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

Sergius Kodera

Abstract

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

Keywords: Naples, executions, early modern novella, physiognomy, Masuccio Salernitano, Ponte Della Maddalena/Ponte Ricciardo (Naples), Piazza Mercato (Naples), Alessandro Baratta, Antoine Lafréty, Pietro di Stefano, Giovan Battista della Porta, Maria de Zayas

Full text: http://openartsjournal.org/issue-6/article-1
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5456/issn.2050-3679/2018w01

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

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They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

Shakespeare, All’s Well that Ends Well, II. iii. 891–896

Introduction

During his research for his treatise on palmistry – the Chirophysiognomia (written perhaps between 1599 and 1608, and published posthumously in an Italian translation in 1677) – polymath Giovan Batista Della Porta (1535–1617) claimed to have collected the plaster casts and drawings of the hands and feet of executed criminals and prisoners, as well as of others who had died an untimely death. I use the general term physiognomics to cover the arts suggested by this text, because, at least for Della Porta, the word referred not merely to the faces of human beings, but also to their other body parts. Della Porta maintained that his (empiricist) approach allowed him to decipher and predict the victims’ tragic fates scientifically. This story, characteristic of the spectacular scienza that Della Porta pursued in his lifetime, is more than yet another eerie story from a particular place – early modern Naples. The Spanish authorities were often unable to control the provinces and sometimes even the capital of the Viceregnio, and Naples’ crime rate was probably higher than that of most other Italian cities. Officials of the Regno remarked bandits’ tendency of fleeing to the capital for greater security. In 1550, Viceroy Toledo admitted to having executed 18,000 criminals (Rovito, 2003, pp.386–7). In the light of the ongoing unsuccessful governmental struggle against well-organised gangs in the entire Regno, it becomes plausible that Della Porta promoted his art as a suitable tool for the identification of devious characters. Physiognonomics links the fates of individuals to their somatic temperaments and the consistency of their bodily fluids, which are in their turn dependent on a specific geographical place. I argue here that Della Porta identified these individual inclinations of the human character with definite locations in Naples that simultaneously served important roles in the ‘translation’ of the criminal body into a corpse. To this end, I shall follow the itineraries of the human bodies (and their remains) in their various translations through specific places in- and outside town – as they were paraded through the streets of Naples to the gallows (reminiscent of religious processions): their execution in Piazza Mercato; the corpses’ transfer to the gallows beyond city limits, the Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo, where the bodies were left to rot away publicly as tokens of terror; their collective way back to town, to be finally buried at the Incurabili; and the various itineraries that led the images of their hands and feet to Della Porta’s palazzo on the Largo della Carità in Via Toledo, where another kind of translation of their bodies into a set of abstract signs – that is, into texts – was performed. In discussing these issues, I focus on the heterotopia of the gallows out of town – its location and architectonic structure, and the fact that this place was not represented on contemporary maps, even though it seems to have had a long-lasting impact on the imagination of Neapolitans and foreigners (as can be reconstructed not only from Della Porta, but also from two novellas written by Masuccio Salernitano ([1471] 1990, 296–301, Novella 19) and Maria de Zayas ([1637] 2000, pp.345–71, La fuerza del amor)). Moreover, I relate Della Porta’s eerie collecting to practices of contemporary Neapolitan necromancers and show that his method of translating (infamous) corpses into text can be related not only to contemporary guides to Naples but also to drawing practices in renaissance academies. These books were dedicated to conceiving the social structure of Naples as a series of interrelated places that could transform the bodies and lives of eminent people into a text.

Della Porta’s account

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

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

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

**Lethal itineraries**

Yet crucially, Della Porta’s translation of ill-fated biographies into sets of portable signs on printed pages is but the end of a long series of movements of human bodies and their remains through gritty and distinct places in Naples. As will become clear below, a distinct sense of place was operative in reducing human beings into corpses and into signs in early modern Naples. Worldly and ecclesiastical authorities collaborated in the production of these signs, with the intention of alerting either local or foreign spectators to the inexorable cogency of their justice. This message was painstakingly inculcated in rituals during which the bodies of criminals were transferred through the city – along itineraries meant to resemble the
festive processions of worldly rulers and saints who were also paraded through the streets and places of Naples. In processions in honor of St. John the Baptist in the early 17th century for example, the saint was paraded somewhat as a tableau vivant. The route of the procession was from west to east of town, as the convicts in the Storace corteo. But crucially, St. John’s beheading was represented at the beginning of the parade, the Fontana di Piazza del Porto, that is in a place very far way form the Piazza Mercato. Here the procession just did not arrive, for it only went as far as San Giovanni del Mare (Marino, 2011, p.217). In these regular, complex rituals, a distinct sense of place was not only affirmed but also manufactured with different forms of intensity, as Helen Hills has persuasively argued in a related context, the Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro in Naples (2013, pp.31, 33, 37).

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

Parading saints and sinners through town: defining the perimeters of the corteo
In early modern Naples, these ‘translations’ of living human bodies into corpses began long before their spectacular executions. In various city prisons – but above all in the dreaded Vicaria (Castel Capuano) – a convict’s last days and hours on death row were punctuated by visits from the confortatori, a confraternity of priests and laymen. The white–hooded Bianchi comprised an influential semi–official body that mediated between the physical application of the law, on the one hand, and the divine order represented by Church and sovereign, on the other (Romeo, 1993, p.11). This function of social mediation during executions, of extreme official violence, was indeed important. Through their physical presence during the parade of the convict through town and at the execution, the Bianchi made a strong case for the idea that a repentant convict could attain spiritual salvation. This assertion amounted to no less than an attempt to eradicate the dishonour of the mala morte, the inauspicious and shameful death at the hands of the hangman, that was deeply ingrained in contemporary minds in the face of the apparent lack of compassion of spectators for the sufferings of those that were to be executed (Panico, 1985, pp.12, 50, 53). Members of the high clergy and powerful laymen in disguise, the Bianchi could demonstrate succor for those who – as a result of the dishonour of dying at the hands of a boia (hangman) – had effectively dropped out of the social order, becoming errant souls and lost bodies.

Thus, the Bianchi helped to make the figure of saint and criminal appear identical, with executions becoming spectacular re–enactments of the via crucis. Cardinal Bellarmine claimed that anyone should consider himself happy to die at hands of the boia – if guilty, for the repentance of sins committed; if innocent, in imitation of the Saviour who pardoned those who caused his death (Panico, 1985, p.94). Very much as in Della Porta’s Chirophysiognomonia, death at the gallows is here considered an inexorable natural law. Yet, the Bianchi’s noble aspiration to mould the abominable spectacle of public death into an edifying example of Christian charity was often hampered by the delinquents’ hardy resistance as they refused to participate in the spectacle of staging their own deaths. Accordingly, in order to quell such recalcitrant behaviour, the Bianchi often brutally tortured the convicts until they were willing to play the roles assigned them in the edifying drama of their own deaths (Romeo, 1993, pp.130, 145–6). The public execution of criminals, as well as the spectacle of the death of the saint, was impatiently awaited by the community – causing large rallies for both sorts of occasion. Public executions bore striking resemblance to passion plays (sacre rappresentazioni) during which the death of the Saviour or the death of a saint was gruesomely represented on stage. It is important to note that this kind of public self–mutilation – for instance, auto–flagellations by the faithful – was generally inflicted with the intent of commemorating the treatment of Christ as the innocent sufferer of a verdict handed down by a court (Groebner, 2003, p.107). All these rituals aim at the display of a spectacular death (Sallmann, 1994, pp.285,
In fact both the criminal and the saintly body were sources of marvel, as displayed in a complex set of rituals. Katherine Park writes:

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

(Park, 1994, p.26, author’s emphasis)

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

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

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

Piazza Mercato

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

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

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

Ponte Ricciardo/della Maddalena

It is significant that 16th- and 17th-century maps of Naples never show the gallows outside town beyond the Ponte Ricciardo (or Ponte della Maddalena, as it was also called). Yet the structure of the bridge itself is clearly visible on maps of both the Lafréri/Du Perac
and the Baratta type, where in both cases the Ponte Ricciardo is found represented on the easternmost limit. This particular bridge is thus a liminal place in a double sense, not only because its structure spans the two sides of a waterway, the river Sebeto, but also because it is represented as the easternmost limit of the city of Naples. Vladimiro Valerio (2013), a student of these maps, has shown that the cartographic representation of Naples was, in fact, a series of highly conscious and politically negotiated decisions on the part of mapmakers. In spite of the fact that these mapmakers were actually capable of making very accurate projections, they accorded significantly more space to the palazzi in the center of town than to more marginal roads and lowly buildings. Valerio explains that the center of town is ‘represented with far greater emphasis than would be produced by applying the rules of curvilinear perspective. Thus the demands of political representation and visibility forcefully shaped the construction of the urban reality drawn by Baratta; power centers are exalted by exaggerating their perspective and as a result, their actual weight within the urban landscape’ (pp. 77–8).

The structure of Ponte Ricciardo was organised in a series of physical, visual and symbolic thresholds that marked the outermost city limits: it was meant to enclose and at the same time disclose the magnificence of Naples. The area of the Ponte Ricciardo was also of some strategic importance: it spanned the Sebeto estuary and was the last bridge before the town walls. General Lautrec had laid siege to the bridge in 1528, where heavy trench fighting took place, in the course of which the old construction was so badly damaged that the entire bridge had to be rebuilt in 1555 by Viceroy Don Fernando de Mendoza, with funding provided by the provinces (Bacco, [1616] 1991, p.30). It seems its name was at this point changed to Ponte della Maddalena (De la Ville Sur-Yllon, 1899, p.154), but, as so often in Naples, the old names Ponte Ricciardo or Licciardo continued to be used well into the 17th century, at least in printed texts, including Della Porta’s Chrophysiognomonia.
The bridge’s span of about 50 metres delineated, as noted, a vast liminal space: a barrier both symbolic and real, and simultaneously a space designed not only for transit but for approaching the town in a highly orchestrated way. On the 1628 Baratta map, one clearly discerns an arched bridge with eight irregular spans supporting a relatively steep and barren ramp on the left bank of the Sebeto, whereas on its opposite side, facing the city, the ramp declines more gently.21

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

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

* For a high resolution reproduction of the Lafréry/Du Perac Map, go to: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb406212074; for the Baratta map, go to: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b35064622/f1.item.r=alessandro%20baratta
Even during the 16th century (and apparently well before this), the river Sebeto was no more than a little torrent (Lalande, 1787, p.404). Judging from the Baratta maps, the river’s left arm seems to have already entirely dried out – that is, where the bridge reached its most elevated point. Quite beyond its actual function, the bridge’s elevation, actually posed a gratuitous impediment for the pedestrian as well as for the cart; it was intended as a spectacular and highly visible threshold, marking the easternmost limit of Naples.

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

**Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo**

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

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

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

In various states of putrefaction, the corpses were symbolically participating in and charged with the sovereign power that carried the prerogative to seal their tragic fates. These bodies were not merely abstract signifiers. Rather, their materiality was displayed in a distinct liminal space, a space created to exhibit unburied human remains: errant matter out of its proper place. If there was no rest for these wicked criminals, this was also characteristic for the saintly corpse: at least to some extent in Naples, ways of treating criminal and saintly corporal remains overlapped. In fact, the liminal places they occupied between life and death were especially extensive, both for saints and criminals. Not only were holy men and women, like convicts, believed to die in pre-announced deaths, but parts of their bodies then became valuable talismans, *materia magica*. Belief in their foreordained death seems to have been the driving force behind the peculiar practice of collecting their remains, a practice that naturally corresponded to the official cult of relics. The faithful sought to keep hairs, fingernails, beards or teeth of the deceased santi (Sallmann, 1986, p.150; 1994, pp.301–3). Likewise, the bodies of executed criminals were believed to contain magical properties (Park, 1994, p.26). Not only were a dead man’s hand or the skulls of executed criminals believed to be powerful necromantic tools, the belief that a victim’s lethal wounds would begin bleeding again once his assassin passed by the corpse served to bolster the most
sophisticated contemporary Neo-Platonic theories of natural magic (cf. Ficino ([1484] 1956, p.250; Della Porta (1658, pp.228–9)). Of course, this set of ideas received an important confirmation through the afterlife of the most eminent patron saint of Naples, San Gennaro, in the regularly performed miracle of the liquefaction of his blood. All this points to a commonly shared belief that some virtù continued to live in the human body even after the individual’s death. 30

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

Masuccio Salernitano

These contingencies – popular fear and belief that the appicati at the Ponte Ricciardo could become alive again or simply still be alive – are vividly reflected in Novella 19 of Masuccio Salernitano’s Novellino, written between 1450 and 1470. With direct reference to the gallows at the Ponte Ricciardo, Masuccio recounts a story of a simpleton – a poor tailor with a sack (sacco) of merchandise from Amalfi – on his way to the market in Naples (Masuccio, [1471] 1990). In the middle of the night, the tailor has to pass the gallows. He greatly fears encountering the corpses, yet as he walks by and all remains silent, he starts shouting at them: ‘Come with me to Naples!’ Unfortunately for the tailor, another man, also on his way to town and unaware of his whereabouts, has fallen asleep in what must have been the doorway blocking the stairs leading up to the gallows’ tribune (Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo), in the erroneous belief that he had settled down at the doorstep of a closed inn. 32 That second man is woken up by the tailor’s shouting, and believes that a friend of his, whom he had left behind, finally caught up with him and is calling him now. Consequently, this second man answers the tailor and starts running after him. The latter escapes, screaming, towards the town, leaving the sack behind, of which the second man takes possession. The tailor continues to run across the Ponte Ricciardo towards the customs officers who are on duty there. In the nearby inns, which seem to be still open long after midnight, his story that the corpses have come after him is immediately believed, the doors are shut, and the rumour that the corpses are alive spreads quickly. 33 Meanwhile, the second man – now together with his friend – returns home with his booty.

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

Maria de Zayas

Another literary testimony to the Ponte Ricciardo gallows can be found in one of the Novellas ejemplares by Maria de Zayas, La fuerza del amor (The Force of Love), published in 1637. 35 Here, Laura, a wealthy Neapolitan noblewoman of the Carafa family, seeks to win back Don Diego, her estranged and cruel husband. To this aim, Laura hires a witch who orders her to procure the hair from the head and beard of a hanged man, as well as his teeth (Zayas, [1637] 2000, p.362, ‘barbas, cabellos y dientes de un ahorcado’). This devious witch tells Laura that in order for this charm to work, it is essential that she herself rob a corpse of these items. At dusk, on one of the darkest nights of winter, the desperate Laura, summoning all
her courage, finally sets out alone from her palazzo in Naples to the gallows (humilladero). With her little lantern she arrives at the place – correctly located by Zayas (although strangely, there is no mention of the Ponte Ricciardo) a mile from town on the road that leads up to the Santuario della Madonna dell’Arco, past Cercola and Barra. Amazingly, Laura has no difficulty in passing though the door that leads to the tribune; yet she fails in her mission, trying in vain for three hours to rob the corpses – six recently executed highway-men (salteadores) whose bodies are dangling on the gallows. Laura’s access to the materia magica is obstructed by the specific dimensions of the gallows: the tribune is surrounded by a deep pit (fosa) about 28 feet deep (quatro estados), designed for the rotten bodies to eventually fall into, thereby serving as their grave. Hence, Laura can only approach the corpses by tiptoeing on a slender pedestal under the dangling bodies, half an ell in width (media vara); since bodies are appended at the top of the tribune on hooks at a height of about 10 feet (estado y media), she is too short to reach their faces. But Laura has to touch the corpses: she has to cling to the bodies in order not to fall into the pit. The specific dimension of the humilladero thus becomes a decisive obstacle for Laura. Her struggle with the dead bodies forms the dramatic climax of the novella, since Laura’s transgression consists not only in entering that forbidden place (even though it is most unlikely she would actually find its door unlocked), but in actually touching the ill-fated corpses. The description of the tribune’s architecture, whether genuine or not, nevertheless locates it correctly, and its ensemble of elements reflects the heterotopic quality of the humilladero.

Zayas’ novella is highly critical of witchcraft, holding these practices as fraudulent and superstitious, and connecting them to the cultural and social context of Spanish Naples: Zayas explains that because Naples lacks a proper (Spanish) inquisition, virtually everybody – even confessors and the Vice-King himself – are in the habit of employing the services of witches. This account testifies to the urgency with which these practices and ideas were negotiated (in Stephen Greenblatt’s sense of the term) not only on a local level, but in the entire Spanish Empire. The supernatural is not entirely missing from Zayas’ novella, nor is witchcraft portrayed as mere harmless superstition: Laura’s brother, Don Carlos, is woken up by a telepathic nightmare revealing that his beloved sister is in great danger, and he rushes to her help; yet the horse he mounts at Pietra Bianca heading for Naples halts at the humilladero, and will not move on. Glimpsing the flickering light of a lantern, Don Carlos immediately realises at which place he has arrived, and he instantly suspects that a witch there is blocking his way. Standing in front of the door of the building with his sword drawn, he eventually makes Laura come out of the humilladero and thus rescues her.

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

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

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

*Santa Maria Restituta*

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

*Via Toledo, Palazzo Della Porta*

In Della Porta’s palazzo, his images of convicts’ hands and feet were discussed attentively by a group of his friends, and were eventually meant to find their way into printed versions of the *Chirophysiognomia*. Thus, not only acts of worldly justice and of religious piety had to be exerted on these bodies, but their destinies were also to be rendered legible: their bodies were meant to become texts. In a series of translations, these bodies were reduced *(ridotte)* first into drawings and finally into scripture. As abstract signifiers of a cosmic fate, their traces were meant to become legible components of an all-encompassing *macchina mondiale*, the fabric of an ordered cosmos where the *Città Partenopea* occupied a distinct place that also bred certain character types, certain personalities.\(^4\)

The act of reducing or translating fragmented corpses into texts, in Porta’s palazzo, became a theatrical event in its own right, with its special nocturnal setting and macabre subject. In dim candlelight, these gypsum and wax representations of criminals’ fragmented bodies certainly must have made for a spectacular and macabre shadow theatre. These imprints were once more displayed and handed about, just as the disgraziati had been histrionically paraded through town prior to their execution; and this became a show of body parts, of metonymic signifiers referring to entire bodies and to their astrologically determined fates. This histrionic dimension of Della Porta’s practice not only constitutes an intrinsic element in his art of physiognomonics, it also forms the backdrop for his entire textual production (Kodera 2012; 2014). In this context, it is also interesting to note that in classical antiquity, literary description of physiognomical features was linked to the description of certain types of comic actors, such as in Theophrastus’ *Characters* (a text of which Della Porta, as the author of at least seventeen plays, was certainly aware). *Character* is a Greek word denoting the image of a person as imprinted on coins; with this in mind, it is perhaps no far-fetched coincidence that Della Porta’s showcasing the images of the delinquents’ severed arms had a gruesome parallel in the public life of Naples: arms amputated from money counterfeiters were displayed in a cage outside the Zecca, the royal mint in the centre of town, opposite the Church of Sant’Agostino (Panico, 1985, pp.42–3, 68–70).\(^4\) Similarly, of course, the hands of saints with their miraculous powers were displayed in churches (Toussaint, 2010).

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

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

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

Bandinelli’s Academy prints can be taken as guides for imagining what Della Porta’s meetings might have looked like and how these body fragments were translated into images and texts. This form of body translation was also practised in another type of contemporary text dealing with place: early guides to the city of Naples. Tanja Michalsky has pointed to the importance of spatial relationships and the keen sense of place in 16th- and 17th-century guides to Naples (2016, pp.121, 118–24). She argues that these books are ordered by spatial structures into which the social networks of the city are inscribed. Pietro di Stefano’s Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli is thus translating funerary monuments, that is, metonymic individual human bodies, into a text. The Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli may then be used to commemorate these persons and their deeds – but never entirely independently of the places in which their graves are situated, since these places have to become known to the reader in order that the individual monuments’ significance may be understood. In analogous ways, Della Porta translates the metonymic bodies of convicts into text. His chirophysiognomonic project also entailed inscribing the abject criminal body into the body of the city – of course, not in any attempt to preserve the memory of these individual lives, but rather with the goal of eliminating anybody who would bear similar signs of doom on their hands and feet (Kodera, 2010, pp.255–61).

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

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

Conclusion

In Della Porta’s palazzo, the appicati came alive again in a fashion vastly different from how Masuccio’s simpleton imagined it. In a sense, Della Porta’s nocturnal parties with his friends reflect the same issue from his palazzo on the other side of the Ponte Ricciardo – from the nonchalant perspective of a Neapolitan intellectual elite. Della Porta styles his nocturnal shows as spectacles during which the limbs of unruly men must be categorised in a scienza that would predict such devious inclinations; through that process, these human remains became the increasingly disembodied object of a scientific theatrum. In this best of all possible worlds, his art of physiognomonics, based on empirical evidence gathered at the Dritto di Ponte Ricciardo, would have been employed as the most rewarding aspect of the greater contemporary project of mapping the human body, the city, and the natural world in general: it would allow the speedy detection of the socially harmful individual, whose deviousness was already inscribed into his or her body. Della Porta’s activities are an attempt to make legible a definite and hitherto unenvisaged deep examination, as it were, of aspects of Naples’ social network; yet his endeavors were thwarted by the religious and political authorities. Despite his countless efforts, Della Porta could not get the Chiropi physiognomoniae past the censors (as Oreste Trabucco has meticulously documented in his introduction to Della Porta, 2003). Abject bodies had to be left to oblivion, not to posterity, just as the place where they were rotting away had to be put off limits and definitively off the map, although it was very much present in the minds of citizens and forastieri in baroque Naples.

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

6 Unless otherwise indicated, translations are the author’s. ‘... multorum hominum diversae naturae variique temperamenti, et illorum praesertim, quibus notabiles casus evenere, manuum pedumque dispositiones observare coepi ... Ut ergo maior supradictum hominum copia suppedetterat, cum neapolitano carnifice pacti sumus, qui tunc Antonellus Cucuzza vocatur; ut, cum in foro boario suspensos a furcis et pedum dispositiones rimabar easque stylo papyro designabam, aut cera et gypso intertexta lineamenta
imprimebam, ut noctu, cum domi essem, cum aliis conferrem et collatis signis veritatem investigarem, eadem semper operam navando, donec signa omnia, quae certius suspender intamenaret, excernerem et mihiem ipsi satisfacere. Mox ut atroci clade et vulneribus interituros cognoscerem, cum Cathedrallis Ecclesiae diaconis convenimus — quorum munus erat in sacello Sanctae Restitutae Verginis dicato interfector sine suorum peccatorum expiatione mortuos sepulturae demandare, ut me eorum morte domi certiorem redderent, ut ad lasciell illud me conferrem, quorum ititem manuum et pedum constitutionibus inspectis vulnerumque locis, numero et qualitate delineatis, eas domi cum aliis conferrem, ex quorum consultu, quae validiores, quae vero debiliores ad demonstrandum fuissent, cognoscerem. Nec minus laboriosa mihi fuit cura publics fori carceres perlustrare, ubi semper ingen facinororum turba concluditur, latronum, parricidarum, grassatorum viarum et aliorum eiummodi farinae hominum, ut eorum manus visere liceret. Deinde animalium per pedes manusque contemplando, eorum figuras com humanis contulimus non sine naturalibus rationis eademque methodo, qua in physiognomonia usi sumus.’

7 Della Porta (2003, p.66) writes: ‘Cum saepissimae in manuum apicibus aliisque manuum locis notae et lineamenta quaedam intrusa reperirem, stellas vel cruxes vel alios characteres imitantem, non solum coelestium virtutum influxibus impressas, sed quae etiam naturalium causarum concursus contingunt, operaepetrum nobis videtur, quid foelicis eventus vel infortunii portendant, accuratius expendere. Crucis character, si Iovis tuberculi sedem occupat absque aliarum notarum consortio, et clara et nitida consciatur, loviis omnis generis dignitates ostendit, etiam fortasse in ecclesiasticis officiis promotiones.’ On this topic in general, see Blumenberg (1986, esp. pp.58–85).

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

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

10 Summonte (1675, pp.177–8 (lib.1. cap.7) reports on the Compagnia di Santa Maria Succurrer Misteris who consolled the convict on the way to the Piazza Mercato, a procession of priests all dressed in white with a black flag: ‘...i quali vanno vestiti di bianchissino lino a modo di battenti, che con ordine gli antecede il stendardo del crocifisso ornato di velo nero, non rappresentando altro, che morte, gli ultimi dei quali vanno ricordando il povery condannato, il quale tenendo in picciolo Crocifisso nelle mani, e da quelli con esempi de vanno ricordando il povero condennato, il quale tenendo nero, non rappresentando altro, che morte, gli ultimi dei quali ordine gli antecede il stendardo del crocifisso ornato di velo nero, non rappresentando altro, che morte, gli ultimi dei quali vanno vestiti di bianchissimo lino a modo di battenti, che con esempi de

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

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

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

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

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

16 For an introduction to these maps and the social changes they reflected, cf. Marino (2011, pp.10–16). For a profound analysis of the visual features and perfect renderings of the famous Map of Lafredi and Duperac (1566) and indeed many other maps from the 13th to the 18th centuries, see De Seta (1981, pp.55, 68–79, who also reproduces a detail of piazza Mercato from that map (p.51) where one can see the gallows; see p.154 for a detail of Baratta’s map, ‘Fidelissiae urbis neapolitanæ...’ (1629). For a high resolution reproduction of the Lafredi/Du Perac Map, go to: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb406212074; for the Baratta map, go to: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53064622/f1.item.r=ale<andr<20baratta.

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

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

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

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

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

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


26 Summonte (1675, p.246): ‘Nel Mercato maggiore … i forastieri … concorrenno, a vendere, e comparare, nel Lunedi, & il Venerdi.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 On foreigners in and the suburbs of 16th-century Naples, see Muto (2001, pp.90–3) and Marino (2011, p.9). I wish to thank Marlen Bidwell-Steiner for introducing me to this particular Novella text and for wonderful discussions on the Novelas ejemplares.

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

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

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

38 ‘Hay en Nápoles, en estos enredos y supersticiones, tanta libertad que publicamente usan sus invenciones, haciendo tantas y con tales apariciones de verdades que casi obligan a ser creídas. Y aunque los confesores y el virrey andan en esto solicitados, como no hay el freno de la Inquisición y los demas castigos, no les amedrentan, porque en Italia lo mas ordinario es castigar la bolsa’ (Zayas, 2000, p.362). For a qualification of Zayas’ claim from the perspective of contemporary popular Neapolitan culture, see Sallman (1986, pp.73–4, 144–5 and passim).
40 We are here confronted with a form of 'negotiation' between a literary text and the cultural practice of witchcraft in the political context of the Spanish rule in Naples. See on the term 'negotiation' see Greenblatt (1988, p.86).

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

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

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

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


46 For a discussion of these images of Bandinelli’s workshop in connection with Della Porta, see Kodera (2014, pp.30–3). For a thorough description and many references to the extant scholarly literature on Bandinelli’s Accademia in their 1531 and 1550 versions, see Hegener (2008, pp.396–412). For an online reproduction of the first 1531 version see http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works–of–art/17.50.16–35

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

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

Bibliography


