

A Forgotten Italian Bestseller

Ludovico Pittorio's Omiliario quadragisimale

Food for the soul and precious merchandise: with these two metaphors, Ludovico Pittorio (c. 1452–c. 1525) depicts his vernacular homilies in the dedicatory letter of his Lenten sermon collection, the *Omiliario quadragisimale*, first printed in Modena in 1506 by Domenico Roccciola (c. 1440–1506).¹ At first glance, the humble tone of the dedicatory letter and the location of the edition — definitely not a main hub in the early printing market — would not appear very promising. Yet, over the years, the book became a major bestseller in Italy. It was a gradual process. The second edition was published by Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler (d. 1526) in Milan in 1513.² This prolific typographer combined the Lenten sermons with Pittorio's *Dominicale e sanuario*, which significantly had been the first sermon collection *de tempore et de sanctis* printed in Italian, published by Roccciola probably

-
- 1 Ludovico Pittorio, *Omiliario quadragisimale fondato de verbo ad verbum sule Epistole e Evangelii sì como corrono ogni dì secondo lo ordine dela Romana Giesia* (Modena: Domenico Roccciola, 1506; hereafter Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*). I was able to consult some digital reproductions of this first edition, kindly provided by Dr Giacomo Mariani. For the remainder of the collection, I rely on Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario quadragisimale* (Brescia: Ludovico Brittanico, 1541; hereafter Pittorio, *Omiliario 1541*). The two editions differ only in the spelling of some words. This publication is part of the project 'Lenten Sermon Bestsellers: Shaping Society in Late Medieval Europe (1470–1520)' (project number VI.Veni.191H.018) of the Veni research programme which is financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO). A first version of this paper was presented at the conference 'Circulating the Word of God in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Transformative Preaching in Manuscript and Print (c. 1450 to c. 1550)', University of Hull, 25–27 March 2017. I am grateful to the organizers of the conference as well as the participants for their inputs and suggestions. Moreover, I am particularly indebted to Professor Veronica O'Mara and Dr Patricia Stoop for the invaluable support they gave me in developing this contribution and the patience and accuracy with which they guided the whole process.
 - 2 Ludovico Pittorio, *Dominicale sanuario e quadragisimale [...] nouamente stampato con molte agionte* (Milano: Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler, 1513).

Pietro Delcorno (pietro.delcorno3@unibo.it) is Senior Assistant Professor in Medieval History in the Department of History and Cultures at the University of Bologna.

Circulating the Word of God in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Catholic Preaching and Preachers across Manuscript and Print (c. 1450 to c. 1550), ed. by Veronica O'Mara and Patricia Stoop, SERMO 17, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), pp. 279–309 BREPOL'S PUBLISHERS 10.1484/M.SERMO-EB.5.130459

between 1502 and 1505.³ By joining the two collections, Scinzenzeler created a set of sermons for the entire liturgical year, a format that became common for the sermons of Pittorio in the 1530s (see Appendix). His Lenten sermon collection was republished in 1518 in Venice by Bernardino Vitali and — again by Scinzenzeler — in 1520 in Milan. No edition was printed in the following decade, during which Pittorio died, probably around 1525. Next, the rhythm of production of the *Omiliario* suddenly soared with four editions between 1530 and 1533, exactly in the period when ‘the idea of spreading the Word of God among all Christians reached its peak in Italy.’⁴ From that moment onwards, Pittorio’s Lenten sermons proved to be unstoppable, reaching the astonishing number of at least thirty-six editions by 1599, when its fortune started to decline, scoring only two other editions in 1607 and 1630.⁵ These impressive numbers prove that Pittorio’s sermons provided generations of readers (and preachers) with a precious access to materials for meditation (mainly on the Bible) during Lent.

By the fifteenth century, Lent had become a period of intensified religious instruction marked by preaching on a daily basis.⁶ Lenten preaching was supposed to lead the faithful in a process of redefinition of their personal and collective identity, culminating in key rites connected with Easter, namely sacramental Confession, participation in the Eucharist, and the commemoration of the Passion. In this regard, Lenten sermon collections were in high demand as crucial tools of pastoral care. As preaching aids that both reflected and produced the religious knowledge of the time, Lenten sermon collections like the one by Pittorio represent fascinating microcosms of late medieval

-
- 3 Ludovico Pittorio, *Dominicale e santuario* [...] (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, [c. 1502–1505]). Previous printed sermon collections in the vernacular were either for Lent, such as those by Roberto Caracciolo (c. 1425–1494) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), or sermon collections organized as treatises, like Antonio da Vercelli, *Consigli della salute del peccatore* [s.n. 1470] or Roberto Caracciolo, *Specchio della fede* (Venezia: Giovanni da Bergamo, 1495).
- 4 Élise Boillet, ‘For Early Modern Printed Biblical Literature in Italian: Lay Authorship and Readership’, in *Lay Readings of the Bible in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Erminia Ardissono and Élise Boillet, *Intersections*, 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 170–90 (p. 177), which highlights the peak in the 1530s and 1540s.
- 5 Several of its early editions survive only in one or two copies. *EDIT16: Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo* indicates one copy for Milano 1513; two copies for Venezia 1518. It is plausible that some editions are entirely lost; see on this topic, Neil Harris, ‘La sopravvivenza del libro ossia appunti per una lista della lavandaia’, *Ecdotica*, 4 (2007), 24–65; and *Lost Books: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. by Flavia Bruni and Andrew Pettegree, *Library of the Written Word, The Handpress World*, 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
- 6 See *I sermoni quaresimali: digiuno del corpo, banchetto dell’anima / Lenten Sermons: Fasting of the Body, Banquet of the Soul*, ed. by Pietro Delcorno, Eleonora Lombardo, and Lorenza Tromboni, *Memorie Domenicane*, n.s. 48 (Firenze: Edizioni Nerbini, 2017). On the origin of Lenten sermon collections, see Jussi Hanska, ‘*Sermones quadragesimales*: Birth and Development of a Genre’, *Il Santo*, 52 (2012), 107–27.

religious culture.⁷ The *Omiliario* stems from this preaching practice, and, at the same time, tries to support and integrate (perhaps even replace) it by envisaging a personal or collective reading of sermons in convents and houses.

Scholars such as Gigliola Fragnito have underlined the relevance of Pittorio's sermons and their extraordinary success in Italy throughout the sixteenth century.⁸ Emily Michelson summarizes well some of their main characteristics:

Pittorio's homilies are direct and conversational. They move from the scriptural reading for the day, presented verse by verse in abbreviated vernacular paraphrases, to a direct and emotional exhortation to penitence and charitable living, as befits the Lenten season. They include no patristic or scholastic references, and they have none of the classical rhetorical flourishes that one might have expected, given Pittorio's classical training.⁹

Still, despite the recognition of the importance and pervasive presence of the *Omiliario* in sixteenth-century Italian society, its sermons have not been subject to any in-depth scrutiny.¹⁰ The *Omiliario* can be considered a forgotten bestseller; or rather, a bestseller that scholars know of, but have forgotten to read. This is even more surprising when one considers that Pittorio is usually listed among the followers of Savonarola (1452–1498) and was active in Ferrara, one of the liveliest Italian cultural centres of the time.¹¹

-
- 7 See Pietro Delcorno, 'Quaresimali "visibili": il serafino, il guerriero, il pellegrino', *Studi medievali*, 60 (2019), 645–88.
- 8 Gigliola Fragnito, *Proibito capire: la Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), pp. 262–63 (and *ad indecem*).
- 9 Emily Michelson, *The Pulpit and the Press in Reformation Italy*, I tatti studies in Italian renaissance history (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 26–27.
- 10 Anna Maria Fioravanti Baraldi, 'Testo e immagini: le edizioni cinquecentesche dell'*Omiliario* quadragesimale di Ludovico Pittorio', in *Girolamo Savonarola da Ferrara all'Europa*, ed. by Gigliola Fragnito and Mario Miegge (Firenze: SISMELE, 2001), pp. 139–53, does not engage with the sermons, offering only a partial description of the editions. Recently, Pittorio's *Psalterio Davidico* (*editio princeps* 1524) received some attention: see Élise Boillet, 'La Fortune du Psalterio Davitico de Lodovico Pittorio en Italie au XVI^e siècle', *La bibliofilia*, 115 (2013), 621–28; Élise Boillet, 'Vernacular Biblical Literature in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Universal Reading and Specific Readers', in *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Sabrina Corbellini, Margriet Hoogvliet, and Bart Ramakers, *Intersections*, 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 213–33 (pp. 220–23); Élise Boillet, 'Vernacular Sermons on the Psalms Printed in Sixteenth-Century Italy: An Interface between Oral and Written Cultures', in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*, ed. by Brian Richardson, Massimo Rospocher, and Stefano Dall'Aglio (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 200–11 (pp. 201–03). Pittorio composed this work in 1522, presenting it as his final gift to a group of nuns (probably of Ferrara), saying that he translated each Psalm into the vernacular and commented on it in the form of a homily ('volgarizarli in forma di homelie'); Ludovico Pittorio, *I salmi di David* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1547), fol. a2 recto.
- 11 On the religious context of Ferrara, with specific attention paid to its Savonarolan movement, see Tamar Herzog, *Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), which only briefly refers to Pittorio (pp. 67

While a detailed analysis of the entire sermon collection exceeds the limits of an essay, this contribution aims to open up the *Omiliario* and to consider closely some of its sermons, in order to shed light on the cultural and religious relevance of a text that has remained for too long in a sort of hazy limbo. Furthermore, the study of the *Omiliario* calls into question several artificial binary divides, since — as we shall see — it seeks to move beyond divisions such as orality-literacy, popular-learned, laity-clergy. In what follows, I will first introduce Pittorio and the intended audience/readers of his sermons, in particular looking at the dedicatory letter of his *Omiliario*. Next, I will focus on a selected number of his Lenten sermons, so as to gain an insight into how Pittorio put the (moral) interpretation of the Bible at the forefront and was able — at least in some cases — to propose a rich, non-conventional spiritual teaching. Finally, I will discuss a few key elements of the reception history of a book that proved to be appealing for quite a differentiated readership.

Pittorio and his Early Religious Works

Information on the life of Ludovico Pittorio (also known as Luigi Bigi) is in short supply.¹² Born in Ferrara around 1452, he studied in his home town with the renowned humanist Battista Guarini (d. 1503), son of the famous Guarino da Verona. Within the entourage of the court of Ferrara, Pittorio became acquainted with the humanist and philosopher Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola (d. 1533), nephew of Giovanni Pico (d. 1494).¹³ Probably due to the friendship and influence of Giovan Francesco Pico, in the 1490s Pittorio abandoned his previous poetic compositions, which dealt with secular and erotic themes, and joined the Savonarolan intellectual circle of Ferrara.¹⁴ Three letters of Girolamo Savonarola, written in 1497, attest to

and 128). The same is true of the valuable introduction in Gabriella Zarri, *La religione di Lucrezia Borgia: le lettere inedite del confessore* (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2006), pp. 136 and 139–40. Scholars usually simply refer to Savonarola's letters to Pittorio (see below) and the information provided by Fioravanti Baraldi.

12 See Giancarlo Andenna, 'Pittorio, Ludovico', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–), 84 (2015), 264–68.

13 See Elisabetta Scapparone, 'Pico, Giovan Francesco', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–), 83 (2015), pp. 320–22.

14 Already at the end of his secular composition *Candida*, dedicated to Giovan Francesco Pico, there is a *Hymnus ad beatam virginem Dei matrem*; see Ludovico Bigi Pittorio, *Candida* (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, 1491), fols 12 verso–13 verso. The hymn is introduced abruptly so that on the same page there is also the end of the poem *Ad Sextum de eius uxore dormiente*, which praises the beauty of a half-naked sleeping woman ('Una papillarum pars cernitur, altera panno / delitet; haec oculos mulcet, et illa beat'). On Pittorio's Latin poetry, see Silvio Pasquazi, 'La poesia in latino', in *Storia di Ferrara, VII: Il Rinascimento e la letteratura*, ed. by Walter Moretti (Ferrara: Librit, 1994), pp. 100–56 (pp. 121–30).

his personal acquaintance with Pittorio.¹⁵ In 1516 the friar's brother, Alberto Savonarola, left in his will a golden ring to Pittorio, mentioned as 'tantum amico meo' ['my great friend'].¹⁶ Probably in connection with the turbulent events of the rise and fall of Fra Girolamo, Pittorio turned to a more intense spiritual life. According to seventeenth-century local historiographers, at a non-specified time Pittorio became a priest, a piece of information that still requires documentary evidence.¹⁷ Anna Maria Fioravanti Baraldi asserts that Pittorio became a member of the Servite order, yet without any evidence of it and probably by misinterpreting the fact that he was buried in his family tomb, which was in the Servite church in Ferrara.¹⁸ Emily Michelson assumes instead that Pittorio remained a lay man.¹⁹ However, this claim would need to be confirmed as well, as it does not seem fully in line with Pittorio's engagement in the pastoral care of lay people and spiritual guidance of nuns that emerges from his own texts. While only new archival findings may shed light on Pittorio's life, we shall note that the sixteenth-century editions of his works did not feel any need to clarify his social status.²⁰ This attests to a cultural context where the involvement of lay authors in the production of

-
- 15 Girolamo Savonarola, *Lettere e scritti apologetici*, ed. by Roberto Ridolfi, Vincenzo Romano, and Armando F. Verde (Roma: Belardetti, 1984), pp. 152–53, 172–74, and 183–84.
 - 16 See Anna Maria Fioravanti Baraldi, 'Ludovico Pittorio e la cultura figurativa a Ferrara nel primo Cinquecento', in *Alla corte degli Estensi: filosofia, arte e cultura a Ferrara nei secoli XV e XVI*, ed. by Marco Bertozzi (Ferrara: Università degli Studi, 1994), pp. 217–46 (p. 221). In a 1514 Latin composition, Pittorio addressed Alberto by recalling Fra Girolamo as a prophet; see Fioravanti Baraldi, 'Testo e immagini', pp. 144–45. In his will, Alberto also left a valuable property to the Ferrarese priest Francesco Caloro, a fervent Savonarolan activist; see Herzog, *Savonarola's Women*, p. 263.
 - 17 Pittorio is defined 'prete divotissimo' ['utmost pious priest'] in Agostino Superbi, *Apparato de gli huomini illustri della città di Ferrara* (Ferrara: Francesco Suzzi, 1620), p. 11. The information is repeated in Antonio Libanori, *Ferrara d'oro imbrunito*, 3 vols (Ferrara: Maresti 1665–1674), III (1674), p. 189. Superbi (d. 1634) was a Conventual Franciscan theologian, active in Ferrara, where the Cistercian abbot Libanori also lived in the second half of the seventeenth century.
 - 18 See Fioravanti Baraldi, 'Ludovico Pittorio e la cultura figurativa', pp. 222 and 229, and Fioravanti Baraldi, 'Testo e immagini', p. 145 (here, she assumes that Pittorio became a Servite between 1494 and 1496). She refers to Superbi, Libanori, and Marcantonio Guarini (d. 1634), yet they did not affirm that Pittorio was a Servite but only that he was buried in the Servite church. Listing the illustrious people buried there, Marcantonio Guarini, nephew of Battista Guarini, put Pittorio not among the famous Servite friars but among the illustrious 'guests', defining him only as a poet ('poeta latino') and describing the sepulchre; Marcantonio Guarini, *Compendio historico [...] delle Chiese [...] di Ferrara e delle memorie di que' personaggi di pregio che in esse son seppelliti* (Ferrara: Eredi Vittorio Baldini, 1621), pp. 47–48. The information that Pittorio became a Servite is repeated in Zari, *La religione di Lucrezia Borgia*, p. 136 and Andenna, 'Pittorio', p. 321. I made the same mistake in Pietro Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son: The Pastoral Uses of a Biblical Narrative (c. 1200–1550)*, Commentaria, 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 444.
 - 19 Michelson, *The Pulpit and the Press*, p. 27.
 - 20 Tellingly the colophon of the first edition of the *Dominicale* uses only the generic and flexible term 'messere' ('Finisse il Dominicale per Messere Ludovico Pictorio da Ferrara'; fol. O6

biblical literature in the vernacular did not encounter resistance (something that increased later on).²¹

The very little that is known about Pittorio's life depends on the information contained in his own religious texts, written in prose and verse, both in Latin and in the vernacular. His first religious texts date to the closing years of the fifteenth century. In 1496 his Latin poetic compositions gathered in the *Opuscolorum christianorum libri tres* were published by Domenico Rococciola.²² The poems enjoyed a certain success outside Italy, where humanists such as Beatus Rhenanus (1487–1545), Jakob Wimpfeling (1450–1528), and Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1450–1536) looked at Pittorio as a model of a Christian poet, together with authors such as Battista Mantovano (1447–1516) and Filippo Beroaldo (1481–1550).²³ Particularly in the German regions his poems were printed four times, in different formats.²⁴ One of them, a meditation on the *Pater noster*, was even translated into German verse and published as an appendix to the sermons on the Lord's Prayer by Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445–1510), the most celebrated German preacher of the time.²⁵

In the same period the *Consolatoria lectione in sul transito della morte* was published (probably in Florence), dedicated to Maria Magdalena Petrata, an Observant Carmelite nun of the monastery of San Gabriele in Ferrara. Pittorio addressed her as his beloved little daughter in Christ, while defining himself as a humble servant of the other nuns.²⁶ This text is quite interesting, since it exhorts the nun to face her death with full confidence in salvation and as

recto), appropriate for any person of high social status such as (learned or noble) lay men or priests. This term seems to exclude Pittorio's belonging to a religious Order.

- 21 For important general remarks see Élise Boillet, 'For Early Modern Printed Biblical Literature', pp. 170–90. The article builds on ongoing research to create a *Repertorio di letteratura biblica in italiano a stampa (ca 1462–1650)*.
- 22 Ludovico Pittorio, *Opuscolorum christianorum libri tres* (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, 1496). The three parts are dedicated to prominent political patrons: Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola, Alberto Pio da Carpi (1474–1531), and Guidobaldo da Montefeltro (1472–1508).
- 23 His fame was also due to Giovan Francesco Pico, who praised Pittorio in his *De studio divinae et humanae philosophiae* (1496); see Andrea Severi, *Filippo Beroaldo il Vecchio, un maestro per l'Europa: da commentatore di classici a classico moderno (1481–1550)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), *ad indicem*.
- 24 For instance, see the edition published in 1509 in Strasbourg by Matthias Schürer, with two dedicatory letters by Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547).
- 25 *Ein betrachtung Ludovici Bigi von Ferraer über das gebett des herren [...]*, in Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Pater noster: des hochgelerten würdigen Predicanten [...]* [Strasbourg: Matthias Hupfuff, 1515], fols V3 recto–V4 recto. On this preacher, see the contribution by Rita Voltmer in the present volume.
- 26 Pittorio's text paraphrased above reads: 'Ludovico Pictorio servo infimo delle Moniale spose di Iesù Christo, infinite spirituali salute dice alla dilectissima e dolce in Christo sua figliuolina suor Maria Magdalena Petrata, professa nello observante e sacro Carmellitan monasterio di sancto Gabriello di Ferrara'; Ludovico Pittorio, *Consolatoria lectione in sul transito della morte* [Firenze: Bartolomeo di Libri, 1490–1500], fol. a1 recto. The monastery was re-founded as a Carmelite nunnery in 1489, under the patronage of the Duchess Eleonora d'Aragona (1450–1493); see

a joyful encounter with Christ, her groom, and with all the saints — it even exhorts her to imagine the delights of the future talks with her guardian angel in heaven.²⁷ In the summary especially, this early text forcefully expresses a Christocentric faith, where salvation comes entirely from the sacrifice of Christ and his love. Hence, according to Pittorio, it would be a mistake to desire to live longer to practise more penitence since (as noted by the apostle Paul) no one can be saved on account of his good deeds, but only because of the Passion of Christ:²⁸

Onde se bene voi vivesti li anni di Matusalem e facessi più penitentia voi sola che facessino mai tutti li sancti insieme, a ogni modo la salute vostra consiste nel sangue di Iesù Christo: lui ha pagato per li peccati vostri; nella passione sua habbate speranza, e sarete salva così hora come da qui a mille anni. (Pittorio, *Consolatoria*, fol. a9 recto-verso)

[Even if you would live longer than Methuselah and do more penitence than all the other saints together, in any case your salvation would come from the blood of Jesus Christ: he paid for your sins; put your hope in his Passion, and you will be saved now as well as in a thousand years].

Pittorio assumed that the nun would confess her sins and receive the Eucharist before her death. The text is not against sacraments or good deeds; nevertheless, with its firm reassurance of salvation, it significantly gives primacy to God's grace. Even the memory of the sins or faults in her religious life will be transformed into elements to praise the divine mercy.²⁹

The *lectione* to Sister Maria Magdalena is part of a small number of texts that attests to Pittorio's commitment (and self-fashioning) as a spiritual mentor of several female communities, not only in Ferrara but also in Milan. Besides the text to the Carmelite nun in Ferrara, there are several letters to the Cistercian nuns of San Michele sul Dosso, in Milan, a brief treatise on sin addressed to Beatrice d'Este, abbess of Sant'Antonio in Polesine, a Benedictine monastery in Ferrara, and a letter to a certain Arcangela, sent immediately after her profession without mentioning her convent. To these texts, one may add the sermon on Holy Communion printed in 1502 and dedicated to Pittorio's own niece, Aurelia Nasella, a nun in the Observant Dominican

Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471–1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 337 and 486.

27 Pittorio, *Consolatoria*, fol. a4 verso.

28 Pittorio, *Consolatoria*, fol. a9 recto.

29 Pittorio expressed this concept in the following words: 'Niuna cosa ti darà noia, non pure la memoria de peccati, anzi considerandoli non in quanto offesa di Dio, ma in quanto materia delle suoi infinite miserazioni farai festa, e iubilosa canterai col propheta: *Misericordias Domini in eternum cantabo*', Pittorio, *Consolatoria*, fol. a3 recto. In early sixteenth-century Italy the mystical and affective language circulated concepts later associated with Lutheran theology; see Michele Camaioni, *Il Vangelo e l'Anticristo: Bernardino Ochino tra francescanesimo ed eresia (1487–1547)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), pp. 42–56, 82–83, and 215–16.

convent of Santa Caterina Martire, in Ferrara.³⁰ The letters to the monastery of San Michele depict a lively personal relationship, since they address both the entire community and specific nuns.³¹ One of the collective letters hints at the existence of Pittorio's writings in manuscript form. It mentions a sister, named Ludovica, who — it would seem — collected them in a 'quinterno' ['notebook'] either for her personal devotion or the benefit of the community.³² The original letters and this handwritten booklet has not survived — as far as we know — yet testify to a circulation of some of Pittorio's spiritual texts in manuscript form before getting into print.

This corpus of texts is presented and preserved as an appendix to Pittorio's *Dominicale* published in Modena, once again by Domenico Rocciola, definitely after 1498 and probably after 1502.³³ It continued to be reprinted together with this volume during the sixteenth century, with an additional edition as an appendix to Savonarola's treatises published in Venice in 1547.³⁴ The *Dominicale* presents some of the letters to the nuns as homilies on key topics for the Christian life, namely: confession, compunction, Holy Communion, and the desire to encounter God (that is, the preparation for death).³⁵ By defining them as 'sermoni scritti a diverse persone' ['sermons

30 See Herzig, *Savonarola's Women*, pp. 128 and 256. I was unable to consult Ludovico Pittorio, *Sermone della comunione* (Firenze: [s.n.], 1502).

31 In a letter to the Abbess Girolama, Pittorio refers with particular affection to Sister Francesca; in a letter to three nuns (Caterina, Paola, Giulia), he mentions several other nuns (besides Girolama and Francesca, the Prioress Maria and Sisters Placita, Chiara, and Ludovica). This letter must date after 1498 (and probably after 1500), since Pittorio presents it as a summary ('cavarne la medolla') and translation into the vernacular of a poetic meditation in Latin included in Pittorio, *Opusculorum christianorum*, fols a7 recto–a8 recto. This text was also printed as an independent pamphlet; see Ludovico Pittorio, *Utile meditatione in sei gradi divisa* (Ferrara: [s.n.], 1502). The Benedictine monastery of San Michele assumed the Cistercian rule in 1498; to my knowledge, there are no studies about this nunnery in that period.

32 'Son contento che D. Ludovica retenga quello nostro quintero, perché havendovi donato il cuore, sono etiam vostre le facultà, benché siano minime' ['I am glad that lady Ludovica keeps this our notebook, since having given my heart to you, you also possess all my belongings, although they are minimal']; Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. y6 verso.

33 See n. 31 for the dating.

34 *Molti devotissimi trattati del reverendo padre frate Hieronimo Savonarola da Ferrara [...] et una esposizione del Pater noster et alcuni sermoni devoti di Ludouico Pittorio da Ferrara* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1547). The publisher conceived the volume as the completion of the edition of Pittorio's Lenten and Sunday sermons, which he printed in the same format in 1546, announcing that he did not include Pittorio's other sermons, which would be published either with his exposition of the Psalms (printed in 1547) or — as happened — with Savonarola's treatises, since their topics were close and the two authors were good friends ('era molto suo familiar amico'); Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1546), fol. 557 verso.

35 The sermon on Holy Communion is addressed 'alli fratelli soi' ['to his brothers']; it addresses a lay audience, probably the members of his confraternity (see below). The relationship of this text with the sermon on the same topic printed in 1502 (see n. 30) remains to be investigated.

written to various people’], Pittorio acknowledges their origin as sermons in the form of letters and implicitly distinguishes them from the sermons of the *Dominicale* that seem to stem from an actual oral performance.³⁶

The *Dominicale* clearly suggests Pittorio’s commitment as preacher within a confraternal environment.³⁷ In its dedicatory letter Pittorio depicts himself as a ‘minimo e inutile fratello’ [‘little and unworthy brother’] of the confraternity of San Ludovico in Ferrara and the sermons as originally intended for the religious instruction of the members of this confraternity, as the references to the local context and the uses of the brotherhood show.³⁸ The letter states that the initiative to publish the book was taken by a certain Ser Ludovico, a devotee probably connected with the confraternity.³⁹ He considered it extremely useful for ‘the illiterate’ who have trouble understanding the biblical pericopes during Mass. Pittorio clearly shared this view by envisaging a lay readership and spiritual nourishment resulting from the interplay between personal reading and collective celebration.⁴⁰ The fact that Ser Ludovico decided to print these sermons — not that he asked Pittorio to write them⁴¹ — suggests that they already existed in a manuscript format of which we have no trace.

Circha l’arogantia, me rimetto ala testimonianza de Ser Ludovico, molto huomo de singulare fede. So che’l testificarà como non già io, ma lui e di

-
- 36 Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. X2 recto. On this type of text in the Italian context see Daniela Delcorno Branca, *Le Spirituali sportelle di Agostino di Portico: lettere alle monache di S. Marta di Siena* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019).
- 37 On the multifaceted phenomenon of confraternities as organizations of (mainly male) lay members coming from different social backgrounds and engaged in devotional and charitable activities, often developed in connection with and with the participation of friars and priests, and on their role in society, see *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, ed. by Marina Gazzini (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009) and *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
- 38 This is the address used by Pittorio: ‘A tuti li electi de Dio e specialmente huomini devoti de congregazione, Ludovico Pictorio minimo e inutile fratello de la compagnia de Sancto Ludovico da Ferrara, infinite e immortale in Cristo Iesù desidera, salute’, Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. 1 verso. See particularly the sermons on the patrons of the *congragazione*, St Louis, King of France, and to St Francesco (the brotherhood was founded in 1434 by Gabriele Guastavillani, an Observant Franciscan friar) as well as those to the patrons of Ferrara, St George (Pittorio criticized the *palio* run on that day in the city) and St Maurelio. On this confraternity, see Giuseppe Antenore Scalabrini, *Memorie storiche delle chiese di Ferrara* (Ferrara: Carlo Coatti, 1773), pp. 338–41.
- 39 The letter refers to him as ‘amico nostro’ [‘our friend’], suggesting his familiarity (if not his affiliation) with the confraternity. In 1496 Pittorio dedicated a poem to an unspecified Lodovico; Pittorio, *Opuscolorum christianorum*, fols b4 verso–b5 verso.
- 40 Antonio Pucci (d. 1388) had already presented his versification of the *Diatessaron* and of the Lenten Gospels as a support for a fruitful listening to preaching, probably thinking of a confraternal readership; see Pietro Delcorno, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone: metamorfosi di una parabola fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014), p. 39.
- 41 The request for someone to write down the sermon was a commonplace in the introduction to sermon collections.

soa spontanea voluntà ha facto stampare questo nostro libro persuadendosi, sì como lui dice, che'l deba sumamente giovare ai lectori de buona voluntà, specialmente ali idioti e illiterati, i qualli non intendono così bene li evangeli e epistole quando se legono a la messa, imperoché non se contiene qui quasi altro se non la expositiōne di evangeli et spesso etiam de le epistole che se recitano ala messa [...]. Veramente ogni fidele christiano, il qualle non ha il latino ma tutavia se dilecta intendere in vulgare cose spirituale, dovrebbe avere questo libro e legere sempre la lectione dela festa occurrente 'nanti che'l andassi ala giesa, perché sì nel legere, sì dipoi nel udire la messa, pigliarà grande consolatione.' (Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. 1 verso)

[Concerning [any accusation of] arrogance [for publishing this book], I refer to the testimony of Sir Ludovico, a man of great faith. I know that he will testify that he and not I, and by his own will caused the printing of this book, being persuaded — as he says — that it would greatly benefit any reader of good will, especially the rude and illiterate, who do not understand the Gospel and the Epistle so well when they are read during the Mass; since here there is almost nothing else than the explanation of the Gospel pericopes and often of the Epistles that are read during the Mass [...]. Truly, every faithful Christian, who does not know Latin but loves to understand spiritual things in the vernacular, should have this book and always read the pericope of the relevant feast from it before going to church, so that first in reading and then in hearing the Mass, he will find great consolation].

Furthermore, Pittorio states that those used to mental prayer would also learn from this book how to develop new interpretations (*sensi*) of the biblical readings, that is to say, how to engage in a personal meditation and appropriation of the Scripture. Here, Pittorio uses the technical terms of the *lectio divina* by saying that the personal rumination ('in secreto ruminando') of the meanings of the Bible will give the reader 'tale gusto de Dio' ['so intense a taste of God'] that one would not have refused to buy this book for all the gold in the world.⁴² Similar affirmations occur also on the title page, which — with an interesting shift — targets families as possible customers, saying that the book can be enjoyed not only by readers but also by listeners, hence hinting at collective reading at home:

Et è opera così facile, iocunda e salutare che ogni famiglia dove sia chi sapia legere la dovrebbe avere in casa per conforto e salute dile anime. Et chi legerà o odirà cognoscerà ch'io non mento, e remarrà certo più che satisfatto e consolato. (Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. 1 recto)

42 Pittorio, *Dominicale*, fol. 1 verso.

[And it is a work so easy, delightful, and useful that each family with someone who knows how to read should have it at home for the consolation and salvation of the souls. And those who read it or listen to it will know that I do not lie, and will remain for sure more than satisfied and comforted].⁴³

The Dedicatory Letter of the *Omiliario*

In 1506 Roccciola published Pittorio's second sermon collection, his *Quadragesimale*.⁴⁴ The dedicatory letter is addressed to Beatrice d'Este, the abbess of Sant'Antonio in Polesine (she was still alive in 1513).⁴⁵ This important Benedictine convent in Ferrara was firmly connected with the Estense family, as a convent founded by one of its saints, Beatrice II d'Este (1192–1262), who was buried and venerated there: evidently, the abbess's name paid homage to the saintly ancestor.⁴⁶ The abbess Beatrice was the sister of Ercole d'Este (d. 1523), not the Duke of Ferrara but the Lord of San Martino in Rio, son of Sigismondo d'Este (1433–1507). Pittorio stated that he composed his work 'sotto l'ombra' ['under the shade'] of Beatrice's illustrious brother and his wife, Angela Sforza (1479–c. 1525), 'mei optimi patroni' ['my excellent patrons'], hence putting himself and his work under the patronage of prominent members of the ruling family of the Duchy of Ferrara, something probably even more urgent after the defeat of his friend and patron Giovan Francesco Pico, who lost control of Mirandola in 1502.⁴⁷

In the letter Pittorio presented the sermons as a spiritual gift to the abbess by saying that — since her duty was 'il pascere le sorelle di cibi sì spirituali sì

-
- 43 Translated by Boillet, 'For Early Modern Printed Biblical Literature', p. 180. A woodcut occupies two thirds of the title page showing Christ, accompanied by six apostles, who dictates the Gospel to the evangelists represented as *reportatores*, seated at their desks, taking note of their master's lesson.
- 44 There are internal references to the previous sermon collection; see Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1541, fols 88 recto–153 recto.
- 45 She was mentioned, still as abbess, in the will of her brother, written in January 1513; see Luigi Napoleone Cittadella, *Notizie amministrative, storiche, artistiche relative a Ferrara*, 3 vols (Ferrara: Domenico Taddei, 1868), II, 318.
- 46 The monastery was closely connected with the noble families of Ferrara and had great relevance during the fifteenth century, when it hosted several popes (John XXIII, Eugenius IV during the Council, Pius II); see Chiara Guarnieri, 'Il monastero di S. Antonio in Polesine: un'isola nella città', in *S. Antonio in Polesine: archeologia e storia di un monastero estense*, ed. by Chiara Guarnieri (Borgo San Lorenzo: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2006), pp. 13–15. Archeological evidence shows the affluence of the monastery in the early sixteenth century.
- 47 Ludovico Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1506, fol. a1 verso. This habit was not new: Roberto Caracciolo put his vernacular sermon collections under the patronage of the Aragonese dynasty of Naples, while Antonio da Bitonto (1385–1465) framed his *Sermones quadragesimales de vitiiis* as a dialogue with Guidantonio da Montefeltro, count of Urbino (1377–1443).

corporali' ['to feed her nuns with both spiritual and corporal food'] — these sermons were suitable as table readings during Lent, since the length of each sermon fitted that of a meal, so that the spiritual nourishment would accompany the actual food, even providing them with a more abundant portion on Sunday, which would serve for lunch and dinner.⁴⁸ Indeed, the time needed to read one of these sermons is about half an hour, with longer texts for the Sundays that could be split over two meals. However, although Pittorio just introduced the sermons as perfect for the nuns, he confesses that they were not written for them — nor that he was thinking of a female audience. As an excuse, he claims that since women are 'comunemente divote' ['usually devout'] they need less spiritual instruction and, by addressing only them, he would run the risk of producing texts too short for the nuns' meals.⁴⁹ The apparent conundrum is solved when one realizes that the sermons often address a (male) lay audience, who live a secular life, and not nuns secluded from the world. Furthermore, they never address women directly and generally overlook aspects related to female life.⁵⁰ Overall, the tone of the sermons suggests that their original setting was a confraternity, as in the *Dominicale*. The audience is constantly addressed as 'fratelli miei' ['my brothers'] or even 'cari li mei compagni' ['my beloved confrères'], as in the first sermon, where Pittorio also states that, 'fuori de casa' ['in public'], one needs to follow the common customs without any ostentation and should not believe those who foolishly say that one may serve God while trying to have 'dela roba e dele belle donne e dele dignità' ['goods, beautiful women, and honours'].⁵¹ This gender loaded language occurs also when the sermon denounces the hypocrisy of those who do not fast nor perform good deeds, and yet 'fingonsi in publico di essere santi' ['act in public as if they were saints'], by presenting themselves 'le veste inculte e la barba longa e capilli spellacciati' ['with neglected dress, long

48 These are the words Pittorio uses: 'Considerando l'ufficio vostro de abbatessa, che è il pascere le Sorelle di cibi sì spirituali sì corporali, pensai che expediente serebbe che de quella povertà la quale Dio mi ha dato, vi provedesse de lectione da fare legere a la mensa nel tempo della Quaresima. Et così, principalmente per amore vostro e de tutte le altre monache et divote persone ho composto el presente libro intitolato Omiliario quadragisimale, nel quale haveriti ognidi el suo peculiare sermon fondato *de verbo ad verbum* sul epistola e evangelio, sì como correrano secondo l'ordine de la sacrosanta romana Chiesa, dove come vederiti ho advertito di fare questo: che le lectione de le ferie siano sì longe che ciascuna sia bastante per el legere de tutto el desinare, e quelle de le Domeniche per lo desinare e per la ciena insime', Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso.

49 The exact phrasing of Pittorio is as follows: 'Vero è che in epse non facio il parlare a donne, ma sequo la via di altri, e questo per honesti e rationabili respecti, e specialmente perché essende le donne comunemente divote, mi sarebbe spesso accaduto di essere troppo brieve, e così a mezo dil pasto vi seria manchato il cibo spirituale con non piccolo scandolo che' vi sopravanzassono le vivande del corpo e manchassovi quele de l'anima', Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso.

50 See a clear example in n. 73.

51 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a3 recto–verso.

beards, and messy hair’], a description that probably hints at the phenomenon of itinerant popular preachers/prophets (*romiti*).⁵²

While Pittorio is profuse in humble declarations about himself in the dedicatory letter, he firmly claims that the book is very useful and — thanks to God — ‘fructo se ben in si non delicato, almancho per la novità fructo de qualche admiratione’ [‘a fruit albeit not delicate, yet somehow admirable for its novelty’].⁵³ Perhaps the latter assertion refers to the interpretation of the Bible in the vernacular, since the author immediately afterwards defends himself from the possible accusation of presumption in ‘parlare sopra la sacra scriptura’ [‘speaking about Holy Writ’]. Here Pittorio introduces a second image to present his *Omiliario*, namely that of navigation. Using a commonplace, he acknowledges that Scripture is a vast and deep ocean, where even the sharpest human intellect can be easily submerged.⁵⁴ Yet, by trusting in divine mercy and asking God to send his favourable wind in the sails, Pittorio had put his ‘navicella’ [‘little boat’] in such a vast sea hoping to reach the port, thanks also to the prayer of the abbess and other devout people.⁵⁵ The widespread nautical imagery is then combined with the semantic field of trade. Once his *navicella* reached the harbour, Pittorio says that he went on the shore and placed there ‘le merce’ [‘his merchandise’] so that the readers could take what they liked from that. Hence, readers are invited to buy beneficial products that come from a dangerous navigation on the sea of Scripture, and that are presented — Pittorio states — without fraud or deceit.⁵⁶

-
- 52 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a3 recto. On the *romiti* in early sixteenth-century Italy, see Ottavia Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo nell’Italia del Rinascimento* (Roma: Laterza, 1987), and Camaioni, *Il Vangelo e l’Anticristo*, pp. 79–88.
- 53 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso. The biblical image of the tree that bears fruit and the concept of usefulness as decisive in evaluating preaching were topical and are found in famous passages of Bernardino da Siena; see Delcorno, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone*, pp. 42–48.
- 54 ‘E non si persuade però persona haba totalmente da presomptuoso assumpto tanto pexo di parlare sopra la sacra scriptura, perché scio multo ben quello che puono e non puono portare le spalle mie, e che sì profondo pelago affaogano etiam spesso li alti ingigni, nonché un minimo pullice qual sonio io’, Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso. On the image of Scripture as a dangerous ocean, previously used by Iacopo Passavanti (d. 1357), see Carlo Delcorno, ‘La trasmissione nella predicazione’, in *La Bibbia nel medioevo*, ed. by Giuseppe Cremascoli and Claudio Leonardi (Bologna: EDB, 1996), pp. 65–86 (p. 79).
- 55 ‘Confiso io nel’infinita soa bontà, ch’a spirare dovesse nele debile mie velle, misse la navicella al’acqua con speranza de entrare in porto, adiutandome maximamente le oratione dela prefata madre nostra abbatessa e de altre mie devote persone, alle quale spesso raccomandava el viaggio mio’, Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso. The link between *acque*, *ingegno*, *navicella* and *vele* might echo intentionally Dante’s incipit of *Purgatorio*.
- 56 ‘Et cosi reducta la nave in porto e su per lo litto distese le merce, in facultà di lectori serà di pigliare se gli serà cosa che gli piazza, e di lassare quello che gli parerà; et veramente quando l’huomo sul mercato non si’ sforzato al comprare, non vedo como el puossi iustamente calomniare li mercadanti per fare mostra de le robe soe, maximamente quando sono de sorte che puono più presto giovare che nuocere, e che dentro non vi è nulla de fraude né di inganno’, Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso.

Scripture is incontestably at the centre of Pittorio's sermons, whose homiletic style does not indulge in picturesque exempla and is almost without any mention of secular or religious *auctoritates*, with the exception of a very few references to the Church Fathers and classical poets.⁵⁷ More relevant seem two mentions of Caterina da Siena (1347–1380), whose revelations are identified as an exegetical authority.⁵⁸ Pittorio may be influenced by the 'Biblecentrism' practised and recommended by Savonarola, if not by Giovan Francesco Pico's *De studio divinae et humanae philosophiae* (1496).⁵⁹ Probably echoing Fra Girolamo, Pittorio condemns those who look for preachers able to flatter them by preaching 'qualche historia romana, o qualche poesia, o de philosophia, o altro che gli delectasse le orecchie' ['either some Roman story, or some poem, or some philosophy, or anything else that amuses their ears'], as the Apostle had predicted speaking of a time when people would prefer *fabulas* instead of the truth (2 Timothy 4. 3–4).⁶⁰

Nevertheless, in the dedicatory letter, Pittorio was careful in positioning himself by saying that he did not claim to interpret Scripture, but only to deal with its literal sense in developing a moral discourse useful for Christian life; and just to be on the safe side, he added that he submitted all his works, deeds,

-
- 57 There are two mentions of Augustine (Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1541, fols 31 verso and 65 verso), two of Jerome (fols 72r and 83r), and one of Gregory (fol. 73r, an interesting passage on historical and allegorical reading). Virgil is mentioned three times (fols 19v, 67r, and 121v), with the addition of his verses 'Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, / auri sacra fames?', quoted as proverbial (fol. 56v). Ovid is mentioned, as an adage, on fol. 146r. Pittorio often refers to liturgical prayers, paraphrasing them in the vernacular. More generally, he should be placed within a complex, non-linear transition of style in sixteenth-century Italian preaching; see Carlo Delcorno, 'Dal sermo modernus alla retorica borromaica', *Lettere italiane*, 39 (1989), 465–83.
- 58 'Santa Catherina de Siena, vergine mia divotissima, dice che'l sposo suo Christo Iesù gli disse un giorno [...] (fol. 87v); 'Et santa Catherina da Siena testifica che la interrogò il suo sposo Christo Iesù di questo ditto, e lui gli rispose secondo la preditta esposizione' (fol. 108v). On Caterina's role in Savonarola and the Savoralan movement, see Herzog, *Savonarola's Women*, pp. 27–33.
- 59 Pittorio dedicated his poem, *Sacrae scripturae non vacasse dolet*, to Pico where he states that he will focus all his attention on the Bible, since he spent too much time seeking an earthly and deceptive glory, while he now refutes the title of poet; Pittorio, *Opusculorum christianorum*, fol. B4 recto.
- 60 Interpreting the theophany of the Sinai, where the Jews stood far off, while Moses entered the darkness (see Exodus 20. 20–21), Pittorio allegorically applies it to those who would refuse to hear the Lord's preaching, which means a truthful preacher, and instead would listen to Moses, that is, to hear an adulator who makes them laugh and please them, with the dire consequence that they all 'andarano a trabucchon nela buccha del'inferno' ['will end up tumbling down into the mouth of hell']; Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1506, fol. 12 recto–verso (Wednesday after the Third Sunday of Lent). With the same reference to 2 Timothy 4. 3–4, Savonarola had similar admonitions, particularly against the use of the *Ovidius moralizatus*; see Pietro Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe: l'allegoria della *fabula* ovidiana in una predica di Johann Meder', *Schede Umanistiche*, 23 (2009), 67–106 (pp. 67–68). Yet, it was a commonplace (*ibid.*, p. 69); we cannot be sure that Pittorio took it from Savonarola.

and thoughts to the correction of the Church.⁶¹ We might say that Pittorio expresses here a Catholic *sola Scriptura* principle: the centrality of Scripture but under ecclesiastical authority. This approach probably contributed to his success in the sixteenth century, when the request of a religious discourse founded primarily on the Bible became dominant.⁶² Yet, Pittorio cautiously put his book in the area of moral exhortation (and not of theological interpretation), which means at a level that was considered appropriate and commendable for his expected readers, namely lay people and nuns.⁶³

Christocentric Piety: ‘We are beggars, let us run to the rich man’

The clear address to a lay audience, mainly (if not exclusively) composed of men is evident when Pittorio comments on Jesus entering Jerusalem and going to the temple. The episode allows him to convey very practical rules for the laity by saying, for instance: ‘Venuto che fu Christo dentro de la città, credeti voi forse fratelli che l’andasse incontinente a sbevazare al’hostaria? Nol crediati! Anzi, andò per nostro essemplio distesamente a dismantare alla chiesa’ [‘Once Jesus arrived in town, do you brothers believe perhaps that he went immediately to booze in an inn? Not at all! He went instead directly to visit the church, to give us an example’].⁶⁴ Similarly, the expulsion of the merchants from the temple should teach Christians to respect the sanctity of churches, as Pittorio states with a terrifying image of the Lord who checks

-
- 61 Here are Pittorio’s exact words: ‘Et per questo testifico ad ogniuno como in ogni parte de questa mia opera [...] non facio professione de commentare né de lucidare la sacra scriptura, ma solamente su la lettera dire cose morale e ala christiana vita consentanee, oltra che etiam in questo e in tutti li atti e ditti e pensieri mei me sottopongo ala correctione de la sancta madre giesa’, Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. a1 verso. Nevertheless, his sermons also refer to the moral and allegorical meaning of Scripture.
- 62 The printing success of Pittorio’s sermons corresponds to the 1530s, when ‘predicare li evangeli’ [‘preaching the Gospel’] was particularly appreciated in Italy, as demonstrated on a different level by the success of Bernardino Ochino; Camaioni, *Il Vangelo e l’Anticristo*, pp. 159 and 261. See also Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo: la censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura, 1471–1605* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997) and, in a different context, John Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 50–74.
- 63 On the distinction between *praedicatio* and *exhortatio*, see Michel Lauwers, ‘*Praedicatio — Exhortatio: L’Église, la réforme et les laïcs (XI^e–XIII^e siècle)*’, in *La Parole du prédicateur (V^e–XV^e siècle)*, ed. by Rosa Maria Dessì and Michel Lauwers (Nice: Z’édicions, 1997), pp. 187–232. Pittorio’s comment suggests that he wrote these sermons without a degree in theology (hence being labelled just *messere*) — if not even while he was (still) a lay man.
- 64 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1541*, fol. 23 verso (Tuesday after the First Sunday of Lent). Pittorio probably used to speak to a mixed audience, since he addresses both ‘voi gran maestri’ [‘you, learned men’] and ‘voi piccoli e bassi nel popolo’ [‘you, humble and poor people’] (fol. 23 recto).

from above with a sharp knife in his hand, ‘per troncare a sacrileghi il capo’ [‘ready to cut off the head of the sacrilegious people’].⁶⁵ Here and elsewhere, Pittorio sometimes uses a popular, even grotesque language, in line with contemporary preachers such as Bernardino da Feltre (1439–1494) and Valeriano da Soncino (d. 1531).⁶⁶

This type of practical, moral teaching is often combined with a more spiritual interpretation of the Bible, which focuses on the inner life and presents a demanding, non-ritualistic Christian life. The two levels are quite visible in the sermon for Thursday after the Second Sunday of Lent on Lazarus and the Rich Man, where Pittorio uses a well-known preaching commonplace, namely the distinction between the words (*parole*) and their inner meaning, the marrow (*medolla*).⁶⁷ First, he comments line by line on the biblical story, echoing well-known preaching topoi on this ‘parable’ such as the exhortation to the poor to be patient and wait for their eternal reward in the afterlife.⁶⁸ Here, Pittorio addresses the poor, with ample use of anaphoric repetitions:

Tu sei mendico; presto serai summamente richo. Tu sei ulceroso; presto serai impassibile. Tu sei famelico; presto serai per sempre satiato. Tu non puo’ camminare; presto serai dali angeli portato. Sta pur costante, e ad imitatione di Lazaro non ti turbare di nulla. Aspecta con patientia l’hora toa, e senza fallo li dolori ti se convertirano in gaudij. (Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1506, fol. i6 verso)

[You are a beggar; soon you will be incredibly rich. You are covered in sores; soon you will be immortal. You are ravenous; soon you will be sated forever. You cannot walk; soon you will be carried by angels. Keep steady and by imitating Lazarus do not be upset by anything!]

-
- 65 Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1541, fol. 24 recto. It sounds like a miniature version of Savonarola’s vision of the sword (1492), often repeated by him and depicted in his *Compendio di rivelazione* (1495).
- 66 For instance, in the First Sunday of Lent: ‘O tignoso vecchiazio (così hora ti volgio chiamare, diavolo infernale, perché sono informato che questo nome te dispiace sommamente) [...] Va’, sathanasso [...] vatene a scavezzacollo nel inferno’ [‘O stubborn grumpy old man (I want to address you like that now, infernal devil, since I know that you greatly hate this name) [...] Go, Satan, go daredevil into hell’] (fol. 17 recto). In another sermon Pittorio compares Christ’s sacrifice with ‘una grassa salvaticina ben arostita’ [‘a fat game well roasted’] (fol. 61 verso). The tendency to popularize the biblical account, even in grotesque terms, gained momentum with Bernardino da Siena (1380–1444) and reached its peak at the turn of the sixteenth century; see Lucia Lazzerini, *Il testo trasgressivo: testi marginali, provocatori, irregolari dal Medioevo al Cinquecento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988), pp. 79–208.
- 67 Pittorio, *Omiliario* 1506, fol. i6 recto. On this commonplace, see Oriana Visani and Maria Grazia Bistoni, ‘La Bibbia nella predicazione degli agostiniani: il caso di Gregorio di Alessandria’, in *Sotto il cielo delle scritte: Bibbia, retorica e letteratura religiosa*, ed. by Carlo Delcorno and Giuseppe Baffetti (Firenze: Olschki, 2009), pp. 115–38 (p. 125).
- 68 On this enduring preaching theme, see Jussi Hanska, ‘And the Rich Man also Died; and He Was Buried in Hell’: *The Social Ethos in Mendicant Sermons* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1997), pp. 142–74; and Delcorno, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone*, pp. 187–95.

Wait patiently for your final hour, and without any doubt your pain will be transformed into joy].

Pittorio exhorts the listeners to convert without hesitation and to meditate continuously on this parable.⁶⁹ Yet, he also proposes an unusual and emotionally engaging interpretation, asking his listeners to identify on a spiritual level with the beggar and to knock at the door of the true rich man, Christ, the divine pharmacist, who will open his own 'speciaria' ['pharmacy'] and cure them.

Charissimi, consideriamo in noi un puocho spiritualmente la condicione di Lazaro. Qual di noi è il quale non sia pieno de ferite de peccati? Qual di noi è il quale non sia povero et egeno di ogni virtù? Qual di noi si può muovere per soa sufficientia ad opera veruna di gratia? Perché cagione adonque non ce mettiamo a mendicare dele micche e di superni e celesti doni? Ecco li cani — li rimorsi dela conscientia — ci vano de continuo lecchando e rodendo la marzura dele piaghe. Che stiamo a fare che non gli poniamo su qualche salutare unguento? Ma perché siamo poveri mendicanti, corriamo presto a casa del gran richo! Pichiamo fiducialmente ala porta dela speciaria soa. Costui non è quale fu il richo epulone! Pichiamo, che'l ci aprirà la bottega gratiosamente, immo accumularà beneficio a beneficio. E dapuo la restituita sanità, ce farà per li sancti suoi angeli portare in quella saluberrima patria, dove non serà mai più pericolo di recediva alcuna e dove con Lazaro e con Abraam saremo de continuo e in eterno sani e beati. (Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. g1 verso)

[My dear [fellows], let us consider briefly the condition of Lazarus on a spiritual level. Who among us is not full of sores caused by sin? Who among us is not poor and destitute of every virtue? Who among us can move by himself to do any work of grace? Why, therefore, don't we start to beg for those crumbs of the superior and divine gifts? Here, the dogs — the remorse of conscience — incessantly lick and gnaw the corruption of our sores. What are we doing? Why do we not put some healing ointment on them? Yet, since we are poor beggars, let us run quickly to the great rich man's house. Let us knock with confidence on the door of his pharmacy. He is not like the Rich Man. Let us knock, since he will open his shop graciously and will even pile upon us benefit after benefit! And after restoring our health, he will command his angels to carry us to that most salvific homeland, where there will be no risk of relapse and where we will be healthy and blessed with Lazarus and Abraham, forever and ever].

Evidently, the sermon goes far beyond a plain explanation of the biblical text with some moral applications. Pittorio outlines a remarkably original

69 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. g1 recto. This parable occurs as a powerful *memento mori* in the epigraph of Pittorio's tomb; Guarini, *Compendio storico*, pp. 47–48.

interpretation of the story by inviting his audience to identify with Lazarus and by portraying Christ as the only true and merciful rich man. Such an interpretation does not have clear antecedents, proving the personal touch that Pittorio was able to give to his sermons.⁷⁰ Notably, he proposed to the readers an intense and moving Christocentric spirituality, based on the recognition of the primacy of grace (expressed in a tone similar to the letter to Sister Maddalena) and the fact that, in front of God, ‘we are all beggars, hoc est verum’, to use Martin Luther’s words.

Generating Jesus in the Heart and Feeding Him in the Poor

The richness of the spiritual interpretation of the sermon on Lazarus is not present in all the homilies, and yet it is not an isolated case.⁷¹ For instance, on the Third Sunday of Lent Pittorio again combines basic religious advice and an unusual spiritual interpretation of the Gospel. His practical instructions aim at shaping a domestic Christian life supported by writing and memorizing sentences of the Gospel useful for an examination of the conscience.

Il se voria havere, amantissimi, nel più bello luogo di ogni casa un Christo, el quale col ditto dimostrasse un brieve con queste parole: *Qui non est mecum, contra me est, et qui non colligit mecum, dispergit*. Ma vogliamo almanco noi scriverle, ciascaduno ala lectiera soa, che ben per noi se spesso ce ne ricordaremo! [...] Examiniamo fratelli la conscientia nostra e ritrovandola dal nemico obsessa, schaziamolo fuora con la contritione [...] lo quale ci dischatenarà la lingua alla sacramentale confessione e faraci fare opere di admiratione in satisfacione e recompensatione dele passate colpe. (Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fols h1 verso–h2 recto)

[My beloved, it would be desirable to have, in the nicest place of every house, an image of Christ pointing with his finger to an inscription with these words: *He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters* [Luke 11. 23]. We shall at least write them, each of us on the bed’s headboard, since it is good for us if we often recall this sentence. [...] Let us brothers examine our conscience and,

70 Pittorio may be influenced by a passage from the *Vita Christi* by Ludolf von Sachsen (d. 1378): see Delcorno, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone*, pp. 32–34. Vicent Ferrer (1350–1419) also identifies Christ as the Rich Man in one of his vernacular sermon; see Pietro Delcorno, “‘Faré per manera que vâlque per molts’: i sermoni di Vicent Ferrer sulla parabola di Lazzaro e il ricco epulone”, *Erebea*, 1 (2011), 203–30 (pp. 213–15).

71 The following sermon ends with another interesting interpretation. Commenting on the parable of the vineyard, the grape symbolizes the soul planted by God in the soil of the body: it bears different types of fruit and needs to be linked with the tree planted in the middle (the Cross), which holds the grapes upright; Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. g3 verso.

when we find it occupied by our enemy, let us send him out by means of contrition [...], which will free our tongues for the sacramental Confession and lead us to perform admirable works such as the satisfaction and reparation of previous sins].

For Pittorio, this inscription (*breve*) also needs to be added virtually as protection for the inner self, so that the interior mirrors the ideal exterior Christian house. When Pittorio states that 'la casa dela conscientia' ['the house of the conscience'] has to be kept clean with 'le schoppe' ['the brooms'] of mental oration, corporal maceration, material and spiritual support of the neighbours, he adds that what keeps the tempter out is that 'vederà che da ogni cantone vi serà el brieve' ['he sees this inscription in every corner'] of the interior house, so that he cannot find an entrance.⁷² In keeping an interior purity, the sermon also underlines the power of the Passion to defend believers from any temptation, by saying that the five senses are like doors that need to be locked with the security bars of the five wounds of Christ.

In the last part of the sermon Pittorio comments upon the Gospel episode when a woman from the crowd says to Jesus: 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you!', to whom Christ replies: 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!' (Luke 11. 27–28).⁷³ The episode allows him to underline the benefits for those who love to read or listen to Scripture: this will give to them not only the necessary strength to follow its teachings, which at first might appear difficult, but will also teach them to carry Christ 'per carità fisso nel core' ['fixed into the hearts with charity']. Remarkably, Pittorio here combines an affective meditation on generating Christ in the hearts with the exhortation of serving him in the poor, as taught by Matthew 25:

Fratelli miei, noi non potemo portare nel ventre nostro, como fece Maria, el dolce bambino, ben lo possiamo portare nele braze dela speranza, e nel grembio dela fede, e nel cuore dela carità. Praeterea, perché lui ha dicto: 'Quod uni ex istis minimis fecistis, mihi fecistis. Quello tanto che voi miei christiani harete facto per mio amore ad ogni minimo poverello, vi ni sentirò non mancho grato, quanto l'havesti facto a mi proprio.' Vogliamo portare nel ventre e nele intime viscere del' affecto nostro el poverino amandolo cordialmente, e con le poppe allactiamolo, sustentandolo con le facultà nostre, e così con Maria, benchè diversamente, conciperemo e nutricharemo el figliolo de Dio. (Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. h3 recto)⁷⁴

72 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. h2 verso.

73 As further evidence that Pittorio mainly thought of a male audience, this reference is not used to propose a model for women but instead to exhort men: 'Non disprecciamo amantissimi le povere donniciole, perché assai volte hano più del buono che li huomini' ['My beloved, don't despise the poor little women, since they are often better than men']; Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. h2 verso.

74 The image of Mary who nurses Christ here overlaps with representations of charity, depicted

[My dear brothers, we could not bear the sweet child [that is, Christ] in our womb as Mary did; yet we can carry him in the arms of hope, in the womb of faith, and in the heart of charity. Moreover, Christ said: ‘*Quod uni ex istis minimis fecistis, mihi fecistis*; i.e. when you, my Christians, did something to any poor person for my love, I will be grateful for that as if you did it directly to me.’ Let us bear the poor person in the womb and in the inner bowels of our affection by loving him heartily, and let us nurse him at our breasts by helping him with our means, and so with Mary, albeit in a different way, we will conceive and feed the little son of God].

This text, in which Christ is generated in the poor through charity, is quite revealing of the way in which Pittorio participated in that evangelical ‘religion of charity’ that characterized the most fervent religious groups of the time in Italy, and which combined an internalized personal relationship with God with a concrete service to the poor.⁷⁵

The Prodigal Son and Savonarola’s Lukewarm Christians

The last sermon that we will consider is devoted to the parable of the prodigal son. On the Saturday after the Second Sunday of Lent, Pittorio advises his audience that the two biblical readings are both quite long, so he has to be concise — and indeed, commenting on the Gospel, he complains twice about the lack of time to deal with many details. Therefore, it is noteworthy, and revealing, that Pittorio diverges from the dominant preaching tradition that focused only on the prodigal son and marginalized the role of the elder brother.⁷⁶ Instead, he devotes considerable space to the latter: ‘Questo figliolo magior [...] per el presente intendo el tepido christiano, el quale si persuade che le cerimonie siano quelle che lo mandino in paradiso e non si accorgie che l’è pieno de invidia e di superbia’ [‘This elder brother [...] currently I interpret him as the lukewarm Christian, who thinks that the religious ceremonies will send him to heaven and does not realize that he is full of envy and pride’].⁷⁷ The reference to the lukewarm is repeated four times in the sermon, which closes by attacking ‘lo tepido diffuora sancto, ma di dentro

as a woman who nurses a child (such as in Piero del Pollaiuolo’s 1469 painting) or according to the well-known exemplum of Pero breastfeeding her father (the so-called Roman Charity).

75 See Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari. Nuova edizione* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), pp. 16–23 and Michele Camaioni, ‘Le opere della “viva fede”: i primi cappuccini tra politiche della carità e teologia del cielo aperto’, in *Politiche di misericordia tra teorie e prassi: confraternite, ospedali e Monti di Pietà (XIII–XVI secolo)*, ed. by Pietro Delcorno (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), pp. 275–309.

76 See Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son*, pp. 447–49 and *ad indicem*.

77 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. 65 verso.

diavolo incarnato' ['the lukewarm person, who outside looks like a saint but inside is a devil incarnate'].⁷⁸

The polemic against the *tiepidi* was not only one of the most recognizable themes of Savonarola's preaching and one of his buzzwords, but the very interpretation of the elder brother as the symbol of the tepid Christians derives directly from the 1496 Lenten sermon collection of Savonarola (printed in 1497), which also contains explicit critiques of the exterior solemnity of religious ceremonies.⁷⁹ Scholars have usually emphasized Pittorio's link with Savonarola, yet always in quite elusive terms. Here, instead, we find a clear textual connection, which proves Pittorio's debt to the spiritual legacy of Fra Girolamo and his knowledge of the predecessor's sermons.⁸⁰

However, in the same homily Pittorio also shows his independence. While in many respects he depends either on a longstanding exegetical tradition or on Savonarola, his interpretation of the shoes the father gives to the returned son is peculiar. The preacher notes that the *calciamenti*, a sort of sandal, are 'disotto asserati e di sopra aperti per dimostrarci che'l se tenga el cuore asserato ale cose terrene e aperto ale celeste' ['closed on the bottom and open on the upper part, so as to show us that one must close one's heart to earthly things and open it to celestial ones'].⁸¹ It is a minor detail, and yet, no antecedent for such an interpretation emerged in my extensive research on the medieval readings of this parable.⁸² It suggests that Pittorio was sometimes capable of sending his *navicella* independently into the vast ocean of Scripture.

A Multifaceted Reception of the *Omiliario*

Pittorio's interpretation of the prodigal son's shoes is echoed in a later, quite peculiar text that provides us with a glimpse into the use of the *Omiliario* by late sixteenth-century preachers. The text in question is the sermon on the prodigal son written by Domenico Sala, a secular priest in the small parish of Santa Maria Assunta of Rancio, near Lecco, in the archdiocese of Milan.

78 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. g6 recto.

79 See Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria*, ed. by Paolo Ghilieri, 3 vols (Roma: Belardetti, 1971–1972), II (1971), 3–26, especially p. 20. On Savonarola's sermons on the prodigal son and his identification of the tepid Christians with the elder brother, see Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son*, pp. 240–50. On the topic of the *tiepidi* in Savonarola, see Donald Weinstein, *The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 87–92.

80 This implicit, yet quite recognizable reference to Savonarola was not obvious in the political context of 1506, that is, after the death of the Duke Ercole (d. 1505) and the (momentary) political ruin of Giovan Francesco Pico, the most prominent political supporters of the Savonarolan movement in the north of Italy; see Herzig, *Savonarola's Women*, pp. 127–53. For another passage where Pittorio possibly depended on Savonarola, see n. 60.

81 Pittorio, *Omiliario 1506*, fol. g5 verso.

82 See Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son*, p. 443.

Sala composed it in the 1570s for one of the monthly meetings among the clergy of the area. At these gatherings the priests were asked to practise preaching and to submit written copies of their sermons to the ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese.⁸³ The content and structure of the sermon are rather simple, not surprisingly given the notably modest theological background of Domenico Sala. Yet, Sala writes: ‘La scarpa è serrata di soto e aperta di sopra, a significare che il peccator, qual ritorna ala via bona di Cristo, de’ lasar le cose terene e risguardar sempre le cose celeste’ [‘The shoe is closed on the bottom and open on the upper part, so to explain that the sinner, who returns to the good way of Christ, must leave earthly things and always look to celestial things’].⁸⁴ Not only are the concepts the same as in Pittorio, but even the terminology. Such a similarity suggests that the priest of Rancio used a copy of the *Omiliario* as his source; something entirely plausible considering the surviving inventories of books of other parishes in the area, which confirm the presence of Pittorio’s *Quadragesimale* among the pastoral books available to many diocesan priests.⁸⁵ A book originally addressed to nuns and lay people for personal or collective reading also proved to be a useful aid for parish preachers just as a proper model sermon collection should be.

Indeed, the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) can be seen as the golden age of the *Omiliario*, which was printed seven times between 1565 and 1571.⁸⁶ In the same period, while his clergy mined the sermons of Pittorio for their pastoral duties, the archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo (1538–1584), recommended the works of Pittorio to the lay confraternities of his diocese, where they were still in use for collective reading as late as 1608.⁸⁷ Such practice was not limited to Milan, as shown by the statutes of the *Compagnia del Nome di Gesù*, a lay confraternity in Genoa, where reading the sermons of Pittorio even became an institutionalized practice, as proven by a chapter of the statutes, probably added around the mid-sixteenth century:

Della lettione del Pittorio, cap. xxviii^o.

Ordiniamo che ogni giorno quando si viene a questa devota compagnia del nome di Iesù si debba legere una lettione del libro di detta compagnia,

83 See Benjamin Westervelt, ‘The Prodigal Son at Santa Justina: The Homily in the Borromeian Reform of Pastoral Preaching’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), 109–26 and Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son*, pp. 442–44. The sermon is edited in Angelo Turchini, *Parole di Dio, parroci e popolo: prove di predicazione del clero lombardo* (Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio, 2011), pp. 364–66.

84 Turchini, *Parole di Dio, parroci e popolo*, p. 366.

85 On these lists see Turchini, *Parole di Dio, parroci e popolo*, pp. 90–94. Other priests of the area had a better theological background than Domenico Sala; see Wietse de Boer, ‘The Curate of Malgrate or the Problem of Clerical Competence in Counter-Reformation Milan’, in *The Power of Imagery: Essays on Rome, Italy and Imagination*, ed. by Peter van Kessel (Roma: Apeiron, 1992), pp. 188–200.

86 It follows a general tendency, see Michelson, *The Pulpit and the Press*, pp. 28–31.

87 See Fragnito, *Proibito capire*, p. 263.

intitolato Ludovico Pittorio, e tale lettione doveranno tutti li fratelli attentamente con gran divotione ascoltare, per esser soggetto molto utile et a noi necessario, contenendovisi il verbo e parola di Dio, Signor nostro, perché come sapete è scritto che *non di solo pane vive l'huomo, ma si di ogni parola che procede dalla bocca dello omnipotente e benigno Dio*, nostro Signore, e che *beati sono coloro che odono il verbo e parola di Dio e lo custodiscono*. (Burlington, University of Vermont, Silver Special Collections Library, MS 16, fol. 35r)⁸⁸

[Chapter 29: About the reading of Pittorio.

We order that each day we come to this devout Company of the Name of Jesus, one lesson of the book of this company that is titled Ludovico Pittorio must be read. All the brothers must listen carefully to this reading, with great devotion, because its topic is very useful and necessary for us, since it contains the Word of God, our Lord. Indeed, you know that it is written that *Man shall not live by bread alone, but also by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the omnipotent and benevolent God*, our Lord [Matthew 4. 4], and *blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it* [Luke 11. 28].

For the members of the confraternity, Pittorio's book became a normative text, necessary for their spiritual life, as a sort of avatar of the Bible itself — and of the presence of an actual preacher among them. We may note that the two biblical quotations echoed in this chapter, although quite common for a discourse on the Word of God, are taken from the pericopes of the First and Third Sundays of Lent, where the *Omiliario* comments extensively on this topic, as we have seen.⁸⁹

A further proof of the wide success of Pittorio's sermons, which appealed to both the laity and the clergy, comes from the official approval by another leading figure of the Counter-Reformation movement, the Jesuit Petrus Canisius (1521–1597). In the decades after the Council of Trent, he was deeply involved in the promotion and censorship of sermon collections for both the Duke of Bavaria and the papal *Index librorum prohibitorum*.⁹⁰ Hence, the discovery of his approval, dated 1578 and registered on a 1558 copy of the *Omiliario* that was held by the Jesuits of Munich is a precious testimony to the

88 The manuscript is described on the webpage of *Textmanuscripts: Les Enluminures* [<https://www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/confraternity-holy-name-jesus-141372>; accessed 27 May 2022].

89 For the First Sunday of Lent see Pittorio, *Omiliario 1541*, fols 12 verso–19 recto.

90 See Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils*, pp. 337–42. Canisius probably knew this type of book from his years in Italy; see Patrizio Foresta, 'Wie ein Apostel Deutschlands': *Apostolat, Obrigkeit und jesuitisches Selbstverständnis am Beispiel des Petrus Canisius (1543–1570)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), pp. 235–70.

lasting acceptance of this book.⁹¹ Indeed, the support, or at least approval, of prominent spokesmen of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, such as Borromeo and Canisius, who recognized the pastoral value of Pittorio's sermons, is the sign, and partially the reason, for the persistent success of the *Omiliario* in the second part of the century.

Conclusion

Pittorio's *Omiliario* arguably stems from the preaching practice of a Ferrarese confraternity and, in its printed format, while continuing to target a lay readership, it was framed also as a spiritual text for nuns, apt to nourish their souls as table reading during Lent. His sermons, therefore, were from the beginning connected with both oral performance and reading practices and ideally appealed to different forms of Christian life, although their contents were mainly attuned to a male lay audience.

The analysis of the sermons showed how Pittorio offered a simple but not simplistic approach to the Bible and to Christian life. His exegetical sources remain to be fully identified, although we saw that he quoted Caterina da Siena and in one case he clearly depended on Savonarola. His plain exegesis presented first his listeners (if Pittorio really preached these sermons) and then his readers and his emulators as preachers with precious access to the Bible, a practical set of moral exhortations, and at least in some cases quite sophisticated spiritual teaching. The latter focused on an internalized relationship with Christ, with an emphasis on the Cross as the source of salvific grace. In front of him all Christians are like Lazarus the beggar. Yet, the appeal to an inner spiritual life was combined with practical exhortations to engage in charity, particularly to the poor, in line with other spiritual reformers of early sixteenth-century Italy. In his dedicatory letter, Pittorio presented his sermons as food for the soul and precious merchandise, which resulted from a dangerous navigation through the ocean of the Bible. Notwithstanding his humble declaration, he was proudly vocal about the novelty of his achievement. Still, he probably would not have dared to imagine the striking success of his book, which came mainly after his death.

The *Omiliario*, indeed, was able to appeal to a very differentiated readership during a considerable time span. The full story of the reception and the actual use of this bestseller remains to be written.⁹² Yet, the few cases considered here

91 See the copy by Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario [...] per tutta la quadragesima et nele dominiche [...]* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1558) held by München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Hom. 1217. On its title page, a note of possession reads 'Societatis Jesu Monacj', while on the reverse of the title page, under the letter of the publisher to the readers, the same hand wrote: 'Approbatus a R. P. Caniseo 1578'.

92 Fragnito, *Proibito capire*, pp. 102, 209, 262–63 offers initial remarks on this topic. An invaluable source for this type of research is the RICCI database [<http://rici.vatlib.it>; accessed

show how it responded to the needs of both lay readers and humble parish priests in search of a reliable preaching aid, while at the same time prominent reformers of the sixteenth-century Catholic Church, such as Canisius and Borromeo, supported or approved its use. For almost a century, therefore, this text provided many believers (clerics, nuns, and lay people) with a valuable instrument to have a (mediated) access to the Bible and through which the Word of God circulated within a changing and turbulent society.

27 May 2022] that charts the books of the religious orders in Italy on the basis of the enquiry made by the Congregation of the Index between 1596 and 1603.

Appendix: Printed Editions of the *Omiliario quadragisimale* by Ludovico Pittorio

Data are taken from *EDIT16: Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo* [accessed 11 June 2021]. The CNCE is the identification number provided by *EDIT16*. I indicate the editions that also included the *Dominicale*, which were either in one (1v) or two volumes (2v). I also indicate when an editor published the *Dominicale* as a separate book (S), yet in the same year of the *Quadragisimale*.

The last two editions are indicated by the Universal Short Title Catalogue, with the following identification numbers: USTC 4035086 and USTC 4044623 [accessed 30 October 2020].

No.	Place	Publisher	Year	Dom.	CNCE
1	Modena	Domenico Rococciola	1506	—	66679
2	Milano	Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler	1513	1v	31326
3	Venezia	[Giovanni Maria Boselli] Bernardino Vitali	1518	—	70161
4	Milano	Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler	1520	1v	31369
5	Venezia	[Giovanni Maria Boselli] Bernardino Vitali	1530	—	37988
6	Venezia	[Giovanni Maria Boselli] Bernardino Vitali	1532	—	38024
7	Venezia	Francesco Bindoni and Maffeo Pasini	1532	S	23294
8	Brescia	Ludovico Britannico	1533	—	57672
9	Venezia	Bernardino di Bindoni	1537	S	23129
10	Brescia	Ludovico Britannico	1541	2v	23249
11	Venezia	Francesco Bindoni and Maffeo Pasini	1541	S	23352
12	Venezia	Al segno della Speranza	1546	1v	32982
13	Venezia	Francesco Bindoni and Maffeo Pasini	1548	S	23474
14	Venezia	Giovanni Pavocano	1550	1v	27873
15	Venezia	Comin da Trino	1552	1v	24689
16	Brescia	Ludovico Britannico	1553	2v	58372
17	Venezia	s.n.	1558	1v	49169
18	Venezia	Al segno della Speranza	1558	1v	33224
19	Brescia	Ludovico Britannico	1561	2v	23262
20	Venezia	Francesco Lorenzini da Torino	1565	2v	39748
21	Venezia	Girolamo Scotto	1566	2v	70167
22	Venezia	Girolamo Scotto	1567	2v	32319
23	Venezia	Johann Criegher	1568	1v	25205
24	Venezia	Johann Criegher	1569	1v	25206

No.	Place	Publisher	Year	Dom.	CNCE
25	Venezia	Eredi di Marchiò Sessa	1570	1v (?)	30207
26	Venezia	Andrea Muschio	1571	1v	31387
27	Venezia	Francesco Ziletti	1574	2v	40019
28	Venezia	[Varisco Giovanni]	1578	2v	40738
29	Venezia	Altobello Salicato	1578	2v	30532
30	Venezia	[Giovanni Maria Leni]	1579/80	2v	40761
31	Torino	[Eredi Niccolò Bevilacqua] Francesco Lorenzini	1581/82	2v	35706
32	Venezia	Fabio e Agostin Zoppini	1583	2v	40823
33	Venezia	Domenico e Giovanni Battista Guerra	1586	2v	37540
34	Venezia	Giacomo Cornetti	1590	2v	25075
35	Venezia	Eredi di Giovanni Maria Leni	1599	2v	37945
36	Venezia	Sebastian Combi	1599	2v	66636
37	Venezia	Pietro Ricciardi	1607	2v	—
38	Venezia	s.n.	1630	2v	—

Bibliography

Manuscripts

Burlington, University of Vermont, Silver Special Collections Library, MS 16

Early Printed Works

- Agostino Superbi, *Apparato de gli huomini illustri della città di Ferrara* (Ferrara: Francesco Suzzi, 1620)
- Antonio da Vercelli, *Conseglj della salute del peccatore* [s.n. 1470]
- Antonio Libanori, *Ferrara d'oro imbrunito*, 3 vols (Ferrara: Maresti 1665–1674)
- Girolamo Savonarola, *Molti devotissimi trattati del reverendo padre frate Hieronimo Savonarola da Ferrara [...] et una espositione del Pater noster et alcuni sermoni devoti di Ludouico Pittorio da Ferrara* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1547)
- Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Pater noster: des hochgelerten wurdigen Predicanten [...] [Strasbourg: Matthias Hupfuff, 1515]*
- Ludovico Bigi Pittorio, *Candida* (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, 1491)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Consolatoria lectione in sul transitio della morte* [Firenze: Bartolomeo di Libri, 1490–1500]
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Dominicale e santuario [...] (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, [c. 1502–1505])*
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Dominicale santuario e quadragesimale [...] nouamente stampato con molte agionte* (Milano: Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler, 1513)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1546)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario [...] per tutta la quadragesima et nele dominiche [...] (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1558)*
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Homiliario quadragesimale* (Brescia: Ludovico Brittanico, 1541)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Omiliario quadragesimale fondato de verbo ad verbum sule Epistole e Evangelii sì como corrono ogni dì secondo lo ordine dela Romana Giesia* (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, 1506)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Opuscolorum christianorum libri tres* (Modena: Domenico Rococciola, 1496)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *I salmi di David* (Venezia: Al segno della Speranza, 1547)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Sermone della comunione* (Firenze: [s.n.], 1502)
- Ludovico Pittorio, *Utile meditatione in sei gradi divisa* (Ferrara: [s.n.], 1502)
- Marcantonio Guarini, *Compendio historico [...] delle Chiese [...] di Ferrara e delle memorie di que' personaggi di pregio che in esse son sepelliti* (Ferrara: Eredi Vittorio Baldini, 1621)
- Roberto Caracciolo, *Specchio della fede* (Venezia: Giovanni da Bergamo, 1495)

Primary Sources

- Girolamo Savonarola, *Lettere e scritti apologetici*, ed. by Roberto Ridolfi, Vincenzo Romano, and Armando F. Verde (Roma: Belardetti, 1984)
- Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria*, ed. by Paolo Ghilieri, 3 vols (Roma: Belardetti, 1971–1972)
- Giuseppe Antenore Scalabrini, *Memorie storiche delle chiese di Ferrara* (Ferrara: Carlo Coatti, 1773)

Secondary Studies

- Andenna, Giancarlo, 'Pittorio, Ludovico', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–), 84 (2015), pp. 264–68
- Boer, Wietse de, 'The Curate of Malgrate or the Problem of Clerical Competence in Counter-Reformation Milan', in *The Power of Imagery: Essays on Rome, Italy and Imagination*, ed. by Peter van Kessel (Roma: Apeiron, 1992), pp. 188–200
- Boillet, Élise, 'For Early Modern Printed Biblical Literature in Italian: Lay Authorship and Readership', in *Lay Readings of the Bible in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Erminia Ardisino and Élise Boillet, *Intersections*, 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 170–90
- Boillet, Élise, 'La Fortune du Psalterio Davitico de Lodovico Pittorio en Italie au XVI^e siècle', *La bibliofilia*, 115 (2013), 621–28
- Boillet, Élise, 'Vernacular Biblical Literature in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Universal Reading and Specific Readers', in *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Sabrina Corbellini, Margriet Hoogvliet, and Bart Ramakers, *Intersections*, 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 213–33
- Boillet, Élise, 'Vernacular Sermons on the Psalms Printed in Sixteenth-Century Italy: An Interface between Oral and Written Cultures', in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*, ed. by Brian Richardson, Massimo Rospocher, and Stefano Dall'Aglio (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 200–11
- Bruni, Flavia, and Andrew Pettegree, eds, *Lost Books: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe*, *Library of the Written Word, The Handpress World*, 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2016)
- Camaioni, Michele, 'Le opere della "viva fede": i primi cappuccini tra politiche della carità e teologia del cielo aperto', in *Politiche di misericordia tra teorie e prassi: confraternite, ospedali e Monti di Pietà (XIII–XVI secolo)*, ed. by Pietro Delcorno (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), pp. 275–309
- Camaioni, Michele, *Il Vangelo e l'Anticristo: Bernardino Ochino tra francescanesimo ed eresia (1487–1547)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018)
- Cittadella, Luigi Napoleone, *Notizie amministrative, storiche, artistiche relative a Ferrara*, 3 vols (Ferrara: Domenico Taddei, 1868)
- Delcorno, Carlo, 'Dal sermo modernus alla retorica borromaica', *Lettere italiane*, 39 (1989), 465–83

- Delcorno, Carlo, 'La trasmissione nella predicazione', in *La Bibbia nel medioevo*, ed. by Giuseppe Cremascoli and Claudio Leonardi (Bologna: EDB, 1996), pp. 65–86
- Delcorno, Pietro, "Faré per manera que vâlgue per molts": i sermoni di Vicent Ferrer sulla parabola di Lazzaro e il ricco epulone', *Erebea*, 1 (2011), 203–30
- Delcorno, Pietro, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son: The Pastoral Uses of a Biblical Narrative (c. 1200–1550)*, Commentaria, 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2017)
- Delcorno, Pietro, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone: metamorfosi di una parabola fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014)
- Delcorno, Pietro, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe: l'allegoria della *fabula* ovidiana in una predica di Johann Meder', *Schede Umanistiche*, 23 (2009), 67–106
- Delcorno, Pietro, 'Quaresimali "visibili": il serafino, il guerriero, il pellegrino', *Studi medievali*, 60 (2019), 645–88
- Delcorno, Pietro, Eleonora Lombardo, and Lorenza Tromboni, eds, *I sermoni quaresimali: digiuno del corpo, banchetto dell'anima / Lenten Sermons: Fasting of the Body, Banquet of the Soul, Memorie Domenicane*, n.s. 48 (Firenze: Edizioni Nerbini, 2017)
- Delcorno Branca, Daniela, *Le Spirituali sportelle di Agostino di Portico: lettere alle monache di S. Marta di Siena* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019)
- Eisenbichler, Konrad, ed., *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2019)
- Fioravanti Baraldi, Anna Maria, 'Ludovico Pittorio e la cultura figurativa a Ferrara nel primo Cinquecento', in *Alla corte degli Estensi: filosofia, arte e cultura a Ferrara nei secoli xv e xvi*, ed. by Marco Bertozzi (Ferrara: Università degli Studi, 1994), pp. 217–46
- Fioravanti Baraldi, Anna Maria, 'Testo e immagini: le edizioni cinquecentesche dell'Omiliario quadregesimale di Ludovico Pittorio', in *Girolamo Savonarola da Ferrara all'Europa*, ed. by Gigliola Fragnito and Mario Miegge (Firenze: SISMEL, 2001), pp. 139–53
- Foresta, Patrizio, 'Wie ein Apostel Deutschlands': *Apostolat, Obrigkeit und jesuitisches Selbstverständnis am Beispiel des Petrus Canisius (1543–1570)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2016)
- Fragnito, Gigliola, *La Bibbia al rogo: la censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura, 1471–1605* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997)
- Fragnito, Gigliola, *Proibito capire: la Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005)
- Frymire, John, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2010)
- Gazzini, Marina, ed., *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009)
- Guarnieri, Chiara, 'Il monastero di S. Antonio in Polesine: un'isola nella città', in *S. Antonio in Polesine: archeologia e storia di un monastero estense*, ed. by Chiara Guarnieri (Borgo San Lorenzo: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2006), pp. 13–15

- Hanska, Jussi, *'And the Rich Man also Died; and He Was Buried in Hell': The Social Ethos in Mendicant Sermons* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1997)
- Hanska, Jussi, 'Sermones quadragesimales: Birth and Development of a Genre', *Il Santo*, 52 (2012), 107–27
- Harris, Neil, 'La sopravvivenza del libro ossia appunti per una lista della lavanderia', *Ecdotica*, 4 (2007), 24–65
- Herzig, Tamar, *Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Lauwers, Michel, 'Praedicatio — Exhortatio: L'Église, la réforme et les laïcs (XI^e–XIII^e siècle)', in *La Parole du prédicateur (V^e–XV^e siècle)*, ed. by Rosa Maria Dessi and Michel Lauwers (Nice: Z'édicions, 1997), pp. 187–232
- Lazzerini, Lucia, *Il testo trasgressivo: testi marginali, provocatori, irregolari dal Medioevo al Cinquecento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988)
- Michelson, Emily, *The Pulpit and the Press in Reformation Italy*, I tatti studies in Italian renaissance history (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Niccoli, Ottavia, *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Roma: Laterza, 1987)
- Pasquazi, Silvio, 'La poesia in latino', in *Storia di Ferrara, VII: il Rinascimento e la letteratura*, ed. by Walter Moretti (Ferrara: Librit, 1994), pp. 100–56
- Prosperi, Adriano, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, Nuova edizione (Torino: Einaudi, 2009)
- Scapparone, Elisabetta, 'Pico, Giovan Francesco', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–), 83 (2015), pp. 320–22
- Severi, Andrea, *Filippo Beroaldo il Vecchio, un maestro per l'Europa: da commentatore di classici a classico moderno (1481–1550)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015)
- Tuohy, Thomas, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471–1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Turchini, Angelo, *Parole di Dio, parroci e popolo: prove di predicazione del clero lombardo* (Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio, 2011)
- Visani, Oriana, and Maria Grazia Bistoni, 'La Bibbia nella predicazione degli agostiniani: il caso di Gregorio di Alessandria', in *Sotto il cielo delle scritture: Bibbia, retorica e letteratura religiosa*, ed. by Carlo Delcorno and Giuseppe Baffetti (Firenze: Olschki, 2009), pp. 115–38
- Weinstein, Donald, *The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)
- Westervelt, Benjamin, 'The Prodigal Son at Santa Justina: The Homily in the Borromean Reform of Pastoral Preaching', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), 109–26
- Zarri, Gabriella, *La religione di Lucrezia Borgia: le lettere inedite del confessore* (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2006)