

PONTANVS FECIT: Inscriptions and Artistic Authorship in the Pontano Chapel*

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The chapel of the humanist Giovanni Pontano (1429-1503) is one of the best known monuments of fifteenth-century Neapolitan architecture, but also among the most controversial. Built between 1490 and 1492, the chapel is one of the few examples from the period of a chapel commissioned by a humanist in his own right and is interesting on account of its elegance as an *all'antica* building and also because, most unusually, it does not form part of a church, but is instead conceived as an independent building situated on the central decumanus of the ancient center of Naples, now Via de' Tribunali (**Fig. 1**).¹ The chapel has been attributed to major architects of the time including Fra Giocondo, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, and Baccio Pontelli; however, the question of who was responsible for this work of art, so advanced and ahead of the architectural and artistic trends of the time, remains unresolved and open.²

This article will discuss Pontano's attempt to present himself not only as the patron, but also as the true "author" of his own chapel. Apart from claiming his responsibility for founding the building in the two dedicatory inscriptions on the exterior, Pontano reveals his wish to leave a memory of himself also as the designer of the chapel by repeatedly signing the pavement of the

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¹ See Bianca de Divitiis, "Pontano and his Idea of Patronage" in *Some Degree of Happiness: Studi di storia dell'architettura in onore di Howard Burns*, ed. Maria Beltramini and Caroline Elam (Pisa: Ed. Della Normale, 2010), 107-131; 684-692. See also Riccardo Filangieri di Candida, "Il tempietto di Gioviano Pontano in Napoli," *Atti della Accademia Pontaniana* 56 (1926): 103-139; Roberto Pane, *Architettura del Rinascimento in Napoli* (Napoli: Ed. Politecnica, 1937), 105-113; Giancarlo Alisio, "La cappella Pontano," *Napoli Nobilissima* 3 (III ser.; 1963-1964): 29-35; Roberto Pane, *Il Rinascimento nell'Italia meridionale* (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1975-1977), II, 199-202.

Luigi Fusco, "La cappella Pontano. Storia di una fabbrica e della sua decorazione", in *Atti della giornata di studi per il V centenario della morte di Giovanni Pontano*, ed. Antonio Garzya (Napoli: Accademia Pontaniana, 2004), 65-72; Stella Casiello, "Restauro dell'Ottocento nella Cappella Pontano", in *Architetture e territorio nell'Italia meridionale tra XVI e XX secolo: scritti in onore di Giancarlo Alisio*, ed. Alfredo Buccaro (Napoli: Electa, 2004), 200-209.

² On the attributions of the chapel see De Divitiis, "Pontano," 108. For the attribution to Fra Giocondo, who was in Naples from 1489 until 1492, see Roberto Pane, *Architettura del Rinascimento in Napoli* (Naples: Ed. Politecnica, 1937), 112 and Giancarlo Alisio, "La cappella Pontano," *Napoli Nobilissima* 3 (III ser.; 1963-1964): 29-33. For the attribution to Francesco di Giorgio Martini, who also was in Naples in 1492, see Pane, *Il Rinascimento*, I, 14-15 and II, 199-202, and Howard Burns, "'Restaurator delle ruine antiche?': Tradizione e studio dell'antico nell'attività di Francesco di Giorgio," in *Francesco di Giorgio architetto*, ed. Francesco Paolo Fiore, Manfredo Tafuri (Milan: Electa, 1993), 162. For the proposed attribution to Baccio Pontelli as architect of the chapel, see Christoph L. Frommel, "Il tempio e la chiesa: Baccio Pontelli e Giuliano della Rovere nella Chiesa di S. Aurea a Ostia," in Id., *Architettura e committenza da Alberti a Bramante* (Florence: Olschki, 2006), 390-393 and Francesco Benelli, "Baccio Pontelli e Francesco di Giorgio: alcuni confronti stilistici fra rocche, chiese, cappelle e palazzo," in *Francesco di Giorgio alla corte di Federico da Montefeltro*, ed. Francesco Paolo Fiore (Florence: Olschki, 2004), 551-555.

interior with the phrase *Pontanus fecit* (**Fig. 3**). This feature has never been remarked upon by historians, yet *Pontanus fecit* can be seen within the context of the humanistic interest in artists' signatures which emerged at the end of the fifteenth century, and as such can be interpreted as a key element in understanding the peculiar position of the chapel as regards the intrinsic and dialectical relationship between patron and artist and the Renaissance sense of who was responsible for the work of art.³



Fig. 1. Pontano Chapel, Naples. View of the exterior.

Begun after the death of Pontano's wife Adriana Sassone in 1490, the chapel was conceived to resemble an ancient mausoleum set up along a road.⁴ It is a simple rectangular building constructed of regular blocks of piperno; the exterior is articulated with small rectangular windows and fluted cabled pilasters with composite capitals, resting on a high base, in a way that closely recalls the Mausoleum of Annia Regilla on the Appian Way. A tall attic

³ On the theme see Michael Baxandall, "Rudolph Agricola on Patrons Efficient and Patrons Final. A Renaissance discrimination," *The Burlington Magazine* 124 (1982): 424-425; Christoph Thoenes, "Il carico imposto dall'economia. Appunti su committenza ed economia dai trattati di architettura del Rinascimento," in Id., *Sostegno e adornamento. Saggi sull'architettura del Rinascimento: disegni, ordini, magnificenza* (Milan: Electa 1998), 177-185.

⁴ For the sentimental relationship between Pontano and his wife and for his feelings after her death see Liliana Monti Sabia, "Una lettera inedita di Giovanni Pontano ad Eleonora d'Este," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 29 (1986): 165-82.

conceals the interior barrel vault, derived from ancient funerary monuments such as Virgil's Tomb in Naples as well as from new *all'antica* chapels, such as the Rucellai Chapel in San Pancrazio in Florence or the Temple of the Muses in the Ducal Palace in Urbino.⁵

The inscriptions in perfect *all'antica* lettering form the main decoration both of the interior and of the exterior, to the extent that the chapel could almost be described as a “written building,” like a piece of paper onto which Pontano pins ancient, new, and false inscriptions, or a sort of autobiographical notebook with a title-page and internal pages.⁶

The exterior has a dedicatory inscription above the main entrance and one above the lateral portal. In addition twelve marble plaques are placed between the windows and the pilasters, and carry moralising inscriptions written by Pontano himself (**Fig. 2**).



Fig. 2. Pontano Chapel, Naples. View of the façade on Via de' Tribunali.

The interior displays on the walls seven ancient inscriptions (five in Latin, two in Greek) either funerary or celebrating conjugal love (**Figs. 4-5**).⁷ The chapel is further decorated with

⁵ De Divitiis, “Pontano”: 121-125.

⁶ Fulvio Lenzo, “Aggiornamento”, in Anthony Blunt, *Architettura barocca e rococò a Napoli*, ed. Fulvio Lenzo (Milan: Electa, 2006), 273.

⁷ For the Latin Inscriptions see Theodor Mommsen, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Inscriptiones Bruttiorum, Lucaniae, Campaniae. . . X* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1883; hereafter CIL X) 2872, 1543, 2041, 2688, 2873. For the Greek inscriptions see Georg Keibel, *Inscriptiones Graecae. Siciliae et Italiae. . . , XIV* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1890, hereafter IG XIV), 763, 888. All the inscriptions are transcribed in Filangieri, “Tempietto.” All the inscriptions are carved on marble slabs, except for the CIL X, 2688

modern inscriptions composed by Pontano himself, which have an autobiographical character and in which the humanist, writing in the third person, gives an account of the construction of the chapel and refers to its contents. Among these are new funerary epitaphs specifically composed by Pontano to be carved on to marble slabs, in the manner of ancient epigraphs, to commemorate his wife, his children, his friend Pietro Golino known as *Compatre*, and himself.⁸ In a further inscription, now lost, the humanist recounted his preservation in the chapel of the pagan relic of Livy's arm, which had been presented to him by the Paduans as a gift for the king of Naples during his first diplomatic mission in the company of Antonio Beccadelli, known as *Il Panormita*; the relic was therefore a memory of his relationship with the elder humanist and the beginnings of his career at the Aragonese court (**Fig. 6**).⁹ From the epigraphic sylloge of the antiquarian Augustinus Tyfernus we know that, among its ancient and new *all'antica* inscriptions, the chapel also displayed a large slab, once again now lost, with a false inscription dedicated to Hercules Saxano, which Pontano himself forged from a Tiburtine inscription as an erudite tribute to his wife Adriana Sassone, for whom the chapel was built (**Fig. 6**).¹⁰ The written character of the building's interior is further enhanced by the exceptional epigraphic character of

which is described as "in quadam urnula ad aquam benedictam destinata". For the original display of the inscriptions see below. It is interesting to note that the IG XIV, 888 was originally seen by Fra Giocondo in the town of Sessa Aurunca "in domo d. Petripauli de Conestabulo" and therefore Pontano might have acquired it in those very years.

⁸ De Divitiis, "Pontano," 125-127. John Sparrow, *Visible Words. A Study of Inscriptions in and as Books and Works of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 18-25.

⁹ Giuseppe Germano, "Testimonianze epigrafiche nel De aspiratione di Giovanni Pontano." in Id., *Il De aspiratione di Giovanni Pontano e la cultura del suo tempo* (Napoli: Loffredo 2005), 215-272. The presence of the inscription which accompanied Livy's arm is recorded by Agostinus Tyfernus (Wien, Nationalbibliothek, cod. 3540, f. 12; cod. 3528, f. 28), by Petrus Apianus (*Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis*, Ingolstadii 1534, f.114) and by Lorenz Schrader (*Monumentorum Italiae, quae hoc nostro saeculo & à Christianis posita sunt, Libri quatuor*, Helmaestadii 1592, f. 231t): "TITI LIVI BRACHIVM QVOD ANTONIVS PANORMITA A / PATAVINIS IMPETRAVIT IOANNES IOVIANUS PONTANVS MVLTO / POST ANNOS HOC IN LOCO PONENDVM CVRAVIT." See Filangieri, "Tempietto," 16; Erasmo Percopo, *Vita di Giovanni Pontano* (Naples: ITEA, 1938), 12-13; Germano, "Testimonianze epigrafiche," 220. For Livy's tomb and relics see Joseph Trapp, "The Image of Livy in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Lecturas de Historia del Arte* 3 (1992): 211-239.

¹⁰ For the original inscription which served as a model see Johann Caspar von Orelli, *Inscriptionum Latinarum selectarum amplissima collectio*, edited by Wilhelm Henzen (Turici, 1828-56), I, 554, n. 2006: "HERCVLI SAXANO SACRVM / SER SVLPICIVS TROPHINVS / AEDEM ZOTHECAM CVLINAM / PECVNIA SVA A SOLO RESTITVIT / IDEMQ DEDICAVIT KL. DECEMBRIS / TVRPILLO DEXTRO M. MECIO / [RV]FO COSS. T. / EVTYCHVS SER PERAGENDVM / CVRAVIT". Pontano's forgery reads: "HERCVLI SAXONO SACRVM / SEX SVLPICIVS TROPHI / NVS AEDEM ZOTHECAM / CVLINAM PECVNIA SVA / A SOLO RESTITVIT IDEMQ / DEDICAVIT KL. DECEMBRIS / TVRPILLO DEXTRO M. MECIO / [RV]FO COSS. T. EVTYCHVS / [SAX]ONVS PERAGENDVM / CVRAVIT. Pontano forged the original inscription by modifying the epithet SAXANO in SAXONO and the initial SER in SAXONVS. The inscription was first transcribed by Agostino Tiferno at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, cod. 3540, f. 12; cod. 3528, f. 28). Accursio, who also studied the inscription, thought that the inscription was originally displayed in Pontano's home and gives detailed comments on Pontano's forgery: "Relatum est idem ex domo olim Ioviani Pontani Neapoli. Quod et nos vidimus ita incisum marmori, ut multos hactenus fefellerit. Puto autem ab eo incidi curatum, propterea quod Saxono scriptum fuerit pro Saxano et Saxonus pro Ser, idque in uxoris gratiam, quae Saxona fuerit, et pro insignis generis Herculem gestarit Nemeum leonem comprimentem. Eradendum itaque illud ex Neapolitanis inscriptionibus." Also Mommsen lists the inscription as a forgery (I, 195*). For an overall account see CIL X, LIX: "Fides Pontani inde non imminuitur, quod Tiburtini tituli *Herculis saxani* exemplum in monumento collocavit ita immutatum, ut *saxonus* fieret et ita uxoris Pontani quodammodo gentilicium (X, 195*); quamquam eo fortasse redivit, quod ubi fraudem in Neapolitanis deprehendisse sibi videbantur viri docti saeculi XVI, ibi de Pontano potissimum cogitarunt." See also Filangieri, "Tempietto," 36-37; Germano, "Testimonianze epigrafiche", 219, n. 16.

the majolica pavement where inscriptions recur within the hexagonal tiles, including the repeated *Pontanus fecit*.



Fig. 3. Pontano Chapel, Naples. Detail of Pontano's signature *PONTANVS FECIT* in the pavement.



Fig. 4. Pontano Chapel, Naples. View of the interior.

Among all the ancient and new epigraphs that decorate the chapel, two stand out as explicit declarations by Pontano of the role he played in the construction of the chapel: the dedicatory inscription on the exterior facade (**Fig. 7**) and the *Pontanus fecit* included in the interior pavement (**Fig. 3**). In both inscriptions Pontano expresses his responsibility for the construction of the chapel, but in each he seems to be claiming a different role, presenting himself on the exterior as the patron of the building, but in the interior implying an artistic function as author of the chapel.

The large marble slab above the ionic portal of the entrance bears Pontano's coat-of-arms, the dedication of the chapel to the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist, the humanist's full name, and the date 1492: "DIVAE MARIAE / DEI MATRI DEI AC DI/VO IOANNI EVANGELISTAE SACRUM IOANNES IOV/IANVS PONTANVS / DEDICAVIT / MCCCCXCII." The inscription is repeated in a slightly abridged version on the lateral portal between Pontano's emblem and that of his wife (**Figs. 8-9**).¹¹

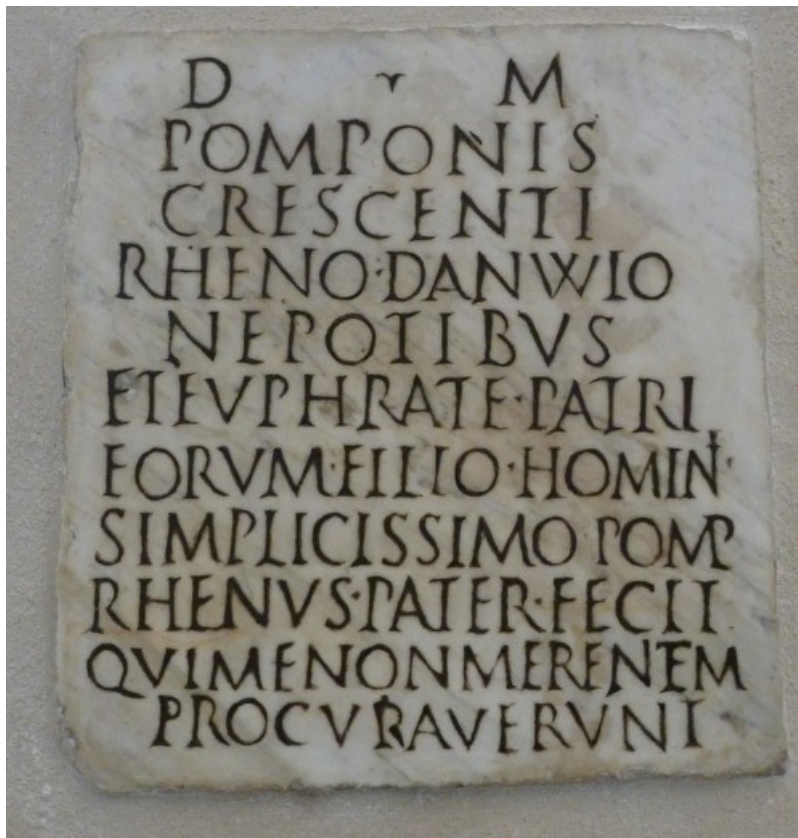


Fig. 5. Pontano Chapel, Naples. CIL X, 2872.

¹¹ The inscription on the lateral portal reads: "DIVAE MARIAE / DEI MATRI DEI AC DI / VO IOANNI EVANGEL. IOANNES IOV / IANVS PONTANVS / DEDICAVIT / AN DM MCCCCXCII." This inscription can be considered as quintessentially Albertian: in his discussion in the *De re aedificatoria* of the inscriptions used by the ancients in sepulchers, temples, and private houses, Leon Battista Alberti praised how "nostri sacellis, cui, et quo essent annorum tempore dicata inscribere assueverant." Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, ed. Giovanni Orlandi and Paolo Portoghesi (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966), bk. 8, ch. IV, 694.

The presence of Pontano's name as patron within a monumental inscription on the two main facades of the building corresponds to a practice which had its origins in Antiquity and for which the evidence in surviving ancient examples would have been very familiar to Pontano. Apart from the example of the Pantheon, which displays on the frieze of the pronaos the name of Agrippa,¹² there were highly important and influential examples in Naples and its surroundings which were still visible at the time, such as the two-line monumental inscription in Greek capital letters sculpted on the frieze of the Temple of Castor and Pollux only a short walking distance away from Pontano's chapel, which carried the dedication of the temple to the Dioscuri and to the city and indicated the name of the two patrons (**Figs. 12-13**).¹³ Pontano was also well aware of the inscription on the frieze of the pronaos of the Temple of Augustus in Pozzuoli where the Calpurnii family are recorded as founders of the building.¹⁴ The ancient practice of inserting the patron's name in a prominent position on the façade of monuments, accompanied by emblems, had been adopted over the course of the following centuries in several centers throughout Italy, where patrons wished to promote their profiles within their respective cities. As early as the eleventh century in Salerno Duke Robert Guiscardus imitated the ancient model of the Dioscuri temple by presenting himself as founder of the cathedral in the inscription in Roman capitals that runs under the pediment of the facade (**Fig. 14**).¹⁵ In the fourteenth century in Naples Robert of Anjou and his wife, Sancha of Majorca, followed the same model recording their names as patrons of the church of Santa Chiara in Naples in the long inscription made up of monumental gothic letters that runs along the frieze of the lower order of the bell tower (**Fig. 15**).¹⁶

¹² The inscription on the Pantheon's frieze reads: "M AGRIPPA L F COS TERTIVM FECIT". Pontano would have noted the inscription during one of his diplomatic missions in Rome for the peace negotiations between King Ferrante and Pope Innocent VIII between 1491 and 1493, that is, in the very years the construction of his chapel in Naples was underway. See Percopo, *Vita* 61-68. Such missions are explicitly mentioned in the proemium to *De magnificentia* as offering an opportunity to visit the magnificent ancient monuments: "Romama quoque ad Innocentium octavum, Pontificem Maximum, te comite profectus cum essem conciliandae cum Ferdinando rege pacis gratia, (dii boni!) tantos illos aquarum ductus, tantam spectaculorum amplitudinem atque, ut ita dixerim, maiestatem quam perspectissime examinasti, ut iudicares aedificiorum magnitudinem cum imperii magnitudine potuisse, quodammodo contendere." Giovanni Pontano, *De magnificentia*, in Id., *I libri delle virtù sociali*, ed. Francesco Tateo (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999), 164-165. For the Renaissance reception of the Pantheon see Tilmann Buddensieg, "Criticism and Praise of the Pantheon in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500-1500*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: University Press, 1971): 259-268. See also Howard Burns, "A Peruzzi Drawing in Ferrara," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institut in Florenz* 12 (1966): 257-258.

¹³ ΤΙΒΕΡΙΟΣ ΙΟΥΛΙΟΣ ΤΑΡΣΟΣ ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΠΟΛΕΙ ΤΟΝ ΝΑΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΕΝ ΤΩΙ ΝΑΩΙ / ΠΕΛΑΓΩΝ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟΣ ΣΥΝΤΕΛΕΣΑΣ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΙΑΙΩΝ ΚΑΘΙΕΡΩΣΕΝ. . IG XIV, 192, n. 714. On the temple and its significance for Neapolitan humanism now see Fulvio Lenzo, *Architettura e antichità a Napoli dal XV al XVIII secolo. Le colonne del tempio dei Dioscuri e la chiesa di San Paolo Maggiore* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2011), 21; 26-29.

¹⁴ "L. CALPURNIUS L.F. TEMPLUM AUGUSTO CUM ORNAMENTIS D.S.F." (CIL X, 1613). See Claudia Valeri, *Marmora Phlegrea. Sculture dal Rione Terra di Pozzuoli* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2005), 40-41.

¹⁵ "[M[ATTHEO] A[POSTOLO] ET EVANGELISTAE PATRONO VRBIS ROBERTVS DUX R[OMANI] IMP[ERII] MAXIM[VS] TRIUMPHATOR DE AERARIO PECULIARI." On the inscription, dated 1081, see Armando Petrucci, "La scrittura fra ideologia e rappresentazione," in *Storia dell'arte italiana. Grafica e immagine. I. Scrittura, miniature, disegno*, ed. Federico Zeri (Torino: Einaudi Editore, 1980), 7-8.

¹⁶ The inscription on the southern side of the bell-tower reads as follows: "ILLUSTRIS. CLARU. ROBERTUS REX SICULORUM / SANCIA REGINA PROELUCENS; CARDINE MORUM / CLARI CONSORTES VIRTUTUM MUNERE FORTES / VIRGINIS HOC CLARAE TEMPLUM STRUXERE BEATAE / POSTEA DOTARUNT DONIS MULTISQUE BEARUNT / VIVANT CONTETAE DOMINAE FRATRESQUE MINORES / SANCTA CUM VITA VIRTUTIBUS & REDIMITA / ANNO. MILLENO. CENTENO TER SOCIATO/ DENO.

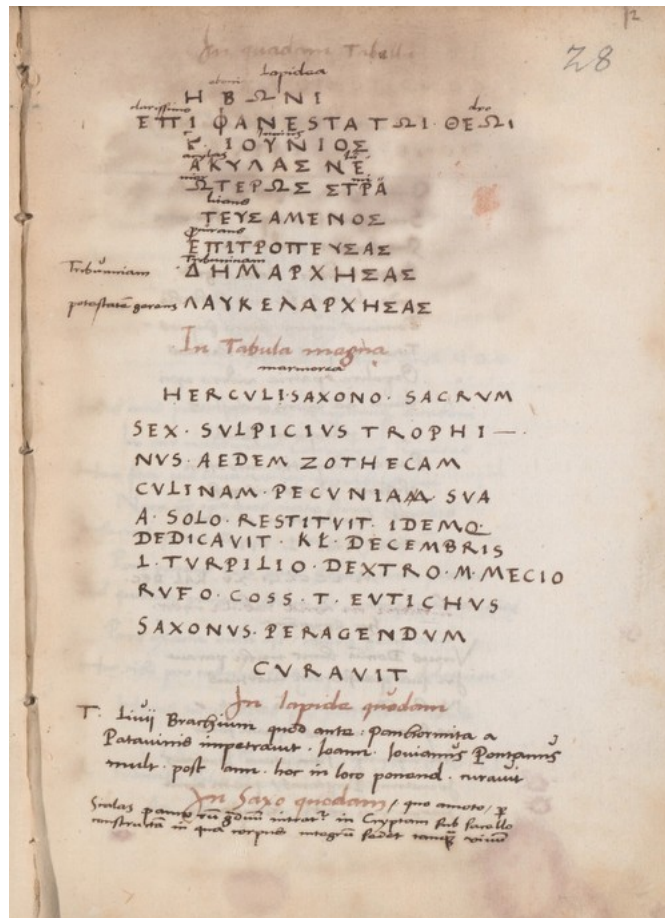


Fig. 6. Agostinus Tyfernus, The forged inscription dedicated to Hercules Saxono and the inscription relating the relic of Livy's arm. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 3528, f. 28.

Another highly relevant example for Pontano must have been the inscription on the triumphal arch at the entrance of Castelnuovo, where in monumental roman capitals Alfonso of Aragon proclaimed himself to be the founder of the castle.¹⁷ Such a practice had also been adopted not only by the royal family in Naples but also by members of the ruling élite throughout Italy, in churches, as shown by the name of Sigismondo Malatesta on the frieze of the so-called Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini (1447-1461), or that of Giovanni Rucellai on the frieze of the facade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1470), and in palaces such as the long inscription of the Cancelleria in Rome which bears the name of Cardinal Raffaele Riario.¹⁸

FUNDARE TEMPLUM CAEPERE MAGISTRI.” On the bell tower see Mario Gaglione, *Il campanile di S. Chiara in Napoli* (Naples, 1998, privately printed).

¹⁷ “ALFONSUS REGUM PRINCEPS HANC CONDIDIT ARCEM.” The word “arcem” in the inscription does not refer only to the entrance arch, but to the entire castle. The contemporary custom of using the term “arx” for the same sort of buildings is demonstrated by Leon Battista Alberti in book V, chapter VIII (*De re aedificatoria*, bk. V, ch. III, 355-357). It could be argued though that in the case of Castel Nuovo’s inscription “arcem” is deliberately used as Alfonso’s claim as the patron of both the entire building and of the arch.

¹⁸ Sigismondo Malatesta’s inscription reads: “SIGISMVNDUS PANDVLFUS MALATESTA PAN FV. FECIT ANNO GRATIAE MCCCCL.” On the Tempio Malatestiano and the use of inscriptions see Armando Petrucci, “Potere, spazi urbani, scritture esposte: proposte ed esempi,” in *Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l’État*

Pontano had to content himself with similar methods of self-representation adopted by the members of the Neapolitan administrative élite, such as Diomede Carafa (ca. 1466) and Orso Orsini (ca. 1470), who surrounded the *all'antica* dedicatory inscriptions above the portal of their palaces, bearing their respective names and the dates of the building's construction, with their emblems and coat of arms (**Fig. 16**).¹⁹ Furthermore, Pontano's idea of using moralizing inscriptions on the façade finds a precedent in Diomede Carafa's palace, where we find the same kind of epigraphs carved in the friezes of the six windows of the first floor.²⁰

Even though Pontano had not been born in Naples, but was from Umbria, through his literary and diplomatic achievements he had become fully part of the Neapolitan administrative and military élite: by the time he began his chapel he was not only the most important humanist in the Aragonese court, but had reached the summit of his political career when he was appointed *secretario maior*, the leading government minister, in 1486. In addition to acquiring the economic status of the local élite, which enabled him to commission buildings in his own right, he also provided himself and his wife with a coat-of-arms which would publically confirm his social status. It is interesting to note that both heraldic emblems derived from a classical interpretation of their respective names (**Figs. 6-7**). Pontano's own emblem, formed of a bridge with two arches resting on three ancient columns, seems to be an *all'antica* version of a similar one used by other branches of his family in Cerreto Sannita, his town of origin near Spoleto, and by prominent namesakes who had been born or lived in Umbria, like the bishop of Todi Teobaldo Pontano, an Umbrian who began his career, like Giovanni, in the Kingdom of Naples (**Figs. 9-11**).²¹ His emblem was therefore an explicit remembrance of his Umbrian origins and his connections with his native region, which at the beginning of his career in Naples he would recall in his writings by using the epithet *Umbro*, later dropped after King Ferrante of Aragon granted him Neapolitan citizenship in 1471.²² The arms of Pontano's wife, representing a male

moderne (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1985), 90-94. The frieze below the pediment of the façade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence carries the name of the patron and the date of the dedication of the completion of the facade: "IOHAN[N]ES ORICELLARIVS PAV[LI] F[ILII]S AN[NO] SAL[UTIS] MCCCCLXX." See Massimo Bulgarelli, *Leon Battista Alberti* (Milan: Electa, 2006), 51-57. On the inscription of the Cancelleria, see below.

¹⁹ The inscription on Diomede Carafa's portal reads: "IN HONOREM OPTIMI REGIS ET NOBILISSIMAE PATRIAE DIOMEDES CARAFA COMES MATALONE." On the portal see Bianca de Divitiis, *Architettura e committenza nella Napoli del Quattrocento* (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 65-76. The inscription of the Orsini palace in Via dei Tribunali in Naples reads "HEC ROSA MAGNANIMI DEFENDITUR UNGUIBUS URSI – HINC GENUS URSINUM ROMA VETUSTA TRAMIT. ANNO DOMINI MCCCCLXXI". On the inscription on the façade of the Orsini palace in Nola see below.

²⁰ De Divitiis, *Architettura*, 62-65.

²¹ The emblem is clearly linked to the etymology of his own name and was interpreted by his first sixteenth-century biographers Tristano Caracciolo (*Ioannis Ioviani Pontani Vitae brevis pars per Tristanum Caraccium descripta*) and Callisto Fido (*De natali solo ac vita Iohannis Ioviani cognomento Pontani*) as a reference to the toponym of his supposed place of birth, erroneously identified with Rocca di Ponte or Ponte in Umbria. See Liliana Monti Sabia, *Un profilo moderno e due Vitae antiche di Giovanni Pontano* (Naples: Accademia Pontaniana, 1998). For Pontano's origin see Liliana Monti Sabia, *Profilo di Giovanni Pontano*, in Id., *Profilo*, 8-9. Teobaldo Pontano's emblem consisting of a bridge formed of three arches on pilasters is visible in his funerary chapel in the lower Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, which had been frescoed by Giotto between 1307 and 1308. Before his arrival in Assisi, Teobaldo resided for twelve years in the Kingdom of Naples as bishop of Castellamare (1282-1295); the progress of his career was largely due to a privileged relationship with the ruling Angevin dynasty, as the chapel's dedication to Mary Magdalen also testifies. See Lorraine C. Schwartz, "The Fresco Decoration of the Magdalen Chapel in the Basilica of St. Francis at Assisi" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1980), 9-10, 121-122, 121-154, 183-198, 222-313. See also Giorgio Bonsanti, "La pittura del Duecento e del Trecento," *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*, ed. Giorgio Bonsanti (Modena: Panini, 2002), 113-208, 171-176; see also entries 630-717, pages 381-393.

²² Monti Sabia, *Profilo*, 10-11.

figure wrestling with a lion and opening the animal's jaws with his bare hands, also seem to derive from antiquarian and erudite associations arising from the surname of the Sassone family, a noble Neapolitan family belonging to the district of the Seggio of Portanova (**Figs. 9-10**).²³ In terms of interpretation, Adriana's emblem can serve, interchangeably, both as an image of the first labour of Heracles, who killed the Nemean lion with his bare hands—an interpretation which might be suggested by the false inscription dedicated to Hercules Saxano which Pontano specially fabricated—or as an image of the Old Testament hero Samson, who also killed a lion with his bare hands on the road to Timnah (Judges, 14, 5-6), and whose name would have been a fairly direct allusion to Adriana's family name.²⁴



Fig. 7. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of the dedicatory inscription on the main façade.

²³ No coat-of-arms of the Sassone family has hitherto been found.

²⁴ The group has been usually interpreted as an image of the first labor of Heracles, but it corresponds closely to the classical iconographical representation of Samson, who is most frequently shown riding on the back of the lion with his cloak fluttering in the wind and gripping open the jaws of the beast at the same time, just as it appears in the Pontano chapel. Such a scene, on the other hand, is somewhat unusual as a depiction of Heracles, who in the classical tradition is most often shown strangling the lion standing up in front of him. See Wassiliki Felten, "Herakles wrestles with the lion," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich: Artemis, 1990), 5.1, 17-34; 5.2, 17-53. For Samson iconography in medieval art and in engravings by fifteenth century Flemish artists, such as the Master E.S., Israhel van Mackenem and subsequently Albrecht Durer, see Peter Arms Wick, "Samson Slaying the Lion by Israhel van Mackenem," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 51 (1953): 85-89. See also Othniel Margalith, "The Legends of Samson/Heracles", *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987): 63-70.



Fig. 8. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of the lateral portal with Pontano's and
Adriana Sassone's coat-of-arms.



Fig. 9. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of the dedicatory inscription
on the lateral portal.



Fig. 10. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of the emblems of Adriana Sassone and Pontano on the lateral portal.

If Pontano followed the practice of the past and of his own times in placing his name and emblems on the facade of his chapel and therefore presenting himself publically as a prominent patron of the major élite of the Reign and of the Italian peninsula, the meaning of the *Pontanus fecit* painted on the floor tiles seems to be very different.

This inscription is part of the more intimate context of the chapel's interior, visible only to the selected guests who had access to it and who, sharing his humanistic approach, could understand Pontano's attempt to commemorate the persons who were closest to him in a manner which reflected classical values, and to recreate ancient models, albeit in a personal way. Such a restricted audience would have been attracted not only by the poignant funerary epitaphs, but also stimulated by the intellectual challenges represented by such significant elements as the forged inscription of Hercules Saxano/Saxono or Livy's arm, as well as by smaller details, such as the *Pontanus fecit*.

The *Pontanus fecit* is part of the elaborate majolica pavement (**Fig. 19**).²⁵ Through its polychromy and its iconographical and epigraphical decoration, the pavement contributes

²⁵ For the majolica pavement in the Pontano chapel see Angela Dressen, *Pavimenti decorati del Quattrocento in Italia* (Venice, Marsilio: 2008), 375-376 (B68). As a whole the pavement is polychrome and still shows the influence of early majolica production in Naples, which looked to Spanish manufacture as a model. The arrangement of the tiles, of the cartouches, and of the iconic content is similar to earlier Neapolitan pavements, but, on the other hand, it differs from them in style and color. Giovanni Tesorone ("A proposito dei pavimenti maiolicati del XV e XVI secolo nelle chiese napoletane," *Napoli Nobilissima* 10 (1901): 115-124) supposes that the pavement has a Tuscan origin and could therefore be connected to an order for 20,000 tiles from Giuliano da Maiano in 1488. Giancarlo Gentilini (*I della Robbia. La scultura invetrata nel Rinascimento* (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1992), 217) suggests instead that the pavement comes from the Della Robbia workshop. According to Antonio Filangieri the pavement was designed by Giuliano da Maiano and executed by a Florentine workshop in Naples ("Per il pavimento della cappella di Ser Gianni Caracciolo nella chiesa di San Giovanni a Carbonara in Napoli," *Faenza* 3 (1915): 33-35; Filangieri, "Tempietto," 27-33). More recently Francesco Quinterio (*Maiolica nell'architettura del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence: Cantini, 1990), 10) and Guido Donatone ("Inediti esemplari di maiolica napoletana di età rinascimentale," *Quaderno del Centro studi per la storia della ceramica meridionale – Sezione Napoli* (1997): 29-30) have argued in favor of its Neapolitan origin. Angela Dressen (*Pavimenti*, 375-376) confirms that the

significantly to the general effect of magnificence in the chapel and testifies to the patron's desire for self-representation. In its overall composition the pavement is organized according to the typical Neapolitan octagonal pattern, with four hexagonal tiles surrounding square ones at the centre decorated alternatively with the emblems of Giovanni Pontano and his wife (**Figs. 20-21**). If the inclusion of heraldic symbols, as well as floral and zoomorphic motifs, were recurring elements in tiled floors commissioned by the elite in Naples as in the rest of Italy at the end of the fifteenth century, iconic and epigraphic decorations were far rarer (**Figs. 20-21**).²⁶

Several hexagonal tiles show the same profile portrait: although the physiognomy depicted does not correspond to the image which we know through his bronze medal and bust, the portrait in the pavement is generally identified with Pontano (**Fig. 22**).²⁷ To the rarity of the iconic representations of the patron one should add that of the inscriptions that recur within the hexagonal tiles, depicted with *all'antica* characters within scrolls, and showing an alternating sequence of four phrases:²⁸ the name of Pontano's wife "Adriana Saxona" for whom the chapel was built, the explicitly religious phrase linked to the chapel's dedication to the Virgin "Ave Maria," the expression "Laura Bella" (**Fig. 23**), which derived from the iconography associated with the ceramic pottery produced for and usually donated on the occasions of marriage proposals and weddings, and finally the inscription *Pontanus fecit*.²⁹

pavement of the Pontano chapel was produced in Naples and has pointed out its prominent Neapolitan characteristics, which are not to be found in Tuscan pavements. The pavement is only partially still *in situ*; fragments may be found in the Museo dell'Istituto d'Arte F. Palizzi di Napoli. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries new tiles were added along the sides, at the entrance and behind the altar of the chapel. Dressen has noted that apart from the original pavement, traces of a second floor with a double flower, a star, a parsley leaf, and a dotted grid can be recognized. Such decorative elements were part of the repertoire of the Master of the Bozzuto chapel, with which the pavement of the Pontano shares several features. The pavement has suffered several alterations but there can be no doubt that the parts that show the references to Pontano and his wife, such as emblems, inscriptions, and portraits, belonged to the original decoration. See also Roberto De Sarno, *Joannis Joviani Pontani vita* (Neapoli excudebat fratres Simonii, 1761), 145; Alisio, "Cappella Pontano," 35; Giovanna Bandini, "Éléments pour une histoire de carrelages de faïence en Italie (1400-1500)," *Les métamorphoses de l'azur: l'art de l'azulejo dans le monde latin*, ed. Élisabeth De Balanda et. al., (Paris: Ars latina 2002), 55; Casiello, "Restauro," 206. For the use of heraldry in majolica pavements see Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 161-188; 204-227.

²⁶ The tiles of the chapels decorated with zoomorphic motifs alternate the image of a fish, of a hare, and another animal, possibly a leopard, enclosed within circles, as often found in Neapolitan pavements. Dressen points out that the image from a stylistic point of view can be associated with the tradition of the Master of the Brancaccio chapel and of the Master of the Bozzuto pavement. Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 189-198.

²⁷ See Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 196-198. According to Pontano's eighteenth-century biographer Roberto De Sarno (*Vita*, 45), the realism of the image makes it resemble an ancient portrait: "Pontanus quaetissimi ingenii pavementum straviv figlino opere encausto pictum, exquisita varietate nobile ob sua stemmata, et uxoris, omnisque prosapiae, imo et ob imagunculas maiorum suorum, praeter flosculos, et parile huius generis ornamentum." The passage was first noted by Donatone, *Inediti esemplari*, 30; see also Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 198. For Pontano's bust and medal see Francesco Caglioti, "Adriano di Giovanni de' Maestri, detto Adriano Fiorentino. Giovanni Gioviano Pontano," in *Il giardino di San Marco. Maestri e compagni del giovane Michelangelo*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana 1992), 112-115. On the portrait see Joana Barreto's essay in this volume.

²⁸ Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 199-204. The inscriptions on the pavement have been noted but not discussed by Filangieri, "Tempietto," 32; Alisio, "Cappella," 32; Tanja Michalsky, "Conivges in vita concordissimos ne mors quidem ipsa disivnxit": Zur Rolle der Frau im genealogischen System neapolitanischer Sepulkralplastik," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 32 (2005): 82.

²⁹ Dressen (*Pavimenti*, 132, 189-191, 201, 357-358, 369-370) points out the relation between the inscription "Laura bella" in the Pontano chapel and the "vasellame amoroso," discussing in the context of the relevant precedents, such as the tiled floor in the abbess's apartment in the Monastery of San Paolo in Parma Maria de' Benedetti (1471-82), in the Bentivoglio Chapel in the church of San Giacomo in Bologna (1486-94) and in the the Vaselli chapel in San Petronio in Bologna (1487).

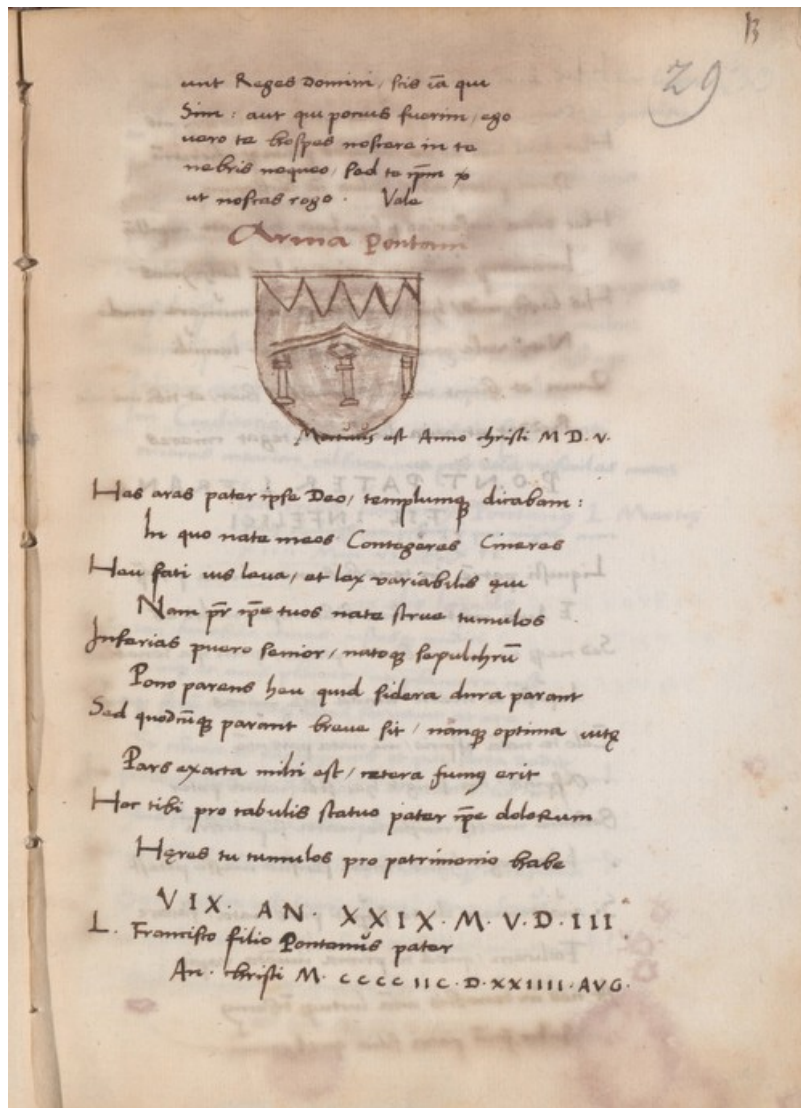


Fig. 11. Agostinus Tyfernus, Detail of Pontano emblem.
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 1528, c. 29r.

Taken together, the inscriptions in the floor enhance the “written” character of the Pontano chapel and seem to celebrate marital love as the main inspiration for the conception of the building as a sacred space. But the *Pontanus fecit* goes beyond the conventional epigraphic contents of fifteenth-century pavements: the grammatical structure made up of the name in the nominative and the verb *facere* in the perfect tense and its position within the building make it not only an explicit recreation of an ancient funerary dedication, but also the signature of an artist who is proudly responsible for the work of art he has created.

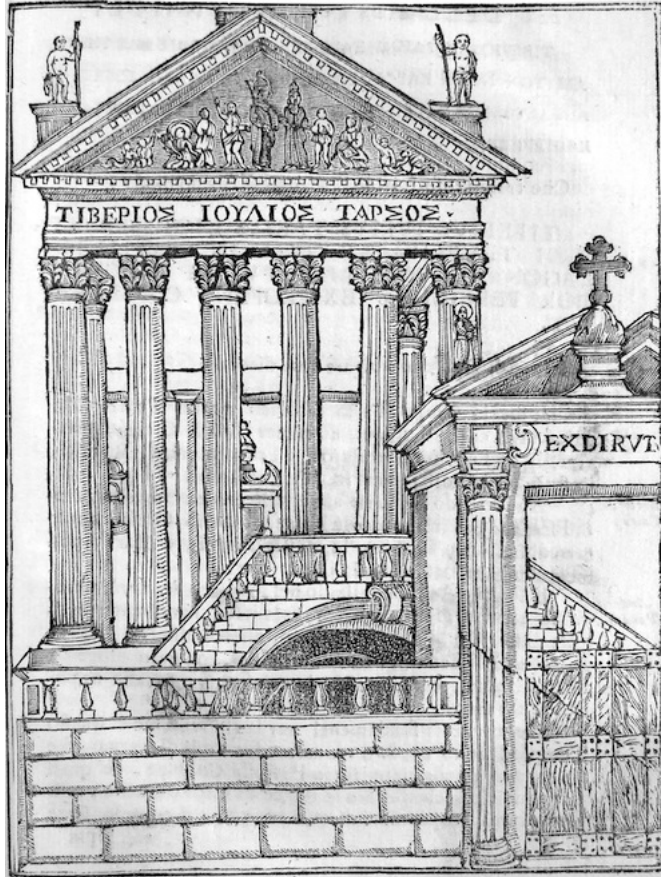


Fig. 12. Temple of the Dioscuri in Naples, Engraving from Giovanni Antonio Summonte, *Historia della città e del regno di Napoli*, Naples (1601), 1675.



Fig. 13. Temple of the Dioscuri, Naples.
Fragment of the marble inscription from the pronaos
(Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale).

Pontano was surely aware that inscriptions with the name and *fecit* had been used by both patrons and artists, and it may be argued that he chose it for that very reason. Dedicatory inscriptions which used the *fecit* are found in ancient monuments, as in the Pantheon, and the practice had been revived in the context of the new *all'antica* architecture, examples of which were well known to Pontano, such as the already mentioned inscriptions commissioned by Sigismondo Malatesta (1450), Orso Orsini (1470) (**Fig. 17**) and Raffaele Riario (c 1490).³⁰



Fig. 14. Detail of the inscription of Duke Robert Guiscard on the facade.

But even more than those on monumental buildings, the dedicatory inscriptions found on ancient funerary altars and tombstones would have been a fundamental reference for Pontano. Among the numerous examples of the latter which he investigated during the compilation of the *De aspiratione*, we find several funerary dedicatory inscriptions where the verb *fecit* is used together with the name of the dedicatee who is erecting the monument either for himself or herself or for a beloved member of the family; no doubt even more such inscriptions would have

³⁰ The inscription sculpted on the lower cornice of the niche on the façade of the Orsini Palace in Nola reads: “VRSVS VRSINO GENERE ROMANVS / DVX ASCVLI SVANE NOLE TRIPALLEQ(UE) / COMES HAS EDES FECIT MCCCCLXX”. See Georgia Clarke, “Palazzo Orsini in Nola. A Renaissance Relationship with Antiquity,” *Apollo* 194 (1996): 44-50. In *De magnificentia* (180) Pontano praises Orso Orsini’s qualities as a patron of the palace in Nola. Another example near Nola that Pontano would have most probably been aware was the inscription of the tenth century “LEO TERTIUS EPISCOPUS FECIT,” where the bishop of Cimitile Leo III used such form to claim his role in the renovation and extension of the oratory chapel of SS. Martiri in the famous sanctuary of San Felice (**Fig. 18**). The inscription on the facade of the Cancelleria reads “RAPHAEL RIARIUS SAVONENSIS S. GEORGII CARDINALIS S. R. ECCLESIAE CAMERARIVS A SIXTO QVARTO PONTEFICE MAXIMO HONORIBVS AC FORTVNIS HONESTATVS TEMPLVM DIVO LAVRENTIO MARTYRI DICATVM ET AEDES A FVNDAMENTIS SVA IMPENSA FECIT MCCCCXCV. ALEXANDRO VI P.M.” See Christoph Luitpold Frommel, “Raffaele Riario committente della Cancelleria,” *Arte, committenza ed economia a Roma e nelle corti del Rinascimento*, eds. Christoph Luitpold Frommel and Arnold Esch (Turin: Einaudi, 1995): 197-211.

been found in his lost epigraphic sylloge.³¹ The connection of the *Pontanus fecit* with such ancient funerary dedications would have been strongly implied by Pontano himself, since at least four and possibly all the ancient funerary inscriptions on slabs that are now set in the chapel's side walls were originally part of the interior pavement; one of these, moreover, was a dedication constructed with *fecit* (**Fig. 5**).³² If the display of the ancient inscriptions in the chapel's floor was intended to evoke their original function as tombstones, their juxtaposition within the majolica pavement with its new epigraphic content, which partly resumed the conventions of ancient funerary inscriptions, would have revealed a subtle transition from antiquarian research and collecting to the composition of new inscriptions and reinforced the status and perception of Pontano's chapel as a classical funerary monument.³³



Fig. 15. Church of Santa Chiara, Naples. Bell tower with the dedicatory inscription.

³¹ Germano, "Testimonianze epigrafiche," 222-224.

³² The ancient inscription constructed with the *fecit* in the pavement of the chapel is the CIL X 2872: "D.M. / POMPONIS / CRESCENTI / RHENO DANVBIO / NEPTIBVS ET EVPHRATE PATRE / EORVM FILIO / HOMIN / SEMPLICISSIMO POMP / RHENVVS PATER FECIT / QVI ME NON MERENTEM / PROCVRAVERVNT."

The other inscriptions described by sixteenth-century sylloges as being in the pavement are CIL X 1543 ("In quondam tabella marmorea in pavimento ante altare") and IG XIV 763, 888 ("sul pavimento"). The inscriptions CIL X 2041 and CIL X 2873 are described as being respectively on the right and left of the altar and were presumably also in the pavement.

³³ Pontano's use of ancient funerary conventions becomes evident in the conclusion of the long funerary epitaph dedicated to his wife: "IOANNES IOVIANVS PONTANVS HADRIANAE SAXONAE VXORI OPTIMAE AC BENE MERETISSIMAE POSVIT. QUAE VIXIT ANN. XXXVI MEN. VI. OBIIT KAL. MART. ANN. MCCCCLXXXX."



Fig. 16. Carafa Palace, Naples. Portal.

However, the *Pontanus fecit* is not only a classical funerary dedication; it can also be seen as Pontano claiming authorship of the work in a way that goes beyond the mere role of being its patron. In order to understand its meaning fully, we need to place the phrase *Pontanus fecit* within the context of the humanistic interest in artists' signatures which emerged at the end of the fifteenth century and which led to the resumption of this practice in antiquarian terms among painters, sculptors, and architects.³⁴

³⁴ On signatures see Tobi as Burg, *Die Signatur. Formen und Funktionen von Mittelalter bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: LIT, 2007). See Maria Monica Donato, "Kunstliteratur monumentale. Qualche riflessione e un progetto per la firma d'artista, dal Medioevo al Rinascimento," *Letteratura & Arte* 1 (2003-2004): 23-47, and Guido Beltramini, "Architetture firmate nel Rinascimento," in *L'architetto: ruolo, volto, mito*, ed. Guido Beltramini, Howard Burns (Venice: Marsilio 2009), 49-66. See also the special issue of *Revue de l'art* on signatures edited by André Chastel in 1974. In particular see André Chastel, "Signature et signe," "La signature épigraphique," *Revue de l'art* 26 (1974): 8-14; Vladimír Juřen, "Fecit – faciebat," *Revue de l'art*, 26 (1974): 27-30. See also Rona Goffen, "Signatures: Inscribing Identity in Italian Renaissance Art," *Viator* 32 (2001): 303-370; Patricia Lee Rubin, "Signposts of Invention: Artists signatures in Italian Renaissance Art," *Art History* 29 (2006): 563-599.



Fig. 17. Detail of the inscription on the façade of the palace of Orso Orsini, Nola



Fig. 18. Detail of the dedicatory inscription of the Bishop Leo on the protiros of the Chapel of the SS. Martiri, Cimitile (Nola).



Fig. 19. Pontano Chapel, Naples. View of the pavement.



Fig. 20. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of Pontano's emblem in the pavement.



Fig. 21. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of Adriana Sassone's emblem in the pavement.



Fig. 22. Pontano Chapel, Naples.
Detail of the profile portrait in the pavement.

There were various types of signatures available to Renaissance men to study and select as a model, and Pontano must have been aware that the choice of the form of the inscription would itself be prominently significant. Although they were rare, there were surviving examples which confirmed the ancient origins of the practice of signing works of art.³⁵ Pontano himself had studied one of the most celebrated ancient signatures of his time, that of Lucius Cocceius Auctus displayed on the side of the Temple of Augustus in Pozzuoli: “L. COCCEIUS. L. / C. POSTUMI. L. / AUCTUS ARCITECT[US]” (Figs. 24-25).³⁶ Many years before it was transcribed by Fra Giocondo and sketched by Giuliano da Sangallo at the end of the fifteenth century, Pontano showed his autoptic knowledge of this epigraph when he used it in 1467, referring to the grammatical exception found in it of the word “Arcitectus” spelled without the *h* to support one of the theories expressed in his treatise on aspiration, the *De aspiratione*.³⁷ Ancient signatures such as that of Cocceius offered valid alternatives to the much more numerous examples that could be observed in important medieval buildings and on sculptures throughout Italy in which the name of the artist usually occurred as part of a more or less articulated encomium.

Pontano may have been aware of the existence of medieval recreations of ancient signatures since the time of Giotto, but it is certain that he knew of the attempts to recreate the practice of antiquity in this field by the Paduan painter Andrea Mantegna, with whom he was in contact, and knew of how this habit of signing works of art *all’antica* had spread throughout Italy among other contemporary artists, such as Donatello, Bartolomeo Bon, Matteo de’ Pasti, Agostino di Duccio, Mino da Fiesole, Baccio Pontelli, all of whom mainly adopted the formula of *opus* + the artist’s name in the genitive.³⁸

³⁵ Beltramini, “Architetture firmate,” 51.

³⁶ CIL X, 1614. On the inscription see Fausto Zevi, *Iscrizione di Cocceio dal c.d. tempio di Augusto*, in *Museo archeologico dei Campi Flegrei*, ed. Fausto Zevi (Naples: Electa, 2008), 246; Valeri, *Marmora Phlegrea*, 40-41. On the dates of Pontano’s *De aspiratione* see Germano, “La cronologia di composizione del *De aspiratione*,” in Id., *Il De aspiratione*, 59-75.

³⁷ Ioannis Ioviani Pontani *De aspiratione ad Marinum Tomacellum liber incipit*, impressum Neapoli Anno MCCCCLXXXI, f. 41r, ll. 22-24. Even though he does not transcribe the inscription completely, he included the epigraph in the context of the series of entries that have *CH* preceding the vowel *I* in the internal and final syllables of words, noting that “architectus, architectonica. Puteolis tamen, in latere vetustissimi templi, est scriptum nomen Arcitectus absque nota aspirationis: adeo quibusdam temporibus a Latinis explosa fuit.” See Germano, “Testimonianze epigrafiche,” 240. Pontano also recalls Cocceio in the *De magnificentia* (188-189) as the architect of the *Crypta Neapolitana*. On Cocceius see Valeri, *Marmora*, 41. On Giuliano da Sangallo’s drawing see Christian Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo: codice vaticano barberiniano latino 4424*, (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1984), 12; Stefano Borsi, *Giuliano da Sangallo: i disegni di architettura e dell’antico* (Rome: Officina, 1985), 262-264. Although there is no direct evidence he did so, it is highly probable that in compiling his list of usages of the term “architectus,” Pontano also took into consideration the signature of the architect Postumius Pollio on the Temple of Apollo in Terracina (CIL X, 6339) and that of the architect Vitruvius Cerdo on the Arch of the Gavi in Verona, at the time mistakenly identified as the author of the *De architectura* (Theodor Mommsen, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Inscriptiones Galliae Cisalpinae Latinae* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1877), V, 3464). See Howard Burns, “Le antichità di Verona e l’architettura del Rinascimento” in *Palladio e Verona*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Pozza 1980), 103. See also Beltramini, “Architetture firmate,” 50-52.

³⁸ Burg, *Die Signatur*, 176-184. On medieval signatures see Peter C. Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz. Mittelalterliche Signaturen als Quelle der Kunstsoziologie,” *Bauwerk und Bildwerk in Hochmittelalter*, ed. Karl Clausberg et al., (Giessen: Anabas 1981), 7-34; Maria Monica Donato, “Opere firmate nell’arte italiana /Medioevo: raigoni, linee, strumenti. Prima presentazione,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia. Quaderni* 16 (2003 (2008)): 365-400. On Mantegna and the recreation of ancient signatures see Andrea Moschetti, “Le iscrizioni lapidarie romane negli affreschi del Mantegna agli Eremitani,” *Atti del Reale Istituto*



Fig. 23. Pontano Chapel, Naples. Detail of an inscription in the pavement.



Fig. 24. Giuliano da Sangallo, Side elevation of the Temple of Augustus in Pozzuoli, with the detail of the signature of the architect Lucius Cocceius Auctus. Taccuino Senese, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, f. 9r.

Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti 89 (1929-30): 227-239; Guido Beltramini, "Mantegna e la firma di Vitruvio," in *Mantegna e le arti a Verona 1450-1550*, ed. Paola Marini, S. Marinelli (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), 137-144; Beltramini, "Architetture firmate," 52. Although the contacts between Pontano and Mantegna are documented only from the time of the design for Virgil's statue in Mantua in 1499, it is probable that the admiration of Pontano and his circle for the Paduan painter and his skill in the rediscovery of antiquity goes back earlier and may have been relevant for Pontano's interest in general in the theme of artistic signatures. See Giovanni Agosti, "Su Mantegna, 3. (Ancora all'ingresso della "maniera moderna"), *Prospettiva* 73-74 (1994): 131-133.



Fig. 25. Marble inscription with the signature of Lucius Cocceius Auctus from the Temple of Augustus in Pozzuoli. Baia, Museo dei Campi Flegrei.



Fig. 26. Marble inscription with the signature of Novello of San Lucano on the façade of the palace of Roberto Sanseverino in Naples, 1470.

In Naples Pontano would have been able to see several examples of fifteenth-century artists who had proudly sculpted their names on the works they had produced, such as the inscription carved on a ribbon at the rear of the lefthand column of the funerary monument executed for the royal secretary Onofrio da Penne (1410-12), which records the name of Antonio Baboccio as the sculptor not only of the tomb but also of the portal of Naples cathedral,³⁹ while in an inscription carved on a marble slab laid into the diamond rustication of the Prince of Salerno Roberto Sanseverino's palace, Novello di Sanlucano asserts his role as "architect" of the work (Fig. 26).⁴⁰ In addition to the names of artists which were recorded as part of long phrases, there were also in Naples examples of signatures which were explicitly intended to be *all'antica*. Pontano would surely have had the opportunity to see and admire the "OPVS MINI" with which Mino da Fiesole signed the base of the monumental marble bust of King Alfonso I of Aragon that was displayed at the time in Castelnuovo (ca. 1455-56).⁴¹ He would also surely have noticed how the sculptor Guglielmo Monaco signed the magnificent bronze doors at the entrance of Castel Nuovo depicting the most important episodes of Ferrante of Aragon's war against the French pretender to the throne Jean d'Anjou (1458-65) by carving in the clypeus surrounding his own profile portrait in the lower left frame of the door the phrase "GULIERMUS MONACUS ME FECIT MILES" (ca. 1470) (Fig. 27).⁴²

Through his knowledge of precedents in Naples and throughout Italy, Pontano must have been aware of how the choice of the form and position of his signature was not merely a matter of whim or of secondary importance. On the contrary, Pontano's use of *Pontanus fecit* reflects a precisely considered humanistic purpose and should be seen as a key to understanding the

³⁹ Nicolas Bock, *Kunst am Hofe der Anjou-Durazzo: der Bildhauer Antonio Baboccio (1351 - ca. 1423)*, (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001), 423-26: "[ABBAS] ANTONIUS [BABOSUS D]E PIPERNO / ME FECIT / [ET PO]RTAM MAIOREM K[A]TEDRAL[EM] ECCLE[SIAE] NEAPOL[IS] / [H]O[NUPH]RIUS DE PENNA REGIS LA[DISLAI SECR]ETARIUS FIERI FECIT."

⁴⁰ Beltramini, *Architetture firmate*, 57. "NOVELLUS DE SANC/TO LUCANO ARCHITEC/TOR EGREGIUS OBSE / QUIO MAGISQUAM SA7LARIO PRINCIPI SALE/RNITANO SUO ET / DOMINIO ET BENE/FACTORI PRECIPUO / HAS EDES EDIDIT / ANNO MCCCCLXX". Despite his admiration for Roberto Sanseverino, Pontano did not hesitate to criticize him for his palace in the *De magnificentia* and in the *De liberalitate*. See Pontano, *De magnificentia*, 180; *De liberalitate*, 210. For the palace see Mary Anne Conelli, "The Gesù Nuovo in Naples: Politics, Property and Religion" (PhD. Diss. Columbia University, 1992), 37-38; Carlo De Frede, *Il Principe di Salerno Roberto Sanseverino e il suo palazzo in Napoli a punte di diamante* (Napoli: A. De Frede, 2000). Pontano dedicated the *De obedientia* to Roberto Sanseverino and wrote a long biographical portrait of him in the *De bello Neapolitano* (Ioannis Ioviani Pontani *De bello Neapolitano et De sermone* (Neapoli ex officina Sigismundi Mayr 1509, bk. I, 12). See Liliana Monti Sabia, *Pontano e la storia. Dal De bello neapolitano all'Actius* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995), 104-105.

⁴¹ The portrait was executed between 1455 and 1456 and is identifiable with a monumental bust signed "OPVS MINI" that is now lost, but was still in Valencia during the eighteenth-century, together with other Neapolitan treasures. See Joana Barreto, "Du portrait du roi à l'image de l'Etat: les Aragon de Naples dans l'Italie de la Renaissance", Thèse de Doctorat de histoire de l'art, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2010, I, 95-96, n. 302; Francesco Caglioti, "Mino da Fiesole [...], Piero di Cosimo de' Medici [...], Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence [...]", in *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, December 21, 2011, to March 18, 2012), ed. Keith Christiansen, Stefan Weppelmann (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2011): 166-168 n. 4.

⁴² On the bronze doors of Castel Nuovo and Guglielmo Monaco see Riccardo Filangieri, *Castelnuovo reggia angioina ed aragonese di Napoli*, Napoli 1934: 209, 217, 242, 251; Luigi Volpicella, "Le porte di Castelnuovo e il bottino di Carlo VIII", *Napoli Nobilissima* 2 (2nd series, 1921): 153-160; Joana Barreto, "Artisan ou artiste entre France et Italie? Le cas de Guglielmo Monaco (Guillaume Le Moine) à la cour de Naples au xve siècle", *Laboratoire italien* 11 (2011): 301-328.

peculiar position of the chapel in terms of the dialectical relationship between its patron and its designer.

Compared to the *all'antica* alternatives illustrated by Mantegna and other contemporary artists such as Donatello or Mino da Fiesole which used a phrase made up of *opus* + the artist's name in the genitive, Pontano consciously opted for a different form of signature. The *fecit* was regularly used by medieval artists, usually as part of a lengthy encomium, more rarely in shorter phrases. *Fecit* accompanied by the name of the artist was the form adopted in notable fifteenth-century examples some of which Pontano may have known, such as Filarete's signature on the bronze door of Saint Peter's (1433-45), Michele Giambono's in the mosaics of the Mascoli Chapel in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice (ca. 1449-51), Benedetto da Maiano's on the base of the bust of Pietro Mellini (1474) now preserved in the Bargello Museum in Florence, and Guglielmo Monaco's on the bronze door of Castelnuovo (ca. 1470).⁴³

Like the formula of *opus* + name in the genitive, the use of the expression with *facere* had ancient precedents, which lent a contemporary practice to the authority of antiquity. One of the best known *fecit* signature was the one on the bronze Vatican "Pigna," which was signed three times by the man responsible for casting it.⁴⁴ Although few in number, ancient signatures using *fecit* and the nominative were recorded in Pliny's passage on artists' signatures in the preface to the first book of the *Naturalis Historia*.⁴⁵ As a humanist, Pontano would have given to a literary source like Pliny—alongside material evidence—a primary importance in the conception of his signature and the ancient text may well have been a determining factor in his decision to adopt the form *Pontanus fecit*. Pliny's text offered a "mythology of skill"—as Baxandall put it—on

⁴³ See Burg, *Die Signatur*, 177-178. Antonio Filarete signed three times Saint Peter's bronze doors and the signature bearing the *fecit* reads: "ANTONIVS PETRI DE FLORENTIA FECIT MCCCCXLV" See Maria Beltramini, "Atrium. West Prospect. Antonio Averlino known as Filarete (ca. 1400-post 1466). Door (1433-1445)", in *The Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican*, ed. Antonio Pinelli (Franco Cosimo Panini: Modena, 2000): 483-490. "MICHAEL ZANBONO VENETUS FECIT" For Michele Giambono's signature see Michelangelo Muraro, "The Statutes of the Venetian Arti and the Mosaics of the Mascoli Chapel", *The Art Bulletin* 43 (1961): 263-274. Benedetto da Maiano's signature reads "BENEDICTVS MAIANVS FECIT". For Guglielmo Monaco see above.

⁴⁴ Christian Hülsen, *Corpus Inscriptiones Latinarum. Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae* VI, pars 4 (I) (Berolini: Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1894), 29794. The inscription reads "P. CINIVS. P. L. SALVIVS FECIT." The signature was inscribed on the convex torus on which the "Pigna" rests. See Anna Maria Riccomini, "Bronze pine-cone (late 1st-2nd century A.D. Vatican City. Vatican Museum. Cortile della Pigna," in *The Basilica*, 905-906. See Walther Amelung *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* (Berlin: Kommission bei Georg Reimer, 1903-1956), 3 vols, I, n. 227, 896-904; Ivan Di Stefano Manzella, "Le iscrizioni della Pigna Vaticana," *Bollettino dei Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, 6 (1986): 66-78. At the end of the fifteenth-century the "Pigna" was located in the "Paradise" atrium in front of the Constantine Basilica of Saint Peter and it was part of a fountain for sacred ablutions. The three signatures most probably influenced Filarete's three signatures on the Bronze Doors of the atrium.

⁴⁵ Pliny uses the theme of artist signatures in part to explain why he has not given his work a more fitting title and in general the imperfection of this and all his other works, to which he could have made many additions: "quos in libellis his invenies absoluta opera et illa quoque, quae mirando non satiamur, pendenti titulo inscripsisse, ut APELLES FACIEBAT aut POLYCLITUS, tamquam inchoata semper arte et imperfecta, ut contra iudiciorum varietatem superesset artifice regressus ad veniam velut emendaturo quicquid desideraretur, si non esset interceptus. Quare plenum verecundat illud, quod omnia opera tamquam novissima inscribere et tamquam singulis adempti. Tria non amplius, ut opinor, absolute traduntur inscripta ILLE FECIT, quae suis locis reddam. Quo apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea." Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock (London-New York: Bell & Sons, 1855), 8-9. See also the Italian edition Plinio, *Storia Naturale*, ed. Antonio Barchiesi et al. (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), I, 17-19.

which Petrarch had already drawn.⁴⁶ Pontano would not have missed Pliny's relevant explanation of the differences between the use of the more common imperfect form *faciebat*, which represented a sort of provisional inscription as though the work were still in process and incomplete, which artists employed when they wanted to beg the beholders' indulgence, and the far rarer perfect tense *fecit*, which denoted instead the supreme—and perhaps envy-arousing—confidence of the artist who thus declared his work a completed achievement. Such a passage had also been quoted almost verbatim by Angelo Poliziano in the *Centuria Prima* of the *Miscellanea*, published in 1489, in relation to the signature of the Greek artist Lysippus on the base which originally carried the lost portrait of Seleukos in the atrium of Lorenzo Mellini's house in Rome, in order to make the point that there was a clear distinction between the use of *faciebat* and *fecit* in signatures.⁴⁷ With his choice of the inscription *Pontanus fecit* Pontano must have been aware that he was not only describing his role in the chapel as a work of art, but also expressing his conviction that the work had been completed to his full satisfaction and was ready to confront the judgment of posterity.

The diffusion of Pliny's work and the growing importance of the passage on signatures among humanists and artists throughout Italy would have made the *Pontanus fecit* not only immediately recognizable but also full of meaning for the select audience of visitors who would have been granted access to the chapel.⁴⁸ Furthermore the implications deriving from the choice

⁴⁶ Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 63-65.

⁴⁷ *Angeli Politiani Opera* (Basileae: apud N. Episcopium Iuniorum, 1553), 264. See Juren, *Fecit*. For Poliziano and Pliny see Vincenzo Fera, "Poliziano, Ermolao Barbaro e Plinio," *Una famiglia veneziana nella storia: i Barbaro*, ed. Michela Marangoni et al. (Venice: Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere, arti, 1996), 193-213. The *Miscellaneorum Centuria Prima* was composed between 1485 and 1489 and was published for the first time in 1489: *Angeli Politiani Miscellaneorum Centuriae Primae ad Laurentium Medicem praefatio* (Florence: A. Miscomini, 1489, Goff P890). Two letters sent by Poliziano to Pontano are evidence of the contacts between the two humanists, but it is known that they had met before and were both aware of each other's work. The letter dated May 1493 demonstrates that Pontano was aware of the contents of the *Miscellanea*. Erasmo Percopo, "Lettere di Giovanni Pontano," *Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana* 37 (1907): 67-78. For further evidence of the *Miscellanea* in Naples already in 1489 see Vincenzo Fera, "Un laboratorio filologico di fine Quattrocento: la *Naturalis historia*," in *Formative Stages of Classical Traditions: Latin Text from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Proceedings of the conference held at Erice, 16-22 October 1993, ed. Oronzo Pecere, Michael D. Reeve (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1995), 453. See also Carlo Vecce, *Gli zibaldoni di Jacopo Sannazaro* (Messina: Sicania, 1998), 45. On the Mellini collection see Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire without End. Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 345-347. On the signature see Christian Hülsen, "Die Hermeninschriften berühmter Griechen und die ikonographischen Sammlungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Römische Abteilung* 16 (1901): 171, n. 39.

⁴⁸ For the fortune of Pliny's passage see Juren, "Fecit"; Mathilde Bert, "Plin l'Ancien et l'art de la Renaissance: balises pour une étude de réception entre le Nord et le Sud," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 75 (2006): 25-31. Weil-Garris Brandt argues that Michelangelo's signature on the Pietà in the Basilica of Saint Peter (1499) reflects his knowledge of Pliny's text and Poliziano's interest in the inscription with Lisippo's signature. Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "Michelangelo's Pietà for the Cappella del Re di Francia," in *Il se rendit en Italie: Études offertes à André Chastel* (Rome: Edizioni dell'elefante; Paris: Flammarion, 1987) 93; Wren Christian, *Empire*, 346. Although there are no explicit references in Pontano's writings to Pliny's passage on artists' signatures, his profound knowledge of the *Naturalis Historia* is evident from the many specific quotations of the classical text in his works. Outside his own writings, there is further evidence for the links between the humanist and the *Naturalis Historia*, for example in Ermolao Barbaro's *Castigationes Pliniana* (Hermolai Barbari, *Castigationes Pliniana et in Pomponium Melam*, ed. Giovanni Pozzi (Padua: Antenore, 1973; 1979), I, CXXI-XXII; CXXXVII; III, CXIX-XXII, CXXVII-XL) and in an illuminated page of the *Naturalis Historia* (Biblioteca de la Universidad de Valencia (MS 691, f. 3)) attributed to Giovanni Todeschino and now preserved in Valencia, where a portrait of

of *fecit* as described by Pliny are confirmed in what Pontano describes as the principal aim of a building in the *De magnificentia*: a work which is admired causes its maker to be admired, attracts visitors from far-flung lands and inspires poets and historians to sing his praises.⁴⁹ Proud of the results of his artistic work, it is not by chance that Pontano chose to publicise his chapel in his literary works by using it as the setting both for two dialogues, the *Actius* and the *Antonius*, and for the treatise *De prudentia*.⁵⁰



Fig. 27. Detail of the portrait and signature of Guglielmo Monaco in the bronze doors of Castel Nuovo, Naples, Museo Civico.

The element which reinforces the status of *Pontanus fecit* as an artistic signature, rather than just a patron's claim of responsibility or dedication of the monument, is the position of the inscription. Pontano's decision to place his claim for the entire building in what may appear to be a subordinate position within the pavement decoration rather than among one of the more monumental epigraphs displayed on the facade or on the walls of the interior seems not without significance. Pontano's examination of ancient inscriptions must have shown him that, in addition to the existence of different formulas, artists' signatures were always placed in a subordinate position to those of the patrons and were always executed in a more discreet

Pontano is recognizable in the foreground, next to Alfonso, Duke of Calabria. See Teresa D'Urso, "Un manifesto del 'classicismo' aragonese: il frontespizio della 'Naturalis historia' di Plinio il Vecchio della Biblioteca di Valenza," *Prospettiva* 105 (2002 (2003)): 41. For the reputation and importance of the *Naturalis Historia* in Neapolitan humanist circles see Vecce, *Zibaldoni*, 36-37; C. Plinio Secondo, *La Storia naturale tradotta in "napolitano misto" da Giovanni Brancati*, ed. Salvatore Gentile (Naples, 1974); Marco Santoro, *Uno scolaro di Poliziano a Napoli. Francesco Pucci* (Naples: Libreria scientifica, 1948), 33-36; Fera, "Laboratorio filologico", 451-466.

⁴⁹ De Divitiis, "Pontano," 129. "Magni enim sumptus et opera ipsa magna, eademque ex egregia et peregrina materia, artificiose, varie ac decenter ornata, locis editis imminetia, firmiter et ad perpetuitatem posita, non ipsa modo censentur admirabilia, verum auctores ipsos admirabiles faciunt; quos aequae genus omne hominum laudibus etiam mirificis prosequatur. Quid? quod aedificia ipsa, ubi eiusmodi fuerint, remotissimis e terris homines ad sui spectaculum atque admirationem trahunt, ac tum poetas, tum rerum scriptores ad sui commendationem invitant." Pontano, *De magnificentia*, 184-185.

⁵⁰ In the proemium to *De Prudentia*, Pontano writes that the religious atmosphere of the place and the memory of his wife Adriana inspired his conversations on prudence and happiness during the meetings of the Academy which occasionally took place there: Ioanni Ioviani Pontani *De prudentia*, Neapoli per Sigismundum Mayr, 1508. On *De prudentia* see Liliana Monti Sabia, "Per l'edizione critica del *De Prudentia* di Giovanni Pontano," in *Tradizione classica e letteratura umanistica. Per Alessandro Perosa*, ed. Roberto Cardini (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), II, 595-615.

lettering.⁵¹ Such an arrangement is clearly seen in the Temple of Augustus in Pozzuoli where, as Pontano himself noted, the signature of Lucius Cocceius Auctus is displayed on the side of the edifice, whereas the name of the family who commissioned the building, the Calpurni, was sculpted on the frieze of the facade. This relationship between patron and artist was echoed in fifteenth-century signatures, as shown for example by that of Baccio Pontelli in the Rocca at Ostia which is carved on the side of the building, whereas the name of the patron Giuliano della Rovere is placed on the front.⁵² In Naples both the position of Baboccio's encomium on the rear of the column of the Penne funerary monument and that of Novello da Sanlucano to the left of the portal of the Sanseverino palace are decentred in respect of the overall structure of the work and the prominence of the patron's name.⁵³ Furthermore Guglielmo Monaco's portrait and signature are placed in the lower righthand corner of the monumental bronze doors of Castelnuovo. The position of the *Pontanus fecit* in some way reflects such a convention: by choosing to insert his signature in the pavement (and not on the front of the building as is seen in the Pantheon, in Palazzo Orsini and Palazzo Riario), Pontano assigns it a subordinate position in comparison with the inscriptions on the two facades where he presents himself as patron of the building.⁵⁴ Like both ancient and more recent artists' signatures, the *Pontanus fecit* is in smaller and more discreet characters, like an obscure detail waiting to be discovered among all the other epigraphic contents and decoration of the chapel. Furthermore the position in the pavement enabled him to combine in one phrase the resumption of an ancient funerary convention with an artist's signature.

The inherently dialectical relationship between the patron and the artist, which is customarily generated by the presence of both names in the context of a work of art, takes on a peculiar aspect in the chapel since both patron and artist coincide in the figure of Pontano, who wished to bequeath to posterity the memory of his capacity in both roles. What might have seemed merely ambiguous instead matched exactly the concept of the patron as "author" expounded by Pontano shortly after the building of the chapel in his treatise *De magnificentia*: it is the patron, as the *auctor* of the work of art, who is able, through his knowledge of architecture and sculpture, to show the architect and sculptor how they can achieve magnificence in the artistic work they are going to carry out on his behalf.⁵⁵ Though it was not published until 1498, *De magnificentia* was written in 1493, just one year after work was completed on his chapel,⁵⁶ and in describing the requisite knowledge a patron/*auctor* should possess, Pontano seems to draw a picture of himself and his role in his chapel's conception and design. His knowledge and expertise in ancient art and architecture is demonstrated not only in *De magnificentia* but also in several other works, in particular the *De bello neapolitano* and the *De aspiratione*, where Pontano cites his personal

⁵¹ Beltramini, "Architetture firmate," 50.

⁵² Beltramini, "Architetture firmate," 55.

⁵³ No inscription bearing Roberto Sanseverino's name as patron of the palace appears to have survived, but we can assume that one was sculpted on the main portal, as in other fifteenth-century Neapolitan palaces.

⁵⁴ There are two cases of fifteenth-century examples of artists signatures which claim responsibility only for the pavement and not for the entire building in which they are found: Antonio Federighi's in Siena Cathedral (1482) and Andrea da Faenza's in the Vaselli Chapel in San Petronio in Bologna (1487). Dressen, *Pavimenti*, 132; 369-370, figs. 29, 54, 63.

⁵⁵ Pontano, *De magnificentia*, 184-185. On the role of the patron as described in *De magnificentia* see De Divitiis, "Pontano," 115-116.

⁵⁶ Liliana Monti Sabia, "Un nuovo codice pontaniano: il Vat. Lat. 14675", in *Filologia umanistica per Gianvito Resta*, ed. Vincenzo Fera, Giovanni Ferraù (Padua: Antenore, 1996 (1997)), II, 1339-1358.

experience of the statues, buildings, and inscriptions he has seen alongside literary sources.⁵⁷ Historical and literary evidence from the period also show how his contemporaries regarded Pontano as an authority to be consulted both for his understanding of ancient architecture, as for example when Bernardo Rucellai relied on his description of how the *Piscina Mirabilis* near Naples functioned—as well as for advice on the design of new *all’antica* works of art—or as when Isabella Gonzaga consulted him in 1499 on the design of a new statue of Virgil in Mantua.⁵⁸ Pontano therefore possessed all the antiquarian, artistic and architectural knowledge which would enable him to advise the artist and architect working for him and thus to play a determining role in the final outcome of his own chapel. The *Pontanus fecit* thus encapsulates the idea of the authorship of a work of art in exactly the terms he would subsequently delineate in the *De magnificentia*.⁵⁹

Even if the question of the attribution of the chapel’s design remains open, the inscription can be seen as a key element in understanding the building’s idiosyncratic status in terms of the customary and inherent dialectical relationship between patron and artist. If on the exterior facades Pontano presented himself solely as the patron of the building inserting his name in a long dedicatory phrase, in the interior the message becomes more subtle and complex. By choosing a form like *Pontanus fecit* that followed the conventions of ancient funerary inscriptions and at the same time was closely reminiscent of an artist’s signature, Pontano could simultaneously define both his role as the author of the building and the status of the chapel as a sort of funerary altar. While the dedicatory inscriptions on the two exterior facades were addressed to the city and its citizens, *Pontanus fecit*, reiterated across the pavement tiles, was visible only to the selected guests who were given access to the chapel and who would have been familiar with Pontano’s interest in both the antiquarian rediscovery of artistic signatures and in the recreation of ancient funerary inscriptions. Such privileged guests would have been capable of appreciating the links of the *Pontanus fecit* with ancient and modern precedents, with Pliny’s text and with Pontano’s own works. Thus the ways Pontano chose to present himself on the exterior and in the interior of his chapel reveal both his familiarity with the methods of self-representation practised among the élite throughout Italy and his awareness of contemporary humanistic debate on the authorship for works of art, defining his avantgarde position in relation to the artistic culture of his own time.

⁵⁷ For Pontano’s antiquarian knowledge see Germano, “Testimonianze epigrafiche,” 215-227; De Divitiis, “Pontano,” 111-114. See also Antonietta Iacono, “La Laudatio urbis Neapolis nell’appendice archeologico-antiquaria del De bello Neapolitano di Giovanni Gioviano Pontano,” *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 39 (2009): 562-586. For Pontano’s attention to the technical aspect of ancient monuments see Bianca de Divitiis, “I resoconti di guerra come fonte per la storia dell’architettura,” *La battaglia nel Rimascimento meridionale*, ed. Giancarlo Abbamonte et al. (Rome: Viella 2011), 321-334.

⁵⁸ Bernardus Oricellarius, *De urbe Roma, seu Latinus Commentarius in Pub. Victorem ac Sext. Rufum de Regionibus Urbis. Adcedit ipsius Pub. Victoris ac Sex. Rufi textus ex fide complurium MScriptorum Vaticanæ Bibliothecæ*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. Joseph Maria Tartinius, Florence 1748, II, fol. 66. See De Divitiis, “Pontano,” 112. For the design of Virgil’s statue see Giovanni Agosti, “Cerchia di Andrea Mantegna. Progetto di un monumento a Virgilio,” in *Vittoria Colonna e Michelangelo*, ed. Pina Ragionieri (Florence: Mandragora, 2005), 38-39. See also De Divitiis, “Pontano,” 118-119.

⁵⁹ Pontano, *De magnificentia*, 184-185. On the role of the patron as described in *De magnificentia* see De Divitiis, “Pontano,” 115-116.

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