of witty subtexts and brilliant *concetti* in his discussion of Caravaggio' *David and Goliath*.[34]

Yet as mentioned above, in contrast to the work's mannerist complexity and blurred boundaries, what emerges with great clarity in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* is the centrality of pain. In the painting pain strikes the viewer immediately upon seeing the boy's panic-filled facial expression.This is surely the most impressive element in the painting. Caravaggio was probably one of the most adept painters of his day in depicting the physical reaction to pain; violence surrounded him and became a central aspect of his art.[35] 'What is being enacted here with such excessive theatricality', writes Ebert-Schifferer, 'is the expression of pain, one of the key affects any painter worth his salt had to master'.[36] What we should note is that Caravaggio made a self-portrait with such an agonized expression, and that this contributes to his self-marketing

32 Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 42 and 83.

33 Cropper, 'The Petrifying Art', 194 and 200–204.

34 David M. Stone, *Self and Myth in Caravaggio's David and Goliath.* In Genevieve Warwick, ed., *Caravaggio: Realism, Rebellion, Reception* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 42.

35 David Stone has gone as far as suggesting that Caravaggio was responsible for building his own myth connecting his life and his art, which was described by his early biographers. In his self-representations in both *Sick Bacchus* and the Borghese *David* he emphasized a darkness that was later described as typical not only of his style but also of his temperament and behaviour. He should be held responsible, writes Stone, for creating a self-abasing image in his depictions of himself, both in these paintings and in other self-representations. Stone notes the painter's own character and self-fashioning, using the famous proverb: '*ogni dipintore dipinge sé*'. Stone, *Self and Myth in Caravaggio's David and Goliath*, 37.

36 Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 349; Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 85.

as a specialist in scenes that represent pain. This early representation of a response to pain marks the beginning of what will eventually become a central feature of Caravaggio's art. During his short career he was very much engaged in producing paintings in which a reaction to pain is manifested and emphasized. For example, the most striking artistic element in his *Martyrdom of St. Peter* (fig. 3) is the saint's agonized gaze at the nail that has penetrated his hand. In this painting he manages to make the viewer almost physically feel the saint's pain.

Indeed, throughout his career Caravaggio was occupied with the presentation of agonized expressions in response to physical pain; and, as will be argued below, in his striving for recognition he emphasized his flair for producing painful scenes. In this he was adhering to established pictorial norms.[37] His ability to convey pain is first and foremost discernible in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard.*

Otherwise, the elements that dominate the painting are obscurity and the blurring of gender, spatial, and depictive boundaries. All these realms are touched by the ambiguity of what is depicted and conveyed. Let us begin with what is seemingly the work's most conspicuous ambiguity—that of gender.

The assumption that the figure in Caravaggio's painting is a boy originates with Baglione, who recognized Caravaggio's image and consequently assumed the figure to be male. As long as the painting remained in Caravaggio's hands, every viewer must have identified the image in the same way.

Baglione mentions an art dealer named Valentino who showed Caravaggio's productions to Cardinal del Monte so that he could assess the artist's capabilities.[38] (Exactly which pictures the cardinal saw remains a mystery; Christiansen and Andrew Graham-Dixon suggest such scenes as the *Fortune Teller* and the *Cardsharps*,[39] which may

37 John Varriano, *Caravaggio and Violence.* In '*Storia dell'arte*' 97 (1999), 318.

38 Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti*, vol. 1, 136; Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 1983, 23 and 352. Andrew Graham-Dixon identifies Valentino as Costantino Spata, an art dealer whose shop was near San Luigi dei Francesi. See Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 97.

39 Christiansen, 'Caravaggio and *L'esempio davanti del naturali*', 423; Graham-Dixon,

certainly be true, since these two paintings did enter the cardinal's collection.) The cardinal was probably pleased with what he saw because he commissioned Caravaggio to make the *Concert*.[40] He also bought other paintings from Caravaggio and by the time of his death owned a large number of his works. Indeed, as pointed out by Creighton Gilbert, the cardinal's collection contained more works by Caravaggio than by any other painter.[41]

There are no records showing that Cardinal del Monte saw *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*. For our purposes what is interesting is that there was a middleman who actually showed potential patrons Caravaggio's work, and that at least in the case of the cardinal, he succeeded in establishing a connection between the painter and the patron. In any case, it is safe to assume that this work had a quality that could draw the attention of such a man, who owned a very large collection of paintings.[42] In this regard I would mention the *Medusa* (fig.4), a painting that is recorded as one the cardinal actually did commission from Caravaggio a few years later. On the basis of the similarities between the two works, one could argue that the Medusa commission was an indication not only of what the cardinal appreciated in Caravaggio's work, but also that he might at least have seen *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* and been inspired

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Caravaggio, 98. For the role of Valentino see also Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 58. For Caravaggio's use of art dealers and Valentino's role as a mediator between Caravaggio and Del Monte, see Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 77, 80, and 90.

40 Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti*, vol. 1, 136; Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Alice Sedgwick Wohl, trans. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 180; Posner, *Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works*, 307.

41 Creighton E. Gilbert, *Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, 111–2; Keith Christiansen, *A Caravaggio Rediscovered: The Lute Player*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990), 10; Moffitt, *Caravaggio in Context*, 147.

42 Patrizia Cavazzani, *Painting as Business in Early Seventeenth-Century Rome* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 86; Yvan Loskoutoff, *Cardinal Del Monte as a Collector of Antiquities: 'The Cupid Affair' (1596)*. In *'Journal of the History of Collections'* 25 (2013), 19–20 and 24. See also, Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 29–35; Gianfreda, *Caravaggio, Guercino, Mattia Preti*, 77.

by it to become Caravaggio's first important patron.[43] The similarities between *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* and the *Medusa* are described later in this essay.

If Valentino did show the painting to potential patrons, they would not have recognized the painter's image in it, being unfamiliar with the artist, who was still unknown in Rome. This has important implications for the interpretation of the painting. Without prior knowledge that the depiction is a self-portrait, the essence of the painting would have been a moralistic, emblematic message—one of the messages that were acknowledged in modern scholarship and detailed above. The question of gender would not have arisen, nor would self-portraiture. It may be assumed that whoever saw the painting would have regarded the figure as being that of a girl, the fair sex being commonly chosen to represent a personification or allegory.

Once the viewer became acquainted with the painter, new layers of meaning (or a second step of reception, to use Rudolph Preimesberger's characterization)[44] would have accrued to the painting. He would have been surprised to realize that the image was a self-portrait. That one of its viewers could have been Cardinal del Monte can be gathered from his later commissions—first the *Lute Player*, later the *Medusa*. In the Del Monte commissions the painter again depicted the main protagonist according to his own image, but again obscured its gender identity. Indeed, Bellori identified the figure in the *Lute Player* as that of a woman.[45] What I mean by the blurring of boundaries in *Boy*

43 Of interest here is Baglione's indication that the cardinal was involved in obtaining for Caravaggio his first major commission—that of the Contarelli chapel. In Caravaggio's work in the chapel one can find ambiguities typical of the paintings discussed here. Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti*, vol. 1, 136. For a recent discussion of these ambiguities, see Lorenzo Pericolo, *Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the Istoria in Early Modern Painting* (London: Harvey Miller, 2011), 219–25.

44 Preimesberger, *Paragons and Paragone*, 100.

45 Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 180. See also Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 35; Varriano, *Caravaggio*, 59. For gender ambiguity in these early works, see Posner, *Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works*, 301; Franca Trinchieri Camiz, *The Castrato Singer: From Informal to Formal Portraiture*, In *'Artibus et Historiae'* 9 (1988), 172; Warwick, *Allegories of Eros*, 51.

Bitten by a Lizard is that Caravaggio does not provide viewers with enough visual cues to enable them to decide whether the central figure is a boy or a girl. This feature caused Donald Posner and John Moffitt, for example, to describe it as an androgynous youth.[46]

What if Baglione had remained silent and never identified the figure in the lizard scene as a boy? The feminine hand gestures, the flower in the hair, the very red lips, and the bare shoulder might have been considered significant enough to suggest that the figure Caravaggio had depicted was that of a girl.

When it comes to style, Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* is a tour de force in its realistic depiction of different forms and textures. In his depictions of fruits and flowers Caravaggio proved himself to be a virtuoso at still life painting. This has been acknowledged by Francesco Scannelli, who wrote not only that Caravaggio was an imitator of the truth (*immitatione del vero*) but emphasized his talent for depicting real objects.[47] Regarding Caravaggio's realism Bellori wrote that he 'took nature alone for the object of his brush'.[48] It was this ability, according to Bellori, that brought Caravaggio fame and many followers.

Nevertheless, ambiguity is apparent in the painter's approach to reality. Here we find ourselves dealing with the same obscurity as in the case of the protagonist's gender. It is manifested first in the dissonance between what is real and what only seems real but is not. This is emphasized by the contrast between the painter's depiction of the fruits, flowers, and lizard, on the one hand, and the unrealistic narrative on the other. Caravaggio's depiction of the lizard biting has nothing to do with reality. As Donald Posner has pointed out, in each and every interaction between men and lizards that appear in a domestic environment, the latter will always flee.[49] But let us, for the

46 Posner, *Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works*, 302; Moffitt, *Poisoned Love Posited in an Emblematic Lizard by Caravaggio*, 5; Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism*, 58.

47 Francesco Scannelli, *Il microcosmo della pittura* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989, reprint of the 1657 edition), 51–2.

48 Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 180.

49 In a short note devoted to the question of whether Caravaggio painted a lizard or

sake of argument, accept the idea that lizards do bite. In such a scenario in real life, the victim's reaction would be quite different from what Caravaggio depicted. The instinctive reaction to suddenly inflicted pain is to pull back the afflicted body part while turning the head toward the cause of pain. In fact, this is the emphasis in the *Martyrdom of St. Peter*, where the saint is gazing at the nail that has painfully penetrated his hand. Caravaggio's boy not only does not pull back his hand, he does not even turn his head towards the cause of the pain. It may be assumed that a perceptive viewer was expected to notice this distortion of reality.

This is what Charlotte Houghton regards as a sophisticated and brilliant 'error' that would have been noticed by art lovers. In her magnificent article focusing on the acceptance of and response to Pieter Aertsen's *Meat Stall* in Antwerp, she argues that the painter's so-called mistakes were committed on purpose, intended to attract the attention of experienced local connoisseurs to the underlying meaning of the painting.[50] Houghton's subject is a 1551 painting in Antwerp. But even forty-five years later, in Rome, such erudite and witty paintings were popular among the art lovers who Caravaggio hoped would sponsor his work.

Another unrealistic element in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* concerns the perception of space. In his painting Caravaggio depicted the boy with his back against a wall, in front of him a table with a vase filled with water and flowers. The round vase is like a convex mirror supposedly reflecting the entire room: in it a window at one end of the room is visible, and another window is reflected on the other side of the

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a salamander, Donald Posner persuasively argues that the animal in question is a lizard. The green lizard in Caravaggio's painting is common in Italy and has no reputation for biting. See Donald Posner, *Lizards and Lizard Lore, with Special Reference to Caravaggio's Leapin' Lizard.* In Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler, eds., *Art the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson* (New York and Englewood Cliffs: Harry N. Abrams and Prentice-Hall, 1981), 389. See also Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 81.

50 Charlotte Houghton, *This Was Tomorrow: Pieter Aertsen's Meat Stall as Contemporary Art.* In *'Art Bulletin'* 86 (2004), 293. See also Dror Wahrman, *Mr. Collier's Letter Racks: A Tale of Art & Illusion at the Threshold of the Modern Information Age* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 60.

vase.[51] The windows seem to frame the chamber. The room is empty, with only a shadowy figure shown next to the first window. The painter, who must have stood with his canvas in a prominent place at the centre of this room, is missing from the reflection. Unlike other painters who included reflected items in their paintings, here Caravaggio does not follow the rule of realistic vision. Jan van Eyck in his *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* (fig.5) depicted a convex mirror on the opposite wall, with the painter's face reflected in it (fig.6). Quentin Massys placed a convex mirror in his *Money Changer and His Wife* (fig.7) that is directed to the left; next to the window reflected in the mirror one can see the portrait of a man (fig. 8). Pieter Claesz, in *Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball* (fig.9), depicted a crystal ball on a table, in which the image of the painter is reflected (fig.10).[52] Titian depicted a distorted image in his *Allegory of Marriage*, known also as *The Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos* (fig.11). In this painting Titian also played with the reflections of the two main female figures, whose faces are reflected in the shield of the male figure. Lastly, Bartolomeo Bettera painted a work in which the image of the painter is reflected twice (fig. 12); in his *Musical Instruments with Two Glass Spheres and a Male Bust*, one can see the image of the painter in both crystal balls on the far edge of a table covered with many musical instruments (fig. 13).[53] In Caravaggio's painting the vase-mirror involves a deception, because it should at least have shown an image of the painter at work.[54]

One last example of an absence of realism in Caravaggio's painting can be deduced from the actual position of the real mirror on

51 For Caravaggio's optical illusions in this painting, see Marcin Fabiański, *Rifrazioni nella pittura al tempo di Caravaggio*. In *'Artibus et Historiae'* 28 (2007), 209–11.

52 For Pieter Claesz's mirror, see Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, *Parmigianinos Selbstportrait: Materie und Reflex*. In *Parmigianino und der europäische Manierismus* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), 51.

53 I would like to thank Ornat Lev-Er for kindly bringing to my attention both Pieter Claesz's and Bartolomeo Bettera's depictions of a painter at work in the reflection of a mirror. For a discussion on the convex mirror, see Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting*. Trans. Mette Hjort (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 126–35.

54 Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 126–7.

the table in front of the boy. The placement of the boy behind the table with the fruits and the vase, and with his back to the wall, makes one wonder what space is reflected in the vase. The actual mirror that the painter must have used for making his own image had to be positioned on that same table or on some surface in front of the table in close proximity. So the open space between the vase and the window does not exist. That the painter makes it impossible for the viewer to draw a line that defines the borders of the room is another ploy used by Caravaggio to remain vague. But the last two points are valid only if the viewer identifies the painter in the figure.

That said, let us turn now to the other painting by Caravaggio in which his self-representation is unprecedented and unconventional—his *Medusa* (fig.4).[55] This painting is well-documented: It was commissioned by Cardinal del Monte and sent to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the former Cardinal Ferdinand I de' Medici.[56] It entered the Duke's collection on 7 September 1598. As with *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, a second version exists; it was found only in 1994 and today is part of a private collection in Milan.[57] The entire work, completed on a wooden convex platform, resembles a shield (*rotella*) bearing a representation of the beheaded Medusa. Here Caravaggio once again depicted his own image. And as in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, the face is characterized by an agonized expression that conveys the successful conclusion of Perseus' attempt to behead the Medusa. Gilbert called it 'an extreme experiment in facial distortion caused by violent stress'.[58] Ovid's slain Medusa is seen here with an open mouth, fear in her eyes, and blood streaming from her throat.

The Medusa represents the power of the gaze,[59] which is the essence of the mythological story itself: He who sees her turns to

55 For the *Medusa* as a self-portrait, see Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 104.

56 Baglione, *Le vite de'pittori scultori et architetti*, vol. 1, 136; Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 181.

57 Ermanno Zoffili ed., *Caravaggio: The First Medusa* (Milan: Continents, 2011), 157–8.

58 Gilbert, *Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals*, 125.

59 Cropper, *The Petrifying Art*, 204; Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 118–9.

stone.[60] She is also an embodiment of the anti-art. Art needs to be seen; destruction through the gaze is the opposite of what the viewing of art is all about.[61] Watching, looking, seeing, are the sources of knowledge and wisdom;[62] therefore the Medusa's war against those who see becomes a threat to the goddess of wisdom, Minerva. This is why after Perseus kills the Medusa her image becomes a symbol of Minerva and is affixed to her shield.

The choice of the Medusa as the subject of this painting was that of the patron. We can only guess at the message that Cardinal del Monte was trying to deliver to the recipient of the shield. The poet Giovanni Battista Marino, who was inspired by Caravaggio's *Medusa*, regarded her image as the protector of the duke.[63] The shield should also be seen as a diplomatic gift that was meant to express a friendly wish for the duke's safety.[64] It conveys a message of protection, as if the cardinal's wish was that all the duke's enemies should turn to stone upon gazing at his shield.[65] John Varriano has suggested that it was meant to replace a painting by Leonardo da Vinci that was part of the Medici collection, last mentioned in a 1587 inventory.[66] Graham-Dixon

60 Hal Foster, *Medusa and the Real*. In '*Res*' 44 (2003), 181.

61 Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 136–43; Cropper, *The Petrifying Art*, 204; Christopher Braider, *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth: Hercules at the Crossroad* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 88.

62 For the concept of knowledge and its connection to sight, see Tudor, *All in him selfe as in a glass he sees*, 180.

63 Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 89; Salerno, *Poesia e simboli nel Caravaggio*, 110; Cropper, *The Petrifying Art*, 204.

64 Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 113.

65 Cardinal del Monte might have been aware of the duke's intention to embark on a crusade. For his expedition plans, see Suzanne B. Butters, *Contrasting Priorities: Ferdinando I de' Medici, Cardinal and Grand Duke*. In Mary Hollingsworth and Carol M. Richardson, eds., *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety, and Art 1450–1700* (University Park: Pennsylvania Press University Press, 2010), 188–190.

66 John Varriano, *Leonardo's Lost Medusa and Other Medici Medusas from the Tazza Farnese to Caravaggio*. In '*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*' 130 (1997), 76; Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism*, 24; Gianfreda, *Caravaggio, Guercino, Mattia Preti*, 21; Mina Gregory, *Caravaggio's First Medusa*. In Ermanno Zoffili ed., *Caravaggio: The First Medusa* (Milan: Continents, 2011), 22. For artistic gifts, see Alexander Nagel, *Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna*. In '*Art Bulletin*' 79 (1997), 649–55. On diplomatic artistic gifts, see Anthony Colantuono, 'The

has suggested that the painting was meant to compete with Leonardo's painting.[67] The cardinal might also have sought to compliment the duke on his wisdom by sending an attribute of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom.

That Caravaggio gave the female Medusa his own image does not confuse us. We refer to this image as that of a woman, even though there is nothing in the painting to indicate this beyond the connection with the mythological creature—there are no flowers in her hair, no bare shoulders, no feminine hand gestures.[68]

What is important for us is Caravaggio's choice of using his own image as a model for *Medusa*; it has nothing to do with the patron's message. It seems reasonable to assume that the Grand Duke of Tuscany was not familiar with Caravaggio's facial features; after all, he returned to his native town in 1589, the year he was married, before Caravaggio arrived in Rome from Milan,[69] so the message of the painting is irrelevant to Caravaggio's self-depiction as the Medusa.

The painter may have wished to emphasize the same ambiguity that can also be found in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* regarding the perception of reality. On the one hand, the Medusa is a reflection of his own image, a mimesis. On the other hand, it is an imagined creature that does not exist and is thus a deviation from what is real.

Of interest is that the round frame of the painting with the self-portrait resembles a mirror, as if the shield is a mirror, writes Louis Marin.[70] The shield as a mirror is a well-known device that is manifested, for example, in Tasso's 1581 *Gerusalemme Liberata* when Carlo and

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Mute Diplomat: Theorizing the Role of Images in Seventeenth-Century Political Negotiations', in Elizabeth Cropper ed. *The Diplomacy of Art: Artistic Creation and Politics in Seicento Italy* (Milan: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 2000), 51–76; Daniel M. Unger, *Guercino's Paintings and His Patrons' Politics in Early Modern Italy* (Farnham and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010), 7–10.

67 Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 157.

68 For the blurring of boundaries in *Medusa*, see Avigdor W. G. Posèq, *Caravaggio and the Antique* (London: Avon Books, 1998), 27–8. Posèq remarked upon the hermaphroditic character of her presentation.

69 Gregory, 'Caravaggio's First *Medusa*', 20.

70 Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 135 and 136.

Ubaldo confront Rinaldo with his own image in the shield given to them for this purpose by the Wiseman of Ascalon.[71] Caravaggio's shield-mirror shows a frozen, realistic image of the painter himself. There is nothing that reflects the real better than a mirror; and yet obviously Caravaggio's hair did not consist of snakes. This depiction embodies what we admire about Caravaggio—his ability to create scenes as if they represent reality, even if the scene and image are totally imaginary.

Also, there is a parallel between the painter and Perseus, the slayer of the Medusa, in that both used a mirror for their actions. The painter uses a mirror for his self-representation, while Perseus used a mirror to kill the monster. It seems the artist identified not only with the Medusa but with Perseus as well.

But what did the Medusa signify for Caravaggio? On the one hand, she is a reflection of the anti-art since she kills the beholder. On the other hand she turns those who look at her to stone, like a sculptor. In this she recalls the work of the artist who tries to imitate nature. Caravaggio is commenting on the critique of his work by portraying himself as the embodiment of anti-art, as well as a realist painter.[72]

What is primarily of interest to us is the connection of this Medusa commission to Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*. The similarities between the two paintings may shed light on Cardinal del Monte's reasons for embracing Caravaggio and his art in the first place. Both paintings are elusive and provocative, and they have a violent, painful element that is manifested in the protagonist's facial expression. Similarly important are two issues addressed in both paintings that relate to self-portraiture: gender (or sexual ambivalence) and realism. Both works clearly have one feature in common—they deal with issues about which Caravaggio is not explicit. He remains vague and thus maintains the blurring of boundaries typical of late mannerism. Whatever the issue raised by Caravaggio, the viewer is left in doubt regarding the painter's

71 Torquato Tasso, *La Gerusalemme Liberata di Torquato Tasso con la annotationi di Scipion Gentili, e di Giulio Guastavini* (Genoa, G. Pauoni, 1617), canto 14, verse 77.

72 For Caravaggio in the eyes of his contemporaries, see Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 46–8.

Figure 1. Caravaggio, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard,* 1594-5. Florence, *Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Roberto Longhi.*

Figure 2. Parmigianino, *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror.* c.1524. Vienna, *Kunsthistorisches* Museum.

Figure 3. Caravaggio, *Martyrdom of St. Peter*. ca. 1604. Rome, Cerasi Chapel.

Figure 4. Caravaggio, *Medusa*. 1597-8. Florence, *Galleria degli Uffizi*.

Figure 5. Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait*. 1434. London, National Gallery.

Figure 6. Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* (detail). 1434. London, National Gallery.

Figure 7. Quentin Massys, *Money Changer and His Wife*. 1514. Paris, *Musée du Louvre*.

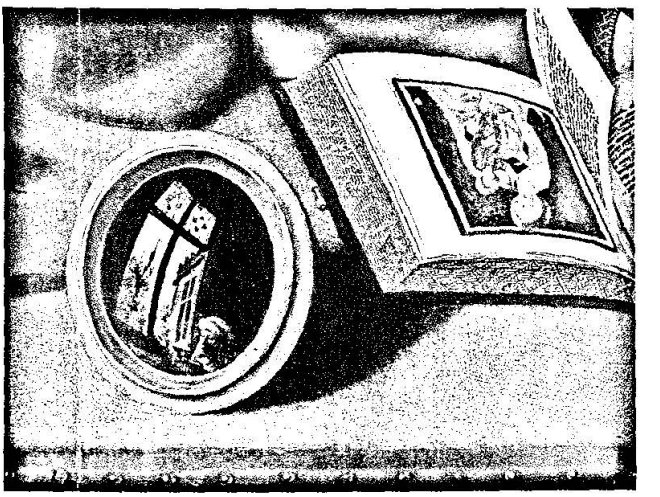

Figure 8. Quentin Massys, *Money Changer and His Wife* (detail). 1514. Paris, *Musée du Louvre*.

own opinion in the matter. It seems as if what really interested him was to remain elusive. The only truly explicit element in both paintings is the pain expressed in them. That Cardinal del Monte sponsored the later painting may allow us to assume that it is precisely the double meaning and witty intention that pleased him. But this remains only a conjecture.

In *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, Frances Ames-Lewis makes a distinction between two types of self-representation that are related to our discussion: automimesis and self-portraiture.[73] In the first type an artist uses his own image merely as a model. In the second, the artist depicts himself as such, focusing on his own identity. The difference is crucial: In automimesis the viewer is not supposed to identify the painter in the painting; in a self-portrait, he is expected to do so. In both *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* and *Medusa* the image is a complex representation, making it difficult to decide whether or not the beholder was supposed to identify the figure as a self-portrait. When Valentino, the art dealer, introduced *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* to potential patrons, and when Del Monte sent the *Medusa* to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, none of the viewers of the paintings could have been familiar with how Caravaggio looked. In the first case, after the viewer met the painter in person, he would have found it intriguing to realize that the boy in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* was a self-portrait. It would be interesting to know if this same revelation occurred to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, if and when he learned that his newly received *Medusa* was in fact a self-representation.

Other important connections between the two paintings relate to the mirror. In neither is an actual mirror involved; in both, it is only insinuated. In *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* the mirror is suggested by the reflection of the vase. In *Medusa*, it is the self-portrait in the round shield that makes the viewer associate the frame with a mirror. The mirror is especially important in connection with the Medusa because of Perseus' manner of slaying her. In both representations what is most

73 Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 211. See also Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 103.

important is the gaze. The *Medusa* is a representation of the anti-art because one cannot look at her; looking at her means death. A mirror is also a representation of this impulse because what is reflected in a mirror is absolute realism without the possibility of interference. The counter-gazing of the boy who is looking at the viewer is an insinuation of the power of the gaze, as is the Medusa's avoidance of the viewer's eyes. In both cases it is the painter himself who is looking (or not) at his beholder.

In both paintings the use of self-presentation provides an added layer of meaning to what would otherwise remain emblematic or allegorical. In both works the painter blurs boundaries in terms of gender and the perception of reality. The animals play an important role, and in both cases Caravaggio made a real effort to depict them—the lizard and the snakes—in a way that is as close to nature as possible.[74]

Boy Bitten by a Lizard is an unconventional, indeed unprecedented form of self-portrait; to the best of my knowledge there is no other such self-representation in early modern Europe before Caravaggio's. Nor does there exist a painting in which a painter depicted himself in such a provocative manner, one that might give rise to negative sentiments. Caravaggio's choice is not only a denial of the entire tradition of self-portraiture as it emerged during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; it is also a straightforward and conscious proclamation that contradicts everything his predecessors were trying to assert about their place on the social ladder.[75]

74 On the lizard, see endnote 49. On the snakes, see John Varriano, Snake Eyes: Caravaggio, Ligozzi, and the *Head of Medusa*. In *'Source'* 24 (2004), 14–7; Whitfield, *Caravaggio's Eye*, 106–7; Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio*, 156; Gregory, *Caravaggio's First Medusa*, 16.

75 The literature is vast so I refer to only a few examples. See Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, especially 3–9; Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, 228–43. For references to specific case studies, see especially, Svetlana Alpers, *Interpretation without Representation or the Viewing of Las Meninas*. In *'Representations'* 1 (1983), 30–42; John Wetenhall, *Self-Portrait on an Easel, Annibale Carracci and the Artist in Self-Portraiture*. In *'Arte International'* 27 (1984), 49–55; Joel Snyder, *Las Meninas and the Mirror of the Prince*. In *'Critical Inquiry'* 11 (1985), 545–7; Luba Freedman, *Titian's Independent Self-Portraits* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1990), 65–9; David Carrier, *Poussin's*

Figure 9. Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball*, c. 1628. Nuremberg, *Germanisches Nationalmuseum.*

Figure 10. Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball* (detail), c. 1628. Nuremberg, *Germanisches Nationalmuseum.*

Figure 11. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage*, known also as *The Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*, c. 1530.Paris, *Musée du Louvre.*

Figure 12. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage*, known also as *The Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos* (detail), c. 1530. Paris, *Musée du Louvre.*

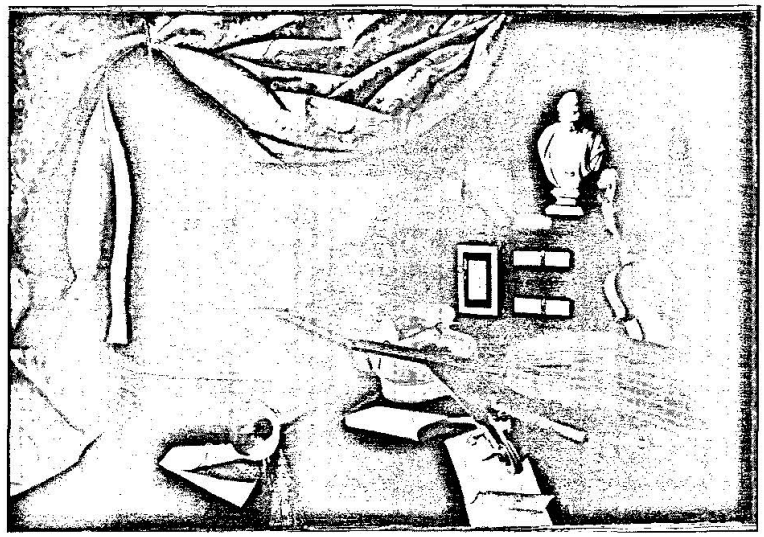

Figure 13. Bartolomeo Bettera, *Musical Instruments with Two Glass Spheres and a Male Bust*, c.1650. Private Collection.

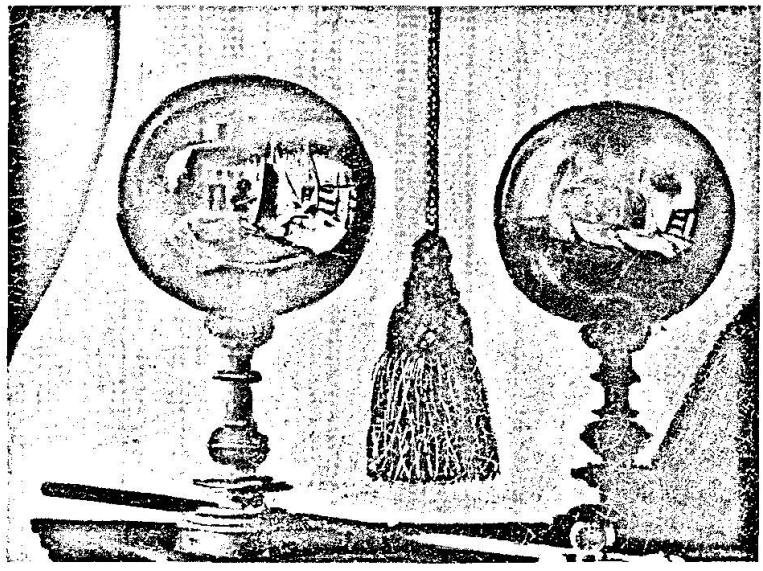

Figure 14. Bartolomeo Bettera, *Musical Instruments with Two Glass Spheres and a Male Bust* (detail), c.1650. Private Collection.

Beyond the sophistication of a representation that blurs pictorial and ontological boundaries, there is also a very physical representation of pain. The painter provokes the viewer twice: first by his challenging gaze, and secondly by the ambiguity of the painting. Against a blurred and ambiguous background, the painter gazing at the viewer is crying out in pain. The only certain aspect of this painting is the unequivocal physical pain marked by the boy's facial expression.

It could have been for the purpose of promoting himself in Rome that Caravaggio created this early work in which his facial features are discernible. This painting could have been a kind of 'business card', meant to impress potential Roman patrons with his virtuoso skills. Promoting one's artistic abilities seems a reasonable endeavour for an ambitious painter aware of his own potential.

In the painting Caravaggio emphasized two aspects that eventually became very dominant in his oeuvre—his stark representation of pain, violence, and death, and his witty, provocative blurring of boundaries. This last aspect seems at first sight to indicate a very clear intention, but the work's sophisticated and brilliant 'errors' make the viewer unsure about their true meaning.

Paintings: A Study in Art-Historical Methodology (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 3–26; Antonio Paolucci, *Botticelli and the Medici: A Privileged Relationship*. In *Botticelli: From Lorenzo the Magnificent to Savonarola* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), 69–72; Daniel M. Unger, *The Pope, the Painter, and the Dynamics of Social Standing in the Stanza della Segnatura*. In *'Renaissance Studies'* 26 (2012), 269–287.

Music Performance Spaces in Maltese Churches during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, and their Relevance Today[1]

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Throughout the ages church architecture and music united to create a unique combination of disciplines experienced through space and time: on the one hand, church buildings were planned with specially designed performance spaces to be occupied by musicians and their instruments; on the other hand, musical works were created by composers primarily to be heard in such designated locations within the church building – the performance spaces. While architecture is timeless and can be appreciated as a spatial whole, music can only be experienced over a period of time within the spatial whole.

This article will discuss the various music performance spaces created in our churches during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their functional use during solemn festivities. The main performance locations within the buildings will be identified, and a brief historical overview of them will be given, illustrated by documents from the

1 This article is a revised and expanded version of a paper given at a conference, organised by the School of Performing Arts, in March 2014. My sincere thanks to Professor Michael Talbot (University of Liverpool) for his helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks also to Mgr Rev. John Azzopardi, director of the Archives of the Cathedral of Malta, and to Mgr Anthony Cassar, Archpriest of the Metropolitan Cathedral of St Paul, Mdina, for making available the source material.

Cathedral Archives and by examples of some of the most prominent buildings in Malta, particularly the Cathedral of Malta at Mdina. Reference is made to musical works in the concertato style (involving instrumental ensembles, choirs and soloists) by Maltese composers.

Music in the Church went through a period of transition during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – a number of factors contributing to these changes will be mentioned. In conclusion, the article will address the relevance of performance spaces and their purposes in modern society, offering ideas on how to restore a musical tradition that is an essential part of our heritage, to where it belongs: a repertoire of works by Maltese composers that may be relevant to a modern, twenty-first-century society in the same way that it was centuries ago.

Right from the very beginning the history of western music was sustained by another, inseparable history: that of church (sacred) music.[2] With the rise of instrumental music in Italy in the late sixteenth

2 Generally, the earliest known references to church music date back to antiquity (c. 2300 BCE): in ancient Mesopotamia (modern day eastern Syria) the primary uses of music were very similar to those of today: i.e., music intended for ritual (including weddings and funerals), and for religious ceremonies and processions, among other uses. The earliest surviving theoretical writings of ancient Greece (c. 600 BCE onwards) mention, among other instruments, the kithara (a big lyre played standing up), which was used in processions, sacred ceremonies, and in the theatre. Music of the Christian Church in the first millennium (CE), centred around the singing of psalms – a central element of all Christian observances – and chanting. The development of modern notation is also attributed to the Church: Guido d'Arezzo (c. 991–after 1033), an Italian Benedictine monk living in Arezzo, north of Rome, developed a system of lines (staves) which evolved into the four-line stave, the precursor of the modern five-line stave. During the eleventh to thirteenth centuries new concepts of architecture were introduced into churches, and new large cathedrals were being erected around Europe. Two styles prevailed: (i) Romanesque (eleventh and twelfth centuries), with round arches and massive columns, and (ii) Gothic (mid-twelfth century), with pointed arches and slender columns. Romanesque decoration specialised in frescoes and sculptures, whereas Gothic preferred stained-glass. Polyphony flourished during the Renaissance (c. 1400-1600), with two major factors determining the development of music performance: (i) the aristocracy, which had its own Court chapels (sacred) and entertainment (secular), and (ii) the Church, which had its own churches and composers. Musicians were salaried, and the Church created its own choir schools and started to teach singing and theory of music to boys.

century came a new approach to writing music for the churches – a new style that would make an impact on the western world. Composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1555–1612), who was employed in the Ducal Church of St. Mark (Venice) from 1585 until his death, composed music that required the participation of multiple choirs of voices and instruments. His major works, the polychoral motets, were compositions for two, three, four or five divided choirs involving a technique that became synonymous with *cori spezzati*. To achieve this, choirs of voices and instruments (*cori*) were placed in two raised galleries (*palchetti*) on either side of the main altar, and also on the ground. Combining solo voices, vocal choirs and instrumental ensembles together became known, in the early Baroque period, as the concertato style.

From the late sixteenth century onwards new churches were built all around Malta, and ecclesiastic architecture and music united to create a unique combination of space and time. The powerful Catholic Church needed music to commemorate its major ceremonial festivities in grand style, so church buildings were built with specific performance spaces to accommodate the choir and orchestra – the *Cappella musicale*.[3] The composers who offered their services to the church created their works specifically to be performed in these designated locations within the churches.[4]

Ceremonial festivity for a religious *festa* in church reached a pinnacle in the eighteenth century, the three principal functions needed for an integrated ceremony being: status (*prestigio*), delight

3 The connection between stone and musicians can be seen in many churches around Europe. Particularly interesting are Beverley Minster (England), where musicians and their instruments are carved in stone on the west side, and the Church of St Mary (also in Beverley), where figures of medieval musicians with their instruments (tabor, cittern, viol, bombard, hautboy, bagpipe, and many others) are carved in stone on windows and on ceiling bosses, and in wood on bench ends. (Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone* (Oxford, 2004), 184.)

4 For Ecclesiology – the study of church buildings – and the difference and peculiarities among faiths as reflected in church buildings (whether Lutheran (with further variations in Scandinavian countries), Calvinist, Reformed, Anglican, etc.), see Nigel Yates, *Liturgical Space - Christian Worship and Church Buildings in Western Europe 1500-2000* (Ashgate, 2008).

(*diletto*) and devotion (*devozione*).[5] Music played a rather important role in the definition of status and solemnity: the more the music, the greater the solemnity (*più musica, più solennità*). Solemnity (*solennità*) and cheerfulness (*allegrezza*) were emphasised through the coordinated participation of the *Cappella musicale* performing during the rite. Since music lured the public from the public squares into church, Baroque society created a dual function for religion: to provide a spectacle, and to provide moral instruction (*dello spettacolo e dell'edificazione*).[6] In consequence, the governing characteristics of the ecclesiastical institution, 'decorum and status' (*decoro e prestigio*), became the symbols of spirituality and solemnity and, as a result, Baroque celebration in church constantly followed a specific formula: the officiating priests and their assistants (*celebranti/clero*), collectively glorified the triumphant Church of God (*Dio/Chiesa trionfante*) through their extra-worldly representations (*riti*) on the main altar before the general public (*popolo*). Every single moment of this minutely ordered ritual demanded the involvement of music, and this combination of liturgy and music, in turn, captured the attention of the congregation, which was steered towards devotion. In other words, music in church became an object of decorum as well as an ornament (*decoro e ornamento*) a fact that inevitably required the provision of specialised music composed by specially trained composers and performed by professionally trained musicians assigned to a specially designed performance space.[7]

Music performance spaces in Maltese churches

The *Cappella musicale* of the Cathedral of Malta at Mdina (hereafter, Cathedral) – the finest musical centre on the island where sacred music was professionally cultivated – was officially inaugurated in 1619. During the seventeenth century it became normal practice to recruit musicians (singers and players) and *maestri di cappella*, from

5 Gino Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca* (Palermo: 1975), 20.

6 Ibid., 30, 220.

7 Ibid., 49-50, 52.

Sicily.[8] Through them, the concertato style was introduced at the Cathedral and other churches around Malta.[9]

Churches of the time were built on the same ground plan as Italian churches, mainly in the Romanesque, cruciform manner.[10] An eighteenth-century ink drawing of the Cathedral (Fig. 1) – over which the present author has superimposed the reference Letters (A-G) and Cardinal Directions (North, South, East, West) – illustrates the various sections of the building[11] and the music performance spaces in the Mother Church (this plan is common to the majority of Maltese churches in the Romanesque style).

The illustration reveals a cross-shaped ground-plan, with the Choir (and high altar) on the liturgical east side of the building, and the main door of the church on the liturgical west. The two lateral chapels on either side of the presbytery and main altar (indicated by north and south) represent the horizontal crossbar, and are called the north transept (to the left) and the south transept (to the right).

Among the various potential spaces found in Roman Catholic churches, seven main locations serving as music performance spaces can be identified, starting on the east side and proceeding westwards:

A - the Choir (*coro*) space at ground level;

B - the upper-level galleries (*gallerie*) in the Choir, facing north/south;

C - the upper-level galleries in the north and south transepts, facing west;

D - the north and south transept (*transetto*) space at ground level;

E - the archway space leading from the central nave (*navata*) to the aisles (*navate laterali*), on either side of the church; and

8 From 1091 to 1798 Malta formed part of the 'Kingdom of Sicily'.

9 Two such musicians were Agostino Buggiani (1621), a singer, and Francesco di Gregori (1622), a trumpeter.

10 A church built in the form of a crucifix. The cruciform shape eventually came to dominate all churches built in Malta and Gozo during this period.

11 Archives of the Cathedral of Malta (ACM.), *Miscellanea*, Ms. 60.

- the main door space on the west side at ground level, on either side of the church's entrance;

F - the organ gallery/loft on the west side, facing east; and

(G) - the upper-level surrounding galleries (shown within round brackets (G) as the galleries could be anywhere around the building).

Not all of these spaces were originally conceived specifically for music – D and E were adopted as potential music spaces only after experimentation with acoustics and space.

The manner of performance in churches was of three kinds: (i) Responsorial, which involved alternation between soloist and choir;[12] (ii) Antiphonal, which required two spatially separated choirs alternating with each other; and (iii) Direct, involving no alternation at all. Deep into the second millennium, precisely in the second half of the twentieth century, the Vatican Council II strongly endorsed responsorial singing between priest and congregation, in alternating (*alternatim*) fashion.[13] The concept of alternating between Choir (east) and organ gallery (west) had already started in the seventeenth century, but came into regular practice in the twentieth century between congregation and *Cappella musicale*.[14]

12 Responsorial psalmody of the Office and Mass involved a soloist singing each psalm verse, and the choir (or congregation) singing the response. Unlike the modern idea of alternating between congregation and choir, responsorial performance implied that the chants sung by the soloist were more melismatic and elaborate.

13 Alternation is possible between (i) priest and congregation with the *Cappella musicale*, or (ii) priest with the congregation (led by a cantor). From the second half of the twentieth century alternation between choir and congregation required that the liturgical texts – at least for the congregation – be in the vernacular (the native tongue), to encourage participation and understanding of the rite.

14 In elliptical-shaped (ellipse, oval-shaped) churches, like the Carmelite Church in Mdina, responsorial singing or alternation took place between organist (plus instrumentalists and singers) located in the organ gallery above the main door on the west side of the church, and the choir of priests in the Choir (on the east side) of the church. (ACM, *Miscellanea* 79, f. 62a, v (p. 38).

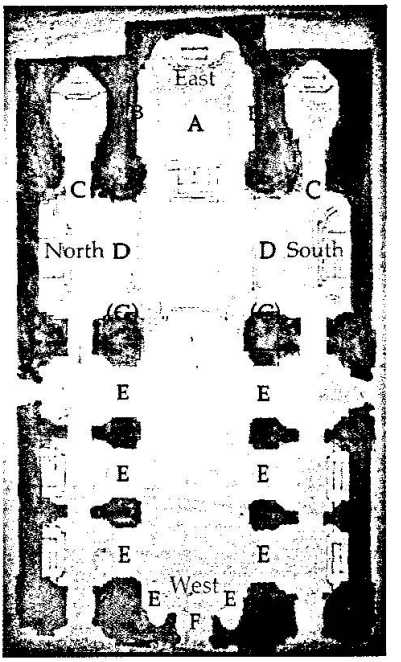

Figure 1. Cathedral of Malta, Mdina, ground plan.

The Locations

A - the Choir space at ground level (Fig. 2), divided into north and south Choir stalls (or benches) facing each other (north/south), was reserved for the singing and recitation of the Office by priests and monks (from which the name Choir itself is derived). This seating arrangement was also called Antiphonal seating as an indication that the clergy faced each other. A large, rotating lectern was often placed right at the centre of the Choir to hold the large choral books (*antiphonari*) serving the clergy on either side during singing.[15] The Choir space is found in almost every Romanesque or neo-Gothic church in Malta, including

15 The rotating lectern had two slanting book-holders facing opposite sides, adjusted to face north-south (simultaneously) for antiphonal or responsorial singing between the clergy. It was usually turned to face east to serve the organist when he was accompanying on the harmonium behind the altar. Books required for the singing of the liturgy included (i) for the Mass: the *Missal* (for the texts) and the *Gradual* (for the chants), and (ii) for the Office: the *Breviary* (for the texts), and the *Antiphoner* (for the chants).

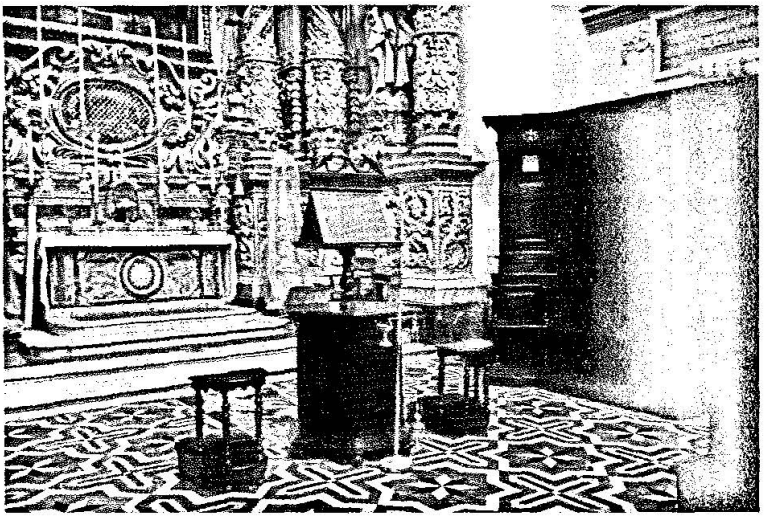

Figure 2. Siġġiewi Parish Church, Choir.

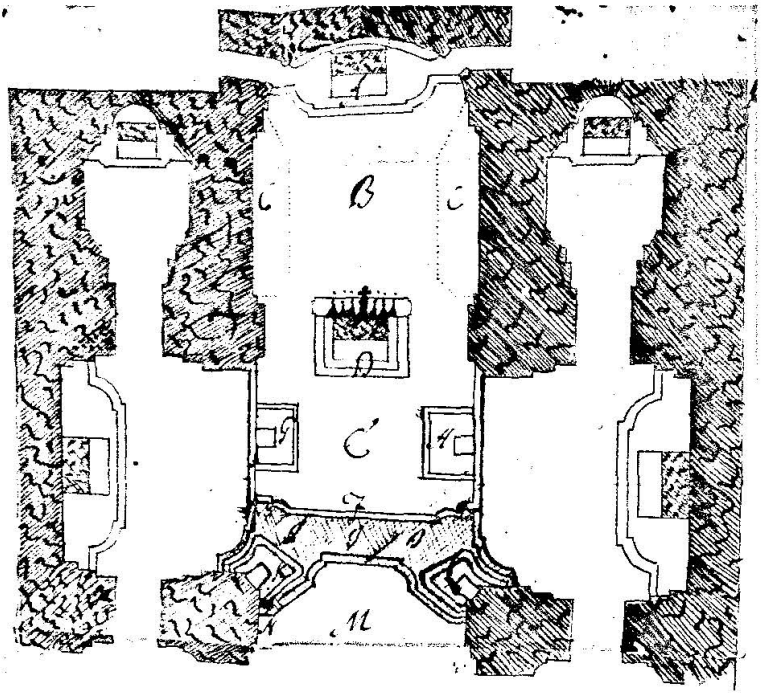

Figure 3. Cathedral Choir, ground plan.

the parish churches of Żebbuġ and Żejtun, and the neo-Gothic churches of the Carmelites at Balluta and Għajnsielem, Gozo. Figure 3 shows a ground plan of the newly created Choir (*B*) and Choir stalls (*C*) at the Cathedral (1702).[16] Also shown are two different locations each for the throne (*trono*) of the Grand Master and that of the Archbishop of Malta (*G-K* and *H-L*, respectively), and the newly constructed presbytery (*J*).

B - the two upper-level singing/organ galleries, recessed or projecting, located on the north and south sides of the church in the Choir itself, facing each other (north/south) (Fig. 4). Originating in the sixteenth century in Venice, the *pergolo* (pl., *pergoli*) was a balcony projecting from a wall (or pier), serving as a *cantoria* or singing gallery.[17] This system of two facing galleries encouraged antiphony, responsorial singing and performances involving two *cori* of instruments and singers.[18] This explains why a number of churches have two performance spaces facing each other (or adjacent to each other, see below).[19] These galleries are usually adorned with a pipe organ in, at least, one of the galleries. Further, the two multi-level spaces in the Choir (A and B in the locations list, above) gave rise to music that could alternate, in responsorial fashion, between a *coro* (or *cori*) placed high in the singing gallery, and clergy below, that is, from ground to gallery.[20] Examples of such performance spaces in Malta[21] are found in

16 ACM, *Miscellanea* 79, ff. 64-65. (See note 38).

17 Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound Space in Renaissance Venice* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 15.

18 Such galleries were used for polyphonic compositions using multiple choirs and instruments.

19 The Church of the Order of St. John at Valletta, with its unique structure not in the traditional cruciform design, has two galleries that now house the island's biggest pipe organ, but which originally were intended for the *Cappella musicale* (musicians and singers), erected high in the Choir on the north and south sides, facing the wide nave without obstruction.

20 Many English cathedrals, including the Anglican one in Valletta, have both north and south Chancel galleries for alternation and responsorial singing between clergy and choir. Occasionally, the Rood Loft (also Rood Screen or Choir/Chancel Screen), which is a separate structure separating the main altar from the Choir, is large enough to support musicians on it and, hence, serves as another performance space. (Matthew Rice, *Rice's Church Primer* (Bloomsbury, London, 2013), 89.)

21 It's interesting to note that Siġġiewi parish church retained its two singing galleries

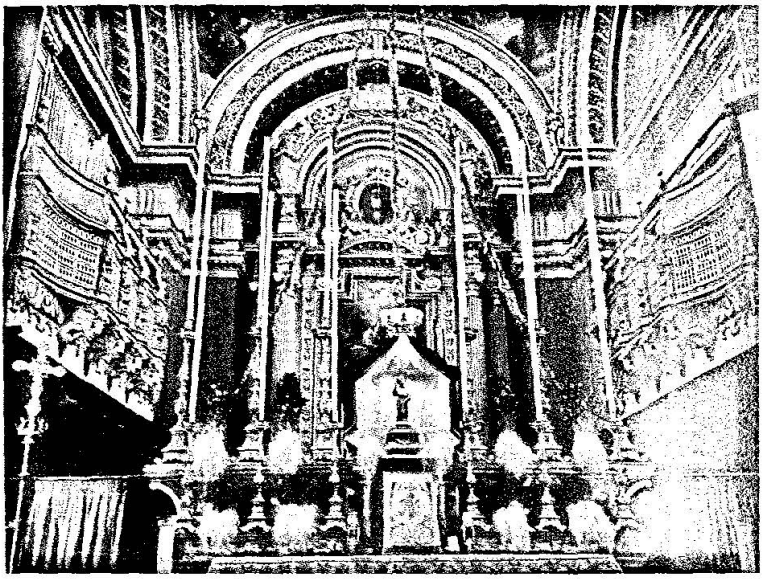

Figure 4. Żurrieq Parish Church, Choir, upper-level galleries.

the Jesuits' church at Valletta, and in Lija and Żurrieq parish churches, among others.[22]

C - the two upper-level singing/organ galleries, recessed or projecting, located in the north and south transepts, on either side of the main altar, facing west.[23] Examples of such spaces, which are rare in Malta, are found at Birkirkara parish church (Fig. 5) and Mdina

until the early decades of the twentieth century, when they were removed (including the organ). The open, semicircular galleries (*lunette*) were suppressed by covering the aperture with two large paintings, which hid them from sight.

22 Benigno Zerafa (1726-1804), *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta during the mid-eighteenth century, was invited to direct the music at Żurrieq during the 1760s.

23 In Venice, the Ducal Church of San Marco had unique music spaces in the form of two raised organ lofts called *palchetti* or *nicchie* (niches) on either side of the iconostasis, facing the nave, which served as music performance spaces to accommodate the choirs, organs and instruments for the music of Gabrieli and others. (Michael Talbot, *Benedetto Vinaccesi: A Musician in Brescia and Venice in the Age of Corelli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 97-98.) Apparently, no information about similar installations in Maltese churches is available, but we do have the raised platforms (*palchi*) resting on the ground in the transepts or under the nave arches at the Cathedral.

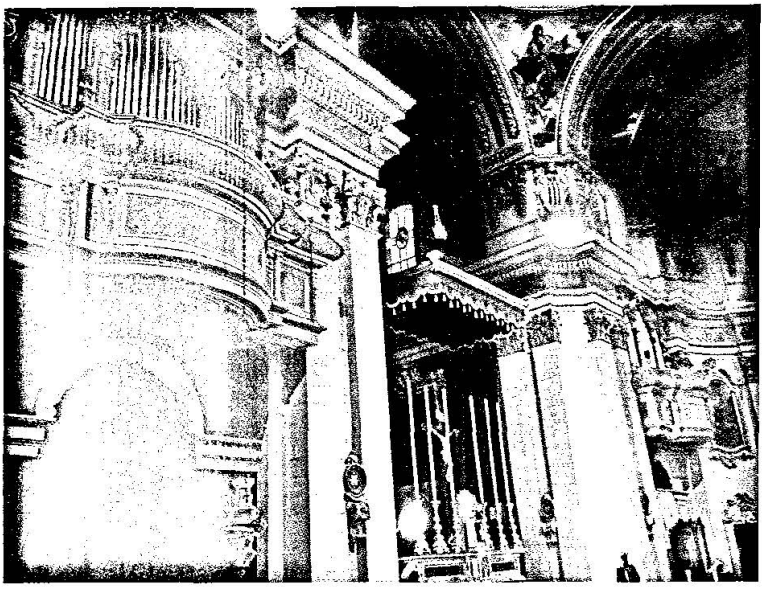

Figure 5. Birkirkara Parish Church, north and south transept galleries.

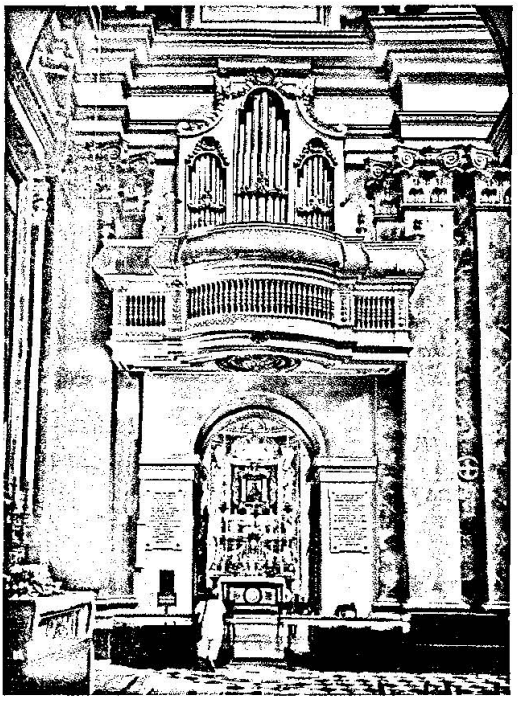

Figure 6. Cathedral, north transept, organ gallery.

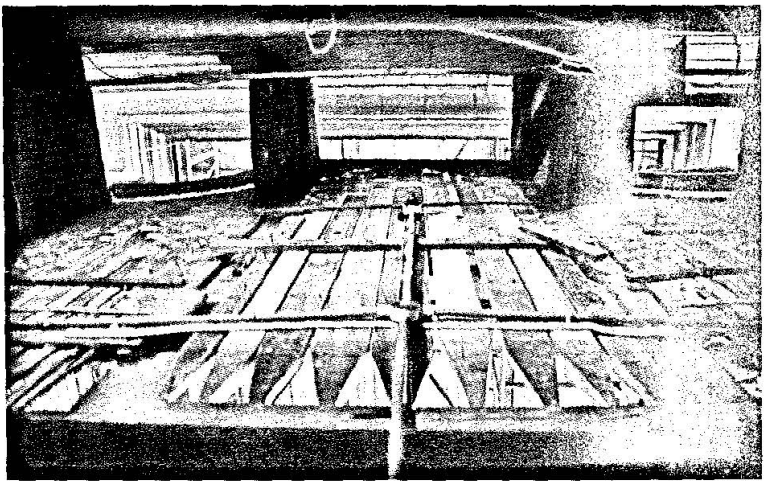

Figure 7. Cathedral, south transept, organ *finta* (seen from behind, projecting outwards).

Cathedral (Fig. 6) and, to a certain extent, at St. John's co-Cathedral, Valletta (see note 19). Like B (above), the transept galleries are equipped with a pipe organ, and have wooden or wrought-iron lattice screens (or grilles) to hide the musicians from view. A false row of wooden pipes (known as the *finta*) was usually installed on the other gallery to balance the aesthetic (Fig. 7).

At the Cathedral it was probably not possible to perform works *a due cori* in the north and south transept galleries, as the distance was far too big for co-ordination and synchronisation between the two choirs (Figs. 8 and 9; see also Fig. 5). However, responsorial exchanges between the *Cappella musicale* in the south transept *finta* gallery and the organist in the Organ gallery were quite normal.

D - the ground level spaces in the north and south transepts, especially the spaces surrounding the presbytery (*presbiterio*) which circumvents the main altar (Fig. 10). Here, works *in due cori* were performed, and it was possible to house the two choirs and ensembles in a single transept space, too. The precise measurements of raised platforms (*palchi*) are found in various documents from the Cathedral Archives of Mdina – platforms that were intended to accommodate

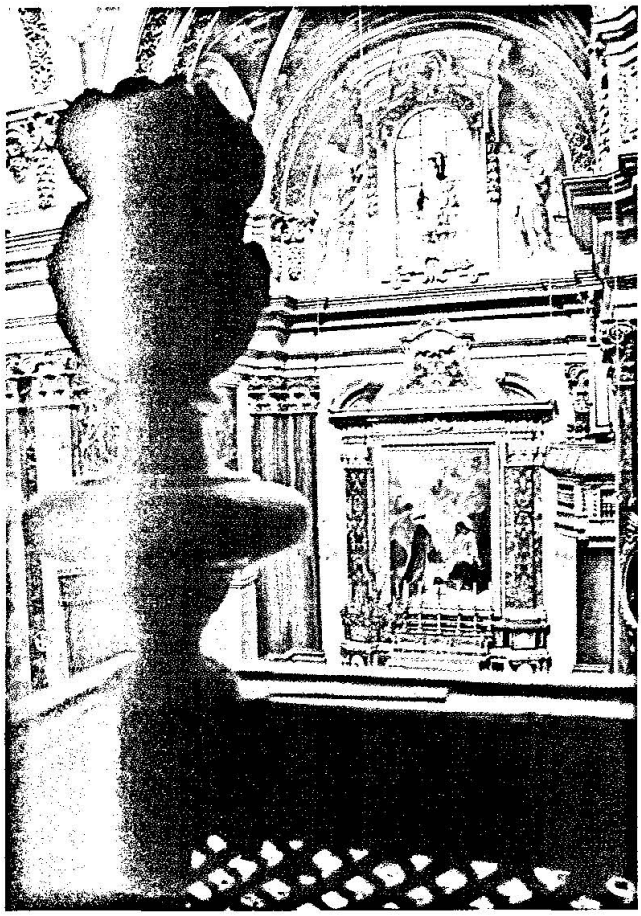

Figure 8. Cathedral, view from the *finta* gallery (south transept), northwards towards the organ gallery (north transept).

instrumentalists, choirs and soloists at a raised level (see note 30). The two Cathedrals of Malta and Gozo serve as examples of such activity. However, the transepts were not only reserved for the *due cori* medium: they also served for countless performances involving a single choir and orchestra.

E - the three archway spaces leading from the central nave to the north and south aisles, on either side of the church (see Fig. 15).[24]

24 Churches having more than the standard three archways include those of St. George at Qormi and Żebbuġ parish.

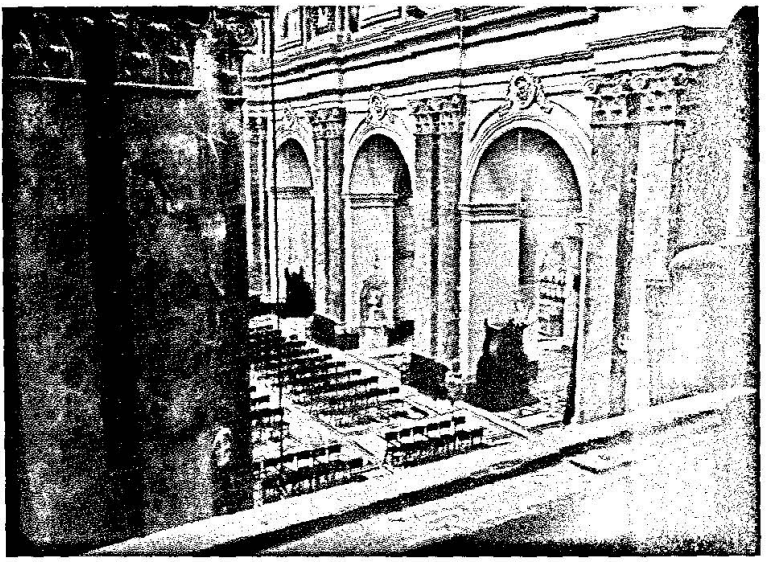

Figure 9. Cathedral, view from the *finta* gallery (south transept), westwards towards the central nave.

Figure 10. Cathedral, north transept.

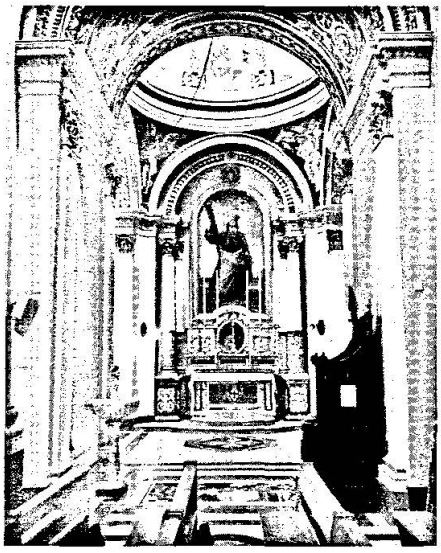

Figure 11. Siġġiewi Parish Church, central nave archway leading to south aisle.

Numerous examples can be given, among them Mdina Cathedral (St. Cajetan chapel and sacristy archways), St. Paul Shipwreck, Valletta, Our Lady of Jesus (*ta' Ġieżu*) at Rabat, and Siġġiewi parish church (Fig. 11).[25] Further, this space could be extended to cover the west end of the church, just before the piers supporting the arcade start, on both sides of the main door.[26] As in the transept ground spaces, works *a due cori* were performed here, since the spatial distance separating the two bodies was ideal.[27]

The earliest documentation reveals that this space was already a favourite for works composed for divided choirs; one such document

25 Not all Romanesque churches in Malta could offer the archway facility, as numerous churches were built, for various reasons, with only a central nave (like, for instance, the church of St. Paul at Rabat, and the Attard and Balzan parish churches).

26 Franco Bruni, *Musica e Musicisti alla Cattedrale di Malta nei Secoli XVI-XVIII* (Malta: 2001), 198.

27 ACM, *Registrum Deliberationum Capitularium* 10, f. 49v. At the Cathedral, works for double choir that may have been performed here include Benigno Zerafa's Z95 and Z96 (*Dixit* and *Messa*, respectively), and Francesco Azopardi's (1748-1809) Mus. Mss. 341 and 342 (Masses), among others.

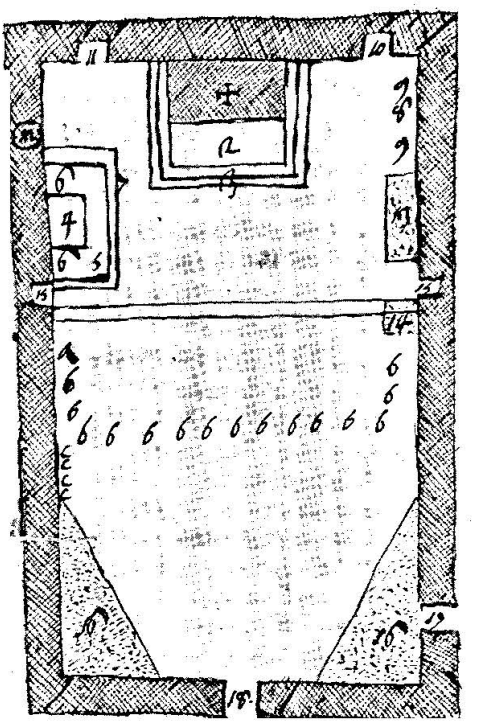

Figure 12. Mdina, St. Peter's nuns' monastery, church ground plan.

places the choir 'formed by the position of the benches' (*coro formato con banchi*), under the first archway (reading westwards from the presbytery) of the central nave of the old Cathedral at Mdina,[28] on both sides of the church.[29]

The use of raised platforms and their dimensions can be examined in a detailed note found in Z22 (1752), a *Messa a due cori* by Zerafa, in which the composer gives the exact measurements in hands (*palmi*) and rods (*canne*)[30] for the size and location of a platform to accommodate the *Cappella musicale*. On a similar yet smaller scale are the platforms used for a feast celebrated in the church at St. Peter's nuns' monastery,

28 The old Cathedral at Mdina was demolished after the earthquake of 1693. The new (present) Cathedral was completed in the Romanesque style in 1702.

29 ACM, *Miscellanea* 62, ff. 32-33.

30 ACM, Mus. 251, f. 82r.

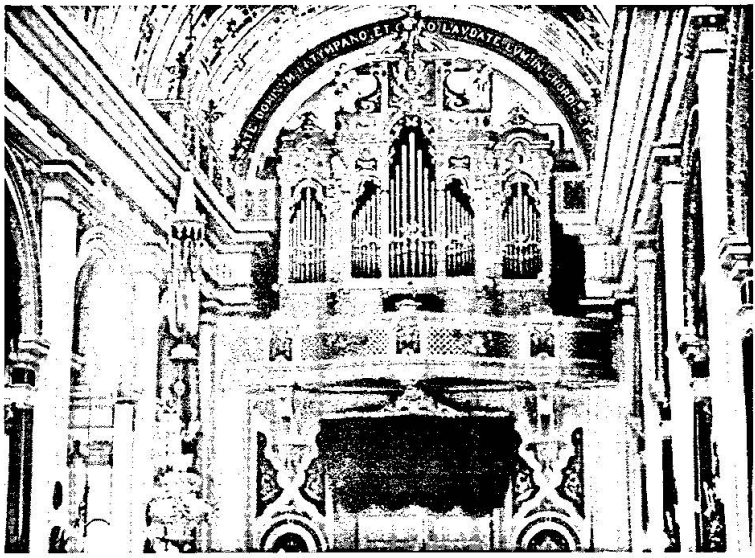

Figure 13. Żebbuġ Parish Church, west organ gallery.

Mdina, in 1744; the document, outlining all the details, places the two platforms on the west side of the small, rectangular church, on either side of the main door (Fig. 12, number *16* on plan).[31]

F - the organ gallery (*galleria*, or loft) on the west side overlooking the main door of the church, with or without the two auxiliary galleries facing each other on the north and south walls, normally reserved for instrumentalists (about which shortly) (Fig. 13). From the seventeenth century onwards church services were performed from such galleries (see note 14), which are very common in Maltese churches, such as at Żebbuġ, Siġġiewi, the Carmelite at Mdina, and Attard, although not exclusive to all churches: a case in point is the Cathedral at Mdina, where there is no west gallery (see Fig. 15).[32] Benigno Zerafa gave his advice on the location of a new organ gallery to be constructed at Naxxar parish church. His report concludes that the best place for the organ gallery was on the west side of the church, above the main door, and not in the Choir, justifying his reasoning by referring to the

31 ACM, *Miscellanea* 63, ff. 181r-182r.

32 Naxxar parish had a new gallery erected and a new organ installed in 1772.

acoustics of the building, which would be perfect for the performance of church music.[33]

Extra wooden 'side' balconies started to be added on the north and south walls of churches, too, to accommodate more musicians (see Fig. 13). Generally, such additional structures rested on the entablature (*cinta*), on either side of the central, west-end organ balcony. Good examples of such balconies can be appreciated in the parish church of Siġġiewi, which has two of the longest furthest-extending structures on the island.

(G) - during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more 'modernistic' concepts were introduced into church buildings: some churches have a surrounding gallery at a higher level or tier (similar to an upper floor in domestic buildings) which may serve a dual purpose: (i) for musicians (singers and instrumentalists); or (ii) as an additional space for the congregation, clergy, etc.[34] Examples of this layout can be found in such churches as St. Theresa at Birkirkara and St. Julian's (auditorium circular plan), St. Patrick's church at Sliema (hall plan), and the Seminary chapel at *tal-Virtù*, Rabat (rectangular hall plan). The chapel of the Good Shepherd at Balzan (Bon Pastur, cruciform, Fig. 14), built in the mid-nineteenth century, serves as a brilliant example of a church endowed with a surrounding gallery that could serve as a performance space for multiple choirs performing at multiple levels (see note 34) – indeed a unique architectural plan for Malta.

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33 Archiepiscopal Archives of Malta (AAM), *Visitationes Pastorales Fra. Joannes Pellerano 1771-1774*, Vol. XXVIII, ff. 104v-106r.

34 Numerous Lutheran churches from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were built with multi-level surround galleries. One such example of a building with three galleries resembling 'tiers and boxes', is the church St. George at Eisenach, Germany – the same church in which J. S. Bach (1685-1750) was baptised. Many Lutheran churches are built in the same style, such as the Castle Chapel at Torgau, which is one of the earliest Lutheran buildings of the mid-sixteenth century with a surrounding gallery.

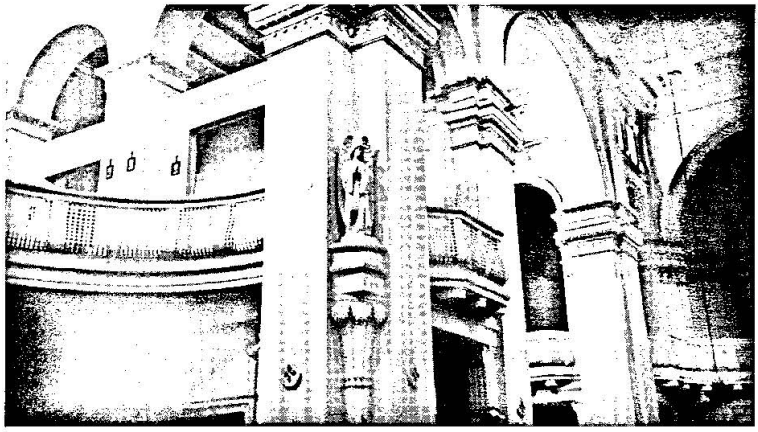

Figure 14. Balzan, chapel of the Good Shepherd (Bon Pastur), surrounding gallery.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a golden age in church music

Works composed for double choir and double orchestra produce unique dynamics that reverberate in the adjacent space between the two *cori* – such dynamics are the result of experimentation which evolved during the late Renaissance with the specific use of the polychoral medium.[35] Antiphony – a term borrowed from the physical layout of medieval Choir stalls (mentioned above) – embraces the compositional technique of how to alternate, make echo and unify two (or more) choirs.[36] Antiphonal singing required two choirs facing, or adjacent to each other, normally located on either side of the Choir, transepts or nave.[37] This kind of sound projection reaching the congregation

35 The polychoral medium originated in Italy in the early sixteenth century in towns such as Padua, Bergamo and Treviso. (Howard and Moretti, *Sound Space in Renaissance Venice*, 28.)

36 Alessandro Striggio's (1536/37-92) Mass in forty parts (1565), for five choirs and instrumental ensembles, was performed in Florence for the wedding of the Medici Prince Francesco and Arch Duchess Joanna of Austria.

37 Gioseffo Zarlino (1517-90), in his treatise on counterpoint, *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (The Harmonic Foundations) of 1558, recommended this type of composition for major feasts (*feste solenni*): 'they are arranged and divided into two choirs, or even three, each in four parts; the choirs sing one after another, in turn, and sometimes

from two adjacent or lateral sound sources became a subject of great interest for musicologists and composers – sound projections in both the horizontal (E-W, N-S) and vertical directions. Works by Benigno Zerafa and Francesco Azopardi (see note 27), written in the Neapolitan style, were conceived for major feasts of the Cathedral of Malta, such as the titular feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (28-29 June),[38] and were created with such performance spaces in mind.

Antiphonal singing (and playing) has provided the composer with unique experimentation of sound coming from these performance locations; such distinctive compositional techniques to experiment with included balance in volume of sound (loudness, dynamics, nuances), clarity in execution of phrases (articulation), the precise rate of overlapping between the *cori*, and the overall sense of immersion in sound (*tutti*), reaching the congregation anywhere in the church. Undoubtedly, the finest result overall will be determined and attained by the architectural style and the proportions of the building. Hence, the prime performance locations identified within such buildings will potentially reward the listener with a superb performance. The intimacy and warmth achieved during a performance by professional musicians will be largely determined by the perception of the spatial dimensions of a church, and the brilliance of sound reflections perceived by the congregation and the clergy can determine the success of the ceremonial festivity of the day.

Generally, performances involving double choir (for instance, at the Cathedral of Mdina) were limited to only a few throughout the liturgical year; the standard works were conceived for SATB choir and

(depending on the purpose) all together, especially at the end, which works very well. And [...] such choirs are placed rather far apart.' (Howard and Moretti, *Sound Space in Renaissance Venice*, 28.)

38 Major church services at Mdina frequently required the attendance of the Bishop of Malta and, on certain occasions, the Grand Master and Council members would also attend (see 'A', Fig. 3 and note 16, above). They would normally be seated on, or around, the presbytery, and it was only sensible for the *Cappella musicale* to be located next to them for their full satisfaction and appreciation. Such compositions purposely build to massive, sonorous climaxes, that only the church's architecture can so effectively resonate around.

orchestra, for which arrangement composers supplied innumerable works. Performances (for single or double choir) taking place in the Choir (at ground level) or in the galleries may have been of better quality then those, say in the transepts: sound waves rise to be deflected by the parabolic apse (*abside*), which is then projected down the central nave with more clarity. Further, performing in the two upper galleries may have created a less reverberant sound, offering a more immediate and clear response in the rather delicate execution of antiphony sections in works *a due cori*.[39]

On the other hand, while music performed in the transepts may have lacked the remarkable definition achieved in the Choir galleries, overall, the result may have been a fuller and more blended sound. The typical Maltese church (like the Jesuits' church in Valletta), with a high and wide dome, produces a high level of reverberation creating additional acoustical problems. This may have been one of the reasons why works for single or double choir were subsequently moved into the nave archways (see 'E', above).

In contrast to grand music was the small sacred concerto or motet, which only required a solo singer(s) accompanied by organ, with or without violins. Examples of such works exist by Giuseppe (1616-1700) and Domenico (1632-1707) Balzano, Malta's earliest known composers, and their successors, who included Pietro Gristi (1696-1738) and Zerafa. The *sonata da chiesa* (*trio sonata*) was established in the early seventeenth century; conceived as a piece for instruments, this kind of sonata was usually scored for two melody instruments, normally violins, with Basso Continuo. This genre is largely missing from the Maltese archives, but a few instrumental works, such as the six sonatas for three violins and Basso Continuo by Michelangelo Vella (1710-92), and various *sinfonie* by Francesco Azopardi, dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, survive.

39 Howard and Moretti, *Sound Space in Renaissance Venice*, 39.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The nineteenth century saw the expansion of the Romantic symphony orchestra in both complement and number. Coupled with the operatic influences of the time, the big sound changed the approach to composing and singing in churches, gradually pushing the music of the earlier periods aside. The music of the Nani and Bugeja families, to mention the most influential composers of the time, contributed to this change, imposing the very 'heavy' Italianate operatic style on the Maltese liturgy - a move that, it seems, was inevitable.[40]

With the advent of the nineteenth century, the fascination for performances *in due cori* waned, and attention was now directed towards the west gallery overlooking the main door; here, the direct performance of psalms and the Mass took place. For churches that lacked a west gallery (see Fig. 15), only one of the Choir or transept galleries was used, or alternatively one of the nave archways. From the late nineteenth century well into the twentieth, the south transept gallery of the Mdina Cathedral, to take one example, was used for church services requiring one orchestra and voices. Recent investigation has shown that alternation between the combined choir and orchestra located in the south transept gallery and the organist located in the north transept gallery, did indeed take place.[41]

In 1903 the Vatican issued a *Motu Proprio*[42] entitled *Tra le sollecitudini* (Among the Concerns) which gave strict guidelines on the performance of sacred music in Roman Catholic churches.[43]

40 For example Anton Nani's *Laudate pueri* (1882) and Requiem Mass (1879) are conceived in a similar style to, and on the same scale as, the sacred works of Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901).

41 Among the *maestri di cappella* serving the Maltese churches during this time (including the Cathedral and co-Cathedral) were Pietro Paolo Bugeja (1772-1828), Vincenzo Bugeja (1805-60), Giuseppe Vella (1827-1912), Paolino Vassallo (1856-1923), Dr. Paolo Nani (1814-1904), Anton Nani (1842-1929), Paul Nani (1906-86), Carlo Diacono (1876-1942) and Rev. Alberto Borg (1919-2012).

42 Document issued on the initiative of Pope Pius X and signed by him.

43 During the late nineteenth century church music became more operatic, with the regular participation of such instruments as the timpani, full brass and harps. The enlargement of the symphony orchestra, operatic influences and massive choruses, have all contributed to the establishment of large-scale performances in churches

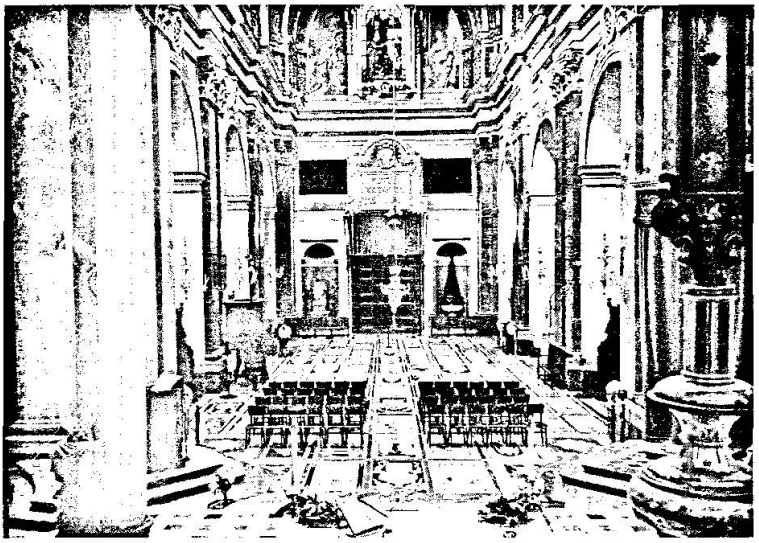

Figure 15. Cathedral, central nave with no west gallery. Note the three archways on either side of the central nave (see 'E' and Fig. 11, above).

The operatic style that had dominated the late nineteenth century was brought under control.[44] Church music went through a period of transition once again in the aftermath of the Vatican Council II (1962-65) – among the factors contributing to this change was the idea that the congregation should be involved as participants and not simply as spectators. From an architect's point of view the main concern was to create a space within the new church buildings that brought the clergy and congregation into closer contact with each other.[45] The new churches of the late twentieth century reflect this attitude, with music performance spaces now being more at the centre of the rite, a few examples being the Manikata church, Paċeville Millennium Chapel and St. Sebastian church at Qormi, which has a whole north transept reserved for a large choir and electronic organ, with congregational

involving one large orchestra and choir located in a single place.

44 Composers who wrote works reflecting the new guidelines included Paolino Vassallo, Giuseppe Caruana (1880-1931) and Carlo Diacono.

45 Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 278.

seating beside them. St. Julian's parish church has the choir and organ pipework just behind the main altar table in an elevated, open space.

The village *festa* was (and still is) one of the very few still commemorated with maximum orchestral and choral music.[46] Composers such as Carlo Diacono, Paul Nani and Censinu Bugeja (1910-67), to mention but three, created works for such occasions. The *Cappella musicale* migrated into the Choir, or kept its position in the west organ gallery or transept gallery; the transept ground spaces were used only occasionally. A few of the remaining spaces, such as the nave archways, were abandoned. Music in the churches during the liturgical year went through a decline, especially since the majority of services started to be executed by the local choir with organ accompaniment, often resulting in services of low quality, the meagre choirs made up of amateur singers who were very frequently untrained in vocal technique and had limited music-reading skills.

Music performance spaces and their relevance today: reawakening the concertato style

Sacred music has always been highly regarded by ecclesiastical authorities – this may be the sole reason why the Church had, throughout the ages, regularly employed or hired the best composers to compose the wealth of indeed impressive music that now survives in the Roman Catholic churches and archives worldwide. The Church does not simply engage artists, but artists who are likewise theologians of music, liturgists, not just talented composers. Composers of sacred music can masterfully combine sacred composition with theology and liturgy, to be performed in specially designed spaces within the architecture. This is the whole essence of the Roman Catholic concept of sacred music since the earliest times: music used for worship that, as an integral part of the Liturgy, serves to increase the *decor et splendor* of the ecclesiastical ceremonies. Evidently, this is how the history of sacred music developed throughout the millennia.

46 The works performed up to this day date mainly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

If we consider bringing back a musical tradition that has been in decline, we need to reoccupy some of the lost spaces once again; almost all of them are still accessible today. In the late Nineteen-Seventies new electric organs started to be placed at ground level in the Choir or in any part of the two transepts, or in the galleries. The Nineties saw new digital organs that reproduce the real sound of pipe organs, being installed into our churches. Galleries now accommodate the speakers for such instruments – one such place is the Jesuits' church in Valletta which, only recently, was furnished with a new, three-manual organ with speakers positioned on both sides of the Choir. The acoustics are very good, and the fine combination of organ, choir and orchestra has been praised. Another example is Mdina Cathedral; many other churches followed.[47] However, the effort made to revive these performance spaces for musical purposes has only been partially rewarded.

Still, we need to go a step further and consider what relevance these performance spaces have, and how to reinvent their purpose for a modern society.[48] By recreating music of the past centuries in our churches we will be safeguarding this heritage in a more systematic manner. The well-organised administrative records of the Maltese Church show that, throughout the years the ecclesiastical authorities have been ardent patrons and custodians of music: many archives survive all around Malta and Gozo that are full of works waiting to be rediscovered. Musicologist-performers must be encouraged to dig into these archives and revive these works that can, in turn, fill these empty performance spaces. Malta's relatively large churches, found at the centre of every town and village, were, from a religious point of view, built to serve the local population in a way very similar to that of the

47 In my view, the wrong decision was taken, back in the early Nineties, to erect a sounding chamber made of brick right in the middle of the south transept (*finta*) gallery, hidden behind the wooden façade pipes, to house the large speakers for the new digital organ. In the past the *maestro di cappella* with his orchestra and singers performed regularly from this location.

48 Lately, there have been numerous efforts by local and foreign sponsors, music directors, choirs and orchestras to successfully organise public concerts of sacred music. Such efforts are to be acknowledged and encouraged.

performance halls, with the capability of reaching out to everyone. Local vocal and instrumental ensembles should be given the opportunity to tour the islands and perform such works. They could easily have them performed in churches outside the liturgy, but they could equally be allowed to perform them during a morning Mass or an afternoon Vesper service in a feast – a brilliant opportunity to reintroduce the concertato style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the congregation during the liturgy.

The twenty-first century is now provoking new thoughts about the revival of sacred music. One of the latest concerns on this issue was voiced by Geoffrey Burgess, who came up with the following thought: 'Perhaps it is time to take early music out of the concert hall and back into the spaces for which it was conceived.' Burgess argues that 'research on the social and cultural context of past music production and consumption can provide resources for developing new audiences, performances contexts and [...] relevance for early music.'[49]

This is undoubtedly an encouraging line of argument that needs to be acknowledged, especially if the long 'lost' works of art are to find their place back on the Church's liturgical agenda. 'Finding new performance homes for this music would [...] reflect its original patronage structure and develop strategies to engage listeners in a meaningful dialogue with performers [...].' Burgess concludes on a strong, yet positive note: 'The end of early music is under constant renegotiation. As long as [...] scholars and performers continue to explore new ways to make the music of the past relevant, there should be little cause for disenchantments in the state of early music.'[50]

If sacred music is to regain its place in modern liturgy, performances must be restored back to where they belong: the performance spaces. We must constantly remind ourselves that these performance spaces were created specifically in the best locations by the best people, to serve both the *Cappella musicale* and the congregation,

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49 Geoffrey Burgess, 'Editorial', in *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 12/2 (Cambridge University Press, September, 2015), 151-155, at 153.

50 Ibid., 155.

to the true glory of God. In a treatise entitled *Scola di canto fermo* (Naples, 1715) Fabio Sebastiano Santoro wrote: in worship, music has been introduced for the total glory of God, and to arouse devotion in the souls of the listeners.[51]

Since 2013 the Valletta International Baroque Festival has established itself as a major vehicle to promote works by Maltese composers – overall it has been a success, and a boost. The festival has captured the attention of international and local performers and brought crowds back into the churches. The shared desire of modern audiences to bring the concertato style back has been strongly felt, and the future looks encouraging. People went to church because Monteverdi's (1567-1643) *Vespers* of 1610 were being performed; or Bach's *Magnificat* (1733) and the *Mass in B minor* (1747-49); or Vivaldi's (1678-1741) *Gloria* (c. 1715). The same audiences may be given the opportunity to attend church because a motet by Giuseppe or Domenico Balzano is being performed; or a Mass by Pietro Gristi, a Canticle by Girolamo Abos (1715-60),[52] a *Messa a due cori* by Benigno Zerafa or a church *sinfonia* by Francesco Azopardi. We have the churches and the performance spaces, the composers and the music, the musicologists and the performers; we have the good will. Let's work to save our church music heritage by establishing a regular programme for our churches that will link us to our past in a new and modern way.

51 Quoted in Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, 56: '*Nel culto, la musica è stata introdotta per maggior gloria di Dio, e per eccitare alla divozione gl'animi degli Uditori.*'

52 An audio CD of three sacred works by Girolamo Abos – the *Magnificat* for four voices, *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel* for five voices, and the *Messa a due cori* (SSATBx2) – edited by the present author and premiered during the 2015 VIBF by the *Kölner Akademie*, directed by Michael Alexander Willens, has been issued under the title *A Maltese Christmas* (Classic Produktion Osnabrück, 2015).

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51 Quoted in [illegible]: '[illegible] è stata introdotta per [illegible] gloria di Dio, e per eccitare [illegible] degli Uditori.'

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Between Augustine and Pelagius: Leonard Lessius in the Leuven controversies, from 1587 to the 20th century

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In the second half of the 1580s, Leuven – a stronghold of Catholicism in the Spanish Netherlands during the wars of religion[1] – was the scene of a thorny dispute over Grace, free will, predestination and Holy Writ, which was part of the series of theological controversies which developed in the 16th and 17th centuries.[2] The Leuven controversies

1 Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635.* (Oxford: OUP, 2011); Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt.* (London: Allen Lane, 1977)

2 The documentation on Leuven controversies is available in several copies, in the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (ACDF), Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Vatican Library (BAV), Historical Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University (APUG). The correspondence between Lessius and Bellarmine on the controversies was published by Xavier-Marie Le Bachelet, *Bellarmin avant son Cardinalat. 1542-1598. Correspondance et documents.* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1911). The main documents of the dispute were published by Gerard Schneemann, *Controversiarum de divinae gratiae liberique arbitrii concordia. Initia et progressus.* (Fribourg: Sumptibus Herder, 1881); some of them were also printed, with other important documents on the matter *de auxiliis* in Jaques H. Serry, *Historiae congregationum de auxiliis divinae gratiae sub summis pontificibus Clemente VIII. Et Paulo V.* (Anvers: Sumptibus Societati, 1709); De Meyer L., *Historiae controversiarum de divinae gratiae auxiliis sub summis pontificibus Sixto V. Clemente VIII. Paulo V. Ab objectionibus R.P. Hyacinthi Serry Vindicatae.* (Bruxelles: Antonii Claudinot, 1715). *Annales de la Sociétè des soi-disans Jésuites; ou recueil historique-cronologique,* I, (Paris: 1764). At first, Hamelius, professor of the Jesuit College, was censored together with Lessius by the University. However, he did not respond to the censorship.

represent the essential connection between Michael Bay and Cornelius Jansen's theologies and the necessary background to understand the later *controversia de auxiliis*.

On 9 September 1587, the professors of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Leuven censored thirty-one assertions gathered from the theology classes taught by the Jesuit theologian Leonard Lessius,[3] characterising his doctrine as '[...] *peregrina, offensiva, & periculosa*'.[4] Basically, Lessius' theology of Grace was charged with Semi-Pelagianism. At the time, Lessius was Professor of Theology at the Jesuit College in Leuven (1585–1600).[5] Quoted widely by historians, especially for his treatise *De iustitia et iure,* and for his theory on lending at interest, Lessius contributed to many other fields: he composed theological, ascetic, and religious-political works, which were often censured, even within the Society of Jesus. The strong probabilism which he endorsed, clearly shown in his treatises, was opposed by many theologians in the Early Modern Age.

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3 *Lessius, Leys, Léonard.* In Augustin and Aloys De Becker, Carlos Sommervogel, *'Bibliotèque de la Compagnie de Jésus'*. (Leuven, Editions de la Bibliothèque S.J, 1960), IV, 1726-1751; S. De Smet, *Lessius (Leys), Leonardus (Lenaert).* In Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín M. Domìnguez, *'Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús biográfico-temático'*. (Madrid: Ortega Edicciones Graficas, 2001), III, 2336-2337. Leonard Schoofs, *De vita et moribus R.P. Leonardi Lessii e Societate Iesu theologi liber. Una cum divinarum perfectionum opuscula.* (Paris: Henault, 1644); Charles Van Sull, *Leonard Lessius de la Compagnie de Jésu.* (Leuven: Museum Lessianum, 1930); on Lessius' moral theology, Toon Van Houdt, *Tradition and Renewal in Late Scholastic Economic Thought. The case of Leonardus Lessius (1554-1623).* In *'Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies'* 28, no. 1 (1998), 51-73; Schneemann, *Controversiarum,* 359-362.

4 The censorship was delivered to the Jesuits on 12 September 1587. *Censura Facultatis Theologiae Lovaniensis in assertiones quasdam Rev Patrum Societatis Jesu, exhibita ipsi Societati die XII Septembris 1587 per Bedellum eiusdem Facultatis* in ACDF, St.St. E 7-c, *Controversia inter doctores Lovanienses et Patres Societatis Jesu tempore Xyxti V*, ff. 15r-29v. Lessius answered with his *Responsio ad censuram*: ACDF, *Controversia,* ff. 38r-52v. See also Eduard Eijl, *La controverse louvaniste autour de la grâce et du libre arbitre à la fin du XVI^e siècle.* In Mathijs Lamberigts, eds., *L'augustinisme à l'ancienne Faculté de Théologie de Louvain*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 111 (Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 207–282.

5 Born Lenaert Leys in Brecht, 1554; died in Leuven, 1623.

Lessius' humanistic open-mindedness towards man's ability, even in the soteriological field, made him one of the most significant Jesuits of the Old Society; the originality of his contribution to moral theology and theology of Grace is remarkable, and needs to be considered in the precise context of early modern Flanders, in the years affected by the religious wars. The threat of Protestantism marked Lessius' theology; similarly, his proximity to Antwerp, a European economic and financial capital, deeply influenced his theory on lending at interest.[6] The Society of Jesus played an important role in the Counter-Reformation and Catholic revival in the Netherlands. The increasing power of the Reformation alerted Lessius to its possible influence on Catholic doctrines. After being appointed to the Chair of Theology at the Jesuit College, Lessius engaged in an internal Counter-Reformation against the Catholicism represented by the professors of the University of Leuven, whose theology Lessius considered to be very close to Calvinism.[7] The subsequent censorship of Lessius represented the Faculty's first counter-attack.

The dispute was the expression of two different Catholic positions. On one side, the academics[8] defended their doctrine of Grace as the authentic teaching of Saint Augustine, considered the *primus* among the Fathers of the Church. These theologians supported an extreme Augustinism based on a literal interpretation of Augustine's writings on Grace, in particular the anti-Pelagian works, and promulgated a partial vision of Augustine's doctrine, as the Jansenists did later.[9] The Leuven theologians did not consider the 'other' Augustine, author of the *Confessiones,* who accepted mankind's ability to answer God's call positively through free will. The academics

6 Leonard Lessius, *De iustitia et iure caeterisque virtutibus cardinalibus libri IV.* (Leuven: ex officina Ioannis Masii, 1605).

7 Bellarmine stated that Protestants were glad that Lessius' doctrine was censored. *Quid a Sancta Sede Apostolica desideretur.* In '*ARSI*', Fl. Belg. 72, I, ff. 120r–122v.

8 Hereafter, 'the academics' refers to the group of theologians of Leuven University who opposed Lessius in the controversies.

9 On Augustine's doctrine on Grace see Gaetano Lettieri, *L'altro Agostino. Ermeneutica e retorica della grazia dalla crisi alla metamorfosi del De doctrina christiana.* (Brescia: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2001).

rejected entirely the contribution of human freedom to the process of salvation and relied completely on God's predestination and Grace. Furthermore, they suspected theologians who ascribed importance to freedom — combined with Christ's redemption — of Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism.

On the other side, during the 16th century an optimistic Thomistic theology was being propagated in Europe. It was strictly linked to Christian Humanism: the religious, anthropological and philosophical trend that elevated mankind from its irremediably 'corrupted-by-sin' condition to a positive state, in which every man could potentially be a good Christian. Francis of Sales, who fully expressed these values in his *Filotea,* supported Lessius' views and defended his controversial work *De gratia efficaci,* published after many polemics and severe criticism in 1610.[10] This theological tendency was associated with the probabilistic moral orientation, of which Lessius was an eminent representative, and was often depicted as coinciding with the doctrine of the entire Society of Jesus, as the eighteenth-century Dominican Daniele Concina, among others, claimed.[11] A general inclination towards that orientation is undeniable; however, this phenomenon never involved all Jesuits. For instance, Tirso Gonzàles (1624–1705) strove to instil the probabilioristic view within the Society, although he did so in a period in which the rigorist tendency was prevalent.[12] While since Ignatius' time the Superiors General had wished for doctrinal unity, a large variety of opinions circulated within the Society,[13] a fact that is proven by the

10 Leonard Lessius, *De gratia efficaci Decretis Divinis libertate Arbitrii et Praescientia conditionata Disputatio Apologetica.* (Anvers: Ioannem Moretum, 1610).

11 Daniele Concina, *Della storia del probabilismo e del rigorismo. Dissertazioni teologiche, morali, e critiche, nelle quali si spiegano, e dalle sottigliezze de' moderni probabilisti si difendono i principj fondamentali della teologia cristiana.* (Lucca: Simone Occhi, 1743). On the Christian rigorism see Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le rigorisme chretien.* (Paris: Les editions du Cerf, 2001).

12 On Gonzales Gay J.-P., *Jesuit Civil Wars. Theology, Politics and Government under Tirso Gonzales (1687–1705).* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012); Colombo E., *Convertire i musulmani. L'esperienza di un gesuita spagnolo nel Seicento.* (Milano: B. Mondadori, 2007).

13 *Monumenta ignatiana ex autographi vel ex antiquioribus exemplis collecta. Serie tertia. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Iesu.* (Rome: Monumenta

abundance of censorships issued by the Jesuit editors.[14] For instance, the Jesuit John Lorinus, who critically analysed Lessius' *De iustitia et iure*, wrote disapprovingly to the General that the author had gained the plaudits of merchants by demonstrating extremely broad-minded ideas about lending at interest. Lorinus suggested that Lessius harmed not only himself, but the entire Society[15] – an accusation that was proposed again with respect to his doctrine of predestination.

Censorship

In the Leuven censorship, Lessius was charged with diverging from Augustine's theology. The academics connected Lessius' theory to Pelagian theology, which took its name from the British monk Pelagius (ca. 354 – ca. 427) who proposed a salvation theology in which good deeds assumed primary importance, to the detriment of Grace.[16] Augustine railed against this doctrine, later condemned as heretic, stating that every good deed is the result of God's will, which held absolute supremacy over human will. Augustine held that Grace is mysteriously granted by God independent of meritorious acts; through Christ's Redemption, God offers his Grace to men destined to be free from sin.

In response, Lessius highlighted the difficulty of understanding Augustine, who often wrote in an obscure way, but argued for the goodness of his own doctrine and its agreement with that of Augustine: *'Et quamvis D. Augustinus interdum aliter loqui videatur, quam in quibusdam ex istis conclusionibus expressum sit, mihi tamen probabile est ipsum in re non dissentire'*.[17]

Historica Soc. Iesu, 1936), II, 356.

14 Ugo Baldini, *Una fonte poco utilizzata per la storia intellettuale: le «censurae librorum» e «opinionum» nell'antica Compagnia di Gesù.* In *'Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento'* XI, (1985), 19-50.

15 ARSI, Censurae 654, III (1603-1631), *I. Lorinus to C. Aquaviva,* 22 December 1603 (uncertain date), ff. 3r-4v.

16 On Pelagianism, for example, Salvatore Pricoco, *Da Costantino a Gregorio Magno.* In Giovanni Filoramo, Daniele Menozzi, eds., *Storia del Cristianesimo. L'antichità* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001), I, 335-343; on Pelagius, Brinley R. Rees, *Pelagius. Life and letters.* (Woodbridge: The Boydell press, 1998).

17 Leonard Lessius, *Conclusiones de praedestinatione et reprobatione* (known as the

The academics accused Lessius of Semi-Pelagianism – a doctrine that spread from monasteries in Provence in the 5th century and which held that, even if man needed God's Grace, he could start the conversion process himself. In the 16th century this doctrine began to be called Semi-Pelagianism. The idea that the theologians subsequently classified as Semi-Pelagians, such as Cassiano and Salviano of Marsiglia, derived their doctrines from Pelagius was completely foreign to their contemporary detractors. On the contrary, Semi-Pelagians harshly condemned Pelagius, but advocated a doctrine about Grace much less radical than that of Augustine.[18]

The accusation of Semi-Pelagianism directed at Lessius rested on the idea that he overturned Augustine's teaching on Grace. Despite Lessius' repeated requests to discuss the issue face to face, the academics never agreed to meet, and always rejected Lessius' proposal of submitting the question to Rome, preferring to rely on the support of local bishops.[19] The academics' refusal is easily explained by the fact that their doctrine was inspired by the previously condemned theories of Michael Bay.[20] From the 1550s, when he became professor of Holy Writ at the Leuven University, Bay laid the foundation of a theological doctrine which was developed and defended by later theologians in the Faculty, despite two Papal condemnations,[21] and became the most valuable precursor of Jansenism.

Ruard Tapper, Chancellor of the University and general inquisitor in Brabant, was greatly affronted by Bay's theology, as

34 Propositions), n. 34 in Le Bachelet, Bellarmin, 153-156.

18 Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency, A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy.* (Macon: Mercer university press, 1998). Jean-Louis Quantin, *Histoire de la grâce. 'Semi–pélagiens' et 'prédestinatiens' dans l'érudition ecclésiastique du XVII^e siècle,* 333. In Thomas Wallnig, Thomas Stockinger, Ines Peper, Patrick Fiska, eds., *Europäische Geschichtskulturen um 1700 zwischen Gelehrsamkeit, Politik und Konfession,* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 327–359.

19 Le Bachelet, *Bellarmin,* 147-148.

20 ACDF, *Controversia,* ff. 687r-733r. On Bay see Xavier-Marie Le Bachelet, *Baius Michel.* In Alfred Vacant and Eugène Mangenot, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique.* (Pargi: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), II, 38-111.

21 Pius V, *Ex omnibus afflictionibus,* 1567; Gregory XIII, *Provisionis nostrae,* 1580. In 1560, Bay had been condemned by the Sorbonne.

was Jean de Lens, to whom the preface of the censorship of Lessius' doctrine, nevertheless, would later be attributed.[22] The resulting internal dispute foreshadowed the controversy with Lessius. Moreover, Tapper's identification of predestination with the prescience of the good use of Grace prefigured Lessius' and Luis de Molina's doctrine,[23] which added the concept of *scientia media*, that is, the prescience with which God foresees men's actions, without depriving them of their freedom.[24]

During the second half of the 20th century, Henri de Lubac stated that Bay had distorted Augustine's theology, and had misunderstood the spirit of his works.[25] On the contrary, Bay had claimed that there were no different interpretations of Augustine's doctrine, representing himself as a truthful exponent of Augustinism, a path that would be followed by his supporters, such as James Janson and James Bay, Michael's nephew, during the dispute with Lessius. After the death of Ruard Tapper, Bay enjoyed the backing of the Faculty.[26] Bay's doctrine, like the theology of Lessius' detractors, proposed a pessimistic anthropologic vision, based on the idea that human nature was irremediably corrupted by original sin. After the Fall man did not have any choice, because freedom would always lead him to evil. According to Bay, only a Pelagian could hold that free will could be used for good. The idea of the necessity of sin after the loss of innocence, together with the importance granted to the faith in the process of justification, seemed to align Bay's doctrine with Lutheranism, although the theologian himself strongly censored Luther's doctrine. Bay shared the radicalised Augustinism embraced by Luther, as well as Calvin, though the three theologians came to different conclusions.

22 Claeys Bouuaert denied Bay's influence on the theology of the Faculty during the controversy also because Lens - supposed author of the preface of the censorship of Lessius - initially opposed Bay. Ferd Claeys Bouuaert, *L'ancienne Université de Louvain. Études et documents,* (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue 1956), 131.

23 Luis de Molina, Jesuit theologian (Cuenca 1536–Madrid in 1600).

24 Jean Orcibal, *Jansénius d'Ypres (1585–1638).* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1989), 26–27.

25 Henri de Lubac, *Augustinisme et theologie moderne.* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

26 Tapper wondered: «*Quel est donc le diable qui a introduit ces sentiments dans notre école?*». Le Bachelet, *Baius,* 39.

In an apologetic letter addressed to Pius V, Bay justified the Leuven theology as a Counter-Reformation instrument.[27] His letter suggests that in the Netherlands, a borderland where Catholics were living in close proximity to Protestants, people were more receptive to the teachings of Holy Writ and the Fathers than those of the Scholastics.[28] Focusing on Augustine, also respected by the Protestants, would be a useful tool for converting heretics and perhaps help to achieve confessional reunification. In this regard, Pierre Chaunu, in a classic article on the history of Jansenism, wrote about the 'Catholicism of the border'.[29]

During the 1950s, Lucien Ceyssens wrote in relation to Jansenism, a theological movement born in the University of Leuven some years after the theological controversies:

> *Je considère le jansénisme comme un mouvement de réforme, théorique et pratique, issu de la Contre-Réforme septentrionale (dont par ailleurs il fait partie), réactionnaire vis-à-vis de l'antijansénisme, lequel m'apparaît comme un mouvement semblable, mais progressif, né plutôt de l'humanisme méridional.*[30]

And:

> *En parlant de Contre-Réforme septentrionale et d'humanisme méridional, je n'entends qu'insinuer l'opposition entre un certain pessimisme augustinien, d'un côté, et l'optimisme né de la renaissance en Italie.*[31]

27 Michael Bay, *Apologia Summo Pontifici Pio V.* In Gabriel Gerberon *Michaelis Baii, celeberrimi in Lovaniensi Academia Theologi Opera [...]*, 'Baiana', II. (Cologne: Sumptibus Balthasaris Ab Egmont & Sociorum, 1696), 79.

28 Jean Orcibal, *De Baius à Jansénius: le «comma pianum»*, 561. In Jean Orcibal, Jacques Le Brun, Jean Lesaulnier, eds., *Études d'histoire et de littérature religieuses. XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1997), 561–583.

29 Pierre Chaunu, *Jansénisme et frontière de catholicité (XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles). À propos du Jansénisme lorrain.* In *'Revue Historique'*, 227, (1962), 115–138. In this paper, the author presents his idea of *'une forme particulièrement pure d'augustinisme que nous appellerons un augustinisme de frontière de Catholicité'*.

30 Lucien Ceyssens, *Le jansénisme. Considérations historiques préliminaires à sa notion.* In *'Analecta Gregoriana'* LXXI (1954), 28.

31 Ceyssens, *Le jansénisme*, 28.

Ceyssens' definition also could be applied, broadly speaking, to the Baianist theology promoted by the University. Ceyssens himself stated that the censorship issued against Lessius was the first manifestation of Jansenism.[32] Archival documentation suggests that the censorship has to be more appropriately considered as a 'missing link' between the original Baianism and the late Jansenist doctrine, that is, as an intermediate passage that would guarantee the continuity of Bay's and Jansen's reflections, in a theological path defined by a stable element: the inability of man to accomplish good by means of free will. The academics had an elitist opinion of Grace, even if they did not openly declare it. They believed, as was later written in the *Augustinus,* that God did not grant Grace to all men. The academics' censorship of Lessius recalled Bay's words in suggesting to the Jesuits that they would have encountered many difficulties in approaching the Protestants without employing Augustine's dogma, and in defending a different and erroneous doctrine of Grace and predestination.[33] It was an accusation of denying the maximum authority in the matter of Grace and of embracing a Semi-Pelagian doctrine.

Although the academics' concern that Lessius' ideas might increase the distance between Catholics and Protestants was probably authentic, it contained the implicit acknowledgment that the Augustinism taught at the University and the theology on which the Protestants shaped their Reformation had common points. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the doctrine of the Faculty amounted to Calvinism, as Lessius claimed. Bay and the theologians of the Faculty struggled against Late Scholasticism, of which Lessius was an eminent representative; in their eyes, it was guilty of corrupting Augustine's doctrine. Although Bay stayed in the background during the Leuven controversies, his influence was clear. Lessius himself, in a letter to the future cardinal Bellarmine,[34] wrote that his doctrine presumably annoyed Bay and

32 Ibid., 19.

33 Stephan Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace. Perspectives in Theological Anthropology.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1993); Bernard Quilliet, *L'acharnement théologique. Histoire de la grâce en Occident. III^e-XXI^e siècle.* (Millau: Fayard, 2007).

34 Franco Motta, *Bellarmino. Una teologia politica della Controriforma,* (Brescia:

Janson. The academics' preoccupation with Lessius grew, as more students undertook Lessius' classes and were exposed to Thomistic theology that diverged substantially from the strict Augustinism taught at the Faculty.[35] Some sources have even asserted that Bay himself collected all thirty-one of Lessius' condemned propositions directly from the students' handbooks.[36] The attack launched against Lessius was very serious. From the academics' point of view, Lessius' doctrine implicitly assumed that Augustine erred in the matter of Grace and free will; consequently, Lessius was implying that the Roman Church was mistaken too, as it had followed Augustine's theology since the first centuries of Christianity.[37] Ultimately, the academics suggested that Lessius implicitly charged Augustine's theology with Lutheranism and Calvinism *ante litteram*.

Following the attack, Lessius composed thirty-four propositions that summarised his doctrine and sent them to Bellarmine, who basically approved his friend's statements. An eminent Jesuit theologian, at the time professor of Controversies at the Roman College, and later a theologian and cardinal within the Curia of Rome, Bellarmine had been Lessius' teacher during his two years of study in Rome; in the first half of the 1570s he was a professor in Leuven, distinguishing himself in preaching against Bay's doctrine. He was a friend and confidant of Lessius, who wrote him the first letter about the Leuven dispute on 29 May 1587. From this date an intense correspondence about the controversy began. The letters show Lessius' certainty that his doctrine laid within the borders of Catholic orthodoxy, and his opinion that the theology of the Faculty did not.

Morcelliana, 2005).

35 In his theology lectures, Lessius used Saint Thomas' *Summa* instead of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

36 Le Bachelet, *Baius*, 147. See *Acta quaedam Baianismum respicientia historice narrata* in Bibliothèque Royale de Bruexelles, Ms 17581, n. 1.

37 Censorship in *Annales de la Société*, 165.

Lessius' doctrine of Grace and predestination

Lessius' doctrine can be divided into a soteriological part, pertinent to the relationship between Grace and free will, original sin and predestination, and a part relating to the inspiration of the Holy Writ. Regarding the soteriological part, first of all Lessius taught that men were not predestined or reprobated before the prevision of the original sin, even if they were preordained with a certain predisposition toward eternal life,[38] and that the original sin was not established as an effect of the reprobation of all men.[39] Furthermore, God would have granted to all men enough help (*auxilium sufficiens*) and, if they agreed to it, they could rise again from sin and be saved. One of the most delicate points of the controversy was represented by the attribution to God of the decision not to provide to all men the relief of salvation. On the contrary, Lessius affirmed that God granted Grace to all men.[40]

Lessius considered the example of a child who dies without baptism. The Leuven academics taught that when a child accidentally dies before baptism, that event would have not only been simply allowed by God, but determined by Him, 'And this is extremely cruel'.[41] Instead, Lessius taught that God could never command that the relief of salvation – first and foremost the baptism – would not be applied because of original sin, but that He could simply allow it, in conformity to what He had foreseen. On the other hand, it was legitimate to suppose that God *sua sponte* would prevent the occurrence of natural or accidental events in order to permit a child to receive baptism.[42] Lessius proposed an image of a merciful and typically neo-testamentary God, who would not deny necessary help to anybody. A man adequately encouraged through *Gratiam excitantem* or *praevenientem* could accept God's call

38 *34 Propositions*, n. 13.

39 Ibid., n. 14.

40 Ibid., n. 17.

41 *Lessius to Bellarmine, 29 May 1587* in Le Bachelet, Bellarmin, 149. The adjective *durus-a-um* can also mean 'difficult', so 'unlikely'. However, I translated it with 'cruel', since Lessius often alluded to the idea that the theologians of Leuven showed the image of an arbitrary and harsh God.

42 *34 Propositions*, n. 16.

without any new Grace that would prevent his consent. This man, being gifted with the *Gratia habitualis*,[43] and sufficiently encouraged *per Gratiam excitantem*,[44] could ask for concomitant help. Stronger support and protection from God are, however, necessary in order to make him persist in good deeds over a long time.[45]

The Jesuit definitely rejected the principle of sin as a necessity, and therefore the idea that some men would inevitably sin due to the original sin.[46] That was the substratum of Bay's doctrine; in fact, he taught that men naturally tend towards evil.[47] In contrast, Lessius' confidence in man's abilities also emerged strongly in the soteriological field. The typically humanistic, anthropological, optimistic value of the *homo faber suae fortunae* found room also in the Catholic reflection. Lessius, like other early modern Christian thinkers, re-read that humanistic concept in a Christian way and based it on fundamental prerequisites, common to all men: the *auxilium sufficiens* and the *Dei Gratia*. Through free will every man can knowingly ratify his own damnation or salvation. God does not refuse his help to anybody, nevertheless many men refuse to affirmatively answer God's call. It is clear that Lessius' theory cannot be considered Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian, as the Leuven academics asserted; Lessius conceded benevolence and confidence to man's capacity to fulfil good actions, but by virtue of the fact that every man had previously received God's Grace.

Concerning predestination and reprobation, the Jesuit taught that everyone who had been saved was elected *ab aeterno* to the Grace (not to the Glory), through which God already knew who would be saved (foreknowledge). According to Lessius, that happened before the prevision of the merits of men and derived only from God's will.[48]

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43 Ibid., n. 20. The adjective *habitualem* concerned the usual presence of Grace in people.

44 *Excitans* refers to the stimulating action of Grace; men are free to agree or reject it.

45 *34 Propositions*, n. 21.

46 Ibid., n. 22.

47 Lessius did not name Michael Bay in the 34 Propositions. Instead, he mentioned the theologian explicitly in the personal letters to Bellarmine.

48 *34 Propositions*, n. 23.

However, Lessius believed that it was highly probable that men were not immediately and effectively elected to the Glory, with an absolute will, before the prevision of merits.[49] At that stage, in fact, man's response to God's Grace became substantial. Eventually, he also admitted that it could be affirmed that a man would be elected to Glory before the prevision of his merits, but only due to God's prescience.

The *ante merita praevisa* concept was vital for the supporters of a rigid Augustinism, both for the professors of Leuven and later for Jansen; it represented the '*centre logique de la doctrine approuvée, sans lequel tout l'augustinisme s'écroullerait*'.[50] The idea of human freedom shaped Lessius' doctrine. The foreknowledge, through which God knows in advance whether a man was elected to Glory, did not depend on God's will, but on what man, with free will – urged by divine help – decided.[51] Similarly, Lessius believed that the reprobation with which God immediately and effectively destines some men to eternal suffering, preparing them for the eternal death, is not inflicted before the prevision of the faults.[52] Lessius described reprobation as the God-given chance to reject eternal life, created after the prevision of the original sin:[53] before that, there would be no need to introduce the concept of reprobation.

> This sentence about predestination and reprobation, which I briefly explained in these conclusions and I have frequently taught during my lessons, mainly conforms to Divine generosity, to the authority of the Writs, to the statements of the Fathers, to the equity of natural reason. It absolutely does not support Pelagius, and distances itself strongly from the heresy of Calvin and Luther.[54]

49 Ibid., n. 25.

50 Orcibal, Jansénius d'Ypres, 19.

51 *34 Propositions*, n. 27.

52 Ibid., n. 29.

53 Ibid., n. 31.

54 Ibid., n. 34. Translation is mine.

With these words Lessius concluded the thirty-four propositions, defending himself against the accusations of the academics. Bellarmine subsequently defended Lessius' theology in front of the Holy See, as his doctrine was taught by many orthodox authors; a statement which, as a Cardinal over twenty years later, he retracted.[55]

Lessius' doctrine was based on three keystones: first, God supplied everybody with sufficient help to accomplish good (through Grace) and be saved; secondly, man's response to God's invitation was crucial for Grace to be efficient; finally, the predestined men were chosen as a result of God's prescience of their positive response. However, the predestination did not simply depend on prescience of good deeds; nobody could earn his own predestination, as the ability to accomplish good derived from the merit of Grace, and the sufficient assistance granted to all men. The idea that election to Glory occurred after the prevision of man's merits did not reduce the role of divine Grace, which was necessary to achieve good.

Reassuring even the most tormented consciences was one of Lessius' main concerns, and his doctrine reached this goal. Lessius was broadly open-minded towards the necessities of men, and exhibited a complex spirituality. On one hand he fully embodied the Salesian spirituality; even his openness towards the use of money – that in *De iustitia et iure* subverted, from a practical point of view, the Aristotelian principle of the sterility of money – was connected to the idea that a good Christian could also be a good merchant, that salvation can be reached through daily activities. Tolerance of others was necessary; imposition of overly strict rules would cause the Catholics to distance themselves from religious practice. That conclusion was absolutely not shared by rigorists and Jansenists, who asked for the contrition of the heart in the confessional. The Jesuit's theology of salvation, which granted hope and confidence to mankind, perfectly fits with his unusual open-mindedness. Despite his attitude towards others, Lessius was very severe with himself: he self-inflicted frequent corporal punishments, spending hours in a meditative state that – according to some 16th

55 ARSI, Fl. Belg. 72, I, ff. 120r–122v.

century sources – led him to a sort of mystic ecstasy. Lessius embodied *ante litteram* Alfonso de Liguori's attitude, which involved tolerance of others but strictness towards oneself.[56]

De Sacra Scriptura

As previously explained, the censorship included Lessius' teaching *De Sacra Scriptura*. We can learn about Lessius' inspiration doctrine not only from the documents on the controversy, but from his commentaries on Saint Thomas' *Summa*, used by the Jesuit as the basis for his theological course.[57] As the historians have certified, Lessius assumed a very important role in the history of inspiration dogma.[58] Lessius' inspiration theory has been generally considered an alternative to the ruling doctrine of his time – that is to say, the verbal inspiration doctrine.

The Dominican Domingo Bañez was a strong adherent to and promoter of the verbal inspiration doctrine.[59] He was a Thomistic theologian, but spread a doctrine similar to that of the Leuven academics. He endorsed physical predetermination and radically extended the theories of Cano and Caetano. Cano, Bañez's master, considered the Holy Writ as the main *locus theologicus* from which theology could be organised as a science,[60] while Caetano taught that prophetical revelations and the divine assistance provided to the New Testament's authors had to be differentiated. According to Cano and Caetano, the enlightenment of the revelation would not have been necessary if the

56 Saint Alphonsus de Liguori defined Lessius 'prince of the moralists'. Van Sull, Léonard Lessius, 186.

57 Antonio M. Artola, *Fuentes para el estudio de la doctrina lessiana sobre la inspiración.* In *'Scriptorium Victoriense'* XX, (1973), 5-31. Artola wrote essays on this matter, for example *El sistema inspiracionista de Leonardo Lessio, S.I.* In *'Archivo Teologico Granadino'* 37, (1974), 5-44.

58 See Eugène Mangenot, *Inspiration de l'Écriture.* In *'Dictionnaire de théologie catholique'*, VII (2), 2068-2266.

59 Antonio M. Artola, *Las aportaciones de la escuela salamantina a la Teologia de la Inspiracion.* In *'Scriptorium Visctoriense'* XVII, (1970), 220-236.

60 Antonio M. Artola, *La razón formal de la Sagrada Escritura en el sistema inspiracionista de Leonardo Lessio, S.J., 'Scriptorium Victoriense'* XIX, (1972), 121–157.

authors wrote about facts known '*por luz natural*',[61] needing only the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Bañez extended the concept of the enlightenment of the revelation to all Holy Writ.

Lessius' inspiration doctrine was nonconformist (as were many of his theological works), including ideas that were not widely followed even within the Society of Jesus. A very important scholar of Lessius' inspiration doctrine, Antonio Maria Artola, emphasised that the Leuven controversies represented one of the most influential moments in the history of the inspiration dogma.[62] Lessius' doctrine was a milestone in that history. The censors questioned three of Lessius' statements.[63] In the first, the Jesuit claimed that it was not necessary that every word was inspired and shaped by the Holy Spirit in the minds of Biblical authors' in order to generate Holy Writ. In the second proposition, Lessius maintained that it was not necessary that whole sentences were immediately revealed by the Holy Spirit to the author, as totally new knowledge, if they were already known by him through experience or natural reason (but not excluding the support of the Holy Spirit in the process). Thirdly, with explicit reference to 2 *Maccabees*, Lessius affirmed that it was possible that a book written with mere human *industria* could become Holy Writ with the subsequent approval of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Lessius' doctrine postulated a dual source of knowledge: human reason and experience, in the Galilean meaning, which valued man and his operative and intellectual skills; and a new supernatural revelation that enlightened the authors. Lessius argued that divine dictation – the basis for the prophetical books – was distinct from New Testament writings, and primarily the Gospels, in which the authors' free will could play a role. In his view, the doctrine of verbal inspiration did not take into account a multiplicity of factors, such as the variety in the books that comprise the Biblical canon, and their

61 Antonio M. Artola, *El sistema inspiracionista de Leonardo Lessio, S.J.*, 9, *'Archivo Teologico Granadino'*, 37 (1974), 5–44.

62 Antonio M. Artola, *La razón formal de la Sagrada Escritura en el sistema inspiracionista de Leonardo Lessio, S.I.*, 'Scriptorium Victoriense' XIX (1972), 122.

63 Schneemann, *Controversiarum*, 374-375.

many authors and styles.[64]

Bellarmine suggested to Lessius that he should remove the third proposition, which troubled the Leuven academics and many other theologians.[65] Lessius' theory was initially largely rejected even in the Society of Jesus, where, however, it later received some acceptance. Lessius gave life to 'real inspiration' of Holy Writ, an idea opposed to the verbal theory.[66] In essence, the Jesuit's doctrine took into account man's role in the revelation process, thereby attracting many Jesuits of Thomistic education, who were very close to Christian Humanism. Moreover, Lessius' doctrine did not call into question God's supremacy in the writing of Holy Writ, but it highlighted its necessity and derived the veracity of the contents of the biblical books from His authority.

Bellarmine's intervention and papal edict

After the academics' censorship of Lessius' assertions, a sequence of polemic writings was presented by both sides.[67] Lessius involved Robert Bellarmine, his former tutor, in the dispute by sending him a document that contained Janson's doctrine; Bellarmine provided an interesting censure to demonstrate the wrongness of the academics' position.[68]

64 The attention to the philological aspect of Holy Writ was typically humanistic.

65 *Bellarmine to Lessius, end of November 1587* in Le Bachelet, *Bellarmin,* 172-175.

66 Antonio M. Artola, *La expansion de las ideas inspiracionistas de Lesso en la Compañía de Jesús, desde la controversia lovaniense hasta la extinción de la misma (1587-1773).* In 'Scriptorium Victoriense' XXIII (1976), 6. See also Johannes Beumer, *La inspiración de la Sagrada Escritura.* In '*Historia de los dogmas*' (Madrid: B.A.C, 1973), I, 55.

67 Lessius wrote the *Antitheses,* in which he summarised his doctrine in six propositions (in *Historia Ms. Collegii Lovaniensis S.J.,* Archives du Royaume, Bruxelles); after the censorship of the University of Douai, he wrote the *Apologia* and the academics answered with the *Antapologia or Iustificatio seu defensio censurae Facultatis S. Theologiae Academiae Lovaniensis contra assertiones quasdam Professorum ibidem Societ. Nominis Iesu* (Schneemann, Controversiarum, 363-364); then, Lessius wrote the *Responsio ad Antapologiam* Ven. *Facultatis S. Theologiae Universitatis Lovaniensis* (manuscript copies are available in BAV, Barb. Lat. 1058, 195-303 and Barb. Lat. 1034, 42-128; ACDF, *Controversia,* ff. 361r.-394v). See also ARSI, Fl. Belg. 72, I, ff. 230r–263r.

68 ACDF, *Bellarmini Censurae in sententias Lovanio missas,* ff. 34r-35r in ACDF,

First of all, Bellarmine focused on one of the most controversial points of the academics' theology. In some aspects of their doctrine, God appeared as the author of sins – an idea decisively refuted by Lessius. Bellarmine diplomatically stated that even if the Faculty of Theology could give a better explanation of the sentences in question, in that 'difficult time' – the century of Protestant schisms – they seemed far too similar to Calvin's and Melanchthon's assertions, which had been condemned by the Council of Trent. Furthermore, Bellarmine labelled as heretic the opinion that men *necessario peccant* (i.e., that men necessarily commit sin), but do it freely as a voluntary act; in the same manner, men who benefit from God's help act necessarily, but, at the same time, freely. This assertion seemed to nullify free will, and not distinguish it from necessity. Moreover, it was totally contrary to the regulation established by the Council of Trent, and therefore heretic. Significantly, at the end of the censure Bellarmine noted with concern that Janson, who taught this doctrine in Leuven, was Michael Bay's close friend and had accurately followed his mistaken doctrine in the past. '*Utinam etiam modo non sit*':[69] a final comment that alluded in an almost explicit way to the derivation of Janson's doctrine from Bay's, and expressed the fear that Bay's heresy had been proposed again, as Lessius suggested.

The controversy did not subside. The theologians of the University of Douai, who produced a censorship (20 January 1588), and various bishops lent their support to the Faculty of Theology of Leuven. In 1591, Lessius composed six assertions to defend his doctrine once again.[70] These mutual continuous accusations were seen as so dangerous for the unity of Catholicism that the Nuncio of Cologne, Ottavio Frangipani, imposed silence on the two factions through the

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Controversia. See also *Propositions extraites de l'enseignement oral de Jacques Janson et envoyées à Rome par Lessius* in Le Bachelet, *Bellarmin,* 158-160.

69 *Bellarmini Censurae,* f. 35r.

70 Leonard Lessius, *Antitheses in quibus consistit tota Controversia inter Doctores Lovanienses et Societatis Jesu Professorem, mota per eorundem Doctorum Censuram, anni 1587.*

publication of a papal edict on 10 July 1588.[71] Sixtus V's decision declared Lessius' censored sentences to be '*sanae doctrinae articuli*' (orthodox doctrine). The choice to impose silence – and deliver victory to Lessius – was strategic: in a century of schisms, the Holy See wanted to avoid further fractures. The academics demonstrated the derivation of their doctrine from Bay's theology: this was evidence that the previous condemnations had not prevented the diffusion of Bay's doctrine, even if with certain adjustments. Condemnations were frequently insufficient to arrest heterodox doctrines, as the later Jansenist case proved.

The evolution of the controversy: 16th and 17th centuries

Despite the papal edict on the orthodoxy of Lessius' doctrine, the issue remained latent for years. It arose again in a dispute between the Jesuit Luis de Molina, accused of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, and the Dominican Domingo Bañez: the deep connection between the two controversies is confirmed by Holy Office documentation.[72] The report containing the censorship of Molina's doctrine starts with a concise dissertation on the Leuven dispute, and demonstrates the link between the two events. Furthermore, the editor pointed out that Sixtus V's imposition of silence should have closed the issue, a hint that presaged the conclusion of the *Congregatio de auxiliis divinae gratiae* (2 January 1598 – 28 August 1607), organised to solve the new dispute.

After many sessions under Clement VIII and Paul V, the controversy ended with no definitive result, and the two sides were authorised to freely teach their own doctrines, but were advised to avoid new controversies. The discussion focused on the effectiveness of Grace: according to the Dominican's thesis, its efficacy was due to the divine predetermination of the human will; in contrast, the Jesuit stated that it depended on the conformity of the divine decree with God's prescience about human choices. On 5 September 1607, Paul V reminded the Superiors General of the two Orders of the postulate of

71 ACDF, *Controversia, Papal edict,* Leuven 10 July 1588. A second Papal edict was published after the censorship of Douai. ARSI, Fl. Belg. 72, I, f. 270r.

72 ACDF, St.St., S.O. 0 5 h 1, *Scritto sulla dottrina del p. Molina, 1605,* ff. 6-7.

Trent, which stated that divine help for the exercise of the free will was necessary for salvation, however, the Pontiff did not detail its nature. Paolo Broggio spoke about a '[...] *disposizione di Paolo V nel senso di una chiusura della disputa che ha tutto il sapore di una scelta di opportunità politica*':[73] the matter was very serious, and the risk of further theological divisions was evident. Then, the Pope was unable to make a resolution contrary to the Society of Jesus, at that time a faithful ally of the Holy See. In essence the Society was the winner of the *Congregatio de auxiliis*. The dispute played an important role in the evolution of the politics of Grace in the Order, as Lessius realised with bitterness some twenty years after the Leuven controversies.

In 1610, Lessius published his treatise *De gratia efficaci,* a response to the work of a Dominican, Francis de Avila, who promoted the concept of predetermining Grace, and declared that the Jesuit's doctrine was contrary to Holy Writ. In his work, Lessius restated his predestination doctrine; however, unlike Lessius, many theologians of the Society of Jesus – among them Bellarmine and Francisco Suarez – attributed the election to effective Grace to the absolute and independent divine will, and did not agree with Lessius' theory *de praedestinatione post merita praevisa*, which preserved human freedom. This was nothing new. Lessius and Bellarmine had debated this question in their correspondence in 1580s, but not as an object of faith. The General Aquaviva complained about the publication of Lessius' work on such a delicate matter; he asserted that the treatise, published without authorisation, contained positions even more difficult to defend than Molina's.[74] Aquaviva was greatly influenced by some documents opposing Lessius' doctrine which were circulating among Catholic theologians, which described it as contrary to Augustine's and even to Thomas' doctrines, as well as being close to the heretical opinions of Catarinus. Aquaviva ordered Lessius to correct his treatise, to avoid the

73 Paolo Broggio, *La teologia e la politica. Controversie dottrinali, Curia romana e Monarchia spagnola tra Cinque e Seicento.* (Firenze: Olschki, 2009), 128.

74 Xavier-Marie Le Bachelet, *Le décret d'Aquaviva sur la grace efficace,* 48. In *'Recherches de science religieuse'* 14, no. 1 (1924), 46-60.

entire Society being attacked.[75] The General expressed his displeasure in many letters, pointing out the necessity of admitting the difference between the Grace provided by God to the men who would be saved and to the men who would not.[76]

According to many theologians, Lessius' doctrine called into question the omnipotent and absolutely free divine decision. Moreover, other pressures, connected to the *Congregatio de auxiliis,* unnerved the Jesuit General. First of all, on 28 August 1607 the Pope strongly recommended that the protagonists should completely abstain from the debate, in order to maintain peace. Furthermore, Philip III of Spain pressured Rome to confirm the Dominican theory. To prevent problems arising from Lessius' work, Aquaviva obtained permission from the Pope to delegate the issue to Bellarmine. Concerned about doctrinal unity in his Order, he communicated to Lessius that Bellarmine was worried about his doctrine of predestination.

After the *Congregatio de auxiliis,* Bellarmine realised that the doctrines of Lessius and Molina posed dangerous risks to Catholic theology and to the reputation of the Society. During the *De auxiliis,* the anti-Protestant function of Molina's doctrine was eulogised, however at the end of the Congregation, Bellarmine chose caution, adopting the General's view.[77] In 1610, the difference in opinion between Bellarmine and Lessius – but also between Bellarmine and Molina – was extremely clear, unlike twenty-five years earlier: these theologians were in agreement about rejecting physical predetermination, but not about the relationship between Grace and good deeds, predestination and election to Glory. Suddenly the cardinal began to believe that Lessius

75 *Aquaviva to Florentinus,* 21 August 1610 in ARSI, Fl. Belg., 1, f. 1169. Le Bachelet was told that an anonymous censorship was sent to Paul V. See Xavier-Marie Le Bachelet, *Auctarium Bellarminianum, Supplément aux oevres du Cardinal Bellarmin.* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1913), 27.

76 *Aquaviva to Lessius,* 7 January 1612 in ARSI, Fl. Belg., 3, ff. 70–71; *Aquaviva to Lessius,* 23 October 1610 in ARSI, Fl. Belg., 1, II, f. 1176.

77 See ACDF, S.O. I 5 e, n. 146: *De novis controversiis inter Patres quosdam ex Ordine Praedicatorum et Patrem Molinam Jesuitam (a) Opusculum Auctore Roberto Cardinale Bellarmino.* The author states he copied a manuscript stored in the Corsini Library.

could be charged with Semi-Pelagianism, as the Leuven academics had claimed in the 1580s. Even if Lessius had some defenders in the Roman College, the council established by Aquaviva to analyse Lessius' opinions (Mutius Vitelleschi, the future General, took part in the censorship) was unfavourable to him. Some assertions taken from the *De gratia efficaci* were censored, and the author was ordered to make the necessary corrections.[78] Xavier-Marie Le Bachelet speculated that Aquaviva glimpsed in Lessius' doctrine the risk of showing a God who would not give the predestined men anything more than other men, as if a common Grace sufficient for all men existed.

Bellarmine's change of attitude greatly disappointed Lessius, as is easily realised by reading his letters.[79] The cardinal had apparently completely changed his opinion. In a letter dated 31 December 1610, Bellarmine explained to Lessius that he had defended him during the Leuven controversies due to a misunderstanding. At that time, he interpreted Lessius' doctrine as meaning that the predestination to the Glory depended on forecast merits, but predestination to the effective Grace only originated from God's will. However, reading the *De gratia efficaci,* Bellarmine comprehended, with great astonishment, that Lessius derived predestination simply and absolutely from the prevision of merits; therefore, that was prescience, not predestination. That doctrine was opposed to those of Augustine and Thomas, as well as to the precepts of Francisco Borgia and of the *Ratio Studiorum*, besides being very similar to Catarinus'.[80]

Lessius defended himself from these attacks. On 18 February 1611, he resolutely communicated to Bellarmine that he hoped his doctrine would be better understood by the means of additional

78 On the censorship in the Society of Jesus, Ugo Baldini, *Una fonte poco utilizzata per la storia intellettuale: le «censurae librorum» e «opinionum» nell'antica Compagnia di* Gesù. In *'Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento'* XI, (1985), 19–50.

79 *Lessius to Bellarmine,* 18 February 1611 in Le Bachelet X-M., *Auctarium Bellarminianum, Supplément,* 148–150. See APUG 540, ff. 73r–74v. Lessius answers Bellarmine's letter dated 31 December 1610 (Le Bachelet, *Auctarium Bellarminianum, Supplément,* 145–147).

80 Le Bachelet, *Le décret d'Aquaviva,* 52.

explanations: his main concern was to demonstrate his complete conformity with Augustine and Thomas. He pointed out that the antecedent and absolute election to Glory clashed with Ignatius' teachings and with the Constitutions, which also profess the active participation of man in salvation.

Bellarmine's previous evaluation cannot be explained as a misunderstanding: the documentation Lessius sent in the 1580s was too accurate to confuse the future cardinal. The hypothesis that Bellarmine completely embraced the change of politics of the Order about the doctrine of the Grace endures. This change depended, essentially, on two factors: firstly, Aquaviva's theological sensitivity; secondly, the conditions imposed by the Pontiff at the end of the *Congregatio de auxiliis*. From the General's point of view, Lessius' work risked to lure new accusations against the Society of Jesus, which were very hard to shake off: in fact, Lessius supported opinions which were more radical than Molina's assertions. It is important to highlight that Lessius was not inspired by Molina: in effect, the *Concordia*[81] (Molina's masterpiece) circulated in Belgium only after Lessius' dispute with the academics. The two theologians developed a similar doctrine, to the point that Lessius greeted the *Concordia* as a confirmation of his own theology.

Pérez Goyena, in a celebratory paper written for the third centenary of Lessius' death, dramatically wrote that the Leuven academics, faced with the Jesuit's doctrine, imagined that Pelagius had risen again from the tomb to defend the dangerous doctrine previously crushed by Saint Augustine.[82] The *Doctor Gratiae*, as Jean Dagens wrote in 1951, ruled 17th century theology;[83] the doctrine of Grace, which received new formulations in the 1500s and 1600s, effectively

81 Luis de Molina, *Concordia Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, diuina praescientia, prouidentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione.* (Olyssipone: Antonium Riberium, 1588).

82 Antonio Pérez Goyena, *El tercer centenario de la muerte de un gran teologo*, 63. In *'Razon y Fe'* II, (1923), 50-69.

83 Jean Dagens, *Le XVII siècle, siècle de Saint Augustin. Communication de M. Jean Dagens au IIIe congrès de l'Association, à Paris, le 28 août 1951.* In *'Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises'*, 3–5 (1953), 31–38.

orbited around Augustine: on one hand, a radical and sometimes altered Augustinism grew in Europe, among Christian theologians; on the other hand, several scholars and theologians were accused of subversion of traditional Augustinism. Lessius put Augustine at the level of the other Fathers of the Church, and freely expressed his own opinions, as long as they were supported by at least one Father; he learnt this probabilistic lesson from Francisco Suarez during his Roman sojourn.

The controversies arising in Leuven during the 1580s represented an essential moment in the history of early modern theology: they showed that Bay's doctrine was alive and appreciated, despite the papal condemnation, and displayed how, over the years, the politics of the Society of Jesus on the subject of Grace changed. In 1613, Aquaviva issued a decree on effective Grace (*De gratia efficace*): the theologians of the Order had to comply with the instruction in order to achieve the desired doctrinal unity. The actions undertaken by the Leuven academics demonstrate that fear of the resurrection of Pelagianism, as a complete subversion of Augustine's doctrine, was still strong in the 16th century. Some historiographers have defined the Augustinism of the academics as pure, others as distorted (*obscurius loquit*, as Lessius wrote about Augustine). Even if some Jesuit historians supported the hypothesis that the academics attacked the entire Society, it is more plausible to assert that this attack was directed, first of all, against the doctrine of a man who contradicted the controversy's instigator, Michael Bay. Additionally, the academics criticised the Thomism generally proposed by the Society, worried that it was corrupting the true Augustinian doctrine of Grace.[84]

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Holy See repeatedly faced similar controversies, through the intervention of the Holy Office or the Pontiff himself.[85] This is proof that the holders of different perceptions

84 See Gaetano Lettieri, *Il metodo della grazia. Pascal e l'ermeneutica giansenista di Agostino.* (Roma: Edizioni dehoniane, 1999), 49; Jean-Louis Quantin, *Ces autres qui nous font ce que nous sommes: les jansénistes face à leurs adversaires*, 409. In *'Revue de l'histoire des religions'* 212, no. 4 (1995), 397–417.

85 For instance, see the case of Sirmond's homilies, in the 1620s. Jean-Louis Quantin, *Philologie et querelle de la grâce au XVIIe siècle: Sirmond, Valérien de Cimiez et*

Leonard Lessius S.J. Print by Nicolas de Larmessin

on the matter of Grace and free will that coexisted within Catholicism barely tolerated each other, and that the Church feared internal divisions. That intolerance was the result of the desire to safeguard the orthodoxy on the part of the most rigid Augustinian theologians. They did not consider the remaining tradition of the Church, particularly Scholastic theology, and distrusted salvation doctrines based on Church Fathers and authors other than Augustine as manifestations of condemned theologies (Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism). Caesar Baronius highlighted this in his *Annales*: he '[...] *mit solennellement en garde "certains modernes" – entendons les molinistes – contre la tentation d'abandoner la doctrine d'Augustin pour adopter celle de Fauste*'.[86] Simultaneously, Lessius and his followers were intolerant of the rigid Augustinism embodied by the academics, associating it with Calvinism.

le Saint-Office, 720. In Jacques Elfassi, Cécil Lanéry, Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk, eds., *'Amicorum Societatis. Mélanges offerts à François Dolbeau pour son 65e anniversaire'*. (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013), 699–739.

86 Quantin, Philologie, 720.

The Leuven controversies and the quarrel between Molina and Bañez had several differences. As Paolo Broggio highlighted, the *Congregatio de auxiliis* occurred in a complicated political situation as regards the relationship between the Pope, the Holy Office, the Spanish monarchy, and the Spanish Inquisition.[87] In contrast, the Leuven dispute is generally regarded as a theological quarrel, without political implications. However, the connection between the two disputes is clear: the theologies of the Leuven academics and Bañez were very close, as Lessius had already pointed out,[88] and deeply opposed to the similar doctrines of Lessius and Molina.

The final echoes of the controversy: 19th and 20th centuries

The Leuven dispute was a troubling event in Lessius' life and, more broadly, in early modern Catholicism. The censors of the *Index librorum prohibitorum* and Holy Office preferred to avoid this subject, as we can see from the censorships on the first biography/hagiography of the Jesuit.[89] In the middle of the 17th century, Leonard Schoofs' *De vita et moribus R.P. Leonardi Lessii* was included in the *Index*, and condemned by the Holy Office *donec corrigatur* (until corrected). The Holy Office's and the Index's concerns focused on two spheres: the attribution of sanctity and the theological controversies.[90] Indeed, they were the years of the reorganisation of the causes for canonisation, and of the explosion of Jansenism. Furthermore, some inquisitors were averse to the idea of validating the 'sanctity' which emerged from the biography of such an open-minded and probabilistic Jesuit,[91] which would mean implicitly approving a theological and moral system branded as too indulgent by many rigorists. From the inquisitors' point of view, accepting Lessius' hagiography would have meant approving

87 Broggio, *La teologia e la politica*, 61.

88 E.g. *Lessius to Bellarmine*, 29 December 1587 in Le Bachelet, *Bellarmin*, 175–177.

89 Schoofs, *De vita*. Decree of the Index: 18 December 1646. Jesús M. De Bujanda, *Index librorum prohibitorum 1600-1966*. (Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2002), 817; ACDF, *Index, Diari IV (1628-1650)*, ff. 152, 245, 276.

90 As it happened in the case of Sirmond's homilies. See Quantin, *Philologie*, 719.

91 For the 19th century, ACDF, *Index*, Protocolli 1894-96, f. 93.

the doctrine of the entire Society of Jesus, which they completely and wrongly identified with probabilism. In the 1890s, when the Society asked to remove the book from the *Index* in order to re-open Lessius' cause for beatification, the hagiography was discussed again in the Congregation of the Index, and a Dominican commissioner raised the same doubts as the commissioners in the 17th century concerning the attribution of sanctity and the theological controversies. Furthermore, he spoke of a Jesuit plot to promote Lessius' cause for beatification and defend what he saw as the Jesuit doctrine.[92]

Bellarmine's and Lessius' fates intersected again three hundred years after their deaths, to the Flemish theologian's disadvantage. At the beginning of the 1900s, Charles van Sull, postulator of Lessius' cause for beatification, wrote to the General Postulation for the Causes of Saints of the Society of Jesus in Rome that the General of the Society of Jesus had recommended that Lessius' process be renounced in case discrepancies between Lessius and Bellarmine emerged.[93] An archival investigation brought to light records of the theological controversy between the two Jesuits, and Bellarmine's concern that Lessius could be accused of Semi-Pelagianism. After three centuries, the Society was close to achieving the beatification of the cardinal (as occurred in 1923, and his canonisation in 1930): thus, the Order chose Bellarmine. In any case, from the General's point of view the cardinal had fulfilled a more significant role in the Society than the Belgian theologian, who had, moreover, been censored. Bellarmine's beatification and canonisation therefore represented a superior outcome. In contrast, Lessius' cause for beatification, which had been supported especially by Flemish Jesuits in the Early Modern Age, was interrupted; after new attempts in the middle of the 20th century, the Society definitively dropped it. The Leuven controversies dogged Lessius even after his death.

Furthermore, in 1870, during the First Vatican Council, Lessius'

92 ACDF, *Index*, Protocolli 1894–96, ff. 65r–66v

93 ARSI, Archive of the General Postulation for the Causes of Saints of the Society of Jesus, *Corrispondenza* 6 (1904-1905), Letter of Charles Van Sull, Bruxelles 21 January 1905.

inspiration theory was raised in connection with the condemnation of Daniel Haneberg's doctrine, which was inspired by the Flemish theologian.[94] Some members of the Council feared that Haneberg's condemnation extended to the Jesuit, but the archbishop of Brixen, Vincent Gasser, defined the differences between the two doctrines in his report *De emendationibus capitis secundi constitutionis dogmaticae de fide catholica.*[95] However, Gasser's considerations were based on the final – and compulsorily corrected – version of Lessius' third assertion on Holy Writ; a version which did not speak of *humana industria,* and contemplated the action of the Holy Spirit. The Council Fathers were not aware of Lessius' true intentions, which clearly emerged from his private correspondence with Bellarmine, and in the explanations he composed. If they had been, the results could have been different, since Lessius' inspiration theory was extremely close to Haneberg's.

Conclusion

Two main points need to be reiterated. First, as emerges from Lessius' writings, despite the controversies he never abandoned the main idea that underpinned his moral theology and doctrine of Grace: the active and fundamental partnership of man in his salvation, in a soteriological process known by God *ab aeterno*. Second, as 19th- and 20th-century documentation shows, Lessius' theology of Grace and predestination and his inspiration theory continued to be strongly criticised and censured as they had been in Leuven in the 1580s. Lessius' open-mindedness has represented a powerful challenge for many theologians over the past 400 years.

94 Haneberg was Bishop of Spires.

95 Vincent Gasser (1809–1879; Archbishop of Brixen), *Relatio De Emendationibus Capitis Secundi Constitutionis Dogmaticae de Fide Catholica, Acta et Decreta Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani, Acta ante Sessionem III,* (Freiburg: Sumptibus Herder, 1890), 7, 139–41. In 1961 Holstein stated that, according to Gasser, Lessius had retracted his theory on 2 Maccabees (a book written with *humana industria* and later approved by the Holy Spirit). That was incorrect; in fact, Lessius never changed his mind, but was compelled to modify his third sentence on the Holy Writ. Henri Holstein, *Lessius a-t-il été condamné au Concile du Vatican?*. In '*Recherches de science religieuse*' XLIX, no. 2 (1961), 219–226 .

L'altare come macchina da festa nell'universo barocco: modelli romani in Sicilia e Malta

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Gli altari, al pari degli edifici e delle facciate barocche, si pongono come quinte scenografiche, come fondali nello spazio teatrale della chiesa. Si curvano e si inflettono, si ergono come baldacchini che proiettano in alto eterei fastigi popolati da santi, angeli e putti: gli "attori" del gran teatro del barocco che negli interni delle chiese viene esaltato da un tripudio di luci sceniche, di colori e di suoni, contribuendo a creare una nuova dimensione dello spazio corporea ed emozionale, in grado di coinvolgere completamente lo spettatore.1 La chiesa diventa un vero e proprio Teatro Sacro alle cui rappresentazioni sono chiamati, da committenti e tecnici esperti, gli osservatori attenti alla meraviglia delle arti.

Non solo gli altari si prestano a trasformare l'effimero in architettura stabile, ma anche le occasioni festive e i funerali sono un elemento di organizzazione dello spazio della chiesa in senso teatrale. Le scenografiche feste per le Quarantore e la costruzione di addobbi e apparati ne sono una dimostrazione.

Il messaggio dell'*Ecclesia Triumphans* doveva, attraverso l'arte, raggiungere il cuore, i sensi e l'intelletto dell'osservatore ai fini di una completa adesione spirituale ai valori della Chiesa rifondata. E' questa una preoccupazione in particolar modo della Compagnia di Gesù e degli ordini controriformati, il cui compito è quello di diffondere la

1 Maria Grazia Bernardini, Bussagli Marco, eds., *Barocco a Roma. La meraviglia delle arti*. (Milan, Skira editore, 2015.)

grandezza e la gloria di Dio.

Il grande successo delle missioni cristiane in tutto il mondo, l'evangelizzazione dalle Americhe al lontano oriente e le vittorie contro i turchi sfociarono, come è stato osservato, in una sublimazione della visione della chiesa vincitrice.

L'altare può essere considerato metafora dei grandi temi rappresentativi dell'architettura barocca, che pienamente si rispecchiano in tale costruzione che è, in parte, architettura, in parte, scultura e non solo. E'opera d'arte totale che, al pari delle macchine da festa, condensa il concetto berniniano di "mirabile composto" ovvero l'unità di tutte le arti in una perfetta armonia.

L'altare è anche campo di sperimentazione di una nuova concezione dello spazio fondata su prospettive policentriche e illusionistiche che mirano al coinvolgimento emozionale e spirituale. Sappiamo quanto abbiano contribuito a questa rinnovata concezione dello spazio il pensiero di Athanasius Kircher[2] e le teorizzazioni sullo spazio di Andrea Pozzo. Sappiamo che la tensione verso "l'arte del guardare" coinvolge nell'età del barocco ogni produzione artistica.

In ambito siciliano il tema risulta poco esplorato,[3] intendo non indagato sistematicamente oppure appendice di altri studi, e del tutto ignorato in area siracusana. Per tale ragione desidero soffermarmi sull'importanza e la centralità dell'Altare nella poetica barocca, individuando i possibili modelli di riferimento e gli echi che di volta in volta lo caratterizzano come macchina scenografica capace di suscitare estasi e meraviglia.

Punto di partenza per la mia riflessione saranno: l'altare "capriccioso" e quello del Beato Luigi di Andrea Pozzo[4] e, di Gian

2 Michele Rak, *L'arte del guardare: dal microscopio alla lanterna ottica nel museo di Athanasius Kircher*. Relazione 'Convegno Internazionale Lo spazio della Roma barocca : il paesaggio ideale e l'illusionismo'. (Roma, Teatro Quirinetta 30 giugno-1 luglio 2015).

3 Maria Clara Ruggieri Tricoli, *Il teatro e l'altare: paliotti di architettura in Sicilia*. (Palermo, Grifo Edizioni, 1992); Maria Clara Ruggieri Tricoli, *Arte e decorazione degli altari delle chiese di Sicilia*. (Palermo, Grifo Edizioni, 1992); Eugenio Magnano di San Lio, *Giovan Battista Vaccarini architetto siciliano del Settecento*. (Siracusa, Lombardi editore, 2010), ricco di osservazioni e di spunti anche sulle botteghe catanesi e i rapporti con Milazzo, 630-637

4 Andrea Pozzo, *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*, trattato scritto tra il 1693 e

Lorenzo Bernini, il Baldacchino e il Tabernacolo del SS. Sacramento per San Pietro.[5] Enfasi, monumentalità teatrale, dinamismo plastico, visione policentrica, ricchezza di materiali e sperimentazione spaziale si manifestano sia nei disegni che nelle realizzazioni degli architetti-scenografi siciliani.

Nel disegno acquerellato per l'*Altare di San Fausto* (foto 1), conservato in Palazzo Abatellis a Palermo, Giacomo Amato,[6] formatosi a Roma a contatto con gli architetti della seconda generazione del barocco romano, rivela attenzione per i grandi temi del barocco e una forte sensibilità per la prospettiva e i fondali scenografici. Si tratta di tecniche che l'Amato mette a punto tanto nei suoi progetti per le facciate degli edifici chiesastici di Palermo quanto nei suoi disegni di altare, a dimostrazione di come tale manufatto sia considerato campo di sperimentazione per effetti illusionistici e teatrali.

L'altare di Amato, sorta di suggestiva rivisitazione del Baldacchino berniniano, appare una costruzione magnifica cui concorre il tripudio di colori, gemme e apparati scultorei posti fino all'alto sinuoso fastigio, coronato di statue e sostenuto da un'articolata trabeazione a sua volta retta da una coppia di colonne tortili su alto piedistallo. Le colonne sono appena ruotate e inquadrano una coppia di colonne tortili più piccole su cui si innalza il grande arco di trionfo contenente la statua del santo, fulcro visivo della scena, ma non l'unico. La scritta in cima al disegno chiarisce infatti che si tratta solo "*di una facciata*" dell'altare di San Fausto "col suo santuario", come dire che l'altare va inquadrato in una visione spazio-temporale complessa che ne suggerisce varie prospettive. Il "*santuario*" non è altro che il tripudio di attori-santi che popolano la scena. Al posto della berniniana croce sul globo, sulle imponenti volute, è collocata l'allegorica figura con la gran croce in cima al fastigio, il cui simbolismo allude alla chiesa combattente e vincitrice. Il tutto poggia sua una mensa tempestata di

il 1698, voll. 2. Una versione in italiano: *Prospettiva dè pittori e architetti.* (Londra 1707).

5 Marcello Fagiolo, *Roma barocca. I protagonisti, gli spazi urbani, i grandi temi.* (Roma, De Luca editori d'arte, 2013).

6 Maria Serena Tusa, *Architettura barocca a Palermo. Prospetti chiesastici di Giacomo Amato Architetto.* (Palermo, Lombardi editore, 1992).

gemme.

La grande fortuna del modello del Baldacchino berniniano per San Pietro è testimoniata e diffusa anche a Malta. A Rabat nell'isola di Gozo, nella chiesa di S. Giorgio, esiste una curiosa replica del Baldacchino in dimensioni ridotte [foto 2], costruito come un vero apparato scenico che inquadra l'altare maggiore e che funge esso stesso da scenografico altare. L'originaria chiesa di S. Georgio fu ricostruita nel 1675-78 e fu danneggiata dal terremoto del 1693. L'uso di colonne tortili salomoniche è pure riscontrabile nell'altare della chiesa dei Gesuiti, nella Valletta, come è nella tradizione dell'Ordine. Questo esempio rimanda alla grande diffusione dei modelli gesuitici di altare in tutto il mondo, cui contribuirono certamente i disegni di Andrea Pozzo.

L'uso della colonna tortile, assai diffuso negli altari siciliani, rimanda alla fortuna e al simbolismo dell'ordine salomonico che caratterizza sia l'interno (cappelle e cori) che l'esterno degli edifici, movimentandone le facciate. La colonna tortile, simbolo dell'infinito movimento e del continuo fluire delle forme architettoniche, sublima la dimensione esistenziale e la concezione della spazialità barocca, come dimostrano pure gli studi degli architetti siciliani Giovan Biagio Amico e Rosario Gagliardi,[7] a loro volta ispirati dal Vignola e dalle colonne tortili vitinee della primitiva basilica di San Pietro. Gagliardi, non a caso, nelle annotazioni sui disegni di colonne a spirale scrive che dovranno farsi sul modello di quelle di San Pietro, alludendo alle primitive colonne ma anche all'uso che ne fa Bernini.

A tal proposito bisogna ricordare le teorie architettoniche del frate benedettino Juan Andrea Ricci, espresse in particolare nel suo *Brebe tratato de arquitectura acerca de orden salomonico entero* (1663) e l'influenza che la sua opera ha avuto nella cultura del tempo.[8] Dalla

7 Giovan Biagio Amico, *L'architetto prattico*, vol. 2, *1726-1750*. Su Rosario Gagliardi: Trigilia Lucia. *Rosario Gagliardi. I disegni di architettura della collezione Mazza. Una grande raccolta del Settecento siciliano*. (Roma, Gangemi editore, 2014).

8 Juan Andrea Ricci, *Brebe tratato de arquitectura acerca de orden salomonico entero*. Manoscritto, Montecassino, 1663, fol. 8, 9. A tal proposito si veda: Rita Valenti, *Juan Andrea Ricci e il disegno dell'ordine salomonico intero fra pittura e architettura*. "Ikhnos analisi grafica e storia della rappresentazione", (Università degli Studi di Catania – Facoltà di Architettura di Siracusa, Siracusa, Lombardi editori, 2003), 11-34.

sua profonda fede deriva probabilmente l'idea dell'ordine salomonico completo "que fue infundido de Dios", cui attribuisce un'origine o una ispirazione divina. Per Juan Andrea Ricci non può trattarsi di un ordine composito "mischiato" con altri ordini, ma di un ordine completo che "si origina dalla Colonna Salomonica [...] che soltanto resta dalla distruzione del Tempio" di Gerusalemme.

Credo possibile che i progetti di Ricci per gli Archi di Trionfo [foto 3] abbiano potuto costituire un modello anche per la realizzazione di molti altari in diverse aree del barocco, oltre che per portali e monumentali facciate. Esempi ne esistono anche a Lecce, in Puglia, in Abbruzzo, in Calabria e a Malta. Sono molti, pure nel barocco siciliano, gli esempi di architetture in cui è utilizzato l'ordine salomonico, proposto nelle sue varie tipologie con fusto liscio, fusto scanalato e ripartito e con decorazioni a foglie d'acanto o con tralci e foglie accordati alle spire. Dai portali agli altari, alle edicole, la diffusione di sinuose colonne a spirale diventa un elemento identificativo di molte architetture siciliane, che trova origine da culture lontane, da modelli assimilati e reinventati.

Il tema della spirale, della serpentina, dell'ordine salomonico, è anche caro a molte architetture di facciata e di altare dell'America Latina. Le colonne della "pergola" costantiniana di San Pietro, riutilizzate da Bernini nei piloni della basilica e nel Baldacchino diventano per Marcello Fagiolo ovunque un modello da imitare ovvero un tema da variare all'infinito. Forte movimento, teatralità della forma e ricchezza di significati sanciscono la fortuna della colonna salomonica nelle missioni del nuovo mondo. Ad esempio a Quito in Ecuador nella facciata della Compagnia di Gesù, oppure negli altari di Santo Domingo, di Carmen Alto e S. Agustin; ad Antigua in Guatemala le colonne serpentinate ritornano in facciata. In molti interni brasiliani come San Pedro di Recife l'articolazione dello spazio verso l'altare costituisce "un esempio paradigmatico della stretta analogia tipologica che esiste tra la sala ecclesiastica e la sala teatrale".[9]

Nel disegno di altare, per il *Cappellone della Compagnia della*

9 Vittorio Minardi (a cura di), *Barocco Latino Americano*, catalogo della mostra. (Roma, Istituto Italo-Latino Americano, 1980.) Mi riferisco in particolare alla sezione architettonica del catalogo coordinata da Marcello Fagiolo, 88-89; 194-195

Carità a Palermo [foto 4], frutto del "*pensiero e dell'architettura*" di Giacomo Amato - abbiamo una chiara dimostrazione del convergere delle arti nell'unità scenografica e mistica dell'altare. Riconosciamo nella scritta in basso al disegno tre personaggi di primo piano: un pittore, un architetto-scenografo e uno stuccatore, tutti di gran fama nella Palermo del tempo.

Leggiamo infatti: "disegno dell'altare con l'adornamenti del quadro designati da Antonio Grano: pensiero e architettura di Giacomo Amato fatto dal signor Giacomo Serpotta in Palermo nell'anno 1693." Sottolineo il concetto di "pensiero" quasi a volere suggellare il valore dell'Idea. Per Vitruvio, ma anche per Guarino Guarini, il Disegno perfetto coincide con l'Idea.

Concezione dello spazio, forme, luci e colori costituiscono una unità. Basti solo osservare, nella profondità prospettica della scena, il ruolo dei putti e soprattutto dei grandi angeli che alludono illusionisticamente al movimento e sembrano scivolare via non senza avere prima idealmente aperto il grande sipario del teatro sacro. Ed ecco la selva di candelabri, nella mistica luce, che attorniano il tabernacolo addobbato probabilmente per il rito fastoso delle Quarantore.

La liturgia delle Quarantore diviene efficace strumento di propaganda religiosa per la chiesa cattolica. Un messaggio ideologico passa attraverso gli apparati permanenti e festivi, scenografie sempre più elaborate che riprendono soggetti biblici o emblematici per la storia della chiesa. A Roma i festeggiamenti messi in atto in particolare dai Gesuiti confluiscono con quelli di Filippini e Carmelitani nella grandiosa cerimonia in San Pietro. Il vero trionfo si ha nelle celebrazioni per la fondazione dell'Ordine che, tra il 1639 e il 1640, si svolgono a Roma al Gesù, al Collegio Romano e a Sant'Ignazio. E' del 1695 l'incisione del gran Teatro per Quarantore di Andrea Pozzo per la Chiesa del Gesù, che tra le tante forme di coinvolgimento deve assicurare "il buon effetto dell'occhio". Si tratta, aggiunge il Pozzo nel suo Trattato: *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*, di disegni di grandi opere, "fatte con buona regola di architettura, pittura e prospettiva" che "gabano l'occhio". Inducono cioè in felice errore, confondendo realtà con illusione.

Un bel disegno di Altare della Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana mostra il progetto di un apparato per chiesa

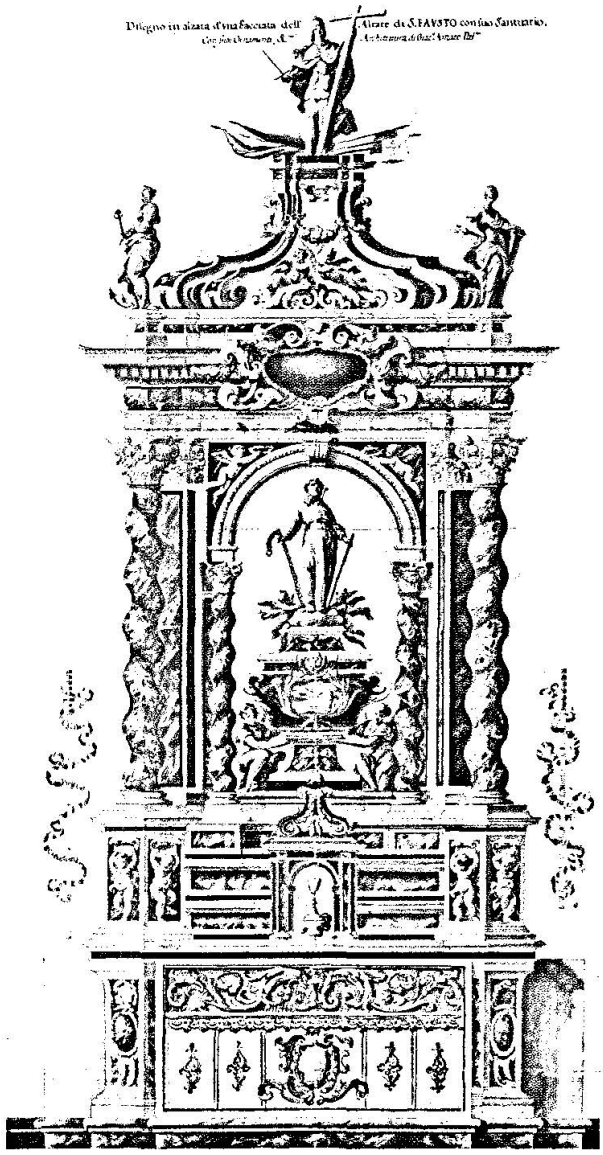

Figure 1. Giacomo Amato, 'Disegno di alzata di una Facciata dell'Altare di San Fausto con suo Santuario' (raccolta Amato, Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo)

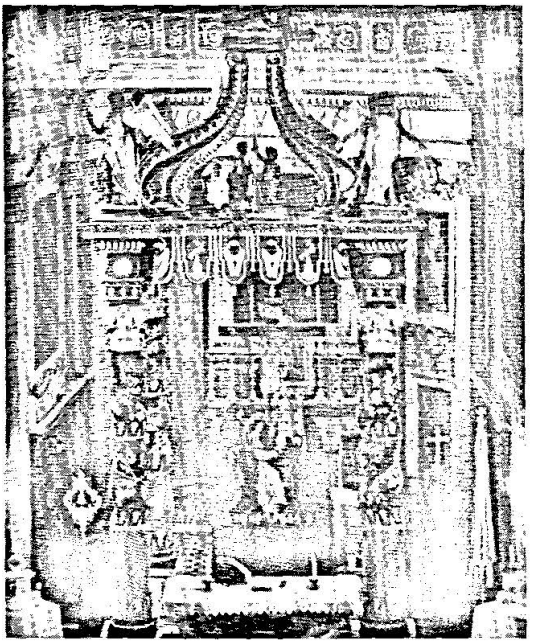

Figure 2. Chiesa di San Giorgio, Gozo, Malta (particolare del Baldacchino, da C. Thake 1995).

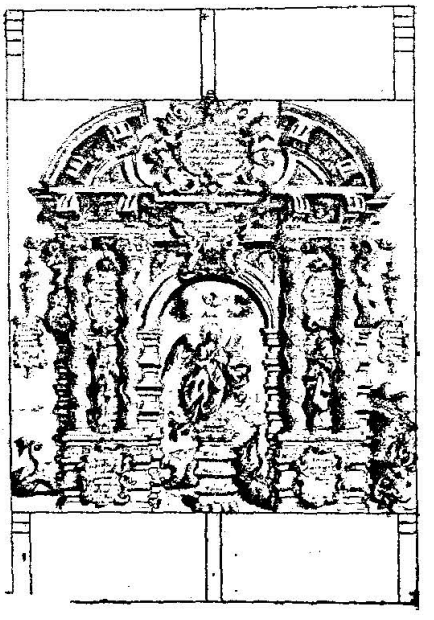

Figure 3. J. Andrea Ricci, Progetto dell'Arco Trionfale dedicato alla Vergine (da R. Valenti 2003)

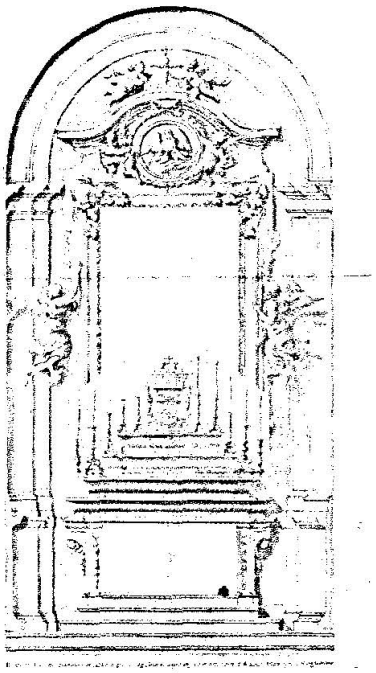

Figure 4. Giacomo Amato, Disegno dell'altare con l'adornamento del quadro disegnato da Antonio Grano (raccolta Amato, Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo).

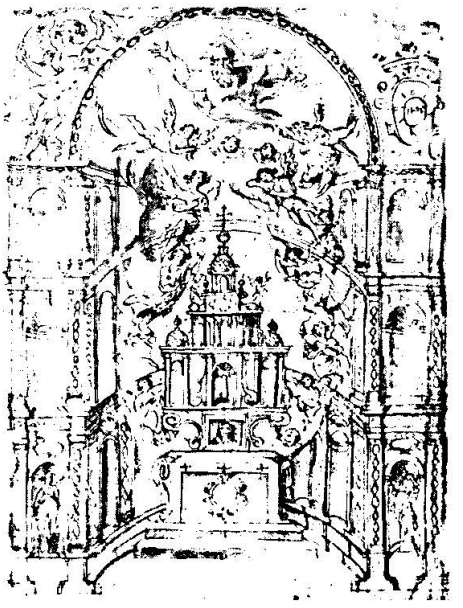

Figure 5. Disegno di Altare per una cappella absidale, sec. XVII (BCRS, da D. Malignaggi 1987).

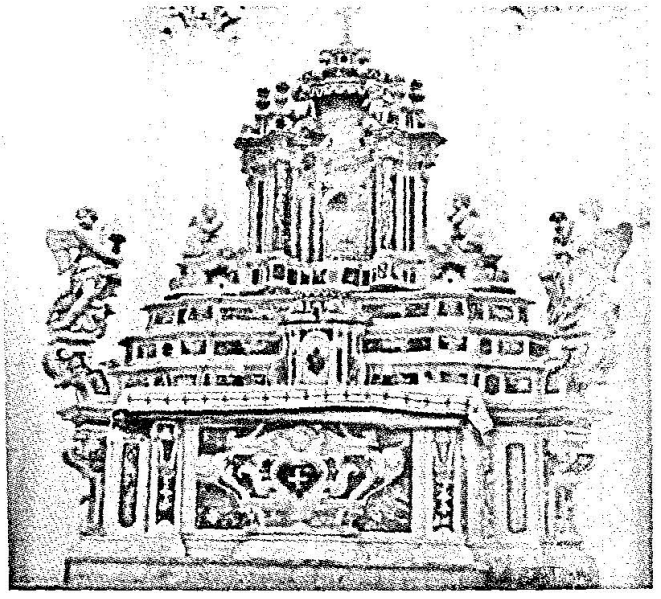

Figure 6. Disegno di Altare per una cappella absidale, sec. XVII (BCRS, da D. Malignaggi 1987).

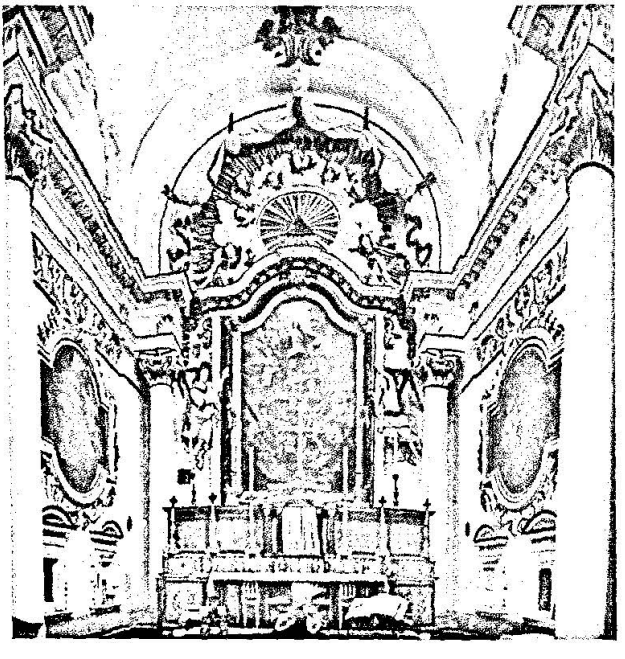

Figure 7. L'altare maggiore della chiesa di Santa Chiara, Noto.

dell'Ordine dei Gesuiti (forse per l'abside della Chiesa del Gesù di Palermo), nell'occasione festiva delle Quarantore [foto 5]. L'apparato è costruito con gli espedienti illusionistici della scenotecnica teatrale. La prospettiva a più piani mostra, all'interno dell'abside trasformata in palcoscenico, l'ascesi di grandi angeli alati a figura intera che attorniano il tabernacolo.

Nel trattato di Giovan Biagio Amico, *L'architetto prattico,* mi riferisco al disegno di *Altare della Madonna del Soccorso* per la Chiesa della Badia Nuova a Trapani, e nei disegni di altare del Gagliardi della collezione Mazza, in cui le membrature si articolano scenograficamente, possono rintracciarsi legami con la trattatistica, essenziale riferimento, da cui il richiamo alla citata opera di Andrea Pozzo, divenuta un modello in tutte le aree di diffusione del barocco.

Come accade nel Sei e Settecento, l'altare siciliano è oggetto di particolare interesse per gli architetti, ad un tempo scultori e scenografi. Dall'ideazione alla sua costruzione l'altare si qualifica come vero e proprio laboratorio di sperimentazione delle arti e opera d'arte totale, alla cui visione architettonica convergono pittura, scultura e opere decorative come stucchi, dorature, argenti, intarsi in legno e marmi mischi.

Gli altari siciliani si ergono come macchine da festa permanenti in gloria di Dio e sono costruiti con materiali e tecniche varie: dal legno alla pietra, dallo stucco al marmo.

Un aspetto particolare assumono, nella Sicilia orientale colpita dal terremoto del 1693, le maestranze, provenienti da diverse aree, come la Calabria, Malta e l'ambiente palermitano, con cui possono stabilirsi reciproci influssi.

A questo approfondimento ha contribuito una ricognizione puntuale degli altari in ambito siracusano da me coordinata, di cui darò conto qui solo sinteticamente con particolare riferimento all'area della Sicilia orientale.[10]

La ricchezza e la variegata tipologia di altari presenti in Sicilia consente di soffermarsi su un certo numero di esempi di grande pregio, cui concorre sia il disegno che il carattere plastico della costruzione

10 In proposito tesi di laurea di Rossella Curcio, *L'altare barocco nel siracusano: analisi e rilievo*, aa. 2013-14, relatore Trigilia Lucia, correlatore Valenti Rita

sia anche l'uso dei materiali. Si possono così individuare influssi e somiglianze con altari di altre aree regionali e rintracciare i modelli culturali che hanno potuto ispirare la committenza e le maestranze, impegnate dopo il 1693 in una estesa opera di ricostruzione dei centri del Val di Noto, colpiti da uno dei terremoti più distruttivi della storia di Sicilia.[11] Quest'area diventa un grande cantiere di diffusione dei modelli del barocco che fa dell'altare, singolare manufatto tra architettura, scultura e arti decorative, un importante elemento di sperimentazione delle tecniche scenografiche e di dinamismo plastico, qualificandolo come macchina volta a suscitare meraviglia, al pari delle grandi macchine da festa o dei catafalchi di cui è assai ricca la tradizione siciliana in epoca spagnola.[12]

Prenderò ora in considerazione, limitatamente allo spazio concesso per questo contributo, solo alcuni esempi di altare, che rimandano ad artefici di varia provenienza, a tipologie diverse e a diversi materiali. Si riscontra nella Sicilia orientale post 1693 una manodopera fatta di colti architetti e capomastri, tra cui possono esser ricordati architetti del calibro, ad esempio, di Giovan Battista Vaccarini autore di "magnifici altari", come recita il suo elogio dottorale per la laurea nel 1736, o più umili artefici come Giuseppe Ferrara, mastro, intagliatore e scultore di provenienza calabrese, trapiantato a Palazzolo Acreide, con incarichi molteplici non solo di costruzione di altari (in San Paolo, Chiesa Madre, San Sebastiano) ma impegnato anche in altre aree della ricostruzione come Buccheri e Buscemi. Tra le figure di spicco sono

11 Sull'opera di ricostruzione post 1693: Lucia Trigilia, *1693 Iliade Funesta. La ricostruzione delle città siciliane del Val di Noto*, (Palermo, Lombardi editore, 1994); Lucia Trigilia, *Un Viaggio nella Valle del barocco. Città siciliane del Val di Noto "patrimonio dell'umanità"*. (Catania, Sanfilippo editore, 2007.) Su Palazzolo Acreide e sulle maestranze tra cui G. Ferrara si vedano in particolare: Lucia Trigilia e Gualtiero Oberti (a cura di), *Palazzolo Acreide architettura e città dopo il terremoto del 1693* ... (Palermo, Lombardi editore, 1992); Santi Rametta, *Architettura religiosa del Settecento negli Iblei attraverso l'opera di Giuseppe Ferrara*. (Siracusa, Morrone Editore, 2001); Luigi Lombardo et altri, *Palazzolo acreide memorare terremotus ...la città, i quartieri, le chiese e le opere d'arte*. (Gal Val d'Anapo, 2001).

12 Lucia Trigilia, *La festa barocca in Sicilia. Spazi e apparati tra sacro e profano*. (Catania, Sanfilippo editore, 2012).

da ricordare pure gli architetti siracusani Natale Bonaiuto, Pompeo Picherali e i fratelli Privitera, i marmorai e le botteghe catanesi, cui appertondono Giovan Battista Marino e la sua schiera.

Una serie di altari di Palazzolo Acreide, cittadina degli Iblei della Sicilia di sud est, mostra la diffusione di varie tipologie, a tronetto e a parete, con concavità e uso dell'ordine tortile.

L'altare di San Gaetano di Thiene (1761) nella chiesa di San Paolo a Palazzolo Acreide, a parete, si impone per il suo carattere monumentale e scenografico e per la ricchezza degli apparati scultorei, esaltati dall'uso di coppie di colonne tortili ruotate in modo da creare un'ampia concavità. E' realizzato dal siracusano Natale Bonaiuto, sul modello dell'altare del Beato Luigi di Andrea Pozzo, di cui esiste un altro esempio nella Chiesa del Collegio dei Gesuiti a Siracusa.

Sempre nella chiesa di San Paolo va ricordato l'altare maggiore (1720-30), inquadrato da quattro poderose colonne tortili decorate a motivi vitinei, d'effetto teatrale, che sostengono una movimentata trabeazione. Una menzione a parte merita l'altare riccamente decorato a intarsio ligneo in colore nero e oro del SS. Sacramento, pure in San Paolo, costruito negli anni 20-30 del Settecento, a tronetto, con un elaborato tabernacolo.

Il Tabernacolo berniniano del SS. Sacramento si rivela un importante modello di riferimento in Sicilia per il tipo di altare a tronetto, che ha nell'altare di San Pietro un antenato importante, riutilizzato in molteplici reinterpretazioni.

Numerosi sono gli esempi di altare a tronetto del XVIII secolo nell'area della Sicilia sud orientale. Ne cito solo alcuni. A Noto: l'Altare Maggiore della Chiesa di San Carlo e l'Altare Maggiore della Chiesa di Montevergine [foto 6]; a Catania: l'altare di San Placido e di San Giuliano; a Palazzolo Acreide l'altare Maggiore della SS. Annunziata.

Assai interessante è l'altare maggiore della Chiesa di San Michele a Palazzolo Acreide, che unifica la tipologia a tronetto con il tipo a parete, dovuta a successivi interventi di trasformazione di cui è oggetto la chiesa tra Sette e Ottocento, un ciclo dei quali è testimoniato dai disegni di costruzione delle navate laterali con la successione di cinque altari, su progetto di Corrado Mazza (1788), di cui ho riferito in precedenti scritti.

A marmi mischi policromi è costruito l'altare di Gesù alla Colonna nella chiesa Madre di Palazzolo Acreide, di autore ignoto, bell'esempio di una tecnica importata dalla Toscana a Palermo, centro siciliano del mischio.[13] Ma il più spettacolare esempio di questo tipo è l'altare della SS. Annunziata, a tronetto, di pregevolissima fattura, col tabernacolo sostenuto da una fitta selva di colonnine composite in marmo multicolore. Il tema dell'intarsio è naturalistico-floreale e rappresenta un'allegoria della primavera.

Per concludere: il teatrale altare maggiore della chiesa di San Sebastiano, in marmo a parete, con affiancate due colonne che sostengono una trabeazione spezzata che inquadra la pala d'altare; statue e decori in stucco dell'altare e della chiesa (1784) sono di Gioacchino Gianforma da Catania.

Qui l'immaginario facilmente si presta, nello spazio-teatro della chiesa, a figurarsi un grande sipario che di volta in volta inquadra l'illusionistica scena. Una suggestiva visione che pur nelle varianti unifica l'universo del Barocco [foto 7].

13 Stefano Piazza, *I marmi mischi nelle chiese di Palermo*. (Palermo, Sellerio, 1992).

La geometria della guerra: evoluzioni tattiche marittime e terrestri nei secoli XVII-XVIII

Francesco Frasca - *Commission française d'histoire militaire Château de Vincennes*

Gli scritti sull'arte della guerra dei secoli XVII – XVIII considerano solo alcuni aspetti delle manovre navali e terrestri, di strategia come noi oggi la concepiamo ve ne era ben poca, d'altra parte essa ancora non esisteva come termine proprio, ed apparirà solo dopo la fine delle guerre napoleoniche. In effetti se consideriamo, per esempio, la prima guerra anglo-olandese combattuta interamente sul mare negli anni dal 1652 al 1654, dell'interregno inglese, fra il *Commonwealth* d'Inghilterra e la Repubblica delle Provincie Unite, notiamo come la marina di Cromwell fosse priva di una vera e propria tattica di combattimento. Armata con i nuovi cannoni in ferro, la marina del Commonwelth, nel corso delle operazioni marittime, fu divisa in parecchie squadre, ciascuna schierata su una linea parallela con le altre. Questo sistema fu la causa in combattimento di gravissimi svantaggi, poiché le squadre navali potevano essere attaccate separatamente dal nemico e non avevano il modo aiutarsi fra loro, ma pur mantenendo la linea di fila, dovevano avvicinarsi il più possibile all'avversario per colpirlo in maniera diretta. Per questo motivo alla Marina inglese furono imposte delle consegne di combattimento più precise e nuove ordinanze entrarono in vigore l'8 aprile 1653, le cosiddette *Fighting Instructions*[1] scritte dagli ammiragli Robert Blake, Richard Deane e

1 J. S. Corbett, *Project Gutenberg's Fighting Instructions, Fighting Instructions, 1530-1816.* (Publications Of The Navy Records Society Vol. XXIX. September 15, 2005, eBook #16695).

George Monck, il 23 marzo 1653, che imposero nel combattimento navale la rigida osservanza della 'linea di fila', rimasta in vigore fino alle guerre napoleoniche. Questo schieramento fu adottato per la prima volta nel 1653 alla battaglia di Gabbard (o North Foreland) i giorni 12 - 13 giugno 1653, e come racconta un testimone oculare permise agli Inglesi una vittoria schiacciante sugli Olandesi. Nel corso della seconda guerra anglo-olandese il duca di York (futuro re Giacomo II Stuart) e gli ammiragli inglesi misero per iscritto questo concetto, nelle cosiddette *Fighting Instructions* dell'aprile 1665. Questa tattica fu applicata nuovamente a Lowestoft (detta anche seconda battaglia di Texel) il 13 giugno 1665, contro l'ammiraglio olandese Jacob van Wassenaer Obdam. La vittoria inglese rese più radicale il principio della 'linea di fila', come si vede nella lettura delle *Instructions for the better ordering his majesty's fleet in fighting* del 1673.

In effetti, il duca di York ordinava chiaramente, in questo caso, la formazione in linea (*Instructions* IV e VI) ma con l'obbligo per i comandanti di mantenere in ogni caso la flotta in linea (*Instruction* XVI) stabilendo un assioma, che sarà in seguito una vera dittatura sul pensiero tattico navale. Sul mare di Lowestoft, la vittoria degli Inglesi, forti di 109 vascelli contro i 103 degli Olandesi, fu ottenuta grazie ad un'occasionale penetrazione della linea di fila avversaria, manovra che fu giudicata dal gesuita e matematico francese Padre Paul Hoste, una delle figure più significative e influenti del pensiero navale europeo, '*la plus glorieuse victoire, et la plus complète qu'on eut encore gagné sur la mer*'. Padre Hoste, cappellano sulle navi del maresciallo d'Estrées, poi dell'ammiraglio de Tourville, ebbe il modo di familiarizzarsi con i vincoli e i bisogni delle armate navali, poi occupò fino alla sua mote un posto di professore di matematica al seminario di Tolone. Fondatore del pensiero navale moderno, Padre Hoste raggiunse la notorietà per aver redatto la prima grande sintesi sulla tattica navale, che non si trattava di una raccolta di semplici articoli sulle manovre navali come le *Instructions* di York, ma di un progetto più vasto che considerava la storia navale dalla battaglia Lepanto (1571) alla battaglia di Hougue (1692), inaugurando quella che si può chiamare la 'scuola storica' nel

campo della tattica navale. L'opera principale di Padre Hoste *Traité des évolutions navales*2 pubblicata in Francia poco dopo le grandi riforme di Colbert e l'adozione in Inghilterra delle prime *Fighting Instructions,* era una sorta di 'grammatica navale' razionale e geometrica, imbevuta di spirito cartesiano (lo stesso Descarte fu istruito dai Padri Gesuiti) concepita con intenzione pedagogica per l'uso dei professionisti del mare.

Questa 'grammatica navale' era tuttavia caratterizzata da un dogmatismo e di un formalismo eccessivo, unicamente preoccupato a fornire solo delle figure geometriche.3 Infatti, Padre Hoste si limitava a considerare solo un "approccio cinematico" della manovra, non considerando nessuna strategia navale.4

I sostenitori di Padre Hoste furono l'ammiraglio olandese de Ruyter, che ne applicava il principio con una certa flessibilità, gli ammiragli francesi Duquesne e Tourville e, nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo, l'ammiraglio inglese Jervis (Lord Saint-Vincent), che dimostrò l'importanza delle teorie di Padre Hoste sul combattimento navale per linea di fila, fino ad allora definito dal conte di Maurepas, segretario di Stato alla Marina francese 'un inutile scambio di colpi'.5

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2 Opere pubblicate da Padre Hoste: *Traité des évolutions navales* (1691), *Recueil des traités mathématiques* (1692), *Théorie de la construction des vaisseaux* (1697), *Art des Armées navales ou traité des évolutions, qui contient des règles utiles aux officiers généraux, et particulières d'une armée navale; avec des exemples tirés de ce qui s'est passé de plus considérable sur la mer depuis cinquante ans*, (1697). Cfr. Michel Vergé-Franceschi, ed., *Dictionnaire d'Histoire maritime*, éditions Robert Laffont, coll. 'Bouquins',2002. Étienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*. (Paris: éditions Tallandier,2002), 573. Brian Turnstall, *Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail. The Evolution of Fighting Tactics, 1650-1815*. (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1990), J.S Corbett, *Fighting Instructions, 1530-1816*. (The Navy Records Society, 1905, vol. 29).

3 M. Depeyre, *Padre Hoste fondateur de La pensé navale.* In FEDN, *L'évolution de la pensée navale* (Paris: FEDN, 1992), 56-77.

4 Amm. Castex, *Théories stratégiques* (Paris: Société d'édition gèographiques, maritimes et coloniales, 1929), 29.

5 J. Meyer, *Tecnique et guerre navale à l'époque moderne. In 'Revue historique des armées'*, no 207 (1997), 11. La citazione è del conte Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux de Maurepas segretario di Stato alla Marina dal 16 agosto 1723 fino al 23 aprile 1749:*'Qu'est-ce qu'une bataille navale? On se canonne, on se sépare et la mer*

Il problema di come realizzare l'azione decisiva nel corso della battaglia, fu risolto in vari modi sia per mezzo di un'evoluzione cinematica (Hoste, Bigot de Morogues), sia per mezzo di formazioni di squadre (Grenier, d'Ablimont), sia con la ripresa dell'idea d'attacco di John Clerck of Edin, come descritto in *An essay on naval tactics* (1782)6 prima opera a tentare uno studio serio sulle tattiche navali, intese distintamente dall'evoluzione della manovra.7

John Clerk of Eldin, scozzese di professione commerciante, iniziò ad appassionarsi alle questioni marittime durante le sue visite ai porti, dove incontrava ufficiali della Royal Navy, mercanti marittimi e costruttori navali. In questa maniera egli acquisì una grossa messe di informazioni sulle costruzioni navali, la navigazione e l'artiglieria di marina. Appassionato di modellismo e di giochi navali da tavolo (gli attuali *wargames*), egli elaborò una nuova tattica di combattimento, che espose nei circoli intellettuali della città d'Edimburgo, contestando lo schematismo e l'immobilismo delle norme inglesi (*Fighting Instructions*). Egli fu così il primo a concepire una maggiore duttilità in battaglia per poter concentrare il fuoco su una parte della formazione nemica, anche a costo di frazionare la propria tradizionale 'linea di fila', il che era ritenuto allora un serio motivo di deferimento alla corte marziale.

Per Clerk of Eldin l'azione principale doveva consistere nel lanciarsi sul nemico per rompere la linea avversaria, questa era la manovra preliminare della battaglia d'annientamento, un principio totalmente rivoluzionario, che all'epoca aveva avuto i suoi epigoni. Fu con questa tattica che l'ammiraglio inglese Rodney vinse alle isole delle Saintes (1782) riducendo, con un violentissimo attacco, la distanza del

demeure aussi salée qu'auparavant.'

6 Pubblicato in Francia come *Essai méthodique et historique sur les tactiques navales* nell'anno VI della rivoluzione.

7 M. Depeyre, *Entre vent et eau: un siècle d'hésitations tactiques et stratégiques, 1790–1890.* (Paris: Editions Economica/Institut de Stratégie Comparée, 2003). Idem, *Tactiques et stratégie navales de la France et du Royaume-Uni de 1690 à 1815.* (Paris: Editions Economica/Institut de Stratégie Comparée, 1998). A. Lambert, *The Last Sailing Battlefleet: Maintaining Naval Mastery, 1815–1850.* (London: Conway Maritime, 1991).

combattimento e rompendo lo schieramento avversario; principio tattico già applicato dall'ammiraglio francese Suffren, grande innovatore, a Porto Praia (1781), e che l'impreparazione dei suoi capitani non gli permise di replicarlo alla battaglia di Cuddalore (1783).

Nel corso secolo XVIII il *drill* alla prussiana, la struttura divisionaria e la capacità evolutiva della nave da battaglia avevano fatto si che il soldato nella compagnia, il reggimento nella linea o nella colonna, il vascello nella squadra, le squadre nella divisione navale, fossero tutti embricati e articolati fra loro in un processo di intercambiabilità di 'monadi' combattenti.8 Così tecnicamente fu possibile, per provocare un punto di rottura nella formazione avversaria, far effettuare progressivamente all'attacco lineare una conversione di marcia, con uno slittamento in obliquo di una delle linee dello schieramento in rapporto all'altra, per creare un disequilibrio decisivo (Federico II, Rodney). Leuthen (1757) fu la tipica della battaglia, ispirata alla tattica dell'antica falange tebana, una variante della falange oplitica tradizionale in cui si attaccava da sinistra la destra dell'avversario. La manovra era stata inventata dal generale tebano Epaminonda, e utilizzata per la prima volta nella battaglia di Leuttra (371 a.C.), in cui i Tebani vinsero gli Spartani. Un'alternativa a questa, se le condizioni della battaglia lo permettevano, poteva essere la formazione di una colonna d'attacco, per annientare l'avversario (Maurizio di Sassonia, Suffren). Celebri furono gli assalti delle colonne prussiane (sconfitte) alla battaglia di Valmy (1792) e delle colonne francesi (vittoriose) a Jemappes (1792) e a Fleurus (1794). In effetti, con l'avvento della rivoluzione francese, l'accresciuta capacità offensiva delle armi di fuoco determinava la rottura dello schieramento del nemico per mezzo di un'evoluzione tattica da un asse parallelo a un asse perpendicolare, grande controversia in Francia fra i sostenitori dell'ordine sottile (Grimoald) e dell'ordine profondo (Folard), che si concluse alla fine del XVIII secolo, quando l'asse della battaglia fece una conversione

8 J.-P. Charnay, *Homologies et hétérogénéités des stratégies terrestre et navale au début de ère industrielles: propositions méthodologiques.* In '*Revue internationale d'histoire militaire*' no. 37, fasc. 3 (1977), pp. 4, 8-9.

progressiva di 90° dal parallelo al perpendicolare, rispetto al fronte avversario, al fine di ottenerne la rottura. Lo spostamento dell'asse raggiunse infine il culmine con il così detto '*taglio della T*', che fu la manovra condotta da Nelson contro la flotta franco-spagnola a Trafalgar nel 1805, totalmente innovativa, che permise la divisione della linea nemica in due o più punti, in modo da concentrare l'attacco su aliquote inferiori di forze nemiche, le quali non avevano più la possibilità di prestarsi mutuo soccorso. Nelson per realizzare la manovra di Trafalgar, ebbe la fortuna di avere i valorosi cannonieri della Royal Navy, che avevano una cadenza di tiro più rapida e più precisa dei loro nemici. Francesi e Spagnoli erano molto più lenti e miravano alle vele e agli alberi, per diminuire la capacità di manovra delle navi, mentre gli Inglesi puntavano i cannoni sulla linea di galleggiamento dello scafo, così quando la murata della nave avversaria si abbassava nel rollio causavano danni gravissimi e se non l'affondavano, la doccia delle schegge di legno provocate dall'entrata dei proiettili penetrati nella chiglia aveva un effetto devastante sui marinai.

Lo schieramento in battaglia per "linea di fila" valeva solo per le navi appartenenti ai primi tre ranghi (*rates*), il quarto, il quinto e il sesto dettero origine alle fregate, alle corvette e ai brigantini. In effetti i soli vascelli capaci di partecipare alla formazione della linea erano quelli di maggiori dimensioni, costruiti e armati in maniera sufficiente da poter resistere alle più potenti navi dell'avversario. Così nel corso del Seicento le navi a due ponti da 50 cannoni, ancora capaci di integrare una linea, furono rapidamente scartate, e sostituite nel corso del secolo con quelle da 60 e poi da 64 cannoni. Nei primi anni del Settecento secolo si iniziarono le costruzioni dei vascelli di linea a tre - ponti, di dimensioni di oltre 1.000 tonnellate di stazza con un armamento di 100 cannoni e un equipaggio di 800 uomini, questi grandi tre-ponti erano rari, perché troppo costosi e poco manovrabili. La loro costruzione riprese alla fine delle guerre napoleoniche, quando i vascelli da 74 cannoni di terzo rango (*rate*), ossatura fino ad allora delle flotte da guerra, incominciarono a essere considerati di dimensioni

troppo ridotte per restare in linea.9

L'ordine misto napoleonico fu una brillante sintesi dei due sistemi contrapposti associando la linea di fila alla colonna d'assalto, il combattimento frontale si svolgeva contemporaneo a un attacco di fianco o alle spalle, e si concludeva con un assalto decisivo, fatto con tutte le forze disponibili contro il centro, per ottenere la rottura totale del fronte nemico, per concludere con l'organizzazione della battaglia in funzione dell'assalto diretto dal nucleo principale dell'armata. L'accettazione del principio d'usura progressiva e reciproca dei due avversari, valeva per chi poteva impiegare le ultime forze disponibili: squadre di seconda zona nella battaglia navale, truppe di riserva in quella terrestre; come hanno dimostrato le concezioni napoleoniche del mantenimento nella battaglia di una riserva generale e dell'impiego della Vecchia Guardia alla fine dello scontro per conseguire la conclusione tattica. Se questo concetto fu adottato anche nella tattica navale da Nelson, per il quale il numero di vascelli posseduti divenne quindi un elemento per creare nel tempo debito e nel luogo prestabilito una superiorità di forza sul nemico, in vista di una battaglia d'annientamento, questo principio non fu mai recepito dalla marina francese, la quale quando le circostanze la costringevano a uscire in mare aperto, come obiettivo principale si limitava alla protezione del naviglio mercantile, evitando ogni occasione di scontro con il nemico. In caso d'ingaggio la marina francese, se costretta a sostenere un combattimento, si poneva sempre in posizione di 'sottovento', utile alla difesa, per costringere il nemico ad attaccare, con tutti i rischi che ne derivavano. Così facendo, era in grado di danneggiarlo durante il suo avvicinamento, evitando gli scontri decisivi e preservando l'integrità delle proprie navi. Al contrario la marina inglese, avendo sempre come obiettivo primario l'attacco e la distruzione del nemico, sceglieva di solito di navigare in 'sopravvento', al fine di spingere la propria flotta verso il nemico.

Queste differenti concezioni tattiche riflettevano due diversi

9 D. J. Lyon, *Les vaisseaux de guerre britanniques. Modèles et politique de construction* (1688-1830). In M. Acerra, J. Merino e J. Meyer, eds., *Les Marines de guerres européennes XVIIe-XVIIIe.* (Paris: PUF, 1985), 162-164.

punti di vista. Per i Francesi la guerra marittima era un elemento minore rispetto alla guerra terrestre, dove 'la Marina non era più che una branca dell'esercito intervenendo su casi specifici, e doveva dunque essergli subordinata'. Per i Britannici invece il 'vero scopo' era 'la vittoria sulla marina nemica e il controllo dei mari, dove le flotte nemiche erano i veri bersagli'.10 Così le operazioni navali britanniche fecero apparire nel corso della storia seguente l'evoluzione continua della strategia marittima.

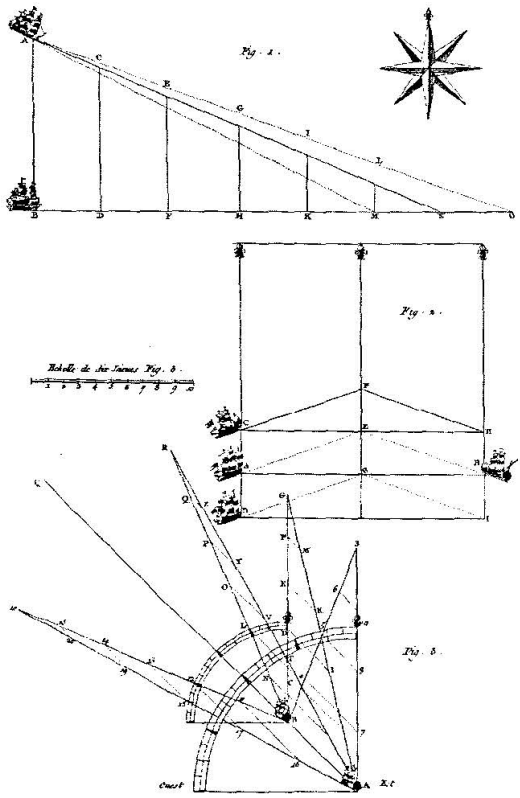

Figure 1: Diderot & d'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie, Marine. Évolution navales, Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explications, à Paris, avec l'approbation et le privilège du Roy.*
Planche Ière
Fig. 1 Méthode générale pour joindre un vaisseau qui est sous le vent, par la route la plus courte.
Fig. 2 Manière de connaître si l'on est au vent ou sous le vent d'un autre vaisseau à la voile.
Fig. 3 Aller par le plus court chemin à un vaisseau qu'on chasse, & sur lequel on peut mettre le cap, sans louvoyer.

10 A. T. Mahan, *L'influenza del potere marittimo sulla storia (1660-1783).* (Roma: Ufficio Storico Marina Militare, 1994), 288-289, 533, 538 e seguenti.

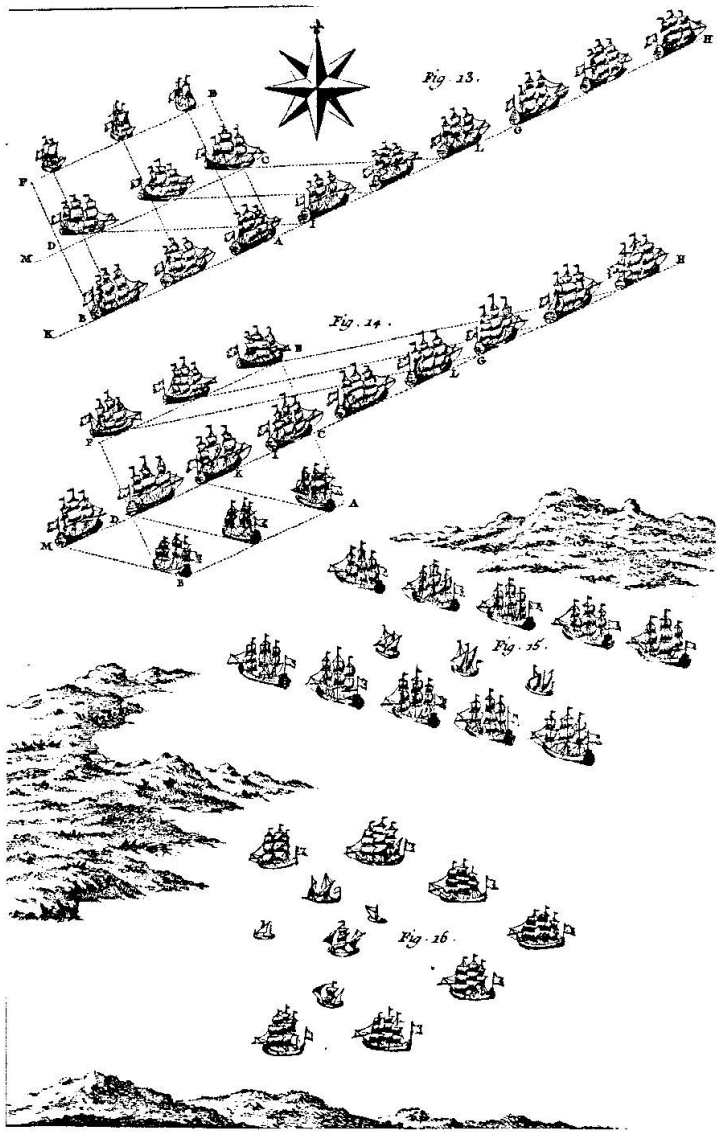

Figure 2: Diderot & d'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie, Marine. Évolution navales, Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explications, à Paris, avec l'approbation et le privilège du Roy.*
Planche VI
Fig. 13 & 14 L'armée marchant sur trois colonnes, la mettre en bataille.
Fig. 15 & 16 Ordre d'une armée qui force un passage.

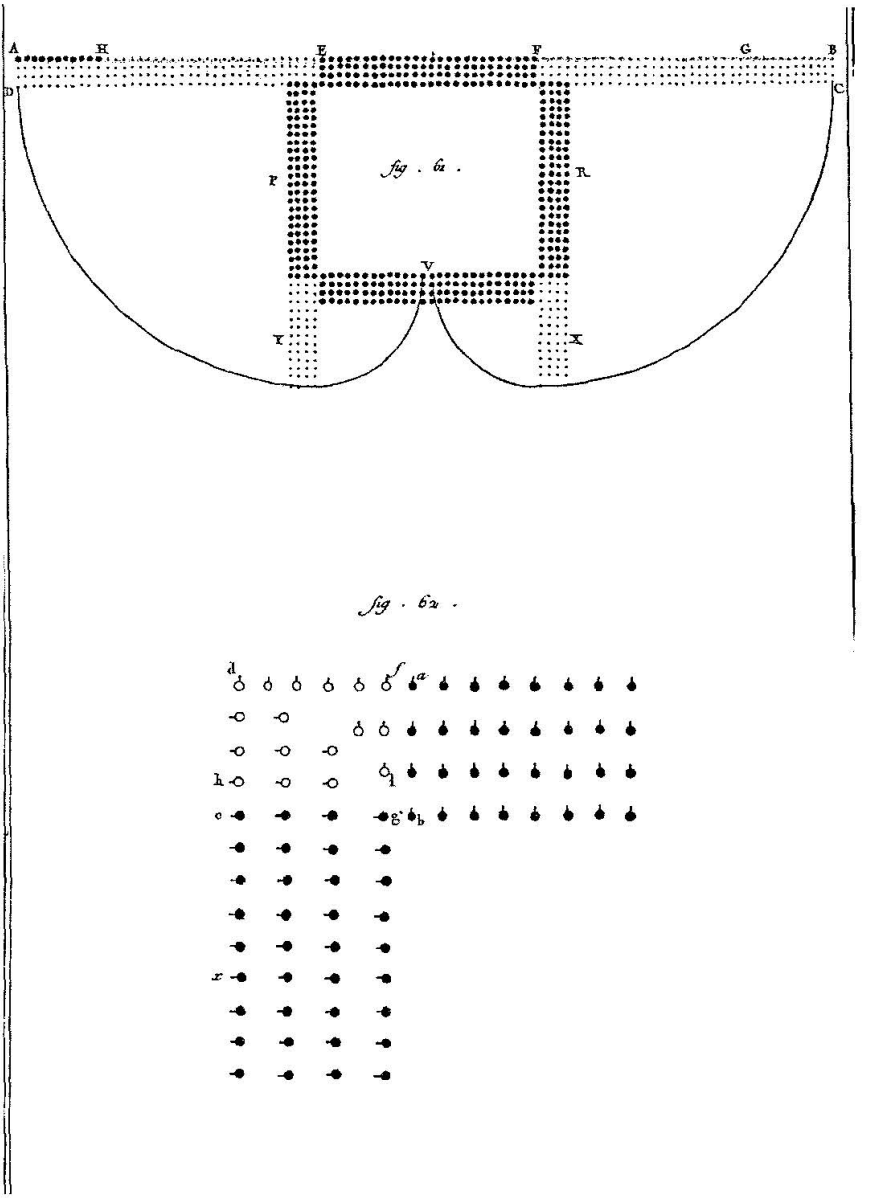

Figure 4: Diderot & d'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie, Marine. Évolution navales, Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explications, à Paris, avec l'approbation et le privilège du Roy.*
Planche VII
Fig. 17 & 18 Ordre de marche.
Fig. 20 Même problème, du vent de nord-ouest.
Fig. 21 Même problème, du vent d'est.

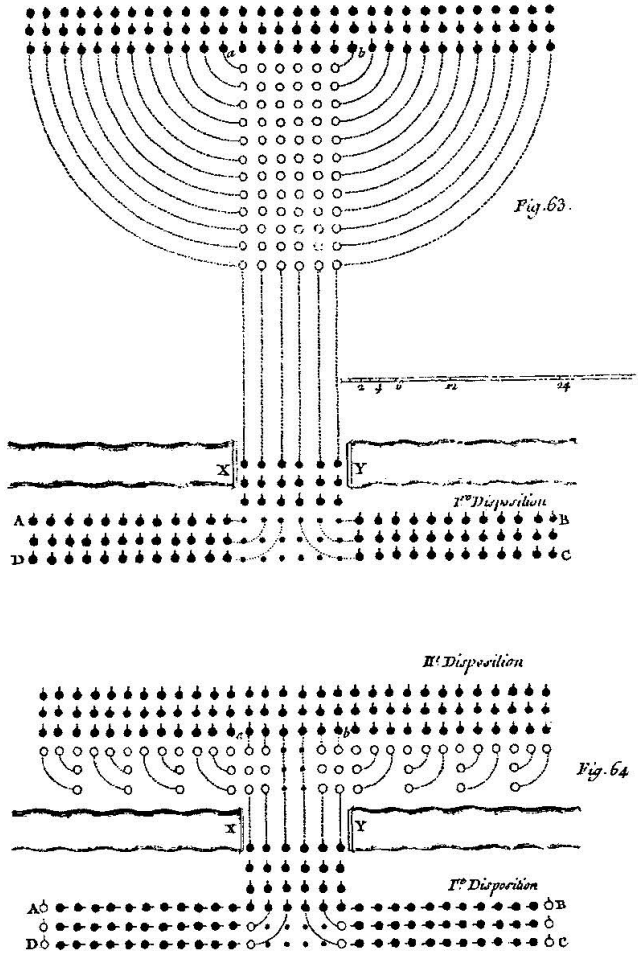

Figure 5: Diderot & d'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie, Arts Militaires, Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explications, à Paris, avec l'approbation et le privilège du Roy.*
Planche XIII
Fig. 63 On donne dans cette figure la manière de défiler par files & par le centre ; la première disposition que fait la troupe ABCD qui défile par le centre sue le point ou le défilé XY ; & la seconde, la même troupe qui s'est reformée après le passage du défilé.
Fig. 64 Cette figure sert, comme la précédente, à donner la manière de défiler par files & par centre. On y suppose que le pont ou le défilé XY peut contenir de front le double d'hommes de la hauteur du bataillon ABCD, qui est sur trois rangs. La première disposition fait voir la division du centre qui entre dans le défilé XY, & les autres divisions de la gauche qui se mettent en état de la suivre ; la seconde disposition, la manière dont la troupe se reforme après le passage du défilé.

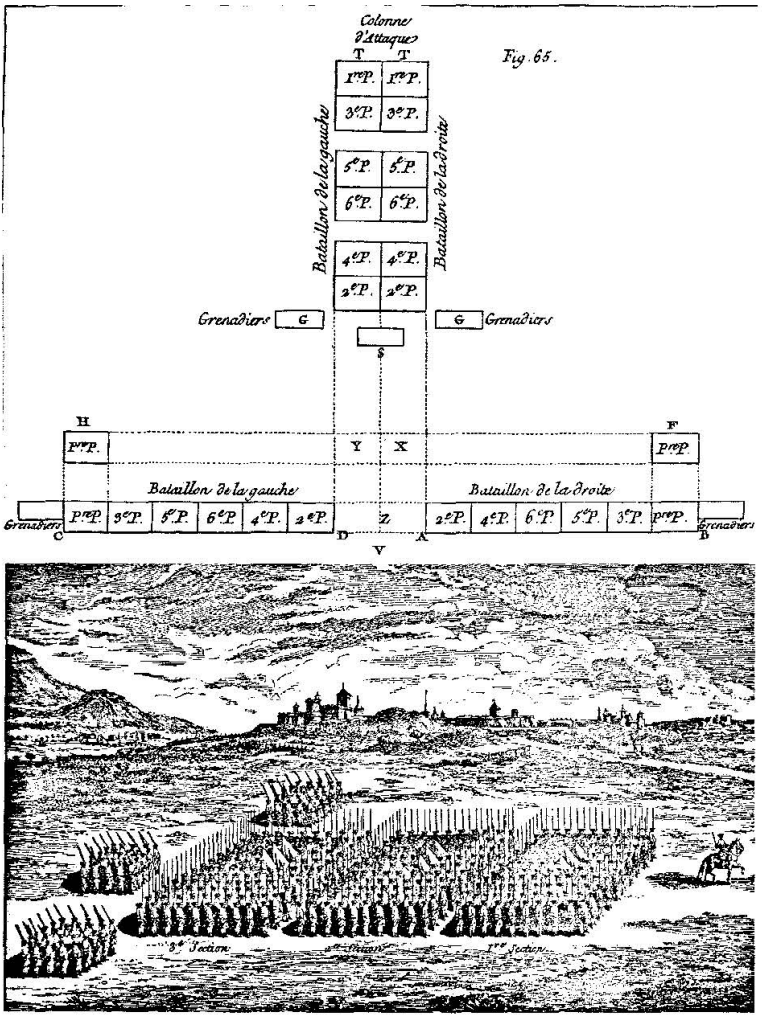

Figure 6: Diderot & d'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie, Arts Militaires, Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explications, à Paris, avec l'approbation et le privilège du Roy.*

Planche XIV

Fig. 65. Cette figure sert à expliquer la formation de la colonne d'attaque TTS, composé des deux bataillons AB & CD, éloigné l'un de l'autre de l'intervalle des piquets, qu'on a supprimés dans cette figure, & divisés par pelotons. F&H sont les premières pelotons de chacun des deux bataillons qui ont marché en avant par huit pas redoublés, & qui ensuite doivent marcher l'un&l'autre par les flancs opposés pour se réunir en X&Y, d'où ils marchent en avant pour former la tête de la colonne ; les autres pelotons du bataillon de la droite & de celui de la gauche faisant successivement le même mouvement, la colonne se trouve formé. G,G sont les grenadiers placé d'abord aux ailes de la ligne formé des deux bataillons AB&CD, & ensuite à l'extrémité des ailes de la queue de la colonne. C'est le peloton des surnuméraires.

On voit dans cette figure les trois sections qui forment la colonne.

Fig. 66. Cette figure représente la colonne de M. le chevalier Folard divisée dans les trois sections, avec les grenadiers qui forment trois pelotons à la queue.

D'Aleccio's Fortifications: Faithful Representation or Artistic Imagination?

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The pre-nineteenth century chroniclers and war artists had only their eyes and brushes and pens to capture, record and convey the details and narrative of battle. The skills required to portray the complexities and pictorial challenges of the battlefield – be it in the form of Egyptian tomb paintings, Sumerian steles, Assyrian bas reliefs, Greek temple paintings, Roman mosaics, or the tapestries, frescoes, and oil paintings of the Renaissance and later artistic periods – placed special demands on an artist's abilities and ingenuity that were not exerted by other pictorial subject matters; difficulties which increased considerably with the changing nature and growing scale of competing armies and the new technologies of warfare along the centuries. As the small scale wars of antiquity, fought at close quarters with swords, lances, and cavalry charges gave way to gunpowder weaponry and large professional standing armies, the scale of the battlefield expanded and the emphasis shifted from the heroic deeds of elite warriors to the mass formation of huge disciplined bodies of men fighting as automata in a large war machine. The introduction of firearms, and the resultant 'exchange of musketry volleys and artillery across open country'[1] increased not only the distance between the belligerents but also, as a

1 P. Paret, *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art* (UNC Press Books, 1992).

result, the compositional difficulties for the artists in their attempts to capture the military action on paper or canvas.

By the mid-sixteenth century, artists in Italy had developed an approach to the portrayal of battle scenes which 'elevated painterly qualities over narratives that simply described specific historical moments' in the fighting,[2] inspired by the northern artists like the German painter Albrecht Altdorfer and his *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529)[3] who first experimented with this technique. Termed as the 'battles without heroes', these compositions were intended to capture the reality of fighting as well as the geography of the battlefield. This descriptive form of depiction eventually led to a formal convention described as the 'mapping of battle' before spilling over into the more 'naturalistic' representations of battles found in the seventeenth-century paintings of Adam Francois Van der Meulen and other painters.[4] Among the formal devices that became the staple convention in the depiction of such scenes was the bird's eye view. This form of representation made the viewer an 'omniscient observer of the event' and allowed for the portrayal of accurate panoramas of the battlefields.

In the spectrum of topographical battlefield art, however, it was the siege, rather than the running battle in the open field, which gave itself most readily to artistic depiction and organized composition. The predominantly static nature of siege warfare and the prominent architectural and landscape features which punctuated and dominated such scenes, centred mostly around the figure of the besieged fortresses, enabled choreographed compositions that were more comprehensible and less difficult to portray than the inchoate, unregulated and chaotic nature of melees in the field. Siege views, in contrast to the confused

2 Norton Simon Museum website, *Note on Battle Scene by Luca Giordano* http://www.nortonsimon.org/collections/browse_artist.php?name=Giordano%2C+Luca&resultnum=1

3 Larry Silver, *Nature and Nature's God: Landscape and Cosmos of Albrecht Altdorfer*. In *'The Art Bulletin'*, 81, no. 2 (June, 1999), 204.

4 Van der Meulen was responsible for establishing the official French topographical type of military painting and for fixing its conventions; see J. Plax, *Battling for Representation: Ideology and Military Images*, 207. http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/Quaderno/Quaderno6/Plax.pdf,

and messy nature of the battlefield, were regulated by 'the discipline of fortifications' and these depictions came 'to pervade the mental imagery' of the time.[5] The fact, then, that by the sixteenth century the fortified city had become, to cite Martha Pollak, 'the privileged site of war' and the 'siege' itself, the prime military strategy for waging war, also ensured that investment and assault became a common occurrence and a most popular iconographic theme of the period.[6] In the sixteenth century alone, siege warfare inspired countless illustrations, from woodcuts and engravings, such as Behams' 1522 *Siege of Rhodes,* to large mural fescoes such as Vasari's *Storming of the fortress near Porta Camollia in Siena* (1570) in the *Sala di Cosimo I* in the *Palazzo Vecchio* in Florence.

Ranking high amongst this category of illustrations of siege warfare are, undeniably, Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's frescoes of the Ottoman invasion of the island of Malta in 1565, which decorate the frieze of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio*[7] at the Palace of the Grand Masters in Valletta, complemented by his subsequent prints published in Rome and faithfully re-engraved and reissued by Francesco Lucini in 1631.

This narrative cycle presents the Hospitallers' view of the battle against the mighty Ottoman army in the summer of 1565, as well as the Knights' notion of their own historical role in that momentous struggle. It was also intended to perpetuate the renown of their illustrious military order. Like the ancient Greeks, the mode most central to the Hospitallers' thinking was the idea of *kleos aphthiton,* i.e., continuity through an imperishable renown maintained through the memory of future generations.[8] Matteo Perez D'Aleccio's 'silent poctry' provides

5 Martha Pollak, *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe* (2010), 110.

6 Ibid., 110.

7 These were painted between 1575 and 1581; for an analysis of the paintings see Theresa Vella, *The 1565 Great Siege frescos in the Palace.* In Maroma Camilleri and T. Vella, eds., *Celebratio Amicitiae: Essays in honour of Giovanni Bonello* (Malta: 2006).

8 S.C. Spiteri, *The Armoury of the Knights and its Organization in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Malta.* In Vicki Ann Cremona and Olivier Renaudeau, eds., *Entre le glaive et la croix : chefs-d'oeuvre de l'armurerie de Malte / Between the*

At the very heart of many of the scenes are the fortifications. It was, after all, the presence of fortifications in the Great Siege equation which gave meaning to the word 'siege' in the title of this epic conflict, for without these defensive elements the confrontation between the two belligerents would have been yet another battle in the open field, an unbalanced contest between two opposing forces varying considerably in numeric and material strength. The fortifications redressed this imbalance and gave the small force of Hospitaller knights and their men a fighting chance and the prospect of surviving the mighty onslaught of the formidable Ottoman war machine. Without the fortifications, therefore, there would have been no siege to begin with.

The arrival of the Turkish armada in 1565 found the Hospitaller Knights entrenched behind a series of strategically placed defences that enabled a degree of control over both the main harbour area and the interior of the Island.[11] This small network of defences comprised a system of detached forts, three inside the harbour and two outposts (formerly the Islands' principal settlements) to the rear. The main Hospitaller stronghold, the mother fortress, so to speak, was the fortified town of Birgu with its adjoining castle of St. Angelo, which now served as the citadel or keep of the defences, where, if all the rest was lost, the Hospitallers could retreat and make their last stand awaiting relief forces. Next came the fortress of Senglea (frequently referred to as Fort St. Michael) on the adjoining Isola Peninsula which was still largely incomplete; and Fort St. Elmo with its cavalier and hastily-built ravelin, which commanded the entrance to the two harbours. Outside the harbour area, the land was much more sparsely defended. To the north, roughly in the centre of the island, stood the old town of Mdina, which although stiffened with a couple of bastions since 1530, was intrinsically still a medieval fortress. Farther to the north, on the neighbouring island of Gozo, stood another small medieval fortress, while a small number of isolated towers, which had been built to provide the rural inhabitants

11 For a description of Hospitaller fortifications in the sixteenth century see S. C. Spiteri, *Fortresses of the Cross: Hospitaller Military Architecture, 1136-1798* (Malta: 1994), passim..

with some protection against corsair incursions, dotted the landscape.

In one important way, the chief strength of the harbour defences lay in the very manner of their design according to the latest conventions of the bastioned trace, planned by leading Italian military engineers of their age, as well as in the solid manner of construction, carved out from the Island's living rock. One the other hand, however, the whole system was severely handicapped by the high ground which enveloped all the positions, a land feature which the Turkish gunners were quick to exploit. One of these heights in particular, Mount Sceberras, had been earmarked as way back as 1524 as ideal site for their new fortress but the financial, political, and military situations which plagued the Knights of St John throughout the early years of their stay on the island had conspired to ensure that the desired fortress remained simply a blueprint on the drawing board and any tactical advantages offered by the topography, forfeited.

Instead, the Knights had been compelled to invest in the fortification of an existing medieval sea-castle and its *suburgu* straddled along the southern part of the harbour. A strong *razzia* by a large Ottoman fleet in 1551 forced the Order to quicken the pace of its efforts and resulted in the construction of two small forts. The first, called St. Elmo, was sited at the tip of the Sceberras promontory in order to command the entrances to the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett. The second, Fort St. Michael, was planted at the neck of the Isola peninsula so as to protect the town of Birgu and the whole promontory was eventually enclosed within a new bastioned enceinte to form the new fortified town of Senglea, named after Grand Master Claude de la Sengle. The election of Jean de Valette to the magistracy in 1557 was followed by a renewed enthusiasm for the construction of the desired *piazza reale* on Mount Sceberras but the two main occasions on which the Order sought to push the project through, the first in 1558 with the help of the Bartolomeo Genga, military engineer to the Duke of Urbino and then in 1562 to the designs of Baldassere Lanci both fell through. By this time, however, the growing Turkish menace ruled out any major works of fortifications and the Knights had to continue to rely on their

strongholds of Birgu, Senglea and Fort St Elmo as their front lines of defence.

It is these handful of fortifications, then, which punctuate D'Aleccio's visual narrative, albeit with varying degrees of intensity and presence. Their representation is not a formulaic rendering, such as found, for example in the Bayeaux tapestry, nor a purely idealize romantic setting drawn in the artist's studio with little or no bearing to reality as encountered for example, in Bedam's 1522 Siege of Rhodes. D'Aleccio appears to have gone to great efforts to make the setting both legible and credible, and as faithful to what he saw around him as his artistic skills allowed him.

Notwithstanding, D'Aleccio's terse images constantly raise a set of fundamental questions on how we are to treat his pictorial chronicle. In other words, does D'Aleccio provide a reliable representation of the fortifications or is some caution called for? How authentic is this a representation of the layout and details of the bastioned enceintes and can we use his depictions to fill in the gaps of our understanding of the Hospitaller fortifications as these stood in 1565? Were these drawings the product of his efforts to reproduce things as directly seen, and if so, how much did he really understand what he was seeing and how was this, in turn, informed by his knowledge, or lack thereof, of the language of military architecture.

More importantly, how much did he give free reign to his imagination? What, in other words, is the images' mimetic power?

Depicting the Bastioned fortress

By the mid-sixteenth century, the art of portraying the fortress on paper, canvas, or lime-plaster, had become a specialized task in its own right burdened with its own complex set of problems which the artist was required to master. At the heart of it all stood the issue of *disegno*, the ability to draw, the most important basic tool in the artist's *metier* and, one must add, also in that of his fellow practitioner, the military engineer, the designer and builder of the very works of fortifications themselves. Even a courtier-warrior, trying to make his way ahead

in the princely courts, was required to know how to draw and paint, , according to Baldassare Castiglione, since a 'knowledge of art' gave one the ability to sketch '*castelles, houldes, fortresses, and suche other matters*',[12] which otherwise could not be easily described to others.

The ability to draw the new architecture of defence, however, had now come to include the need to muster the principles of geometry and the rules of perspective. For the modern bastioned fortress which emerged from the military revolution triggered off by the invention and introduction of gunpowder-operated artillery had created a totally new kind of structure that did not really give itself so readily to painterly depiction. The bastioned fortress '*alla moderna*' as re-engineered by Italian military architects, with its low-profile walls and thick ramparts gave the artist few distinguishing visual features which he could latch onto and exploit graphically. The distinctive and pronounced vertical silhouette of the earlier medieval castles and citadels, with their turretted battlements and crenelleted walls were now replaced by flat, low-lying, generally featureless and sterile masses of earth and stone. The traditional graphic codes of representation established by castellated military architecture could not be easily translated to portray the relative blandness of the geometric *trace italienne*.

The problems of depicting fortifications

The challenges which the changes in military architecture of the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries presented the artist seeking to depict and represent the fortress were brought about by the radical change in the new forms of fortification which accompanied the introduction of the bastioned trace. This new type of architecture created problems with issues of scale and orientation.

It is true that by the sixteenth century the fortified city had grown considerably in size. Even medieval cities such as Florence had,

12 Baldassare Castiglione, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), cited in J.R. Hale, *Warfare and Cartography, ca. 1450 to ca. 1640* (http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt1/HOC_VOLUME3_Part1_chapter29.pdf); pdf version at https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/671/courtier.pdf.

by the fifteenth century achieved huge and unwieldy proportions as amply illustrated by the *della Catena* drawing. These cities' massive scale and extensive enceintes made them difficult to condense and represent on paper. Although the new science of perspective had thought the artist how to resolve some of the issues and allowed him, through foreshortening, to circumvent distances and compress a huge entity onto a few feet of canvas or paper, the diminution of the distant features that inevitably came with this method of portrayal from a single viewpoint (real or imagined) meant that only selected sections of the enceinte could be presented directly to the viewer. The perspective foreshortening, moreover, made the fortress appear short and squat and its distant features occluded by those located in front of them. One way of bypassing the restriction of this convention was through the adoption of bird's eye views. These elevated views of fortified cities or fortresses from above, more often than not, however, were not actually aerial perspectives but axonometric-type of renderings, that combined 'a vertical plan of ground-level features with perspective views of buildings and other standing features, all presented at roughly the same scale'.[13] The fortress thus appeared 'as it would unfold itself to any one passing over it, as in a balloon, at a height sufficient to abolish sharpness of perspective, and yet low enough to allow of distinct view of the scene beneath'.[14]

This technique became very popular among cartographers and map makers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It is a technique which D'Aleccio commonly employs in his portrayal of the Hospitaller fortifications. Of the 14 instances or so in which the Knights' defences and strongholds are depicted in his panels (and prints), 9 are bird's eye views or map-like depictions. The wider composition of the overall scenes themselves, however, also includes various elements of an arbitrary form of diminution intended to impart a sense of depth

13 William Ravenhill, *Bird's-eye view & bird's-flight view.* In '*The Map Collector*' 35 (1986), 36–7.

14 Herbert Hurst, *Introduction - Oxford Topography: an essay*. In '*Oxford Historical Society*' (1899), 1–12 (4–5).

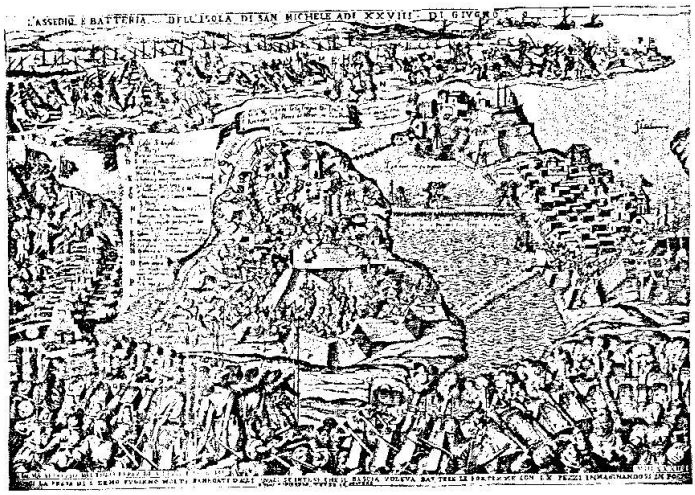

Figure 1. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Sesto*, showing the bombardment and attacks on Senglea (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

and distance to the landscape. An attempt at a form of 'realistic' aerial perspective, perhaps inspired by the need to recapture the enemy gunners' view of the fortifications as they would have been seen from the elevated Turkish camps and batteries positioned on the enveloping hills, is encountered in the depiction of the Birgu land front showing the bombardment of the post of Castile (*Foglio Ottavo*) and Senglea.

In the latter, the sense of depth is actually conveyed by the diminishing size of the figures rather than by the ramparts themselves which retain the same dimensions. Indeed, the bastion and cavalier of Fort St. Angelo, set in the middle ground, have practically the same dimensions as those of the ramparts along the Birgu land front depicted in the foreground. In this manner, D'Aleccio retained a documentary, plan-like quality to his portrayal of the forts. In these two drawings, the artist also sought to employ another convention that was becoming popular with battlefield paintings – the use of the foreground rise. This technique created a 'stage', so to speak, which showcased the Turkish

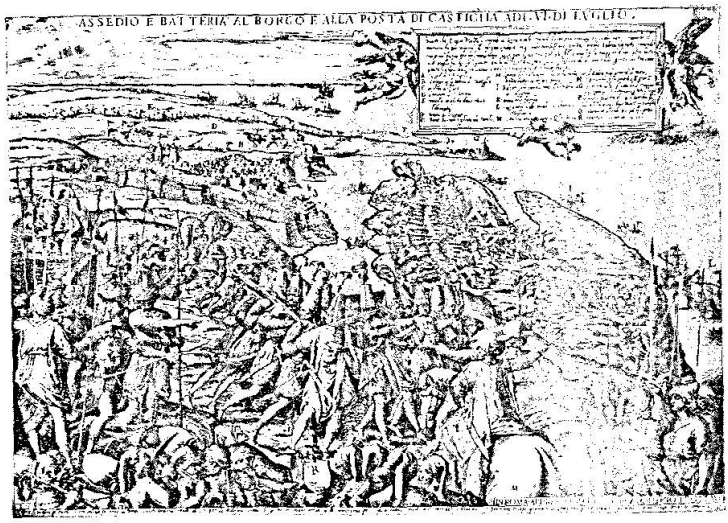

Figure 2. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Ottavo,* showing the bombardment of the Post of Castile (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

commanders and their powerful siege gun batteries. This rise had the effect of endowing the composition with a distinctive 'basin-shaped foreground'. [15] In D'Aleccio's depictions, however, the technique is at times somewhat understated.

A similar attempt is found in the scene showing the bombardment and infantry assaults on Fort St. Elmo (*Foglio Quinto*). Here, D'Aleccio likewise uses the rising foreground to show the massive Turkish siege battery which pounded the land front of the small star-shaped fort. The fort itself, however, is show in practically 3D-plan format, like an axonometric rendering (*perspettiva soldatescha*), rather than in perspective, while the castle of St Angelo, across the harbour, on the other hand, is depicted in profile.

The bastioned ramparts' low relief brought about a dramatic reduction in the hierarchy of vertical elements and this made the profile of modern gunpowder fortifications difficult to define, with the

15 Plax, *Battling for Representation*, 207-208.

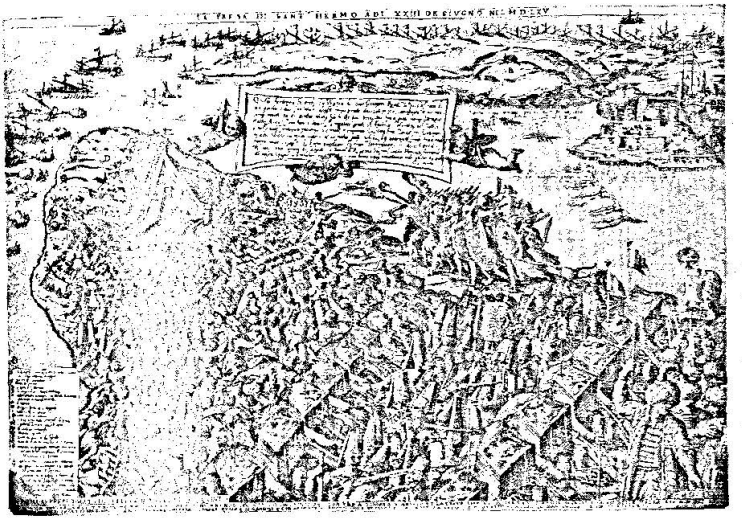

Figure 3. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Quinto*, showing the Turkish siege battery and the attacks on Fort St Elmo (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

exception of their cavaliers, which projected vertically (but which in any case were relatively few and spaced far between), presenting the viewer with a relatively uneven progression of walls which, on paper, generally translated into little more than a straight line or band of ramparts.

With the modern bastioned fortress, therefore, placing the viewing point at eye level only resulted in a meaningless elevation of sterile walls. Bastioned fortresses, as a result, now required a different placement of the point of view if they were to convey any meaningful complex three-dimensional visual information. This problem was solved by raising the point of view. This not only allowed for a more detailed representation of the whole ensemble but also served to expose and reveal the interior layout within the walled perimeter. Francesco di Giorgio Martini was able to demonstrate this new invention in his *Codex Saluzziano* in the late 1400s,[16] and thereafter most military

16 Miguel Ángel Alonso-Rodríguez and José Calvo-López, *Prospettiva Soldatesca: An Empirical Approach to the Representation of Military Architecture in the*

engineers and illustrators came to rely heavily on it. The reception of Martini's solutions is first encountered in the highly successful treatise *Del modo di fortificar le città* by Giovanni Battista de Zanchi (1554) and by Maggi and Castriotto in 1564,[17] both of which espoused the use of bird's eye views and so-called 'military' or 'cavalier perspectives' (*prospettiva soldatescha*).

In D'Aleccio's drawings, these difficulties of representing the bastioned fortress are best illustrated in his treatment of the land front of Birgu. *Foglio Ottavo*, for instance, highlights the problems of ground-level frontal-viewing that the low profile and silhouette of Birgu's bastioned enceinte presented to the artist. Another profile is encountered in *Foglio Settimo* which shows the eastern Kalkara-facing side of Birgu (highlighting the Post of Castile) and Fort St. Angelo. Within the same picture one finds, similarly in profile but shown as a schematisation of a silhouette in the background, Mdina with the bell tower of its cathedral, and further in the distance, likewise schematized, the Gozo castle.

The reliability of D'Aleccio's depictions

The techniques and conventions of representation, as discussed above, would have dictated and in some ways even taxed D'Aleccio's ability to a convey a faithful representation of the fortifications within the narrative nature of his visual space. The extent to which he was able to overcome these difficulties was largely determined not only by his visual powers of observation but also on his ability to 'read' the language of military architecture and understand clearly what he was actually seeing.

Although our present knowledge of the first-generation Hospitaller fortifications, as these stood in 1565, is highly fragmented and incomplete, there is still enough information to allow us to analyse

Early Modern Period. In '*Nexus Network Journal Architecture and Mathematics*' (Turin: 2014), http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00004-014-0216-6/fulltext.html.

17 Girolamo Maggi d'Anghiari and Giacomo Fusto Castriotto, *Della fortificatione delle città* (Venice: 1564).

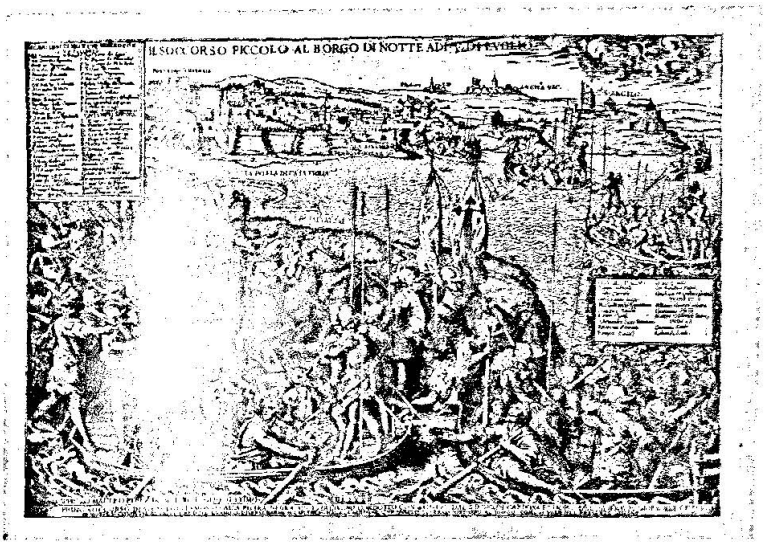

Figure 4. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Settimo*, showing the arrival of the *Piccolo Soccorso* and the fortress of Birgu and the Castle of St Angelo in profile in the background (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

the validity of D'Aleccio's graphic statements. There is little argument that, on the whole, D'Aleccio's depictions of the fortifications manage to capture the essence of the various works making up the defensive network. However, there are also various omission, errors, and inconsistencies which raise a range of questions about the reliability of those features and elements which are represented.

Although D'Aleccio was not an eyewitness to the fighting, he was, nonetheless, able to get a first-hand knowledge of the fortifications as rebuilt in the post-1565 period. These repairs and rebuilding efforts had not really altered the original configuration of the defences to any significant degree, although some of the elements, such as the *ritirate* and the ravelin of Fort St. Elmo, and probably the wooden palisade at Senglea would have already been cleared away by the time of his arrival in Malta in 1575. D'Aleccio's fortifications, therefore, even if based on a post-1565 rebuilding effort, would still have largely comprised the

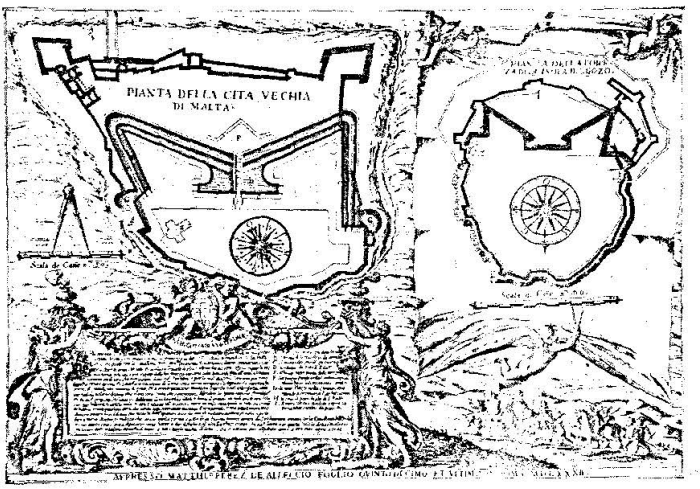

Figure 5. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Quinto Decimo*, showing the plans with proposed new projects for the old fortifications of Mdina and Gozo (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

original elements that faced the Ottoman attackers a decade earlier.

There is also little doubt that D'Aleccio had some form of access to various military and architectural plans of the defences. The inclusion, in his printed version, for example, of the scaled plans of the Gozo castle and the enceinte of Mdina (probably depicting Francesco Laparalli's / Gerolamo Cassar's proposals for alterations to these two old strongholds with the addition of new bastioned fronts), are based on accurate and detailed architectural plans that had been prepared earlier by experienced military engineers. Indeed, these very plans constitute the earliest planimetric record of these two fortresses. That similar plans of Birgu, Senglea and Fort St Elmo must have also been available for consultation can be deduced from the map-like manner in which D'Aleccio chose to portray these fortified cities in five of his scenes. Their complex geometric layout could not have been clear solely through observation at ground level.

The complex elements making up the irregular enceintes of

Birgu and Senglea, in particular, with their many bastions, curtains, flanks, and spurs, would not have been readily comprehensible to the untrained eye of the non-military observer. At the same time, however, this does not explain the many inconsistencies and omissions which are encountered in some of his depictions, if D'Aleccio, as believed, was working with the benefit of plans. It is also important to draw attention here to the fact there exist significantly large differences in the details of the fortifications as represented in the frescoes at the Grand Master's Palace and those found in his later Rome engravings. The frescoe representations have been found by the author to be more accurate than those which are shown in his engravings.

There is even a degree of inconsistency in the engravings themselves. A simple comparison of *Foglio Terzo* and *Foglio Quarto* for example, reveals the great difference in the shape and number of bastions along the Corradino side of Senglea's enceinte and in the Kalkara side of the Birgu's perimeter. Furthermore, when these plans are then compared to the profile and land front aerial views of the same fortifications, they not only fail to corroborate the secondary details, but furthermore, reveal other inconsistencies and omissions of their own.

For example, although Birgu is shown with two towering cavaliers in all the plan-like views, only one cavalier is actually shown (St. John Cavalier) in the perspective and profile views. It is now known that St James Bastion did not have a cavalier in 1565 - there was only one cavalier, that on St. John Bastion. Earlier in 1562, Baldassare Lanci had recommended that one should be built there but this did not materialize until the eighteenth century. D'Aleccio's depiction of this cavalier in his plans, but not in his aerial perspective views and profiles, therefore, seems to have resulted from his inability to read correctly the architectural plans which had been handed to him. Indeed, the structure which D'Aleccio interprets as a cavalier was actually the two-stepped layout of the bastion and its outer protective antemural. This latter feature, a sort of faussebraye described by Giacomo Bosio as a *rivellino*, had been grafted onto the faces and flanks of the two bastions of Birgu prior to the Siege in order to provide them with added protection against

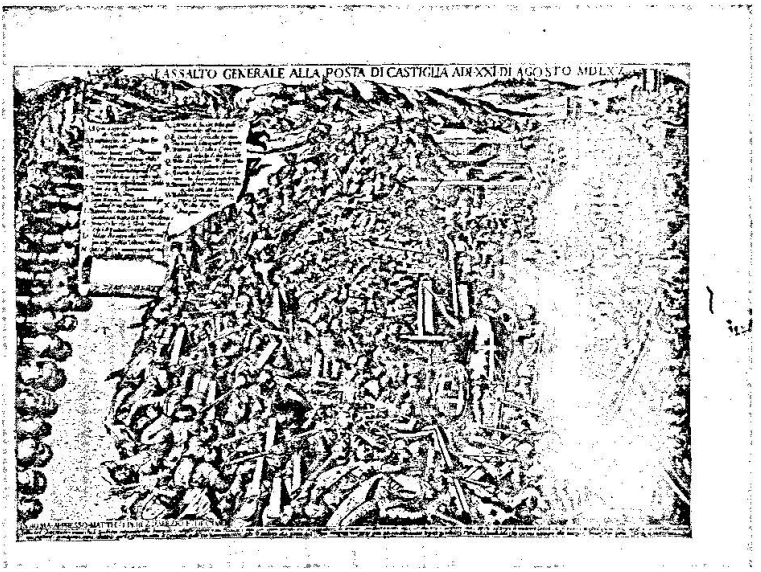

Figure 6. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Decimo*, showing the attacks on the Post of Castile at Birgu (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

direct bombardment. Although these features no longer exist, they survived well into the eighteenth century and were documented in a number of seventeenth-century plans before they were engulfed within the perimeters of the larger bulwarks erected by Charles François de Mondion. An illustrated report prepared by Mederico Blondel in 14 July 1695 entitled '*Discorso della riparatione necessaria delle rouvine dell' Ala destra della fronte della Città Vittoriosa e della sua Porta Marina*' shows very clearly the '*Baluardo principale di Fronte con Falsabraga*'. Moreover, recent archaeological investigations undertaken at St. John Bastion by the Restoration Directorate, have now confirmed the existence of this two tiered layout.

D'Aleccio actually manages to portray this layout quite faithfully in his frescoe but fails miserably to follow his own initial depiction in his later engravings. D'Aleccio's inability to portray this feature

consistently, and to mistake it for a cavalier can, to a certain degree, be excused, for when viewed from within the enceinte itself, as can be seen in *Foglio Decimo (*showing the battle of the Post of Castile), the enceinte descended in three tiers of platforms, the uppermost battery of which was formed by the left flank of the Bastion of St James. Looking at this image, one would be forgiven for thinking that the upper tier was some kind of cavalier. D'Aleccio gets this feature totally wrong in the profile view of Birgu in *Foglio Settimo,* where he depicts the *rivellino* as a sort of rectangular tower rising from within the ditch in front of the bastion.

In *Foglio Sesto*, however, D'Aleccio does manage to depict very clearly the *rivellino* grafted onto the Cavalier of Fort St. Michael in Senglea. In his original frescoe version he portrays some arquebusiers lodged inside this triangular spur-like screen protecting the face of the cavalier, a detail which is missing in the engraving. The one aspect about the Senglea cavalier that immediately strikes the viewer, however, is its enormity in relation to the rest of the enceinte. It was evidently drawn exaggeratedly and out of proportion, for in reality, this cavalier (the original tower-like Fort St. Michael) was actually a very small structure. Evidently, this amplification was intended, above all else, to emphasize the crucial role played by Fort St. Michael in the defence of Senglea. Curiously, the plan-like views of Senglea in some of the etchings also omit to show another important feature of the land front – the counterguard. This triangular outerwork, nonetheless, is depicted by D'Aleccio in *Foglio Sesto*, which shows the Turkish gunners' viewpoint of Senglea's land front. This counterguard is no longer standing, unfortunately, and there are no known plans of this work prior to the late 1600s, by which time it appears to have been actually linked securely to the main enceinte immediately behind it.

The greatest degree of inconsistency, however, is encountered in the depiction of Fort St. Angelo. Although D'Aleccio manages to correctly portray this fort's bastioned front with its cavalier, bulwark and curtain, as well as De Guiral's Battery at the tip of the promontory, his depiction of the rest of the stronghold, particularly its medieval

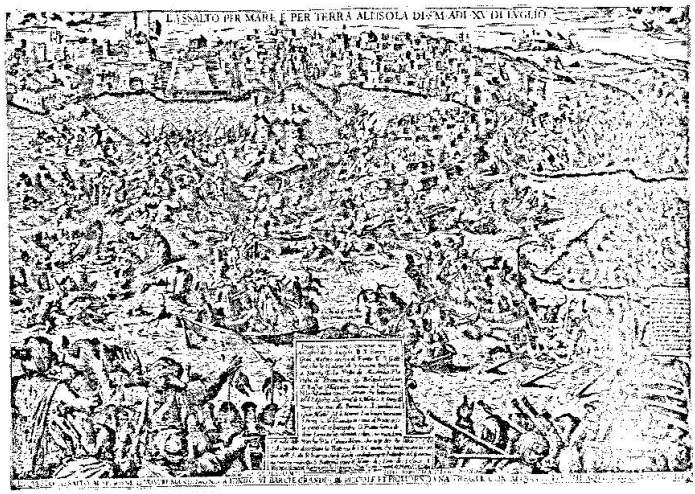

Figure 7. Matteo Perez D'Aleccio, *Foglio Nono*, showing the seaborne attack on Senglea with Fort St. Angelo in the background (upper left) (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta).

elements, is very chaotic and incoherent. In 1565 (and in 1575), Fort St. Angelo was still intrinsically the same medieval castle which the Knights of St. John had inherited upon their arrival in Malta in 1530. Most of its enceinte was then still an irregular perimeter of ramparts punctuated with a handful of wall-towers, a barbican, and a few gateways *all'antica*, all hugging the contours of the rocky promontory.[18] As such, it was still, in essence, a complex multi-layered castle, with at least two, but probably even three, baileys or wards. The core of the stronghold formed the inner *castrum*, a sort of shell-keep commanded by a tower-like castral residence that had been converted into a magistral palace after 1530. There was then, at a lower level, a second ward housing the

18 For a good description of the defences of Fort St Angelo in 1565, particularly the medieval elements of the castle, see G. Wettinger, *The Castrum Maris*. In Lino Bugeja, Mario Buhagiar, Stanley Fiorini, eds., *Birgu, a Maritime City* (Malta, Malta University Press, 1993).

garrison and the main stores. This contained a main entrance protected by a barbican and, in 1541, was fitted with Ferramolino's cavalier. D'Aleccio also shows a third, sea-level outer ward reaching down into the creek fitted with wall-towers and a gateway. To date there is still very little evidence to corroborate this enceinte, but the author's view is that it is very likely that this feature did really exist.

The multi–tiered configuration of Fort St Angelo is perhaps best captured by D'Aleccio in *Foglio Nono* where he provides a credible profile. Here again, however, the details of the medieval enceinte are too sketchy and fleeting to be taken literally. Fortunately, there exists a very realistic artistic portrayal of Fort St Angelo, drawn in the 1660s by Willem Shellinx, which gives us an excellent bench mark with which to compare D'Aleccio's representations.[19] What we find, however, is that there is little correlation in the detail of various ramparts, although some features within castle, such as the magistral residence (formerly the de Nava residential quarters), clearly stand out in both representations. D'Aleccio struggled considerably to remain consistent even in the details of the buildings within the stronghold. Look, for example, at the different ways in which he depicts the gable tiled roof of the magistral residence. It seems, that as far as Fort St Angelo was concerned – or more precisely, its medieval part – D'Aleccio was working without the benefit of a basic plan. None of his plan-like depictions, in actual fact, manage to agree on the layout of the medieval enceinte and the various features within this stronghold.

One of the elements on which both D'Aleccio and Schellinx do agree, on the other hand, is what appears to have been a covered sea-level type of battery facing the mouth of the Grand Harbour. This battery stood on the northern slope of the promontory immediately below the Magistral palace, facing out to sea and was a sort of *myne* such as had been built by the Hospitallers at Bodrum castle in the late

19 Bernard Aikema ed., *W. Schellinks: viaggio al sud, 1664-1665* (Rome, 1983), with preface in French and Italian Alessandro Marabottini, and parallel texts in Italian and English.

what is believed by many to be Pietro Prado's original plan for the fort, as preserved in the Simancas Archives in Spain, as well as Francesco Laparelli's sketch-plan prepared immediately after the Siege. Both these documents corroborate many of the details depicted by D'Aleccio. The fort, perhaps because of its smallness, regular shape, and distinctive features, is also consistently depicted, except for the cavalier, which when shown in profile in the engraved version, is represented in the form a rectangular tower with heavily buttressed front facing the main fort. It is *Foglio Quinto*, however, which provides the most important depiction of Fort St. Elmo. Here D'Aleccio picked up on many of the finer structural features of the fort, such as the casemated nature of the ramparts (where the casemates open up onto the parade ground), the hollow sunken *piazza*, the buttressed faces of the ravelin, and most authentically of all, the fact that the guns were mounted *a barba* (*en barbette*), or as Laparelli also calls them, *a mezza rota*, that is, firing over the parapet. According to Laparelli these parapets were also built of poor material (*di cattiva materia*), thereby placing the defenders at a considerable disadvantage and exposing them to enemy fire. It is not surprising, therefore, to read that many soldiers fell to sharpshooters (there was a day when 21 sentries were killed). Consequently, the defenders were obliged to put up many improvised breastworks to compensate for this deficiency. On 16 June, for example, the Grand Maser sent over 200 mattresses, blankets, tents, ropes and sails as material to be used for improvised cover. Although providing some measure of protection against musketry fire, these *opere soldatesche* would have been very vulnerable to artillery bombardment and incendiaries. Guns mounted a *mezza ruota* can also be seen depicted on the bastions of Mdina in D'Aleccio's frescoe version of the scene showing the plan-like aerial representation of the old city.

Even so D'Aleccio still manages to omit some salient features. Amongst these, perhaps the most important, is his failure to depict the covertway, or *strada coperta*. This feature was constructed from the same earth and rock chippings generated during the excavation of the ditch. The debris was also used to create a glacis but this was so crudely

laid out that the '*gitto di terra*' (as Laparelli calls it) literally created a mound which served to shield the Turkish soldiers as they approached the fort, '... *il gitto ch'era stato fatto delle materie cavate dal fosso così à caso gittate e male assette erano in loro favore, dietro al quale potevano starsi grosso numero di soldati senza poter esser visti dai luoghi à loro vicini e nemici.*' According to this military engineer, the covertway, which was served by a banquette, was practically useless and unreachable from within the body of the fort owing to the lack of sally-ports. According to Cirni, there was also an improvised barrier built in the form of a rubble wall entrenchment ('*una trincea di muro à secco*') which the defenders hastily erected in the area extending from the covertway behind the ravelin to the point of the spur of the cavalier. This was large enough to hold 50 soldiers. This defensive work is also mentioned by Balbi but it is not shown in any of the plans and maps of the Great Siege. Presumably many of these improvised elements had already been cleared away by 1575.

Features only found in D'Aleccio

There are then those features which only D'Aleccio's depictions seem to document and record. Amongst these one finds the depiction of the gateways and sally-ports, the casemated batteries, the entrenchments (*ritirate*) and the *Sperone* of Senglea.

(i) Gateways and Sally-ports:

A sally-port in the cavalier of Fort St Elmo, which opens onto the harbour side of the structure. There is as yet no other confirmation for this feature.

A gateway or sally-port in the rampart today known as the Macina, in Senglea, which at the time appears to have gone by the name of *Porta Marina* and opened directly into the ditch, practically at sea level.

A Sally-port in flank of bastion of the hornwork of the Post of Castile. After the rebuilding of the Post of Castile in the 1700s, this sally-port was relocated.

Two sally-ports along the Kalkara-facing enceinte, one of which is situated beneath the *Sacra Infermeria.*

Escutcheons and coat-of-arms

Eschutcheons with coat-of-arms on the right face of D'Homedes bastion at Fort St Angelo. These appear to refer to the escutcheons of Grand Masters L'Isle Adam, Del Ponte and Saint Jaille known to have been placed there by the knight Jaconio Pellequin. Today, together with a fort escutcheon, these are to be found on the parapet surmounting the left face of the same bastion.

Land front gate of Senglea shown surmounted by an escutcheon (in the frescoe version only).

Casemated batteries

A Casemated battery with two embrasures closing off the mouth of the ditch of Birgu on the Kalkara side.

A Casemated battery with three embrasures in the curtain near the main entrance or *Porta Superiore* of Birgu

A Sea-level battery at the foot of the right face of D'Homedes Bastion, Fort St Angelo.

Entrenchments

A *trincieramento* of earthworks surrounding the two windmills at Senglea

Sperone of Senglea

D'Aleccio's depiction raises issues about the actual configuration o fthe Spur of Senglea, *Lo Sperone*, which is somehow shown as a flat-faced platform rather the structure which is seen today. This configuration is also shown in Schellinx's more detailed depiction (see image) although the bulwark itself is strangely located very far inland on the rising ground at the tip of the promontory.

Conclusion

As has been shown by this brief analysis, D'Aleccio uses a hybrid form of representation in the depiction of the fortifications throughout his scenes, drawing on and combining the graphic techniques of both the military engineer and the artist. His attempts to convey true and accurate representations vary in intensity and consistency, depending on the fortifications' prominence and role in the narrative being portrayed in the respective scenes in which they feature, acquiring greater authenticity the closer they are made to figure in the foreground.

D'Aleccio's reductionist technique and skilful attempts to combine both painterly and military-engineering modes of representation of fortifications manage to capture the essence of the shape, form, and details of the salient elements of the defences. On the whole, D'Aleccio's drawings do successfully manage to convey a credible portrayal of the fortifications and their setting with the landscape as these would have been visible to all the protagonists in 1565. Many of his depictions, and the details of the defences contained therein, are confirmed by various other historical documents. D'Aleccio's depictions, however, are perhaps at their most successful in their ability to create a graphic representation that easily latches onto to our memory.

Giovan Francesco Buonamico – A *Flâneur* in Baroque Style

Bernard Micallef - University of Malta

The Baroque disposition in traveller and poet

The twentieth-century German critic Walter Benjamin, who studied the Baroque temperament in depth, provides us with his famous figure of the *flâneur*, the stroller who wanders about, along unending and intersecting city roads and arcades. In this wandering habit, the *flâneur* embodies the essential Baroque principle of roaming without a specific destination in mind, without a definitive point of entry or exit in his physically executed arabesque. Well before Benjamin's time, Giovan Francesco Buonamico had betrayed the same Baroque tendency in both his writings and his extensive European travels, executing the art of wandering as an end in itself. That is, he personifies the well-known saying that the journey matters more than the destination. The same preference for a winding movement rather than a linear progression towards a clear end is evident in Buonamico's works. His memoirs, for instance, easily digress from historical narrative, to some collected fable, then to a descriptive or reflective paragraph on the behaviour of a townsfolk, then on to the etymology of some curious term dug up from the local heritage, or a speculative passage on the town's economic and industrial prospects. He is thus a man of his time in both his authorial and his travelling roles. No less is this evident in his single poem in

Maltese, whose intricate weave of figurative and rhetorical devices will be discussed in the following section.

Buonamico's love of intricate detail could only have been enhanced by his anatomizing mind as chief doctor of the Order of St John's Fleet, an appointment he received from Grand Master Cottoner at the age of 28. The scientific outlook typical of such a key medical position is displayed in his scientific papers on, say, flora and chocolate (a recent discovery at the time). Taking together Buonamico's travelling, literary, and scientific methods brings out the common denominator of flâneury – that is, the constant habit of roaming for the sake of the journey's intrinsic and accumulating details, without a predetermined goal or sharply demarcated area of realization. The German critic Benjamin attributes this sort of mindset to the twentieth-century city and its arcades, which he defines as a location where the old intersects with the new, the inside converges with the outside, and the individual blends with the crowd. But the same flair for crossing boundaries between artistic and scientific aptitudes, between old and new perceptions, between familiar and foreign geographies already characterizes Buonamico's apprehension of his seventeenth-century Baroque world, a world whose artistic expression alone already constantly overflows its boundaries into its typical arabesques.

The poem: a meandering art

What insights does Buonamico's Maltese poem *Mejju Ġie bil-Ward u ż-Żahar* ('May is Come with Flowers and Blossoms') provide as regards this mindset? Even in its own right, the poem is a powerful illustration of its author's predisposition towards a meandering composition. It abounds in florid encomiastic figures with which the local Maltese crowd eulogizes Grand Master Cottoner. In his grammar, the prominent eighteenth-century scholar Agius de Soldanis mentions other poems in Latin by Buonamico, amongst which the collection entitled *Laudes Cotoneriae,* published in 1672 in Lyon, betrays from its very title both its encomiastic function and its classical medium, Latin. This publication suggests that the Maltese poem, probably

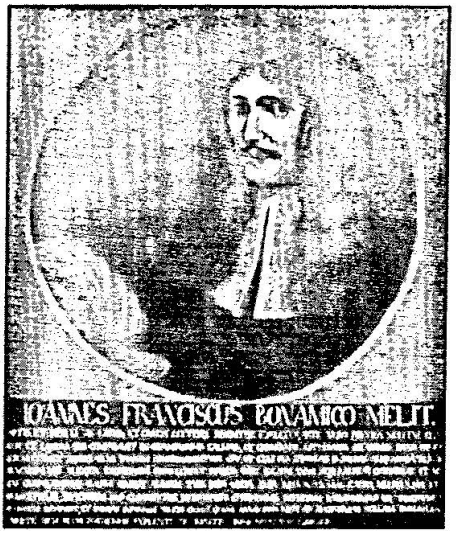

Figure 1. Portrait of Giovan Francesco Buonamico.

produced at around the same time, was composed not for the Grand Master's own reception, but for recitation by the local populace. The Maltese poem would then seem a means of preconditioning its common listeners (hardly readers at the time) into a collective voice glorifying their ruler's benevolent and industrious governance. Given that Grand Master Cottoner already had Buonamico's published collection in his name and in his own administrative and classical medium, Latin, the vernacular poem could only have been a literary strategy for converging the masses into an hymnal chorus, uniform in singing the praises of their ruler. In short, the poem's local audience also constitutes its only possible speakers, in a way that integrates the roles of listener and speaker, reader and author in a single voice. Such a strategy confuses the discursive points of origin and destination: from whom did the words really originate (poet or populace) and to whom are they really addressed (the Grand Master or his subjects)? As will be argued shortly, the absence of clear origins and destinations is an inherent principle of the Baroque mindset, practice, and artistic execution.

use of '*Sema*' ('Heavens') as a metonymic figure for divine intervention in the island's rule. These figurative devices are matched by the poem's structural consistency, its parallelism of syntax ('Ceased has the wind, calmed has the sea') fitted into a tight octosyllabic structure with its closed rhyme scheme: a-b-b-a. For all its appearance as a popular celebration of nature's revival at the start of May, Buonamico's poem is manifestly ornate and complex in its figurative, rhetorical, and structural features, showing a cultured man's endeavour to embellish a popular octosyllabic structure with a florid style that overflows its apparent formal constraints. It is this comingling of artistic trends (Baroque and popular), genres (encomiastic and celebratory), and functions (hearing and speaking) that give the poem its uniquely hybrid character.

Buonamico wanders from one register to another, one literary function to the next, with the same facility that his roaming gaze and feet wandered urban Europe undaunted by cultural, political, and georgraphical frontiers. His resultant experience of various overlapping and interpenetrating perspectives anticipates, once again, Benjamin's definition of the city stroller as the *flaneur* who feels 'at home' in arcades where glass roofs blend exterior light with interior darkness, where shop windows and corridors merge, where 'a shiny enameled shop sign' serves the same ornamental function 'as an oil painting' on a bourgeois living room wall,[1] in other words where perspectival limits are constantly crossed, allowing disparate viewpoints to conflict and merge. It is no accident that Benjamin, too, approached the integrating perspectives offered by the city as an 'inexhaustible wealth of permutations' between outer and inner, past and present, individual and collective standpoints. John Rupert Martin notes the same principle of transcending physical and artistic barriers in seventeenth-century Baroque 'church facades by Pietro da Cortona, Bernini and Borromini, where the interpenetration of exterior and interior space is especially

1 Walter Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire'. In Michael W. Jennings, ed., trans. Howard Eiland, Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingston, and Harry Zohn, *The Writer of Modern Life*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 2006), 68-69.

marked'[2] or in the play between 'the real space of the observer and the perspective space of the painting, or, in the case of sculpture, in the statue that transcends the limits of the niche within which it stands'.[3] To roam within a space of continuously crossed boundaries and interpenetrating perspectives, whether that space is geographical or intellectual, is thus an essentially Baroque principle.

Yet, apart from this tendency of the Baroque mind to spill over its spatial, artistic, cultural, and perspectival boundaries, there is also the inherent tendency of the Baroque composition to unfold not in a linear progression, but by exploding its inner structure into ever more intricate flourish, thereby fulfilling its progress in terms of a ramifying growth of inner detail. This enables the audience of Baroque art to lose itself in the augmenting inner richness of the perceived design, marking its progress through the further segmentation and reorganization of the work's intrinsic pattern.

Like Benjamin's *flaneur* for whom strolling becomes an end in itself, the Baroque mind often loses itself in its own densely executed motifs, whose increasingly extravagant pattern provides the only means of gauging a growth in meaning and perception. The arabesque becomes the artist's means and end. In Buonamico's poem, this lack of linear progression in favour of an ever-increasing inner richness of the medium is further exemplified by the device of antithesis, that is, the play of opposite views that leads to no final resolution, but merely enhances perception through entangling its audience in its unresolved contrasts.

The boldest instance of antithesis in Buonamico's poem occurs when, after exalting the heavens for preserving the Grand Master's benevolent rule over the Maltese population, the Maltese crowd proclaims, with gratitude, that from 'severest cold we [will now] take warmth'. Apart from endowing the people's collective voice with a highly rhetorical style, this antithetical device presents the Grand Master in bold paradoxical terms: he is, in effect, a warm spring in wintertime.

2 John Rupert Martin, *Baroque*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 15.

3 Ibid., 14.

It is now almost pointless that May should take on the anthropomorphic figure of an approaching band of merry singers, bringing natural icons of springtime's fertility to town, since divine will has already decreed that a continuous time of plenty be embodied in the Grand Master's person. Even if one were to go by Arnold Cassola's observation that in Buonamico's original orthography the final verse should read 'At thc cold term's end we get warmth' rather than 'in severest cold we take warmth',[4] there still remains the rhetorically bold hyperbole of equating Grand Master Cotoner with an unchanging natural order, with the implication that to have his rule is to have spring's warmth and happiness arriving at their proper yearly time.

Malta personified as a female figure vulnerable to enslavement and hunger (anticipating Dun Karm's prevailing motif of the island as a pure maiden), Grand Master Cotoner's metaphorical identification with the people's joy and happiness, the evoked 'heavens' implying divine intervention in political as much as natural events, the predominating sense of a perennial or an annually returning spring with its inference of a smoothly run government and the people's well-being – these interwoven poetic and rhetorical features are hardly the stuff of the people's voice. Their effect is rather a complex of extravagant metaphors, inversions, contrasts, and associations which makes for an intricate weave of techniques and the consequent elusiveness of any fixed standpoint.

As the Baroque critic Martin observes, 'Not only is there no

4 Cassola Arnold, *The Literature of Malta – An Example of Unity in Diversity.* (Malta: Minima Publishers, 2000) 19-25. Cassola observes how Agius de Soldanis gives two versions of Buonamico's poem: one in the poet's original orthography and the other in his own. However, since 1924, it is Agius de Soldanis's version that continued to be cited, and this version transcribed the phrase '*fl'achar*' as 'in the severest' ('*fl-akbar*') not 'at the [cold term's] end' ('*fl-aħħar*') or 'at the [cold term's] worst ('*fl-aghar*'). Various later publications of the poem persisted in presenting Agius de Soldanis's version. Others (like G. Wettinger and P. Fsadni in their 1968 study and D. Fenech in his 1977 publication, *Wirt il-Muża*) render the phrase as even more antithetical: 'in the worst cold we will have warmth' ('*fl-aghar bard ikollna s-sħana*'.) Cassola argues that in Buonamico's original orthography the letters 'ch' are repeatedly used instead of the letter '*ħ*': thus '*reich*' for modern '*riħ*', '*Bachar*' for '*Baħar*', '*schab*' for '*sħab*', and so forth.

homogeneity of style in the Baroque period, but one is almost tempted to speak of the very diversity of styles as one of its distinguishing features'.[5] What Martin defines as the freedom, spontaneity, and immediacy of the Baroque mode of execution[6] can be seen as a motivating principle operating not merely in Buonamico's art, but in his traveller's disposition, primarily his penchant for crossing borders in a culturally, politically, and religiously divided Germany, a hybrid world of intersecting and interwoven viewpoints. As Dr. Albert Friggieri, Ambassador of Malta to Germany, points out:

> Buonamico was very conscious of the fragmentary nature of 'Germany'. In his memoirs, he often refers to the political divisions that characterised the German territories in the second half of the 17th century. In the course of his travels, he often had to cross borders separating the many German states, to which he refers quite systematically in his memoirs.[7]

To inhabit this dense mosaic of traditions, architectures, economies, and histories is analogous to meandering through the maze of allegorical, rhetorical, and generic qualities governing Buonamico's poetic art. In both cases, the underlying principle is to dwell in an intricate design with several points of entry, to inhabit one's world as a complex of colliding and interpenetrating viewpoints. Once again, this is the kind of roaming gaze that Benjamin the critic reserved for the *flâneur* – the leisurely and observant stroller of the European City whose movement amidst multiple intersecting points of view actualizes a Baroque existence. It is the same multiple or exploded vision that enables Buonamico to be fascinated by '*ogni sorte di gente, e Nazione, è una sentina d'ogni setta d'Eretici*' in a city such as Mannheim,[8] whose

5 Martin, *Baroque*, 26.

6 Ibid., 37.

7 Albert Friggieri, *Foreword*. In Arnold Cassola, *The German Memoirs of a Maltese Intellectual – Giovan Francesco Buonamico (1639-1680)*. (Malta: ProMinent, 2013), 13.

8 Giovan Francesco Buonamico, *Memorie de viaggi di Giovan Francesco Buonamico nella Francia, Germania, Olanda, Fiandra, Lorena, Svizzera, Italia, Sicilia,*

'indiscriminate mixture of peoples of all different hues and creeds', as Cassola puts it, compelled the seventeenth-century doctor to liken the place 'to Noah's Ark, where one could hear all sorts of voices and encounter all kinds of dirty animals (*'s'udivano ogni sorta di Voci, e si vedevano assieme ogni specie di piu sozzi animali'*)'.[9]

If the Baroque impulse towards a drifting, curving, and spiralling design (whether in sculpture, architecture, or literature) also impelled Buonamico's wandering gaze and feet in a multifaceted Germany, then it is perhaps correct to speak of this intellectual's fascination with accumulating detail as a fashionable seventeenth-century mode of existence, a manner of being that was physically, as much as poetically, accomplished. It would hardly be doing justice to such an intellectual figure to restrict his multifarious disposition to just its geographical, or poetic, or medical concerns, thereby missing the fundamental Baroque principle of subjecting such disciplinary boundaries to an overarching extravagance of detail. Aspiring to a sense of infinity not through linear progression, but through an inner growth and profusion of perspectives – that is the common denominator of Buonamico the traveller, the doctor, and the poet.

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spiaggie e varie isole della Grecia (f. 49 Aquisgrana – f. 66 *Ritorno da Friburgo in Aquisgrana per via alquanto diversa*). In Arnold Cassola, *The German Memoirs of a Maltese Intellectual – Giovan Francesco Buonamico (1639-1680)*. (Malta: ProMinent, 2013), 69.

9 Cassola, *Giovan Francesco Buonamico*, 33.

Anciens Usages des Maltais d'après un Guide Touristique de Malte du XVIIIe Siècle

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La première entrée du manuscrit sous la cote *Arch.* 2063 de la *National Library of Malta*, enregistre une commande du commandeur Semprin, datée du 13 avril 1791, pour l'ouvrage anonyme *Malte par un voyageur français* pour le montant de trois cent sept écus et quatre *grani.*[1] Deux exemplaires de cet ouvrage se trouvent à la Bibliothèque nationale de Malte. L'un d'eux est un ex-libris du notaire Giuseppe Natale Monreal qui pratiquait sa profession entre 1791 et 1831. Sur la page de titre se trouve manuscrite entre parenthèses: (St-Priest, chev. de). Or, il y avait deux frères chevaliers de Saint-Priest. Lequel des deux est l'auteur, Charles qui reste chevalier à Malte ou son frère qui, à la mort de son frère aîné, obtient d'être relevé de ses vœux pour se marier pour continuer la lignée ? Le catalogue de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et du *British Museum* et plusieurs bibliographes dont Antoine-Alexandre Barbier attribuent l'ouvrage à François-Emmanuel Guignard, comte de Saint-Priest, chevalier de l'Ordre de Malte.[2]

1 NLM, Arch. 2063, *Stamperia* (1791-1792), f. 2r. : *'Si è stampata l'opera intitolata 'Malte par un voyageur françois' con 27 piance fatte dal Commendatore Semprin, li 13 aprile 1791.'*

2 François-Emmanuel Guignard, comte de Saint-Priest (1735-1821) suit une carrière diplomatique en divers pays et est ambassadeur du roi de France à la Porte Ottomane pendant 17 ans (1768-1785). Il fait ses caravanes entre 1773 et 1755 et revisite Malte où se trouve son frère, le commandeur Charles, en 1776.

L'ouvrage, *Malte par un voyageur français*, dédié au Grand Maître Emmanuel de Rohan, est divisé en deux parties. Dans la première, l'auteur trace brièvement l'histoire de Malte à partir des temps préhistoriques jusqu'à l'établissement de l'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem à Malte. Sa source principale est la *Malta Illustrata* de Gian Antonio Ciantar, mais il ne néglige pas un nombre considérable d'autres sources dont Diodore de Sicile et Antonio Bosio. Dans la seconde partie, il décrit Malte et Gozo sous des aspects différents : géographie, architecture, arts décoratifs, climat, fossiles, population, commerce, usages, coutumes et langue. La distinction entre 'usages' et 'coutumes' n'est pas anodine, car ce membre de l'Ordre avait ses raisons pour indiquer les anciens usages que les Maltais avaient abandonnés et ceux qu'ils ont retenus ou adoptés. Traités avec clarté et concision, cette deuxième partie contient une mine d'information sur la vie contemporaine à Malte, où un coup d'œil sur le passé met en relief le présent.

Le lecteur moderne trouve un intérêt particulier dans la découverte de l'évolution des mœurs. Saint-Priest remarque qu'autrefois[3], la vie des femmes maltaises était 'très retirée', attribuant ce fait, soit à la sévérité des mœurs orientales sous la domination de l'île par les Arabes, soit à 'la force de l'exemple [de] la jalousie espagnole.[4]' Selon l'auteur, 'les sages du pays répétaient avec complaisance à leurs enfants que les femmes ne devaient paraître que deux fois en public, le jour de leurs noces et celui de leurs funérailles.' Lorsqu'elles sortaient pour aller à l'église très tôt le matin, elles portaient une mante qui ne laissait 'au découvert que le front et les yeux'. En revanche, au temps où écrit l'auteur, 'elles se sont composé un habillement qui laisse admirer à la fois la délicatesse des traits du visage et des yeux vifs et superbes, la finesse de la jambe, la petitesse du pied, et qui par une ampleur qui n'est point incommode peut encore sauver les défauts de la taille.'

3 Saint-Priest se sert du mot 'autrefois' pour indiquer que tel usage ou coutume ne se pratique plus.

4 Malte était sous la domination espagnole entre 1414 et 1530, année où Charles Quint offrit l'île à l'Ordre de Saint-Jean.

La célébration des noces

Saint-Priest assure que

> Les cérémonies des noces sont actuellement à Malte les mêmes que dans le reste de la chrétienté. La première visite que fait la nouvelle mariée à ses parents est seulement célébrée par une fête qu'on nomme *ħarġia*, et qui consiste en une grande conversation à la mode d'Italie, pendant laquelle on distribue à la compagnie des rafraîchissements de toute espèce.

Que cette coutume est éloignée des mœurs d'aujourd'hui! Mais si l'auteur ne dédie que ces deux phrases pour décrire les cérémonies des noces à Malte en son temps, et cela parce qu'elles ne diffèrent point de celles des pays chrétiens, il ne manque pourtant pas de décrire en détail comment les noces étaient célébrées autrefois. Il signale que les articles du contrat du mariage étaient réglés par les pères des futurs mariés. C'est alors que 'le jeune homme envoyait à sa future un présent de poissons entourés de guirlandes de rubans et un anneau d'or placé dans la gueule du poisson le plus recherché.' À cette occasion fut décidé le jour de l'entrevue des futurs mariés. Ce jour-là, les mères des deux époux préparèrent 'une composition d'anis, de plantes aromatiques, de sel et de miel, dont elles frottaient les lèvres de la jeune personne, afin que ses paroles fussent douces, sages et prudentes.' Les deux époux s'offraient des cadeaux: 'il lui offrait un anneau sur lequel étaient gravées deux mains, entrelassées [entrelacées] en signe de *bonnefoy*, des bracelets, des colliers et une chaîne d'or; elle lui présentait à son tour un mouchoir garni de dentelles et de rubans noués ensemble.'

Le jour du mariage, la future mariée 'fort parée' portait un voile blanc très fin posé sur sa tête par 'le plus respectable des parents de l'époux' et 'une simarre de velours' à laquelle des parents attachaient de petites coquilles d'or après y avoir fait quelques déchirures. En route pour l'église 'pour la *ħaddara* ou cérémonie[5][...] des joueurs

5 Saint-Priest explique que *ħaddara* veut dire la cérémonie. Selon J. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Malta: Midsea Books, 1987), 472 : *ħaddâr*. '*One who*

d'instruments et des chanteurs célébraient dans des couplets les louanges des nouveaux époux.' Devant eux marchaient trois hommes, le premier 'portait sur sa tête un bassin [...] rempli de brioches fraîches [...], le second tenait une corbeille pleine de dragées ou de noix confites [...], le troisième brûlait continuellement des parfums.' Selon Saint-Priest, l'évêque de l'île défendit, en 1668, l'usage du dais. Jusqu'alors, 'les deux époux marchaient les derniers sous un dais de damas cramoisi festonné porté par quatre des principaux personnages de la noce' et les parents les suivaient.

En arrivant à l'église, au son des cloches, les époux offraient au curé, 'un bassin contenant un gâteau, un mouchoir et deux bouteilles de vin.' La cérémonie à l'église durait quatre heures. Une fois terminée on retournait à la maison en procession comme avant. De la fenêtre, un domestique jetait 'quelques poignées de grains et de petites monnaies' sur la tête des nouveaux mariés. C'est le mari qui entrait le premier dans la maison car les Maltais croyaient que si la femme passait devant, elle gouvernerait son mari!

Pendant le festin nuptial, l'épouse restait dans une chambre séparée ou dans un coin de la salle bien cachée par des toiles jusqu'à la fin du repas. C'est alors qu'elle rejoignait son époux et buvait à la même tasse. On dansait pendant le festin, mais Saint-Priest distingue deux coutumes différentes :

> Dans les casaux [...] chaque danseur jetait une monnaie aux ménestrels et pour le repas chaque convié portait une poule. Dans la ville jusqu'au commencement de ce siècle [le XVIII[e]] les bals qu'on donnait le jour des noces se faisaient à l'espagnole, on y dansait les castagnettes à la main.

Un autre festin accompagné d'un bal avait lieu huit jours après. C'était le jour où l'épouse était reçue dans la maison conjugale, car les huit jours suivant son mariage, l'épouse les passait dans la maison paternelle.

L'auteur du guide remarque que les Maltais ne se mariaient

attends a wedding ceremony'. Il s'agit de la personne qui est présente à la cérémonie.

jamais au mois de mai à cause d'une superstition qui voulait que tout ce qui fût commencé pendant ce mois se terminât mal.

Sous le titre 'Fêtes', l'auteur revient sur le contrat du mariage pour indiquer l'insertion d'un article qui oblige les maris des filles de la campagne de mener leurs femmes 'chaque année à la cité Valette le jour de Saint Jean, à la cité Vieille le jour de Saint Pierre et au Casal Zeitun le jour de Saint Grégoire.' Dans la description de la fête folklorique de *Mnarja*, on remarque qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de différence entre le divertissement qu'offrait cette fête à l'époque de l'auteur et aujourd'hui, excepté que la danse avait une place primordiale et que les femmes de la campagne portaient 'leurs parures nuptiales de quelque saison qu'elles [fussent].' Il ajoute qu'au retour de la fête, on ornait les calesses et les chevaux de branches d'arbres, 'un souvenir de l'usage qu'avaient les habitants de l'île lorsqu'ils étaient encore païens, de porter à la main dans les fêtes d'Hercule des branches de peuplier, qui était l'arbre consacré particulièrement à ce dieu.' Sous le titre 'Coutumes', Saint-Priest fait allusion à une fête familiale qu'on célèbre encore aujourd'hui à Malte, mais pas de la même manière, le jour du premier anniversaire d'un enfant, la 'cucciha.' L'auteur dit qu'il s'agit 'd'un usage particulier à Malte et qui n'est même conservé que dans les maisons riches.' Il signale qu'on offre aux garçons 'deux corbeilles dans l'une desquelles est du blé et des confitures, et dans l'autre des bijoux, des monnaies, une écritoire, une épée, etc. Aux filles, 'on substitue à l'épée et à l'écritoire, des aiguilles, des soies, des rubans.' Le choix de l'enfant 'détermine, dit-on, la vocation ou le caractère qu'il prendra en grandissant.'

Les funérailles

Sous le titre *Funérailles*, Saint-Priest indique un ensemble de coutumes maltaises qui ne se pratiquaient plus depuis 1676, année où la peste en 'interrompit la pratique.' La première concerne les *newwieħa*. C'étaient deux femmes, 'vêtues d'un manteau de deuil traînant', qui, 'en chantant des moralités d'un ton de voix bas et triste, coupaient les pampres des vignes dans les cours [...], renversaient les vases de fleurs [...], brisaient quelques meubles d'ornement et [jetaient les

morceaux] dans une chaudière d'eau bouillante en y mêlant de la suie de cheminée et des cendres, elles teignaient ensuite avec ce mélange toutes les portes de la maison, en poussant de longs soupirs.' Les *newwieħa* passaient ensuite dans la chambre du mort, tendue de noir, où se trouvaient les 'femmes de ses parents toutes vêtues d'un manteau noir de soie et la tête couverte d'un voile.' Les *newwieħa* se mettaient à genoux au pied de la bière, et louaient le mort par des chants.

> À la fin des couplets, les autres femmes se frappaient la poitrine, criaient et se coupaient des poignées de cheveux qu'elles plaçaient sur la bière. On distribuait ce jour-là à tous les parents des gâteaux et du grain bouilli, et l'on coupait les crins de la queue aux chevaux qui se trouvaient dans l'écurie de la maison.

Avant d'accompagner le mort à sa dernière sépulture, on prenait soin de mettre sous sa tête un oreiller plein de feuilles d'oranger et de laurier : on attribuait à ce dernier des effets expiatoires. Dans le cortège funèbre figuraient des joueurs d'hautbois et de trompettes ainsi que les *newwieħa* qui précédaient les parents. Sur la tombe on plaçait un tapis pour indiquer aux passants qu'il était interdit d'y marcher. Pendant trois jours on n'allumait pas le feu dans la cuisine de la maison du défunt, mais ceux qui y habitaient mangeaient un dîner, qui leur était préparé par un ami intime du défunt ou par son parent le plus éloigné, 'assis à terre sur une natte et les jambes croisées.' Le deuil durait un an ou deux selon le degré de parenté et on restait enfermé chez soi : les hommes pendant sept jours, tandis que les femmes ne sortaient que quarante jours après le décès.

Comme les anciens usages concernant les noces, les anciennes cérémonies des funérailles ne se pratiquaient plus au temps où Saint-Priest écrivait son guide. 'On ne voit plus de *newwieħa* suivre le convoi, mais deux femmes en manteau noir qui portent sur leurs têtes des réchauds où brûlent des parfums.' S'ouvre devant le lecteur moderne un passé coloré par des coutumes difficiles à accepter aujourd'hui.

Quelques pages de ce guide touristique sont dédiées à une brève

Figure 1. François-Emmanuel Guignard, comte de Saint-Priest (1735-1821)

description de certaines localités. On peur élargir le concept d'anciens usages en citant des constatations intéressantes. Telle la présence des 'Zingari ou Boëmiens' qui habitaient 'autrefois' des grottes dans 'les jardins de l'Évêque'. Dans la même localité se trouve Bir Zegrella, 'fontaine, dont l'eau est, dit-on, un fébrifuge'. Sur 'El Mitarfa, Saint-Priest écrit, 'colline sur laquelle on croit, d'après une tradition, qu'était élevé le temple de Proserpine.' L'auteur indique 'Kibur el Lhut ou sépulcre des Juifs', ceux-ci ayant été 'chassés de l'île en 1494.' Vers la fin du XVIII[e] siècle Balzan était 'entouré d'oliviers, de caroubiers et d'amandiers', malheureusement disparus aujourd'hui. Des villages comme 'Farrugi, petit village', 'Bubakera, village assez grand', n'existent plus aujourd'hui, tandis qu'il attribue à l'appellation de 'Tarscien, [l'etablissement des] premiers Carthaginois qui vinrent à Malte [car] le nom dérive de Tarsis ou Carthage'.

Usages devenus 'anciens' aujourd'hui

Si l'auteur distingue les anciens usages de celles contemporains, la curiosité du lecteur moderne est également suscitée lorsque celui-ci découvre les changements qui ont eu lieu dans un intervalle de plus de deux cents ans.

Les fêtes célébrées le premier mai et 'l'avant dernier jour du carnaval', qui plaisent 'infiniment aux gens du pays', étaient marquées par la cocagne où 'on attache depuis le haut jusqu'au bas des animaux vivants, des paniers d'œufs, des jambons, des saucissons, des guirlandes d'oranges, enfin toute sorte de comestibles.' Saint-Priest assure que 'les Maltais ne permettent ni aux étrangers ni aux soldats de partager avec eux les profits de cette fête et les maltraitent s'ils se présentent.' Quant à la fête de Saint-Jean, quatre courses avaient lieu à La Valette l'après-midi après la procession du matin.

> La première course est celle des hommes à pied, la seconde des ânes nommés à Malte *Janets*, et dont la race est superbe, la troisième des juments et la quatrième des chevaux. Les janets, les juments et les chevaux ne portent ni selle ni bride et sont montés à poil par des enfants de douze à quinze ans qui les frappent continuellement des deux mains avec des fouets et des cordes. Le soir toute la ville est illuminée.

Sur la communication journalière entre Malte et Gozo, Saint-Priest assure qu'elle 'a lieu au moyen de cinq ou six barques qui, le matin, arrivent remplies de provisions à la cité Valette et en repartent l'après-dinée, chargées de marchandises et autres choses dont l'île est dépourvue.'

Conclusion

On remarque que *Malte par un voyageur français* contient deux titres qui se rapportent mais que l'auteur choisit de traiter séparément, ce sont *Anciens usages* et *Coutumes*. Saint-Priest avait déjà constaté : 'un peuple qui perd ses anciens usages change ordinairement de caractère ; c'est à ce signe qu'on reconnaît que la société des étrangers a influé sur la sienne, et que dans le cas où les étrangers sont maîtres

et les nationaux sujets, ceux-ci vivent contents sous l'empire des lois que les régissent'. L'auteur de *Malte par un voyageur français* n'est pas un simple voyageur qui laisse ses impressions de l'île dans un récit de voyage après un bref séjour. C'est un chevalier de Malte qui a passé des années dans l'île et qui la connaît bien, non seulement par sa propre expérience, mais aussi à travers ses lectures, surtout de la *Malta Illustrata* de Gian Antonio Ciantar. C'est pour cette raison qu'il sait indiquer, non seulement les coutumes qui sont encore pratiquées, mais aussi celles que les Maltais ont abandonnées. Tout récit a sa dose de subjectivité. Il s'agit dans ce guide touristique avant l'heure d'un récit dédié au Grand Maître Emmanuel de Rohan, écrit dans le but de glorifier l'Ordre de Malte. L'ouvrage est précédé d'une poésie de neuf vers qui rend hommage à 'La fleur de la Noblesse et [aux] Fils de la Gloire.' Saint-Priest attribue à la persistance des anciens usages une forme d'assertion d'un peuple subjugué. 'La nation maltaise [...] s'attacha plus que jamais à ses anciens usages aux temps où elle était opprimée, car en les pratiquant elle s'isolait de ses oppresseurs', mais sous l'Ordre, 'le peuple content abandonna ses anciens usages pour se lier davantage à des maîtres dont il n'eut jamais qu'à se louer.'

Cette remarque est assez ironique lorsqu'on constate que sept ans après la publication de l'ouvrage, ce peuple, content sous les lois de l'Ordre, passa sous une autre domination qui ne dura que deux ans. Saint-Priest se trouva à Mittau lorsqu'il apprit la prise de Malte par Bonaparte. Une vingtaine d'années après, il écrivit ses *Mémoires*, où il exprima son étonnement toujours vif par la phrase : 'une forteresse inexpugnable s'était rendue sans la moindre résistance !... Cet évènement étonna toute l'Europe.'[6]

6 François-Emmanuel Guignard, comte de Saint-Priest, Mémoires, *La Révolution et l'Emigration.* (Paris : Calmann-Levy, 1929), 191.

Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art, by Heinrich Wolfflin, a new translation by Jonathan Blower, edited and with essays by Evonne Levy and Tristan Weddigen; The Getty Research Institute, 2015; 357 pp; ISBN 978-1-60606-452-8.

The Getty Trust is providing an essential service to academia through its research arm by re-publishing original texts that shaped the study of art and architecture. With seminal writings such as Samuel Quiccheberg's *Inscriptiones* (1565), the first treatise on museums, and Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso* ... (1592), on sacred and profane art in the wake of the Counter-Reformation, the 'Texts and Documents' series take art historians back to their professional roots, in the manner of taking another look at famous paintings only to observe something new, perhaps even undiscovered by others. Texts from the early modern period as well as the twentieth century allow the historian to trace the history of ideas, and ultimately to recognize the road travelled in getting the history of art to where it stands today, in the world of both the specialist as well as that of the lay person. The latest stellar addition is Heinrich Wolfflin's *Principles of Art History*, which was first published in German in 1915 and soon became essential reading for specialists in Baroque art and architecture. Wolfflin's authoritative work gained further traction when it was translated into English in 1932.

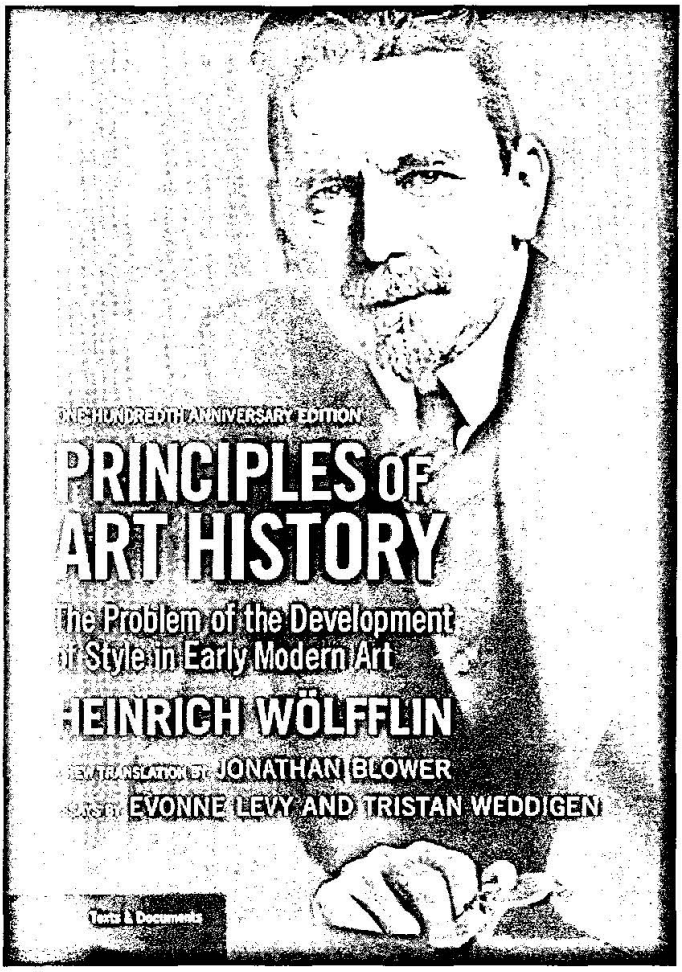
Wolfflin's lifelong study of paintings led him to devise a foundational theory of art that was based on formalism, known best for the five contrasting pairs of concepts which he saw as the basis for stylistic change between artistic movements: linear versus painterly, plane versus recession, closed versus open, multiplicity versus unity and clearness versus unclearness. His theories were best applied in understanding the structural difference between Renaissance art and Baroque art. Wolfflin's *Principles* thus flew in the face of the centuries-old model of "budding, blossom and decay" with its historical contextuality, by considering the underlying structures of pictures as well as the position of the viewer in the act of seeing and perceiving.

In proposing a new method for interpreting painting, sculpture and architecture, Wolfflin freed the art of the early modern period from the long-held idea of Baroque art as reflecting post-Renaissance decline. In effect, he also identified a method of seeing that could serve the interpretation of modernism in the works art that were appearing in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Wollflin's book and its several later editions were the result of his study of works of art in the original during a post-graduate stint in Italy and his ongoing study of black and white photographs that came to form essential tools for art historians. His writings were also the outcome of his encounters with the formalist texts of a handful of earlier writers, most notably Alois Riegl's *Problems of Style* (1893) as well as other contemporary teachers at Basel, where he taught Art History after the death of his tutor Jacob Burckhardt in 1897. From his first book, *Renaissance and Baroque*, published in 1888 to *Principles*, first published in Berlin twenty-seven years later, Wolfflin kept refining his ideas on formalism; subsequently, with each new edition, he extended his arguments yet kept to the same foundations which he had presented at the outset.

This hundredth anniversary edition surpasses the previous ones by means of its useful inclusion of all eight of Wolfflin's prefaces. This permits the reader to trace a one-sided 'correspondence' with the author in tracing changes in his thinking as they occurred between 1915 and 1943, the year of his last work on the subject. In addition, the editors' essays provide an invaluable review of the historical context of Wolfflin's theories, thus showing how the ideas outlined in *Principles* have withstood the test of time.

Perhaps more importantly, this new translation is accompanied by a fresh appraisal of the original ideas and theories, updated to encompass century-long research into the history of theory and the critical writings of the turn of the twentieth century. Evonne Levy, professor of Art History at the University of Toronto, sets the background against which Wolfflin formulated his ideas, describing the steps taken by his predecessors towards the reform of art historical practice, as well as



the contemporary problem of dealing with photographs of paintings, as contributing to Wolfflin's gestation of his own ideas about reforming ways of seeing and perceiving. Levy also delves into the socio-political contexts of the period, a valuable addition to understanding contemporary critiques of *Principles* as well as its reception. Another scholarly essay in the 2015 edition is that by Tristan Weddigen, professor of the History of Early Modern Art at the Universität Zürich, who gives an updated assessment of the *Principles*. Weddigen revisits the main ideas behind Wolfflin's text and analyses his objectives, as

well as the method undertaken in expounding his theories. The author concludes with a contemporary critique of *Principles*, pointing to the theoretical problems and cultural differences that could raise difficulties when applying Wolfflin's theories. This essay should be essential reading for today's teacher of the history of art theory. The translator, architectural historian Jonathan Blower, also gives a brief yet essential explanation of considerations to be made in navigating the translation of *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, better known in the Anglophone world as Heinrich Wolfflin's *Principles of Art History* - a title that is still perfectly true of the book's contents today.

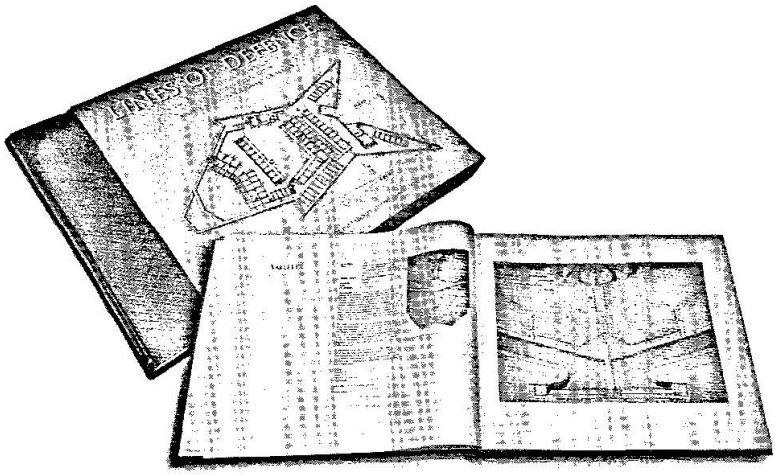
University of Malta
Theresa Vella

LINES OF DEFENCE - Fortification Drawings of the Baroque Age at the National Library of Malta, Denis De Lucca, Stephen C. Spiteri Hermann Bonnici, ed. International Institute for Baroque Studies & Malta Libraries. 2015. 398 pp. ISBN: 978-99957-856-1-1.

Despite the often urgent nature of war, works of fortification were generally conceived first as designs on the drawing board before being imposed on the landscape and shaped into impregnable strongholds. The hand-drawn plans and architectural drawings illustrated in a new book entitled Lines of Defence show the great importance that drawing, and hence draughtsmanship,assumed in the preparations for war within the milieu of the renowned Hospitaller Order of the Knights of St. John the Baptist, more commonly known as the Order of Malta.

Beautifully-Produced and published jointly by the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta and Malta Libraries, this new book on *LINES OF DEFENCE - Fortification Drawings of the Baroque Age at the National Library of Malta*, is large-format, full-colour publication that brings together in one volume the collection of fortifications plans of the Knights of the Order of St John housed in the National Library of Malta in Valletta. The text of this unique publication is by Professor Denis De Lucca, the Director of the International Institute for Baroque Institute, Dr. Stephen Spiteri and architect Hermann Bonnici. The book has a n introduction by Prof. Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University.

This unique collection of drawings is the largest and most important collection of architectural plans of Hospitaller fortifications in the Maltese islands to have come down to us from this period of the Island's history. The importance of these plans also emanates from the fact that the fortifications of the Knights of St John in the Maltese Islands rank amongst some of the most important works of military architecture built to the conventions of the bastioned trace anywhere in the world. The plans of Hospitaller fortifications at National Library of Malta attest to the considerable volume of work that was produced by the Order's fortification atelier. These surviving plans constitute, nonetheless, only a fraction of the huge output of plans and models that



were produced during the course of the eighteenth century, many of which, sadly, have not come down to us. The larger part of the present collection dates to the eighteenth century and stands witness to the very high standards of draughtsmanship that were introduced in Malta by French military engineers in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Order's resident engineers could rely upon the services of at least one full-time draughtsman. In 1792, for example, we find Giovanni Borg, earning an annual salary of 200 scudi for such services while earlier, Balì de Tigné had made extensive use of '*il Donato e Capo Mastro dell'Opere' Giuseppe Bonnici*' to trace plans and designs ('*delineare disegni*') while in 1771, he had also sought to secure the services of Gioacchino Trigance specifically because of the latter's skills in military architecture.

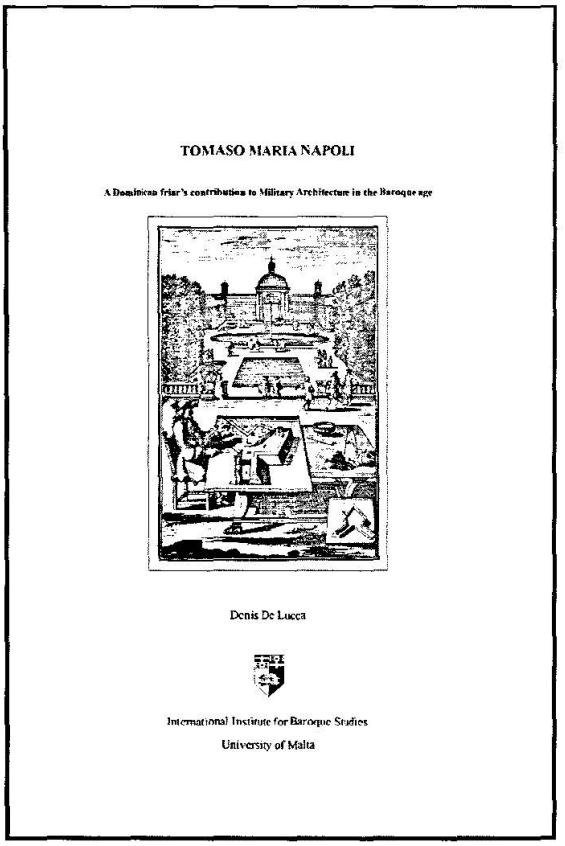
These plans display a sophisticated mode of draughtsmanship, finely executed and based on standard scaled dimensions and colour-coding. According to the accepted convention of the time, the outlines of the fortifications were drawn in black Indian ink, as opposed to the sepia used in earlier designs, with all parapets and ramparts built of stone shown in red while proposed or unfinished works were represented in yellow. Ditches and '*tutti i lavori in terra*' were washed with a light tint of burnt 'il color d'ombra', and the countryside surrounding the fortress

in green. Moats and the sea were coloured with a wash of sea-green or light blue. An element of depth was added to the drawings by means of shading, where, as a rule, the light was taken to enter from the top left-hand corner of the plan. A scale was generally included in the bottom of the plan. This usually showed the Maltese cane or canna (*qasba*) as the unit of measurement, although frequently the French *toise* was also represented. The size of the plans themselves varies considerably. Representing the massive enceintes, such as those of Cottonera, Floriana, required large sheets that were produced by glueing smaller sheets of paper together. In most instances the drawings are executed on thick yellowish cartoon-like paper. Up until the late eighteenth century, paper production was hand-made and involved recycled fibres from used textiles, called rags, made from hemp, linen and cotton.

The book's special large-scale format [measuring 49cm (wide) x 42 cm (high)] was designed to capture the wealth of graphic information embodied within the various plans and designs – architectural details which are invaluable to the students and historians of military architecture and the art and science of fortification. Although frequently consulted by scholars and students over the years, these plans have never been brought together in one extensive compendium in the manner that they deserve as a prime source of original information on eighteenth-century Hospitaller military architecture. Each plan is accompanied by explanatory commentaries that also serve to make this book an important resource of architectural and historical information.

The International Institute for Baroque Studies of the University of Malta, together with Malta Libraries, has long been convinced of the significance and importance of this collection and has striven hard over the past years to publish these plans in a prestigious publication that does justice to the subject matter. This new book is the product of a direct collaborative effort between the University of Malta and the National Library of Malta. This special edition is limited to only 200 copies.

University of Malta



De Lucca's latest study on Tomaso Maria Napoli now shows that the Jesuits were not alone in the pursuit of the study and teaching of military architecture. The Dominican Order of Preachers, founded by the Spanish priest Dominic de Guzman in France in 1216, was another. By the seventeenth century, the Dominican friars excelled at the teaching of mathematics and geometry, the very basis of the art and science of fortification. Some of its members were actively consulted to review and design new works of fortification. Few know, for example, that Vincenzo Maculano da Firenzuola, the architect of the Sta. Margherita enceinte built by the Hospitaller Knights to protect their Grand Harbour in Malta in 1638, was a Dominican friar. Moreover, he was the same Firenzuola – *Il Cardinal Maculano* – who examined Galileo Galilei

during his trial in 1633, the episode dramatically represented in a painting by Cristiano Banti (1824-1904), reproduced in De Lucca's book.

Indeed, the role of the Dominican Order in the teaching and practice of military architecture has remained largely uncharted territory and Denis De Lucca has taken a practically forgotten treatise authored by the Dominican friar Tomaso Maria Napoli, published in 1722, as his stepping stone into an examination of this subject. Entitled, *Breve Tratto Dell'Architettura Militare Moderna cavato da' piu insigni Autori* and dedicated to Prince Eugenio of Savoy, this little booklet is actually 'a remarkable treatise' distinguished from others by its 'clear, concise and readable qualities' of its texts and diagrams.

Divided into two *libri* (based on four and eight chapters respectively) Napoli's *Breve Tatto* deals with both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, giving considerable importance to the mastery of the geometrical problems involved in the design of fortifications on plan, the use of a scale, and the compilation of tables and clear diagrams to assist the design of multi-sided regular polygonal forts. His thirteen 'maxims', those rules-of-thumb so beloved by military engineers and practitioners of fortification, laid out in the tradition of Errard[1] and those who followed him in France provide the 'mix', in the words of Janis Langins, of the 'geometrical principles and practical tips that were [then] becoming to be considered the basis of the science of fortification'.[2] Napoli's booklet was truly a military engineering pocket hand-book. In this respect, it was a good idea to include a facsimile copy of the *Breve Tratto* in the appendix. As a matter of fact, De Lucca's book is also well illustrated with various images, including portraits of the main characters shaping Napoli's narrative, diagrams and extracts from contemporary treatises and other relevant images that are very useful in setting the scene and capturing the 'spirit of time and place'.

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1 Jean Errard's *La fortification démonstrée et réduicte en art* (Paris, 1600).

2 J. Langins, *Conserving the Enlightenment* (2003), 59.

One of the more interesting aspects of the *Breve Tratto*, as De Lucca points out, are the many references to works of the leading military theorists of the Baroque age that pervade its pages, showing that Napoli was not only well versed in the science of fortification but also in its history and in the diversity of the schools of thought and the ongoing contemporary discussions fashioning the quest for the optimal fortress design. From Errard de Bar-le-Duc, through to Caude Milliet, Jose Zaragosa, Matthias Dogen, Blais Francois de Pagan, Antoine de Ville and down to *il Marescial di Vauban*, Napoli employs each experts' arguments to examine the various problems of fortification facing military engineers in the early eighteenth century, such as the issues influencing lines of defence, bastion design, the advantages of second flanks, the use of terreplein, and the design of traverses and covered ways, to mention but a few.

Napoli's interest, however, extended beyond the world of fortifications. He was in fact, an accomplished architect. De Lucca's book takes a good all round look at Tomaso Maria Napoli's career and achievements and the historical milieu that influenced his formation as both an architect and military engineer. Born in Palermo in 1659, Napoli received his architectural formation under the renowned architect Andrea Cirrincione when a novitiate in the Convent of San Domenico. He then travelled to Naples, Rome, Vienna, and Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik). When in Rome, he penned his first treatise on military and civil architecture entitled *Utriusque architecturae compendium in duos libros divisum* (1699). Napoli visited Vienna on many occasions, and in 1687 even joined the Imperial army as a chaplain and took part in the military campaign in Hungary that led to the Second Battle of Mohacs. From 1689 to 1700, he was appointed official architect of the Republic of Ragusa and assisted in the reconstruction of that city following the devastating earthquake of 1667, where he contributed significantly to new cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. He returned to Palermo by 1711 and was appointed as military architect and later as *Architetto del Regno e della Real Camera*. His best known works today are two villas in Bagheria, Sicily, together with the façade of the Church

of San Domenico in the heart of old Palermo and the *Colonna dell' Imacolata* embellishing *Piazza Imperiale*. Indeed, Tomaso di Maria, to cite De Lucca, 'emerges from the mist of time as a unique person, demonstrating, beyond a strict adherence to his religious vows, a rare balance of interest in both military architecture – concerned with the honour of several Baroque cities in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – and civil architecture – concerned with embellishment issues'.

It is interesting to note that Napoli's *Breve Tratto* also wielded a degree of influence over other military theorists. In 1733, a younger colleague friar of Napoli, Benedetto Maria del Castrone, published a treatise entitled *L'Ingegnoso ritorvato di fortificare co in mirabilis attezza ogni sorta di poligono regolare sopra l'idea del Signor di Vauban* which was clearly influenced by Napoli. Less known, and perhaps the subject of further research, is the influence that Napoli's work may have exerted on the military engineers working on the fortifications of the Knights a few miles away farther to the south, on the island of Malta. An annotated copy of his book was, after all, once kept in the *Biblioteca Annunciate Conv. Victoriosae.* Did this ever come to the attention of Charles François de Mondion, for example, then engaged as the Order's resident military engineer?

De Lucca's new book on Tomaso Maria Napoli is a welcome addition to a new type of literature in the study of the history of military architecture that has begun to look beyond the fortress and explore the very formation of the military engineers and architects themselves. Students of the Baroque world and military architecture will benefit greatly from this very readable and well-researched publication.

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