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Latin lay piety and vernacular lay piety in word and image: Venice, 1471–early 1500s

RUTH CHAVASSE

'Latin lay piety and vernacular lay piety' offers some insight into the religiosity and Christian devotion of lay people across Venetian society. Such piety is illustrated primarily by the diverse guises of devotion to the Virgin Mary in the literary and the visual images of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Case studies include the record of devotion of humanists, of Marcantonio Sabellico and his younger colleague Domenico Palladio Sorano, the commitment and opportunism of printers, publishers and editors, alongside the study of the literary genre of miracle stories which found such popularity with Venetian and north Italian publishers and their audiences.¹ 'Lay' refers to this audience, the recipients of this printed and visual culture, not always to the creators of devotional works, who were often in religious orders. In their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, both lay and religious people sought to extend the possibilities of divine protection from war and invasion, from the plague, from economic and social exploitation, where terrestrial protection so often failed. Devotion to Mary provided an accessible means of intercession, especially for lay people to reach divine power through the Theotokos, Deipara or Godbearing Virgin. It provided, through what had become Marian tradition, a means to curb sin and immoral behaviour. This was the emphasis of devotional literature such as *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* and *Fior di virtù* which were the vernacular equivalent of Latin 'exempla' collections, guides to basic morality through classical, biblical and folklore examples.²

¹ Marcantonio da Coccia, assumed name Sabellicus, 1436?–1506; for career and publications R. Chavasse, 'The first known author's copyright, September 1486, in the context of a humanist career', *B John Ryl*, 69 (1986), 11–37. M. Martini, *Domitius Palladius Soranus, poeta* (Frosinone, 1969).

² *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, 32 editions by 1500, *Incunable Short Title Catalogue* (London, 1993), 5010–12; R. Chavasse, 'The Virgin Mary as social worker', in *Culture, Society and Women in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Manchester, 1996). *Fior di virtù* headed the list of Anne J. Schutte's 'Vernacular religious "best-sellers" printed in Italy, 1465–1494' with 42 editions, paper presented 1979 for University of Warwick in Venice; for this article: *Fior di virtù* (Venice: G. B. Sessa, 1499), British Library (BL), IA 24561, 8°, roman, illustrated, with colophon:

De le virtù io son chiamato il fiore
Le feste almeno legemi per amore
Fui rinnovato nel mille quattrocento
Che de virtù per tutto fama spande
Vinetia bella gratiosa e degna.

P. Grendler, 'Form and function in Italian Renaissance popular books', *Renaiss Q*, 46 (1933), 451–85. 'Fior di virtù', 454–61. L. Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth Century Venice* (Chicago, 1976), 119–125 'Content analysis – religious books in Italian and Latin'. M. A. Sabellicus, *Exempla* (Venice: Geogius de Rusconibus, 1507), 4°, roman, see D. Rhodes, *Studies in Early Italian Printing* (London,

Whereas other studies have concentrated on civic piety and the relevance of various devotions, especially those of St Mark and of the Virgin Mary, for the city of Venice, this essay looks at something more personal: where and how they were leading the devout and the less devout, in Venetian society, those concerned as much with the salvation of their souls as with the prosperity of the Republic – although these interests could coincide! Did this spirituality conform with the teaching of the Church in Rome or the Church in Venice, or was it a deviation, almost an alternative religion based strongly on sources additional to the Bible and to the traditions of the Church as expressed in its councils? How characteristically Venetian was this lay piety? Was there less of a divide in the culture of even such a structured society as the Venetian, between those who sought solace in Latin devotions and those who found spiritual comfort in vernacular texts? It is possible that many individuals read, or had read to them, books in Latin and in Italian or Venetian towards the end of the fifteenth century when the use of the vernacular was on the increase. Those concerned in editing, printing, publishing and bookselling such as Cornazzano, Squarzafico, Moreto and Sabellico were promoting classical, humanist and religious literature.³ Printers were not divided exclusively into those who published editions of the classics and the works of humanists, and those who fuelled popular piety in editions of *Miracoli* and vernacular devotional and moral works. Figures 1 and 2 show how Giovanni Rosso's classical frontispiece format was adapted for both genres.

Piety and devotion were exhibited in contrasting guises; why were they so attired? Civic support for, or often appropriation of, the Church and its devotions has been the guise of piety most explored in Venice, together with piety's social guise in confraternities or scuole. Edward Muir, David Rosand and Rona Goffen have illustrated the associations, both political and spiritual, of the Madonna in Venice.⁴ Edward Muir saw in the festival of the Twelve Wooden Marys associated with the church of S. Maria Formosa 'the interplay between popular and elite institutions in Venetian society'.⁵ Sabellico's reference to the occasion as 'ludi annui Divae Virgine' conjures up a public spectacle; he was, no doubt, familiar with Cicero's phrase, 'ludi Olympiae'.⁶

1982), ix 'On the use of the verb "facere" in early colophons', 49–51. Sabellico's collection of *Exempla* opens with, 'De Christo Dei filio: Virginis puerperium . . .', and goes on to offer the customary mix of Christian and classical examples.

³ Antonio Cornazzano (1429–84), the poet from Piacenza, became the editor for Jenson, M. Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson* (Oxford, 1991), 52–4. Sabellico shared publishing interests and corresponded with both Gerolamo Squarzafico, an editor for Windelin of Speyer, and Antonio Moreto, the ubiquitous scout and bookseller.

⁴ E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), ch. 4, 135–56; D. Rosand, '“Veneta figurata”: the iconography of a myth', in *Interpretazione Veneziane*, ed. D. Rosand (Venice, 1984), 177–96, 180 for Venice and the Virgin Mary; R. Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), V 'The cult of the Madonna in Venice', 138–54.

⁵ Muir, 135.

⁶ Sabellicus, *Historiae rerum Venetarum ab urbe condita*, edition in *Istorici delle cose Veneziane*, ed. A. Zeno (Venice, 1718), 21.

Rona Goffen saw the abolition in 1379 of this celebration of the feast of the Purification, coinciding with the enhancement of the cult of St Mark. Yet the cult of Mary retained and increased its strength, as Goffen herself has shown, particularly in connection with the Franciscans of the Frari and their devotion to the Immaculate Conception.⁷

The cult of Mary in its most civic sense had to focus on the Annunciation, since myth and tradition had it that the city was founded on the feast of the Annunciation, 25 March 421, establishing an analogy between Christ's incarnation and the birth of the city. Sanudo commended Sabellico's treatment of the subject when, in his *History of Venice*, he explained that the conception of Christ through Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary coincided exactly with the anniversary of God's creation of Adam; Christ became the new Adam, compensating for his sin, Mary the new Eve, redeeming her through her own immaculate conception. Sabellico qualified his discussion of the incarnation by emphasizing that it was a 'mystery' beyond human comprehension.⁸ Venetian editions of *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* of 1491 and 1502 were prefaced with a woodcut illustration of the Annunciation (figs. 3 and 4).⁹ Sorano believed that a depiction of the Annunciation should inspire reverence; he addressed a couplet (published in 1498), composed, perhaps, for the unveiling of a new painting, to the Venetian 'Spectator, salute the Queen of Heaven and Earth, and repeat with God's messenger, Hail [Mary]'.¹⁰ Sorano's couplet illustrates aptly one focus of John Shearman's *Only Connect*: images were not primarily for adornment but for devotion and veneration.¹¹

There was, by the second half of the fifteenth century, much visible evidence of Venice's collective devotion to Mary: by one contemporary estimate there were twenty-one churches with 300 altars, which expressed both communal and personal devotion, and two scuole grandi dedicated to Mary.¹² Sabellico in his Latin guide to the city, *De situ urbis*, published in 1490 or 1491, provided a detailed and enthusiastic description of the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, built between 1481 and 1489 to house and honour the miraculous image of the Madonna painted earlier in the century by Nicolo di Pietro. He described the beauty of the marble and inlaid stone and felt that this new church – undoubtedly he admired its novelty as much as its pious purpose – ranked next to 'the golden temple', the basilica

⁷ Goffen, 141, ch. v/2.

⁸ Sabellicus, *Rerum Venetarum*, 14.

⁹ *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* (Venice: Bernardino Benali, Matteo da Parma/Codeca, 1491), BL IA 22345; *Miracoli* (Venice: G. de Rusconibus, 1502).

¹⁰ Palladius D. Soranus, *Epigrammata* (Venice: Bernardo Vitali for G. B. Sessa, 1498), BL IA 24557, Biblioteca Marciana Inc. 1013.91 and 2 other copies. Martini, 218.

¹¹ J. Shearman, *Only Connect* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), ch. 1 'A more engaged spectator'.

¹² Goffen, 138–9 and n. 3, 239 for Bernardo Giustiniani's figures of 1457; Marin Sanudo, *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero la città di Venetia (1493–1530)*, ed. Angela Caracciolo Aricò (Milan, 1980), 45, gives seventeen churches dedicated to Mary.

of St. Mark, in splendour.¹³ The Miracoli was dedicated, in 1489, to the Immaculate Conception, as were the Scuola Grande of S. Maria della Misericordia in 1493, and the Scuola Grande of S. Maria della Carità in 1496, a confraternity favoured particularly by intellectuals. Sabellico, who showed deep devotion to the Virgin Mary, was a member of this scuola; his death and funeral were recorded in their register.¹⁴ The church of the order of the Crociferi was dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, and Sorano composed orations to be delivered for the celebration of the feast of the Assumption there. Sabellico was asked by Sorano if he would deliver Sorano's Panegyric in praise of the Virgin 'Deipara' one 15 August, probably because Sorano was indisposed in the country during an exceptionally hot August. Sabellico replied that he would gladly come 'even though the Crociferi is as far from here as it possibly could be'. The church of the Crociferi was at the present-day Gesuiti, so on the northernmost part of the city, while Sabellico lived in the parish of Sant'Angelo, not so far away; but around 1500 he was getting on in years. He received Sorano's request only the day before the feast of the Assumption, but he was 'attracted by the enticing script', 'encouraging Palladio Sorano for the future in sacred writing, in imitation of the ancient poets, whose concerns were more with heavenly than earthly things . . .', and closing his reply with 'Cultivate piety, my dearest Palladius . . .'¹⁵ Funeral orations for distinguished Venetians and non-Venetian dignitaries were delivered by humanists, including Sabellico; sermons or orations on other ecclesiastical occasions have been little noticed in Venice, although several of Sabellico's were published.¹⁶

Marian devotion, even more than Christocentric devotion, was promoted by the regular feast-days of the Christian year: 2 February, the Purification, 25 March, the Annunciation; May was a month devoted to Mary, 2 July the Visitation, 15 August the Assumption, 8 September the Nativity of the Virgin, and (from 1476) 8 December, the Immaculate Conception. The New Testament gives little guidance on Mary's life, but by the end of the

¹³ Sabellicus, *De Venetae urbis situ Opera* (Basle, 1560), Tom iv, col. 262, *Opera* (Venice, 1502), 87; Sanudo, *De origine*, 26.

¹⁴ Archivio di Stato, Venezia (ASV), *Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità: Successione ereditaria Guardiani e confratelli 1450-1545*, from back fol. 51', col. 2, 20 April 1506 records Sabellico's death and burial; I am grateful to Martin Lowry for pointing me to this reference; its entries suggest that intellectuals favoured membership at this time. Sanudo recorded Sabellico's death on 18 April, and the funeral at San Stefano on 20 April, M. Sanuto, *I diarii*, ed. R. Fulin (Venice, 1879-1902), vi, col. 329. He was buried at the monastic church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, R. Chavasse, 'Humanism commemorated: the Venetian memorials to Benedetto Brugnolo and Marcantonio Sabellico', in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. P. Denley and C. Elam (London, 1988), 455-61.

¹⁵ Martin, 160-1 for Sorano's composition of orations for his students at the Crociferi, novices and sons of the nobility, to deliver on the feast of the Assumption. Sabellicus, *Opera: Epistolae familiares* (Venice: A. de Lisona, 1502), fol. 51.

¹⁶ Sabellicus (1502), *Orationes* 5 and 6 funeral orations, 10-12 religious/ecclesiastical with civic overtones; R. Weissman, 'Sacred eloquence: humanist preaching and lay piety in Renaissance Florence', in *Christianity and the Renaissance*, ed. T. Verdon and J. Henderson (Syracuse, N.Y., 1990), 250-71 on humanist sermons for Florentine confraternities.

fifteenth century apocryphal sources had become the given account; literature, the arts and to an extent the teaching of the Church affirmed Mary's role in salvation. Sixtus IV recognized the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1476 by appointing an office and feast-day.¹⁷ Recognition of Mary's Immaculate Conception was to consider her co-redemptrix. It tended to be a highly intellectual doctrine, as depicted by some central Italian artists in the wake of Sixtus IV's action, and as Signorelli's difficult altarpiece of the subject suggests;¹⁸ or, as will be shown, it could be more simply understood by returning in thought to Mary's conception at the meeting of her parents, Anna and Joachim, at the Golden Gate. The escalation of devotion to St Anna in the late fifteenth century expressed in Latin, in the vernacular and in art was strong affirmation of this teaching in a form that could be comprehended by lay people who had not studied the arguments of the Church Fathers, or the opposing views of Franciscans and Dominicans. Other expressions of Mary Immaculate were her *Dormition*, rather than *Death*, and her bodily *Assumption* into heaven and consequent *Coronation* as Queen of heaven. These were aspects of Marian imagery particularly favoured in late fifteenth-century Venice, especially depictions of her death/dormition, and the last rites carried out by the Apostles, based closely on the description in the *Golden Legend*.¹⁹ Mary was conceived without original sin, 'without spot' as described by Sabellico in his first elegy to the Virgin; only as such was she fit to bear Christ. Mary, without original sin, did not suffer bodily death. Mantegna's rendering of the subject about 1460 shows her spirit ascending to heaven in Christ's care, whereas it was legitimate to depict her bodily ascension, since she was assumed body and soul.²⁰

The piety of Venetian society in the closing decades of the fifteenth century was not channelled exclusively into cults of Mary. The importance of the cult of St Mark continued; that of Venice's own bishop and patriarch, Lorenzo Giustiniani, who had died in 1456, was much promoted.²¹ The 1470s was a decade packed with promotion of devotion: 1475 was a year of Jubilee which the earliest edition of *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* celebrated.²² Sixtus IV's Franciscan background, and Franciscan influence in Venice, were important for lay spirituality. Lay devotion was stimulated by natural and man-made disasters, by recurring epidemics of plague, and the proximity of the Turks in Friuli in the late 1470s. Impetus was given to the cult of San Rocco, especially at the time of the 1478 epidemic of

¹⁷ 1854 Pius IX's Bull 'Ineffabilis Deus' confirmed the Immaculate Conception as dogma.

¹⁸ Goffen, 58 and fig. 28; Luca or possibly Francesco Signorelli, *Immaculate Conception*, Cortona, Museo Diocesano; a similar altarpiece, School of Signorelli, *Immaculate Conception*, S. Maria delle Grazie al Calcinaio, Cortona.

¹⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger (New York and London, 1989), 451-4.

²⁰ Andrea Mantegna, *Death of the Virgin*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, with upper portion, *Christ with the Virgin's Soul*, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara.

²¹ Patricia Labalme, 'No man but an angel. Early efforts to canonize Lorenzo Giustiniani (1381-1456)', in *Studi in onore di Aldo Stella* (Vicenza, 1993), 15-43.

²² *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* (Vicenza: L. Achates, 1475), BL IA 31707, colophon (fig. 15).

plague. The Scuola of San Rocco was recognized that year and the saint's body was brought to the city in 1485; Sabellico covered the event, in *De situ urbis*, albeit not as extensively as the building of Santa Maria dei Miracoli which enshrined the miraculous image of Mary which had saved plague victims.²³ Francesco Diedo, who died in the office of *podestà* of Verona in 1484, wrote a Latin life of San Rocco in response to the ravages of the 1478 outbreak. Venice's printing houses suffered badly in that epidemic; nevertheless there were five editions and two Italian translations of Diedo's *Vita* before 1500. The British Library copy of the 1494 edition was printed by an unknown printer in gothic type, whereas most such religious imprints, perhaps surprisingly, were in roman.²⁴ Diedo mixed in the intellectual circle or academy of the humanist Giovanni Panteo in Verona which Sabellico joined when he retreated there in 1484 to write his *History of Venice*. That much read Augustinian Hermit, Jacopo Filippo Foresti, seems to have been responsible for attributing a life of San Rocco to Sabellico which has never been traced.²⁵ It is possible that Sabellico simply added a note to his colleague's account, to describe the translation of the saint's body to Venice which took place the year after Diedo's death. Sabellico's lost work might well have been written while he was in Udine, or rather in the Friulan countryside to escape the 1478 plague, about the time he composed *Carmina in tredecim in laudem dei parae virginis*.²⁶

Anti-Semitism might be called negative piety; Martin Lowry has shown that it was a guiding influence for Jenson's early religious publications, in 1471 and 1472, and even behind the *Decor puellarum*, a manual of Christian conduct addressed to girls before marriage.²⁷ In 1471 Jenson published Antonio Cornazzano's *Life of Christ and the Virgin* in Italian verse which was accompanied by an appeal to unite against the Turks. Cornazzano became an editor for Jenson. In the overproduction crisis of 1473, religious literature in the vernacular for lay people seemed too speculative; Latin was safer with ecclesiastical authority, and after 1475-6, Jenson published no more religious works in the vernacular. It was in character with what Martin Lowry has shown to be the close links between Jenson, the Carthusians, Franciscans, Camaldolese, patrician patronage and local humanist editorship, that 1475 saw his publication of Giovanni Matheo Tyberino's *In beatum Symonem*.²⁸ Tyberino was both physician and humanist; his vehement stance on the guilt of the Jews has been discussed by R. Po-Chia Hsia in *Trent 1475: Stories*

²³ Sabellicus (1560), col. 267.

²⁴ BL IA 427; Grendler (1993), 470, 'Gothic letter signaled Latin'.

²⁵ J. F. Foresti. *Supplementum chronicarum* (Venice: Albertinus de Lisona, 1503), lib. xvi, fol. 436', 'De sancti Rochi vita li. 1'.

²⁶ One of three MSS of Diedo's *Vita* is in Udine, Bibl. Comun. Fondo Cod. 1335 (176), which may provide some clue to Sabellico's lost work; Sabellicus, *Opera: Carmina* (Padua, 1483); R. Chavasse (1986), 19, 23.

²⁷ Lowry (1991), 59-60; Lowry, 'Humanism and anti-Semitism in Renaissance Venice: the strange story of "Decor puellarum"', *Bibliofilia*, 87 (1986), 39-54.

²⁸ Lowry (1991), 121.

of *Ritual Murder*.²⁹ Tyberino's Latin poems on the Simon theme closed with a poem in praise of the 'Virgin of the Assumption'; he saw Simon's mother as 'Mater dolorosa', and his own hymn to the Virgin was entirely appropriate in this context. Early in his quarto volume he appealed to the Franciscan pope Sixtus IV; the Franciscans were known for their anti-Semitism, largely orchestrated by Bernadino da Feltre, and for their efforts to establish Monte dei Pietà to counter Jewish money-lending. Tyberino's publication was seen as a weapon against heresy, concluding with the well-known phrase 'Post tenebras spero lucem'.³⁰ Hsia has drawn attention to the same vernacular and Latin conjunction as I have found in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: he noted 'If preachers conjured up Christ, Saints and Martyrs when fueling popular violence against Jews, the poets invoked the Muses, Apollo and Virgil in praise of him.' Raffaele Zovenzoni, a humanist from Trieste, composed promotional verse for the campaign. Giovanni Calphurnio, a fellow humanist, whom Sabellico noted for his religious verse, wrote of 'Blessed Boy Simon, slaughtered by the Jews'. The Simon of Trent literature pointed up the miraculous as well as analogies with Christ and Mary, the combination most loved by lay religiosity, and as Hsia put it, 'In prose or in verse the Christian had recourse to that language of moral suasion humanist Latin.'³¹ Besides the humanist author had the advantage of intellectual and technical know-how which not all promoters of vernacular publications might possess. The wide interests of Venetian publishers and the rapidity with which they switched from classical to vernacular has to be realized in order to understand that diversity became less and less of an obstacle for publishers.

In misjudging the generality of fear, of recourse to religious comfort and of hope in nothing short of the miraculous, the proximity of genres and language at this time has been underestimated. Hsia concluded that 'far from reflecting a mood of optimism, often attributed to the revival of classical learning, the new technology of printing expressed the deeply felt anxiety of Christian Europe threatened by heretics and Jews from within, and by the Turks without'.³² In the context of these wider public demands on fifteenth-century religion it is easier to move on to more personal and spiritual devotion expressed in classical and everyday guises. Both the Latin and the vernacular guises were forms of fantasy: the one dressed its Christian subject in classical idiom in order to honour and venerate its miraculous nature; the other, realistic but fictional, approach of vernacular literature, as in the *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, put the miraculous in an everyday context. Were both the classical and the realistic guises, in their effort to

²⁹ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

³⁰ Tyberinus, *De obitu Beati Simonis* (Tarvisio: Gerardo de Lisa, 1482?), Marciana Misc. 388.6; *In beatum Symonem* (Trent: Praesbyter Leonardus Longus, 1482), BL IA. 51136, 'Ad laudem assumptionis Beate Marie semper Virginis', fol. A2 'Adsis Sixte praecor'; the colophon is followed by 'POST TENEBRAS . . .'. Bernardino da Feltre was depicted for an altarpiece in Narni holding an emblematic mountain decked with coins, at present in Palazzo del Podestà, Narni.

³¹ Hsia, 52-5, n. 7, 153 'Carmen Joannis Calphurni ad Joannem Hinderbachium'.

³² Hsia, 56.

exemplify through the vocabulary and idiom of other genres, in danger of contravening theological and doctrinal correctness?

THE HUMANISTS AND THE LATIN GUISE

It is preferable here to set aside the terms Christian humanism and Christian humanist in looking at the various facets of humanist religiosity, because they carry particular connotations. Marian themes in the visual arts were already in classical garb; in literature Mary's many attributes lent themselves to classicizing more readily than Christocentric themes. Mary's titles were legion; to load her additionally with classical titles and epithets was to honour her, not to blaspheme. Sabellico's first elegy to the Virgin on her birthday opened with the well-known 'Hail you, Festival day' derived from Venantius Fortunatus and medieval liturgy; he went on to develop a pastoral mode reflecting the golden age of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue:

Fair was the day, as that first, which shone on the newly-created
World – but this day surely was fairer by far!
There on the sunny hills hung grapes in succulent bunches,
Apples were strewn abroad, everywhere under the trees . . .³³

Sabellico's language and verse were intentionally sophisticated; was it only a virtuoso exercise? His continuing and not out-of-the-ordinary Marian devotion can allow us to value more than our nineteenth-century predecessors did the spirituality of fifteenth-century intellectuals, those of this slightly older generation than Lorenzo dei Medici, Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna, that was singled out by Burckhardt in his chapter 'Morality and Religion' in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.³⁴ Burckhardt found it impossible to reconcile the seeming opposites which he saw in Italian Renaissance Catholicism. Much recent research in pre-Reformation religion has meant that we can come to terms with what have appeared in the past to be major inconsistencies in the religious and intellectual life of Renaissance Europe.

Sacred poetry was held in high regard in Renaissance Venice. There was a remarkable export from Venice to the Netherlands of the *Devotio Moderna*; some Venetian publications were actually commissioned for the northern

³³ Sabellicus (1483), 'First elegy to the Virgin on her birthday', lines 34–8. I would like to thank Rachel Moriarty for her classical expertise, and for translating Sorano's orations and Sabellico's poems, rendering the latter in verse. Such pastoral verse was a literary counterpart to Carlo Crivelli's fruits in depictions of the Virgin; Crivelli's National Gallery (NG) 906 *The Immaculate Conception* could be the earliest representation of this subject, NG *The Earlier Italian Schools*, ed. M. Davies (London, 1986), 166; P. Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven, Conn. 1993), 337 n. 17. The Perugian humanist Francesco Maturazio opened his 'In Nativitatem beatissimae semper virginis Mariae', 'Salve festa dies, salve sanctissima / Salve'; Sabellico's thirteen Elegies to the Virgin were known in Perugia and were copied, possibly from a fragment of the Padua 1483 publication, in 1492 in the monastery of San Pietro; both MS and printed fragment are now in the Biblioteca 'Augusta' del Comune di Perugia, MS Fondo Vecchio I 56., Inc 33; Sabellicus, *Opera* (Padua, 1482–3), 'Elegies to the Virgin' only.

³⁴ J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, 1951), 300.

market. Fortunately Jacobus de Breda's 1498 Deventer edition of Sabellico's poems was prefaced by an explanation and dedication for the benefit of the students of Alexander Hegius' school; the school was closely associated with the publishers de Breda and Richard Paffraet.³⁵ Typographically it is interesting for the way it was printed as a school text with commentary. The gloss, not particularly erudite, throws light on the level of educational attainment at which these Latin texts were aimed (fig. 5). More remarkable for our understanding of late fifteenth-century piety and its influence into the early sixteenth century is the knowledge that Erasmus lifted chunks of Sabellico's verse for his own religious poems in these early years, as a humanist poet might have appropriated lines of classical verse.³⁶ The young Erasmus showed flare enough to take over some of Sabellico's rather good lines:

Haec est illa tui sacri lux conscia partus
Anna parens tantae virginis anna parens

which implied the new years, new life, brought to humankind through Anna's and Mary's roles in the incarnation, for which Mary's own immaculate conception was essential.³⁷ Debate over Mary's immaculate conception directed attention to Joachim and Anna, but especially to the mother figure St Anna. Erasmus' 'In praise of St Anna' was indebted to both Sabellico's St Anna and to Rudolf Agricola's *Mater Anna*.³⁸ The literary and visual evidence came together in increasing numbers of depictions of Anna and Joachim meeting at the Golden Gate; the scene was given unusual prominence in Bartolomeo Vivarini's altarpiece of 1473 in Santa Maria Formosa, when the campaign for recognition of the Immaculate Conception was approaching success (figs. 6 and 7). The scene was more commonly found in predellas or side panels depicting the life of the Virgin.³⁹ Bartolomeo and Alvise Vivarini's commissions reflected the commitment to Marian devotion and a growing excitement over the implications of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.⁴⁰

Erasmus' proximity to the style and thought of the Venetian humanist was reinforced by his use of Sabellico's message of peace, a plea which was

³⁵ Sabellicus, *Carmina* (Deventer: de Breda, 1490, 1498), BL IA.47614, IA.47911; commentary by Herman Torrentinus.

³⁶ D. Erasmus, *Collected Works, Vols. 85–86, Poems* (Toronto, 1993), Poems 1, 42, 110.

³⁷ Rachel Moriarty's observation on Sabellico's lines, 'Elegy I', fol. a2'; Erasmus, Poem 42, line 16.

³⁸ Sabellicus, 'Elegy I'; for Agricola and Erasmus see Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus Man of Letters* (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 87, 240 n. 56; R. Agricola, *Historia matris Anne*, 4^o Gothic (Leipzig: J. Thanner, 1507), Poem 2 'Anna parens mundo sacrie'.

³⁹ NG 4250 Dalmatian/Venetian School, *Altarpiece of the Virgin Mary*, end fourteenth century, left over bottom scene 'The Meeting at the Golden Gate', *The Earlier Italian Schools*, 550: 'This altar piece may be intended as a representation of the Immaculate Conception.'

⁴⁰ B. Vivarini, *Triptych: Madonna della Misericordia, Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate* (detail fig. 6) and *Birth of the Virgin* in chapel of the Purification, originally for the high altar of the old church, Humfrey, Appendix no. 15 344; Alvise Vivarini, Treviso altarpiece, 1480, *Virgin and Child with Franciscan Saints and Joachim and Anna; Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1480, Noale (Padua), Humfrey, Appendix nos. 28, 29 347, plates 194, 214 – note the drama of the Apostles' gestures compared with his less dramatic 1478 *Assumption*, Milan, Brera, and the drama of figs. 8 and 9. I appreciated Monsignor Giuseppe Rizzo's courtesy and interest in showing me the altarpiece of the *Assumption* in the Chiesa Arcipretale dei SS. Felice e Fortunato, Noale.

expressed by both learned and popular writers in the troubled last decades of the century:

Per te tuta quies, per tea sunt ocia terris
Pressa iacent merito bella nefanda tuo⁴¹

The Netherlandish scholar Reedijk judged the quality of Sabellico's verse above that of Baptista Mantuanus and Matheo Vegius who have had greater recognition for their poetry.⁴² All were used to teach classical Latin vocabulary, grammar and metre in the context of accepted Christian tradition rather than in a pagan context. The printing centres in northern Europe which favoured publication of Italian humanist works for teaching purposes, Deventer, Paris, Erfurt and Leipzig, all laid foundations for explosive religious developments not many years later. Humanists, by classicizing their Christian devotion, have created problems of interpretation: how definitive, for example, were their descriptions of Mary, not only as *alma*, or *parens*, but as *genetrix* and most questionably as *creatix*, which implied near equality with her Son? Stylistically the Latin author had to employ variety, and therefore literary devices can be confused with doctrinal implications. We are left with doubts and questions which may not have troubled fifteenth-century lay authors and readers in the way they may trouble us. The language was often dramatic, as in Sorano's description of the Assumption:

at the moment before you [the Virgin Mary] met death, clarion calls of trumpets were heard, the air seemed to change to the likeness of a shining white cloud, and at once all the Apostles stood in wonder before your door, beneath the cloud-like shape. Then John went out to greet each one of them, and supported them wonderfully as they wept . . . They dried their eyes and went in . . . and when they saw her, bowing their knees most reverently, they greeted her, not as if she was the Mother of the Creator, but the Creator himself.

after her death, was this not something divine, even, indeed more than divine? At the very moment when the most glorious soul of the Virgin was most gloriously raised to the heavens, a radiance gathered in the sky, so bright that nobody's eyes could endure it.⁴³

He closed the second oration on the 1502 feast-day:

On the third day, then, the body was taken up into heaven in the company of all the Angels, amid the joy of all the Saints, the applause (so to say) of all the stars [?], and into the presence of her Son himself.

⁴¹ Sabellicus (Deventer, 1490), 'Elegy XIII Ad divam grazie virgine', c3', Erasmus, Poem 50, line 96.

⁴² C. Reedijk, *The Poems of D. Erasmus* (Leiden, 1956), 5.

⁴³ Soranus, First Oration, composed 1499 for feast of the Assumption to be delivered by one of his teenage students at the Crociferi, on this occasion Lorenzo Priuli (the future doge), but in the event delivered by a young cleric, nephew of the General of the Order of the Crociferi, Domizio Palladio, *Oratio de assumptione Virginis* (Venice, 1500), Marciana Inc. 871, Latin text Martini 260-5; Sorano also referred to the Virgin as 'semper adiutrix' (of 'perpetual succour') as in the 'Madonna del Soccorso', Chavasse, 1996.

What is your faith, my noble Christians? the earth shook with joy; the very waters were stirred to merriment, the air grew clearer, the sky seemed a fairer sight. The whole firmament of heaven shone brighter than before.⁴⁴

The humanist genres, both poetic and prose, conveyed the ethereal quality of Mary's assumption, coronation and the powers which came to her from her heavenly status. There is no problem in reconciling the literary genre and the drama which it conveys with the increasing drama depicted as visual concepts of the teaching of the Immaculate Conception evolved: the Dormition, the bodily Assumption and Coronation were the consequences of Mary's immaculate conception. The small panel of *The Death and Assumption of the Virgin* in the National Gallery, by Gerolamo da Vicenza, and the bronze of the *Assumption and Coronation* from the Barbarigo monument for the church of Santa Maria della Carità convey drama similar to Sorano's but in different media (figs. 8 and 9).⁴⁵ Figure 10 shows a woodcut with a similar artistic scheme but without depicting the Apostles' dramatic gestures. Images of these subjects increased in number in the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century; depiction of ethereal drama reached a climax in Titian's *Assumption* for the high altar of Sant Maria Gloriosa dei Frari completed in 1518. Angelic choirs and angelic musicians under the banner of Christ had helped to create the extraordinary and the miraculous in the Gerolamo and Barbarigo interpretations.

Margaret King observed that 'Venetian humanism made a marriage with Christianity...'⁴⁶ There was a strong tradition of piety within the Venetian patriciate, among whom the Giustiniani, Diedo and Priuli, Sorano's patrons, encouraged the employment of scholars from outside Venice, from the Veneto and from further afield, especially from Rome, like Sabellico and Sorano himself. Some of these scholars were already associated with the new printing enterprises as editors and as scouts; others were keen to be associated, to publish their own works or editions, but perhaps without the know-how to do so, Sabellico got his friend Sorano's poetry published by one of his own printers Bernardo Vitali, through the editor G. B. Sessa.⁴⁷ Much humanist poetry remained unpublished – scholars and would-be scholars produced so much in the process of perfecting their literary skills.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Palladius, *Oratio* (Venice: B. de Vitali, 1502), BL 845.e.30, Martini, 268–72.

⁴⁵ NG 3077, G. da Vicenza, *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*, 1488, 335 × 225 cm. I am grateful to Susan Foister and Larry Keith for enabling me to view the panel during restoration 1993–4; fig. 8 shows the panel after restoration. Part of funereal monument (from above the altar) to Doge Marco (d. 1486) and his brother Doge Agostino Barbarigo (d. 1501), now in the Giorgio Franchetti Gallery, Ca' d'Oro; F. Valconover, *Ca' d'Oro* (Milan, 1986), 36 for uncertain attribution: possibly Tullio and Antonio Lombardi, or their school. Agostino showed particular devotion to the Virgin Mary.

⁴⁶ M. L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton, N.J., 1986), 31–7, 'Humanism and piety'; Chavasse, Essay Review of King, *BS Renaiss Stud*, 5, no. 2 (1988), 21–6.

⁴⁷ Palladius Dominicus Soranus, *Epigrammata* (Venice, 1498), BL IA.24557.

⁴⁸ Sabellicus, *Epistolae* (1502), fol. 9' to Foresti: 'Scripsi ad quinque milia carminum, sub praeceptoribus, quae omnia adultus abolevi, praeter pauca, quae ex illis non omnino displicuerunt.'

Marino Sanudo valued Sorano's poetry enough to copy out his verse himself; it often had an apocalyptic appeal in the crisis years of the early sixteenth century.⁴⁹ Sabellico did us a great service in his fifth elegy in celebration of the Virgin's birth, by paying tribute to a host of fifteenth-century Italian humanists whom he associated with the celebration of the Virgin.⁵⁰

VERNACULAR EXPRESSION

The humanist Latin approach to Christian devotion might be considered the equivalent of the didactic image, whereas the vernacular expression could be equated with a miraculous image for use in intercession and veneration. The cult of the Madonna at Loreto was based on a miracle rather more fantastic than many of the everyday stories retold in edition after edition of *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*. Insecurity in the face of the Turkish threat had catapulted the miracle of the Marian shrine in the Marche into prominence in the 1470s. Humanists from the Marche, such as Ludovico Lazarelli, working in Rome, told the story in verse, and Bonfini in a history of Recanati where he was teaching.⁵¹ Baptista Manutianus referred to it in his *Hymns to the Virgin*.⁵² The image of the angelic transportation was emblematic for the miraculous. Editions of *Miracoli* published in 1490 and 1496 by different printers in Brescia used the Holy House of Loreto as a frontispiece, not because one of the stories in the collection told of the miracle of Loreto, but because the Virgin's house at Loreto was synonymous with the miraculous (fig. 11).⁵³ In contrast Benali's 1491 *Miracoli* was prefaced by the biblical

⁴⁹ Marciana MS Lat. XII, 211 (= 4179), fols. 114, 200 in Sanudo's hand, other Sorano verse in different hands.

⁵⁰ Sabellicus (1483), *Elegy V*, 'De Natale Divae Virginis ad sui seculi poëtas', closes with reference to the Assumption, stressing the ethereal throne; also the Virgin as 'creatrix'; Chavasse (1986), 23-4; devotional poems which seemed out of character with humanism have assumed a different significance seen in the context of strong Marian devotion, Sabellico's own personal piety and the calamitous events around him of Turkish invasion and plague, as well as in the context of their subsequent educational role. Sabellico's references to contemporary poets in this elegy underline humanist commitment to Christian devotion and confirm the popularity of the poetic genre.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Shayne Mitchell for her help in locating humanist references to the miraculous transportation of the Virgin's house from the Holy Land to Italy and for her transcription of the relevant lines of MS Vat. lat. 2853, Ludovico Lazarelli, *Fasti Christianae religionis*, c. 1478-84 dedicated to Sixtus IV, published by G. Amadio, *La vita e l'opera di Antonio Bonfini* (Montalto Marche, 1930), 286-7, Bonfini references 285.

⁵² B. Mantuanus, 'Hymn to the Virgin' (Venice: Jacobus de Leucho, 1499), BL IA.24530, fol. C1.

⁵³ *Miracoli* (Brescia: Bernardino Misinta, 1496). A. M. Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut* (New York, 1963; 1st edn 1935), II, 507-8, fig. 271 for *Miracoli* (Brescia: Battista Farfengo, 1490), Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale P.6.3, where the Loreto illustration is followed by eight lines of verse in which the printer claims responsibility for authorship as with the Achate 1475 edition, n. 22 above and fig. 15; what appeared to Hind as a canopy over the Virgin was in fact the fifteenth-century interpretation of the angelic transportation of the Virgin's house from the Holy Land to Italy - the house was reputed to have landed twice before reaching Loreto; many fresco examples of the Holy House depicted in this way, solidly earthbound, with angels clasping four columns, exist in central Italy, especially on and near the pilgrim routes to Loreto from Rome. Tiepolo's rendering of the subject for the ceiling of the church of the Scalzi in 1743 (Venice, Accademia no. 292) gave a better idea of the orthodox airborne interpretation, with no room for the suggestion mooted in the sixteenth century, that the house had been transported by sailors.

miracle, Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, although, again, the text has no reference to any New Testament miracle (fig. 12).⁵⁴ It is as if this one biblical reference (John 11.1–46), together with the miracle or mystery of the Annunciation to the Virgin (fig. 3), justified the following sixty-two miraculous accounts. The *Miracoli* were manuals of intercession, praying made palatable for lay people. Many of the stories were in circulation throughout Europe, largely from French manuscript sources, but others had specific Italian settings.⁵⁵

There can have been little unease with the miraculous where the image of the Virgin was transferred from the spiritual to the real (fig. 13). The fifteenth-century philosophical concept of beauty in conflict with evil or the devil was illustrated in the story of the painting of the Virgin's portrait, and in its basic illustration in a Venetian edition of *Miracoli* of 1505.⁵⁶ It had become increasingly apparent that St Luke could not have painted all images of the Madonna, known to have miraculous status, so the story recognized the miraculously creative power of the artist: when he was challenged by the devil, 'Why do you make her so beautiful and me so ugly?', the artist replied, 'Because she is the most beautiful and the most precious Madonna who was ever in heaven or earth, whereas you are the most ugly and vile beast . . .' The devil then made to push the painter off his scaffold into an abyss, whereupon the image of Our Lady, which he had painted, stepped forward and held out her hand, saving him from falling.

What of the books themselves? The *Miracoli* must have been read so avidly that they now exist often in single copies. There was not the expected distinction of type between classical editions and books for a wider audience. Vernacular religious books were produced in quarto editions, most often in clear roman types, with broad margins. The earliest was printed in 1475 in Vicenza by Leonardo d'Achate from Basle, who had already printed Virgil, and later corresponded with the humanist, Sorano. Leonardo claimed, in the colophon, that he was the 'master of these sweet songs . . .', an authorship also claimed by other *Miracoli* publishers. The British Library copy may have survived in good hands; the hand rubrication gave it status, and it has escaped the wear and tear of everyday use (figs. 14 and 15). The only other copy survives in the Querini Stampalia and had more everyday handling; the vellum sheets binding that copy bear some manuscript clues to its 1493 ownership, a poor signature with two hearts pierced by an arrow.⁵⁷ The 1480s, 1490s and early 1500s saw the peak output of this popular vernacular genre: there were three editions published in Venice in the 1480s, five editions there in the 1490s, eight editions in the Terraferma (three in Vicenza, three in Treviso, two

⁵⁴ *Miracoli* (Venice, 1491) following title-page with 'Annunciation', n. 9 above.

⁵⁵ I have used Jean Mielot, *Miracles de Notre Dame*, c. 1456, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 374, facsimile edition (Westminster, 1885); Chavasse (1996) for Italian settings.

⁵⁶ *Miracoli* (Venice: B. Zanni, 1505); a slightly more sophisticated woodcut illustrated the same story, cap. x, in *Miracoli* (Florence: Bartolomeo de' Libri, 1500), Florence Bibl. Naz. L 7.46.

⁵⁷ BL IA.31707; Venice, Biblioteca Querini Stampalia Inc. 66 – note Venetian spelling. *Miracoli* (Vicenza: Giovanni da Reno, 1476), Stonyhurst College BV VIII 10, appears to be a reprint of Vicenza, 1475, apart from a different printer's name inserted in an identical colophon. Early ownership of this copy is recorded on the first leaf, and is of interest for the present discussion: the first owner in 1479 was Victor, a Camaldolese monk of Murano. A further manuscript note is evidence of the later shared ownership of a popular book: 'Est mei A.F. et amicorum'. I am grateful to the Rev. F. J. Turner, S.J., Librarian of Stonyhurst College for enabling me to consult this copy.

in Brescia). There had been eight editions, all but one printed in northern Italy, before there was a Florentine edition in 1480. Florence continued with two in 1495, one in 1500, but never approached the Venetian production.⁵⁸ Larger firms with an eye on the market entered this field; they were publishers known for their classical and humanist imprints. Six of Sabellico's printers (he used a great many) also printed Latin and vernacular devotional works as well as humanist or classical: Antonio de Avinione, Berdardino Vitali, Albertino de Lisona, Giovanni Pentio de Leuco, Giovanni Tacuino de Tridino and Giovanni Rosso; so did Lazzaro Suardi, Bernardo Benali and other publishers of *Miracoli*. In no way can authors, editors, printers and publishers have been unaware of the full range of publications. The length of the work, rather than its contents, seems to have been a guide to publication; short works could be fitted into programmes. Religious books were often illustrated from the 1490s.⁵⁹ Printers and publishers in Venice in the busy 1490s and 1500s would seem to have been the great levellers. Did they reflect or dictate society's choice of reading and language? Sabellico, like Erasmus, insisted that his culture was a Latin culture.⁶⁰ Other intellectuals, like Cornazzano and Sanudo, wrote in both languages. The petition to the Senate to translate Sabellico's *Rerum Venetarum* into the vernacular in early 1505, to make it more available to those, such as merchants, who did not read Latin, was indicative of the changes around the turn of the century.⁶¹

Personal devotion may not have been deeper in Venice than in other cities; the same characteristics of Latin and vernacular lay piety were undoubtedly demonstrated elsewhere. But Venice, as a cultural centre where artistic, literary and publishing activities came together on such a scale, presents the opportunity to view a wide spectrum of society's devotion through both word and image. It demonstrates that the Virgin Mary and the saints were more approachable than Christ; Erasmus' comment in *Praise of Folly* that 'ignorant man comes near to attributing more to her [Mary] than to her Son' rang true.⁶² Faith and hope in the miraculous were alive; the escalation of devotion to Mary in fifteenth-century Europe was a reality, not a fiction created by later historians of the pre-Reformation Church following a Protestant/Erasmian model. Lay piety and devotion went beyond rather than against the teaching of Rome. Vernacular religious literature was not subject to privilege legislation in Venice. It was, therefore, impossible to control the language, form and symbolism of such a vast output. Intellectuals seemed unquestioning, yet they were aware of the educational value of their own

⁵⁸ Note 2 above; also A. J. Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books, 1465-1550* (Geneva, 1983), 262-5; *Indice generale incunaboli delle biblioteche d'Italia (IGI)*, vol. IV (Rome, 1965), 86-9.

⁵⁹ *IGI* notes illustrated incunabula.

⁶⁰ Sabellico's autograph will, ASV, Lodovico Talenti, Il Testamenti, 956 no. 517: 'Cognosco, et indico seria stata cosa piu conveniente alla mia professione haver notato questo mio testamento in latino che in lingua vernacula...'

⁶¹ ASV Notatorio del Collegio R.16, 1499-1507, fol. 134/136', 22 Nov. 1504, fol. 139/141', 14 Feb. 1504/5.

⁶² Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. B. Radice (London, 1971), 128-9.

publications. This was the devotional context in which Contarini, a student of Sabellico, and his patrician friends, Giustiniani and Querini, were brought up. The *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* of 1537 which bore the imprint of Contarini's mind, attacked public schools in Italy which allowed ungodly, philosophical debate to take place in churches.⁶³ At the turn of the century, humanists such as Sabellico and Sorano had held their classes in church buildings.⁶⁴ By the mid-sixteenth century Sorano's *Orations on the Assumption* could not have been delivered. In 1499 and 1501 they epitomized the interplay of Latin or learned lay devotion and popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary on the feast of her Assumption.

Sabellico made provision in his will of 1505 for his burial in the monastic church of S. Maria delle Grazie in the lagoon, where his son Mario had, that year, been buried. Further he added a codicil to his will to the effect that the 'ancona' of the Madonna from his bedroom, the *Virgin of the Assumption*, should go to the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in his birth place Vicovaro, near Rome, and should that cease to be consecrated for religious devotion, as has been the case, it should be transferred to San Pietro.⁶⁵ This panel of the Madonna (fig. 16) was carried in procession on the feast of the Assumption until after the Second World War, and a strong Sabellico lobby in this small town would like to see the combined commemoration of the Mother of Christ and of their greatest son take place again.⁶⁶

St Hilda's College, Oxford, 1992–3⁶⁷

⁶³ Ed. and trans. by Elizabeth Gleason, *Reform Thought in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1981), ch. 6/III, 95–6; the text contains a warning about 'the printing of books' and advice that, as with the public schools, the bishops should supervise; the same section ends with the advice that 'the *Colloquies of Erasmus* . . . and other books of their kind' should be banned in schools.

⁶⁴ Sabellico taught in the church of San Silvestro, Sorano in the Crociferi.

⁶⁵ Codicil to will dated 'pridie calendas Martias' 1505, n. 60.

⁶⁶ My tentative identification of the Vicovaro panel of a primitive Madonna of the Assumption with Sabellico's bequest has led to its acceptance by local historians, although, because the panel has been damaged and over painted, I believe it must remain conjecture. I should like to acknowledge, with appreciation, many useful discussions with Giuseppe Pomponi and information shared, and the welcome and hospitality he, his family and the Comune of Vicovaro have given me.

⁶⁷ I record with appreciation that the research for this paper was completed while I held the A.S.M. Research Studentship at St Hilda's College, Oxford.

LI MIRACOLI DELLA MADONNA.



Fig. 3 *Miracoli*: Annunciation, B. Benali and M. Codeca, 1491, BL IA.22345. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 4 *Miracoli*: annunciation, G. Rusconi, 1502.

D. Antonij Sabellici doctissimi viri i laude
 miris dei sp. virginis Marie Elegie pulcherre
 Elegia prima in natalem diue virginis

Virginis alma di

Res. tellus quæ pontus et æther
 Landat. et immensi regia tota poli
 Salve festa dies cælestis conscia partus
 Virgineo salve digna puerperæ
 Venturam cecinere p̄ij te carmine vates
 Aeg. sybillini non tacuere chozi
 Tibi nascenti quauis prenuicius iret
 Splendidior solito. lucifer ater erat
 Jret et aurato coniungit tonia curru
 Candidior cygnis. candidiorq; nite
 Fulcior illa tñ visa est. quis credere possit
 Quamuis zelotypo sit placitura viro
 Varius astrifero sidus splendebat olympo
 Acedere cui potuit phœbus et alma foroz
 Illius adventum manes sensere profundi
 Cerberus. et stygiam qui regit arteratem
 Anthius oceano nitidum quum tolleret açe
 Et matutinis surgeret actus equis
 Vidit et insolito radiantē lumine mundū
 Humine non nullo sensit adesse diem
 Quid cūctamur ait rātos nemoz abimur or?
 Nascere iam fas est. nascere sancta dies
 Dixit et extremis subito se prodit ab indis
 Lætera spectasses nil nisi splendor erat
 Nō pluvios luxilla notos. boreā ve mualem
 Sed mollis zephyros sensit et etefias
 Bredita nec cælo est longis erroribus villa
 Dulcia sed vernans carmina fudit auis

vel sol dicitur a cynthio q̄ mans est in insula delo. Notus o curta est ventus australis. Pluvius l. pluvialis. zephyrus aut ventus occidentalis. Et sic sunt quidam venti a quibus
 tonis ardentissimo spe estatis flantes cū sol ingressus est signum leonis. Et dicitur
 aut ab etos qd est annus quia singulis annis eodem tempore flant

Elegia p̄mo p̄vucta de
 carne p̄tans p̄sibo det
 ametrus et pentametrus
 alternari cōpositis. ab
 elegos greco noie quod
 lucrum significat. qm̄ h̄
 ḡne carminis p̄imum
 lucrus et miseria deseri/
 bi solebant sed deiti que
 cūq; materia. Pontus
 p̄rie est qd̄ p̄ maris
 circa thracia. Sed acct
 pitur ḡnaltur pro mari
 Aether est p̄rie sup̄mā
 dem̄tum salicet ignis
 Ast em̄ grecum a greca
 p̄bo et̄o quod ē creno
 Pontus sepe pro celo
 Duidus Sic habitos
 terras et redideret q̄
 tiber. Auertitū est par
 tus pueri vel ipsa pro/
 les gra Sibylla dicit
 mina p̄m̄nas aut p̄phe
 tans. Carro recedet de/
 cem sibyllas q̄ om̄es de
 christo variatate sunt
 vr̄ aut lactatius Auci
 fer est stella matutina dicit
 at lucifer fuisse ater id ē
 obscurus comparatiōe
 marie. Titonus laome
 dontis filius in oriente
 regnauit et fingitur esse
 maritus aurore. Tñ ti/
 tonia cōiungit auroza.
 Jucius est subniger. ze
 loripus dicitur nimius ama/
 tor formę et qui p̄rozan
 suam nimis diligit. Cer
 berus dicitur a poetis tri/
 ceps canis inferozum ia
 nito. Anthius apollo

Fig. 5 Sabellicus, *Carmina*, Deventer: J. de Breda, 1498, BL. IA.47614. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 6 Bartolomeo Vivarini, *S. Maria Formosa* triptych: left panel (104 × 50 cm), Joachim and Anna meeting at the Golden Gate (1473). By permission of Osvaldo Böhm, Fotografo Editore, Venice.



Fig. 7 *Graduale*: Meeting at the Golden Gate. Joannes Emericus de Spira, for L. A. Giunta, 1499–1500, fol. ^v CCXX



Fig. 8 Gerolamo da Vicenza, *The Death and Assumption of the Virgin* (1488), (33.5 × 22.5 cm), NG 3077. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London.

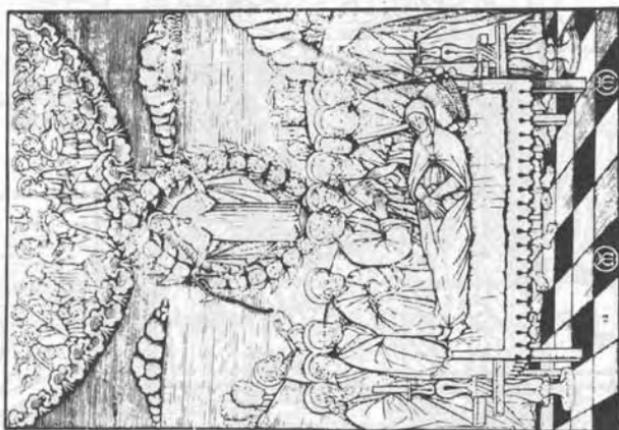


Fig. 10 *Graduale*: Death and Assumption of the Virgin, for L. A. Giunta, 1513-15

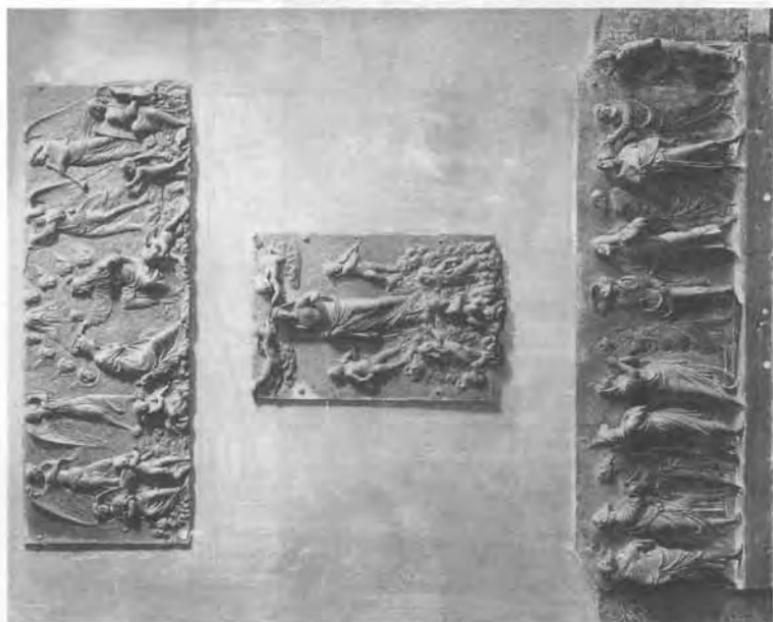


Fig. 9 School of Lombardi, *Apostles, Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin*, bronzes from Barbarigo monument, Ca' d'Oro. By permission of Osvaldo Bóhm, Fotografo Editore, Venice.



Fig. 11 *Miracoli*: The Holy House of Loreto, Brescia, 1496



Fig. 12 *Miracoli*: The Raising of Lazarus, B. Benali, 1491, BL IA.22345. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 13 *Miracoli*: The painter and the devil, B. Zanni, 1505



Fig. 16 Venetian school, *Madonna of the Assumption*, S. Pietro, Vicovaro, Lazio. Photographed by Massimo Pomponi.



Fig. 14 *Miracoli*: opening page, Vicenza: L. d'Achate, 1475, BL IA.31707. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 15 *Ibid.* colophon, BL IA.31707. By permission of the British Library.