

THE PROBLEM OF ORNAMENT IN EARLY MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Dislocating Decoration in Knole, Kent and the Certosa di San Martino, Naples

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on two case studies to stake a challenge to the subordinate status of decoration in architectural scholarship. The four architectural works studied are the Painted Stair and Great Chamber at Knole, and the Lay Brothers' Choir and Great Cloister at the Certosa di San Martino. Long cast as excessive or inessential, architectural decoration has recently begun to be reassessed. The present study aligns with this emerging field and endeavours to open up new avenues through a multidisciplinary study of the functioning of ornament in architecture. By focusing on Baroque Naples and Jacobean England – both treated as marginal in traditional art-historical scholarship – I question the scholarly categories that cast these field as insurmountably separate and draw out the insights of their productive tension.

The thesis offers extended analyses of four artworks, which directly question metanarratives imposed by the works' place within the scholarly landscape: device, didacticism and moral naivety; the iconographical 'meaning' of nature; celebratory, functional state rooms; the symbolic signification of a cloister. Close visual analysis of artworks is coupled with readings of poetry and literature, political and gender studies, anthropology, devotional writings, guidebooks as well as recent critical theory. I examine two cases studies of illusionistic painted decoration, demonstrating how the painted surface can question, extend and problematize architecture. Carved surfaces, sculpture and relief studied in the complementary chapters provide a counterpoint, as the arresting and unsettling effects of sculptural presence are explored. Ultimately, I demonstrate that decoration is riven with tensions, paradoxes, stoppages and evasions that play a fundamental part of architecture.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

This thesis focuses on architectural ornament and decoration. Although decoration and decorative art across media has suffered from being placed in a subordinate position, ornament plays a particularly central role in architectural discourse. In his seminal 1992 essay 'Untitled: The Housing of Gender', Mark Wigley argues that ornament holds a pivotal point in the institution of architecture as an intellectual pursuit.¹ For Leon Battista Alberti, the author of the most influential architectural treatise of the Renaissance, the *De re aedificatoria* of 1452, architecture was characterised by a dichotomy between the body of a building and its 'lineaments', the former aligned with matter, the latter with the mind.² As Wigley's essay explores, this dichotomy corresponds to and sustains several crucial binaries: between male and female, intellect and the senses, public and private, order and chaos, and essence and accident.³ It is this set of nesting hierarchies and assumptions, Wigley demonstrates, that fundamentally shapes the birth of architecture as a humanist discipline.⁴ Furthermore, it is precisely architecture which is then employed to fashion the spaces – intellectual and physical – of humanist discourse: the private cabinet; the public letter; the treatise; the subject separate from his body and sexuality; and the academic discipline, capable of controlling and ordering the messy reality of human life.⁵

Wigley closely examines Alberti's discussion of decoration. For example, Alberti extols the virtues of a white coat of plaster with which a building is finished. In Wigley's words, it "is a pure surface," whose "unmarked surface screens off the bodily condition of the body and yet reveals its formal order."⁶ Thus decoration is crucial in securing the distinction between the material body of a building and its intellectual order. Yet at the same time, decoration is also aligned with the opposite of order (the structure or 'lineaments' of the building). Alberti compares

¹ Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in *Sexuality & Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina and Jennifer Bloomer (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 327-89.

² *Ibid.*, 353.

³ *Ibid.*, on male and female, cf. 332-37; intellect and senses, 59-60; on order, surveillance and 'matter out of place', 36-41; essential and inessential, 52-53, 70-71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 353, 60-61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 345-46, 47, 49, 60, 61-62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

architectural ornament to women's practices of adornment, which in their material nature, their appeal to the senses, their potential for deception and their association with sexuality serve as a model of transgression.⁷

Wigley suggests that architecture enables the very possibility of academic discourse.⁸ Ornament is crucial in this wider project. Alberti's white surface, simultaneously ornament and its opposite, helps produce a regime of visibility (making apparent the order inscribed in the body of architecture, revealing what is behind and in front of the surface) that sustains both architecture's disciplinary functions and architecture's own disciplinary control.⁹ In Wigley's analysis, this decorative surface enables the architectural production of hierarchies of sexuality, gender and privacy *and* the production of academic discipline which is seemingly separate from and posterior to these structures.¹⁰ To examine, destabilise and rethink the position of architectural ornament then is to undermine the certainties of a much broader academic and disciplinary discourse.

This thesis focuses on Early Modern decoration, conceived within a broader chronological frame of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹¹ Wigley's analysis draws attention to this period as

⁷ Ibid., 355-57.

⁸ In Wigley's words, "[a]rchitectural discourse plays a strategic role in guaranteeing assumptions that are necessary to the operation of other discourses." Ibid., 329, see also 65.

⁹ Ibid., 360-62.

¹⁰ "This economy of vision is of course written into the more recent institutions of art history, the philosophy or art, art criticism, the museum, and the gallery, and continues to locate architecture institutionally. Architecture is understood as a kind of object to be looked at, inhabited by a viewer who is detached from it, inhabited precisely by being looked at [...]." Ibid., 362.

¹¹ Jacobean ornament is a continuation of the so called 'Artisan Mannerism' of the sixteenth century in England, closely related to ornamental vocabulary of strapwork and grotesques that also flourished in the print culture of the Low Countries in the sixteenth century, cf Mark Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture: Its Rise and Fall, 1540-1640* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 125-216, 99-376; Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Influence of Continental Prints, 1558-1625* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). While the Neapolitan work of Cosimo Fanzago is classed as Baroque, I do not treat it as strictly separate in terms of periodicity; its visual styles have a strong relationship to Michelangelo's architectural work in the sixteenth century (Anthony Blunt,

a foundational moment in the production of ornament as distinct from structure, in ornament's subordination, and in the fashioning of architectural discourse upon such a fundamental distinction. At the same time, the Renaissance offers some of the most striking examples of decorative proliferation and of highly inventive, imaginative and strange ornament.

Sparked by the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea in the late fifteenth century, grotesques constituted one such hugely popular category.¹² In France, the Low Countries and Britain, grotesque-inspired ornament mingled with strapwork, a decorative language of peeling, curling, lacelike forms reminiscent of leather, paper and metal.¹³ In architecture, term figures proved another wide-spread genre, taking the Caryatids, Atlantes and Persians known from Vitruvius' classical architectural treatise to new degrees of invention in publications such as Hugues Sambin's *La diversité des termes*.¹⁴ This kind of ornament provides a contrast to the regulation of ornament in Alberti's writings. Its inventive, transgressive force appears to challenge the discourses of placing and control examined by Wigley.

What emerges from the intersection of these colliding perspectives? This thesis addresses the problem of the Renaissance proliferation of wild ornament and of the simultaneous codification of ornament as subordinate at the heart of architectural theory through focusing on the particular. This allows me to make a contribution to the interpretation of Renaissance ornament, but also to closely examine the assumptions and discourses that have hindered such interpretation.

Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture (London: A. Zwemmer, 1975), 74; Gaetana Cantone, *Napoli barocca e Cosimo Fanzago* (Naples: Banco di Napoli, 1984), 88.)

¹² See the seminal study by Nicole Dacos (Nicole Dacos, *La découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques à la Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1969)) and Alessandra Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 90-195.

¹³ Alain Charles Gruber, ed. *The Renaissance and Mannerism in Europe*, *The History of Decorative Arts* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 347-431 especially.

¹⁴ Howard Colvin, "Herms, Terms and Caryatids in English Architecture," in *Essays in English Architectural History*, ed. Howard Colvin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

Wigley's analysis highlights the way academic and disciplinary discourses are conditioned and instituted by binaries which they appear to precede. The disciplinary hierarchies in which decoration plays such a pivotal role continue to shape art-historical study of both architecture, decoration and the Renaissance discourses that Wigley suggests instituted them. A crucial aim of this thesis is to avoid interpretation of decoration simply through the already-known, as representing something pre-existing: institutional or personal identity, national style, domestic or religious architecture etc. This thesis therefore focuses on two *disparate* case studies as a conscious heuristic strategy: the Jacobean country house of Knole in Kent and the Carthusian monastery of San Martino in Baroque Naples.

While these case studies may appear to be arbitrarily selected, the choice of contrasting, disconnected buildings is aimed to avoid the reduction of decoration to pre-existing narratives. Such a set-up directly challenges art history's construction of its ideal (or indeed permitted) subjects, which are usually bound by the 'same' time frame or the 'same' geographical area. In an essay on Fra Angelico's paintings in the dormitory of San Marco, Florence, Georges Didi-Huberman demonstrates both art history's dependence on contemporaneous textual accounts as evidence *and* the problematic and limited nature of such textual accounts as means of interpretation.¹⁵ He argues that any image in itself abounds in anachronism – indeed, exists as a condensation of conflicting times – yet the discipline of art history focuses on reconstructing a perfect case of “euchronistic consonance”, a magic moment where all objects speak with the same voice.¹⁶

What is particularly significant here is that Didi-Huberman's discussion is prompted by a confrontation with ornament. An insistence on consonance and continuity across a culture's objects becomes particularly unhelpful when faced with a non-figural, fictive marble panel under Fra Angelico's fresco of the Annunciation. For Didi-Huberman, anachronism (or the juxtaposition of Fra Angelico with an art-historically 'illicit' comparison – the twentieth-century painting of

¹⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman, "Before the Image, before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism," in *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History*, ed. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). He calls this the problem of euchronicity, where it is assumed that “the “key” to understanding an object from the past is situated in the past itself, and what is more, *in the same past* as the past of the object”, *ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35, 37-38.

Jackson Pollock) serves a key role in attempting to see this panel as *intrinsic*, necessary, rather than subordinate or superfluous.¹⁷ Thus Didi-Huberman suggests that anachronism that challenges art history's parameters of proper objects "is fertile when the past proves to be *insufficient*, that is, forms an obstacle to the understanding of the past."¹⁸

This thesis employs the two case studies from a similar heuristic standpoint and seeks solutions when the close national context of buildings proves *insufficient* and indeed forms an obstacle to their interpretation.¹⁹ The contrasting case studies are aimed to make possible the emergence of new meaning, to avoid reducing the material to what is already known, or to a coherent story about a particular artistic culture, national or patronal context. In the case of material that has not become 'visible' within its historiography, a challenge to the tyranny of concordance (simultaneity, sameness) is not only productive, but necessary. Ideas of geographic, national or cultural stability have subsumed ornament both at Knole and at San Martino into wider narratives of architecture at the time: as untutored, fantastical, nativist, naïve; as simple display of wealth and excess, or of education and taste. These contexts and narratives, with which it is assumed the buildings are necessarily consistent, forever postpone the oddity and the challenge of strange, unruly, contradictory decoration in a Cloister, in an elite courtly room.

Knole House in Sevenoaks, Kent, owes much of its present character to the rebuilding activity undertaken by Thomas Sackville, the first Earl of Dorset and Lord Treasurer to Elizabeth I from 1599, between 1605-1808. When Sackville took possession of the house in 1604 it was already an impressive archbishop's palace built between 1456 and 1486 for Archbishop Bouchier and expanded by Archbishop Warham in the early sixteenth century.²⁰ Two recent doctoral theses by Alden Gregory and Edward Town have studied the history of the house focusing especially on the fifteenth- to seventeenth-century interventions at Knole.²¹ The authors determined that

¹⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 40. My emphasis.

¹⁹ Wigley's analysis of architectural discourse and its binary hierarchies after all points to the way they both constitute academic disciplines and help sustain these disciplines' blind spots.

²⁰ Edward Town, "A House 'Re-Edified' - Thomas Sackville and the Transformation of Knole, 1605-1608" (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2010), 123.

²¹ Alden Gregory, "Knole: An Architectural and Social History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's House, 1456-1538" (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011); Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'."

the footprint of the house and a remarkable degree of the fabric were developed under Archbishop Bouchier in the second half of the fifteenth century, while Thomas Sackville's rebuilding in the early seventeenth updated and remodelled the house without major structural alterations apart from a few key areas.²² During Sackville's refurbishment, Stone Court (see Figure 21), adjacent to the Great Hall, was remodelled along with the south range (Figure 21 N-S), facing the garden and containing the State Apartments.²³ Interiors throughout the house were refurbished and provided with numerous marble and stone chimneypieces; plaster ceilings; woodpanelling and painted decoration, executed by key craftsmen associated with the Office of the King's Works and fashionable London milieu.²⁴

Thomas Sackville (1536-1608) was one of the Elizabethan 'new men' and the son of Richard Sackville, who had served as Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, privy councillor under Elizabeth I and under-treasurer of the exchequer.²⁵ Thomas Sackville's career cemented his family's rise and he was created Lord Buckhurst in 1567, and Earl of Dorset 1604, achieving the position of Lord Treasurer in 1599. He trained as a lawyer at the Inns of Court, was known in his youth as an accomplished poet and had travelled on the Continent; later in life he became a key courtier, Privy Councillor and diplomat, undertaking two embassies into France and the

²² Gregory, "Knoles: An Architectural and Social History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's House, 1456-1538," 210-13; Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," for the building pre-Sackville, 123-37; for Sackville's remodelling, 37-46, 223-25.

²³ "A House 'Re-Edified'," 137-46.

²⁴ Such as stonemason and sculptor Cornelius Cure and plasterer Richard Dungan; the King's Master Carpenter William Portington has also been associated with the refurbishment. For craftsmen, see *ibid.*, 147-77, 77-208; for summaries of Sackville's work, 137-46, 220-21, 23-25.

²⁵ Literary scholar Rivkah Zim has written numerous articles on aspects of Sackville's life, cf Rivkah Zim, "A Poet in Politics: Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and First Earl of Dorset (1536-1608)," *Historical Research* 79, no. 204 (2006); "Religion and the Politic Counsellor: Thomas Sackville, 1536-1608," *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 498 (2007); "Dialogue and Discretion: Thomas Sackville, Catherine De Medici and the Anjou Marriage Proposal 1571," *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 2 (1997); "Marvellously Given to Be Antiquaries': William Fleetwood's *Itinerarium* and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst," in *The Name of a Queen: William Fleetwood's Itinerarium Ad Windsor*, ed. Charles Beem and Dennis Moore (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For a synthesised overview, see Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 10-96. For Richard Sackville, see Sybil M. Jack, "Sackville, Sir Richard (D. 1566), Administrator," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

Netherlands. His interests were firmly rooted in the counties of Sussex and later Kent, with his influence consolidated through public office (Lord Lieutenant of Sussex from 1569), patronage, land acquisition and building activity at Buckhurst, Lewes and Knole.²⁶

Upon his death in 1608, Knole passed to Thomas Sackville's son Robert and then swiftly to his grandson Richard, the third Earl of Dorset, in 1609.²⁷ This period of history at Knole is known for the diaries kept by Richard's wife, Lady Anne Clifford.²⁸ Her diaries between 1616 and 1619 are notable for giving a sense of life at Knole, although without much reference to architecture. During her Knole stay, Anne Clifford's diaries primarily chart the protracted acrimony between herself, her uncle Francis Clifford, her husband and even the King over the issue of her Clifford inheritance in the north of England.²⁹ Knole has stayed in Sackville hands, albeit having been passed down indirectly several times, and interventions after Thomas Sackville's work were fairly modest, so as to – as Edward Town argues – “emphasise the notion of a house unchanged by time.”³⁰ One of the house's more famous later inhabitants was the writer Vita Sackville-West, who grew up in the house but lost possession of it to her uncle when her father died, and whose writings of the house and family offer the valuable perspective of an inhabitant.³¹

²⁶ Zim, "A Poet in Politics."; "The Politic Counsellor."; Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 13-14, 49-53, 67-71, 96-99, 109-13, 13-18.

²⁷ On Richard Sackville and Knole in the early seventeenth century, see Vita Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles* (London: National Trust, 1991), 60-88; Robert Sackville-West, *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 25-43.

²⁸ She lived at Knole between 1609 and 1624, the dates of her marriage to Richard Sackville and the latter's death respectively; her Knole diaries start in 1616.

²⁹ Anne Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (Stroud: Sutton Pub., 2003), viii-x, 29-87; Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 63-67; Sackville-West, *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*, 29-31, 33-37.

³⁰ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 33. On the troubled Knole inheritance, see Sackville-West, *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*, xix-xxi.

³¹ *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*, 185-88, 203-35, 32 for her sense of loss. Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* was inspired by the former's relationship with Vita Sackville-West and features an ancestral house directly inspired by Knole.

My second case study is the Charterhouse (or Certosa) of San Martino in Naples. The Carthusian order was founded in 1084 by Bruno of Cologne and six companions.³² The first Carthusian foundation, the Grande Chartreuse from which the order draws its name, was located in the French Alps near Grenoble and is still the mother house of the order.³³ The Carthusian order was founded on the principles of a retreat into the desert of solitude, modelled on the first Desert Fathers. The dedication to solitude and silence was one of the most distinctive Carthusian practices and shaped the ordinances, structure and architecture of a Carthusian monastery.³⁴ Thus most Carthusian foundations were organised around the

³² On the Carthusians, see a Carthusian and J. Dubois, "Certosini," in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, ed. Guerino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca (Milan: Edizioni Paoline, 1974-2003); "Chartreux," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Fernand Cabrol, Henri Leclercq, and Henri Irénée Marrou (Paris: Letouzey, 1920-53); Robin Bruce Lockhart, *Halfway to Heaven: The Hidden Life of the Sublime Carthusians* (London: Thames Methuen, 1985). A key volume is *Certose e certosini in Europa: Atti del convegno alla Certosa di San Lorenzo Padula, 22, 23, 24 settembre 1988*, (Certosa di San Lorenzo, Padula, 1988). In English, the best overviews can be found in the work of Dennis D. Martin and James Hogg, cf. James Hogg, "Everyday Life in the Charterhouse in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980); Dennis D. Martin, *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo De Ponte* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997); "Carthusians During the Reformation Era: "Cartusia nunquam deformata, reformari resistens"," *The Catholic Historical Review* 81, no. 1 (1995); *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). See also Gordon Mursell, *The Theology of the Carthusian Life in the Writings of St. Bruno and Guigo I*, *Analecta Cartusiana* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1988). For more recent problems, Julian M. Luxford, *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

³³ It was the subject of a 2005 film *Into Great Silence*, which conveys the order's ideals of seclusion, silence and simplicity and captures the rhythms and sounds of daily life in a Charterhouse, Philip Gröning, "Into Great Silence," (2005).

³⁴ The Carthusian order does not have a Rule; instead, it has developed through a series of ordinances, beginning around 1127 with the first 'Customs' of the Grande Chartreuse, purportedly written by Prior Guigo I on the behest of other, smaller foundations. The first printed version of the statutes was published in Basel in 1510. The Carthusian order showed a great interest in its own legislature, summarised by the late-seventeenth-century Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, Dom Innocent Le Masson, who documented the succession of Carthusian statutes in his volume *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis* (Innocent Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis tribus libris distributa, auctore R.P.D. Innocentio Le Masson. Nova editio*. (Montreuil-sur-Mer: Typis Cartusiae S. Mariae de Pratis, 1894).) Le Masson gives great attention to both

separation between choir or ordained monks (Fathers) and lay monks or conversi (Brothers): a Great Cloister or 'desert' surrounded by the cells of the Fathers and a minor or Procurator's cloister with the accommodation of the lay brothers and the spaces dedicated to the practical running of the monastery.³⁵ The insistence on solitude and silence also meant that a typical Carthusian cell comprised a self-contained two-storey cottage, complete with workroom and its own individual enclosed garden.

The Certosa di San Martino was founded by Charles, Duke of Calabria in 1325 on the steep hillside known as Monte Sant'Erasmus towering above the city of Naples.³⁶ It was endowed by

the continuity and changes in the statutes and ascribes the Carthusians' spiritual purity to the steadfastness of their observance of these rules. For an overview of Carthusian legislature, see Hogg, "Everyday Life."

³⁵ On Carthusian architecture, see Jean-Pierre Aniel, *Les maisons de chartreux: des origines à la chartreuse de Pavie* (Geneva: Droz, 1983); Dom Augustin Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des chartreux*, 2 vols., *Analecta Cartusiana* (Séguinac: La Grande Chartreuse, 1998); Giovanni Leoncini, "Il monasterio certosino: attuazione di un ideale," in *Certose e certosini in Europa: Atti del convegno alla Certosa di San Lorenzo Padula, 22, 23, 24 settembre 1988* (Naples: Sergio Civita Editore, 1990); *La Certosa di Firenze: nei suoi rapporti con l'architettura certosina*, *Analecta Cartusiana* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 1979). The Procurator was responsible for the charterhouse's relations with the outside world, including business and landholdings; the lay brothers thus came under his charge.

³⁶ Most scholarship on the Certosa di San Martino has been undertaken by Italian scholars, but in recent years it has been the subject of two doctoral theses by John Nicholas Napoli and Concetta Martone Dragani (John Nicholas Napoli, "Fashioning the Certosa di San Martino: Ornament, Illusion, and Artistic Collaboration in Early-Modern Naples" (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2003); Concetta Martone Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth: Negotiating Sacred Space at the Church of the Certosa Di San Martino in Early-Seventeenth-Century Naples" (PhD thesis, Temple University, 2012). Napoli's book on San Martino, arising from his doctoral research, is a key English-language resource on Baroque San Martino, while Dragani's thesis provides a good overview of the monastery before the seventeenth century, cf John Nicholas Napoli, *The Ethics of Ornament in Early Modern Naples: Fashioning the Certosa di San Martino* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth," 1-98. See also Raffaello Causa, *L'arte nella Certosa di San Martino a Napoli* (Cava dei Tirreni: Di Mauro, 1973); Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*; Cantone, *Napoli barocca*; Charlotte Nichols, "Ecclesiastical Architecture and the Religious Orders," in *Naples (Artistic Centres of the Italian Renaissance)*, ed. Marcia B. Hall and Thomas Willette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 145-51.

Charles and his daughter Joanna (who saw the building through to consecration in 1368) with land and numerous royal privileges. The current state of the monastery is largely a result of a major expansion and refurbishment started at the end of the sixteenth century and continuing into the beginning of the eighteenth.³⁷ At this stage, the Great Cloister was remodelled, the individual cottages split up to provide two storeys of cells and the cottage gardens replaced by panoramic terraces, a Women's Church was built outside the entrance to the monastery, the church expanded eastwards and opened to additional chapels on the south side, the subsidiary rooms of the church (Sacristy, Treasury, Chapter House, Parlour, Lay Brothers' Choir) were extended, and the Procurators' Cloister remodelled (Figure 151).³⁸ The Church and key adjacent rooms were lavishly decorated with paintings, sculpture, marblework and furnishings.³⁹ As has often been noted, the monks sought out and promoted some of the key artists of the Neapolitan Baroque era, such as Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, Jusepe de Ribera, Massimo Stanzione, Domenico Gargiulo (known as Micco Spadaro) and foremost, the sculptor-architect Cosimo Fanzago, whose marblework, inlay, sculpture and architectural ornament was installed across the complex of San Martino.⁴⁰ Fanzago's role at the monastery has become notorious through the wealth of documentary evidence associated with a protracted lawsuit brought by the architect and his heirs after the end of his collaboration with the monks in 1656 and revealing the extent of his workshop's operations both at San Martino and across Naples.⁴¹

³⁷ See Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 25-28; *Ethics of Ornament*, 2 and also Appendix 1.

³⁸ Adele Pezzullo, "Rivisitando la Certosa: dal restauro al nuovo museo," in *San Martino: immagini e memorie*, ed. Nicola Spinosa (Naples: Grimaldi & C. Editori, 2000); Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth," 95-100, 10-15, 30-31, 35-44.

³⁹ "Between Heaven and Earth," 115-28, 46-78.

⁴⁰ Christopher Marshall gives a good overview of the Carthusians' patronage at San Martino in the seventeenth century, cf Christopher R. Marshall, *Baroque Naples and the Industry of Painting: The World in the Workbench* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 171-81.

⁴¹ This formed the basis of John Nicholas Napoli's thesis, Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino." Napoli argued that the documents, including contracts (of 1623 and 1626) as well as payments and appraisals linked with the liquidation of Fanzago's accounts in 1631 and 1656 reveal what he calls the "mass-production of sculpture" that allowed Fanzago to rapidly adapt his designs at San Martino and to work on numerous commissions across Naples simultaneously, employing a large stock of pre-existing and interchangeable architectural elements, *ibid.*, 108-09, 64, 77, 86, 89-90. For an overview of the documents associated with Fanzago's activity at San Martino, see *ibid.*, 110-11, footnote 239, and 110-90

Both of my case studies come from architectural traditions where the importance of decoration and ornament has been widely acknowledged, but also used as a means of marginalising those traditions.⁴² Both are served by a theoretically underdeveloped and under-diversified scholarship, although the situation is rapidly changing (especially with respect to Naples).⁴³ Yet

for a detailed discussion of both Fanzago's operation at San Martino and the legal process following his departure in 1656.

⁴² For English architecture, cf John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830* (London: Penguin Books, 1953); Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson & the Elizabethan Country House*, ed. Mark Girouard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); *Elizabethan Architecture*; Nicholas Cooper, *The Jacobean Country House: From the Archives of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press, 2006). Thus, Summerson writes "Classical architecture made its way in England not as a method of building but as a mode of decorative design. [...] In building [the 'new fashion'] was still, precisely, a form of applied decoration: it was applied to the old stock of building tradition." Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, 22-23. For Naples, the classic study is Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*. See an analysis of the issues at stake, including Italian *meridionalismo* which cast Southern Italy as backward and exotic, characterised by excess and sensuality, Melissa Calaresu and Helen Hills, "Between Exoticism and Marginalisation: New Approaches to Naples," in *New Approaches to Naples C.1500-C.1800: The Power of Place*, ed. Melissa Calaresu and Helen Hills (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Helen Hills, "Introduction: Directions to Baroque Naples," *Open Arts Journal*, no. 6 (2017).

⁴³ In England, recent years have seen the development of new approaches with Tara Hamling's scholarship challenging the long-standing trope of British visual impoverishment in the Early Modern period, Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); "Visual Culture," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock, and Abigail Shinn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). The 1990s saw a rise of new scholarship inflected by gender theory, but these studies failed to significantly alter the field: Christy Anderson, "Masculine and Unaffected: Inigo Jones and the Classical Ideal," *Art Journal* 56, no. 2 (1997); Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); "Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House," *Assemblage* 18 (1992). For recent approaches to Naples, Cordelia Warr and Janis Elliott, eds., *Art and Architecture in Naples, 1266-1713: New Approaches* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); John A. Marino, *Becoming Neapolitan: Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Melissa Calaresu and

they represent huge opportunities in relation to architecture, decoration and Early Modern art more broadly.

The Certosa di San Martino is remarkable for the richness of its decoration, which includes multicoloured marble inlay, complex painted schemes in fresco and oil panels, stucco and gilt, and Cosimo Fanzago's remarkable experiments with classical ornamental vocabulary. Although spanning a century and a half of interventions by a multitude of painters, craftsmen, sculptors, stonemasons and architects, it has also been recognised for its unusual degree of unity and collaboration.⁴⁴ The Certosa di San Martino represents a key elite institution in Spanish Baroque Naples, one of Europe's most populous cities and a crux of Spanish colonial power.⁴⁵ At the same time, its interpretation has proved a particular challenge for scholarship because traditional approaches fail to reconcile the tension between the lavish decoration of San Martino and the Carthusian ideals of asceticism, silence and simplicity.

Knole, on the other hand, is one of the best-surviving examples of Jacobean interior decoration and is striking in the visual oddity and complexity of its ornament. It is a monument to elite Elizabethan and Jacobean court culture, celebrated for its elaborate manipulation of ritual and ceremony and its sophisticated literature focused on ambiguity, complexity and paradox.⁴⁶ Yet

Helen Hills, eds., *New Approaches to Naples C. 1500–C. 1800: The Power of Place* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Marshall, *Industry of Painting*. Neapolitan 'excess', in particular, is being re-evaluated in terms of materiality, cf Helen Hills, *The Matter of Miracles: Neapolitan Baroque Sanctity and Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Joris Van Gastel, "Celano's Naples: Itineraries through a Material City (1692)," *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani* 29, no. 1 (2014).

⁴⁴ Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 1-10.

⁴⁵ Tommaso Astarita, *A Companion to Early Modern Naples* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Thomas Dandeleit and John Marino, eds., *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion 1500-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Marino, *Becoming Neapolitan: Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples*, including 138-53; Marshall, *Industry of Painting*, including 171-81.

⁴⁶ Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Pimlico, 1999); Fred Schurink, "The Intimacy of Manuscript and the Pleasure of Print: Literary Culture from *the Schoolmaster* to *Euphues*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

there is also a strong scholarly mismatch between the sophistication ascribed to Tudor literary culture and the imputed naivety of contemporaneous architectural production.

In both cases, patronage is an obstacle as well as an opportunity. While the reduction of decoration to presenting the prestige of a religious institution or a secular patron has hindered the interpretation of decoration at Knole and San Martino, the seventeenth-century urban hermitage and the well-seasoned poet-diplomat both represent opportunities to examine how decoration intersects with power, politics and identity in complex ways.

In the thesis that served as basis for his recent book *The Ethics of Ornament in Early Modern Naples: Fashioning the Certosa di San Martino*, John Nicholas Napoli defines ornament (in distinction from decoration) as “the part of decoration that has no other purpose but to enhance its carrier.”⁴⁷ The Certosa di San Martino, he suggests, spectacularly blurs such distinctions: “The Certosa’s decoration becomes ornamental.”⁴⁸ Yet the way ornament (or decoration) is conceived in Napoli’s approach to the Certosa is significant. Ornament is something that *enhances*. It is thus crucially related to a carrier. Yet this carrier must precede and predate the ornament that enhances it – and ornament must not constitute a material, substantial change, but rather a heightening or honing of something pre-existing. Thus, Napoli characterises San Martino as “comprised architecturally of simple spaces that are then decorated in spectacular fashion”; decoration is indeed “applied”.⁴⁹

This view of decoration upholds certain tropes in Alberti’s *De re aedificatoria* discussed above: of decoration as enhancement, adornment, ‘dressing up’ of a pre-existing architecture. It is this aspect of decoration that Napoli explores in *The Ethics of Ornament*, focusing especially on the marble revetment of the monastic church at San Martino.⁵⁰ My study pushes in a different direction. Knole material already challenges this perspective. Although characterised in

⁴⁷ Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 88. I have chosen not to uphold the distinction between ornament and decoration and use the two interchangeably.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁰ Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 33-141, 254-66. His study thus draws attention to how Carthusian visitation reports describe the church as a dressed-up bride, *ibid.*, 254-60.

scholarship by a similar understanding of decoration as enhancement, English architecture has also long been recognised for a certain oddity, a marked emphasis on the fantastical and strange, indeed earning great Elizabethan and Jacobean country houses the title of ‘prodigy houses’.⁵¹ How might the prodigality of Jacobean ornament alter or disrupt the conception of decoration as enhancement, addition, adornment, dressing? How might it also inspire different approaches to the decoration at San Martino?

There has been renewed interest in ornament that challenges categories, transgresses boundaries and questions limits, especially in the context of print culture, invention, craftsmanship, nature and abundance.⁵² I aim to further this discussion by focusing specifically on what happens when such ornament intersects with architecture.

Older scholarship on ornament tended to approach decoration through an emphasis on its perceptual characteristics along the model of Ernst Gombrich’s exhaustive *The Sense of Order*.⁵³ While Oleg Grabar’s seminal 1992 study *The Mediation of Ornament* is nuanced and rich, its focus was shaped through an assumption of the an-iconicity of Islamic art and by defining ornament in opposition testifies to the dichotomous logic of the field.⁵⁴ A new wave of scholarship on ornament and decoration is enriching the discourse, however, and moving beyond these models.⁵⁵ Emblematic of this new scholarship is the recent *Histories of Ornament*,

⁵¹ Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, 30-55.

⁵² See Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Madeleine C. Viljoen, "Christoph Jamnitzer's Neuw Grottesken Buch, Cosmography, and Early Modern Ornament," *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 2 (2016).

⁵³ E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979); David Brett, *Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure & Ideology in the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵⁴ Thus, Grabar concludes by suggesting that “beautification [...] is [ornament’s] sole purpose”, Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). 228.

⁵⁵ Cf Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*; Gülru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne, eds., *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Clare Lapraik Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). This includes John Nicholas Napoli’s study of the Certosa di San

edited by Alina Payne and Gülru Necipoğlu, which resists the universalising tendencies of older studies and calls attentions to the multiple and complex historicities of ornament.

In this thesis, I have chosen to eschew synoptic study.⁵⁶ My aim is to resist overarching conclusions and to avoid imbuing decoration with new essence by simply opposing, or indeed rearranging – and hence upholding – the frameworks that ‘place’ ornament in architectural history.⁵⁷ My chapters are arranged around four distinct architectural spaces, the Painted Stair and Great Chamber at Knole, and the Lay Brothers’ Choir and Great Cloister at San Martino. Much of the material examined in the chapters has here been given its first in-depth reading. The individual chapters allow me to examine decoration in a way that acknowledges contradiction and complexity and pushes against the grain of simplistic readings. Part of this thesis’ aim is unapologetically about method: to develop models for reading decoration that would open the field to further insight.

Martino, Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*. See also the exhibition catalogue Stephen J. Campbell, ed. *Ornament & Illusion: Carlo Crivelli of Venice* (London: Paul Hoberton, 2015). Franklin Rudolf Ankersmit, "Rococo as the Dissipation of Boredom," in *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History*, ed. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Ittai Weinryb, "Living Matter: Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 52, no. 2 (2013); Katie Jakobiec, "Beyond Form and Fancy: The Merchant Palaces of Kazimierz Dolny in Poland," *Architectural History* 60 (2017); Viljoen, "Christoph Jamnitzer's Neuw Grotessken Buch. "; Jason Nguyen, "Fire, Décor, and Heating Machines," *Oxford Art Journal* 40, no. 3 (2017). A fascinating perspective on what could conceivably be considered decoration in a much wider, political, social, horticultural and economic context is offered by Chandra Mukerji, "Dress and Address: Garden Design and Material Identity in Seventeenth-Century France," in *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France*, ed. Mirka Beneš and Dianne Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁶ There have been recent studies which take a more universal approach, see Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*. For a genealogical study of the motif of grotesque, see Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau*.

⁵⁷ Approaches that aim to take ornament seriously can easily slip into producing new essentialist versions. Thus, Guest approaches ornament through its Classical and rhetorical association with order, framing and mediation, examining the Renaissance period as a moment of rupture where these cosmic functions gave way to historicist and stylistic uses of ornament, cf Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*. 1-17 and 21-66.

Chapter 1 uses the Painted Stair in Knole, Kent, to examine the paradoxes arising from the fraught position of decoration within architectural history generally, and British architectural history in particular. It focuses on the generally-acknowledged link between the allegorical panels that make up part of the painted decoration and the poetic activity of the house's patron, Thomas Sackville, to explore a wider point about the way complexity – despite nominal reference to it – is evacuated from interpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture. In order to challenge the conventional didactic readings of the allegories and the flattening out of decoration into detachable, superfluous layer, I employ a phenomenological approach that insists on an embodied viewer as a crucial part of the room's functioning. I thus consider how the decoration of the Painted Stair produces its own complex poetic fictions, worked out through subtle architectural means, that cannot be reduced to a didactic, verbal 'message'.

Chapter 2 furthers the examination of painted decoration by examining the extensive figural decoration of the Lay Brothers' Choir from an architectural point of view. This largely overlooked space covered with landscape scenes set within a fictive architectural framework has been interpreted as a straightforward link to the role of the Carthusian lay brothers, who undertake all manner of manual work in Carthusian foundations. Instead, I focus on the operation of illusionism and fictive architecture in this decoration, interrogating especially how and why imagery of lush landscapes presents an architecture seemingly opening up, coming apart and meeting its own edge. I employ the theoretical writings of Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti to explore the ways in which Micco Spadaro's painted decoration develops its own architectural ideology.

Chapter 3 undertakes a close examination of the critical role of decoration in producing a room, a building, an interior. It focuses on the carved decoration of the Great Chamber at Knole, including a frieze populated by a startling array of crouching, grimacing, disconcerting monsters. The decoration of the Great Chamber resists an iconographic reading; instead, in order to interpret its strange ornament, the chapter considers how the decoration might be seen as productive of effects. It places the perceptual effects of this high-relief, dispersed decoration both within the context of recent scholarship on Early Modern uses and conceptualisations of elite interiors, and of twentieth-century critical theories of the uncanny. These frameworks, coupled with two key responses to Knole (Anne Clifford's in the seventeenth century and Vita Sackville-West's in the early twentieth), allow me to explore what kinds of interior and room the

decoration helps bring into being and the ways in which decoration – besides providing pleasure and adornment – can also be seen to trouble and disturb.

Chapter 4 directly tackles a methodological challenge in thinking decoration which is not compact or uniform. In the Great Cloister at San Martino one is faced with a dilemma of how to interpret its disparate elements together without reducing them to a single, coherent symbolic meaning. The chapter therefore devotes close attention to the Cloister's key components: the seven busts of Carthusian saints set in the corners of the cloister; the elaborate door surrounds which carry these busts; the architectonic and repeating ornament that punctuates the cloister's arcades; and the elaborate cemetery enclosure complete with marble skulls placed in one corner of the cloister garth. In considering all these elements, the chapter pushes against the scholarly tendency to treat the cloister through the discrete disciplinary lenses of sculpture or architecture and allows the contradictory performances of its decoration to come into view.

Together, these case studies allow me to explore new ways of approaching Renaissance decoration and to pursue key questions about the problem of ornament in Early Modern architecture. How does decoration affect architecture?⁵⁸ How can decoration be thought not as additional, as an enhancement? How does it constitute experience of and thinking about architecture when not seen as supplementary to an architecture already constituted elsewhere?⁵⁹ How does it shape what a building *is*?⁶⁰ How can it be thought architecturally?

And what art-historical positions are served by policing distinctions between architecture and decoration? What intellectual positions does it sustain and what sorts of inquiry does it preclude? What are the specific modes of such erasures? These are some of the key questions I hope to address.

⁵⁸ Not simply from a formal standpoint (i.e. how does it stylistically help categorise a building; how does it participate in the formal composition of architecture as 'artwork') but rather from an interpretative one.

⁵⁹ See Jacques Derrida's discussion of supplement or *parergon*, Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially 52-67.

⁶⁰ These questions are not to assert the dominance of decoration over other more traditional categories of architectural analysis, such as planning, composition, ceremonial routes, use etc., but to attend to how decoration intersects with those categories and to ask how that attention alters those categories.

Chapter 1 The Painted Stair at Knole - The Question of Complexity

The Elizabethan and Jacobean love for complexity has been a long-standing trope in architectural history.¹ The idea of ‘device’ as a cultural phenomenon across media, from painting, poetry and architecture, to fashion and festivals, has proved a key explanatory strategy.² Yet whilst it acknowledges the importance of the strange, unsettling and marvellous in Tudor architecture, scholarship struggles to explore what complexity in architecture might entail. Rather, in paradoxical fashion, it is marginalised just as it is acknowledged. Nicholas Cooper writes:

The decoration of Jacobean houses catered to a contemporary taste for complexity, ingenuity and pattern. But in the long run, such complexity and elaboration would collapse under its own weight. Too much moralising becomes tedious; too much intricate ornament, churned out by the yard, becomes tiring.³

The decoration of such buildings is thus treated as only so much useless matter, a thick layer waiting to peel off and reveal something more essential and simple (implicitly, the more classically ‘correct’ architecture of Inigo Jones). Complexity becomes an applied ‘finish’,

¹ From John Summerson’s emotive descriptions of ‘prodigy’ houses through the seminal work of Mark Girouard, to Nicholas Cooper’s *The Jacobean Country House*, see Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*; Girouard, *Robert Smythson & the Elizabethan Country House*; *Elizabethan Architecture*; Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*, 17-19.

² Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). 86-87.

³ Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*. 19. More than twenty years earlier, Mark Girouard characterises Jacobean architecture as “rich and exciting food” in his seminal book on Robert Smythson yet evokes “the danger that the outlines will become too fantastic, the detail too overpowering”, again described in terms of unsustainable weight. See Girouard, *Robert Smythson & the Elizabethan Country House*, 36.

undifferentiated and generic. Furthermore, this move means that the nature of complexity in these buildings need never be questioned - its presence is merely identified through symptoms (pattern, device, allegory, geometric figure, inscription), but its modes of functioning rarely explored.⁴

This chapter examines the decoration of the Painted Stair (Figure 1) at Knole, Kent, created in Thomas Sackville's rebuilding of the house between 1605-1608.⁵ The interpretative opportunities and difficulties that the Painted Stair presents help me to elucidate and explore a divergence: the paradoxical space between what is observed (so frequently in scholarship - the alien, strange aspects of Tudor architecture) and what is discussed (iconography).

1.1 "Too much moralising" - Interpreting Allegory in the Painted Stair

The Painted Stair at Knole is one of the most extensive surviving Jacobean interiors. Its rich imagery and coordination of motifs across media is exceptional both at Knole, and in the wider context of contemporary architecture. It lies on the ceremonial route from the Great Hall to the Great Chamber (now known as the Ballroom) on the first floor and comprises a wooden open-

⁴ The state of affairs in architectural history regarding the complex is striking in comparison to literary studies. Recent reinterpretations of John Lyly's *Euphues* (1578) - long considered merely an example of stylistic excess - have drawn attention to the interrelation of its thematic and formal concerns, and its ambiguous tackling of contemporary literary culture; see Schurink, "The Intimacy of Manuscript." Schurink, 2009.

⁵ No scholarly monograph on Knole exists, but two recent doctoral theses have studied the chronology of the building at Knole in detail: Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'. "; Gregory, "Knole: An Architectural and Social History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's House, 1456-1538." See also Robert Sackville-West, *Knole, Kent* (Swindon: National Trust, 1998); *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*; Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*; Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*. The guidebook written by Vita Sackville-West be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

well stair set against three walls, separated from the landings by arcades, with carved newel posts, painted walls and elaborate door frames on both floors.

Most interpretations of the space focus on the three sets of allegorical 'panels' painted on the walls. The ground floor carries the Four Ages of Man (Figure 6); the three walls of the stairwell have the Five Senses (Figure 1 and Figure 3), and six scenes of Virtues (Figure 2) are painted on the walls of the upper landing. Cooper writes:

The meanings of the individual sets of paintings are clear enough; taken together, they may have been intended to show that man learns throughout his life, by the proper exercise of his natural faculties, thus enabling him to contend victoriously with his vices and to achieve pure virtue at the end.⁶

Tara Hamling focuses on the manner in which spiritual meaning, domestic space and bodily movement could intersect in the Elizabethan and Jacobean setting. She suggests that in order to avoid censure in Protestant England, decoration could take on a moral function: the Painted Stair thus "alludes to the spiritual ascent of man away from bodily preoccupations, towards higher moral and spiritual virtues. [...] Thus, the spiritual journey of the soul is symbolically mirrored in the physical ascent up the stairs."⁷

What is striking is that although complexity might be hinted at in scholarship, the rich, multi-layered work of the Painted Stair collapses into simplicity in such accounts: "a suitably moral autobiography for an old man", according to Cooper.⁸ The neatness of the alignment between ceremonial route, upward movement and moral elevation means that the depictions are treated as generic themes; their placement a universal device. The move towards such a stable

⁶ Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*.

⁷ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*.

⁸ Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*.

'message' evacuates the ambiguities of what the themes of the allegories may have meant to Thomas Sackville. The 'lesson' is finished, rather than open, contested.⁹ This is how it becomes only so much 'tedious moralising' of Cooper's passage quoted above.

Such a reading depends on a lifting-out of the panels from their architectural context. To take the sets of allegorical panels 'together' at Knole is an effort. Although they are united by a common colour-palette of monochrome light greys for the figures, and two-tone dark grey backgrounds, they vary in size and format. Their location throughout the space does not encourage a linear reading - it is impossible to simply 'pick up' the thread at one end and move from image to image as one progresses in the space. Old Age is deposited into a dark corner just to the left of the entrance from the Hall (at the left-hand edges of Figure 5 and Figure 10). The rest of the Ages unfold towards the ground-floor door at the opposite end, away from the steps to mount the stair. The panels of Senses vary in size and height on the wall; the most elaborate panels depicting Smell and Taste only come into view at the end of the ceremonial route through (by this point the Ages have disappeared out of sight, in the shadows of the lower level). Although the moral 'message' is not entirely absent in situ, it cannot be assumed to flow easily. To put the pieces together is to struggle against a multifarious, eye-catching, variegated fabric of the space's decoration.

Furthermore, the didactic reading elides the fact that Sackville was a highly educated, sophisticated patron. As Edward Town suggests in his recent doctoral thesis, the Painted Stair is striking in the way it intersects with other, non-architectural activities of its builder.¹⁰ In his youth, Sackville was educated at the Inns of Court and actively contributed to the literary culture centred on the Courts.¹¹ In 1561, he co-wrote the blank-verse tragedy *Gorboduc*, performed at

⁹ Maria Hayward, "In the Eye of the Beholder: 'Seeing' Textiles in the Early Modern Interior," *Textile History* 47, no. 1 (2016): 30 is a recent example of the facility with which this account is transmitted, summarising the Painted Stair as "decorated with imagery intended to educate the visitor as they climbed from ground to first floor".

¹⁰ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 187-98.

¹¹ On the Inns of Court as literary centres, see Jessica Winston, *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558-1581* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Chapters 5

the Inner Temple Christmas revels, and wrote the dedicatory sonnet to Thomas Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's extremely popular *The Book of the Courtier*.¹² Between 1563-4 he is known to have been in Rome.¹³ Letters back to England document Sackville's expedition to France in 1571 with the secret mission to negotiate the marriage of Queen Elizabeth to the duke of Anjou.¹⁴ In 1587, Sackville was in the Netherlands, caught between the conflicting demands of the Dutch States General on the one hand, and Robert Dudley and the Queen on the other.¹⁵ In 1582, he became the chancellor of University of Oxford.¹⁶

The Painted Stair appears to be an ideal art-historical subject, in that Sackville's literary activities provide clear links to the themes of the painted allegories. Town notes that "[t]he scheme was both personal to Sackville in its allusions to his poetic career, and amenable to a wider audience through its didactic message, and could only have been conceived by Thomas Sackville himself."¹⁷ The Four Ages of Man provide an immediate link to Sackville's verse epistle 'Sackvyles Olde Age', unpublished in his own time and attributed to Sackville in 1989 by Rivkah Zim and M. B. Parkes.¹⁸

and 7 discuss, respectively, the *Mirror for Magistrates* and *Gorboduc*, with which Sackville was directly involved.

¹² Zim, "A Poet in Politics."

¹³ See discussion in Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 25-31.

¹⁴ For an excellent analysis of the literary and courtly strategies employed in the letters, see Zim, "Dialogue and Discretion."

¹⁵ For a summary of Sackville's diplomacy in Netherlands, see "The Politic Counsellor," 902-04. For extensive published letters, Dudley Carleton, *Cabala, Sive Scrinia Sacra: Mysteries of State and Government, in Letters of Illustrious Persons, and Great Ministers of State, [...]* (London: Thomas Sawbridge, 1691).

¹⁶ Zim, "The Politic Counsellor," 906-10.

¹⁷ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 196.

¹⁸ Rivkah Zim and M. B. Parkes, "'Sackvyles Olde Age' a Newly Discovered Poem by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, Earl of Dorset (c. 1536-1608)," *The Review of English Studies* 40, no. 157 (1989). Town also draws attention to a connection to the 'Induction' of Sackville's contribution to the *Mirror for*

In this 236-line poem, Sackville directly engages the question of the Ages of Man and their appropriate employments. He contrasts the inexorable passage of time and its effects on man with the cyclical nature of the seasons; juxtaposes images of 'lusty' youth and hoary age and, according to Zim, poetically constructs his own identity as entering an age of autumnal 'fruitfulness', ready to reap the rewards of education through public service.¹⁹

To read the poem the same way as the Painted Stair is habitually interpreted, however, would be to miss its many ambiguities. According to Zim, the poem must have been written before 1574 (when Sackville would have been 38 years old) but may be closer to the date of 1566.²⁰ Although the poem is often seen as a simple declaration of Sackville's renunciation of his youthful pursuits, the work is delightfully contradictory.²¹ Sackville states his resolve at the end of the poem thus:

O myghtty loue here yelde I vp to the
the harte and hand that sarved the so longe
the lusty penne that wonted for to be
the swete complaynt off woffull louers wronge
ladies off court farewell and court w'all
the pleasaunt shynnyng [shyn] off your bewtyes lyght
the glisteryng palaice and the golden halle
vayne wretched pompe dothe me nomore delyght
Away pleasures away pasttyme and playe

Magistrates, see Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 194-95. "So for Sackville, the inclusion of de Vos's Four Ages of Man [in the Painted Stair] had a multi-layered meaning. Ostensibly, it reminded those who view these panels of the transience of life, and the inevitability of death, but it also made subtle biographical allusions to the trajectory of Sackville's life and his poetry itself."

¹⁹ Zim and Parkes, "Sackvyles Olde Age."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Sackville-West, *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*, 18.

flatteryngē delyghtes depart I ye reiecte
vnto the hevenly kyngē that lives for aye
my selffe and all hence forthe wyll I dērecte
my pen shall paynt his honour and his prayse
and wt my mouthe furthe wyll I spred his Fame
and when this wretched erthly masse decaies
my Soule in blysse shall magnify his name.²²

Sackville bids his farewell to pastimes, play, court ladies and flattering delights, most notably promising to give over his 'lusty penne' to the service of God instead. Zim and Parkes suggest that Sackville draws on a topos of coming into maturity as a time of fruitfulness, service and duty.²³ Remarking on the inexorable passage of time, he intends to replace "folies past wt frute off present paines", "idle youth wt aged diligence".²⁴ Certainly these matters will have been on Sackville's mind after his father's death in 1566.²⁵ Yet Sackville's poem seems more an entreaty to himself, pre-figuring, rather than documenting, a hoary man deprived of the green lustiness of youth. Substantial parts of the poem linger over rich imagery of the seasons and nature that revel in the delights of poetry and take stock of Sackville's many youthful pursuits. Illustrating the inexorable passage of time, he catalogues his interests and activities with vigour:

In mvses while i pas awaie the tyme
off Troylus the double wo to here
the knyghtes storie and the reve's ryme
the myllers tale and eke off chaunteclere
in Surreas verse while fyxed is my loye
his englyshe vyrgell for to read and waie
off lust Aeneas and the fall off troye
and wyates psalmes while that i synge and saie

²² Ll. 221-236. I have emended the poem following Zim and Parkes' suggestions for clarity. Zim and Parkes, "Sackvyles Olde Age," 25.

²³ Ibid., 4-6.

²⁴ Ll. 187-188.

²⁵ Zim and Parkes, "Sackvyles Olde Age," 8.

in court amyd the heavenly ladyes bryght
to fede myne eyes whyle I somtyme desyre
and wth the stroke that reaves me off my syght
while sparclynge In my breste I feale the fyre
[...]
swete frendes while I embrace and to my loue
Some lustie ditie while i do Indite
wythein my stody while I mvse and move
to the fraunces while I these verses wryte
age creapethe on [...] ²⁶

Sackville's tone is impassioned, he lingers lovingly over the pursuits of youth as he denounces them. As he promises to leave the delights of poetry behind, he does so in the form of a long poem. The last lines bring the matter into Sackville's present moment: "wythein my stody while I mvse and move / to the fraunces while I these verses wryte", referring to Dr Thomas Francis, a renowned physician to whom the poem is thought to be dedicated.²⁷ Indeed, although he promises himself to mature pursuits, this change is still primarily charted through poetry: through the longing denouncement of his literary heroes, Chaucer, Surrey, Wyatt.²⁸ There is great relish in his ode to them, just as he promises to leave them behind.²⁹

By 1608, the question of age will have taken on a different cast to that of over 30 years previously. As Town suggests, by the time Knole was being redecorated, the themes of the allegory were "pertinent for Sackville, not least because of his preoccupation with his health and

²⁶ Ll. 85-96, 101-105.

²⁷ Zim and Parkes, "Sackvyles Olde Age," 2-3.

²⁸ Ll. 197-220.

²⁹ Ll. 85-92.

his impending mortality.³⁰ Over the years, Sackville repeatedly mentioned his ill health in his letters.³¹ Thus in 1572 he comments on his kidney stones:

For near two thousand years, philosophers have been writing and wrangling in their search for *summum bonum*, but have never found time to spend an hour in seeking out *summum malum* [...] In few words then, *Experto crede Roberto*, if there be any *summum malum* in earth beyond that mischievous *malum* of the stone, let me never have credit with you more.³²

A letter to Thomas Heneage from Sackville's expedition in France in 1571 comments on the death of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, expressing melancholy over the passage of time: "Thus you see how our frendes faile in this world and that ther is nothing but transitory treasure here".³³

Town furthermore draws attention to the striking echoes between the decoration of the Painted Stair and Sackville's dedicatory sonnet to Hoby's 1561 translation of *The Courtier*.³⁴

These royall kings, that reare up to the skye
Their Palaice tops, and deck them all with gold:
With rare and curious woorkes they feed the eye:
And shoue what riches here great Princes hold.

³⁰ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 194.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

³² Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Allan George Finch, Esq., of Burley-on-the-Hill, Rutland*, vol. 1, Mss. Of A. G. Finch, Esq., of Burnley-on-the-Hill, Rutland, Vol. I (Historical Manuscripts: Reports on Historical Manuscripts) (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1913), 20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁴ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 195-96.

A rarer work and richer far in worth,
Castilios hand presenteth here to the,
No proud ne golden Court doth he set furth
But what in Court a Courtier ought to be.
The Prince he raiseth houghe and mightie walles,
Castilio frames a wight of noble fame:
The kinge with gorgeous Tyssue clades his halles,
The Count with golden virtue deckes the same,
Whos passing skill lo Hobbies pen displaise
To Brittain folk, a work of worthy praise.³⁵

According to Town, “[h]ere Sackville suggested that sumptuous royal residences should be furnished with the virtue of the courtier, and that however rich and engrossing the aesthetic experience of these palaces, it remains second in worth to the courtly behaviour described by Castiglione.”³⁶ The material display of elite architecture is compared with the refined codes of behaviour explored in Castiglione’s book. As Town suggests, the stair parallels courtly behaviour not only in the intricacies of its fine fashioning, however. The decoration’s play with illusionism and trickery (projected arcade and handrails; painted marble) also echoes courtliness’ potential to deceive.³⁷

I would like to push this discussion a little further. In the sonnet, Sackville’s comparison is focused not so much on the performance of the virtuous courtier, as on that of Castiglione, and by extension, Hoby and himself. “Castilios hand” presents a rarer work than gold-decked palaces. Quite insistently, Sackville’s sonnet stages writing and poetry as a work worthy of competing with architecture and decoration. It is not the courtier who adorns himself with virtue, but rather the author: “Castilio frames a wight of noble fame”, “The Count with golden virtue decks the same”. The final lines of the sonnet emphasise that what Sackville himself is framing is a book, not a courtier: “Whos passing skill lo Hobbies pen displaise / To Brittain folk, a work of

³⁵ Sir Thomas Hoby, *The Book of the Courtier from the Italian of Count Baldassare Castiglione: Done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby* (London: David Nutt, 1900), 4.

³⁶ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 195.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

worthy praise.” Hoby’s pen displays Castiglione’s skill in producing or staging an image of the ideal courtier. Sackville’s sonnet is yet another link in this chain of poetic displays and translations.³⁸

It is all the more interesting, then, that more than forty years after Sackville’s dedicatory sonnet, the latter himself clads his stairwell “with gorgeous Tyssue” that takes up the themes of his early poetry. The sonnet’s *paragone* of literary work in contrast with architecture’s ‘golden halls’ is resurrected, but this time in reverse. Architecture’s works claim back the final word.

The agency of architecture and decoration in the production of meaning is evacuated in shorthand accounts of the Painted Stair. Yet “the meaning of individual sets of paintings” can only be separated from their setting, from non-figural elements, through sleight of hand.³⁹ I will now consider how the Stair extends and exceeds the poetic and literary treatment of some of these themes.

1.2 Sensing the Limits of the Body

Rivkah Zim argues that Castiglione’s *The Courtier* made a significant impact on Thomas Sackville’s worldview, prompting him to commission a Latin translation of the work from his close associate Bartholomew Clerke in 1572.⁴⁰ Coupled with Edward Town’s examination of the relationship between Sackville’s dedicatory sonnet and the painted decoration of the staircase, this suggests that Castiglione’s work can offer a suitable courtly context to a consideration of the

³⁸ On the culture of translation, especially widespread at the Inns of Court, see Winston, *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558-1581*, 5-16, and Chapters 3 and 4.

³⁹ See Cooper quote above.

⁴⁰ Zim, “A Poet in Politics,” 205. The book, finally published in 1606, includes a dedicatory letter to Sackville as well as the latter’s response, Bartholomew Clerke, *De Curiali sive Aulico Libri Quatuor* (Frankfurt, 1606).

Stair's allegories. Indeed, *The Courtier* can help uncover the instabilities of the seemingly straightforward allegorical scenes.⁴¹

Castiglione opens Book II with a meditation on the limitations of age, and its particular fault of considering the past always better than the present: "And truly it seems against all reason and a cause for astonishment that maturity of age, which, with its long experience, in all other respects usually perfects a man's judgement, in this matter corrupts it".⁴² Castiglione proceeds to give his explanation of the cause, suggesting that "the physical constitution changes and the organs through which the soul exercises its power grow feeble."⁴³ The question of the aged body is repeatedly raised in relation to various courtly activities, like games, singing and love, which could be unbecoming in an old man.⁴⁴ Together, these passages of *The Courtier* show an ambivalence about the merits and perils of Age. Growing life experience treads a narrow line separating virtuous maturity from dangerous melancholy. As much as the allegories accompanying one's ascent up the stair may suggest elevation "away from bodily preoccupations", they also remind of the inescapable *limitations* of the earthly body. It is this theme that will be taken up next through an examination of the allegories of the Senses.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Although the Castiglione text is by no means posited as a source for the allegorical scenes, it provides a useful parallel for a courtly context in which themes of the senses, knowledge, age and wisdom were treated with great sophistication and ambivalence – a perspective far removed from the schematic moral message ascribed to the panels by existing scholarship.

⁴² Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 107.

⁴³ Ibid. This is furthermore joined by a very interesting discussion of the direct relationship between the extent of virtue and vice in a given age that is very evocative in relation to the third set of allegories at Knoke, that unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁴⁴ Albeit the issue is resolved in Book IV: "For even if he is too old to take part in these things himself, he can still understand them", his youthful experience of these enabling him to teach his prince. Ibid., 320.

⁴⁵ Sackville's earlier literary treatment of the same humanist themes that in 1608 appear in the Painted Stair allegories subverts the simplicity of the 'message' governing the work. The allegories are deeply overdetermined. The 1608 echoes of *The Courtier*, with which Sackville engaged as a young man in 1561, reveal a convoluted, folded temporality (*The Courtier* was also translated into Latin by Bartholomew Clerke under Sackville's patronage in 1572). Meaning does not simply reside in a work, be it of

Sight and Hearing – often characterised as the higher senses - are placed on the wall straight ahead of the viewer as one first steps onto the stair (north). These crucial links in the acquisition of knowledge through experience - as per the linear narrative - are frequently obscured and difficult to see (Figure 4). The panel depicting Sight (Figure 17) is a veritable 'blind' spot: surrounded by three windows, all larger in size than the painted field, it is, along with the depiction of Old Age downstairs, often very difficult to make out. In the narrow, oblong pictorial field, the figures become smudged and obscured. The dark grey, plain background against which the monochrome figures are placed makes all the figural scenes recede under the dramatic contrasts of natural light conditions. The ornamental strapwork panels - on the other hand - project, pushed forward by the light background.

The decorative elements of the space thematise - indeed play a complex game with - the interactions of the senses. In the uneven light-conditions of the stair, painted and carved elements are in a continuous flux, caught between dissolution and brilliance. The murk of corners hides certain depictions, the streaming light of the windows - or coming in through an open door - washes out the intricate differentiation of elements into stark silhouettes of arcade, column, opening. On the painted walls of the stairwell, light not only reveals, but also conceals: falling sideways, it can reduce the complex order of painted elements (painted archway, ornament, figure) into uniform glare (Figure 17).

At the same time, close encounter - a viewer moving through the space - reveals the attractions of the tactile. In the complex and confused space of the ground-floor landing, as one's eyes move between the gloom under the arcade or the light of the more open stairwell beyond, it is carving that asserts its presence. Here, one becomes particularly aware of the carved and

architecture, painting or literature. The work that Sackville was introducing in 1561, by 1608 cannot have remained the 'same' work. The multiple threads of relations between Sackville's writings, the painting of the Painted Stair, Sackville's experience of court - all these form a kind of loop. The 1608 paintings might 'remember' parts of a work with which Sackville closely engaged in 1561, parts that then might not have been relevant. At the same time, by 1608 Sackville's poetic persona - his link to the Hoby translation - was something that he had demonstratively renounced.

strongly projecting terms set above the columns of the arcade (Figure 12 and Figure 13, see also Figure 10). They are bodily proximate - they loom above and their corpulent forms enforce a sense of presence. Their projecting, tactile, worked carving makes the most of the light, either hidden in the murk, as an indistinct something, or catching slivers of illumination coming from different directions on their edges. The spandrels of the arcade are likewise carved with lace-like strapwork ornament. Heightened with white, the patterning of the plane pushes forward, catches the eye, entangles it. Everywhere in the stair, carved surfaces evoke the pleasure of touching, of tracing complex curves. Although often washed out into flatness in photographs, in situ, their forms are powerfully assertive (Figure 11).

The prominence of the term figures produces a contrast between media (wall-painting, carving) and between senses (sight, touch). The presence of the carved bodies heightens the variable visibility of the allegorical figures, so easily erased through the vagaries of light. The disjunction of sight and touch is furthermore heightened in the columns of the two arcades, as well as the mouldings of the doors opening out of the stair space. Both are coated in 'stone-imitation' painting. Yet while at distance, the dappled and curlicued effect can be quite convincing, at close quarters, it dissolves into painted circles quite evidently distinct from real stone. What one might expect to touch through the stimulus of the eyes is shown to be a fiction, a trick.

The allegories of Smell and Taste, on the other hand, fare much better. These allegorical panels are couched within the two fictive arcade openings of the west wall (Figure 1). They are larger in size than the other Senses, topped with elaborate decorative lunettes and the lavishly-dressed figures have a courtly air. Here especially the 'bridging' of the allegory into a cultural space familiar to the elite audience of the images is heightened. Smell and Taste evoke the pleasures of courtly dining and elite gardens. The larger fields of these depictions, set in 'fictive space' prompt a sense of entry and participation.

Finally, on the opposite wall, the allegory of Touch (Figure 15) playfully offers itself up to touch: adjacent to the top landing, it is the allegory most within hand-reach, most ready to be stroked. From the upper landing, its flatness is easily perceptible, catching the gleams from the stairwell windows.

The Senses, then, are presented as a complex, differentiated matter. They are bound to come up against limitations (of lighting); they compete; they can be evoked as a matter of pleasure and participation, of enjoyment rather than instruction; finally the panels within their larger framework can heighten different modes of engagement with one's surroundings: looking from a distance, visually evoking the pleasures of touch, calling into comparison the discontinuity between painted and carved, inviting to touch an 'image' which should otherwise be apprehended at distance.

Through a multitude of elements, the decoration of the Painted Stair works to characterise the senses as unreliable and prone to being tricked. In his discussion of the errors of old age, Castiglione writes: "For our bodily senses are so untrustworthy that they often confuse our judgement as well."⁴⁶ In the decoration of the Painted Stair, architecture helps heighten and extend these limitations, rather than will them away.

The constantly changing points of view of the Painted Stair draw attention to the moving body's role in assembling and re-assembling its imagery. The central role of gesture, movement and body in making meaning is testified to by Castiglione's discussion of jokes:

But perfect grace and true merit in this consist in using both gestures and words effortlessly to express exactly what one wants, so that those who are listening seem to see what is being described before their very eyes. When this is achieved, it is so effective that sometimes it enhances and makes very amusing something which would not, of itself, be very witty or ingenious.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 158-159

Furthermore, the Stair is a collection of necessarily *limited* points of view. There is no one, simple way to take it in. The allegorical imagery in its context helps *make present* the limitations of sensual knowledge.⁴⁸

1.3 The Compromised Image: Peeling Away

The Painted Stair highlights the limitations of the body as a source of knowledge. At the same time, it also questions the body as a nexus of meaning in the realm of painting. Leon Battista Alberti's artistic theory sought to organise painting around the narrative *historia*, with its basic element of figure: "The great work of the painter is the 'history'; parts of the 'history' are the bodies, part of the body is the member, and part of the member is a surface."⁴⁹ Alberti's principles continue to effect art history's fetishisation of the figural.⁵⁰ The manner in which the Painted Stair is reduced to a message conveyed by the figural scenes speaks to this eloquently. As discussed above, interpretations of the Painted Stair entrench a gap between the striking, enveloping quality of painted and carved decoration, and the linearity of the moral message.

⁴⁸ These issues also echo Castiglione's discussion of the limitations of old men's judgement. Anxiety about old men's decreased, rather than increased, insight is expressed in the merciless, but coolly rhetorical rebuttal of Eubulus' advice in *Euphues* by the eponymous hero (John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit; and, Euphues and His England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 40-41.) Fred Schurink has shown a close link between *Euphues* and Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*, itself deeply indebted to *The Courtier*, see Schurink, "The Intimacy of Manuscript." Ascham frames *The Schoolmaster* as intended for the education of Thomas Sackville's son.

⁴⁹ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), 71. See also Cecil Grayson's introduction: "What is new is Alberti's insistence on the 'historia' as *the* object of painting, and on the choice of the subject, its organisation and execution, as the greatest achievement of the artist." (ibid., 13.)

⁵⁰ Cf Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 11-13.

How does one arrive at a didactic story out of the rich fabric of woodwork, carving, painted pattern and architectural member?⁵¹

The decoration of the Painted Stair conspires in the peeling-away of the figural scenes from their context. The framing elements of the allegories help cast them as panels and facilitate their scholarly detachment from the rest of the painted fabric. Here are Alberti's expressive figures, in a variety of pleasing attitudes.⁵² The framed, clearly delimited nature of these images conforms to a particular economy of vision. For Alberti, *circumscriptio* - outlining the space taken up by a body - is a crucial part of the art of painting.⁵³ The very process of vision in Book I of *De Pictura* hinges on concepts of enclosing and delimiting bodies by the visual rays, grasping at and measuring out their 'quantity'.⁵⁴ In this perspective, an image is a peeling surface, grasped through its outlines, and wrested away from its surroundings.

The allegorical 'panels' of the Painted Stair stand out, ready to be 'taken away' by the passing viewer. Yet the preceding discussion raises questions about the value and effectiveness of these images. Does the flimsiness of what scholarship tends to come away with from the ascent up the Painted Stair unwittingly mirror the ambivalent status of the 'panel' in Early Modern

⁵¹ The 'fabric' of the Painted Stair is discussed, however, in relation to its possible makers, the sources of ornamental motifs, developments in stair types, and stylistic change. See Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 371-73; Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, 211-12.

⁵² Alberti, *On Painting*, 77-79. Alberti introduces his practical pointers thus: "Now comes the composition of bodies, in which all the skill and the merit of the painter lies." (77) The panels are furthermore devoid of colour, which Alberti saw as a secondary attribute or property, *ibid.*, 37-39. Discussing the use of colour in a painting, he says: "Indeed, I agree that a wide range and variety of colours contribute greatly to the beauty and the attraction of a painting. But I would prefer learned painters to believe that the greatest art and industry are concerned with the disposition of white and black, and that all skill and care should be used in correctly placing these two." (89)

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 67-71. He also evokes Quintilian's authority in locating the origins of painting in the tracing of shadows (63).

⁵⁴ "[T]he extrinsic rays, which hold on like teeth to the whole of the outline, form an enclosure around the entire surface like a cage." *Ibid.*, 41-43.

Europe? At the same time as the allegories insist on representation, on a conceit, a graspable meaning, their overdetermination (close links to Sackville's own work, their reference to courtly pastimes, their place in the proximity of spaces like the Great Hall and Great Chamber dedicated to feasting, music, courtship) confounds expectations of clear and unequivocal communication. The move is refracted on another level in the limitations and ambiguities of the viewer's apprehension of the 'panels', their awkward, changeable, limited lines of sight. The seeming eloquence of 'panel' is undermined just as it is conjured.⁵⁵ Whilst in scholarship these become the most visible - most capable of contributing to interpretation - *in situ*, it is the most 'panel-like' elements of the decoration that are most vulnerable to obscurity, blindness, being dwarfed.

A scholarly focus on the moral message conveyed by the decoration of the Painted Stair furthermore renders the strapwork panels of the wall-painting invisible (outside questions of stylistic influence or print source). Juxtaposed with the allegorical scenes, they testify to the impoverishment of art-historical interpretations solely focused on iconography, figures or narrative. Strapwork significantly calls to mind questions of touch, handling and depth. Although often interpreted as recalling leather forms, especially in the cases closely related to the School of Fontainebleau, by the late sixteenth century its proliferation in prints established a close resonance between the flat but pliable forms of the decorative motif and the surface of the cut and incised metal printing plate through which it was transmitted.⁵⁶ The curling strapwork surface - like metal plate, or parchment - thematises the volatile, detachable qualities of the image.

⁵⁵ The choice of grisaille is interesting and not entirely resolved for me. For one, the allegorical scenes are not particularly vivid in their setting, sharing their limited colour palette with the illusionistic architectural framework and ornamental panels. Their poetic 'fictions' or images (of Old Age, Virtue, Vice etc.), in paralleling the verbal images of Sackville's own works, perhaps lose out in a competition between word and image.

⁵⁶ Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 40-42.

1.4 Architecture of Layering

Yet the painted decoration as part of a wider whole (the joined structure of the stairwell, the floors, doors and openings) also explores, questions and speaks to architecture. This is most clear in the way architectural members are transposed onto the flat surfaces of the walls through illusionistic painting. The west wall (Figure 1) shows the artifice of painting at its highest in the illusionistic projection of the upper landing arcade onto the adjacent wall. Every element of the arcading is carefully transposed from three dimensions into two, including the spandrels and their ornament, the balusters, the profiles of the entablature separating the two floors, complete with the carved decoration of the frieze. This decoration celebrates an architecture governed by the classical orders, and the partitions or 'lineaments' provided by columns, pedestals, cornices and arches; an architecture of void and structural support.⁵⁷

Yet other walls of the stairwell present a wholly different architectural performance. The north wall (Figure 3 and Figure 22) has a striking patchwork quality of alternating surfaces: the allegorical panels of Sight and Hearing interspersed with white-ground panels of strapwork and similarly-proportioned window openings, all outlined by a dark grey border so that they appear to float or hang over of a dun-coloured ground. These 'hanging' panels recall Gottfried Semper's conception of architecture as dressing or cladding.⁵⁸ Semper argued that structural support, far from being the primary concern of architecture, was in fact secondary to the principle of enclosing space with surfaces, the carpets hung on a framework of the first nomadic tribes.⁵⁹ Semper's spatial enclosure was fundamentally textile-like, woven, textured, and its patterning provided the symbolic space that constituted enclosure.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Wigley, "Untitled," 353 and. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 5, and Book I (7-31).

⁵⁸ Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 101-26; Wigley, "Untitled," 365-81.

⁵⁹ Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 103-05.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103-10.

The certainties of the classical, post-and-lintel architectural system are undermined in the complex overlays of the Painted Stair. On the east wall, the allegory of Touch (Figure 15) is delimited by a narrow, moulded frame that 'hangs' it in front of an imaginary wall-ground. It appears to float in front of a dark-grey ground similar in colour to that of the upper parts of the figurative scenes. This same ground - further to the left of the panel - morphs into structural 'lineament' over a lighter, dun-coloured surface. Thus, the painted decoration confounds the distinction between structure and surface.

The idiom of cladding takes on historical specificity in the context of the Painted Stair. The colours, composition and arrangement of panels and interstices, dark borders over light ground, evoke English timber-framed construction (Figure 18) as well as an earlier decorative tradition characterised not by fixed fittings, but rather movable tapestries.⁶¹

The illusionistic painted decoration of the Painted Stair presents a display of competing architectural idioms. The west wall (Figure 1) brings their collision together in one painted surface. The projection of the adjacent arcade onto a flat wall produces numerous paradoxes. The vertical stacking of supports is disrupted as the voids mirroring those of the real arcade are filled up. The illusionistic space that the painted arcade would project into depth is obstructed by the flattening effect of the frame around the allegorical scenes above (Taste and Smell). The space between lower and upper balustrade is particularly telling of the collapse of depth and planarity. The central column of the upper stage is stacked over the leopard-bearing newel post, echoing the superimposition of the orders on the left. At the same time, although the painted column 'sits' over the newel post on the flat plane of the wall, the arrangement is a structural nonsense. Newel and column are connected on the vertical plane, while painterly illusionism would create a gap between them through projection into depth. The void that sits under the entablature of the real arcade fills up in the painted version. The white strapwork panels, set against a dun ground, project, and almost hover *in front* of the entablature, not below or behind.

⁶¹ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 85. On timber-framed construction, see Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan & Jacobean Style* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 42-45.

The painted decoration of the Painted Stair sets questions of depth and surface, flatness, perspective and illusionism into a restless state of play. The strapwork panels celebrate, on the one hand, the motif's adherence to a two-dimensional plane, such as that of the wall. At the same time, the decoration challenges the coincidence of strapwork and wall. Strapwork is full of punched-through holes that question the continuity of its plane. Rivets thematise the volatility of this surface, as if it might peel or scroll off its support. Strapwork must be held down. The faceted 'gem' in the triangular panel below Touch (Figure 15) further confounds questions of flatness and depth. The unarticulated edge between dark grey ground behind the allegorical scene and the white ground of the decorative motif suggests a continuity; strapwork panel then clings to the wall as the 'ground' decoration. Yet the gem's shaded and articulated sides suggest a protrusion beyond the layer of the figural panel which sits in front of this same ground.

The architecture of the Painted Stair, therefore, appears as a collection of multiplying and ambiguous superimpositions. Structural, load-bearing members - the orders of classical antiquity - are assimilated into the two-dimensional layer of wall-dressing, an applied, film-like effect. Equally, the allegorical panels are yet another layer in this play of surface. Nowhere is the eye allowed to easily settle on a 'foreground'. In the simplified readings of the Stair's meaning cited above architecture is treated like a neutral ground which conveys a message that already exists elsewhere. In the ambiguous layering of the Painted Stair, however, the possibility of a ground is forever postponed, the surfaces reassembling into new configurations at every turn.

1.5 Headspinning Space

This section examines how the fortuitous 'completeness' of the Painted Stair ensemble spectacularly enacts architecture's power to put on a show, heightening the impression of unreliable senses and further undermining the idea of a didactic, moral message. It examines the way decoration deconstructs the stability of a space produced by surface and wall and casts its effects as a fancy - an interlude or alternate reality inserted at a key point in the house.

The Painted Stair lies in the heart of the sprawling, complex and asymmetrical assemblage that is Knole (Figure 21). The Painted Stair wears the aggregate nature of the house on its sleeve. The spectacular windows open not onto the exterior, but rather onto one of the famed internal courts of Knole. All the doors opening off the stairwell are signalled by elaborate ornamental frames and the lack of hierarchical distinction undercuts the univocality of the hall-stair-great chamber progression that is often assumed. Doors opening in a multitude of directions hint at the unfolding of the house beyond simple axiality.

The illusionistic painting further emphasises the issue of spatial complexity. The arches that frame Taste and Smell project a space similar, but not equivalent, to the landing onto the west wall. The suggestion of painted space collides with the presence of the Great Hall just beyond the wall. On the opposite wall, similarly, an arcade appears to open just to be filled up and blocked by an elaborate strapwork painted lunette, neatly screening the opening (Figure 16). An effect of spatial dissimulation is also suggested on the walls that carry the depictions of the Virtues (Figure 2). The walls are separated in two (just above waist high): below are the ornamental strapwork panels, with grey motifs on white ground; above, whitish grisaille Virtues placed in the same abstracted, grey background as the Senses. Unlike Taste and Smell, these figural panels have very little in the way of framing elements. Both the Virtues and the ornamental panels they sit above are bordered by simple wooden dividers.

Looking up at the landing from the stair, this arrangement recalls an open gallery or walkway (Figure 2). The lower, white-ground panels coupled with brown rectilinear framing elements, recall timber-framed construction.⁶² From this perspective, the landing is uncanny: on one side, opening out in real space, yet only overlooking an interior; on the other side, opening 'outward', but into imaginary space.

⁶² Timber-framed houses sometimes could bear patterned motifs on the white plaster infill, *Elizabethan & Jacobean Style*, 42-45.

Towards the late sixteenth century, stairs were gaining in size and elaboration, making ascent easier, more comfortable, potentially even conducive to taking in decoration.⁶³ This tendency extends and enlarges the experience of passage, as Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson argue, drawing attention to the very experience of transition.⁶⁴ John Templer argues that Renaissance and Baroque stair planning owed much to garden stairs, especially since there were not many Classical remains of internal stairs but plenty of examples of landscaping.⁶⁵ Thus in the Italian Renaissance stairs were exploited in gardens as a means of linking different planes and areas, controlling vistas and arranging an experience through the landscape.⁶⁶ Later architecture drew on this association by providing fictive views as part of the staircase experience: “The drama of the outdoors was staged in an idealized manner indoors with the sky frescoed onto the ceilings and the movement of the landscape suggested in marble or painted onto the walls.”⁶⁷

Knole substitutes these outdoor views with an inward, architectural spectacle.⁶⁸ As I suggest, the illusionistic painting in the walls of the stairwell juxtaposes, assembles and rearranges aspects of different architectural idioms and traditions. The arcade showcases Italianate, classically inspired columnar architecture, with Doric columns on the ground floor and Ionic above, separated by a Doric entablature complete with triglyphs (Figure 12). The dark interstices and the corner with the Virtues, on the other hand, evoke English timber-framed buildings (Figure 18). Through painterly conceit, these diverging architectural principles are thrown

⁶³ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 224-28. See also Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 369-76.

⁶⁴ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 224.

⁶⁵ John Templer, *The Staircase: History and Theories* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 102-19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁸ The authors of *The Architecture of Ascent* associate British stairs between 1600-1800 with trompe-l'oeil decoration, but despite specific reference to Knole do not analyse the latter from this point of view (Knole rather is used as example of woodcarving and heraldic decoration), Oscar Tusquets et al., *The Staircase: The Architecture of Ascent* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 86-89.

together, tested and recombined. Italianate forms are incorporated, adapted and manipulated with flair, as in the insertion of English roses into the metope spaces of the entablature.⁶⁹

The richness of the ensemble harnesses the stair's association with movement and gradually unfolding views, but this visionary quality is turned inwards. It is focused instead on the synergies of architecture and painting, on their capacity for paradox and disjunction. The stair stages a film-like, enveloping quality of painted decoration and ties it to architecture's capacity to put on a show. The chromatic and ornamental unity of the Painted Stair - the sense of totality mentioned above - contrives to produce a kind of mirage. Nowhere else in the house do different surfaces and media conspire in quite the same way - wood doesn't mirror plasterwork, painting does not imitate structural members. The unparalleled decorative unity of the Painted Stair paradoxically contributes to make the ensemble more contingent, illusory, 'made' - a whirlwind, head-turning space.

Although clearly a high-status environment, the Painted Stair is also a fundamentally transitory space. Analysing Michelangelo's design for the vestibule of the Laurentian library, Rudolf Wittkower suggests the strangeness of its conception as "a room which is for the stair alone."⁷⁰ It is striking in the way it signals itself as a room for passage, and Wittkower suggests it became the model for later Baroque stair halls.⁷¹ I would suggest that the all-over painted decoration of the Knole Stair heightens its unique effect as an intense, albeit fleeting experience. The vagaries of lighting, changing throughout the course of the day and modulating what can be seen of the painting and carving, add to this effect.

⁶⁹ Strapwork provides another architectural idiom which is incorporated into the whole, emphasizing the curves of the arcade in the spandrels (Figure 12) or the triglyphs in the entablature with delicate Flemish-inspired drop motifs (Figure 12). Town has stressed the importance of both Sackville's interest in Italian culture as well as antiquarianism and history at home as key forces shaping the rebuilding of Knole, Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 221. Sackville was, for example, deeply interested in ancient feudal rights and history of the monarchy, cf Zim, "Marvellously Given to Be Antiquaries."

⁷⁰ Rudolf Wittkower, "Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana," *The Art Bulletin* 16, no. 2 (1934): 205.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

The multitude of representations, feints and imitations, fictions and projections - unified by common motifs and colour - contribute to make the Painted Stair an experience that might 'turn one's head'. Its fictions are enticing and complex, yet its numerous openings also insist on the necessity to keep moving. The virtuosity is dazzling, but all the more temporary - a spectre, like the insistent greys of the figural scenes. The stair opens a startling vision, supported by the effects of light and shadow, the interplay of painting and carving, but its centrifugal motion at the heart of the house threatens to dispel its fictions with the ease of a dream.⁷² Trickery and delight are united, the experience of movement fashioning the Stair into a rich architectural conceit.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have emphasised the sophistication and ambivalence at the heart of Sackville's cultural milieu, evident in his own poetic writings and letters, and central to Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier*, with which Sackville engaged over the course of his life. The allegorical scenes of the Painted Stair demonstrate that the latter shared in this wider culture. My analysis of the allegories within their overall context, with close attention not only to the figural, but also the ornamental, framing elements of the painted decoration suggests that the stair was also an intervention, however. The marshalling of the Stair's necessarily limited and changing points of view coupled with the employment of painterly illusionism extends and advances a discourse on the nature and limitations of the senses. Castiglione draws attention to the unreliability of the senses, especially with age – the Stair takes the conversation further – and does so through architectural means.

The scholarly focus on allegorical panels furthermore overlooks the Stair's complex play with illusionism. This very play conspires to challenge the autonomy and communicative power of the framed panel painting and the eloquent human body as a unit of painting. The Stair stages these representations as just one of architecture's multifarious effects, fragments arranged within a larger mosaic of hanging-like panels. The allegorical compartments quite literally pale

⁷² Thomas Sackville's 'Induction' to the *Mirror of Magistrates* is presented as a vision-like experience the author has while walking out in the fields, Reginald W. Sackville-West, ed. *The Works of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst* (London: John Russell Smith, 1859), 97-123.

within the overall arrangement. Instead, painterly illusionism helps stage complex architectural assemblage, juxtaposing arches and columns with cladding-like surfaces attached to a subordinate framework. In presenting an experience of the Stair as a kaleidoscopic, dazzling orchestration of architectural visions, the Stair fashions its own architectural conceit.

Chapter 2 Dwelling in Wilderness: The Limits of Architecture

A tapestry blows in the wind and reveals an opening onto the blue sky (Figure 23). The front of the tapestry shows a landscape stretching into the distance. The ridge in the foreground has rocky outcrops covered in fir trees, and a few white-clad monks amid their flock. In the valley beyond, faint through the haze, lies a monastery circled by a large walled perimeter. The central scene is surrounded by a wide border of bright, red and yellow geometric flowers on a green ground, and the red edging of the tapestry is trimmed with fringe. The back of the tapestry is deep green.

This is one of the six fictive tapestries painted by Domenico Gargiulo, also known as Micco Spadaro, in the choir of the Lay Brothers at the Certosa di San Martino in Naples (Figure 24). He executed the work on the fictive tapestries and the rest of the walls and vault of the choir between 1638 and 1642. The work was one of an extensive string of commissions he enjoyed at the monastery: frescoes in the Old Treasury, the atrium of the church and the Prior's Quarters, numerous devotional panels, portraits of priors, as well as the 1657 *Thanksgiving after the Plague of 1656*.¹

The present chapter takes the cues of this fictive tapestry as starting point. The green scenery populated by men and sheep gives landscape a prominence that is insistent in the choir, in the rich green tones of the six tapestries, the three pictorial carpets in the vault, and the landscapes of the smaller compartments painted by Spadaro. The decoration seems to be deeply concerned with the issue of wilderness. Why such an insistence on representations of landscape? How and to what end are these representations employed? Furthermore, the present chapter considers these questions as fundamentally architectural. Why and how is nature employed here as the limit condition of architecture? The peeling away of the fictive

¹ Giancarlo Sestieri and Brigitte Daprà, *Domenico Gargiulo detto Micco Spadaro: paesaggista e "cronista" napoletano* (Milan: Jandi Sapi, 1994), 24-35, 120-21. The chronology of Spadaro's work at the monastery will be discussed further below.

tapestry produces a significant edge. The illusionistic opening and the triangle of blue sky draw attention to the question of what lies *beyond* the representation. This chapter considers how depictions of wilderness are presented in tandem with the production and excavation of an edge between architecture and that which it is not, a something that is presented as lying beyond.²

The chapter will therefore explore how Spadaro's decoration deploys landscape. The first section will consider the paucity of interpretations of the Lay Brothers' choir, outlining some of the questions and paradoxes that arise in considering it. It will then examine in greater detail a reading of the more iconographic aspects of the decoration, deepening the understanding of the role of landscape noted by previous scholars. The following section examines how Spadaro's complex fictions repeatedly present architecture pushing up against its own limits. To help think about the non-figural aspects of nature and architecture's deployment, and about the production of a beyond, I draw upon Leon Battista Alberti and Vitruvius' ideas of the conceptual borderlines and edges of architecture. Finally, the last section considers what these feints and displays of what-architecture-is-not might have offered the Carthusians of San Martino, examining the ambiguous position of Lay Brothers and considering the intersection of architectural and Carthusian myths of origin.

² My thanks go to Prof Rebecca Zorach for drawing attention to my use of the term 'nature' in this chapter. While I largely refer to the scenery depicted in Micco Spadaro's decoration as 'landscape' or 'wilderness', to distinguish from Renaissance ideas of nature as a personified creative force, I have retained 'nature' in certain key instances. Chandra Mukerji's work has drawn attention to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discourses that work precisely to transform nature into landscape and territory, see Chandra Mukerji, "Material Practices of Domination: Christian Humanism, the Built Environment, and Techniques of Western Power," *Theory and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002); *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Renaissance interest in distinctions between first nature (primal, uncultivated wilderness), second nature (landscapes altered by human activity) and third nature (artificial landscapes or gardens that may blur the distinctions between the two) shows the potential fluidity and connection between wild and cultivated landscapes, creation and natural order of "Nature," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). I therefore use 'nature' in passages where such blurring and fluidity is crucial to what is at stake in Spadaro's decoration.

2.1 An Overlooked Space: Understanding the Lay Brothers' Choir at San Martino

The Lay Brothers' choir is paradoxical. It is a visually arresting space. It is perhaps one of the most coherent pictorial 'programmes' in the monastery (Figure 25).³ All the fresco decoration of walls and vault, apart from the altarpiece, was carried out by Micco Spadaro. It is united by a vibrant, vivid tonality, dominated by the green of trees, landscapes and tapestry borders. The overall conception is also striking in its grand sweep. The 'carpets' that cover the apex of the vault depict the creation of the world, setting the tone and scope of the frescoes. The Lay Brothers' Choir also demonstrates the close collaboration between Cosimo Fanzago and Spadaro: in the fresco of Moses producing water from the rock above Fanzago's marble lavamano, or in the ornamental forms of the painted architecture.⁴

Yet scholarly engagement with the Lay Brothers' Choir is virtually non-existent. In a key work on Micco Spadaro, Giancarlo Sestieri and Brigitte Dapra largely limit their discussion to chronology and stylistic analysis.⁵ Focusing on the arrangement of the church in relation to the Fathers' choir, Concetta Martone Dragani has suggested that the lay brothers' choir was moved sometime after 1614.⁶ Spadaro was also paid only 500 ducats for his work, a low sum.⁷

The eighteenth-century biographer of Neapolitan artists, Bernardo De Dominici, raises the intriguing possibility of the Lay Brothers' Choir decoration as a trial piece: "The fame of Spadaro having thus immensely grown – and for good reason – the monks of San Martino also become

³ The Chapter House, which is adjacent to the Lay Brother's choir, and the Sacristy on the north side of the main choir, are roughly similar in dimensions but both comprise a much more composite collection of artworks. On the Sacristy, see Marino, *Becoming Neapolitan: Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples*, 138-53; Causa, *L'arte*, 36-38. For Chapter House, see *ibid.*, 50-52.

⁴ Causa, *L'arte*, 73, 65-66.

⁵ Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, 25-35, 120-21.

⁶ Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth," 112, 20-21. For a further discussion, see the section 'The Placement of the Choir' below.

⁷ Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, 120.

desirous of having some great work by him, and for this reason commissioned him to paint the Choir of the Lay Brothers.”⁸

Current scholarly opinion dates Spadaro’s decoration of the new choir to between 1640-42 (Sestieri and Dapra) or 1640-46 (Napoli).⁹ According to Sestieri and Dapra’s authoritative monograph, the commission was preceded by Spadaro’s work in the church atrium, and in the so-called Old Treasury.¹⁰ The list of payments that Sestieri and Dapra reproduce in their book (*Conti del Sig.r Domenico Gargiulo Pittore*) begins with payments for the ‘Camera dell’Argenti’ in October of 1638.¹¹ The first entry for the year 1640 draws a sum total of 516.1.-. Yet the payments above only add up to just over half of that sum.¹² The following document (*Conti del Pittore Domenico Gargiulo*) lists the Lay Brothers’ Choir first: “Per il Coro de fratri come per Instr.to”.¹³ Moreover, another *conto* (*Pitture saldate nel 1647*) mentions a drawing according to

⁸ “Essendo poi sommamente cresciuta, ed a gran ragione la fama dello Spadaro, s’invaghirono anche i Monaci Certosini di S. Martino di possederne qualche opera insigne, e perciò gli diedero a dipingere il Coro de’ laici.” Bernardo De Dominici, *Vite de’ pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani*, 3 vols. (Naples: Francesco and Cristoforo Ricciardi, 1743), vol. 3, 200.

⁹ Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, 120-21; Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix I.

¹⁰ Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, 25-35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Documentary appendix I, 412-13. ASN 2142, fol. 84-85.

¹² Under the entry for 1647, 516.1.- is added to a further 414.- that has been recorded between 1642 and 1647. It seems possible, therefore, that a sheet with payments *prior* to October 1638 is missing that would provide the entries taking the sum up to 516.1.-. It is conceivable that the Tesoro frescoes and those of the Lay Brothers’ Choir could have been worked on simultaneously. Perhaps the latter was conceived first (as the trial piece) but took longer to carry out (as well as reimburse) than the Treasury chapel, which may have been a more informal commission passed onto Spadaro after he had started work on the Lay Brothers’ Choir.

¹³ Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, Documentary appendix II, 413-14. ASN 2142, fol. 89-90.

‘istromento’ is also how Battistello Caracciolo’s initial contract for the painting of *Washing of the Feet* is referred to; see Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix 2.

which the Lay Brothers' choir was to be finished, a comment not present for any of his other commissions, including the extensive work in the Prior's Quarters.¹⁴

As scholars have shown, the Carthusians at San Martino had an established pattern for hiring new artists to decorate the monastery: they would first engage them for a specific task, outlined in a carefully detailed contract, often with detailed designs and stipulations on size, materials, workmanship and figures, as well as the right to refuse the work if unsatisfactory.¹⁵ Conversely, if the monks were satisfied, further commissions would follow, often on a much more informal, *ad hoc* basis.¹⁶ The quick expansion of Spadaro's commissions into multiple areas of the monastery follows that pattern, and his accounts furthermore mention a contract in relation to the Lay Brothers' Choir.

The possibility of the Lay Brothers' Choir decoration having been undertaken as a trial piece would help address its low cost that seems to belie the inventiveness and visual complexity of the frescoes.¹⁷ If the monks did indeed assign the decoration of the Lay Brothers' choir to Spadaro as a trial piece, it would demonstrate a motivation to make the most of an opportunity to provide spectacular decoration without putting undue pressure on the monastery's finances – and that the execution impressed the monks. Irrespective of this possibility, the mention of a drawing also testifies to thinking on the monks' part about the work they wanted to see in the Lay Brothers' Choir.

¹⁴ “Resta à pagarmi la pittura guastata du d.to Choro che cossi mi fu promesso, che era mittà del lavoro e fatto in conformità del primo disegno”. Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, Documentary appendix, III, 414. ASN 2142, fol. 126.

¹⁵ Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 156-66; Marshall, *Industry of Painting*, 171-81.

¹⁶ Thus, the contract for Neapolitan painter Battistello Caracciolo's *Washing of the Feet* of 1622 explicitly described the painting as a trial piece, and reserved the monks' right to be refunded the 100 ducats they had advanced to the painter should they be dissatisfied, Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 159-61; Marshall, *Industry of Painting*, 176. Giovanni Lanfranco's contract in 1637 for the frescoing of the nave vault also included stipulations on what was to be depicted, as well as a drawn preliminary design, Steffi Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes: The Baroque Era, 1600-1800*, trans. Russell Stockman, 1st ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 2007), 189-90.

¹⁷ That is to say the frescoes did not necessarily have low *value*.

2.1.1 Inhabiting Wilderness: Landscape in the Lay Brothers' Choir

Interpretation of the decoration has rarely delved beyond first appearances. John Nicholas Napoli suggests that “the landscapes evoke the concept of *desertum*, or seclusion, much valued by the Carthusian order.”¹⁸ Sestieri and Daprà note the dominance of landscape, which they suggest overtakes the religious scenes in importance.¹⁹ They refrain from interpreting the episodes of Carthusian lay brothers depicted on the fictive tapestries, however, suggesting they are perhaps of a didactic character and aimed at the brothers who would congregate in the space.²⁰

A slightly more attentive interpretation is advanced by Roettgen: “These pictures, with their scenic and figural richness and their particular charm owing to their landscape elements, gave the lay brothers something to look at during their prayers that was as entertaining as it was instructive. The many-faceted and complex pictorial program was presumably based on a precise concept of which there is no written record.”²¹ She suggests the organising theme is the creation of the world and fall of man; significantly, she notes the recurrent theme of angels, “who appear to mankind as messengers and agents of the will of God and assist them on the laborious path toward regaining paradise.”²² While Roettgen’s attention to the recurring themes in the decoration is more nuanced and complex, her analysis is bookended by statements that reduce the imagery to a didactic message directed towards the lay brothers. All these accounts consider the meaning of Spadaro’s decoration as either too self-evident or not sufficiently significant to merit closer analysis.

The imagery of the Lay Brothers’ Choir proposes a vision of what can be achieved through inhabiting wilderness. Roettgen notes that the biblical scenes revolve around two repeated

¹⁸ Napoli, “Fashioning Certosa di San Martino,” 244.

¹⁹ Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, 25-35, 120-21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

²¹ Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes*, 193.

²² *Ibid.*

motifs: landscape and the appearance of angels.²³ The characters of the scriptural stories that adorn the walls - a mixture of Old and New Testament subjects - are shown dwelling primarily outside. Indeed, one of the key themes of the images is the way God enables such inhabitation. The four lunettes depicting the stories of Tobias focus on the angel Raphael's guidance of the youth through various landscapes, drawing on a story where the hero is frequently advised to use natural resources to heal, protect and provide (Figure 34 to Figure 37). In one of the trapezoidal fields in the spandrels an angel shows a well to Hagar (Figure 50). These episodes repeatedly emphasise divine aid and provision of vital resources. Wilderness is portrayed as a place of encounter with divinity, of interaction between different planes, even of divine insight (a scene of Jacob's Ladder, Figure 46). The benefits of dwelling in wilderness are cast in contrast to the confining potential of buildings (scene of Peter's release from prison, Figure 38) and the perils of urban life (Lot's flight from the destroyed city of Sodom, Figure 53).

The natural world is thus presented as a counterpoint to architecture, an alternative habitation. The fictive tapestry painted directly opposite the entrance from the Chapter House concentrates this opposition (Figure 31). The foreground depicts a Carthusian lay brother sitting in a wild setting contemplating a skeleton before him. The brother seems to belong in his setting: he fits in comfortably between the rocks and the outline of his body is replicated on a larger scale by the diagonal arrangement of the bank which cradles him. The rounded and undulating lines of the bushes, trees and rocks - as well as the monk's habit and limbs - contrast powerfully with the rectilinearity of the stone tomb that holds the skeleton in front of him. The carcass does not fit its container as comfortably as the monk - the harsh planar coldness of the stone collides with the brittle and bare bones.

Contemplating death and the passing of time, the monk also faces up to the inadequacies of earthly dwelling and containment. The linear geometries of wall and plane, of earthly dwelling, are suddenly revealed as rigid and grotesque. The natural environment of the wilderness, by contrast, with its suppler outlines, is proposed as a neater 'fit'. It appears protective and accommodating; indeed, the branches just above the monk's shoulder supply a 'natural' cross that sanctifies this scene of human mortality. The scene in front of the monk starkly foregrounds

²³ Ibid., 193.

the limitations of stone architecture, which is thwarted both by its own collapse, and by the ephemerality of the body it is supposed to contain. This emblematic *memento mori*, however, helps think about the whole of Spadaro's choir decoration. It directs attention to the fact that the depiction of landscape takes places in close tension with the illusionistic painting of a fictive architectural framework. This tapestry offers one route through the complexity of Spadaro's frescoes: the play with architecture's limits – and nature cast as architecture's opposite.

The scene of Moses producing water from the rock (Figure 78 and Figure 24), placed above Cosimo Fanzago's marble lavamano and highlighted by a matching marble frame, furthermore demonstrates the particular nature these themes could take on in a Carthusian context. Moses' miracle, while fitting with the Old Testament subjects of the other compartments, reproduces an episode of the Carthusian order's founder, Bruno's hagiography. Guided by divine providence, Bruno and his companions are led to their first retreat, the *desertum* of the Grande Chartreuse, and provided with every necessity.²⁴ The site they are granted only lacks a source of drinking water. Bruno, however,

in the image of Saint Moses, in the blink of an eye miraculously produced it in such quantity, and of such quality, that it was sufficient not simply for drinking, but also for other uses, and for all the cells; and it still pours and wanders forth to our own time with its immortal name of the Fount of St Bruno.²⁵

²⁴ Meleagro Pentimalli, *Vita del gran patriarca S. Bruno cartusiano* (Rome: Alessandro Zanetti, 1622). On Pentimalli's *Vita*, Giovanni Lanfranco and Theodor Kruger's engravings and the process of canonization, see Sebastian Schütze, "The *Vita S. Brunonis Cartusianorum Patriarchae* and Its Interpretation by Massimo Stanzione in the Certosa Di S. Martino in Naples," in *Parthenope's Splendor: Art of the Golden Age of Naples*, ed. Jeanne Chenault Porter and Susan C. Scott (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1993).

²⁵ "Ma il santo Patriarca BRUNO confidato all'onnipotenza divina, da dove derivano Mari, e Finmi di gratie, postosi in profondissima estasi; à guisa del santo Mosè in un batter di occhi miracolosamente l'ottiene in tanta quantità, e qualità buona, che non solo al bere; ma ad altri usi, e per tutte le Celle abbondantemente scorrendo provvedeva; e scorre ancora, e camina a'tempri nostri col suo nome immortale. FONTE DI S. BRUNO." Pentimalli, *Vita*, 60-61. The image was clearly potent, for another

Spadaro's fresco substitutes the image of the Carthusians' first habitation with that of Moses in wilderness, projecting backward in time the significance of Bruno's provision for his order. Carthusians are noted for their advanced plumbing systems, and at San Martino, the earliest of the interventions begun in the 1580s included a new well-head in the Great Cloister.²⁶ In the lavamano too, plumbing, artifice and spiritual significance are woven together. The water spouts emerge from grey bardiglio marble, a reference to the grey rock from which Moses and Bruno produced water.

The insistent appearance of landscape in Spadaro's Lay Brothers' Choir decoration, therefore, draws out the idea of wilderness as habitable, pre- or post-architecture. Biblical scenes work in contrast to the stony illusionistic framework of the frescoes, presenting ways of dwelling that have no need for such structures (as if a taunt). The providential potential of nature is furthermore linked in the fresco of Moses to the providential character of Carthusians' own first *locus*, the wilderness of the Grande Chartreuse. In broadest terms, therefore, the landscape or natural setting is presented in opposition to architecture, as a locus of alternative ways of dwelling.

2.2 Representing Architectures/Architecturing Representation: Architecture at its Limit

While the memento mori tapestry crystallises the possibility of inhabiting the land and the limitations of stone architecture, all of Spadaro's frescoes in the Lay Brothers' Choir are deeply concerned with the question of architecture. His work across the monastery is suffused with an interest in architectural representation, its staging, its feigning. This interest was cultivated and expanded through Spadaro's close collaboration with Viviano Codazzi, a well-known painter of

Fount of St Bruno was also recorded at Bruno's burial place in Calabria, known for its miracle-working properties, Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 102-05.

²⁶ Fanzago also worked on the new cistern, cf Mario A. De Cunzio, "La cisterna del Chiostro Grande nella Certosa di San Martino," *Napoli Nobilissima* 8 (1968).

architectural perspectives, and the two are known to have collaborated on numerous works.²⁷ Focusing on the idea of landscape, scholarship has tended to overlook how the question of architecture arises – as an open question – in many of the scenes. More importantly, it ignores the way architectural representation is central to organising Spadaro's frescoes in the Choir. Fictive architectural structure carries the tapestries and cartouche-like pictorial fields of the compartments; the framework organises the depictions hierarchically and thematically, and the ornamental vocabulary ties the frescoes to the marble decoration of Cosimo Fanzago, both in the Choir and elsewhere in the monastery. Spadaro's attention to different levels of representation is crucial to the effect of the Lay Brothers' Choir frescoes. Through framing, feigning and fiction, the relationships between painting and architecture, representation and its staging are constantly renegotiated. In the following two sections I will examine the different tropes that shape the presentation of wilderness as edge, limit or stoppage, as architecture's Other in Spadaro's frescoes.

2.2.1 'As an open window': Architecture and Vision

One of the central conceits rehearsed in Spadaro's choir decoration is that of the opening out of architecture. Spadaro's frescoes furnish the Lay Brothers' Choir with multiple fictive openings. Three of the six fictive tapestries (Figure 23, Figure 29, Figure 32) billow at the corners to reveal a large quadrangular aperture backing onto a blue sky; the sense of openness is heightened by the imaginary breeze that the billowing suggests. The squinches that sit above the fictive tapestries are pierced by oculi (Figure 54 to Figure 59) with angels or *spiritelli* gazing (or even clambering) in.²⁸ Finally, the fictive architecture of the room is open to the sky at the apex of the vault, with three pictorial carpets attached to the painted entablature providing temporary cover (Figure 69 and Figure 70).

²⁷ Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, 19-23, 25-35. Sestieri and Daprà, 19-23, 25-35. De Dominici frequently mentions both the collaboration between Viviano Codazzi and Micco Spadaro, as well as their close and loving relationship, De Dominici, *Vite*, vol. 3, 190-213.

²⁸ A conceit that recalls the central oculus of Mantegna's famed *Camera Picta*, cf Stephen J. Campbell, "Mantegna's *Camera Picta*: Visuality and Pathos," in *Andrea Mantegna: Making Art (History)*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell and Jérémie Koering (Chichester: Wiley, 2015).

Architecture's illusionistic openness is also acute in Spadaro's slightly later fresco decoration of the Prior's Quarters. Here the presence of outdoor, sylvan space, dominated by a vivid green palette is conveyed. The effect is particularly strong in Sala 14 of the present-day museum, one of the large galleries of the Prior's apartments (Figure 71). The vault depicts four elongated landscape scenes and a central image with the baptism of Christ. An illusionistic architectural structure frames the scenes. In the real corners, the combination of fictive corbels, projecting cornice and colonnette reinforce an illusion of a load-bearing arrangement (Figure 72). The neutral colour and slenderness of the framework gives an impression of airy open space above one's head. The golden and rose tones of the clouds in the landscape scenes create tonal unity between the five sections, affecting the illusion of a unified sky, lit by the glow of the sun.

The decoration of these ceilings rehearses the topos of painting as a window opening out onto a view. This concept was most famously formulated by Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise *On Painting*:

Up to now we have explained everything related to the power of sight and the understanding of the intersection [of the visual pyramid]. But as it is relevant to know, not simply what the intersection is and what it consists in, but also how it can be constructed, we must now explain the art of expressing the intersection in painting. Let me tell you what I do when I am painting. First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen; and I decide how large I wish the human figures in the painting to be.²⁹

Alberti's evocation of the window occurs at an important juncture in Book I of his treatise: it acts as a transition between his lengthy discussion of the science of vision, and his practical advice for the construction of pictorial surface governed by the proportional relationships of perspective. The metaphor of the window is thus both crucial, and curiously unexamined, quickly passed over. As rhetorical device, Alberti's image has been all too successful: it has

²⁹ Alberti, *On Painting*, 55 (book I, §19).

drawn attention to vision and to the practical construction of the pictorial plane, yet its architectural dimension is usually underplayed.³⁰

The veiling of architecture's role in the work of painting is part of wider discourses that relegate architecture to simple representation or reflection.³¹ Helen Hills summarises the problem: "The image of the painting dependent on the window has been overwhelmingly interpreted by art historians as a conceptualization of the perspicuity of the picture."³² The overwhelming focus on perspective ignores the strangeness of Alberti's image. Thus "the architectural widow has too hastily been interpreted as an insignificant framing device merely making possible the real matter of painting as perspective."³³ Thus Anne Friedberg argues: "The frame is what mattered, not the view from a window."³⁴ Yet the 'view from a window' is not merely a by-product of the frame. Alberti's text imagines the opening of an architectural window on a surface destined for painting. He pictures an intriguing reversal of the relationships between painting and building in fresco, where the architectural surface is necessary to support and carry the painted surface; indeed, the two quite literally fuse together. In the 'open window' trope, rather than painting being inscribed over building, architectural opening is inscribed onto and into an expectant canvas. It recedes just as it provides the opening for painting to come into view.

In the Prior's Quarters, architecture seems to slip comfortably into the role of providing the opening for/of painting. The meandering lines of rivers and roads provide a perspectival movement into depth. The edges of the pictorial opening cut off treetops and trunks, even the elbows of the hermits (Figure 72 to Figure 74) placed in the corners of the field, seemingly

³⁰ As Anne Friedberg suggests, "Alberti's 1435 metaphor [...] remains a pivotal trope in debates about the origins, practices, and traditions of perspective" Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 26.

³¹ Helen Hills, "The Veiling of Architecture," in *Il velo in area mediterranea fra storie e simbolo: tardo Medioevo - prima eta moderna*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, Maria Grazia Nico Ottaviani, and Gabriela Zarri (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014).

³² *Ibid.*, 361.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Friedberg, *Virtual Window*, 30.

neutral apertures rather than conscious framing devices. The delicate painted framing elements stage architecture's making way for pictorial representation.

In the Lay Brothers' Choir, the illusionistic framework that 'carries' the fresco compartments plays on architecture's structuring role. At the same time, the painted image that architecture accommodates seems to have expanded aggressively, colonising architectural structure through painterly illusionism and revealing it as a fiction. While views at first seem to be implied also in the Lay Brothers' Choir, here various openings and frames are worked through differently.³⁵ The three billowing and creasing tapestries draw attention to the fictive and superficial nature of the central scenes, while simultaneously reinstating the 'view through' in the square openings behind the tapestries. They thus highlight contradictions inherent in the Albertian trope. While Alberti's metaphor 'opens' and architecturalises the canvas, his employment of architecture also conceives the latter as surface. In Alberti's fashioning of painting, architecture is veiled, Helen Hills has suggested.³⁶ The open window through which the painter is to gaze upon the subject to be painted is substituted with a fine, gridded cloth, the *velo*, used as an aid to reduce three-dimensional form to a flat surface.³⁷ Friedberg draws attention to the way Alberti's own writing in his later treatise on architecture (*De re aedificatoria*, 1452), contradicts the tropes of transparency and 'seeing through' often attached to the window metaphor.³⁸ When thinking about architecture, windows become a permeable, yet material

³⁵ The issue of 'views' was at stake in other ways at San Martino at this time. The Bay of Naples was considered one of the most beautiful sights of Italy at this time, and the Certosa di San Martino commands the best possible views of it. Pompeo Sarnelli writes that it might indeed be the best *veduta* in Europe, Pompeo Sarnelli, *Guida de'forestieri, curiosi di vedere, ... le cose piu notabili ... di napoli, e del suo amenissimo distretto, etc*, Nuova edizione da A. Bulifon ... abbellita. ed. (Naples: Antonio Bulifon, 1692), 323-24. The renovations of the Great Cloister started at the end of the sixteenth century transformed the traditional two-storey cells with individual gardens into smaller habitations supplied, instead, with *loggie* opening out onto these very views. The Lay Brothers on the other hand are furnished with fictive views. I am indebted to Anne-Marie Akehurst for her thoughts on this matter.

³⁶ Hills, "The Veiling of Architecture," 359.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 360.

³⁸ Friedberg, *Virtual Window*, 30-32.

surface, mediating the movement of light and air, and providing shelter from wind or bad weather.³⁹ Alberti's "[w]indows were *translucent*, not transparent," Friedberg thus suggests.⁴⁰

While in the vaults of the Prior's Quarters, the framing of the landscape scenes makes architecture retreat to the margins, to be 'seen through', openings can also work *into* architecture a certain visionary quality. The butterfly-like, trapezoidal fields of the vault spandrels are particularly interesting (Figure 46 to Figure 53). Here, there is even less of a sense of framing than in Sala 14 - the pictorial 'opening' seems punched through the architectural fabric, without any mouldings or courses to mediate the transition. At the same time, the edges of the field curl inward. Thin and white, they resemble paper or parchment. Bounded by these edges, the images are revealed as potentially flimsy, perhaps even superficial. In the trope of the window, painting gains in structure and solidity through being embedded in architecture - the architectural edging stabilises them and holds them in place. In the trapezoidal areas of the Lay Brother's Choir, the paper-like quality of the edge insinuates an image far removed from the apparent stability and endurance of fresco painting, of architectural support. Here we are looking not even at an image on canvas, but something painted on paper - easily detached, rolled up, removed - perhaps even blown away by the wind. Although openings of sorts – similar in tenor and tone to other compartments in the room – they also present an architectural performance radically different from the simulations of the tapestries, the oculi, or the vaults of the Prior's Quarters.

Illusionistic architectural structure returns however and casts these images in an even more unsettling light. The field is topped by a monstrous mask-face and the space that 'opens up' appears to do so in its gaping maw (Figure 51). The masks are set under an illusionist architrave crowning the whole space and therefore act as the capitals of an engaged order. Here, the capital - one of the sustaining members of a building - opens up a monstrously yawning space. The curling edges and the awkward, overblown shape of the field present the visions as something conjured that might soon fold back up and be reabsorbed. At the same

³⁹ He describes windows covered over with thin slabs of alabaster, or perforated sheet of bronze and lead. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

time, the shape of the field also responds to the curvature of the vault which it envelops and implies the carrying capacity of architecture. It is precisely the load-bearing part of the vault that is destabilised - pierced and torn open.

In many of the biblical scenes depicted by Spadaro in the Lay Brothers' Choir, the wilderness or the outdoors are cast as setting for visionary experience.⁴¹ While the pictorial scenes (that which is framed) present landscape as an ideal place of prophecy and vision, Spadaro's fictive architecture (that which frames and contains) produces a paradoxical paragone. The fictive architectural structure that appears to support, house and structure the scenes is shown to produce visions. It thus stages *architecture's* visionary quality. It is not simply that architecture is pushed to mimic or feign a wilderness setting, but rather that its members, its fabric and its formal language are shown to be pierced and ruptured themselves by spiritual vision. While presenting scenes of ideal visionary landscapes, architecture itself competes in providing an alternative visionary setting.

2.2.2 Out of Nature: Vitruvius and the Beginnings of Architecture

Another trope that helps think about the way nature is staged as architecture's limit-condition, its *caesura*, is the Vitruvian account of architecture's origins. The foregrounds of the scenes in Sala 15 rehearse a state of nature. Opening up the room to a magnificent pictorial landscape of greenery, it is as if the viewer is invited to inhabit groves and forests like primitive humans. In the central scene of the Baptism, Christ and John the Baptist are part-naked, clothed in simple, rudimentary attire. The hermits inserted into the very corners of the oblong sections, although less noticeable, develop this quality further. The trunk of a tree serves as chapel for one of them, propping up his cross (Figure 74); another shelters under a cave-like outcrop (Figure 73). They make use of their environment for shelter - they seek to find ways of dwelling in the landscape. Enclosure or bounding is a matter of affinity: their abode is carved out through a certain concordance between their bodies and the objects of their surroundings. Similarity in outline (see hermit in Figure 74) conjures a space *in* nature, not apart from it. The hermits seem to present a simpler mode of dwelling, in contrast to the stone architecture with quite literally

⁴¹ Cf. depictions of Jacob's Ladder (Figure 46), two scenes of Christ in the Garden of Getsemane (Figure 41 and Figure 67) or Moses receiving the tablets of the law on Mount Sinai (Figure 48).

fades into the haze of the distant background. These hermits living in the shelter of trees and coves recall Vitruvius' narrative of the origins of architecture.

The enduring myth of the primitive hut dramatises architecture's point of origin at the threshold between nature and building. Vitruvius gives his version of the origins of architecture at the beginning of the second book of his *De Architectura*.⁴²

Mankind originally brought forth like the beasts of the field, in woods, dens, and groves, passed their lives in a savage manner, eating the simple food which nature afforded. A tempest, on a certain occasion, having exceedingly agitated the trees in a particular spot, the friction between some of the branches caused them to take fire [...]. Returning to the spot after the tempest had subsided, and finding the warmth which had thus been created extremely comfortable, they added fuel to the fire [...] and then went forth to invite others, by signs and gestures, to come and witness the discovery. In the concourse that thus took place, they testified their different opinions and expressions by different inflexions of the voice. From daily association words succeeded to these indefinite modes of speech; and these becoming by degrees the signs of certain objects, they began to join them together, and conversation became general.⁴³

Vitruvius' account is dense. He swiftly sketches out the state of nature of first mankind, before moving on to the fateful storm that sets in motion a chain reaction: the discovery of fire and its comfort, assembly and gathering, signs and gestures, leading finally to language and conversation.

⁴² The second book is to be devoted to building materials, but before proceeding to that subject, Vitruvius offers "an inquiry into the origin and various species of the earliest buildings, and their gradual advance to perfection." The next sentence presents what is at stake: "In this I shall follow the steps of Nature herself, and those who have written on the progress from savage to civilized life, and the inventions consequent on the latter state of society." Marcus Pollio Vitruvius, "Ten Books on Architecture," <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Vitruvius/home.html>. Book II, Introduction, paragraph 5.

⁴³ Ibid., Book II, Chapter 1, paragraph 1.

Building is then introduced into the rapid progression from savagery to civilisation:

Thus the discovery of fire gave rise to the first assembly of mankind, to their first deliberations, and to their union in a state of society. [...] In the assembly, therefore, which thus brought them first together, they were led to the consideration of sheltering themselves from the seasons, some by making arbours with the boughs of trees, some by excavating caves in the mountains, and others in imitation of the nests and habitations of swallows, by making dwellings of twigs interwoven and covered with mud or clay. From observation of and improvement on each other's' expedients for sheltering themselves, they soon began to provide a better species of huts.⁴⁴

In this view, human society and building are closely intertwined. The very first attempts at shelter take their cue from nature's own forms, like caves and arbours. Yet the progress of dwelling, building and craftsmanship is tracked in the transformation of nature's bounty into resources, of trees into wood, of muds, plants and rocks into materials. Through interaction and reflection, the first builders progressively move towards ever-more perfect forms and ever further away from what is simply 'given' by nature. They thus leave behind a way of dwelling in nature.

In this perspective, architecture's origin is conceptualised as the betterment of the art of sheltering. Vitruvius' insistence on the perfecting of the craft of building implies a teleology - better, more solid, more secure, architecture moving away from its roots in the natural state. The myth places at its heart a certain removal from nature, nature's exclusion behind walls.

In Vitruvius' account, architecture is born as a means of shelter, of catering to the basic needs of warmth and protection from the elements. Yet in the Lay Brothers' Choir, Spadaro's frescoes undermine a view of architecture as sheltering and closure. In the Priors' Quarter vaults

⁴⁴ Ibid., Book II, Chapter 1, paragraph 2.

discussed above this is done through effects of bringing the outside in, coupled with the representation of arbour-dwelling hermits. In the Lay Brothers' Choir, the questioning of architecture's sheltering function is more deliberate and nuanced. The fictive openings 'behind' the tapestries, the oculi in the squinches, and the apex of the vault all present an architecture open to the elements. The three tapestries caught in the breeze undermine the solidity of the walls as a bounding, impenetrable surface. The oculi present the fictive edifice as open to the gaze and intervention of higher forces.⁴⁵ Finally, the vault presents the room as unroofed. The canopy above, like the covering of the openings in the wall, is shown to be temporary: created temporarily by whoever has laid the carpets over the openings, but also liable to be pulled apart by a current of air, like the one animating the tapestries.

What is striking about Vitruvius' story is also the sense of architecture's *emerging*, a kind of immaculate conception. The narrative of progress is set against a single sentence outlining the 'state of nature' out of which humans are about to exit at remarkable speed. Vitruvius naturalises the trajectory he charts, by repeatedly emphasising human character as responsible for successive steps: "For association with each other they were more fitted by nature than other animals" or "It was thus that men, who are by nature of an imitative and docile turn of mind, and proud of their own inventions, gaining daily experience also by what had been previously executed, vied with each other in their progress towards perfection in building."⁴⁶ Development is thus almost inevitable and pre-ordained – it was always going to happen.

Vitruvius' account also draws attention, however, to the significance of the line drawn between the natural landscape and architecture. Examining the classical origin myths of painting, Victor Stoichita has demonstrated how the origin is also a place of anxiety and vulnerability.⁴⁷ The shadow, as one of the fabled origins of painting, could become both a trope for valorising the art of painting (through its suggestion of bodily or authorial presence), as well as a negation of its

⁴⁵ This parallels – but also alters - the imagery of divine intervention depicted in the Biblical scenes; the providential eye is not kept out of architecture.

⁴⁶ Vitruvius, "Ten Books on Architecture" Book II, Chapter 1, paragraphs 2-3.

⁴⁷ Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997).

fundamental claims (to its mimetic nature).⁴⁸ Once what Stoichita calls the “otherness of the myth of origin” is allowed to emerge, the shadow takes on a demonic cast, a figure of distortion and trickery, and something to be projected onto the cultural other.⁴⁹ Vitruvius’ narrative, therefore, brings into focus the symbolic significance of architecture’s encounter with nature, emerging from nature, distance from and dependence on nature. When architecture appears to open onto something other than itself, it also draws on the moment of origin as something simple and innocent, however. It helps cast this architecture – Spadaro’s architecture – as somehow pre-architectural (because always opening onto its own limit), and therefore not man-made.

2.3 Stories of Origin: Lay Brothers’ Choir as Foundational Myth

What is the purpose of all this complicated architectural play and what does it offer the Carthusians of San Martino? The final section of the chapter draws the multiplying of architecture’s limits and edges into relation with the fashioning of San Martino’s lay brothers’ identity. I want to argue that the position of the lay brothers here becomes a synecdochal figure for the whole of the monastic community. Concetta Martone Dragani has analysed the placement, decoration and staging of the ordained monks’ choir in the church as a concerted attempt to represent and fashion an authoritative monastic body.⁵⁰ The changes to the arrangement of the monastic church are read by Concetta Martone Dragani as “a manifestation of the changing relevance and authority of the monastic body within the sacred space.”⁵¹ She emphasises the greater visibility of choir monks once placed at the head of the church, within direct lines of sight, and their symbolic command of the church space from that position.⁵² The

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-41, 123-52.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 123-27. I think there is much to research in the parallel case of architecture, especially the idea of cave-dwelling as a mark of the primitive or pagan. Unfortunately, this lies beyond the scope of the present chapter; see my forthcoming essay on grotesques, ““Other Bodies and Other Forms:” Grotesque Departures in Seventeenth Century Naples”, in *Paradigms of Renaissance Grotesques*, edited by Damiano Acciarino (Toronto: Centre of Renaissance and Reformation Studies), forthcoming Spring 2019.

⁵⁰ Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth," 145.

⁵¹ Ibid., 129-30.

⁵² Ibid., 127-28, 30, 36-37.

painted decoration, gilding and marbledwork portray the monks as already half-way to heaven, elevated by their contemplative piety.⁵³

The lay brothers are not made 'visible' in such ways in the church, the choir supplied for their observances removed to a separate auxiliary space. At the same time as the choir monks are placed in a position of greater visibility at the head of the church, the lay brothers are removed from view, pushed deeper into the heart of the monastic complex.⁵⁴ Yet the new choir was outfitted with expensive decoration in keeping with the rest of the monastery. The complexity of Spadaro's imagery and the placement of the choir betray a fetishization of the lay brothers and their role.

The late-seventeenth-century Carthusian legislator Dom Innocent Le Masson notes the uniquely challenging position of the lay brothers when commenting on the admission process of a novice. He suggests that the vetting process for a lay brother should be no more lenient than that for a choir monk, since the daily tasks which the *conversus* is called to supply more occasion for sin and dissolution than the life of the choir monks.⁵⁵ Gordon Mursell argues that the Carthusian lay

⁵³ Ibid., 165-78.

⁵⁴ Dragani considers the Lay Brothers' choir only insofar as it relates to the trajectory of the monastic church's gradual opening up through the relocation of the monks' choir to the final two bays, and of the altar to the boundary between the choir and the nave. A key aspect of this is the removal of the choir screen or *tramezzo*. Dragani frequently refers to the screen – a standard feature of pre-Reformation church layouts – but offers nothing in the way of positive evidence on its existence or dismantling. Direct comment on the Lay Brothers' Choir is brief: the move is made "in order to ensure the young brothers' privacy from the lay community." Ibid., 142-43. She perhaps somewhat erroneously characterizes the lay brothers or *conversi* as 'young', confusing the lay brothers with novices. Certainly, the depictions of lay brothers in Spadaro's frescoes, or indeed in his well-known *Thanksgiving after the Plague of 1656*, show them as older men.

⁵⁵ "Probatio Conversorum non minus severa debet esse quam Monachorum, quia Conversi nisi bona vocatione, id est coelesti, aut putata tali, ad Monasterium fuerint adducti, et nisi intenso studio suae vocationis officii adimplendis strenue vacent, per exercitia externa quibus destinati sunt, facilius in dissipationem, deinde in relaxationem habituaem, et postmodum in varias peccandi occasiones decideri possunt, quod Monachis in Claustro semper degentibus non tam facile evenire potest." Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusienensis*, 138.

brother is to be viewed as more than a *famulus*, a simple servant.⁵⁶ The lay brothers were a well-acknowledged part of the Carthusian order from the outset, Mursell suggests: two of Bruno's first companions, Andrea and Guarino, are described as 'laici'; and already the first written statutes of the order, Guigo's *Consuetudines* of around 1127 dedicate a significant part of the text to the lay brothers.⁵⁷ Mursell argues that their importance is testified to by the way the lay brothers' lives parallel those of the choir monks, from liturgical observances to strictures against the breaking of silence. After the *Antiqua Statuta* of 1259, Carthusian regulations took on a tri-partite division with one part dedicated to liturgy and the divine office, and the other two to the rules governing the lives of choir monks and lay brothers respectively. Thus, Mursell suggests, the Carthusian order incorporated two distinct monastic paths corresponding to the differing paths to salvation of a lay person and a cleric.⁵⁸ Mursell characterises the *conversi* as "the underwriters of Carthusian solitude; and they were there both to ensure its continuance and to benefit from its fruits."⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the intermediary position of the lay brothers seems to be a source of anxiety for Carthusians. Both the articles of the statutes and the imagery of the Lay Brothers' Choir may be interpreted as an attempt at control and surveillance. A key difference in the otherwise very close vows of the monk and the *conversus* is the clause stating that a lay brother, who has abandoned his vocation, may and should be returned to his monastic house.⁶⁰ While choir monks also made a vow of obedience to the will of their superior, the clause in the lay brothers' vow gives this renunciation very direct and concrete form. Chapter 45 of Guigo's statutes considers when lay brothers are allowed to speak as part of their obediences and their use of signals, but forbids them from learning new ones from strangers, or conversely, teaching

⁵⁶ Mursell, *Theology of Carthusian Life*, 203-07.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* See Le Masson's chapter on the foundation of the order, Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusienensis*, 3-7.

⁵⁸ Mursell, *Theology of Carthusian Life*, 206.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁰ "Quod si aliquo tempore unquam hinc aufugere vel abire temptavero, liceat servis dei qui hic fuerint, me plena sui iuris auctoritate requirere, et coacte ac violenter in suum servicium revocare." *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 74; for the profession of the novice see chapter 23. A parallel Latin and French edition with critical commentary has been published as Guigo I the Carthusian, *Coutumes De Chartreuse [Consuetudines Cartusiae]* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2001).

strangers their signs.⁶¹ The cook must not give or receive anything from strangers without express permission.⁶² He must also avoid involving himself with the inhabitants of nearby villages who might appear at the monastery on feast days.⁶³ The master shepherd is exhorted to stick to business in his trade deals, avoiding idle gossip, and cautioned against participating in the trickeries commonly associated with such deals.⁶⁴ Chapter 58 and 59 forbid lay brothers to seek conversation with strangers and give advice on what to do with objects sent to the community.⁶⁵ These examples conjoin the spatial and architectural policing of boundaries and points of entry, with the social policing of the behaviour of lay monks. The lay brother's position is ambiguous: crucial to the choir monks' vocation yet subordinate to it; central to the daily functioning of Carthusian monastery, but also always at the margin, dangerously close to the world beyond the *desertum* that the choir monk renounced.

2.3.1 Ideal, Ambiguity and Surveillance: Picturing Lay Brothers at San Martino

Spadaro's frescoes respond to and extend the ambiguities of the lay brothers' position. Some of them appear to exalt the lay brothers, presenting them as autonomous subjects of spiritual experiences: the brother contemplating death (Figure 31); the one receiving a vision of Virgin Mary (Figure 30); the miracle of the ass' detachable leg (Figure 29). The echoes between the fictive tapestries depicting lay brothers and the lunettes, ovals and spandrels with biblical scenes seem to place the lay brothers within an exalted pedigree.

The unstable, shifting and in-between qualities of the lay brothers' vocation are also made evident. The fictive tapestries take up the importance of the threshold, most intriguingly in the first two on the left as one faces the altar (Figure 79). The one on the left (Figure 32), directly above the door leading to the Chapter House, depicts a view of a Charterhouse with a vineyard

⁶¹ *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 45.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 46. The statutes pertaining to the cook, or *coquinario*, in charge of the kitchens but also the main door of the monastery, expand significantly in subsequent editions.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 50.

⁶⁵ *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 58 & 59.

cultivated by Brothers. The next one to the right (Figure 33) shows the Count of Nevers as a Lay Brother. The two tapestries present contrasting points of view. On the right, we look at the monastery from the outside, blocked by a high wall; on the left, the view is from the monastery out. On the right, the scene is set in the remote surroundings of the Grande Chartreuse (albeit given a distinctly genteel appearance); on the left, the terrace gives way to the distant view of a large sea-side city, very like the bay views of Naples seen from San Martino. Spadaro's exploration of architecture's edges and limits (what is and is not architecture) and Carthusian ambivalence about lay brothers interweave in the production of these scenes. Architectural edges are emphasised: the great gate of the monastery with the lay brother as gate-keeper; the edge of a terrace, protective but also open to a view. Just beyond the gate in the right-hand view, people inhabiting the edges of enclosure are depicted in shadow.⁶⁶

The social status of lay brothers is an unsolved matter that has an impact on how the fetishizing of the lay brothers' role is interpreted.⁶⁷ The original statutes direct the prospective lay brother to ask someone else to write his vow of profession for him.⁶⁸ This is in line with a general assumption that lay brothers were usually illiterate. Dom Innocent Le Masson comments: this is because most of the early *conversi* were labourers or peasants. Yet in latter times, "men of great nobility have embraced this vocation because of humility and devotion, and adorned the

⁶⁶ These figures engage several concerns that reappear in Carthusian statutes: the question of alms, contact with neighbouring people, the horrible image of the *gyrovagus* (itinerant beggar) which already Guigo's statutes use to fend off accusations of elitism and excessive isolation. The oval scene on the painted pilaster that separates the tapestries concretises the virtues of the in-between. Sestieri and Dapra call it Joseph's Dream, which seems to be referring to episode in Matthew 1: 18-25. An angel is shown appearing to Joseph in a dream, persuading him to accept Mary as his wife. In the oval scene, Joseph is shown sleeping outside, on the threshold of a rustic building, perhaps a stable. Joseph leans towards the corner pier of the building, itself marking an edge just like the fictive pilaster to which the scene seems fastened. It echoes the many images of vision and angelic visitation depicted in the choir, and Joseph, neither out nor in, in slumber, is also at that moment yet undecided about his future.

⁶⁷ Is it collaborative, idealistic, paternalistic? Are the lay brothers' being 'spoken down to' in the imagery?

⁶⁸ *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 73.

order with the splendour of great virtue.”⁶⁹ Lay brothers’ low social status should not be too readily assumed. Indeed, Mursell regarded the lay brother’s calling as an alternative monastic path with its own unique virtues. Choosing this path thus acts as a testament of great humility and virtue, an ornament to the order. Le Masson’s brief comment may also be read as noting the exception that proves the rule, however. Elsewhere, summarising the strictures and ordinances of the order promulgated through the general chapters, Le Masson notes sixteenth-century regulations requiring lay brothers to clearly sign their letters as ‘*conversi*’.⁷⁰ The legislators note that all too frequently lay brothers allow ambiguity to arise when signing their names, illicitly taking on the authority of choir monks. The strictures hint at the gulf between the first Carthusian institutions and the realities of the sixteenth century, where lay brothers’ engagement in writing poses a threat to the distinctions that separated them from monks proper.

Spadaro’s depiction of the Count of Nevers (Figure 33) draws attention to the potential nobility of the lay brothers’ vocation and exploits the display of virtue and prestige noted by Le Masson. The Count’s interaction with his son, who offers his help in relieving him of his duties, also highlights the investments of professed religious in the world they are expected to leave behind, in particular through familial ties. The many ambiguities of monastic vocation generally and Carthusian practice in the seventeenth century more specifically are concentrated into this space and framed through the tropes of nature, landscape and the work (literal and symbolic) of lay brothers.

2.3.2 The Placement of the Choir

Yet this ambiguity must also be controlled. Spadaro’s frescoes explore the idea of permeability on a grand scale, yet the room itself is walled in on each side, with multiple courts, walls, cloisters and rooms erected between it and the extra-claustral world (Figure 26). This is all the more notable as the placement of the choir is unusual in Carthusian tradition. The architectural layout of Carthusian monasteries is typically seen to correspond to the distinct eremitic and

⁶⁹ “Id ita statuitur, quia maxima pars Conversorum Cartusiae, erat ex statu mechanico aut rustico oriunda; quamvis postea viri valde nobiles Statum illum ex humilitate et devotione amplexi sint, qui Ordinem magno virtutum splendore decoraverunt.” Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis*, 138.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 370.

coenobitic components of Carthusian vocation.⁷¹ Braunfels outlines the separation of a Charterhouse into three distinct spheres: that of the solitude of the Great Cloister and its individual cells; the communal spaces around the church; and the areas dedicated to the lay brothers.⁷² The lay brothers, he suggests,

not only saw to the needs of the monastery and received its guests, but also shielded the monks from the world. [...] The security afforded against the intrusion of the world by such a third sphere is responsible for the Carthusians' want of any special stipulations as to the localities best suited to their new foundations.⁷³

The sphere of the lay brothers is thus seen as a buffer between the fathers' seclusion and the rest of the world, both physically in the arrangement of the buildings, as well as practically, in taking on the burden of managing everyday tasks and interactions with the outside world.

The monastic church was typically split into three areas: a presbytery with the altar in the east; a monks' choir in the centre of the church; and a choir for the Lay Brothers or *conversi* in the western end.⁷⁴ This arrangement can still be seen at San Lorenzo in Padula (Figure 75 and Figure 76) and the Certosa di Trisulti (Figure 77), two important foundations in the south of Italy, or at the Certosa di Galuzzo near Florence, founded by Niccolò Acciaiuoli, a fourteenth-century patron of the Neapolitan foundation. Giovanni Leoncini draws attention to Padula, Florence and Naples as examples of Charterhouses where the original medieval structure of the church was largely retained through later refurbishments.⁷⁵ Naples was thus an exception in the relocation of the lay brothers' choir which was a traditional part of the medieval church arrangement.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Leoncini, "Il monastero certosino."

⁷² Wolfgang Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe: The Architecture of the Orders*, trans. Alastair Laing (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 113.

⁷³ Ibid. The question of the location of Carthusian houses is more significant than Braunfels' words would suggest, see below.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Leoncini, *La Certosa di Firenze*, 83.

⁷⁶ Foundations in German-speaking lands developed a variant where the western arm of the cloister would run through the middle of the monastic church, often surmounted by a gallery and acting as a more substantial alternative to a rood screen in separating the two choirs. Ibid.; Braunfels, *Monasteries of*

Concetta Martone Dragani assumes San Martino's original conformity to this plan when discussing the relocation of the choir during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century refurbishments (Figure 68).⁷⁷ She sees the need to enforce spatial separation between women, lay guests and the lay brothers as one of the key factors motivating a redesign of the monastic church.⁷⁸ By 1590, however, the Chiesetta delle Donne had been built, resolving the issue of female presence.⁷⁹ The move complicates the customary view of lay brothers' liminality, their intermediary position. It helps secure the position of the lay brothers through reducing liminality and removing them from view. Ensclosed in a corner between the monks' choir and the Chapter House, there is a protective quality to the choir's positioning. Doors open both towards the monks' choir in the church and towards the chapter house, suggesting surveillance and the nearby presence of the monks' authority. Thus, while less accessible to outsiders, I suggest that the choir takes on a particular significance for the whole monastic community, something that Spadaro's extensive, complex and contradictory decoration testifies to.

2.3.3 Mythic Origins

The fictive tapestry this chapter opened with (Figure 23) demonstrates the wider significance of the Lay Brothers' Choir imagery. Raffaele Tufari's mid-nineteenth-century guidebook to the Certosa di San Martino merely refers to it as "another view of the Charterhouse".⁸⁰ Tufari's

Western Europe, 115-16. See for example Buxheim in Germany, Kristina Krüger, *Monasteries and Monastic Orders: 2000 Years of Christian Art and Culture*, ed. Rolf Toman (Königswinter: H.F. Ullmann, 2008), 156-57.

⁷⁷ Dragani, "Between Heaven and Earth," 96-128, 35-43.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 110-11.

⁸⁰ "nell'ultimo un'altra veduta di Certosa con armenti che pascolano", Raffaele Tufari, *Certosa di San Martino: descrizione storica ed artistica* (Naples: G. Ranucci, 1854), 60. It is not clear whether a Charterhouse or *the* Charterhouse is referred to; although the article seems definite, he uses the same descriptor for the first tapestry on the left when facing the altar (Figure 32), which depicts a decidedly Italianate landscape and shows monks cultivating a vineyard something that is difficult to envisage in the Alpine foothills of the Grande Chartreuse. Tufari remains the main source of information on the subjects

generic description belies its importance. The landscape in this fictive tapestry derives from a 1630 print of the Grande Chartreuse in the French Alps titled *Vera et accurata descriptio situationis Magnae Cartusiae*, engraved by Léonard Gualtier and printed by Jean Messenger (Figure 80).⁸¹

The print identifies the Grande Chartreuse as the first or principal house of the Carthusian order, which derives its name from this first foundation.⁸² The question of origins was of acute significance to the Carthusians at the beginning of the seventeenth century: in 1623 a century-long campaign resulted in the canonization of their founder, St Bruno.⁸³ The canonisation coincided with printing and publishing efforts, foremost among which was the publication in 1620-1 a series of prints of the life of St Bruno, designed by Giovanni Lanfranco, and the accompanying *Vita del gran patriarca S. Bruno Cartusiano* of Meleagro Pentimalli (1621 and 1622).⁸⁴ Dom Innocent Le Masson's great overview of Carthusian observance, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis* (first published as *Annales Ordinis Cartusiensis* in 1687), also tracks Carthusian practices back to their first origins.⁸⁵ The bulk of the text explores the evolution of Carthusian rule through successive collections of statutes; the first chapters, however, present the source of this legislation. The first chapter is concerned with the founding of the order, yet interestingly, the second chapter is dedicated to 'How Bruno and his companions decide upon a seat and make a home for themselves in the desert of Chartreuse'.⁸⁶ The chapter then gives a close description of the hermitage's dimensions and topography.

of the Lay Brothers' Choir paintings, and his suggestion that they were taken from the Carthusian chronicler Petrus Dorlandus is still cited in modern scholarship on Spadaro's paintings, cf Sestieri and Daprà, *Micco Spadaro*, 120-21.

⁸¹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, GE DD-627 (99 RES).

⁸² "primariae domus sacri ordinis Cartusiensis"

⁸³ Cf Schütze, "Vita S. Brunonis." The print is dedicated to Bruno D'Affringuez, prior of the Grande Chartreuse at the time and a convenient namesake of the founding father.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis*.

⁸⁶ "Quomodo S. Bruno & socii eius sedem fixerunt & domicilium sibi locaverunt in Eremo Cartusiae." Ibid., 8.

Spadaro's billowing fictive tapestry (Figure 23) makes a clear link between the lay brothers and the first home of the Carthusians, the original *desertum*. Spadaro's adaptation of the print adds a hillock to the foreground that presents white-clad brothers amidst their flocks. This manoeuvre challenges relations of scale and proportion, as the brothers at the top of the hillock appear as tall as the trees; another brother descending the hillock dwarfs the distant outbuildings and even the lower house. It is the path of the lay brothers that leads into the image, into depth, back in space and time towards the distant monastery.⁸⁷

Spadaro's frescoes explore architecture, landscape and representation in relation to the issue of habitation. Giovanni Leoncini draws attention to the fraught nature of these relationships in the sixteenth century. For Leoncini, the Charterhouse of Pavia marks a turning point in Carthusian architecture, signal in its size, grandeur and richness, coming in for criticism already in 1522.⁸⁸ Leoncini suggests that around this time, while French foundations remained simple and modest, Charterhouses in Spain, Italy and Bavaria started moving towards much greater architectural grandeur. The collision of different conceptions of Carthusian architecture came to a head in 1587, when the Prior General Gerolamo Lignano wanted to transfer the primary seat of the order from the Grande Chartreuse to Pavia.⁸⁹ The idea was framed as an opposition between the poor and lowly buildings of the old mother-house and a foundation more suited to celebrate the dignity of the order.⁹⁰ Lignano's plan met with staunch opposition within the order and resulted in the removal of the Prior General as well as a denial of the right for the Grande Chartreuse community to choose the new prior. Thus, even as Carthusian architecture elsewhere was evolving and diversifying, the image of the wilderness-set mother house was of crucial importance to members of the order and was to be protected even at the expense of the centralised authority represented by that very house.

⁸⁷ The lay brothers are distinguished by their shorter scapulars; see also (Figure 32).

⁸⁸ Leoncini, *La Certosa di Firenze*, 85-86. See also Aniel, *Les maisons de chartreux*. For Aniel, Pavia is the *terminus* of his exploration of Carthusian architecture.

⁸⁹ Leoncini, *La Certosa di Firenze*, 86; Devaux, *L'architecture*, vol. 1, 154.

⁹⁰ Devaux, *L'architecture*, 208-09.

At San Martino, the place of the lay brothers is staged quite literally at the heart of the monastery. The image of lay brothers as working the land and living in close harmony with nature helps produce a foundational myth, that of wilderness-dwelling Carthusian origin. Symbolically, landscape acts as the medium through which the ambiguities of not only the lay brothers' position, but also that of the choir monks, are recast. Pictorialising the link between lay brothers and nature helps produce a place that might contain their unstable status. By association, it also helps secure the status of the rest of the Carthusian community. The natural landscape helps re-invigorate, reassert and reimagine the vision of Carthusian vocation as a dwelling in wilderness.

Yet it is also the bold staging of architecture's pushing up against its own limits, its presentation precisely of that which it seems not to be, that helps carve out a place for this Carthusian mythic origin. The latter is all the more strengthened through its interweaving and colliding with visions of architecture's origins, limits and boundaries. Architectural fictions help sustain, mask and protect ideological fictions.

2.4 Conclusion

The decoration of the Lay Brothers' Choir explores the complex, restless and paradoxical layering of architectural representation. Spadaro's frescoes depict an architecture spectacularly opening out onto vistas. Architecture's self-effacement and aggrandisement are put into constant tension through these manoeuvres. In the scenes that depict hermits peacefully inhabiting wilderness, architecture seems to rehearse its own retreat or *caesura*. Decoration orchestrates architecture's presentation of that which has been left behind, but the architectural presentation of these stories of origin is in itself masked. The decoration also points to the already convoluted nature of architecture's promise of shelter and removal from the elements. More than simply visualising a sort of 'othering' of architecture – architecture's insistence on being something else (landscape, outdoors) – the decoration examined in this chapter also pictures an architecture that presents and reveals its limit, pushes up against it.

The question 'what is architecture' is nowhere allowed to settle in the Choir. In the layering of openings, surfaces, tapestries, supports and images, what makes up architecture is constantly

postponed. All at once, the frescoes offer up fictive views out into landscape (lunettes), the 'true' fake views presented in the glimpses of blue sky, the 'fake' views of the tapestries' central scenes, revealed through the creasing of textile, the visions in the ovals layered over fictive architectural members. The tapestries in particular boldly disturb different orders of the fiction, bringing together representation and its disruption, the questioning of its very possibility through the means of pictorial and architectural fiction.

Nature and architecture co-constitute each other in Spadaro's decoration. If the natural setting is treated as a stabilising force, a place to embed the origins of Carthusian vocation, architecture, on the other hand, never settles. Through the evident fictions of architecture, the frescoes produce a pre-architecture, a non-architecture which *can* contain and accommodate dreams of Carthusian origin. Yet pulling in the opposite direction, the issue of origin also helps present architecture as given, represent its emergence from nature, its not-man-made character. So the thrust of Spadaro's frescoes is contradictory. On the one hand, it is subversive – calling attention to the fictions and fabrications, layerings and slippages of architecture. At the same time, it is conservative too in obfuscating and mythologizing the origin of architecture. It recalls, reinterprets and intensifies a moment of origin, evoking architecture's first home in a mythical beyond that simply *is*, as clear and opaque as a quizzical piece of blue sky at the edge of a painted tapestry (Figure 23 and Figure 82).

Chapter 3 Monster in the Room: Great Chamber at Knole

“Fortunately, the frieze in the ball-room cannot be hidden. It used to delight me as a child, with its carved intricacies of mermaids and dolphins, mermen and mermaids with scaly, twisting tails and salient anatomy, and I was invariably contemptuous of those visitors to whom I pointed out the frieze but who were more interested in the pictures.”¹

Vita Sackville-West

The decoration of the Great Chamber at Knole provides an immediate and striking contrast to the elegant courtiers of the Painted Stair discussed in Chapter 1 (Figure 83 and Figure 84). It is very richly decorated, typically for Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture, in a wide array of different media: wainscot panelling, carved frieze and fireplace, plastered ceiling - all densely packed with pattern. This decoration is populated with far less genteel bodies than those pictured in the stair. Here, the walls are thick with bodies: men being torn apart in pilasters (Figure 94 and Figure 88); crouching fauns (Figure 96); hippocamps (Figure 95b); sirens or sphinxes (Figure 95, sides); leopards (Figure 94); scowling grotesque masks (Figure 97).²

Why these monsters in the frieze? The effect of the decoration in the Great Chamber is drastically different and sharply juxtaposed with that of the Painted Stair. In the walls of the stairwell, illusionistic painting stages and continuously undermines visions of courtly elegance, playing with perception through sleek surfaces of paint. In the Great Chamber, the decoration is more direct, robust even. The figures of the frieze project into the room, so forcefully modelled as if ready to detach from the wall. The uniform white paint does away with the subtle modulations of fictive framing and draws attention instead to the deep shadows cast by the

¹ Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 26.

² The creatures in the frieze are referred to as hippocamps in the Knole guidebook, Sackville-West, *Knole Guidebook*, 31. They have scaly lower bodies with a fish tail and muscular front limbs with hooves that seem to support this identification (a fish-horse hybrid), although the head is decidedly dragon-like.

carvings. The elaborate allegorical scenes of the stair are replaced by grimacing, struggling figures, dispersed and repeated around the room.

The Elizabethan Great Chamber has been characterised as a crucial elite space of entertaining; in Tara Hamling's words, "the most grand and solemn reception space in the house."³ Early scholarship on Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture, most notably the work of John Summerson and Mark Girouard, revolved around state apartments, emphasising their relationship to royal visits and household ceremony.⁴ The underlying assumptions have proved remarkably persistent in architectural scholarship and continue to shape the interpretation of buildings like Knole.⁵ However, the monsters in the room resist a reading that treats the Great Chamber as (simply) a room for courtly entertaining and the representation of Thomas Sackville's status.⁶

One of the most remarkable and characteristic features of architecture in Britain between 1540-1640 is the proliferation of opulent, vibrant and visually rich decorative surfaces, in houses from the very grandest palaces all the way through to more modest dwellings.⁷ The Great Chamber

³ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 149.

⁴ Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*.

⁵ See for example Cooper's *Houses of the Gentry*, where architecture is considered in terms of its reflection of social structures, changes in plan and increasing emphasis on privacy over the span of the period examined. For example: "The plan and appearance of the late medieval gentry house reflected its origins as well as expressing the social structure of the family and community that it was built to accommodate." (55) or "But the fundamental change is an increase in [the rooms'] numbers as rooms changed from spaces that were shared to spaces that are private, and from rooms with more general functions to more specialised ones." (273) Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry: 1480-1680* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁶ The reading of the Painted Stair relies on ascent "towards the splendor and exclusivity of the first floor", a social ascent coupled with a spiritual one, according to Sackville-West, *Knole Guidebook*, 18. Far from excluding, the Great Chamber admits interlopers of the rudest kind.

⁷ Hamling, "Visual Culture." Mary Hazard, for example, recognises the significance of decorated surfaces, from architecture to clothing and textiles, but this insight is ultimately deployed to analyse text, (Mary Hazard, *Elizabethan Silent Language* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), see chapter 3, 'Surface, Color, and Texture as Superficial Comment', 77-108.) It is strange that interest in this material has not necessarily encouraged more nuanced or thorough analyses of architecture or decorative arts;

embodies the scholarly difficulties with interpreting these surfaces, which are habitually treated as superfluous, uniform and easily dispatched through generalities. Thus Nicholas Cooper considers them under the heading of 'Ornament and Decoration' in his book on Jacobean architecture and summarises their significance thus: "So if armorial decoration announced the lineage of the house's owner, Classical ornament (however strange) spoke of his cultivation, and symbols and emblems incorporated into the decoration of his house expressed his values."⁸ Cooper's treatment of the Great Chamber at Knole exemplifies art history's privileging of the visible and legible as its subject: confronted with the room's strange surfaces, he suggests that the frieze "may have a heraldic significance that is no longer clear," but dedicates the remainder of his discussion to details of craftsmen involved in the execution.⁹ The quest for concrete meanings renders the Great Chamber inexplicable.¹⁰

It is these two aspects that seem to have resulted in a remarkable paucity of interpretations of the Great Chamber.¹¹ The presence of ornament is primarily explained as a display of the

Hazard's own reading of architecture (135-140) is a good example, focusing on prodigies like Kenilworth, Hardwick Hall and Rushton Lodge, and taking the approach that "[g]reat houses historically express the magnificence of the great man who built them." *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸ Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*, 19.

⁹ Cooper's reading of the Great Chamber in *ibid.*, 38. Georges Didi-Huberman suggests that in the course of art history's formalisation as a science in the nineteenth century, its claims to authority were built upon the privileging of the figurative, and of discrete meanings, or the tyranny of the visible and legible, as he puts it, see Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, especially 1-9. Tara Hamling notes that "[i]n moving away from a focus on style or technical skill new approaches [to visual culture in early modern England] tend to adopt a linguistic model for interpretation so that works of art are said to have been 'read like a text'." Hamling, "Visual Culture," 77.

¹⁰ Thus, the Painted Stair has been discussed much more readily.

¹¹ Edward Town's a recent PhD thesis focuses on the building chronologies at Knole and the involvement of particular craftsmen and printed sources, but in the case of the Great Chamber – unlike the Painted Stair – does not offer an interpretation, Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'." Neither Girouard nor Hamling discuss the Great Chamber at Knole, Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*; Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*. The Knole guidebook summary is emblematic: "The carved musical instruments above the fireplace suggest that this was a room for music, dancing and masques as well as for eating." Sackville-West, *Knole Guidebook*, 61. Edward Town notes the overlooked nature of Knole, suggesting it relates to

patron's wealth and taste, a fashionable status symbol. Its full strangeness, formal richness, and oddity are rarely addressed.

In examining the Great Chamber, I develop ways of thinking about the monsters in the room and the prominence they are given, pushing beyond simple iconography to think about the non-figural qualities of this decoration. Yet this material does not submit to analysis easily. It is both mundane and strange, oddly inexplicable. In order to dislodge the gloss of familiarity, I resort to what Mieke Bal calls a pre-posterous reading.¹² I thus mobilise the texts of Anne Clifford, Sigmund Freud, a fictional story in the *Strand Magazine* and Vita Sackville-West to seek out ways of engaging with the Great Chamber at Knole and addressing aspects of the house and the domestic realm that are otherwise not available.¹³

3.1 Confronting Strange Bodies

The reading of the Painted Stair as simply mapping progress towards increasing virtue and gentility is complicated by the Great Chamber, the imagined end-point of such a journey.¹⁴ The painted surfaces of the stairwell carry virtuoso presentations of elegant courtiers, caught within the illusionistic play of architecture. In the Great Chamber, decorative surfaces are encrusted with something quite different. In the wainscot panelling, screaming men are pulled apart by strapwork (Figure 94); the capitals of the principal order are populated by grotesque masks and water dragons (Figure 93, bottom left corner). The almost in-the-round, carved frieze under the

the house's "intrinsic duality", caught between medieval and early modern, palace and country house, Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 6-7.

¹² Where a later work of art (or text, in my case), can highlight new aspects of a historic artwork, cf Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 6-7; "Ecstatic Aesthetics: Metaphoring Bernini," in *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History*, ed. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

¹³ Clifford, *Diaries*; Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955); *Collected Papers*, trans. Alix Strachey, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth Press, 1925); L. G. Moberly, "Inexplicable," *Strand Magazine* 1917; Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*.

¹⁴ These readings are discussed in Chapter 1.

ceiling has mermaids; griffins (or hippocamps, according to the Knole guidebook); sirens and satyrs. Here be monsters.

In a space dedicated to elite entertaining and associated with household ceremony, the monsters in the frieze and wainscot provide a rude interruption. Masks grimace (Figure 97); faces crumple and scream; satyrs crouch as if to defecate and expose their genitalia (Figure 96). Anna Bryson suggests that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the rise of a heightened concern with comportment in England: conduct books “show the emergence of the body as a central subject and organising principle in the ideal of ‘courtesy; or, a significant new term, ‘civility’.”¹⁵ She relates this development to an increasing emphasis on personal virtues acquired through liberal education as a necessary requirement for the upper classes. As such values became interiorised, new modes of signalling social status externally were developed. Bryson writes: “For sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers on gentlemanly manners, then, the body was a text from which good or bad character could be read.”¹⁶

The discourses on courtliness which treat comportment as representation of inner character and virtue are already deeply problematic. Although on the one hand, outward appearance is charged with the task of honesty or truthfulness, at the same time, it is also likened to clothing, which instantly calls up the potential of changing dress. Discussing Erasmus’ *De Civilitate*, Bryson writes:

He defines ‘civility’ as the ‘outwarde honestie’ which should mirror the virtuous condition of the soul. He calls the body and its adornment the ‘habyte and apparayle of the inward mynde’ and, in the process of defining correct demeanour, he lists facial and gestural faults as a catalogue of representations of inner vice and folly.¹⁷

At the very heart of such conduct literature lies a paradox and an anxiety over the relationship between inner and outer character. The writers of such literature aim to heighten the reader’s

¹⁵ Anna Bryson, “The Rhetoric of Status: Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture C. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion, 1990), 141.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

awareness of the messages comportment might convey; yet at the same time, as 'manuals' they uncomfortably bring into the spotlight the possibility of dissimulation - good manners are surely, by virtue of these very books, easy to feign. A new correspondence between inner and outer, visible and invisible, body and mind, is fragile at its very inception - instantly subject to misuse, misrepresentation, to the question of deceit, feigning, forgery.

This new emphasis on 'outward honestie' presumes a regime of bodily policing and visibility. The Great Chamber frieze seems to reflect back the anxious nature of such scrutiny to the room's inhabitants.

It is thus possible to interpret these figures through radical difference. The faces and bodies in the room evoke the image of the boor, a comedic contrast to genteel behaviour.¹⁸ *Grobianus*, a satirical work translated from German, pictures a figure who "keeps his hand in his codpiece, walks about soiled after relieving himself, belches and farts with gusto and assaults every woman within reach."¹⁹ The juxtaposition of the frieze figures with the Painted Stair courtiers in particular casts the former as just such contrasting examples. The figure of the animal was crucial for policing the boundaries of good manners, playing in particular to anxieties about the potentially bestial nature of the physical human body.²⁰

But there is also a logic to the assembly of figures in the frieze. Its orderly and almost hieratic arrangement evokes a ceremonial procession. The hippocamps and mermen are disposed in pairs, separated by brackets carrying sirens and satyrs (Figure 95). The mermen are shown in an elegant pose, hand resting on hip, and each pair holds a wreath between the two of them. Their hair is carefully curled and some seem to be sporting moustaches. The laurel wreath underlines the impression of ceremony. The dragons are facing away from each other, but their tails are entwined in an elaborate interlace knot, reminiscent of love knots.²¹ The pairings, knots

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁰ Body as "the area of human experience most threatened by descent into animality", *ibid.*, 150-51.

²¹ Gruber, *Renaissance and Mannerism*, 22-111, especially 27, 66.

and wreaths have a faintly nuptial air.²² In their evocation of mannered procession the figures also provide an ironic gloss on the courtly human inhabitants of the space.

Monsters in Early Modern Europe were frequently interpreted as sign: monster as portent was indeed *demonstrative*, usually indicating some sin or transgression.²³ As Laura Knoppers and Joan Landes point out, a crucial aspect of the monster was its marking of boundaries – between self and Other; religious, national and political identities.²⁴ In particular, the monster could serve to both enforce and undermine borderlines between the human and bestial, demonic or godly.²⁵ In the Great Chamber, the monstrous figures signal an edge or limit, but their ambivalent quality suggests that they should not be read in terms of any simple cautionary message. The strangeness of the figures insists precisely that the room is ‘not about us’ – the builder, inhabitant, visitor, viewer. Decoration acts as a disruption, a challenge or taunt.

Elizabethan and Jacobean decoration is often seen as the surface for inscription of status.²⁶ The

²² I am thinking here of the arrangement of Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*. On marriage ceremonies, cf David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 263-81, 336-49.

²³ The literature on Early Modern monsters has expanded in the recent years: Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Peter G. Platt, ed. *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999); Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger, eds., *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002); Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, eds., *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Zakiya Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

²⁴ Knoppers and Landes, *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities*, 1-22.

²⁵ Hanafi, *Monster in the Machine*, viii, 3. See also Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman, eds., *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies, and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), 3-4.

²⁶ “It was therefore extremely important that the status and wealth of an owner was made apparent” in the great chamber, Emily Cole argues, Emily V. Cole, “The State Apartment in the Jacobean Country House, 1603-1625” (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2010), 299. Cooper on Jacobean great chambers: “The

monsters and odd bodies in the room operate precisely contrary to the construction of stable identities that conventional accounts ascribe. Notable for its lack of figural or narrative-allegorical imagery, the Great Chamber places the emphasis on more diffuse, dispersed ornamental decoration instead.²⁷ Hence it is ultimately unsatisfactory to think about the monstrous bodies simply as message, caution, or through edifying contrast. I propose to think of these surfaces instead as areas productive of effects.²⁸

3.2 The Great Chamber & The State Apartment

“The elaborate screens, ceilings and friezes were all the decoration that would have been required to create the impression of grandeur that Thomas Sackville wished to convey.”²⁹

To think of effects, it is worth examining the issue of the great chamber and the state apartment in some detail, so that decoration may emerge as more than simply a dressing for something pre-existing. When decoration is interpreted by architectural scholarship, it is usually in relation to the place of the room in question within a state apartment.³⁰ Interpretation of Elizabethan architecture often relies on long-established generalities, particularly the sequence of state rooms comprising a great hall, great chamber, withdrawing chamber, bedchamber and closet.³¹

room would be lavishly ornamented on walls, ceiling and fireplace, flattering both the owner and his guests with his wealth and cultivation.” Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*, 13.

²⁷ Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson present numerous examples of middle-class homes, where the principal rooms are adorned with large-scale figural imagery, Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*. One wonders whether a degree of social distinction is at play in this choice at Knole.

²⁸ For a critique of materiality as sign and the insistence on intensities, see Hills, *The Matter of Miracles*, 20-22, 24-25.

²⁹ Sackville-West, *Knole Guidebook*, 31.

³⁰ Thus, Cooper in his book on Jacobean architecture: “Rooms were decorated in a manner appropriate to their functions, with the grandest entertaining rooms naturally receiving the most lavish ornament.” Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*, 17.

³¹ For a brief overview of the scholarship on the state apartment, see Cole, “State Apartment,” 120-25.

The schematisation of this sequence, however, actively suppresses the complexity of Elizabethan and Jacobean buildings and their uses. Thus Emily Cole argues that a much more nuanced understanding of state apartments is necessary and highlights the narrowness of their conventional treatment.³² Calling state apartments ‘royal apartments’ “places emphasis on royal visits, overlooking the fact that, even where such rooms were built specifically with a monarch in mind, they had other functions, and would not have been covered in dust sheets for much of the year round.”³³

In a royal context, the relationships of rooms such as great or presence chamber, withdrawing chamber, privy chamber and bedchamber are shown to be in continuous flux over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁴ Before the 1540s, the presence chamber held greater political significance which waned as access to the privy chamber became more public; in Queen Elizabeth’s time, again, the privy chamber became more exclusive in tandem with the power of the Privy Council.³⁵ The threshold between presence and privy chamber was managed through special household offices, ordinances or the spatial separation of the two through intermediary rooms or galleries.³⁶ The royal apartments were thus malleable and shifting in terms of function, access, demarcations of private and public, and the concentration of political and symbolic significance.³⁷

Cole’s thesis reasserts the long-standing link between country houses and royalty.³⁸ Yet the nine Jacobean buildings Cole examines in detail reveal the diverse nature of architectural

³² *Ibid.*, 120-22.

³³ *Ibid.*, 121.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 94-117.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 107-08.

³⁶ An ‘air-lock’ in Simon Thurley’s words; discussed by *ibid.*, 108.

³⁷ During the reign of James I, the newly established officers of the Bedchamber closely controlled access to the king’s more private rooms, cf, *ibid.*, 99-100. In the process, “the privy chamber’s political significance was transferred to the bedchamber” and it “became one of the outer state rooms”, *ibid.*, 110. Cole’s overview of royal apartments in France reveals a similarly fluid situation, shifting between the desire for privacy and the demands of access to the royal person; informality and regulated ceremony, *ibid.*, 57-70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-4, 317. On the royal links of Cole’s case studies, see *ibid.*, 226.

approaches in the early seventeenth century.³⁹ Some houses (such as Hatfield, built in explicit expectation of the King's visit) reveal more clearly defined sets of state apartments, with Hatfield's double sequence of apartments, one for the King's side and one for the Queen's, being most emblematic.⁴⁰ In other houses, however, the best lodgings are adapted to existing built fabric or to the different social stature of the patrons.⁴¹ The static picture often relied on in the scholarly literature overlooks the flexible and contingent nature of planning and building, amplified furthermore through the shifting uses of the rooms.⁴² This becomes particularly clear in the movement of furniture and room dressing across the state apartments.⁴³ Even at Hatfield (where the double state apartments and multiplicity of rooms might be thought to remove the need for flexibility), rooms could be transformed through 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' sets of hangings, and the movement of furnishings between rooms blurs their distinctions.⁴⁴

At the other end of the scale recent work has focused squarely on the more unstable and shifting aspects of early modern architecture. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson note the difficulty of assessing traditions of planning and function at a middling level, where room names and descriptions are prone to be fluid. Describing the parlour of Arden of Faversham, whose murder was dramatised in an eponymous play in 1592, they suggest it:

³⁹ "[T]he course of development of Jacobean country houses was rarely straightforward," *ibid.*, 249; 18-316.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 268-75. Robert Cecil on his expectation of the King's visit in *ibid.*, 223. Cole also notes the unusual clarity and coherence of the state apartment decoration at Apethorpe Hall, a house remodelled at the explicit request of James I, cf *ibid.*, 220 and 94-98.

⁴¹ At Cranborne, the compact plan of the house meant the state apartments were situated on the second floor, above lodgings occupied by the owner; the house thus manages to provide two high-status accommodation suites within a relatively small building, *ibid.*, 226, 51-56, 84. At Bramshill, a second state apartment was added to an existing suite in the 1610s, resulting in a non-symmetrical arrangement, 275-280. See also the variable placement of the long gallery in relation to other rooms, prompted by existing building fabric: 280-281.

⁴² See discussion of doubled inner rooms in the state apartments at Audley End, *ibid.*, 267-68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 302-16.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 304-10. Thus, furnishings listed in the 'Second Chamber' in 1611 move to the King's Chamber by 1612; the 'extraordinary' furnishings of the King's antechamber migrate to the Queen's bedchamber.

was a very particular kind of space, a ground-floor room reached via the hall. This arrangement represents an ideal associated with the traditional manor house. Much of the secondary literature on early modern architecture characterises the parlour in relation to this model, but significant questions remain about the form, furnishings and quality of this space at the middling level and especially in an urban context.⁴⁵

In urban houses, the best room could be found either in a more private, 'inner' position beyond the hall, or on the contrary, at the front of the house/street range, looking out onto the street.⁴⁶ Pressed for space in a dense urban setting, compromises were made: "There are distinctions, therefore, between the actual and hypothetical space of the parlour and the proliferation and diversity of spaces used for entertaining and leisure in a range of house types across the period."⁴⁷

Hamling and Richardson maintain the difference of middling and elite building: "In the elite house, space was use-specific: the provision of hall, parlour and bedchamber, along with subsidiary rooms such as the study, permitted the regular and separable association of individual practices with particular rooms."⁴⁸ Yet Cole's examination of state apartments shows that even within the elite, differences of stature, resource and existing accommodation resulted in diverse solutions. While plenitude of land and resources for building might imply the possibility of maintaining separation between different rooms – one room for every need – the contingencies of use – whether by family, guests or royal party on a visit – impose their own demands of flexibility.

Knole is particularly representative of this aspect. As Cole notes, it is in many ways unusual within her typology.⁴⁹ The sequence of rooms is interrupted after the Great Chamber by a secondary stair, and the Withdrawing Room is followed by a Long Gallery, with the State

⁴⁵ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 181.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 183-85.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁸ 189; here Hamling and Richardson rely on the scholarship of Girouard and Cooper.

⁴⁹ Cole, "State Apartment," 282-83.

Bedroom placed at its far end.⁵⁰ The location of King's Bedroom in a tower is exceptional among Cole's sample and related to the earlier fabric of the house.⁵¹ Indeed, Edward Town argues that the King's Tower, which houses the State Bedroom, was built to provide a symmetrical counterpart to the Duke's Tower, a remnant of the medieval house that contained the old bedchamber.⁵² It is unclear which lodgings were initially intended to be used by Thomas Sackville; by 1645, the room identified as 'my Lords Chambr' in an inventory is most likely to be the King's Bedroom.⁵³

What is a state apartment? What does it mean to build for royalty? Edward Town suggests the rebuilding of Knole may be related to Sackville's ambitions of hosting the king.⁵⁴

Yet is this to say the suite of rooms now called the State Apartments (Ballroom or Great Chamber, Withdrawing Room, Cartoon Gallery, King's Bedchamber) was built in explicit expectation of James' visit – *for* him? Despite the lore surrounding the King's Bedchamber, it is unlikely that he ever visited.⁵⁵ As Emily Cole has shown, James' progresses followed a predictable pattern and out of his 22 journeys, none headed towards the south-east of the country.⁵⁶ Could Sackville have known this in 1605, two years after the king's accession? Would the prospect of a visit have seemed less likely by 1608 when the refurbishment was being finished? How would such a realisation change the significance of state rooms at Knole?⁵⁷ All these uncertainties underline the inadequacy of relating state rooms to any stable identity of function. They demand that 'state' or best apartments be thought not only in more nuanced

⁵⁰ Ibid., 282.

⁵¹ Ibid., 258-59.

⁵² Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 144-45.

⁵³ cf Cole, "State Apartment," 255-56.

⁵⁴ He argues that the ambition of hosting the monarch may have been renewed after the accession of James in 1603, and that the brief projects for the palace at Eltham undertaken by James may have suggested Knole as a desirable option, Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 117-18.

⁵⁵ Cole, "State Apartment," 223. Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 29-30.

⁵⁶ Aside from journeys from and to Scotland, James travelled either westwards (towards Wiltshire and Dorset) or to the midlands. On James' progresses, see Cole, "State Apartment," 6-54.

⁵⁷ Although Mark Girouard has acknowledged that the role of royal visits in country house planning has been overstated, he does include the state apartments at Knole in a section on 'Palace planning', Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 112-24.

terms, but also with an awareness of the acute tensions between potentiality and actuality.⁵⁸ Uncertainty, hope, ambition, pragmatism and frustrations are at their heart.

The work of Emily Cole and Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson provides a valuable challenge to the still-dominant Summerson-Girouard paradigms.⁵⁹ The significance of this is that it draws attention to the as-yet unknown and potentially fluid boundaries that separate the architectural practices of urban and rural householders, gentry, nobility – and perhaps royalty. Rather than treating this as a matter of insufficient information, however – a scholarly problem or lacuna – it may be productive to read these complexities as testament to underlying fluidity and flexibility, rather than the schematic adherence to plan often suggested by scholarship. Knole represents a complex building history of its own, including its origins as an archiepiscopal palace, royal residence and the expanded and refurbished residence of Thomas Sackville.⁶⁰ Edward Town's study of Thomas Sackville's work at Knole suggests that it is precisely the way old and new are accommodated in tandem that makes Knole of enduring scholarly interest.⁶¹ Such contingencies of planning are encapsulated in the garden façade where an imposing remnant of the old house (Duke's tower) prompts the building of a new, matching tower (King's

⁵⁸ Girouard notes this tension at Theobalds, where a planned double-suite for Elizabeth and a consort was never built, *ibid.*, 113-15. More intriguing for my line of argument are his examples of Wollaton and Hardwick Hall, which both evoke the grandeur of royal planning, but complicate the question of whom the apartments were 'for', both patrons being unlikely to expect the Queen's visit (115-116).

⁵⁹ Kimberley Skelton's recent *The Paradox of Body, Building and Motion in Seventeenth-Century England* is indicative of this tendency: the early seventeenth century in England is characterised as a time of 'staccato' movements and of "walls that held individuals in place within the domestic interior." Cf Kimberley Skelton, *The Paradox of Body, Building and Motion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 7-17, Introduction and 18-43, 'Early seventeenth century staccato boundaries'.

⁶⁰ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 223-25.

⁶¹ "It also reflects the fact that there was still a degree of continuity between the design, and to some extent the domestic needs, of the great house of an archbishop and that of an early seventeenth-century Lord Treasurer. [...] In this sense, Knole says as much about how notions of domestic building on this scale in England had stayed the same between 1450-1600 as it does about how much they had changed." *Ibid.*, 224. This challenges the linearity of development implied by studies such as Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*; Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*.

tower), solidifying rather than hiding the new house' dependence on previous work.⁶² It is through and *with* this move that an Italianate garden loggia is produced, a long gallery accommodated, the familiar sequence of state rooms (Great Chamber, Withdrawing Chamber, Bed Chamber) disrupted.

3.3 House, Family, State: Body Politic and Generation

The ornamental surfaces of the Great Chamber are densely packed with detail (Figure 83). One of the key themes that emerges from this dispersed decoration is that of fertility. While the centre of the mantelpiece is left curiously empty, its black ground is covered in marble fruit, flowers and foliage, as in a *mille-fleur* pattern. The strapwork of the pilasters also carries foliage and sprouting grotesque faces. Satyr and siren figures long associated with fertility adorn the frieze, and the crouching forms of the former prominently display their genitalia (Figure 96). The members making up the architectural orders appear productive, spawning odd bodies (Figure 92).

The surfaces of the Great Chamber work to present an architecture of abundance. Rebecca Zorach has analysed a similar conjunction of abundance, ornament and productivity at the palace of Fontainebleau, especially in the decoration of the Galerie Francois Premier.⁶³ She considers a particular kingly iconography of sacrifice as guarantee of the realm's prosperity and renewal, but this analysis is also coupled with a consideration of the "politics of plenty" at work in the ornamental framework of the gallery, as much as in the copious print culture and luxury goods market of sixteenth-century France, employed and manipulated in the service of royal, artistic and cultural discourses of abundance.⁶⁴

⁶² Cf Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 144-45.

⁶³ Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*.

⁶⁴ "Politics of plenty", *ibid.*, 18, chapters 2 and 3 ('Blood', 'Milk') on productivity.

The close connection of bodies and sexuality to politics has been acknowledged for some time.⁶⁵ The order implicit in the structure of a patriarchal family was furthermore understood as a microcosm of the larger functioning of society. As Mary Fissell suggests,

All relations of power – between a monarch and his/her subjects, a bishop and his flock – were analogous to the relations between a man and the family he headed. [...] At the same time that the family was politics writ small, it was reproduction writ large.⁶⁶

As Mary Fissell points out, political and familial/sexual conflict often went hand in hand in the Early Modern period in England.⁶⁷ For Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, producing a male heir had been a huge cause of concern. Royal productivity was closely related to the wider well-being of the realm, for continuity of line should prevent upheaval and lead to prosperity and abundance.⁶⁸

The house as building was inevitably linked to questions of lineage, family and kin. Architecture and the domestic setting are a crucial arena for the playing out of these issues. Linguistically, 'house' conveys the dual functions of domestic buildings - both as physical setting, and as an institutionalisation of continuity, bloodline and lineage. Armorial decoration brings the interweaving of house and family to the fore, and great chambers "proved a particularly popular

⁶⁵ Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Mary Fissell writes: "It is not just that models of the body reflect historical change. Rather, men and women thought through the body, using ideas about reproduction as a kind of imaginative resource to understand and to justify their changing circumstances." Mary Elizabeth Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-2. See also Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁶ Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-13.

⁶⁸ Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*.

place to display heraldry.⁶⁹ (Figure 98) Heraldic displays on mantelpieces imagine marriages, connections, allegiance and fertility as part of the material fabric of the building.⁷⁰

Recent work in the histories of sexuality and literary studies has broadened the picture of Early Modern sexual identities and modes of interaction, challenging a view primarily focused on the heteronormative patriarchal family.⁷¹ In this respect, the Elizabethan period in particular provided ample motivation for the exploration of alternative modes of thinking about the relationship between the body of the ruler and the realm, as well as the crucial question of procreation and productivity. Elizabeth's female body was a constant source of anxiety, on the one hand insistent in its potential productivity (marriage necessary to produce an heir and continue the line); on the other, dangerously unstable in the demand made by its gender to submit to another.⁷² The Elizabethan chivalric cult centred on the Queen could be seen as a reorganisation of such connections between sexuality and rule.⁷³

⁶⁹ Cole, "State Apartment," 292.

⁷⁰ For another angle on the interconnection between body, state and building considering the role of the animal, see Karen Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 127-50.

⁷¹ Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Melissa E. Sanchez, "'Use Me but as Your Spaniel': Feminism, Queer Theory, and Early Modern Sexualities," *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (2012); Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects*; Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

⁷² Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 1-9; Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, 12-14. Theodora Jankowski suggests that virginity – such a central cultural motif in the Elizabethan period – could become deeply queer, indeed sometimes “capable of disrupting the regime of heterosexuality.”, *ibid.*, 14.

⁷³ Cf. Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth*, 159; *The English Icon: Elizabethan & Jacobean Portraiture* (London: Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, 1969), 34. For a more nuanced treatment of the sexual and gendered implications of Elizabeth's queenship, see Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen*, Updated and revised ed. (London: Routledge, 1994).

The importance of royal progresses sees the bonds between sovereign and subject reasserted in a different 'marital' context: Elizabeth's progresses across the country, staying at length in the households of her key courtiers, could perhaps be seen as a kind of polygamous 'keeping house'.⁷⁴

Although James I came to the throne as a married man with a male heir, his reign provides its own alternative queer models of relationship. His close relationship with George Villiers, created Duke of Buckingham, takes on the issue of closeness and intimacy through familial metaphors. Yet these are shot through with inversions and subversions: in a letter of 1623, James characterises his relationship to Buckingham by turns as that of parent and spouse, calls himself widow and then again Buckingham his child and wife. James' identity is ever in flux, playing off different positions of superiority against each other (the unequal relationships of father to child, or husband to wife), swapping gender (James as widow) and proposing marriage across the hierarchical divide.⁷⁵

Melissa Sanchez suggests "the latent perversity of the erotic politics" both found expression, and was explored, in literature.⁷⁶ Architecture, household and building as a crucial component of such relations, however, have been overlooked. Mary Fissell imagines gender relations as a hinge between body and politics.⁷⁷ I propose that house and household should be seen in a similar, turncoat position, like a double-sided hinge always pulling together, yet also drawing apart the connections between family and realm, human and other, familiar and strange.

⁷⁴ Patricia Fumerton explores similar themes in her consideration of child fosterage in Elizabethan England as part of ornamental (or 'trivial') gift exchange, Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 29-66. The elite practice of passing children on to foster parents cements familial networks parallel but also alternative to the patriarchal family unit. Fumerton notes the relationship between these modes of (familial) gift exchange and the trope of overflowing fertility in Spencer's *Fairy Queen* (52).

⁷⁵ Cf David Moore Bergeron, *King James and Letters of Homoerotic Desire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 98-143, especially 13. Letter quoted in *ibid.*, 138.

⁷⁶ Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects*, 26.

⁷⁷ Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 2.

In the broadest terms, this suggests two observations. The Great Chamber at Knole does not shy away from the potential queerness of family-realm-productivity conjunctions. Secondly, however, the rich ornament of the Great Chamber – creatures coupled with the flowers and fruit of the mantelpiece, the richness of the ornamental forms – can also be read as an amplification of the strange fertility of the house itself. That this is at stake seems to be demonstrated by blatant display of the crouching satyrs' manhoods, the sirens, the strange pairings of figures in the frieze and the abundant fruits covering the fireplace.⁷⁸ Cast through the lens of otherness, the creatures of the Great Chamber stage a comical, excessive overcompensation. Across the richly decorated rooms of Knole, the flesh of architecture appears potently productive - capable of forming bodies and imagery out of the otherwise undistinguished matter of plaster, wood and stone, and endowing them with a vitality that makes them stare back, strain against their settings, shout and grimace. They figure, therefore, the potency of the house, as if to engage (or perhaps parody?) anxieties over dynastic continuity, personal as well as political.

3.4 The Uncanny

The anxieties of house and home in modernist architecture have been explored by Anthony Vidler in *The Architectural Uncanny*.⁷⁹ Drawing on Sigmund Freud's seminal 1919 essay 'The Uncanny', Vidler's argument is focused on the architecture and thought of the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries, where a number of specifically modernist anxieties are worked out in haunted houses, archaeological digs and ruined cities.⁸⁰ The early modern has remained outside these questions. Yet Freud's essay suggests to me that Early Modern architecture need not always be stable, secure and conventional. Its surfaces are full of strange beasts and alien faces staring back.

Here is a particularly vivid passage from Freud, as he prepares to wind down the main thrust of his argument in the essay.

⁷⁸ This is a hypothesis that deserves further examination within the wider framework of Elizabethan and Jacobean building.

⁷⁹ Anthony Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1992).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-14.

In the middle of the isolation of war-time a number of the English *Strand Magazine* fell into my hands; and, among other somewhat redundant matter, I read a story about a young married couple who move into a furnished house in which there is a curiously shaped table with carvings of crocodiles on it. Towards evening an intolerable and very specific smell begins to pervade the house; they stumble over something in the dark; they seem to see a vague form gliding up the stairs - in short, we are given to understand that the presence of the table causes ghostly crocodiles to haunt the place, or that the wooden monsters come to life in the dark, or something of the sort. It was a naïve enough story, but the uncanny feeling it produced was quite remarkable.⁸¹

This episode is one of several peculiar anecdotes that haunt Freud's essay. It is a pivotal part of his text, riven with contradictions, shaped by omissions and richly symptomatic, both of the effects of uncanniness, and of the uncanny nature of Freud's own essay.⁸² Despite having declared himself rather insensitive to the feeling of the uncanny at the outset, Freud relies on such personal recollections throughout. These intrusions in fact come to characterise the text, re-enacting a tension Freud sets up in the first few pages: aspects of the uncanny "unhesitatingly recognized by most people", and the difficulty of establishing a secure definition.⁸³

What is fascinating about this retold story is its main character - the crocodile table. In an essay full of the explicitly gruesome - severed hands, gouged eyes, demonic spirits - the set-up here is both mundane *and* exotic. A table is a curiously banal object - not something customarily endowed with much potential, be it in the context of a story, or in the field of art history for that matter.

⁸¹ Freud, "The Uncanny," 244-45.

⁸² This is richly explored in Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), especially 133-41.

⁸³ Freud, "The Uncanny," 220.

Yet the strange fashioning of this familiar object opens it up to the workings of the uncanny. The table captures the ambivalence of the original German word *heimlich*, to which Freud devotes much space.⁸⁴ Turning on the idea of the 'homely', this word came to designate both the comforting and "familiar, friendly, intimate" as well as "something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret", all inscribed within the symbolic space of the house.⁸⁵ As has been suggested, the uncanny is deeply architectural.⁸⁶ Vidler emphasises the architecting of the relationship between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, and how the homely or familiar is constituted by the burial of an original secret.⁸⁷ Such a burial both creates, institutes and secures the home, and forever threatens and haunts it as that which *will* come to light.⁸⁸

Earlier in the essay, Freud provides a striking summary of the conditions that sustain the uncanny effects described in the *Strand* story. The uncanny, he writes, occurs when "one may wander about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch, and collide time after time with the same piece of furniture."⁸⁹ The image of the strange room depends on the one hand on darkness, and on the other, on the tactile, physical presence of the furniture with which one collides. I will now examine these two aspects in Freud's *Strand* story that are particularly thought-provoking in relation to the Great Chamber and then move on to the essay's usefulness more broadly.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 220-26.

⁸⁵ Both *Heimlich* and *unheimlich* are thus used for the uncanny (ibid., 225-26).

⁸⁶ Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 5-14. See also Mark Wigley's writing on the topic, who suggests that the uncanny domesticity of the house can also structure philosophical discourse, Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1993), 97-121.

⁸⁷ Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 23-27. "Something was not, then, merely haunted, but rather revisited by a power that was thought long dead."

⁸⁸ Freud highlights the following definition of the uncanny by Schelling: "everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light." See also Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*, 106-15.

⁸⁹ Freud, "The Uncanny," 237.

3.4.1 Shadow

The uncanny haunting of the house takes place in the dark - it is at nightfall that the crocodiles begin to intrude upon the inhabitants' own space. The first, 1925 translation of Freud's essay by Alix Strachey puts the matter in striking terms: "things begin to get in their way and trip them up in the darkness; they seem to see a vague form gliding up the stairs."⁹⁰ The wording of this passage is the biggest discrepancy between this early translation and the later, Standard Edition revision of the passage, which gives "they stumble over something in the dark".⁹¹ The Standard Edition translation follows Freud's original "*man stolpert im Dunkeln über irgend etwas*" more closely. Alix Strachey's first version, however, seems to represent the events described in the original *Strand Magazine* story more accurately, which becomes altered and condensed in Freud's account.⁹² Indeed, in "Inexplicable" (the original story that Freud recalls), "things begin to get in their way and trip them up in the darkness."⁹³

As Nicholas Royle suggests, "Freud's 'The Uncanny' is an essay in the night, an investigation in the dark, into darkness."⁹⁴

In a curious echo of Freud's stories, Vita Sackville-West - intimately familiar with the house having spent her childhood at Knole - offers her own recollections:

There were no electric torches in those days. The light gleamed on the dull gilding of furniture and into the misty depths of mirrors, and started up a sudden face out of the gloom; something creaked and sighed; the tapestry swayed, and the figures on it

⁹⁰ *Collected Papers*, 4, 398, *The Uncanny* on pages 68-407.

⁹¹ "The Uncanny," 244-45.

⁹² Royle notes the "telescoping" effect of Freud's retelling, Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction*, 135.

⁹³ Moberly, "Inexplicable." "“Something tripped me up,” he said, in dazed accents.” (578)

⁹⁴ "Throughout the essay, Freud keeps coming back to the dark, or the dark keeps coming back to him." Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction*, 108.

undulated and seemed to come alive. The recesses of the great beds, deep in shadow, might be inhabited, and you would not know what eyes might watch you, unseen.⁹⁵

Sackville-West evokes an aspect of the house that we tend to forget. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson draw attention to the liminal quality of what was called the cockshut hour in early modern England:

'Cock-shoot' or 'cockshut' refers to the hour of dusk, either when woodcock may be shot as they begin to fly, or when chickens should be put to roost; this is a moment when one mode of behaviour gives way to another. It is a 'brown' moment, when natural light yields to artificial illumination, and space, objects and people are seen differently. For the middling sort and those above them, it is a period of leisure – sociable activities that mediate in interesting ways the time between working and sleeping, between the house as executive space and its more social and familial uses.⁹⁶

Vita's picturesque night-terrors find an echo in Anne Clifford's early seventeenth-century diary which includes her sojourns at Knole, the house of her husband, the 3rd Earl of Dorset, Richard Sackville.⁹⁷ Although the diary does not offer much relating directly to the building, it records the nocturnal episodes that would be part-and-parcel of the occupation of such a house. Again and again, messengers bring letters in the night and Lady Anne dispatches her own.⁹⁸ For example, on 4th February 1617, "[a]t night, Thomas Woodyat came from London & brought a squirrel to the child, and my Lord wrote me a letter by which I perceived my Lord was clean out with me, & how much my enemies have wrought against me."⁹⁹ It is easy to picture Anne Clifford reading these letters by the light of a flickering candle, the troubling news conveyed perhaps coupling with the moving shadows cast in darkened rooms. In June 1616, Anne is "sent away upon half

⁹⁵ Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 28-29. Her account was first published in 1922, three years after Freud's essay, and three before Alix Strachey's English translation.

⁹⁶ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 177.

⁹⁷ Clifford, *Diaries*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* See for example the entries for 1616.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

an hour's warning" from London and only arrives at Knoles after midnight.¹⁰⁰ The diary charts a rich night-time life of the house.

George Whetstone, in *An Heptameron of Civil Discourses* (1582), offers a reversal of these relationships, when he describes arriving in the great chamber in the morning after the night's revels "as he that cometh out of a house full of torch and taper lights, into a dark and obscure corner."¹⁰¹ The night's revels, he suggests, gave the room the appearance of a veritable Paradise; its disappearance in the light of day proves an alarming experience.

The crocodile story is more than mere analogy or parallel. It draws crucial attention to the inadequacy of art history's encounter with darkness. Art history's objects are almost without fail conceived in full light; their existence beyond these lighting conditions only ever an after-effect. Art-historical discourse does not allow darkness because its basis as science was founded on claims to truth, deeply invested in the ideal of lucidity.¹⁰²

Yet as Sackville-West's account testifies, the night-time of the house is an inevitable part of architecture. The uncanniness of the home or the house lies in the potential for darkness to overtake the familiar and make it strange, disorient us in otherwise safe surroundings. We blunder. Architectural history, however, rarely accommodates the potential of the familiar to transform.

The night-time Knoles of Sackville-West's account prompts one to think about the ways in which the boundaries of the room would shift inward as dusk sets in, become more malleable and dependent upon the placement of the brazier (Figure 86). As in Freud's anecdote, the "vague forms" of the frieze in the Great Chamber might loom above, the plaster white feebly pushing through the shadows, forms animated by a flickering flame. Vita imagines precisely how these

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰¹ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 94.

¹⁰² On the staging of art history as a science of the visible, especially Giorgio Vasari's presentation of his *Vite* as artistic rebirth, Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, 60-67. Stoichita, *History of the Shadow*, 7-9 sets out art history's dependence on Plato's and Hegel's views of truth and clarity.

surfaces too might “begin to get in [one’s] way and trip [one] up in the darkness”, in Freud’s words, emerging into our field of vision from the shadows as we roam the room with a candle.

Indeed, the uncanniness of these architectural surfaces may lie in the way in which they gather darkness. They collect shadows along edges and borders, in nooks and crannies, concentrated in corners and behind figures. Such a surface appears sensitive to change. It also carefully modulates the limits to a viewer’s vision, the limits of visibility and the gaze.

3.4.2 Relief

Many surfaces in the Great Chamber are furnished with ‘strange carvings’. Freud’s crocodiles are helpful for thinking about the strangeness of these surfaces. To me they draw attention to the potential uncanniness of relief. Carving or relief inhabit a liminal space within the discipline of art history, belonging fully neither to painting or sculpture. The Great Chamber ‘carvings’ transgress boundaries between two and three dimensions. Attached to a support and dependent on a surface they are perhaps akin to painting. Yet at the same time, especially from closer up, they occupy space, project and recede in a way that painted surfaces can only illusionistically suggest. The frieze, the walls, the ceilings, the carved bodies - all exceed and disrupt classical expectations of what objects belong within the category of art.

The place of relief at the intersection of painting, sculpture and architecture has guaranteed its fraught status within art historical scholarship, Alina Payne suggests.¹⁰³ In the context of the Renaissance emergence of academies, the boundaries between the different arts were hotly debated in the traditional *paragone*, a discourse comparing the relative merits of two practices such as painting and sculpture, painting and poetry, music and architecture and so on. The birth of art writing and elevation of arts into the academy made such limits particularly important.¹⁰⁴ Payne argues that relief’s confounding of the boundaries between the three arts was also

¹⁰³ Alina Payne, "On Sculptural Relief: *Malerisch*, the Autonomy of Artistic Media and the Beginnings of Baroque Studies," in *Rethinking the Baroque*, ed. Helen Hills (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

precisely what gave it a crucial role in debates about the value of Baroque art undertaken by nineteenth-century scholars.¹⁰⁵

3.4.2.1 Inexplicable Attractions

Freud's account cited at the start of this section refers to a story titled 'Inexplicable', published in the *Strand Magazine* in 1917 by a L. G. Moberly.¹⁰⁶ The parallels between the crouching demons and strange bodies (Figure 95, Figure 89, Figure 85) of the Great Chamber, and the carved crocodile table in 'Inexplicable' are particularly striking. The narrator's first encounter with the table is described thus:

[...] my eye was attracted to a small table standing against the wall by the fireplace. It was octagonal in shape, set on three twisted legs – just a small occasional table such a one may see in any drawing room. But the way in which it was carved was entirely out of the common, and I crossed the room to look at it more closely, exclaiming as I did so, "What a perfectly lovely piece of carving! Of course, this has been left here by mistake." And I turned the table more to the window to let light fall upon it. The whole top was a crust of carved leaves and flowers, and in each curve of the octagon there was fashioned a small alligator, his head pointing outwards, his tail meeting the tails of the other crocodiles in the centre; and as the light fell full on the scaly bodies they had an extraordinary look of life, and the little sinister heads with the small evil eyes almost seemed to move.¹⁰⁷

The table 'catches the eye'. Just before its appearance, the narrator marvels at the abandoned state of the house:

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Moberly, "Inexplicable." Royle suggests the author is Lucy Gertrude Moberly, author of several early twentieth century novels, Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction*, 133-41, footnote 5133-141, footnote 5.

¹⁰⁷ Moberly, "Inexplicable," 573. The odd echoes of the Knole carvings are uncanny in their own right: the twisting, scaly tails of the mermen, the flowers and leaves.

“I wonder the house has been allowed to get unto this condition,” I remarked to my guide when, having visited all the lower rooms, we stood in the big front bedroom; “it would surely have paid to put a caretaker into the place to keep it cleaned and aired.”¹⁰⁸

Everything is covered in dust, contributing to the image of a haunted house.¹⁰⁹ It is certainly unhomely. It is this lack of care and inhabitation that the crocodile table draws the narrator’s eye away from, however. The table’s carved forms distract from the uncanniness of the house, its explicit strangeness – they spread a glamour of beauty and artfulness.¹¹⁰

While Freud acknowledges the importance of the strange piece of furniture, he slips over one of the most uncanny aspects of the story. The table is undeniably attractive to the new inhabitants of the house. Its artfulness, however, is inextricably tied to the uncanniness its menacing presence evokes. When the couple next return to the house, their encounter with the table continues the peculiar somnambulist tone that pervades the whole story.

“So much the better for us,” Hugh exclaimed gaily, his fingers running over the delicately-carved crust of flowers and leaves, and resting on the head of one of the alligators, a head fashioned with such skill that its loathsome naturalness made one shudder.¹¹¹

The table charms at the same time as it evokes a sense of unease and revulsion; in fact, it charms precisely *in the face of* this unease. Freud opens the paragraph with the crocodile table story by suggesting that a source of the uncanny is “effacing the distinction between imagination and reality”. The mastery of the table’s carving – precisely its effacing of this distinction – is what produces its strange effects. The *Strand* story makes much more apparent how *art* can become

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Royle notes that the narrator brings to the house a stock of literary tropes of the kind Freud’s essay analyses, Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction*, 136.

¹¹⁰ Before the encounter is over, the narrator’s attention is caught again by the table, and she describes it as a “beautiful thing”, “exquisite” and “an artistic piece of work”, wondering why anyone would want to leave it behind; Moberly, “Inexplicable,” 573.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 574.

uncanny in its uncertain mediations between imagination and reality.¹¹² Yet this is an aspect that Freud passes over. Nicholas Royle suggests that reading itself as uncanny experience is one of the haunting motifs of Freud's essay.¹¹³ The Strand story, however, points to literature's other, repressed double: solid, modelled, exquisite carving that quite literally gets in the way and stops the subjects of the story in their tracks.

Between the Strand story and Freud's account of it, the crocodile table menaces because its decoration will not 'stay put'. The repeated appearance of the slithering bodies of the crocodiles under the feet of the couple, the servants and the visitors imagines relief gone 'rogue' and excessive, forms detaching from the familiar object they should 'belong' to.

The decorative surfaces at Knoke play upon these uncertainties. Ornament is commonly considered subordinate to the flat wall, yet in the Great Chamber it is caught in the process of emerging from it, moving into 'our' space and becoming tangible. The characters populating these surfaces assert their presence forcefully and figure architecture as live and full of vitality. The main pilaster order in the Great Chamber makes this point with particular force (Figure 94 and Figure 88). It incorporates into its shaft a human body, worked in high relief and protruding powerfully into the space of the room. Furthermore, this body both is and is not part of the architectural fabric within which it appears. Its toes curling over the piece of strapwork on which it stands and hands gripping two curls above his head he seems a separate entity. Yet his abdomen is flayed or quartered out in a way that makes it part of the very strapwork motif that appears both to restrain and support him. The relationship of the body to architecture is deeply uncanny here. The body is poised between being present of its own 'free will', and under the duress of violence. The grip with which he holds on to the framework appears to show the figure's wish to remain part of it; the violent pulling apart of its flesh, however, coupled with the rampant leopards menace this same body. A loose ribbon threaded through the strapwork captures the ambiguity of body almost-captured, near-restrained by architecture: it passes over

¹¹² After Hugh, the husband in the story, has been tripped up by the table, he offers a paradoxical summary of its artful allure: "'Beastly things,'" Hugh said, looking at [the crocodiles] with a queer little shiver, as I helped him to hobble into the drawing-room. "The chap who carved them was an artist, if you like.'" Ibid.

¹¹³ Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction*, 136-40.

the abdomen of the figure, behind and then in front of his arms, the ends hanging loosely as if tempting to be tightened.

Held in place by decidedly shackle-like strapwork, screaming or pulling faces, these figures are forever poised between escaping and being held in check. The violence with which architecture works to confine them, to keep them from emerging, testifies all the more to its own potency.

3.5 Furnishing the (un)Homely

3.5.1 Surface

The changeable, shadowed surface discussed above is very different from the white wall valorised both by classical and modernist architectural theory. Mark Wigley has argued that the architectural tradition established in the writings of Leon Battista Alberti relied on the pristine, sanitised white surface as a means of disciplining architecture, elevating it from the material and lowly into the exalted realm of an intellectual pursuit.¹¹⁴ Such a white wall functions as a screen or light box. It masks, on the one hand, the material reality of the building underneath it, projecting in its place a purified interior. On the other hand, it foregrounds ornament as that which stands out against its reflective surface as the inessential, applied or supplementary. This screening surface purports to illuminate and enlighten it even as it domesticates it.

In 1995, Lucy Gent argued that the white wall does not apply to Elizabethan architecture.¹¹⁵ Gent suggested that traditional categories of analysis inherited from the Italian Renaissance systematically work to exclude and marginalise much of what is unique to the visual arts in Britain in the sixteenth century. Elizabethan architecture, she argued, like the miniature painting of Nicholas Hilliard, demands a different 'economy of vision' to that perpetuated by Leon Battista Alberti and other theorists of the Italian Renaissance. Such an economy would crucially entail a much more haptic understanding of sight, based on a roving eye 'venturing out' into the world, rather than simply receiving.

¹¹⁴ Wigley, "Untitled."

¹¹⁵ Lucy Gent, "'The Rash Gazer': Economies of Vision in Britain, 1550-1660," in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Mark Girouard describes the richness typical of spaces like the Great Chamber:

Any ambitious Elizabethan or Jacobean interior was made up of tapestry or richly carved panelling, oriental or oriental-style carpets, cushion covers and other embroidered fabrics, ceiling and/or friezes of ornamental plasterwork, heraldic glass in the elaborately leaded windows, a great two-storey chimneypiece, usually rich in heraldry, sometimes an internal porch, not very much furniture but that massive and occasionally elaborate, including a buffet loaded with plate on ceremonial occasions; to which must be added the embroidered clothes and hieratic movements of the occupants, in harmony with their setting.¹¹⁶

Assessing the effects of such surfaces at Knole is difficult: the elaborate wooden wainscot is obscured by numerous pictures, including tall state portraits of the Sackvilles, in gilt frames.¹¹⁷ Vita Sackville-West's comment quoted at the start of the chapter, therefore, carries some weight. The salient and striking effects of the Jacobean interior are nowadays directly interrupted by the later furnishings, especially the picture hang. As Sackville-West suggests, what is important is misrecognised.

3.5.2 Closeness

Hamling and Richardson draw attention to the link between the decorative surfaces of rooms such as parlours and their effect of 'closeness'. William Harrison's account in his *Description of England* is notable:

¹¹⁶ Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 360-61.

¹¹⁷ Closing his summary of the sensory effects of an Elizabethan interior, Girouard notes: "Pictures barely featured, except in the galleries." *Ibid.*, 361. Catherine Daunt notes regarding the development of picture galleries: "In Ben Jonson's 1602 play *Poetaster*, a husband tells his wife not to hang their pictures in the hall or the dining chamber 'but in the gallery only for 'tis not courtly else'." Catherine Daunt, "Portrait Sets in Tudor and Jacobean England" (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2015), vol. 1, 155.

The walls of our houses on the inner sides ... be either hanged with tapestry, arras work, or painted cloths ... or else they are ceiled with oak of our own, or wainscot brought hither out of the east countries, whereby the rooms are not a little commended, made warm, and much more close than otherwise they would be.¹¹⁸

'Close' implies both a sense of spatial seclusion, as well as a sense of protection from the elements.¹¹⁹ Wainscot or panelling in particular have a connotation of contributing to the sense of closure: walls are 'ceiled', that is to say sealed, with these coverings. Seals on letters, with all their associations to status and individual identity, acted as guarantees of inviolability. Although the urban parlour spaces analysed by Hamling and Richardson in *A Day at Home* are smaller and perhaps more private than the Great Chamber at Knole, they draw attention to the fragile, vulnerable qualities of the 'closeness' Harrison presents as an effect of decorative surfaces that dress a room and seal it in. This vision of decorative surface is remarkably close to Semper's conceptualisation of architecture as the production of social space through ornamented (spatial) enclosure.¹²⁰

Such effects of closeness, however, immediately produce the threat of transgression. Hamling and Richardson consider the parlour's conjunction of activity (leisure pursuits), location (a protected, intimate space of sociability) and time (the twilight hour) rife with anxieties, vulnerable to transgression.¹²¹ This dynamic, they suggest, is treated with particular sharpness in the play *Arden of Feversham*. The play stages the gruesomeness of the murder in close relationship to questions of hierarchy and transgression, both social and spatial. Mosby and his conspirators, as Hamling and Richardson suggest, represent "an instructive range of middling-status biographical vignettes of dissatisfaction and social rivalry – younger sons, decayed gentlemen and men who rise from servants to masters."¹²² Dangerous challenges to the social order are staged through the figure of the house, and the parlour especially. It is Mosby's acting as master

¹¹⁸ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 182.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 103-10.

¹²¹ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 178.

¹²² Ibid., 179.

in Arden's house which foreshadows the crime.¹²³ *Arden of Faversham* therefore engages the anxious entanglements of social hierarchy with domestic space, how the home could be read for signs and threats of transgression, rather than simply for affirmation of status.

Indeed, Hamling and Richardson demonstrate that the multiple uses of best rooms in an urban context would stoke potential for anxiety.¹²⁴ These 'executive spaces', as they call them, could be used to carry out important business, especially tasks associated with city administration. They could therefore become politically charged civic spaces, the furnishings emphasising the command and authority of the owner. But their closeness also threw into relief challenges to the owner's authority: Hamling and Richardson describe a case where a visitor interrupts an intimate, leisure use of the room by expressing loud discontents and bringing cause to the host.¹²⁵

The open question of state apartments and room typologies discussed above enriches this line of investigation. If the role and significance of rooms such as parlour and perhaps great chamber is difficult to pin down now, this may point towards the difficulty of 'pinning them down' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As important social and representative rooms they concentrate and refract anxiety, nervousness, exploration and experimentation. Thus Hamling and Richardson suggest that while "[...] other rooms have a recognisable typology, a common sense of how the space functioned [...] the parlour seems most flexible when it comes to definition" and "it is its unique status as a room with which not all members of a given community might be familiar [...] that gives it a central role to play in the definition of social position."¹²⁶ The collision of conflicting demands and the continuously shifting parameters stoke a sense of danger. As in *Arden of Faversham*, the ambivalent, vulnerable qualities of these spaces arise not so much from their exclusively private nature, but from the collision of more

¹²³ This idea parallels the broad historiographic association of Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture with 'new men' (for example Cooper, *Jacobean Country House*, 9-11.)

¹²⁴ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 189-91.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 190-91.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 187-88.

intimate business and sociability with a space weighted with representative function, social status.¹²⁷

Knole is all the more interesting because what has been analysed in this chapter is a Great Chamber, not a parlour. While a great chamber is generally considered a place for ceremonial dining, a frequently-cited household 'catalogue' at Knole turns ideas about ceremony and intimacy, private and public on its head.¹²⁸ The Lord's table lists eight people in all, mostly close family. The next subdivision on the list, however, is the 'Parlour table' for the main officers of the household, listing twenty-one people in total. The parlour in this case seems rather crowded, while the lord's table – presumably related to the Great Chamber – presents a dining arrangement of some intimacy.¹²⁹ This seems to follow Girouard's observation that "[i]n the grandest houses [the parlour] was more a common room for the upper servants than a family room".¹³⁰

While the Great Chamber may be a more ceremonial room than Hamling and Richardson's parlours, its rich dressing in wainscot, frieze and plaster ceiling uphold a sense of enclosure.¹³¹ Even the doors of the Great Chamber are covered in the wainscot, masking the existence of openings when shut, see (Figure 87 and Figure 90). The more threatening qualities of rooms of reception – torn between public and private – are localised and given place here, however. The

¹²⁷ Hamling and Richardson discuss the role of parlour as a space of authority, and the unsettling quality of transgressions against this function by outsiders; similarly in *Arden of Faversham*, the parlour stands metaphorically for the authority of Arden, subverted both in household (access of the lower-status Mosby to intimate spaces, but also his 'taking charge' of the parlour) and sexual terms (Mosby's cuckolding of Arden); cf *ibid.*, 178-80, 89-91.

¹²⁸ Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 85-88.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹³⁰ Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 68-69. Tara Hamling in *Decorating the Godly Household* focuses on examples of the parlour as a contrast to the great chamber, characterized by comfort and informality, rather than grandness, cf Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 131-41.

¹³¹ Thomas Sackville is known to have paid for 22 painted leather hangings, and in the inventory of 1645, three leather carpets are noted as being in the Great Chamber, Cole, "State Apartment," 312-13.

decoration, as suggested above, emphasises both 'closeness' *and* the presence of threatening, unwanted guests.¹³² As if to exorcise the threat (to siphon it from other, actually more vulnerable spaces), the danger is made part of the spectacle, acknowledged. The strangeness of closeness is put on display, precisely in supposedly more public space.¹³³ Patricia Fumerton offers a tantalising sense of the miniature, jewel-like figure of Elizabethan intimacies: "a "secret" room, cabinet, case or other recess locked away (in full view) in one corner of the house".¹³⁴

3.5.3 The Empty Frame

The Great Chamber sets the emphasis slightly differently from Girouard's description of Elizabethan surfaces quoted above. As Edward Town has noted, the Knoke chimneypieces eschew elaborate displays of heraldry, contrary to contemporary custom (Figure 91 and Figure 98).¹³⁵ The chimneypiece in the Great Chamber, furthermore, is relatively modest. Although elaborately and spectacularly carved with musical instruments, fruit, flowers and ribbons, the chimneypiece is fairly flat and does not project much into the room (cf. Figure 86). Framed sections of marble and stone emphasise this flatness. The mille-fleur patterning of the overmantle, coupled with the white colour of the carved accents, ties the chimneypiece to the patterning of the wainscot. Emphasis shifts to the peripheries: the ceiling, panelling and all-round frieze.

As Tara Hamling has stressed, in Jacobean interiors chimney pieces acted as key 'nuclei' of the room, concentrating light and warmth, providing talking points.¹³⁶ Vita Sackville-West pictures

¹³² At Hardwick Hall, for instance, the High Great Chamber is very different – even more spacious, with tall windows looking out onto the landscape and a molded frieze showing a forest-set hunt.

¹³³ The wainscot re-enacts this paradox in another key: it is both carved and dressed to gather shadow *and* painted brilliant white to catch light.

¹³⁴ Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament*, 69. This displays an out-of-reach intimacy like the discovery space at the back of an Early Modern stage, in *Aden of Faversham* used as the closet where the perpetrators of the crime hide, cf Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 180-81.

¹³⁵ Town, "A House 'Re-Edified'," 184; Cole, "State Apartment," 292. The dark stone lintel does carry an incised coat of arms with a garter belt.

¹³⁶ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 220-21.

the original inhabitants of Knole occupying space in accordance with the dictates of heating and comfort: “on winter days,” she writes, “I cannot believe that the group ever moved very far away from the fireplace or the brazier.”¹³⁷ In the Great Chamber, the ornamental effects of the room are dispersed – if not to say beyond the reach of the heat and light of such spots, then certainly to their margins. The most powerfully carved element of the room – the frieze – is placed under the ceiling, in the corners most likely to gather shadows. Away from the centrepiece of the fireplace, the wainscot sprouts with faces, bodies, monsters and tendrils. Something is always taking place just out of sight.

Such a dispersal is one of the room’s most pointed effects. The central part of the overmantle is taken up by a large slab of veined grey marble, entirely unadorned, surrounded by a carefully-modelled, white alabaster cartouche. Edward Town suggests that it embodies a “shift of emphasis, away from ostentatious displays of heraldry towards a composition that showcases the qualities of the prestigious materials”.¹³⁸ But it isn’t simply that a ‘shift of emphasis’ takes place. The overmantle actively draws attention to an absence, to the subversion of expectation. Unlike the cartouches on the side pilasters (Figure 92, middle) where two more rectangles of veined stone are set against white alabaster background, the central slab is recessed, rather than projecting – not so much presented as withdrawn. Beyond the empty frame, however, the surface of the chimneypiece proliferates with ornament, filled up with flowers, fruit, ribbons, baskets and musical instruments. The *mille-fleur* effect offers a pointed contrast to the smooth surface of the central field. The effects continue laterally into the frieze and wainscot, the high modelling of the figures drawing the eye away from the overmantle. The chimneypiece frames, highlights and stages an empty centre.

In the interplay between chimneypiece, frieze, ceiling and wainscot, the decoration of the Great Chamber subverts the process of looking. The chimneypiece demands attention, creating a one-to-one relationship between an inhabitant and this significant feature. Indeed, it places and shapes a reciprocal viewer. Yet this viewer’s focus, his or her ability to grasp and perceive, is undermined by the ornament that disperses from this centre. In Stephen Campbell’s analysis of the *Camera Picta*, painted between 1465 and 1474 by Mantegna, architecture fashions its

¹³⁷ Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 24-25.

¹³⁸ Town, “A House ‘Re-Edified’,” 184. The issue of materiality is very interesting but will not be discussed as part of my argument at this point.

viewer as he who sees and is being seen in turn.¹³⁹ The oculus surmounting the vault of the room draws attention to the 'eye-fulness' of occupying the room and experiencing its decoration. In the Great Chamber, however, the eyes multiply, any stable central point is denied. In this, the decoration highlights the strangeness of looking and of being seen.¹⁴⁰

The void in the middle uncannily centre-stages the present absences of a room such as the Great Chamber, be it the forever-potential-but-not-actual question of the monarch's possible or implausible visit, or indeed other more personal absences. Knole offers a helpful example of this. During Thomas Sackville's possession of the house, the latter would be away from Knole for long periods of time. The generation of Sackville's grandson, Richard Sackville, is particularly interesting however. Between 1609 and 1624, Richard's wife, Anne Clifford resided at Knole. Yet her experience of the house, documented in her famous diaries, seems to have been significantly shaped by her husband's frequent absences from the house. Her diary recalls with nervous precision 'her Lord's' stints in London, her abandonment at Knole used as tool of attrition in their war over her contested inheritance. Thus, in April 1616, she writes:

Upon the 11th I came from London to Knowle where I had but a cold welcome from my Lord.[...] Upon the 12th I told my Lord how I had left those Writings which the Judges and my Lord would have me sign & seal behind with my Mother. Upon the 13th my Lord & Thomas Glemham went up to London. Upon the 17th came Tom Woodyatt from London, but brought me no news of my going up which I daily look for.¹⁴¹

The decoration of the Great Chamber, unfolding around an empty middle, heightens the absences at the heart of this domestic space.

¹³⁹ Campbell, "Visuality and Pathos," 124-26.

¹⁴⁰ The early modern great chamber was also often known as the presence chamber.

¹⁴¹ Clifford, *Diaries*, 32-33. The following month she writes the often-quoted passage: "All this time my Lord was in London where he had all and infinite great resort coming to him. He went much abroad to Cocking, to Bowling Alleys, to Plays and Horse Races, & [was] commended by all the World. I stayed in the Countrey having many times a sorrowful & heavy Heart & being condemned by most folk because I could not consent to the Agreement, so as I may truly say, I am like an Owl in the Desert." *Ibid.*, 35.

3.6 Conclusion

Freud's insights crucially demonstrate that the home must be constituted and held together – it certainly never simply *is*. My discussion of state apartments emphasised the necessarily shifting, fluid nature of domestic space and the planning of Early Modern buildings. The question of what 'makes' a room, what is sufficient to constitute home, hall, parlour or great chamber is therefore a crucial one.

The chapter revealed the role of ornamental surface as crucial component in constructing spaces of comfort, intimacy and leisure. The multiple effects of the Great Chamber surfaces help fashion a particularly loaded sense of 'closeness', rich, comforting and claustrophobic at once. The decoration seals the room in, producing a space where authority, prestige and the inhabitants' relations to outsiders might be worked out. The presence of monsters foregrounds the strangeness and vulnerability of domestic, intimate space, constituted precisely in the presence of others. The space of ceremony, display, affirmation must be witnessed to exist. The frieze gives shape to the unsettling intrusion of such witness, to the uneasy experience of being seen.

The Great Chamber decoration draws out and extenuates the anxieties and vulnerabilities of the kinds of domestic spaces discussed above. Its decoration indeed fashions a certain poetics of the strange, unsettling and vulnerable. They seem to invite a continuous traffic across the seemingly secure boundaries between the mundane and the unexpected, the animate and the inanimate, the stability of architecture and its more delirious qualities. It is in this movement that the power of the house emerges.

Chapter 4 Architecture's Opening: The Great Cloister at the Certosa di San Martino

4.1 The Fabric of Rupture

The 1761 Italian edition of Thomas Salmon's *Modern History* summarises the Great Cloister at San Martino thus:

One passes then to the nearby Cloister, worthy of admiration due to its magnificence and loveliness, and for its remarkable ornaments. One descends there by a beautiful marble stair; and its size is 100 square feet. The pavement is entirely of marble, inlaid with strange artifice: and the four Galleries, of which it is formed, are supported by 60 columns made of a single piece of the finest white Carrara marble. The trimmings [fregi], statues, half-busts, and various other ornaments with which it is embellished, are by the famous *Cosmo Fanzago*; if we leave out six of the statutes of the cornice, which are more ancient, and by other great Craftsmen. The work of this Author is also the nearby Cemetery, entirely surrounded by balusters, and other marble trimmings, with various skulls that resemble the natural. The aforementioned cloister, by way of a long corridor, leads to a beautiful View of the sea, and one so charming that there isn't perhaps another similar in Europe.¹

¹ “Si passa quindi al vicino Chiostro, degno di ammirazione per la sua magnificenza, e vaghezza, e per i suoi riguardevoli ornamenti. Vi si discende per una bella scala di marmo; e la sua ampiezza è di 100. passi quadrati. Il Pavimento è tutto di marmi, commessi con bizzaro artificio: e le quattro Gallerie, onde vien formato, sono sostenute da 60. colonne di un sol pezzo di finissimo marmo bianco di Carrara. I fregi, le statue, i mezzibusti, e gli altri varj ornamenti, di cui vedesi abbellito, sono del celebre *Cosmo Fanzago*; se vogliamo eccettuare sei delle statue del Cornicione, che sono più antiche, e d'altri eccellenti Artefici. Opera di questo Autore è similmente il vicino Cimiterio, tutto intorniato di balaustri, e d'altri fregi di marmo, con varj teschj che rassomigliano il naturale. L'accennato Chiostro per via di un lungo corridore conduce a una bellissima Veduta sul mare, e così deliziosa, che non v'ha forse altra somigliante in Europa.”
Thomas Salmon, *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi, e popoli del mondo naturale, politico, e morale*, vol. 23 (Venice: Giambattista Albrizzi, 1761), 66-67. The valences of the word 'fregi' will be discussed in detail below.

What are the Great Cloister's 'remarkable ornaments'? Salmon's passage neatly presents the multiple, multifarious, divergent delights of the Great Cloister at San Martino (Figure 100). The cloister easily disintegrates into a number of seemingly discrete units: the long runs of arcaded walks, smooth white walls and repeating cell doors (Figure 100 to Figure 102, Figure 105); elaborately carved door surrounds clustered in the four corners (Figure 112 to Figure 118); marble busts placed over the door openings; the 'trimmings' or 'ornaments' of the cloister that appear in appraisal accounts and indeed 'run around' the cloister, measured by length and number (Figure 103 and Figure 104) – keystones, capitals, frieze ornaments, consoles, scrolls; the balustrade of the terrace; the full-length sculptures above; the cemetery enclosure (Figure 106 to Figure 109) in the south-east corner of the cloister garth.

This chapter examines this multitude of elements, differing in scale, composition, elaboration and genre. Giovanni Careri has drawn attention to the complexities of devotional art that unites multiple and heterogeneous elements of painting, sculpture and architecture in his examination of three Baroque chapels by Gianlorenzo Bernini.² Careri draws attention to the way art history over-emphasises the "textual basis" of art, focusing on "the identification of motifs, figures, and iconographic programs" at the expense of visual complexity and its non-verbal modes of communication.³ His study hinges on approaching Bernini's well-known heterogeneous, multi-media '*bel composto*' as montage. Developed in the cinematic theory of Sergei Eisenstein, montage "mobilizes heterogeneous elements as much by their substance as by the conditions under which they appeal to the senses or understanding, making them work together in an expressive synthesis that is intended to act on the viewer".⁴

As Careri explores, for the *composto* to work, painting, sculpture and architecture, the general and specific, narrative and intensive elements must maintain their difference – they cannot be reduced to a single logic and it is their very difference that generates the energy of the work and

² Giovanni Careri, *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*, trans. Linda Lappin (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴ Hubert Damisch commenting on Careri's employment of the concept of montage in the foreword to Careri's book, *ibid.*, viii.

elicits an experience in the viewer.⁵ Yet Careri's case studies also operate with a remarkable degree of unity and coherence. The Fonseca and Albertoni chapels, especially, are compact. Careri considers them as largely self-contained. Moreover, their operation is first set in motion by the genius of Bernini. *Bel composto*, as Careri explains, concerns the problem of "how unity is created from the multiple and heterogeneous of a work of art."⁶ A passage on Eisenstein's method that Careri quotes suggests that the dramatic shifts between different registers "are made possible by the coherence of the work's composition".⁷ The Eisensteinian montage unfolds as a sequence in time.⁸ Careri emphasises that "in the *composto* all the components are present at the same time" and "the transformations and conversions are created in the beholder by the dynamic solicitations potentially at work within a perfectly static whole."⁹ Thus the beholder works to organise the *composto* into coherence through a singular, intensive and ecstatic viewing experience, reassembling in space the thread of the filmic montage.

While this chapter owes much to Careri's insights into the 'ecstatic' displacements of media as they "surpass their own limits" and the heterogeneity of elements pulling in different directions, it also sets off from the difficulty of establishing any sort of coherence within the Great Cloister.¹⁰ The Cloister cannot be surveyed 'at once', from a single point of view and there is not a strong, privileged route through it. In focusing on discontinuity, disjunction, and rupture this chapter explores how Careri's key emphasis on the relationship between heterogeneity, artwork and spiritual experience might operate in the non-*composto*.

⁵ Ibid., 2-5, 71-75, 81, 85-86.

⁶ Ibid., 75.

⁷ Pietro Montani quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

⁸ In Montani's words, a "dynamic and temporal" model.

⁹ Careri, *Flights of Love*, 82.

¹⁰ "In order to understand the dynamics of the Albertoni chapel, we must distinguish between the pathos of the theme, Ludovica's ecstasy, and the pathos generated by the ecstatic (as in "ex-stasis") way the components of the *composto* are related to each other in the functioning of the whole. These components are linked by a succession of leaps in which each element, pushed to its extreme limit, culminates in an explosion in which its dimensional, chromatic, and conceptional equilibrium is broken, at which point another element comes to the fore and carries on." *Ibid.*, 75.

The remodelling of the Great Cloister began in the 1580s, as part of a wide-ranging series of works in the monastery.¹¹ The work can be seen as a response to a number of factors: the initiative of an ambitious prior Dom Severo Turboli, a lightning strike that hit the powder store in the adjoining Castel Sant'Elmo in 1587 or the desire to dramatically increase the monastery's provision for ordained monks, transforming two-storey individual cottages typical of Carthusian foundations into double-tier, high-density accommodation.¹² The cloister's broadest form is usually given to the Florentine architect Giovanni Antonio Dosio, working at the monastery from 1591.¹³ Its decoration, on the other hand, was fashioned by Cosimo Fanzago, the single most significant figure in Neapolitan architecture of the seventeenth century.¹⁴

The Cloister was a starting point for Fanzago's work at the monastery, an endeavour that quickly expanded beyond the limits of the Cloister and would last for over thirty years:¹⁵

While he was originally commissioned to complete the large cloister, his production quickly diversified to include work in the church, the parlour, the chapter room, and the prior's quarters. With the absence of a contract for these additional interventions, we are

¹¹ Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 55-57.

¹² Cf. Pezzullo, "Rivisitando la Certosa," 50-53.

¹³ Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 34; Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 63. In his *Napoli sacra* of 1623, Cesare D'Engenio Caracciolo notes Severo Turboli's creation of 'many beautiful cells', in addition to the rebuilding of the church, Cesare D'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli sacra di D. Cesare D'engenio Caracciolo, napoletano* (Naples: Ottavio Beltrano, 1623), 586.

¹⁴ Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 61, 73-74. Here Blunt writes: "It is clear from the documents that the lay-out of the cloister and the form of the arcade were settled before Fanzago came on the scene, but the decoration, which is recorded as being executed by him in a survey of 1631, is clearly of his own invention[.]" Gaetana Cantone has explored Fanzago's work across the city in Cantone, *Napoli barocca*.

¹⁵ The key documents associated with Fanzago's work at San Martino (including the Great Cloister decoration) are the 1623 and 1626 contracts that defined and expanded the remit of Fanzago's work at San Martino; three payments (two from 1631, one from 1656) associated with Fanzago's liquidation of his accounts with the monastery in 1631 and 1656; and two appraisals of work undertaken (carried out by Fanzago's colleagues), one associated with the 1631 liquidation, the other probably from some time after 1656; cf Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 110-11, footnote 239, and 110-33 for a longer discussion of the complexities associated with these documents.

led to believe that the monks at San Martino recognized Fanzago's talent and began to envision a sculptural and architectonic campaign of totalizing proportions.¹⁶

By 1631, Fanzago had worked to complete the basic paid-by-the-measure parts of the cloister arcade, produced ornaments not specified in his initial contract and appraised that year by Jacomo Lazzari and Cristoforo Monterossi, and expanded into a variety of other jobs, small and large, from cloister pavement to the cemetery enclosure.¹⁷

The discontinuous nature of the cloister decoration is matched by a fragmented scholarly response. Paola D'Agostino notes this problematic in relation to the doorways: "Studied in too great an isolation by specialists of different disciplines, these doors [...] must be reconsidered within the whole of architectural design, sculptural decoration, and of half-statues in relation to

¹⁶ Ibid., 117. For a discussion of the evolving relationship between Fanzago and the Carthusians, from his first contract in 1623, the 1626 contract granting him greater responsibilities, and the payments and appraisals of 1631 and 1656 which testify to a move to a much more fluid working relationship, see Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 161-66. A more thorough discussion is available at "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 110-33.

¹⁷ On the first two contracts of 1623 and 1626, see "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 111-14; Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, 56-59. The marblework to be paid by measure was stipulated in these contracts: each arch to be made of four pieces of marble, all from the same block; the 60 columns supporting the portico; architraves; three-pronged pieces of marble above the capitals that act as springers for both the lateral arches as well as the transverse groin of the walkway vaulting. For the appraisal, see Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix 5, p325. It lists various repeated elements of the cloister portico ('riscontri' or 'peduci' (Figure 110), 'borciette' (Figure 147a and Figure 111), 'mensole' (Figure 147b), 'fiori' (Figure 147c), 'borcie' (Figure 147]), as well as vases and spheres on the cornice crowning the arcades; two bases for statues in middle of the upper terraces, and four in the corners. The seven doors, with their complex carvings, are mentioned in a single entry – by 1631, the two next to the Prior's Quarters are already in place and used as models for those yet to be installed. The first entry is somewhat difficult to interpret: "In prima per li riscontri seu peduci delli capitelli delle colonne intagliati si rileva la cimasa sopra che è stata misurata sono 56 deli interi et 8 delli medi che in tutto somano n. 60 riuniti tutti insieme". I take it to refer to the scrolled consoles of the responds ('riscontri'), especially since they number as stated in the account: 56 whole ones for each freestanding column, and 2 each for the 4 doubled corner columns. See Figure 134m for one of these half-consoles. For pavement and cemetery, see payment of 11 March 1631; cf *ibid.*, 115.

the receding runs of bays of the Cloister arms.”¹⁸ Despite the much-noted intermediality characteristic of Fanzago’s work, the approaches are divided along the borders of artistic media. Scholars like Anthony Blunt and Gaetana Cantone consider the importance of the cloister within Fanzago’s broader architectural oeuvre.¹⁹ Although Cantone insists on the fundamental interconnection of the decorative and structural (or sculptural and architectural), old patterns persist and a recent study of Neapolitan architecture reasserts these boundaries: “Although the cloister was sculpturally embellished by Cosimo Fanzago in the seventeenth century, Dosio established its architectural framework.”²⁰

On the other hand, the busts are treated as sculpture, and analysed from a formal and stylistic point of view.²¹ Teodoro Fittipaldi considers the three ‘autograph’ busts an important step within the development of Fanzago’s formal language (connected to his projects in the church of the Gesu Nuovo and the Treasury Chapel at Naples Cathedral).²² Both Fittipaldi and Antonia Nava Cellini consider the naturalism, ‘luminism’ (referring to dramatic play with light similar to painted chiaroscuro effects) and modelling of the busts, in order to situate Fanzago in relation to Gianlorenzo Bernini, or to place him within wider narratives of Neapolitan art, as an interpreter of the legacy of Caravaggism, or proponent in sculpture of the idiom of Jusepe Ribera.²³ The busts are detached from their architectural frames and from the cloister so that they can figure in the wider project of fashioning an independent Neapolitan art tradition, with its own star artists

¹⁸ “Studiate troppo separatamente dagli specialisti delle diverse discipline, queste porte [...] vanno riconsiderate nell’insieme del disegno architettonico, dell’ornato scultoreo, delle mezze statue in relazione alla scansione delle campate dei bracci del Chiostro.” Paola D’Agostino, *Cosimo Fanzago scultore* (Naples: Paparo, 2011), 208. D’Agostino’s own study, however, tends towards formal and stylistic analysis in the service of untangling the complex chronologies of Fanzago’s interventions at the Certosa, see *ibid.*, 208-10.

¹⁹ Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*; Cantone, *Napoli barocca*.

²⁰ Nichols, "Ecclesiastical Architecture and the Religious Orders," 148-49. Cantone on Fanzago’s architecture as sculpture: Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, 8, 55, 58.

²¹ Teodoro Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago: i busti della Certosa di S. Martino in Napoli* (Naples: Publigrاف, 1969); Antonia Nava Cellini, "Tracce per lo svolgimento di Cosimo Fanzago," *Paragone* XXII, no. 251 (1971).

²² Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*, 9-10, 14-17.

²³ *Ibid.*; Nava Cellini, "Tracce per lo svolgimento di Cosimo Fanzago."

(Fanzago, Ribera, Stanzione) and essential characteristics (drama, luminism, religiosity, naturalism).

What would one define as decoration in the Great Cloister? The great span of the walls would seem undecorated, unlike the rich imagery of medieval cloisters, or the extensive contemporaneous Carthusian painting programmes in the cloisters of El Paular or Paris.²⁴ Is the cemetery enclosure decoration, and if so, what does it decorate? Separating the ornamental and the structural here is near-impossible. Are the pieces all around the cloister carefully listed in appraisals and payments – its ornament according to Lazzari and Monterossi – decoration or detail?²⁵ In the corners, does the marblework decorate the doors, or do the doors indeed decorate the cloister?

Gottfried Semper's principle of cladding (discussed in Chapter 1) provides a model for considering decoration that gives new value to surface. John Nicholas Napoli's work on the Certosa has demonstrated the careful work of *interweaving* that took place at the Certosa across the time-span of a century and a half, a process arising from the demanding commissioning practices of the Carthusians at San Martino, and Cosimo Fanzago's workshop practice (something Napoli terms the 'mass-production' of architectural sculpture).²⁶ Anthony Blunt describes the church as: "the most successful example of the Neapolitan formula of combining coloured marble decoration with frescoes, so that the two elements *almost fuse into each other* and form a *decorative scheme* of extraordinary richness but, at the same time, of perfect unity."²⁷ In the Great Cloister, however, the close-textured fabric of decoration comes apart. How to think decoration when it is not all-over? How can decoration operate in terms of rupture and discontinuity?

²⁴ Cf Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 105 and 33fn45.

²⁵ Ibid., Appendix 5.

²⁶ Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 75-107. As Napoli suggests, the post-1656 records of the prolonged litigation between Fanzago and the monks testify to the fact that a desire for uniformity was one of the fault lines in the collision between Carthusian expectations and Fanzago's workshop practice; cf *ibid.*, 150-90, especially 63-64.

²⁷ Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 75. This judgement closes a paragraph where Blunt notes that the decoration of the church is predominantly two-dimensional.

Salmon's description raises some of the key aspects at stake in this discontinuity: ornaments and statues, cemetery and walks, enclosed quadrangle and view out at the end of a long corridor. This chapter moves between the distinct elements that make up the Great Cloister at San Martino. It traces one possible trajectory through thinking the cloister's decoration, from asking questions about the busts (who do they represent?) and considering their framing (door/framing?), to the door surrounds' relationship with the wider cloister, and the syncopation provided by the cemetery enclosure. This somewhat schematic movement allows me to hold in tension, and to make room for, the paradoxical qualities of the Cloister and the question of what its decoration is and does. The disparate elements 'belong together', in several senses: they represent intense workshop activity led by Cosimo Fanzago that appears to have moved fluidly between tasks; in the words of Gaetana Cantone, they also participate in a "game of recurrences", where repetition and variation are played across areas small and big, figural and abstract.²⁸ Yet they are also distinct, pulling in different directions. Although by no means the definitive or exhaustive trajectory, this movement allows me to make the unevenness count.

4.2 Santi della Religione: Multiplying Monks

"Negli angoli del Chiostro sono cinque vaghissimi busti di marmo de' Santi della
Religione [...]"²⁹
Pompeo Sarnelli, 1685.

In the four corners of the Great Cloister, seven life-size busts are placed over the doors, paired across the walkways' corners, although not quite facing each other. Five of these were made by Cosimo Fanzago between 1631 and 1656 (doors 1-4, 6 in Figure 99); the remaining two (doors 5 and 7) by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Figure 116 and Figure 118).³⁰ The busts do not carry any inscriptions or names, but their arrangement has a certain rhythmic logic. Each of the three pairs juxtaposes a mitred bishop with a tonsured

²⁸ Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, 55-56. See also pp. 5-10 for a discussion of aspects of Fanzago's architectural poetics.

²⁹ Pompeo Sarnelli, *Guida de'forestieri, curiosi di vedere, ... le cose più notabili ... di Napoli, e del suo amenissimo distretto, etc* (Naples: Giuseppe Roselli, 1685). "In the corners of the Cloister there are five most delightful marble busts of the saints of their Order [...]"

³⁰ Cf Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*; D'Agostino, *Cosimo Fanzago scultore*, catalogue entry A.22.

monk, those at doors 4 and 6 clearly wearing the distinctive Carthusian scapular. Correspondences call out across the length of the walkway: two bishops face each other at 1 and 4; two hooded monks at 3 and 5.

Yet the busts have proven difficult to identify.³¹ The earliest 'naming' of the figures I am aware of comes from Bernardo De Dominici's *Vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani*, published in 1743.³² De Dominici names only three: St Martin, St Bruno and St Januarius.³³ In 1854, Raffaele Tufari named all seven, and it is on his identifications that most scholarship seems to rest.³⁴ The most recent monographic study of Fanzago's sculptural work by Paola D'Agostino relies on Tufari's identifications without much discussion.³⁵ While Nicholas Napoli raises the issue in his doctoral thesis on the Certosa, in his recent book on the monastery the problem disappears from view.³⁶

Why is identification built on such uncertain ground? The busts constitute an insistent and impressive presence, leaning powerfully into the viewer's space, and are renowned for their virtuoso treatment of marble. Their faces and hands are expressive and particular. This, and the differences in attire and pose across the seven, suggests they are far from generic.

This part of the chapter explores the problem of the busts' identities. While I tend to favour one potential arrangement of Carthusian worthies proposed by Fittipaldi, my analysis works to address also the odd semiotic 'vagueness' of the busts. Here the virtuoso, portrait-like carving seems to hold out the possibility of the specific and nameable but does not deliver. Scholarship

³¹ Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 244-46.

³² In the *vita* of Cosimo Fanzago in volume 3. De Dominici, *Vite*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 184. A significant selection of three 'cardinal points': the protectors, respectively, of the Naples charterhouse, the Carthusian order, and the city of Naples.

³⁴ Tufari, *Certosa di San Martino*, 104-05. Tufari's seven are: St Januarius, Blessed Landuin, St Martin, St Anselm, St Bruno, Cardinal Nicola Albergati and St Hugh.

³⁵ D'Agostino, *Cosimo Fanzago scultore*, 209 (footnote 416) and catalogue entry A.22 (pp. 368-70.)

³⁶ Compare Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 244-46; *Ethics of Ornament*, 161-63 which discusses the Great Cloister in relation to Fanzago's contracts and increasing autonomy, and Appendix I (entry for 1631-56) for identifications. This is interesting since the busts are closely related to questions of Carthusian identity which form the basis of Napoli's second chapter in *Ethics of Ornament*.

largely evades the questions that these figures pose; their uncertain identity disappears all too easily. Yet this very uncertainty demands attention. How is the collision between the art-historical expectations of 'nameability' and the elusive nature of the busts revealing? I firstly explore the most interesting of the pairings, that in the south-east corner (doors 3 and 4), where one of the most securely identified figures – the hooded St Bruno holding a skull (Figure 114) – is coupled with the figure of a bishop, possibly St Hugh (Figure 115). While I consider the evidence for this pairing, I also address a recurring trope of doubling, present both in the Cloister busts, in the contemporary hagiography of the Order's founder, St Bruno, and in imagery elsewhere in the monastery. By challenging a view of identity as fixed I thus propose alternative approaches to iconography and to thinking the role the busts played in the Great Cloister.

4.2.1 Bruno and Hugh

Interest in the life of the order's founder had been growing since the sixteenth century and reached its peak in the early seventeenth century, leading up to Bruno's canonisation in 1622 and the publication of a key biography by Meleagro Pentimalli in 1621 and 1622.³⁷ Cesare D'Engenio Caracciolo's *Napoli sacra* (1623) testifies to the consolidation of the key episodes in Bruno's *vita* in a five-page-long account of the order's founding.³⁸ The episodes mentioned largely reprise the chapters of Pentimalli's *vita*. Bruno's early life is characterised through his nobility and learning, and his position as canon of the cathedral school in Reims. During a stay in Paris, the episode of Raymund Diocres takes place: Bruno attends the funeral of a well-known and respected doctor of law who over the course of three days interrupts the funeral service to call out that he stands accused by God. It is in response to the prodigious episode that Bruno vows to retire into solitude and is joined by six companions. They set off from Paris in search of a suitable abode, heading towards Grenoble. At the same time, Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, has a prophetic dream featuring seven stars that stand for Bruno and his companions.³⁹ When the latter arrive, the Paris episode is recounted and Hugh resolves to grant the desert of Chartreuse to the companions. Some time after Bruno's foundation of the

³⁷ Schütze, "Vita S. Brunonis," 195-98. For a summary of the development of Bruno's *vita*, see Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 102-03.

³⁸ D'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli sacra*, 587-92.

³⁹ Pentimalli's hagiography also includes Bruno's own prophetic dream that parallels Hugh of Grenoble's.

hermitage, he is called to Rome by his one-time pupil, Urban II. While in Rome, Bruno declines the bishopric of Calabria that is offered him. However, reluctant to remain at court he obtains permission to return to solitude and sets off to Calabria in search of a new hermitage. There, he and his companions encounter Roger of Sicily while the latter is out hunting and are granted the churches of Santa Maria del Torre and San Stefano del Bosco. Later, Bruno appears to Roger in a dream, warning him of treachery at the siege of Capua.⁴⁰

Thus, the corner with doors 3 and 4 (Figure 114 and Figure 115) proves particularly interesting. The hooded figure (door 3) is unequivocally identified as Bruno, but its companion has elicited divergent readings. D'Agostino, for instance, still captions that figure as St. Anselm. Yet Fittipaldi (and Napoli in his wake) puts forward a powerful case for this figure to be identified as St Hugh of Grenoble.⁴¹ Fittipaldi draws attention to Hugh's importance as a suitable companion to St Bruno, because of his significance in the early story of the Carthusians. Hugh has a prominent role in Pentimalli's account of the order's foundation, but his importance to the order continued beyond its first foundation.⁴² The prologue of the first Carthusian statutes, written in the 1120s, frames their production as a response to Hugh's advice:

Submitting to the commands and counsel of our most beloved and most reverend father, Hugh Bishop of Grenoble, whose wishes we have no right to disobey, we entrust the customs of our house to [continuing] memory in writing – something your affection has demanded more than once.⁴³

Indeed, David Hugh Farmer writes in the Oxford Dictionary of Saints that because of Hugh of Grenoble's extreme closeness with the first Carthusian house, "the diocesan bishop was always expected (contrary to other monastic orders) to guide and cherish Charterhouses in their

⁴⁰ See D'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli sacra*, 587-92; Pentimalli, *Vita*, 7-50, 68-74, 86-105. Napoli discusses the iconography of these episodes in relation to the Chapel of St Bruno in the monastic church, Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 102-11.

⁴¹ Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*, 12-13; Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 245-46.

⁴² Pentimalli, *Vita*; Guigo I the Carthusian, *Coutumes*, 14-15.

⁴³ "Carissimi ac reverentissimi nobis patris, hugonis gratianopolitani episcopi, cuius voluntatis resistere fas non habemus, iussis et monitis obtemperantes, quod vestra non semel dilectio postulavit, consuetudines domus nostrae scriptas, memoriae mandare curamus." *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, Prologue, 2.

dioceses."⁴⁴ The significance of cultivating such relationships explains the appearance of a substantial section on the admission of Bishops to the monastery in the second version of the Carthusian statutes, the *Statuta Antiqua* (1259).⁴⁵

Moreover, Fittipaldi proposes a connection between the paired busts of the cloister, and paired figures of monks in the Parlour room.⁴⁶ In the Parlour, as in the cloister, the corners are thickened, a heavy wooden frame projecting forcefully from the wall and opening an illusionistic space containing paired white-clad monks (Figure 120). The Carthusian monks of the Parlour are identified by names inscribed in the stone slabs they stand on and Fittipaldi suggests they reprise two of his proposed identifications in the cloister: Blessed Cardinal Nicola Albergati paired with St Anselm (Figure 123, compare doors 1 & 2, Figure 112 and Figure 113) and St Bruno paired with St Hugh (Figure 122, doors 3 & 4, Figure 114 and Figure 115).⁴⁷

The conceit of *pairing* Carthusian figures across a corner is striking in both cases. Both Fittipaldi and Napoli identify the idea of thematic connection, contrast and complementarity operating in the pairings.⁴⁸ According to Napoli, "[t]he groupings also pair a monk with a bishop, emphasising the symbiotic relationship of the Carthusians and the Church leadership."⁴⁹

The possible doorway pairing of Bruno's and Hugh's busts would reprise a coupling emphasised in Carthusian hagiography. Individually, it heightens the prominence given to Hugh in the story

⁴⁴ David Hugh Farmer, "Hugh of Grenoble," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁵ Discussed in Innocent Le Masson's *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis*, Book II, Chapter XII. There are further problems: Fittipaldi draws a link between the chapel of St Hugh in the church and the Cloister bust; yet Napoli reads the chapel of St. Hugh and St. Anselm as referring unequivocally to Hugh of Lincoln, rather than Hugh of Grenoble, Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*, 12-13; Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 111-19.

⁴⁶ Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*, 14; Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 245-46.

⁴⁷ Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*, 14.

⁴⁸ "I santi certosini [...] sono abbinati in ritmo alterno anche secondo una tematica imposta dai monaci con calibrate risponderenze di ordine storico politico in uno con l'importanza connessa al personaggio nell'ambito stesso dell'ordine." Ibid., 10-11; Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 244-46.

⁴⁹ "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 246.

of the Order's foundation and underscores a doubling of authority at the origin. The two other corners further underline the importance of such doubling.

4.2.2 Worthies and Virtue – The Life of St Bruno

What might be the specific value of this doubling, beyond iconographical complementarity? That is, how might the conceit of the paired figures affect the interpretation of the busts and their role in the Cloister?

While the cloister busts have not received extended scholarly attention, the issue of Carthusian forbears, identity and the order's self-representation has been explored in relation to the chapels of the monastic church by John Nicholas Napoli. He argues that "the decorative program of the church of San Martino presented a carefully articulated vision of the Carthusian monk in seventeenth-century Naples that set the eremitic ideal of the monk both in distinction to and in concert with the outreach efforts of the recently founded institutions including the Jesuits, Theatines, and the Oratory of Divine Love."⁵⁰ While the Chapel of Saint Bruno celebrates the order's founder and his leadership, the Chapel of Saints Anthelm and Hugh honours Carthusians responsible for the diffusion of the order in Europe.⁵¹ "Viewed together [with the Chapel of St Martin]," Napoli suggests,

the three chapels present a message about the position of the Carthusian order amidst the monastic tradition, the political and spiritual hierarchy of the Church, and the relationship between the eremitic life of the Carthusian monk and the active service of the bishop.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ethics of Ornament*, 94.

⁵¹ Napoli views the altarpiece in the Chapel of Saint Bruno as "a statement of Bruno's leadership and example that serves as the Carthusian Rule, underscoring the order's devotion to a set of precepts laid out by the example of their founder." (*ibid.*, 110.). On the Chapels of St Bruno and Sts Anthelm and Hugh, see *ibid.*, 102-19.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 119.

Napoli frames these issues by drawing attention to the importance of episcopal attributes in depictions of St Bruno.⁵³ A discarded bishop's mitre frequently appears as a sign of St Bruno's refusal to accept the bishopric of Reggio Calabria, one of the key episodes in Bruno's hagiography discussed above. Napoli suggests the motif embodies "the moral dilemma of the virtue of humility: it can only be exercised through earning and then declining worldly acclaim".⁵⁴

I propose a more fluid interpretation. The story of the order's foundation emerging in Pentimalli's hagiography and especially the concise summary of *Napoli sacra* abounds in echoes and repetitions. This is especially evident in the episode of Raymond Diocres, which Dennis Martin argues became particularly central to Carthusian identity from the fifteenth century onwards.⁵⁵ Paris as centre of study and the reverend Raymond Diocres, much admired for his wisdom and learning, are juxtaposed with Bruno's own position as scholar and teacher. Diocres' portentous self-indictment, all the more dramatic because of his reputation, triggers Bruno's conversion and renunciation of his life as canon at the cathedral of Reims. Yet Bruno and his companions flee Paris to set off for another city (Grenoble) and are received and assisted in their mission by a representative of ecclesiastical authority, Hugh of Grenoble. Although Hugh's dream presents the desert destined for Bruno as already pre-ordained, Hugh's power and standing play an important role in enabling the Carthusians' way of life.⁵⁶ Hugh of Grenoble's service to the nascent order provides a *contrapposto* to the episode of Raymond Diocres. At the very beginning, the retreat from worldly acclaim is matched by the benefits of authority used wisely.

The theme of authority is picked up again when Bruno is called to the Papal Curia. Bruno is the new pope, Urban II's former school master and is invited in order to provide wise counsel; yet in leaving the solitude of the desert, Bruno also submits to the demands of ecclesiastical

⁵³ Ibid., 91-93.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁵ "Nicholas Kempf made the story [of the Paris miracle of Raymond Diocres] central to his interpretation of Carthusian history because it offered a paradigm for the order's mission: to rescue those swollen with pride of learning, pride of accomplishment, pride of making, pride of technique, from damnation." Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf*, 259-60.

⁵⁶ D'Engenio Caracciolo's brief account places significant emphasis on matters of jurisdiction, land-ownership and boundaries, cf D'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli sacra*, 588.

authority.⁵⁷ Pentimalli presents him as torn between service to the Universal Church and his personal commitment to seclusion.⁵⁸ It is at the end of his service in Rome that Bruno has to refute earthly authority again, asking the Pope to excuse him from the office bestowed upon him. Retreating to Calabria (the very area, whose bishopric he was offered), Bruno forges new relationships with authority, however, when he encounters Roger, Count of Sicily.⁵⁹ Bruno's encounter with Roger reprises the earlier one with Hugh of Grenoble – Bruno and his companions are given land again for a new hermitage.

To link the mitre at Bruno's feet simply to his refusal of the seat of Reggio Calabria belies the multiple moments of contact with ecclesiastical (and secular) authority that the saint's hagiographies develop. The mitre works as temptation and test, rather than attribute.⁶⁰ It is worth thinking about the episcopal regalia not only in terms of virtue but also in terms of action (calling, one's *specific* vocation). The mirrored episodes of Hugh and Roger, Grenoble and Calabria, portray a symbiotic relationship with ecclesiastical and secular authority respectively. The echoes laced through Bruno's *vita* furthermore slow down the process of the order's foundation; time and delay show it to be a process, rather than a singular moment. St Bruno's dilemma, aside from celebrating the founder's virtuous character, is an active question – what must one do? How should one be a Carthusian? Bruno's vocation is thus not a static position *in opposition* to something, but a searching-out of a way of living, the pursuit of a spiritual calling.

⁵⁷ Napoli sees these themes of submission to authority and pastoral service developed in the Chapel of Saints Anthelm and Hugh, Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 111-13.

⁵⁸ Pentimalli, *Vita*, 68-74. Pentimalli plays with the idea of ecclesiastical institutions at the beginning of the chapter on Bruno's calling to Rome by presenting Bruno's habitation in the desert as a 'Sacro Collegio Eremitico', paralleling the college of cardinals that elects the Pope, or the Sacro Collegio di Propaganda Fide, founded in 1622, around the time of the writing of Pentimalli's hagiography.

⁵⁹ While Cesare D'Engenio Caracciolo does not explain Bruno's move to Calabria, Pentimalli gives the reason as a means of avoiding further incursions from the Papacy – he suggests the original desert is a little too close to major roads that the Pope might travel on, *ibid.*, 88-90.

⁶⁰ Thus 'worldly acclaim' is not simply a matter of recognition. 'Worldly acclaim' is tempting because of what could be achieved in a position of authority.

The idea of doubling at origin and the active nature of choice affirms the Carthusian calling as not a matter of simple abnegation or opposition.⁶¹

4.2.3 Parlour

Although now known in Italian as the Parlatoio, most early reference to this room calls it the Colloquio.⁶² It is placed between the Chapter House adjoining the church choir and a stair descending into the Great Cloister, along the monks' main route from cell to church service. In a monastic context, parlours often refer to a room for sanctioned conversation, especially with outsiders.⁶³ In female monastic communities, parlours provided a literal interface between the monastic community and the outside world, as visiting rooms for family and business associates.⁶⁴ In Carthusian statutes, however, parlours are not mentioned directly. Instead, the 'colloquio' makes frequent appearances; its main use, however, seems to be related to conversation *within* the community, rather than with outsiders.⁶⁵

⁶¹ The difficulties of understanding the Certosa di San Martino are often related to its refusal to fit into clear-cut oppositions: between world and desert, silence and commotion, asceticism and magnificence. Giovanni Leoncini terms this a spirituality of antithesis, a vocation pursued precisely in the face of the temptations of the world, rather than in its abandonment, 'passing through' the realities of the outside world, in his words (Giovanni Leoncini, "Les chartreux, l'art e la spiritualite en Italie." in *Les chartreux et l'art: xive-xviiiie siecle*, ed. Alain Girard and Daniel Le Blévec (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 236.)

⁶² For instance, in a 1631 appraisal of Cosimo Fanzago's work at the monastery (see Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix 5.) Also Sarnelli, *Guida de'forestieri*; Carlo Celano, *Notitie del bello, bell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli per i signori forastieri date dal canonico Carlo Celano napoletano, divise in dieci giornate* (Naples: Giacomo Raillard, 1692).

⁶³ Véronique Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe: Gardens of Prayer* (New York: Viking Studio, 2001), 14.

⁶⁴ Helen Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth Century Neapolitan Convents* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 139-42; Giancarla Periti, *In the Courts of Religious Ladies: Art, Vision, and Pleasure in Italian Renaissance Convents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 14-16.

⁶⁵ Innocent Le Masson's *Disciplina* only identifies this specifically as a location within the monastery when discussing customs such as 'recordatio' and 'colloquio', that is communal conversation (Book II, Chapter V; Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis*, 179.) Briefer references to 'colloquium' appear in relation to the reception of visiting dignitaries.

The Parlour doubles the Chapter House's communal and communicative role. "[H]ere," writes Pompeo Sarnelli in 1692, "the fathers congregate to discuss the business of the monastery."⁶⁶ But the imagery also suggests that some of the liminal role of a Parlour is retained. Here questions of silence, participation and interaction with the extra-claustral world come under particularly acute interrogation.

In contrast to the Great Cloister, the Parlour is a small space with a thematically coherent set of images.⁶⁷ The walls above the dado depict four scenes of the foundation of the order (Figure 124 to Figure 127): Bruno and his companions before Hugh of Grenoble, including scenes of Hugh's dream of seven stars and the bishop taking Bruno's companions to the desert; Bruno before the Pope; Count Roger coming across Bruno and his companions on a hunt; and Bruno appearing to Roger at the Siege of Capua.⁶⁸ The corners carry paired depictions of white monks: Blessed Petronius and Stephanus (Figure 121); Saints Hugh and Bruno (Figure 122); Blessed Denis and Ludolph of Saxony (Figure 120); Blessed Cardinal Nicola Albergati and Saint Anselm (Figure 123).⁶⁹ The curve of the vault shows scenes from the life of Christ (Resurrected Christ Appearing to the Apostles (Figure 128; Doubting Thomas (Figure 131); and two miracles of the fishes (Figure 129 to Figure 130) flanked by prophets; the large image crowning the vault is of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Figure 132).

⁶⁶ "[...] ove I Padri si congregano à trattare i negozj del Monistero [...]." Sarnelli, *Guida de'forestieri*, 323.

⁶⁷ Frescoed by Avanzino Nucci in 1596.

⁶⁸ Tufari, *Certosa di San Martino*, 99-100.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Blesseds Petronius and Stephanus both appear to be associated with the Carthusians of Siena: Blessed Stephanus is most likely to refer to the Blessed Stefano Maconi, Prior of the Charterhouse of Pontignano and translator of works by St Catherine of Siena (Stefano Maconi in glory appears on the architectural view of Pontignano collected at the Grande Chartreuse, cf Pierrette Paravy, *Les cartes de Chartreuse: désert et architecture* (Grenoble: Glénat, 2010).); Petronius to a Blessed Petro Petroni, whose *vita* was published in 1618 under the title *Vita Beati Petri Petroni Senensis Cartusiani* and dedicated to the Cardinal Carlo Medici. Ludolph and Denis were both renowned Carthusian spiritual writers.

The Parlour paintings provide a very direct exploration of the dynamics of doubling and juxtaposition implicit in Bruno's *vita*.⁷⁰ The four scenes of the order's foundation stake out the idea of split origins. Hugh is shown enabling the Carthusians' retreat while the Pope compromises it; Roger coming upon Bruno in his lands helps him, and Bruno later intervenes in temporal matters as he appears to Roger in a dream. The corner figures present authoritative forbears that the order itself cultivated in Bishops Anselm and Hugh, and Cardinal Albergati. Conversely, a Carthusian might also intervene and 'do his talking' through writing, as did the Blessed Denis of Rykel and Ludolph of Saxony.⁷¹

The biblical scenes in the vault echo themes in the Carthusian stories. The prophets and kings shown writing, coupled with the painting of the descent of the tongues at Pentecost, cast the Carthusian vocation in apostolic terms.

The Cloister with its busts is in itself a reprise of the themes of the Parlour at a remove of over thirty years. The contrast with the Parlour is instructive. While the latter may indeed extol and celebrate the virtues of Carthusian interaction with the extra-claustral world, the Cloister busts suspend these issues. The parlour is overdetermined, rich in narrative echoes, appending names. It is indeed loquacious – and amenable to language. The cloister mutes this tumult into silence. The figures are less historically grounded in narrative, presented instead in terms of insistent presence.

This reprise demonstrates how a coherent iconographic programme or clear narrative may be *insufficient*. The move shifts the theme of founding, forbears and Carthusian vocation from the anchoring of meaning in the richness of imagery to an excess of art that is not reducible to autonomous concepts or verbal formulations. The pairings, repetitions and doublings of the cloister demand a more flexible mode of interpretation than a focus on stable identity or iconography. The question of the mitre explored above concretises this issue. In the cloister busts, Bruno is paired with a figure who *wears* the mitre, has *not* discarded it. The two are not presented hierarchically, but rather set out as equals: equally present, equally viable paths.

⁷⁰ The Parlour paintings were executed before the 1621 publication of Pentimalli's *vita*, which suggests that the dynamic of doubling and contrasts cannot be reduced to Pentimalli's text.

⁷¹ The issue of writing is a fascinating topic that cannot unfortunately be explored in this chapter.

The decoration at San Martino repeatedly picks up key episodes of the order's founding (in the Atrium, Chapel of St Bruno, Chapter House, Parlour, Cloister). The busts of the Great Cloister, however, actualise and put to work the split and multiplied founding moments of Pentimalli and *Napoli sacra*. The busts bring to the fore the active nature of choice, of monastic vocation. Bruno does not simply renounce authority, once and for all, placing himself and his companions in a binary opposition with an Other – the teaching post at Reims he leaves, worldly authority. The multiplication of episodes and their amplification through repetition display precisely that an initial renunciation is *not sufficient*.

Thus, the paired busts in the cloister also introduce the questions of temporal delay (the dilation of the order's founding moment) and duration (the emerging significance of the busts over time) that will be further explored later in the chapter.

I will now consider the effect of Fanzago's door surrounds which purport to frame and contain the busts, but come to compete for attention in their exuberant, shifting forms.

4.3 Door/framing: Architecture Beyond Frame

"The saints' busts [...] instead of sitting in niches above the doorways, burst forward, overflow them, just as the elements of mouldings overflow the boundaries they begin to sketch [...]"⁷²

In her article on architectural history's indeterminacy, Helen Hills highlights the excessive, overflowing quality of the doorways. Busts escape their framing; architectural forms burst their boundaries. The doorways' excesses make them difficult to discuss and complicate the relationship between busts and door-framing.

One of the difficulties arises in defining what one is looking at. Are these frames for doors or for busts? In the accounts and appraisals associated with Fanzago's activity at the Certosa di San Martino, the doorways and busts are listed separately. The doorways (or doors – '*porte*') are

⁷² Helen Hills, "Architectural History's Indeterminacy: Holiness in Southern Baroque Architecture," *field* 1, no. 1 (2007): 54-55.

listed in the 1631 appraisal but the five busts only appear in the 1656 reconciliation of accounts and are noted as executed after the 1631 liquidation.⁷³ Between 1631 and 1656 at least some of the door surrounds would have 'stood empty'. This situation persisted with doorways 5 and 7 until 1709-1718, the time when Domenico Antonio Vaccaro's final two busts of Sts Martin and Januarius were completed and installed.⁷⁴ This testifies that the frames could be conceived independently of the busts, the white marble surrounds arranged around two dark openings: the grey bardiglio backed oval niche and the rectangular opening for the door below.

Are these frames for busts or frames for doors? The surrounds thicken and expand to fill the whole of the arcade end bay.⁷⁵ Fanzago's 'doors', as designated by the accounts, are riven with a tension between the presentation of the busts and the staging of a quite separate, non-figural activity happening around them. I will first examine what makes this other activity so strange and eye-catching.

4.3.1 Architecture's Language

In *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, a seminal English-language study of Neapolitan architecture, Anthony Blunt writes:

The seven doors in the corners of the cloister were finished by 1631, though the busts in the niches were not executed till the 1640's [...]. Here the forms are more complex. The triangular consoles (Figure 134a)⁷⁶, which break up the 'pediments' over the doors and support the busts, are squeezed in between the scrolls (b), the same arrangement being repeated above the niche, but with the scrolls inverted (c). The arches supporting the vault end on consoles (d/e) which are linked to the jambs of the door by marble ribbons, from which hang flowers, leaves, and fruit. Over the door itself the architrave bursts into

⁷³ Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix 5 and 6; "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 128 (item 22).

⁷⁴ "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 68-69; *Ethics of Ornament*, 314 (Appendix 1).

⁷⁵ The effect is striking when seen in the long perspective of the arcade walk, see Figure 101`.

⁷⁶ The letters in brackets in the following passage will refer to annotations of Figure 36.

a life of its own, projecting upwards a curl of marble (f) and downwards two scrolls (g), which [...] seem to act as clamps to the top of the door itself (see also Figure 136).[...]⁷⁷

What is striking in Blunt's attempt to grapple with these 'complex forms' is the way in which that process unravels the seeming certitudes of language. Faced with these doorways, a 'console', a 'pediment' or a 'scroll' no longer refer with any degree of specificity. Thus when Blunt writes "[t]he arches supporting the vault end on consoles," it is not immediately clear which arches and which consoles. Although the reference to ribbons suggests he means the consoles at (d) in Figure 134 upon which the archway that forms the outer framework of the doorway rests (see Figure 144), a similar description could apply to the first rib of the walkway arches (l in Figure 134) and its console (e). The walkway arch is squeezed up against the doorway arch in a way that emphasizes the echoing and repetition of forms.⁷⁸

It is not simply a matter of insufficiently precise terminology, however. Fanzago's exuberant decoration *demonstrates* the non-identity of form. This is particularly evident the use of scrolls, repeated over and over in the door surrounds (Figure 134, letters b; c; g; h; i; j; m). The scrolls that 'squeeze' the bust consoles (b) are formed of curled-up mouldings of the door lintel, articulated through multiple profiles (Figure 136). Above, at (c), scrolls are delicate and comprised of a single surface, like petals or lashes (Figure 145). If below scrolls 'squeeze', above they unfurl elegantly in space. Scrolls appear as planar and strongly linear elements (b) or conversely as three-dimensional forms, moments of protrusion (i). The strongly architectonic scrolls are contrasted with ones that draw on more natural, organic inspiration (above like sea shells (c), below as leaf form (g)). A scroll is a logical continuation of other architectural elements (b) or it is an interruption that traverses these elements (g). A scroll is solid and uniform (c), a scroll is a muscular, articulated cluster of tightening forms (l, see also Figure 146).⁷⁹ A scroll is

⁷⁷ Blunt, *Neapolitan Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 74. I have purposefully excised from this passage the final sentence, which institutes an anthropomorphic reading I wish to avoid at present.

⁷⁸ The two arches are placed at a ninety-degree angle to each other, juxtaposing the unfurling of marble form on the flat surface of cloister wall with three-dimensional space framed by the walkway arch.

⁷⁹ There is a certain surreal, mind-bending quality reminiscent of the work of M. C. Escher in their confounding of what bodies forth and what emerges, what opens up and what is being consumed/contained.

perhaps instead a drop (j).⁸⁰ A scroll is never itself. The varied forms of Fanzago's doorways *interrogate* the nature of a scroll.

Consoles are also doubled: one for each register (a and k in Figure 134). The lower console appears justified by the bust: the console is there to support. Yet where it is mirrored above, there is nothing to support. The two consoles are related to the two registers of the composition, yet when connected to the two openings, they crown rather than support. The console becomes a keystone instead.

The attempt at description activates the strangeness of Fanzago's decoration. The vocabulary of classical architecture is clearly evoked in Fanzago's forms, but also transformed and pushed to its limits.

4.3.2 Framing

There is a tendency to think of the door surrounds in terms of frame, but this quality only goes so far. Contrasted with the white marble employed all around the cloister, the grey bardiglio in the doorways help stage an idea of framing. The grey of the ovals throws the busts placed over the doors into relief, creating a ground.⁸¹ The oval and the half-length figure evoke contemporary frontispieces to saints' lives.⁸² The incised and emphasised vertical lines and the heavy cornice above outline another – architectural rather than pictorial – frame. The four flat

⁸⁰ The term 'gocciolate' is used in an appraisal of the counterfacade of the church, another of Fanzago's complex decorative ensembles (Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 190-92 for a discussion. There is kinship here to the 'guttae' of Doric entablatures, the fabled raindrops on roof-beams of Vitruvian architecture. The scrolls at j become drop-like, but in a material form that recalls something rather more viscous, such as the bulging of candle-drips.

⁸¹ This aspect is particularly pronounced in black-and-white images of the doors.

⁸² Hills notes the rise of portrait frontispieces in would-be saints' lives in seventeenth-century Naples, where emphasis was placed on the mundane and accessible aspects of everyday sanctity; cf Helen Hills, "The Face Is a Mirror of the Soul': Frontispieces and the Production of Sanctity in Post-Tridentine Naples," in *Art and Architecture in Naples, 1266-1713: New Approaches*, ed. Cordelia Warr and Janis Elliott (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), especially 144-46.

slabs of bardiglio used to either side of the central, white marble arrangement create another area of contrast (compare Figure 134 and Figure 144). In this gap, through this ground, an illusionistic space would seem to open up, back into depth, as if to continue the cloister walk. The central arrangement projects further into the viewer's space than the outer 'pilastrini', the multiplying mouldings producing a perspectival effect (see doorway in the background of Figure 139).

Yet already in the process of attempting to delineate these frames, one is forcefully confronted with how tenuous they are. Indeed, Napoli draws attention to the dynamic action implicit in the terms used to describe these doorframes in the appraisal documents of 1631.

The Italian verb *scartocciare* means to unwrap or to unhusk (as with an ear of corn). All of these meanings point to framing and enveloping functions of these ornamental/architectonic features surrounding the half statues. [...] Fanzago's *scartocci* do not merely frame. They present. They unwrap the half statues. Combined with the festoons, the unwrappings suggest a desired effect of celebration and presentation.⁸³

To attempt to think the doorways is to constantly traverse boundaries between part and whole. Imprecision of language is crucial in this respect, for the 'doorways', 'doors', 'corners' cultivate a shimmering quality that flickers across as one tries to talk at one moment of 'doorways' as the framing apparatus that unfolds around the busts and door opening (Figure 134, rectangle), at other moments, about the whole (Figure 144). The relationships between part and whole, between architectural, figural and non-figural elements are continuously rearranged.

The central oval fails to contain the bust, which projects powerfully beyond the plane of the surround. Hands, books, heads jut out. The folds of the saints' clothing defy gravity, folded up wilfully, and trespass over the lower edges: exceeding the framework that attempts to accommodate them.⁸⁴ The framing proliferates. The 'unnameable' forms that are everywhere

⁸³ Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 120-21.

⁸⁴ Compare the lower edges of Fanzago's busts with those added in the early eighteenth century by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro (St Martin and St Januarius) (Figure 116 and Figure 118, compared with Figure 117, Figure 114 and Figure 115).

taking shape compete for attention with the busts that would claim to be worthy of our attention. The doors extend laterally, stretching outward: tied with ribbon and garland in the lower register; crowding up against, indeed clinging onto the console of the first marble rib of the vault.⁸⁵ The 'frame' also pushes uncomfortably up against the vaulting of the passageways at the top, and against the door it is paired with, wrapping around the corner like creased fabric rather than the firm, clear angled structure of a frame. The frame has expanded outward, colonising all available space, engorged, filling up.

In his essay on the *parergon* or supplement in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* (1790), Jacques Derrida examines how *parerga*, including frames, constitute a crucial limit between the 'inner' and 'outer' of art, the edges where it begins and where it stops. A proper frame should delimit the work from its milieu, but also designate the internal edge of the work itself:

Parerga have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only (as Kant would have it) from the integral inside, from the body proper of the *ergon*, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which statue or column is erected, then, step by step, from the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription [...].⁸⁶

Fanzago's door surrounds disrupt the proper functioning of the frame. The expansion 'outward' of the aedicule links rather than separates the busts to the architectural structure of the walkways, the wider span of the cloister and its terraces. Furthermore, the surrounds' 'wavering' between framing busts and framing door openings connects the former to their environment and to that which should remain beyond them (the bodies of living monks). The hands, folds and mitres of the figures undermine the internal edge of the work. A frame ought to help bring into focus what constitutes the intrinsic nature of an artwork, but here framing precisely disrupts such clarification. To linger to look at the bust is to fail to pass through the door. Conversely, if one passes through the door, the bust up above disappears from view.

⁸⁵ See the doubling of the cornice here (Figure 135): the cornice belongs both to the console to its right, and to the flat arch above it.

⁸⁶ Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 60-61.

Derrida suggests, however, that the thickness of the *parergon* is effective by receding from view: “the *parergon* is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy.”⁸⁷ Not so in Fanzago’s doorways. Here the thickness of the frame draws attention to itself. Within it, all sorts of formal and architectural transformation take place. Indeed, the thickness here is so great that that a pocket or gap opens within it (Figure 136). The frame cannot even contain itself.

Although Derrida focuses on Kant’s three examples of *parerga*, the (picture-)frame, the clothing dressing a sculpted body and the columns added to a building, architecture itself emerges as the frame that might contain the others – a *quadratura* akin to the sense in which Derrida employs the French word *cadrée* to stand for framing.⁸⁸ The way in which Fanzago’s doorways might contribute to a similar sense of bounding will be explored in the next section, but at close quarters they undermine architecture’s role as a framing. The broad outlines of the doorframes recall the familiar language of classical architecture, but the familiarity of the forms is questioned in the lively transformation and shifting of scrolls, consoles, pilasters and pedestals. In the encounter of a viewer with the bust, architectural form comes to life as event, rather than as a staging, containing or defining.

4.4 Clausura

To return to the issue of decoration and discontinuity requires a shift of perspective. Fanzago’s doorways, at close quarters, offer a mirage-like, paradoxical vision. From a distance, the restless forms of the doorways resolve into a more unified composition of light and shade, surface and opening. This section will examine more closely the relationship of the doorways to the Cloister and to the other elements of its decoration.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 61. “With respect to the work which can serve as ground for it [the frame], it merges into the wall, and then, gradually, into the general text. With respect to the background which the general text is, it merges into the work which stands out against the general background.”

⁸⁸ Geoff Bennington and Ian MacLeod note the insistence on squareness in Derrida’s use of the word. In Derrida’s discussion of *parerga*, the figure of architecture repeatedly appears as a means for him to frame and stage Kant’s ideas, *ibid.*, 52-67.

4.4.1 What Is a Cloister For?

The first edition of the *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca* of 1612 defines 'chiostro' as "luogo chiuso da abitare" [a closed-off living place].⁸⁹ Medieval monastic cloisters are thought to have evolved organically, through a move towards greater protection and enclosure, rather than as a borrowing of earlier, roman building models.⁹⁰ The cloister quickly became a means of organising monastic buildings, lying in the corner between transept and nave of the church, the church acting as bulwark and border between the wider world and the institutional spaces of the community. In the typology commonly described as the 'Benedictine plan', communal buildings such as the dormitory, chapter house, parlour, refectory that corresponded to the closely-regimented monastic day were disposed around the arms of the cloister.⁹¹

Early medieval cloisters are remarkable in their sense of enclosure and protection, their creation of a microcosm.⁹² The vaulted walkways allowed monks to move between different tasks during the day without being exposed to the elements (this is most clear in the glazed cloisters of Northern Europe) or to prying eyes (with special night stairs providing access to the church for services). In the cloister, a sense of communal identity was cultivated through a wide range of activities: processions, meetings (before the development of a designated Chapter House, cloisters were used for gatherings of the community), reading, writing, teaching – perhaps even laundry.⁹³ Communal identity and architectural form are tied to such an extent in the cloister that the word is frequently used in a synecdochic capacity to signify monastic institutions in general.

⁸⁹ Vocabolario della Crusca, 'chiostro', <http://www.lessicografia.it/index.jsp>.

⁹⁰ Kristina Krüger, *Monasteries and Monastic Orders: 2000 Years of Christian Art and Culture*, ed. Rolf Toman (Königswinter: H.F. Ullmann, 2008), 104-05.

⁹¹ On cloisters, see *ibid.*; Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe*, 13-21. For broad chronological overviews of monasticism and monastic architecture, see Krüger, *Monasteries and Monastic Orders*; Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*.

⁹² A feature that relates to cloisters being identified with the imagery of *hortus conclusus*.

⁹³ Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe*, 13-21.

The light-filled, airy and spacious Great Cloister at San Martino is a long way from the shaded walks of medieval cloisters. The Carthusian cloister does not organise communal living along the same lines as described above. Braunfels suggests the organisation of Carthusian monasteries around two main cloisters, representing realms of eremitic solitude, coenobitic communal worship and contact with the outside world delegated to the Procurators and *conversi* – a pervasive topos in thinking about Carthusians and architecture.⁹⁴ Often referred to as *desertum*, the great cloister usually comprises just the individual cells of the Fathers, with communal spaces like refectory and chapter house arranged around a smaller, minor cloister.⁹⁵ Reading, writing, meditation – as indeed most of the monk’s prayers throughout the course of the day – are undertaken in the solitude of the cell. Guigo’s first Carthusian Statutes, collected and written around the 1120s, paint the picture of a well-equipped cell, with all that might be needed by a monk – clothes, needles, writing supplies, basins, sacks and cutlery.⁹⁶ Guigo concludes the list: “And if we grant so much to each [monk], it is so that he is not compelled to leave the cell, which we deem illicit.”⁹⁷ The individual Carthusian cell concentrates functions that in other monastic contexts would often be communal and arranged around the cloister. The detailed enumeration of the cell’s furnishings endeavours to secure its self-contained nature. Indeed Chapter 28 on the furnishings of the cell is immediately followed by one outlining the Carthusian daily observance under the heading of ‘When we exit the cell’. Guigo summarises the relationship of the cell to the cloister and other spaces beyond its limits with the following admonishment: “The inhabitant of this cell should diligently and anxiously guard that he does

⁹⁴ Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*, 113-15. Signal in this respect is the repeated appearance of the eremitic/cenobitic motif in *Certose e certosini*, one of the most significant publications on the Order and its art and architecture; see for instance essays by Dom. Gabriele Maria Lorenzi, “Finaltà e vita quotidiana dei certosini,” in *Certose e certosini in Europa: Atti del convegno alla Certosa di San Lorenzo Padula, 22, 23, 24 settembre 1988* (Naples: Sergio Civita Editore, 1990), 38-40; Leoncini, “Il monastero certosino,” 47.

⁹⁵ Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*, 111-24; Krüger, *Monasteries and Monastic Orders*, 148-57; Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe*, 15.

⁹⁶ See chapter 28, ‘Objects of the Cell’, as well as the related chapters 29-31. Cf Prior of the Grande Chartreuse Guigo I, *Coutumes De Chartreuse*, ed. Maurice Laporte, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 223-33 for a parallel Latin and French edition. For a summary of the Carthusian statutes through to the sixteenth century, see Hogg, “Everyday Life,” 120-22.

⁹⁷ Chapter 28, paragraph 6. Guigo I, *Coutumes*, 224. “Idcirco enim unit anta concedimus, ne, quod illicitum ducimus, exire de cella compellatur.”

not contrive or accept occasions to exit it, beyond those that have been instituted, but rather considers the cell as vital to his well-being and life as water to fish or pastures to sheep.”⁹⁸

The idea of Carthusian separation between the quiet of solitude and communal activities has perhaps obscured ways in which cloisters were used.⁹⁹ Yet there is evidence that the vision of the cloister as place of silence and solitude was closely guarded. One of the activities mentioned in relation to the cloister in the early statutes – the ‘recordatio’ – is picked up by Dom Innocent Le Masson in his extensive late seventeenth-century commentary on Carthusian observance.¹⁰⁰ Commenting on the practice of ‘recordatio’ as set out in the *Antiqua Statuta* of 1259, he is quick to point out that the reference is to the minor cloister.¹⁰¹

That cloister was not the big space by which the cells are reached, which we now call the Great Cloister, but the small cloister which in almost all houses is seen attached on one side to the Church, and that is also the same place with fixed benches that is called the ‘Colloquium’, which from the early days of the Order to our own time has been used for the colloquium.¹⁰²

With Masson’s commentary, communal activities are indeed lifted out of the *desertum*. At San Martino, as we have seen, a specific room was provided for such colloquia.

⁹⁸ “Cuius habitatorem diligenter ac sollicite decet invigilare, ne quas occasiones egrediendi foras, vel machinetur vel recipiat, exceptis his quae generaliter, institutae sunt; sed potius sicut aquas piscibus, et caulas ovibus, ita suae saluti et vitae cellam deputet necessariam.” Chapter 31, paragraph 1; *ibid.*, 231-32.

⁹⁹ There are repeated mentions of gathering in the cloister in Guigo’s Statutes; see discussion of Masson’s commentary on this below.

¹⁰⁰ Le Masson, *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusiensis*.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 178-80.

¹⁰² “Clastrum illud non erat amibitus major, per quem ad cellas pergitur, quemque nunc Clastrum magnum vocamus, sed Clastrum parvum quod in omnibus fere domibus ex una parte adhaerere Ecclesiae conspicitur, cujus etiam pars illa in qua scamna fixa habentur, Colloquium vocatur, quia ad colloquium habendum, a primis Ordinis temporibus usque ad nostra usitatum destinature. Ab illum ergo locum confluebant Monachi quoties ex Statutis colloquium commune concedebatur, atque etiam pro Recordationibus faciendis.” *Ibid.*, 179.

What is the significance of the Great Cloister at San Martino, then? Are there ways of thinking about its symbolic significance in tandem with both its use and its decoration?

4.4.2 Seeing Whole

Late-seventeenth-century guidebook writers tend to see the cloister as a whole, the first impression being often that of the perimeter enclosure. In 1685, Pompeo Sarnelli writes of the cloister: “Then one goes to a most beautiful Cloister, made up of [composto] the finest marbles, supported by a great number of columns of whitest [candido] marble.”¹⁰³

By the 1692 edition, the emphasis has changed somewhat. The section on San Martino is much amplified from 1685, and Sarnelli’s description of the cloister is also longer.¹⁰⁴ The trailing opening sentence describes the cloister thus:

From the aforementioned Parlour [Colloquio], by white marble steps one descends to the famous Cloister, it is entirely made up of the finest Carrara marble bases, pedestals, friezes, statues, half busts, and other most beautiful works, supported all round [per intiero] by sixty columns of the same white marble [...].¹⁰⁵

Sarnelli’s syntax is a little elusive, but seems to suggest that the cloister is made up of the finest Carrara marbles, which are the bases, pedestals, friezes etc. The running-together of the sentence at the juncture between ‘marmi di Carrara’ and ‘base, piedistalli [etc.]’ superimposes ‘marbles’ and decorative elements. Form and material coincide in an awkward linguistic

¹⁰³ Sarnelli, *Guida de’ forestieri*, 324-25. “Quindi si v`a al bellissimo Chiostro, composto di marmi finissimi, sostenuto da gran numero di colonne di candido marmo.” The *Vocabolario della Crusca* (1612) defines ‘candido’ as “Bianco in supremo grado”.

¹⁰⁴ *Guida de’ forestieri*, 323-24.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* “Dal sudetto Colloquio, per gradi di bianco marmo si cala al famoso Chiostro, `e intieramente composto di finissimi marmi di Carrara base, piedistalli, fregi, statue, mezzi busti, ed altri lavori bellissimo, sostenuto per intiero da sessanta colonne di detto bianco marmo [...]” My thanks for their insights on this tricky bit of syntax go to Ilaria Grando and Fabrizio Ballabio.

agglomeration, but form and material also work together to ‘compose’ the cloister entirely. Sarnelli casually unites the seemingly disparate and discontinuous elements of decoration discussed in the introduction of this chapter – statues to bases, friezes to half busts.¹⁰⁶

The word ‘fregi’, used by Sarnelli but also prominent in Salmon’s account cited at the beginning of the chapter, emphasises the impression of wholeness in the Cloister’s composition.¹⁰⁷ It is frustratingly difficult to translate. Although ‘fregi’ can refer to a specific architectural element (frieze), its use in Italian generally tends to be in a broader sense. In the *Vocabolario della Crusca*, the first definition is that which relates ‘fregio’ to adornment in clothing: a ‘guarnizione’ or ‘fornitura’, something like the English ‘garnish’ in the archaic sense; or most closely, a trimming. In the fourth edition (1729-38), another definition is added: “an Adornment that runs around [ricorra intorno] rooms”. Another possible translation would be a ‘border’ in the sartorial sense. In the use of the word ‘fregi’, therefore, these accounts view Fanzago’s ornament as a kind of edging that finishes off but also brings together a unified fabric.

Standing to face the doorways, it is difficult to glean a sense of the whole of the Cloister. Yet that the whole is significant is testified by Carlo Celano’s use of the term ‘macchina’ to describe the cloister in 1692.¹⁰⁸ In the 1691 edition – the first instance of a separate entry for ‘macchina’ – *Vocabolario della Crusca* describes it as “[e]dificio mobile, e grande: Ordigno, e strumento da Guerra, macchinazione”: a big and movable edifice, contraption, instrument of war, scheming.¹⁰⁹ The numerous earlier appearances of the word in the dictionary point to its association with complexity, movement, simultaneous functioning. The second edition (1623) offers a quote by St Augustine to define ‘mondiale’: “They make their forms known to the senses, by which [forms] the universal masterwork is adorned.”¹¹⁰ Although I will not here pursue the cosmic resonances of adornment which the quotation evokes, Celano’s use of ‘macchina’ does suggest

¹⁰⁶ See also De Dominici in 1743: “belissimo Chiostrò ornato di pilastri, di porte, e Nicchie su di quelle” – a cloister adorned with columns, doors and niches (De Dominici, *Vite*, 184.)

¹⁰⁷ “I fregi, le statue, I mezzibusti, e gli altri varj ornamenti, di cui vedesi abellito, sono dal celebre *Cosmo Fanzago* [...]”; Salmon, *Lo stato*, 23, 66-67/66-67.

¹⁰⁸ Celano, *Notitie del bello*, 688.

¹⁰⁹ *Vocabolario della Crusca*, 3rd edition (1691), ‘macchina’, <http://www.lessicografia.it/index.jsp>.

¹¹⁰ “Fanno sentire alli sensi le forme loro, per le quali la macchina mondiale è adorna.” I have so far been unable to locate the passage in Augustine’s *City of God*.

that complexity, contrivance, totality, and especially movement seemed to him pertinent to the Great Cloister at San Martino.¹¹¹

4.4.3 Poetics of Passage: Movement and Repetition

Repetition and movement animate the cloister. To think of the cloister walks is to think of passage. The rustle and movement that bring it alive are produced *in passage*: from the eremitical, individual vocation to communal celebration, from silence to sound. Fanzago's 'ornaments' pace the walkways: the 60 columns, the consoles of the responding arches (Figure 110) lining the white-washed wall; the triglyphs (Figure 100 and Figure 147 above c) in the spandrels above the columns, which project and lead upward to the vases and spheres animating the terrace edge; the pediments of the terrace windows alternate between triangular and segmental; the crowning balustrade beats time to the arcade below.¹¹² The sense of movement is channelled further underfoot: "The whole pavement of the cloister is composed of inlaid marbles, with a variety of capricci."¹¹³

It is the corner doors, especially, that heighten the rhythm and propulsion of the cloister walks. Their rich fleshiness contrasts with the simplicity of the doors to the individual cells that punctuate the white walls. The openings thematise the emergence of bodies from within architecture. They admit and propel bodies: those of anonymous, living white-clad monks, as well as those of celebrated Carthusian worthies set above the doors in the corners. The moving body of the monk alters the nature of the contrast between these two types of doors, between simplicity and exuberance. As the monk emerges from his dwelling, the cell doors produce their

¹¹¹ The connection of ornament to cosmic order has been stated many times, most recently discussed in great depth by Clare Lapraik Guest: Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*.

¹¹² As has been noted, the cemetery enclosure reprises some of these rhythms on a different scale, especially through the resonance of formal motifs, cf Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, 55.

¹¹³ Sarnelli, *Guida de' forestieri*, 324. "Il pavimento intieramente di detto Chiostro è composto à lavori comessi di marmi, con diversità di capricci." The unfurling nature of these capricci makes them akin to grotesques, whose role of mediating movement in an architectural context has been suggested by Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Art of Transformation. Grotesques in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2018), Chapter 7.

own wealth of crumpling and folding white cloth. The distinction between spaces of contemplation and spaces of business overlays this tension between sameness and difference.

Moreover, such passage must necessarily also be thought in relation to repetition. A Carthusian monk's life consisted of the cyclical repetition of the daily observance, arranged around the liturgical seasons.¹¹⁴ Chapter 29 of Guigo's Statutes sets the rhythm of these observances in counterpoint to the inviolability of the cell.¹¹⁵ Guigo's paragraphs highlight the punctuations of the Carthusian day: 'at the second signal of the bell', 'after having said Matins'. The paragraphs of this chapter open with reference to such pivots that partition the day, yet the text then expands to chart change through time: the rise and fall of periods of work and sleep between summer and winter, the flexible movement of observance throughout the year. Passage is therefore not simply the vector of a single movement, between cell and church, but the trajectory traversed through repeated movement, through time, in the course of the monk's vocation.

4.4.4 Constancy and Conversion: Denis the Carthusian's 'Monastic Profession'

It is useful here to consider a short work on monastic profession by Denis of Ryckel (or Rijkel), also known as Denis the Carthusian or *Doctor Ecstaticus*.¹¹⁶ Denis the Carthusian was one of the most significant spiritual writers of the fifteenth century and his wide-ranging work was encyclopaedic in its scope, pertaining to clergy, the professed religious as well as to lay society.¹¹⁷ His writings offer one opportunity of considering Carthusian theology beyond its early sources in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.¹¹⁸ Denis' significance and reputation is testified

¹¹⁴ For an example of a typical Carthusian day see Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 226-28, 30-31; Lockhart, *Halfway to Heaven: The Hidden Life of the Sublime Carthusians*, Appendix 2, 141-42.

¹¹⁵ Guigo I, *Coutumes*, 226-31.

¹¹⁶ Denis the Carthusian, *The Spiritual Writings of Denis the Carthusian*, trans. Íde Ní Riain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 353-94. See especially introduction by Terrence O'Reilly pp. ix-xiv.

¹¹⁷ Dennis D. Martin, "Denis the Carthusian," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); E Gurdon, "Denys the Carthusian," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

¹¹⁸ Julian Luxford notes the poverty of scholarship on the Carthusian order in the later Middle Ages, Luxford, *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, 3.

to at the Certosa di San Martino by his inclusion among the monks of the Parlour corners (see above), paired with Ludolph of Saxony. The library catalogue of the monastery lists sixteen works by him, including his *Opuscula insignora*, a compendium of teachings for clergy, professed religious and laity, which also includes the 'Monastic Profession'.¹¹⁹ One seventeenth-century prior of the monastery was depicted in a portrait by Micco Spadaro as Denis.¹²⁰

The 'Monastic Profession' offers a glimpse of late fifteenth-century thinking on the unique nature of monastic life. Its repeating concerns help understand what was crucially at stake for professed Carthusians on the eve of Catholic Reform.¹²¹ As Terrence O'Reilly has suggested, Denis' writing is often highly engaging and poetic, drawing on rich imagery to create a sense of immediacy.¹²² His imagery and concerns, therefore, help understand some of the symbolic significance of, and concerns related to, the Great Cloister.

One of the aspects that Denis is most vehement about is constancy. The bulk of the 'Monastic Profession' is organised as an analysis of six key components of the monastic profession sworn by (Carthusian) religious.¹²³ These are: stability, conversion of manners, chastity, poverty, obedience, and enclosure. Denis thus starts with a consideration of what he calls 'stability':

¹¹⁹ *Bibliothecae Regalis Carthusiae Sancti Martini Catalogus*, (Naples: Typographia Symoniana, 1764), 91.

¹²⁰ Brigitte Daprà, *Micco Spadaro: Napoli Ai Tempi Di Masaniello* (Napoli: Electa Napoli, 2002), 100 (cat. No. 30). Priors' portraits are a fascinating aspect of the collections of the monastery and deserve further study.

¹²¹ On Denis' popularity and relation to reform, see Terrence O'Reilly's introduction in Denis the Carthusian, *Spiritual Writings*, xi-xii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

¹²³ The treatise is loosely framed as a response to 'a most venerable Nun' regarding especially the nature of venial and mortal sins in relation to the monastic profession (358-59): "I had proposed to touch here specially on the profession of Nuns – for it was on this subject that I was begged and moved to write by a certain venerable Nun, and I yielded to the pious insistence of this excellent, devout, illustrious person (for what could my littleness do but obey her?). Nevertheless, I intend to proceed from the clarification of the said profession to some discussion of the professions of other religious too." (*ibid.*, 358.) The question of how female monasticism is used as test-case or limit condition in thinking about monastic profession is

Religious, bound by a solemn vow, are especially obliged to persevere in stability. In their formula of Profession they give pride of place to this particular vow. On this they build and establish all the exercises of their entire monastic life, regarding this foundation as a solid and immovable rock. Indeed, they would rather die, and would even undergo a thousand deaths, than go back on the solemn profession they had made to God and the religious life that they had assumed. Therefore, in the Profession of many religious – Benedictines, Carthusians, and at least certain Nuns – the vow of stability is given first place. For it is the solid rock on which the whole building and practice of holy religion is constructed and founded.¹²⁴

Yet it becomes clear that this (literally) fundamental value of stability could be frustratingly elusive. “As the saying is, to begin is easy, but to continue to the end of life in arduous acts of virtue is difficult.”¹²⁵ Section 5 of Denis’ text gives a numbered list of ‘strategies’ for cultivating constancy (*How to nourish and build up stability*). Throughout, he acknowledges the difficulty of a monk’s commitment, only too closely connected to the fallibility of human nature.¹²⁶ “A Religious ought first to be very cautious and very much on his guard not to fall from his first fervour,” he writes; and indeed, “I think you will agree when I say that many Religious are more inclined to impatience, anger, detraction, suspicion, murmuring, gluttony, rebellion, pride, loose living, after many years in the Order, than they were at the beginning of their conversion and the time of their Profession.”¹²⁷ Simply *being* then is not sufficient; a monk must return, again and again, to his vow, practice it with diligence, begin again every time. Repetition and movement animate the practice as they do the Cloister.

fascinating, but unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter. Despite the framing, the text mostly seems to be referring to all religious; sections pertaining to nuns are clearly flagged as such.

¹²⁴ Section 4 (*In what way a Religious should, from the time of profession, be held to stability; and when, in regard to this, a sin is mortal or venial*) of ‘Monastic Profession’. Ibid., 359.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ “We are, by nature, fragile and unstable.” Section 5 of the ‘Monastic Profession’ (ibid., 361.).

¹²⁷ Ibid., 384. See also section 7: ‘How dangerous it is for Religious not to make progress in renewal and purification of their inner life’ (366-68).

4.4.5 Thresholds and Limits: Sketching Out the Clausura

Giancarla Periti recently drew attention to the symbolic activity associated with monastic gates, and their power of mediating transformation: “As liminal architectural borders, gates were stages for the first rite of monastic life”.¹²⁸ Through movement in physical space, monks’ bodies daily re-enact the idea of passage, and, in the celebrations of the office, of ritual.¹²⁹ Rather than being the locus of specific activities, such reading or meditation, the cloister concentrates the experience of passage and transition. Transformation, or ‘conversion’ in Denis’ words, is at the heart of the cloister’s significance. The cloister is a place, then, where transformation can happen, whilst in passage, in motion. The doorways spectacularly stage the transformative, ambiguous power of thresholds.¹³⁰ The shifting, restless forms that make up the doorframes play out in marble the “betwixt and between” of the limit, its creativity.¹³¹

Yet despite their intense celebration of the threshold, the corner doorways also make it deeply paradoxical. The Roman god Janus has two faces; a door too always faces two ways. In Cosimo Fanzago’s gateway for the Treasury Chapel in Naples Cathedral, the productive potential of doors, thresholds, of Janus/Januarius is exploited to spectacular effect, where a double-bust of St Januarius faces two ways, both in and out.¹³² Fanzago’s busts at San Martino have been linked to his work for the Treasury Chapel.¹³³ But at San Martino, the two Janus-like faces of a door, rather than being made visible in their join, through the openwork grille of bronze gateway, are pulled apart. Indeed, the two faces of doorway are made to face each other. This splitting-open of the doorway makes it a matter of arrest rather than transition. The two faces – of doorways, of saints – rather conspire to capture and concentrate, indeed catch in their crosshairs, in the angle or corner bay conjured up by the peeling-open of a doorway.

¹²⁸ Periti, *In the Courts of Religious Ladies: Art, Vision, and Pleasure in Italian Renaissance Convents*, 23.

¹²⁹ On rituals, passage, liminality and community, see Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969).

¹³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 94-130.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹³² Hills, *The Matter of Miracles*, 128-36.

¹³³ Fittipaldi, *Per Cosimo Fanzago*; D’Agostino, *Cosimo Fanzago scultore*, 209.

In some sense, the doorways deny the possibility of a literal transformation at the threshold through any simple passage. One of Isidore of Seville's etymologies for a doorway (*ostium*) is related to its function of revealing something within or beyond: "or it is doorway because it discloses (*ostendere*) something within".¹³⁴ The San Martino doorways do not, in any direct way, 'celebrate' what is beyond: three of the corners open onto different rooms and apartments; and the single lone door is a blind one. Elsewhere in the monastery, Fanzago's exuberant threshold ornament marks significant moments of transition (church façade, Figure 149) or signals the significance of what lies beyond (Old Treasury, Figure 148). The corner doorways, on the other hand, do not directly punctuate the transition from the solitude of the cell to the communal celebration of the church. There are other openings in the cloister (besides the individual cell doors): the stair leading up – through Parlour and Chapter House – towards the church; the long passageway to the procurators' cloister. Both openings could be conceived as important symbolic thresholds. The passageway to the procurators' cloister opens onto the limit of the cloister – the limit of silence and contemplation. Celano writes: "by a long vaulted passage [...] one exits into another cloister, which they call *extra claustrum*, where stay all the procurators and others who concern themselves with the monastery's estates [...]"¹³⁵ Here lies a world of business and clamour.¹³⁶ Yet the mouth of the corridor in the Great Cloister is indifferent and there is no evidence to indicate an attempt to mediate this passage. The stair up towards the church is equally unmarked (Figure 150).

The question of the threshold, therefore, is complicated. Not just passage, liminality also presents itself as *limit*. It is important to hold in mind not merely the close-up view of the doors,

¹³⁴ Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 311 (Book XV, chapter vii.4).

¹³⁵ "Da queste stanze per una lunga volt ache tiene a destra l'ampio cenacolo, nel quale s'uniscono, i monaci a pranzo nei giorni che essi dicono: *quando fit sermo*, s'esce in un altro chioistro che da loro si dice *extra claustrum*, dove stan tutt' i procuratori ed altri che han pensiero delle tenute del monastero, e di questi ognuno ha il suo comodo appartamento." Carlo Celano, *Notizie del bello, dell'antico, e del curioso della città di Napoli*, 5 vols. (Naples: Edizioni dell'Anticaglia, 2001), 690.

¹³⁶ One of the late seventeenth century chapter visitations suggests that no one should loiter in the entryways of the Procurators' Cloister. It is clearly a space open to the probing, assessing eyes of outsiders. Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, 255.

but also the distant one: Fanzago's doors *close* a view.¹³⁷ They provide a counterpoint, a termination to the rhythmic run of marble columns, sketching the trajectory of a movement through space (Figure 101 and Figure 139). For Isidore of Seville, a doorway ('ostium') is a stoppage. "A doorway is that by which we are prevented from any entrance, so called from 'impeding' (ostare, i.e. obstare)".¹³⁸ "Others say doorway is so called because it detains an enemy [...], for there we set ourselves against our adversaries".¹³⁹ Thus the door acts as a pivot – both disclosing and obstructing, revealing and displacing.

After the plain walls and plain doors that dominate most of the arcades, in the corners, everything is suddenly given at once (Figure 140). The space of the doorway is extended, through the projecting busts and the relentlessly curling, opening, multiplying layers of the 'framing'. Looking at one of the doors in profile (Figure 141) drives home the sense of geological pile-up, thickening, fortification. The 1631 appraisal refers to the doors in the four 'cantonate' of the cloister.¹⁴⁰ The first edition of the *Vocabolario Crusca* defines a 'cantonata' as the external angle of a building, associating a corner to fortresses and towers in one of its sample sentences.¹⁴¹ The intensity of visual effect concentrated in the corners, with this crucial boundary thickened by layers of marble, strains to bracket and secure the whole cloister. Leon Battista Alberti's *Ten Books on Architecture* indeed defines a monastery as "a form of religious military camp, where a number of men [...] may come together for a life of piety and virtue."¹⁴²

The exuberance of Fanzago's doors exhibits the kind of border anxiety discussed by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*.¹⁴³ Examining concepts of pollution in ritual practice, Douglas suggests their importance in producing and maintaining community, especially around the

¹³⁷ Cf Celano: "porte che stanno nel fine degli archi" (688).

¹³⁸ Book XV, chapter vii.4. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 311.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ 'Le sette porte grandi nelle quatro cantonate dello inchlaustro', cf Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, Appendix 5, 326.

¹⁴¹ *Vocabolario della Crusca*: "Perchè la rocca aveva una torre forte, presso al cantone del tempio."

¹⁴² Book 7, chapter VII. Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 127-28.

¹⁴³ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

vulnerable areas of margins.¹⁴⁴ Douglas notes the analogies between bodily edges and the limits of a wider community in ritual practice – rituals therefore concentrate around bodily margins as a way of policing the wider the social body.¹⁴⁵ This perception is echoed in Denis' advice in the 'Monastic Profession': "Check your exterior senses, for otherwise deathly sin might enter your soul through the windows of the body."¹⁴⁶

I propose that attending to the analogy between body and community, emphasised in the work of Mary Douglas, helps think about the work of the doorways in the Great Cloister. The intensity with which the doors reinforce the edges of the physical cloister point to the importance of sustaining a certain ideal vision of it. For Denis the Carthusian, the cloister and the soul become analogous in a series of ever smaller enclosures (monastery, cloister, cell, monk, his soul). The analogy between soul and cloister is made explicit in his quotation of Eusebius Emisenus: "What good is it to you to retreat into a hermitage or cloister, [...] when you think you have left the world, but hold – cloistered within you – the very world you have left, with all its passions, vanities and vices?"¹⁴⁷ Monastic retreat is juxtaposed with the enclosure within one's soul of vices, rather than virtue. Although not equivalent, the relationship between the physical cloister and its enclosure of a monastic community, and the monk's soul and its enclosure of virtue or vice, devotion or obstinacy, are central to Denis' view of the Carthusian vocation in 'Monastic Profession'.

A corner, also, is a coming-together: *angulus* because "it joins two walls into one" (*in unum coniungeret*).¹⁴⁸ Fanzago's doorways stress this aspect of the cloister. In Denis' writing, dwelling together appears as a powerful mechanism, something which extends the possibility of holy living. The monks' profession is significant because of the promise made, something which bestows spiritual favour and extends his spiritual agency: "A religious has every means and every facility for making progress in grace and virtue, since he has made many great promises

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. See chapter 7 and 8 especially. The vulnerability and potential threat of margin is echoed in another association of the word 'cantone' in the Vocabolario Crusca, which ties the corner to the street-walker or woman of cheap price; Crusca.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 125-28.

¹⁴⁶ Denis the Carthusian, *Spiritual Writings*, 365.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 368.

¹⁴⁸ Book XV, chapter viii.3; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 312.

to God.”¹⁴⁹ Denis emphasises the way in which the cloister amplifies. ¹⁵⁰ Sin, inconstancy, clamour – all are particularly dangerous in the cloister, Denis warns, because of the way they affect the whole community.¹⁵¹ The very closure of the cloister, and its enclosing of ever smaller spaces (like the soul of the monk), while having the potential to support, encourage, and sustain the monk in his quest for constancy, can also prove dangerous:

Be certain of this [...] that a Religious would be far worse in the cloister than he was, or could have been, in the world, unless he learns daily to subdue himself, to uproot his own passions, to attend to his own Vocation. This is why we find that certain Religious are more beyond the reach of conversion, harder and more inflexible than people living in the world.¹⁵²

The difficulty in defining the uses of the cloister noted at the beginning of this section marks precisely the kind of ambivalence which requires a perpetual re-statement, re-enforcement of boundaries. At San Martino, these are already far from ideal. Braunfels notes that the quarters of the prior were typically placed in more public areas of a Carthusian monastery, in accordance with their in-between quality – removed thus from the claustrum.¹⁵³ Yet at San Martino, the ‘in-between’ is brought *into* the cloister and given an eye-catching frontispiece (doors 1 and 2, Figure 112 and Figure 113). Hence the over-exuberant, excessive articulation of the corner doorways seems to sketch out boundaries that are already felt to be unravelling, an ideal closure already dangerously slipping from one’s grasp. The corner doorways help to delimit, draw out, rehearse and restate the edges of the cloister. Like clamps, the doors strain to hold the space of the cloister together (Figure 142).

¹⁴⁹ Denis the Carthusian, *Spiritual Writings*, 366.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, Denis’ description of inordinate attachment to objects that some religious develop, more than seculars have to money, *ibid.*, 374.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 370-71. (“The greater the Congregation to which a Religious belongs, the greater should be his solicitude and fervour in building up the faith of his colleagues, and in no way scandalising them”).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 368.

¹⁵³ Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*, 114.

But the cloister mediates precariously *two* closures, two perimeters: the ideal *desertum*, white-walled and paced daily along the routes of the monk's observance; and the cloister which erupts, opens at the corners into spaces that are less ideally defined. Off the south-west corner lie the Prior's Quarters – described in the eighteenth century by Thomas Salmon as capable of competing with those of a Prince – which themselves unfurl outward to gardens and *loggie*, walks further down the San Martino mountain-side.¹⁵⁴ The south-east corner opens into the apartments of the Vicar, including a large hall that may have been reserved for the Royal Court, and a balcony with the choicest view of Palace square below, provided one has a decent spy-glass.¹⁵⁵

4.5 The Final Resting Place

In 1692, Carlo Celano writes in his *Notizie*:

[...] and in the middle, there is a garden divided into four sections; one of these serves as the monks' cemetery, and it is enclosed [cinto] by marble balusters and piers in the corners, and in the middle there are *some trophies of death*, like calvaries, stripped bones, and others so carefully [delicatamente] worked by Cavalier Cosimo, that he would not have been able to achieve more *had he worked them in wax*.¹⁵⁶ [my emphasis]

¹⁵⁴ Salmon, *Lo stato*, 23, 67.

¹⁵⁵ Adele Pezzullo mentions Renaissance portals reinstalled in the course of the 1999-2000 renovation works at San Martino, and one portal that had remained in place, leading to a "sala riservata alla Real Corte.", Pezzullo, "Rivisitando La Certosa," 48. I have not been able to find further information on this space. On views, see Celano, *Notitie del bello*, 689. "Nell' altro angolo di questo braccio vi sono le stanze del Vicario. Queste hanno una famosa loggia detta il Belvedere, dalla quale si scorge tutta la nostra città e tutto il nostro Posilipo, e da questa con un semplice cannocchiale si può osservar quanto si fa nella piazza di palazzo."

¹⁵⁶ "[...] nel mezzo vi [e] il giardino compartito in quattro quadroni; uno di questo serve per cimitero dei monaci, e sta cinto tutto di balaustri di marmo e da pilastri negli angoli, e di mezzo si veggono alcuni trofie di morte, come calvarie, ossa spolpate, ed altro così delicatamente lavorati dal Cavalier Cosimo che pi[u] non si avrebbe potuto fare se lavorati li avesse in cera." *Notitie del bello*, 688. 'Delicatamente' could also be read as 'smoothly', 'cleanly', 'gently'.

The monks' cemetery is one of the constants in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers' accounts of the Great Cloister at San Martino. There is a tension between the repetitive, iterative movement of monks up and down the cloister walks, between cells and church, tracing and enlivening the arcades – and the stillness of the central garth: the fluid peripheries and the still centre, moving shadows and blazing sun on the greenery. The cemetery enters into this tension in multiple ways and it provides a kind of counterpoint. Just as it sits off-centre in the corner nearest to the Prior's Quarters, so it works not as counterpart but indeed as counterpoint to the wider cloister, the corner doors. I will now consider some of the ways in which it intervenes.

4.5.1 Like Wax

The medium of wax is used by the guidebook writers (Celano, Sarnelli, Parrino) to think about the striking virtuosity and lifelikeness of both the busts over the corner doors and the ornament of the cemetery enclosure. In his 1700 guidebook Parrino's short description of the monastery (only four pages) notes "half busts of Holy Monks, which seem a work in wax, so subtly is the marble worked by Cavalier Cosimo."¹⁵⁷ In the busts of the saints, Parrino's description of wax is a response to heightened particularity and liveliness of the figures. Celano's quote above compares Fanzago's mastery of his medium to the malleable potential of wax and Sarnelli declares that the marble death skulls on the balustrade are so close to nature as to be nearly indistinguishable from the original.¹⁵⁸

Recent scholarship has considered wax as productive art-historical disruption.¹⁵⁹ Wax as artistic medium most stretches expectations of fixity and immutability in sculpture. Its long tradition of

¹⁵⁷ "mezi busti di Santi Monaci, che sembrano lavoro di cera, tanto sottilmente è lavorato il marmo del detto Cavalier Cosmo." [125]

¹⁵⁸ Celano, *Notitie del bello*, 688; Sarnelli, *Guida de'forestieri*, 324-5. "Qui si vede il Cimitero circondato da balaustrata di bianco marmo ben lavorata, compartitevi per sopra diversi teschi di morti, anche di marmo; mà così al natural, che appena si distinguono dale vere calvarie."

¹⁵⁹ The seminal study in bringing art-historical attention to wax was Julius von Schlosser's "History of Portraiture in Wax", first published in 1910. The themes of his study were subsequently picked up by Aby Warburg's essay on Renaissance portraiture in Florence, Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*:

use from antique to modern times has long been suppressed by art historical discourse. Wax is often found caught precariously between life and death, serving to reproduce and mimic the human body in effigies, death masks or anatomical models. Death masks in particular could preserve the likeness of a deceased person and paradoxically serve to record it with great particularity in painted portraits. Aby Warburg's essay on Ghirlandaio's portraiture in Renaissance Florence sketches out some of these tensions by drawing attention to the dependence of a new mimetic painterly art on the much older practice of making wax effigies.¹⁶⁰ In the votive offerings left in the church of the Santissima Annunziata, he suggests, Christian devotional practices mix with the pagan cult of the image. The Florentine portraits Warburg examines depend in their immediacy upon the imprint of a living body, now gone, but recorded in its most lively, and hence also most fleeting, particularity. Georges Didi-Huberman summarises the paradox of the *most living as most dead*: "it is thanks to the texture of the Florentine funerary masks, those modern versions of the Roman *imago*, that the "alive-ness" ["vif"] of the realistic portraits of the Renaissance could make a place for itself."¹⁶¹

The 'waxiness' of Fanzago's carving everywhere brings a touch of death to his lively forms. Marble skulls become all the more portentous in their uncanny verisimilitude. From this perspective, the instability of the architectural form in Fanzago's door surrounds appears as a matter of decay and dissolution as much as transformation. The guidebooks' accounts employ the simile of wax to address the liveliness and similitude of Fanzago's works in the cloister – but especially that of the symbols of death. In being only barely distinguishable from the real, the skulls become all the more dead the closer they are to the 'living article'. Because of, and

Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 185-222. George's Didi-Huberman's scholarship has explored the intersections between wax, art history and questions of artistic survival (Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms: Aby Warburg's History of Art*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).) and some of the key emerging issues are summarized in Roberta Panzanelli (ed), *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008).

¹⁶⁰ On the contradictions of Florentine culture and the survival of the pagan effigy cult, Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, 189-90.

¹⁶¹ Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms: Aby Warburg's History of Art*, 92.

through, Fanzago's virtuoso display of artistic skill, a stark reminder of artwork as deprived of life emerges. Wax, therefore, brings the deathliness of art into the cloister.¹⁶²

4.5.2 Skulls

While the corner doors, together with the individual cells, stage the appearance of bodies, the cemetery presents their disappearance. The absence occasioned by death is given a perimeter and the virtuoso forms of the balustrade help trace a filigree around the void opened by death. In the corners, the balustrade bends around such openings, sketches out the shape of negative space (Figure 143).

The cemetery enclosure brings to a stark conclusion a contemplation opened up in the figure of St Bruno (Figure 114). De Dominici treats this figure as especially representative of the virtuosity of Cosimo Fanzago's achievement in the Great Cloister.

With a wonder of art, he sculpts here the half statues of St Martin Bishop, St Bruno and St Januarius, folding the draperies marvellously [mirabilmente] into complicated creases, and that of the Holy Carthusian is a matter of astonishment, whose robes and scapular twist and turn, which could not be surpassed but by the greatest sculptor. But how much do we esteem the skull [testa di morte] that the Saint holds in his hand? I will say only that it is impossible to imagine, for one who has not seen it, how miraculously it is carved out, and that it has of marble only the heaviness of bone [che h[a] di marmo solamente la grossezza dell'osso], being inside entirely hollow [vuoto], and it is with astonishment that anyone sees it [...].¹⁶³

¹⁶² In an analysis of late medieval and early modern Deposition imagery, Amy Knight Powell focuses on the deathliness of the image in contrast to recent approaches that emphasise the lively presence of art, see Amy Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone Books, 2012).

¹⁶³ "Ove con meraviglia dell'arte vi scolpi le mezze Statue di S. Martino Vescovo, di S. Brunone, e di S. Gennaro, piegando mirabilmente I panni con difficili piegature, ed è di stupor quella del Santo Certosino, nel quale volta e rivolta la tonaca con lo scapolare, che non può da chi che sia gran scultore essere superato. Ma che vanto daremo noi alla testa di morte che tiene in mano il Santo? Dirò solamente, che non può comprendersi da chi non vede questo cranio così mirabilmente incavato, e che hà di marmo

His marvelling helps think about the skull held by Bruno as more than a somehow simple *memento mori*. The skill of the sculptor conjures up a split temporality: Bruno the Living is confronted with (Bruno) the Dead. The white marble is continuous across the skull, Bruno's hand, his habit, his face, his hood. They are of one matter and the uncanny fineness of the marble-cutting helps peel back the layers and reveal a commonality between hooded scalp, and scalpless bone.

The skulls pacing the cemetery balustrade complete the trajectory, leading towards real – but concealed! – remains. Rose Marie San Juan has examined how images of skulls in Andreas Vesalius' anatomical treatises could obliterate representation.¹⁶⁴ Turned and tilted, the skull is made strange in order to detach it from the familiarity of moral messages. The upturned skull turns from face to head, drawing attention to the materiality of the body in the process.¹⁶⁵ At San Martino, the faciality of the skull is intact, but they present a different kind of challenge to visibility. The challenge is not representational (moving in Vesalius' case from narrative or morality to strange, objective knowledge) but architectural. Here the skulls, precisely in their visibility, fracture the visibility of body in architecture. The problematic 'presentation' of saints' bodies by an architectural framework, discussed above, is finally cast in terms of absence or void.

The cemetery, finally, elicits the question of ends – split ends. Denis the Carthusian's virtue of stability tended towards its end in death.¹⁶⁶ "Cease not to meditate on your last end," he exhorts.¹⁶⁷ The provocation of the cemetery helps one return to the issue of the door as

solamente la grossezza dell'osso, essendo al di dentro tutto vuoto, ch'è con stupor di chiunque lo vede [...]” De Dominici, *Vite*, 184.

¹⁶⁴ Rose Marie San Juan, "The Turn of the Skull: Andreas Vesalius and the Early Modern *Memento Mori*," *Art History* 35, no. 5 (2012).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 967.

¹⁶⁶ "So we have need of a special virtue, called stability or perseverance, if we are not to break down under this difficulty [of continuing in acts of virtue], and if we are not to give up – through human instability, fragility and infirmity – the good works that we had begun, but to persevere therein until death." Denis the Carthusian, *Spiritual Writings*, 359.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 363.

terminus and limit, a visual stoppage at the end of a walkway. For a Carthusian father moving between his cell and the communal spaces, the corner doors perform a displacement. They spring into effusive, insistent visibility at the ends of the walkway, yet are unlikely – most of the time – to be the monk’s destination. They do not directly mediate the relationship between closure and what lies beyond, between this space and the one behind the door; they do not announce the communal work of celebration in the church. From this point of view, the doors are less about where they lead to, and more about the kinds of ends they announce. At the end of the walkway, it is a door awaiting, a door that changes, a door that transforms – a glorious door. But one cannot pass through that door while one still walks the passages of the cloister. It is guarded by imposing gate-keepers. Unlike a plain door, it announces discontinuity, the impossibility of usual passage, a jump. It is the void of the cemetery that provides the end; the leap sideways opens the way.¹⁶⁸

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced a complex, discontinuous trajectory through the ‘remarkable ornaments’ of the Great Cloister at San Martino. At close quarters, the busts over the corner doors of the Cloister emphasise doubled, distributed and emergent meaning, forever raising (again) the question of choice and vocation. The architectural framework of the door surrounds that carries the busts also foregrounds the forces of becoming in its shifting and unstable employment of classical architectural elements. Yet it also acts as irruption and interruption. It distinguishes itself from the busts it is supposed to frame, transgressing its role of frame in its dilation and

¹⁶⁸ I am describing a movement analogous to the anagogical leap or moment of unitive wisdom celebrated in the writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte and considered a crucial aspect of early Carthusian spirituality; cf Martin, *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo De Ponte*, 3-66. In this there are echoes of the way Giovanni Careri relates the ex-static workings of a *composto* to a historical viewer trained in the practices of contemplation and familiar with accounts of (spiritual) ecstatic experience (Careri, *Flights of Love*, 30-43, 59-62.). However, I am reluctant to link the workings of the Great Cloister at San Martino directly to a recreation or sollicitation of anagogical rapture. Rather, I suggest the disjunctions and ruptures of the Great Cloister exercise the monk’s mental and spiritual capacity for non-linear, sideways movement, trained on an object or destination unattainable in the present life.

display of autonomous energy. Architecture appears as unsuitable frame for the figures of saintly forebears; rather than grounding them in their setting it interrupts their relationship to the cloister and to their environment. Architecture is staged as separate and distinct, taking place (quite forcefully) *beside* the viewer's encounter with the busts.

Changing scale, a wider perspective of the cloister reveals the importance of the temporal, repetitive rhythms that animate it. These rhythms help pace out the broad idea of the cloister, its powers, challenges and dangers. But the anxieties and contradictions of the decoration seen at this scale reveal a dynamic mediation of two cloisters: real and ideal, or perhaps more accurately – enclosing and opening at the same time. Just as the edges and boundaries of enclosure are traced and reasserted, its infinite openings also foreground the possibility of passage, connection and change. No one, coherent, symbolic cloister is sustained to the detriment of what (else) might be.

The off-centre, syncopated counterpoint of the cemetery and of startling displays of wax/skulls/marble stage the ultimate disruption to closure – death, ending and the challenge of time. The issue of death gestures towards unattainable ends, putting the functioning of all other decoration in the cloister under pressure, blocking passages, reifying absences. Death emerges as the breaking-open of architecture, for better or for worse.

Some of the multifarious insights of my trajectory through the ornaments of the Great Cloister contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which this architecture might be Carthusian, or rather how specifically architecture *could* be 'Carthusian'. The examination of the corner busts draws attention to a certain staging of artistic silence: the insufficient, *not-enough* quality of narrative or iconography. The mediations of wax introduce a deathliness to the skulls and cemetery enclosure which sustains a critique of the powers and attractions of art. But the discontinuity emphasised in this chapter also specifically cultivates that which is beyond any specific religious precept or spiritual ideal. It helps sustain and produce an open space, sufficiently 'loose' and spacious for semiotic flexibility, for change, and therefore for time. Fanzago's decoration – in its multilevel, heterogeneous nature – extends the potential field of meaning and significance, making space for change, and allows the cloister to continue to speak in silence.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I re-examined the parallels between the allegorical themes of the Painted Stair at Knole and the poetic work of its patron, Thomas Sackville, which allowed me to demonstrate both the challenges and possibilities associated with decoration in Early Modern architectural scholarship. By foregrounding the embodied experience of viewing the allegorical 'panels' of the Ages of Man, Senses and Virtues on which most scholarship has focused, I suggested that the architectural ensemble, far from encouraging a simple didactic reading, instead works to promote and attenuate ambivalence, heightening the viewer's awareness of the limitations of their senses and embodied perspectives. By treating textual evidence such as Sackville's own poetry and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* not as prior to and explanatory of architecture, but as parallel but distinct interventions in a shared cultural field, I was able to demonstrate the ways in which the painted decoration of the Stair offers a sophisticated and particular treatment of commonplace themes.

Through close attention to non-figural elements, this chapter also revealed an aesthetic of layering that denies any stable 'ground' upon which allegory could be placed. Instead, this layering stages the Stair's juxtaposition of different architectural idioms through the medium of painting, fashioning a complex architectural spectacle.

Chapter 1 therefore allowed me to rethink Early Modern English architecture as both on a par with contemporaneous literary (court) culture *and* as a distinct field currently ill-served by over-simplified and linear modes of interpretation, which overlook the crucial role of decoration because of its positioning as inessential addition or simple display.

Chapter 2 focused on the insistent quality of landscape imagery in Micco Spadaro's decoration in the Lay Brothers' Choir at San Martino. By resisting a reading primarily lead by iconography, I was able to hone in on the question how and why architecture seemed to be opening up, retreating from view or presenting powerful visions of precisely what it is not. Taking forward the preceding chapter's idea of representation within decoration as layering and pile-up, I drew attention to the complex ways in which Spadaro's fictive architectural framework meditates on and explores the relationships between architecture, painting, imagery and dwelling.

The chapter was based on a view of Carthusian lay brothers not as known quantity, but as an open question. I thus took time to consider the ambivalence of the lay brothers' position in the Carthusian order, the diversity of their depictions in Spadaro's decoration, the question of their intermediary role, and the new, seventeenth-century positioning of their choir at the heart of San Martino. In this way, I was able to demonstrate how the Lay Brothers' Choir questioned, rethought and reinterpreted (rather than represented and served) the lay brothers' role within the order.

Equally, an examination of architectural and artistic theory in the works of Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti revealed crucial tropes surrounding architecture's origins, stoppages and limits that cast architecture not as a finite, definite quality, but as something discursively slippery, elusive but also potent. By bringing together Spadaro's imagery, lay brothers, architectural theory and Carthusian dwelling as open questions, rather than known answers, this chapter was able to stage decoration as a kind of architectural thinking and as a crucial component within a bigger picture that sees architecture fashioned through a multitude of heterogeneous practices and discourses.

Chapter 3, focused on the Great Chamber at Knole, marshalled more recent scholarship on Early Modern English architecture to explore ornament as production of domestic space. A recent scholarly emphasis on embodied viewers and daily life provided an essential framework for thinking the interconnection between architecture, decoration, class, social performance and domestic life. By questioning the rigid typologies of ground plans and room functions that dominate English Early Modern architectural scholarship, the chapter proposed the fluidity of buildings like Knole as a crucial dimension of their social importance. The chapter thus suggested that the open question of Knole's possible uses – sporadic dwelling, visitors, monarch, absence, aspiration, emptiness – constitute its very heart.

The chapter steered away from pursuing intentionality or symbolic meaning, attending rather to the compounded effects of the layering of bodies, patterns, relief, light and dispersal. Numerous 'outside' voices (beyond the magic echronic moment of Thomas Sackville as patron) were employed to explore the range of effects this decoration might promote and sustain: Anne Clifford's Knole diaries in the seventeenth century and Vita Sackville-West's guidebook to the

house in early twentieth; as well as the writings of Sigmund Freud on the domestic uncanny together with the early twentieth-century short story that inspired him.

The range of these sources helped me avoid the positing of a single, ideal and authoritative embodied experience. Vita Sackville-West's account offered up an eye sensitive to architectural detail and history, while Anne Clifford's presented one particularly dramatized and emotionally charged experience of inhabiting the house. Freud's concept of the uncanny was central to this chapter and allowed me to hone in on the production of architecture/home as both the exclusion *and* inclusion of the strange. Throughout these accounts the domestic emerges as a powerful site for strangeness, unease and anxiety.

Chapter 4, finally, revealed the competing thrusts of the decoration in the Great Cloister of the Certosa di San Martino. Moving between different levels, perspectives and scales allowed me to avoid reading the cloister as a single symbolic space. Instead, I was able to show how the importance of the monastic cloister plays out in a number of contradictory ways.

A study of the busts of Carthusian worthies, by addressing rather than downplaying their uncertain identities, first allowed me to hone in on the significance of repetition. Carthusian hagiographies of the order's origins distribute the moment of foundation between multiple, mirrored moments of choice and between several key characters. At San Martino, the interpretations of this material in the Cloister and the Parlour solidify this emphasis on doubling, opening up a performative and temporal dimension to the question of Carthusian vocation and sanctity.

My study of the Carthusian statutes, including their late seventeenth-century interpretations, demonstrated how an ideal of purity and silence was pursued through Carthusian regulation and (at San Martino) sustained through an emphasis on defining and reinforcing the edges of the cloister. Mary Douglas' anthropological work helped shed light on the intense over-elaboration of thresholds and doorways in the cloister and allowed them to be seen as important symbolic sites for the control and surveillance of the communal, monastic body. Yet within the wider perspective of the cloister, I demonstrated that Cosimo Fanzago's exuberant door surrounds also act as irruptions and interruptions that call to mind the unattainable ends of monastic life and help fashion the cloister as paradoxically open just as it strains to enclose.

These chapters centered on four distinct architectural spaces allowed me to develop a diverse range of concrete approaches and models for interpreting decoration.

In Chapter 1, I suggest that the spatial limitations of sightlines and light conditions that obscure some of the Painted Stair's allegorical panels directly contribute to an architectural meditation on the senses and their limits.

In Chapter 2, I propose to read the insistent inclusion of landscape in a fictive architectural framework as picturing and giving place to a Carthusian fantasy of wilderness retreat.

In Chapter 3, I suggest that the richness of the Great Chamber decoration conveys a certain queer fertility of the house. My reading of uncanniness highlights that such deeply carved decoration must be seen in the context of the night-time life of the Early Modern house, attenuating the effects of live, limited or absent lighting.

In Chapter 4, I interpret the unnamed and ultimately unidentifiable Carthusian worthies as catering to a more loosely defined view of meaning, emphasising the importance of choice and action, rather than stable identity or the embodiment of virtue. I read the repetition of non-figural ornament litanously rehearsed in building accounts and guidebooks as a 'pacing out' of the Great Cloister by rhythm and visual accent, emphasising and policing enclosure 'all round'. I suggest Fanzago's strange forms in the corner doorways act as a vision of intensity and transformation, interruption and impossible, inexplicable passages akin to the soul's contemplative journey towards God.

It is my hope that such readings developed to cope with the paucity of scholarship on my case studies may be adapted and serve as inspiration for the swiftly-expanding interest in architectural decoration. At the same time, although this thesis insists on particularity and has aimed to resist essentialising definitions of ornament, several crucial themes have emerged.

My case studies have both challenged and complicated a view of decoration as dressing. The Introduction set out how the opposition of ornament to structure casts the former as something inessential and supplementary. In Chapter 1, the analysis of scholarly treatment of complexity

drew attention to the way decoration is seen as an undifferentiated layer of excess, easily distinguished from the real matter of architecture. Chapter 1 also introduced Gottfried Semper's principle of cladding that challenges the idea of structure's primacy over decoration. Instead, Semper suggests that the 'dressing' of space through decorative surfaces takes priority over the structures erected to support such surfaces. Semper's vision of architecture as the production of social space through decorative surface accords much better to the Painted Stair at Knole, which revels in the spectacular layering and pile-up of imagery and undermines the possibility of establishing a neutral 'ground' against which representation might be read.

The idea of the production of social space through surfaces is developed in concrete terms in Chapter 3. The Great Chamber is rendered inexplicable by the idea of decoration as adornment, enhancement or celebration: the crouching satyrs, mermaids and hippocamps do not represent or uphold some previously available elite identity or the prestigious nature of the room.¹ Instead, the decorative surfaces of the Great Chamber work to produce a 'close' space. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson's work on the Early Modern house in England coupled with Freud's insights on the uncanny helped highlight the peculiar intersection of intimacy and display, comfort and unease, social exclusion and vulnerability generated by the room's 'ceiling'. Class or status, then, come precisely as after-effects of the fluid and shifting uses of rooms and their decorative dressing.

Chapter 4, on the other hand, deconstructed the image of ornament as unified, undifferentiated surface introduced in Chapter 1. Here I challenged the problematic scholarly privileging of decorative 'composti' and developed ways of analysing decoration through discontinuity. Indeed, in the Great Cloister the tensions between wholeness and disjunction allow the architecture to function as more than mere symbol, and to respond to and accommodate change.

In paying attention to these issues, I have brought to light how the tropes and metaphors associated with decoration – what and *how* decoration is assumed to be – matter. The recent resurgence in ornamental studies has rightfully incorporated Semper's insights and worked to

¹ Indeed, I suggested that the marble fireplace in the Great Chamber exemplifies how the decoration of the Great Chamber converges around a kind of void.

valorise adornment through approaches such as John Nicholas Napoli's (on the Certosa di San Martino church) or Giovanni Careri (on Bernini's *composti*). But my case studies also highlight how models that underpin scholarly understanding of decoration can exclude or misinterpret material such as the Great Chamber at Knoke or the Great Cloister at San Martino.

My case studies also challenge the traditional association of ornament with pleasure.² Instead, they highlight the disquieting, uncanny potential of Renaissance ornament.

This is most clearly seen in Chapter 3. Here, ornament is analysed through its production of domestic uncanniness. This decoration carved with strange faces caught in grimaces and screams, breaking codes of comportment and conducting their own, separate rituals of courtliness serves not to adorn and beautify a room, but to surprise, disquiet, stoke unease. It appears to figure and propose the house's own alien productivity. In its placement, relief and deep shadows, it activates the potential of architecture to make the familiar strange.

Freud's essay on the uncanny employed in Chapter 3 (in tandem with the 'Inexplicable' story from *The Strand Magazine*) highlights key aspects of Renaissance decoration that deserve further scholarly study. The ubiquitous motifs of strapwork and grotesque, for example, play with the distinction between animate and inanimate, subject and object, that Freud highlights as another source of uncanniness.

Cosimo Fanzago's doorways in the Great Cloister of San Martino provide a useful contrast to the Great Chamber. Here, the unsettling quality lies not in a literal, figural presence. The strapwork-like, curling and fluid vocabulary of Fanzago's forms instead shows ornament appearing as unruly. Placing the doors in the wider context of the cloister allowed me to highlight how Fanzago's strange forms act as an interruption, as an excavation of ideas of

² In opposing ornament to structure, Alberti aligns decoration with beauty and sensual pleasure, see Wigley's discussion in Wigley, "Untitled." For a recent treatment of decoration through the lens of pleasure, see Brett, *Rethinking Decoration*, 1-12.

threshold, passage and transformation that does not necessarily simply or easily 'present' the busts.³ This is a different example of decoration as disquieting and unravelling.

Another theme that emerges from my case studies is the question of decoration as edge, boundary or limit. The association of ornament with edge or boundary has been noted, particularly in relation to term figures derived from Greek and Roman land boundary markers.⁴ While these ideas are reinforced numerous times in this thesis (I examined Fanzago's ornamental doorways in relation to ideas of liminality, and the painted decoration of the Knole Painted Stair as playing with inside and outside), I want to resist broadly associating decoration with mediating the relationship between in and out, interior/exterior etc. Such boundaries are already a spatial metaphor. It is not simply that ornament operates on the margins or mediates margins; but rather that decoration is an intrinsic part of the 'spacing' that is required to think insides and outsides.⁵

Two examples of how decoration upholds such 'spacings' are particularly interesting in relation to their wider implications.

Chapter 2 supports but also expands ornament's association with limit or edge. Here I argued that Micco Spadaro's decoration pictures architecture's coming up against its own limits. I suggest that such insistence of *non-architecture*, before-architecture and beyond-architecture helps construct a renewed vision of 'dwelling in wilderness' (foregrounding especially the role of Lay Brothers). In seventeenth-century Naples, the Carthusians faced a two-fold pressure: of what it meant for a Carthusian monastery to be situated not in the Alpine wilderness but rather next to a city; and what it meant to exist next to this rapidly expanding, populous urban centre. By dramatising an architecture opening up to its own limits, the choir shows the spiritual problem of a changing and evolving order being worked out in terms of architecture. The value of Spadaro's paintings is that they embody the *architectural* work done to incorporate or co-opt

³ On the ornament as presenting the busts of Carthusians, see Napoli, "Fashioning Certosa di San Martino," 119-21.

⁴ Colvin, "Herms, Terms and Caryatids in English Architecture.," Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 129-30.

⁵ This goes back to Mark Wigley's insights in 'Untitled', see the Introduction of the present study.

such limits (of what constitutes Carthusian vocation, wilderness). Spadaro's complex fictive architectural framework places the issue of limits and edges *at the heart* of architecture.

Chapter 3, on the other hand, tackled decoration that seems to make present (and prominent) the presence of Others. The carved decoration of the Great Chamber, as I suggested, hints at the potentially vulnerable, fraught nature of elite 'display' space by boldly presenting the viewer/inhabitant with the bodies of 'outsiders' – monsters, beasts, boors – and placing them in the position of witness or viewer of those same inhabitants. This is decoration that appears to clearly demonstrate the uncanniness of domesticity explored by recent critical theory: the home made familiar precisely by its domestication of the alien.⁶ The insights of this chapter suggest that further research is warranted into how such canonical ornamental motifs as Persians, Caryatids and Atlantes explore the architectural incorporation and domestication of Otherness.

Through the thesis, attention to embodiment and lived experience has been a crucial point of departure for rethinking decoration. In Chapter 1, acknowledging the experience of moving up and down stairs, the limitations to seeing the allegorical panels, or seeing them from different, contradicting points of view produced new insights. Chapter 2 arises from the powerful impression of greenery and openness right at the heart of the monastic complex. Chapter 3 gives place to the incongruity of crouching, self-exposing, grimacing, screaming bodies in a supposedly elite space and addresses their 'pooling' of effects of relief, light and shadow. Chapter 4 insists on the relationship of decoration to monastic rhythms of movement, repetition and passage.

The insights on uncanniness, on edges and otherness discussed above reinforce my focus on lived experience. In centering these concerns, rather than treating them as incidental, I have been able to address material that has never been interpreted before, bringing it to 'visibility' like George Didi-Huberman's discussion of the fictive marble panel under Fra Angelico's *Annunciation*.⁷ These chapters have therefore demonstrated how the non-figural or non-iconographic demands an inhabited architecture, gains meaning in light of embodied experience. As Mark Wigley suggests, the marginalisation of ornament (in opposition to

⁶ Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*, 97-121.

⁷ Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*. See Introduction.

structure) ultimately enables a disciplinary perspective that fashions architecture as something that is “inhabited by a viewer who is detached from it, inhabited precisely by being looked at”.⁸ This is the disciplinary perspective that renders so much of the material considered in this thesis invisible or insignificant.

My choice of contrasting case studies has revealed the ways in which categories usually kept separate in scholarship (secular/religious, domestic/institutional) may converge – and how this convergence is productive. The combination of Knole and San Martino has allowed the domestic and lived-in aspects of the latter to come to the fore, and this has in turn drawn attention to how the ornament at San Martino operates over time and incorporates contradiction. Thus, my case studies highlight how insights gained from an assessment of the domestic (the discussion of uncanniness in Chapter 3) might be pertinent to architecture more widely.

A crucial component of these questions is the problem of time. I would suggest that the issue of dwelling (lived experience, inhabitation) casts the relationship between architecture and time in sharp relief. Chapter 4 is particularly helpful in exploring this question in concrete terms. Here, Carthusian practices of timekeeping, daily observance, repetition and constancy offer an opportunity to examine the collision of architecture with a historically specific model of time. At the end of the chapter, I suggested that the cloister’s disparate, disjunctive elements allow it to accommodate both change and constancy; enforce closure *and* opening, so that the cloister’s significance for its inhabitants might evolve over time. Thus, the chapter demonstrated how the spiritual problem of constancy intersects with architecture at San Martino, illuminating in concrete terms the crucial relationship between decoration/architecture and the dilated temporal spans of dwelling in/with a building. The anachronistic voices engaged in Chapter 3, by making visible aspects of the artwork unaddressed in its ‘own’ time, ultimately demonstrate how architecture and decoration might work to ‘provide for’ potential, prospective, not-yet-in-existence viewers. Thus, my case studies demonstrate how ornament not only responds to time, but also demands time to unfold.

Throughout the thesis, therefore, my case studies have allowed me to stage decoration as architecture. Decoration appears as a medium of architectural thinking (Chapters 1 and 2) and

⁸ Wigley, "Untitled," 362.

as a crucial component in the construction of space (Chapters 3 and 4). At the same time, my case studies have allowed to develop a better insight into the way ornament focuses anxieties, unease and uncanniness. Freud's essay and the 'Inexplicable' story in *The Strand Magazine* ultimately draw attention to how architecture conjoins issues of dwelling and uncanny liveliness (to live in/with architecture is to experience its 'living' in time and space too) and the Renaissance predilection for playing with such liveliness suggests that these issues deserve much closer scholarly attention. I have demonstrated through my case studies how ornament does not *mark* an edge, but rather *makes* it, characterises it: makes it ideologic (Chapter 2) or a place of intrusion (Chapter 3). But in thinking about what is so evocative and productive in Freud's stories of uncanniness, it also becomes clear that the way it arises *at home* is to do with the blurring of edges. In Chapter 4, I discussed Derrida's analysis of framing and how the frame delimits the work from the outside. My case studies have demonstrated, however, how architecture can thwart such framing, how decoration becomes unframed or draws attention to the frame itself. It is therefore precisely in such cases that the question of how work, viewer and environment intersect and commingle becomes most acute – and most fertile.

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Illustrations



Figure 1: Painted Stair, Knole House, 1605-1608. Allegories of Smell and Taste in the background on west wall, adjacent to the Hall.

Landing with doors to Great Chamber and Brown Gallery on the right.

Source: Pinterest.



Figure 2: Painted Stair, Knebleton. View towards upper landing with panels of Virtues on the left (south wall; adjacent to Great Chamber) and Smell on the right.

Source: 123rf Stock Photos.



Figure 3: Painted Stair, Knole, Kent. View from upper landing into stairwell with Smell, Taste, Sight and Sound panels left to right.

Source: Town, "A House Re-Edified", fig. 61.



Figure 4: Painted Stair, Knole. View upwards in the stairwell (towards north wall, windows opening into Water Court), with glare from the windows.

Panel between windows on the left is Sight.

Source: Unknown.



Figure 5: Lower landing of the stair. Door to the Great Hall to the left. Panel of Old Age is in the shadows of the left-hand corner.

Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 6: Three of the Four Ages of Man, Painted Stair, Knole. Door to the Hall on the right.
Source: Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, fig. 361.



Figure 7: Painted Stair, Knele. Painted column seen in left foreground.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 8: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of heraldic leopards on the newel posts.
See also carved ornament of the arcade at the top, and door frames in the background.



Figure 9: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of newel post, including high-relief vegetal carving, and low-relief strapwork carving of the upper portion and stair rail.

Source: <https://jessicaminiermabe.wordpress.com/2013/12/21/photography-great-houses-3-knole/>



Figure 10: Painted Stair, Knole. View from Great Hall door.
Panel of Old Age to the left. See also the projection of the terms above arcade columns.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 11: Door from Great Chamber, Knole House, to the Painted Stair.
See details of strapwork carving in the doorframe.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 12: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of carved decoration of the lower landing arcade. See high relief term figure, strapwork spandrel decoration and carved roses in the frieze. Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 13: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of lower landing arcade with carved decoration.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 14: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of stair and illusionistic wall painting.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 15: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of wall painting including allegorical panel of Touch, adjacent to the upper landing (east wall). See also painted newel post overlapping the 'panel'.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 16: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of painted decoration on the east wall.
Panel of Touch on the extreme right.
Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 17: Painted Stair, Knole. Detail of the panel of Sight seen from the upper landing, with Taste to the left, obscured by the light from the windows.

Source: National Trust Images.



Figure 18: Houses in Saffron Walden and Lavenham showing timber-framed construction, including pargetting on the left.
Source: Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style*, 42-43.



Figure 19: Withdrawing Chamber, Knole House, 1605-8. Door to Cartoon Gallery on the left.
Source: Town, "A House Re-Edified", fig. 51.



Figure 20: Cartoon Gallery, Knole House, 1605-8. Original carved and painted panelling visible on the left hand (south) wall. From National Trust Images

PLAN OF THE HOUSE

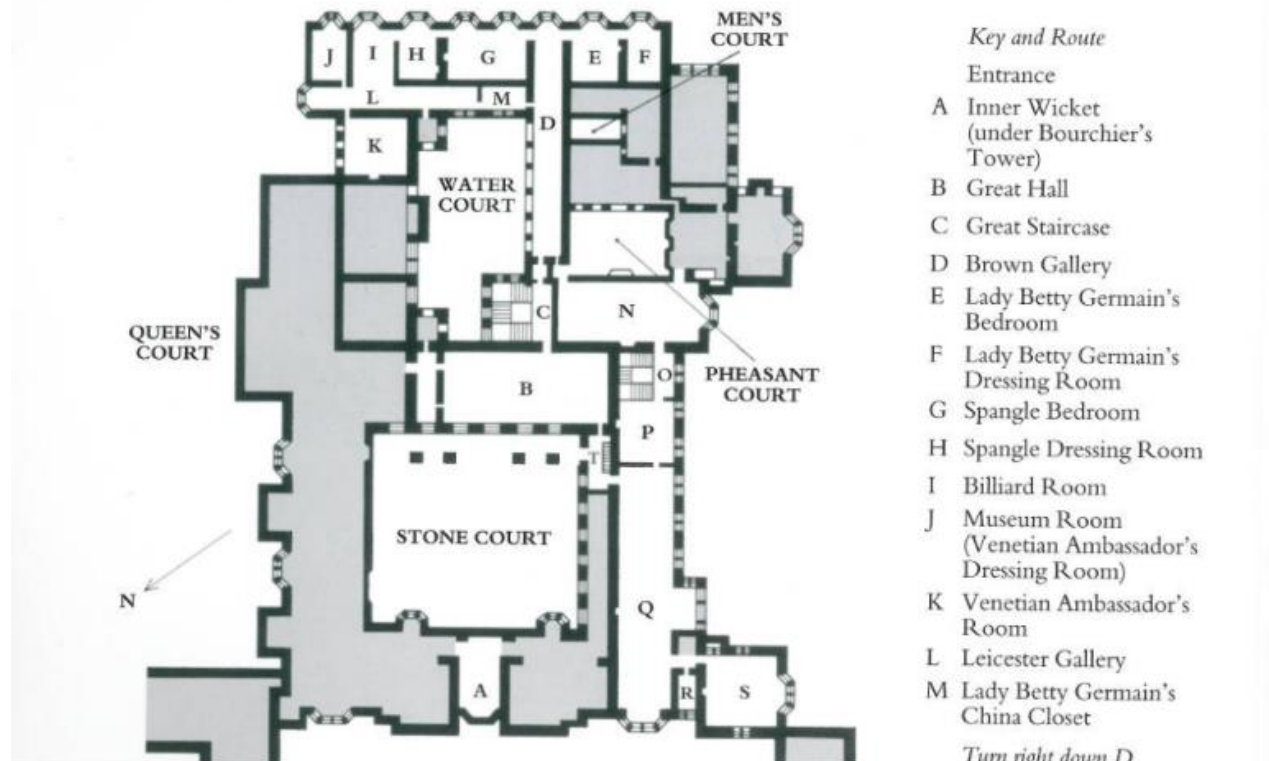


Figure 21: Plan of Knole House, Kent. Marked with the Great Hall (B), Painted Stair (C), Great Chamber (N), Withdrawing Room (P), Cartoon Gallery (Q).

Garden towards the south, to the right of the N-Q range.

Source: Robert Sackville-West, *Knole, Kent* (guidebook).



Figure 22: Painted Stair, Knole House, Kent, looking towards the north wall.
Panel of touch reduced to a gleam on the right. Source: Robert Sackville-West, *Knole, Kent* (guidebook).



Figure 23: Micco Spadaro, fictive tapestry in the Lay Brothers' Choir of the Certosa di San Martino, Naples, 1638-40. Fresco.

Third tapestry on the left, east wall, located opposite door to lay brothers' corridor.

Source: Sestier and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, 131.



Figure 24: View of the Lay Brothers' Choir at San Martino, looking towards Cosimo Fanzago's lavamano (completed by 1631), and wall adjoining the church.

Source: Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes*, plate. 78, p. 202.

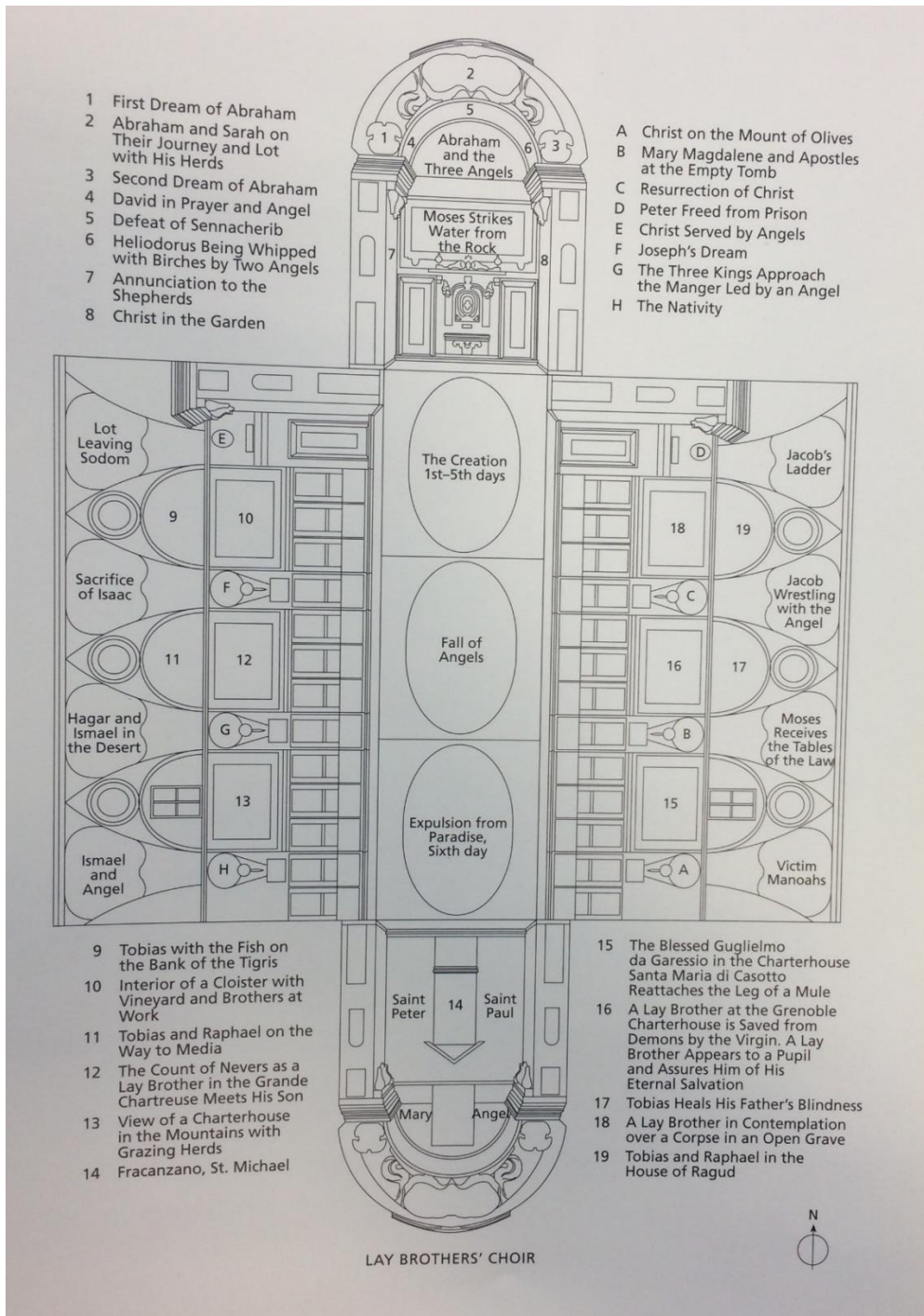


Figure 25: Schematic diagram of Micco Spadaro's decoration in the Lay Brothers' Choir.

A number of scenes are located incorrectly on this diagram.

Source Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes*, 195.

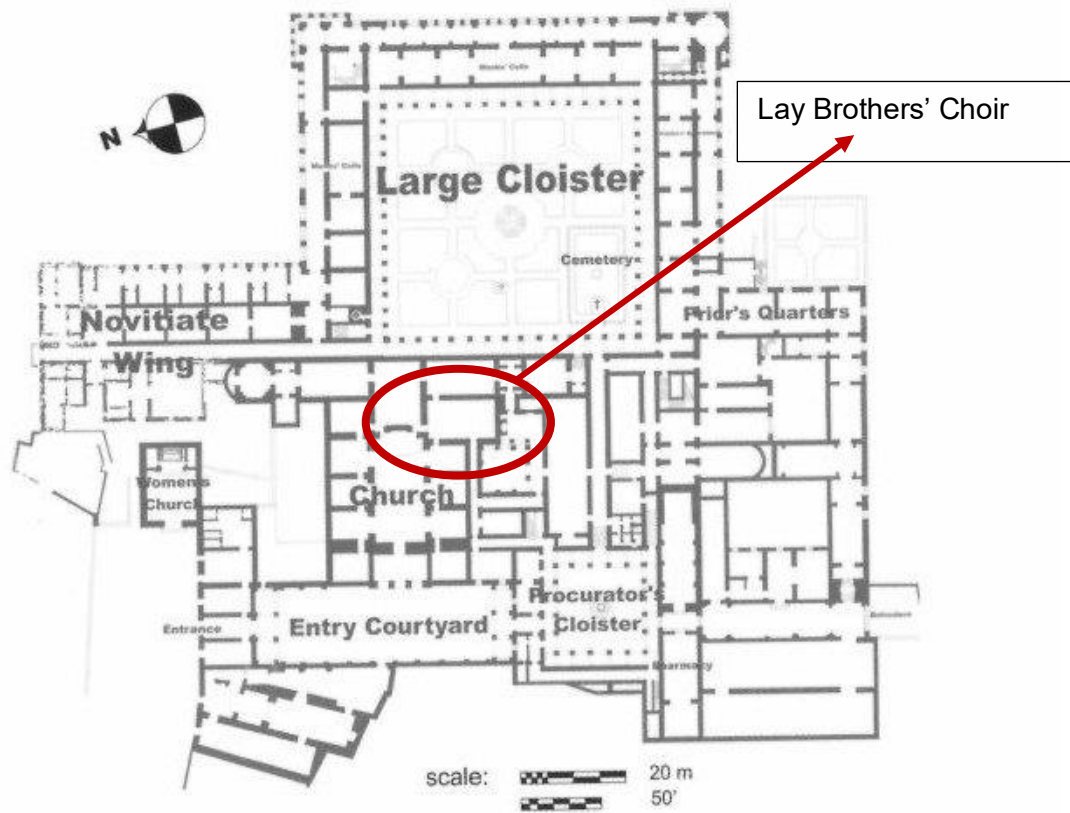


Figure 26: Plan of the Certosa di San Martino, Naples, with location of the Lay Brothers' Choir indicated.
Source: Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, p. 32, fig. 7.



Figure 27: Ceiling frescoes in the Lay Brothers' Choir, with the Fall of the Angels in the centre. The pictorial carpets are oriented towards someone standing by the lavamano, facing towards the altar. Source: author's own photo.

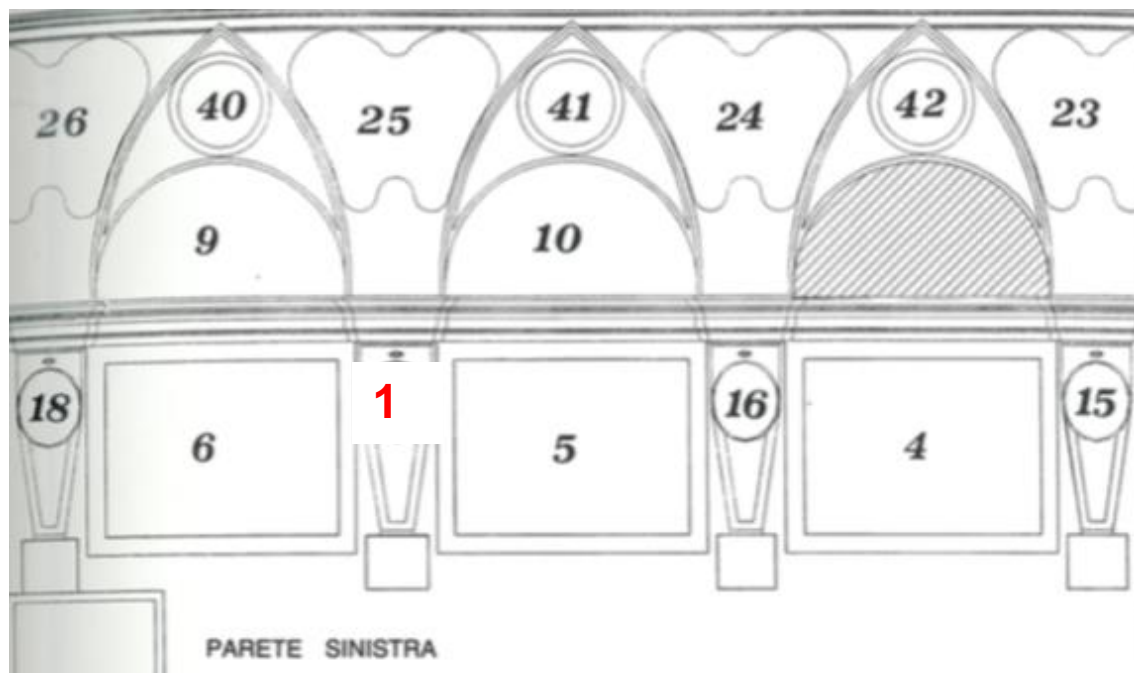
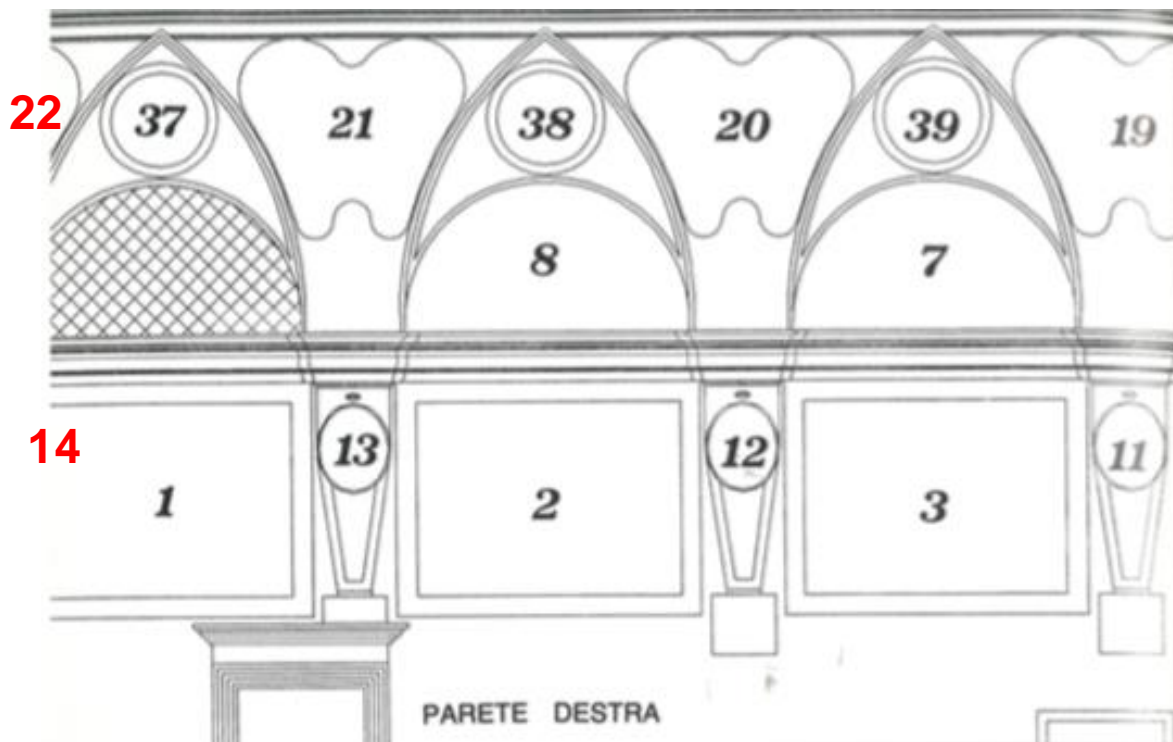


Figure 28: Diagrams showing the arrangement of compartments on the lateral walls of the Lay Brothers' Choir.
 Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, pp 124, 131



Figure 29: Fictive tapestry in the first register above the choir stalls, third on the right, west wall, depicting the Miracle of Guglielmo Garresio.

This tapestry is painted above the door leading to the Lay Brothers' corridor towards Refectory, Refectory (or Little) Cloister and Procurators' Cloister.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p124.



Figure 30: Fictive tapestry, first register above the choir stalls, middle tapestry on the right, west wall, depicting the Apparition of the Virgin to a Brother.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p125



Figure 31: Fictive tapestry, first register above the choir stalls, first on the right, west wall, showing a lay brother contemplating a human carcass.

This fresco is opposite the door from the Chapter House, and above a door leading to the south side chapels of the church. Fig. 9a below, showing west wall of Lay Brothers' Choir, tapestries in figs. 7-9 left to right. Door to lay brothers' corridor on the left, door to chapels on the right Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*; & own photo below





Figure 32: Fictive tapestry, first register above the choir stalls, first on the left, east wall adjoining Chapter House, with a vineyard scene and view onto a city.

Located above door to the Chapter House.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p132



Figure 33: Fictive tapestry, first register above the choir stalls, middle tapestry on the left, east wall, depicting The Story of the Count of Nevers.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p132.



Figure 34: Lunette above the fictive tapestries in the Lay Brothers' Choir, clerestory register, with a scene from the Story of Tobias, located above Figure 31.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p126.



Figure 35: Lunette, clerestory level, depicting Tobias at the House of Rachel, located above Figure 30.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p126



Figure 36: Lunette, clerestory register above fictive tapestries, showing Tobias Catching a Fish in the River Tigris. Located above Figure 32.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p133.



Figure 37: Lunette with a scene from the Story of Tobias, clerestory register, located above Figure 33.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p133.



Figure 38: Oval over fictive pilaster to the right of Figure 31, depicting St Peter Freed from Prison, Lay Brothers' Choir.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p127



Figure 39: Oval over fictive pilaster between Figure 30 and Figure 31, depicting Ascension of Christ.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p127.



Figure 40: Oval over fictive pilaster between Figure 29 and Figure 30, depicting Three Marys at the Tomb.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p127.



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Figure 41: Oval over fictive pilaster to the left of Figure 29, depicting Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p127.



Figure 42: Fictive pilaster to the right of Figure 23, depicting Nativity.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p134.



Figure 43: Oval over fictive pilaster between Figure 33 and Figure 23, depicting The Journey of the Three Kings. Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p134.



Figure 44: Oval over fictive pilaster between Figure 32 and Figure 33, depicting The Dream of Joseph.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p134.



Figure 45: Oval to the left of Figure 32, above door to the Chapter House, depicting Christ Dining with Angels.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p134.



Figure 46: Trapezoidal spandrel field on the curvature of the vault, first on the right, above Figure 38, depicting Jacob's Ladder. Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p128.



Figure 47: Vault spandrel, second on the right, above Figure 39, depicting deep landscape with Jacob and the Angel Wrestling in the foreground.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.128.



Figure 48: Vault spandrel, third on the right, above Figure 40, with small figures depicting the scene of Moses Receiving the Tablets on Mount Sinai.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.128.



Figure 49: Vault spandrel with trapezoidal compartment, fourth on the right (next to altar wall), located above Figure 41. Depicting a landscape with a sacrifice scene in the foreground (Manoah's Sacrifice at the Birth of Samson according to Raffaele Tufari).

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.128.



Figure 50: Vault spandrel compartment, fourth on the left (altar wall corner), above Figure 42.

Depicting a landscape with Hagar and angel in the foreground (Angel Showing Hagar a Well). Note the repetition of the compartment's outline in the grotesque mask below.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.135.



Figure 51: Vault spandrel, third on the left, depicting Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert with an Angel. Located above Figure 43. Note how the curling edges of the compartment become the hood of the grotesque mask below. Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.135.



Figure 52: Vault spandrel, second on the left, located above Figure 44.

Depicting a landscape with The Sacrifice of Isaac.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.136.



Figure 53: Vault spandrel, first on the left (church wall corner), depicting Lot Fleeing Sodom.
Located above Figure 45.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.136.



Figure 54: Putto with goldfinch in a painted oculus in the squinches of the vault, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.129.



Figure 55: Putto in oculus, vault squinch.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.129.



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Figure 56: Two putti in an oculus, vault squinch.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.129.



Figure 57: Putto climbing into an oculus, vault squinch above Figure 36.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.129.



Figure 58: Angel in oculus.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.137.



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Figure 59: Angel peering into an oculus, vault squinch, located above Figure 37.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.137.

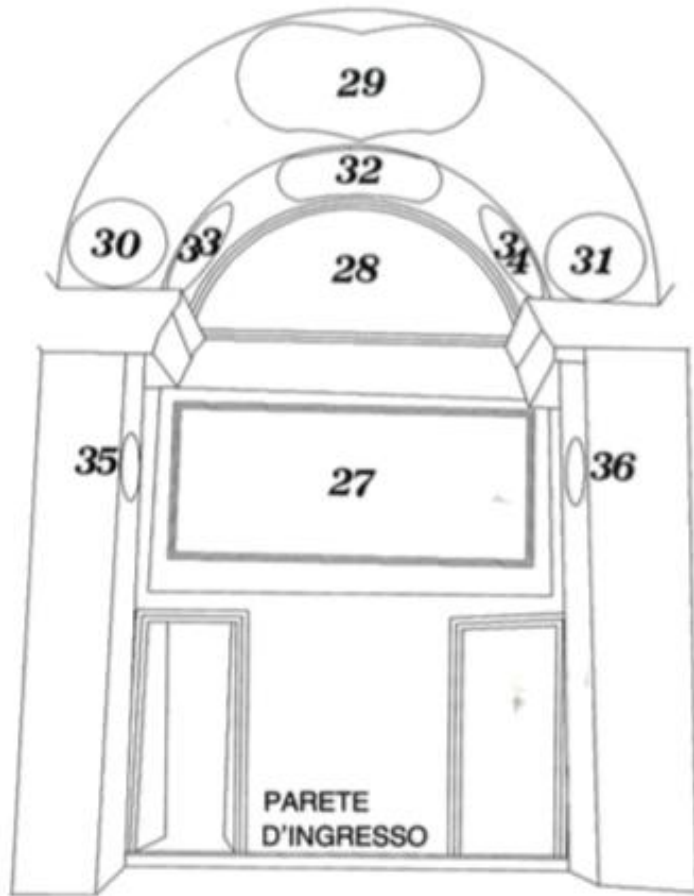


Figure 60: Diagram of the wall adjacent to the church, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino. Chapter house to the right.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.138.



Figure 61: Moses Producing Water from the Rock, fresco above lavamano on the wall adjacent to the church, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino.

Number 27 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.139.



Figure 62: Lunette in the upper register above the lavamano, wall adjoining church, depicting Abraham and Three Angels. Lay Brothers' Choir. Number 28 on diagram.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.139.



Figure 63: Compartment at the top of the arch adjoining the church, upper register above lavamano, depicting a landscape with The Journey of Abraham and Sarah.

Number 29 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.140.



Figure 64: Two oval compartments on the arch adjoining the church wall, depicting Lot and his Herds, and The Dream of Abraham.

Presented as two medallions or shields resting on the cornice. Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino. Numbers 30 and 31 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.140.



Figure 65: Compartment showing a scene of David and the Angel, underside of the arch adjoining the church, Lay Brothers' Choir.

Number 32 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.141.



Figure 66: Two scenes on the undersides of the arch adjoining the church, showing The Whipping of Heliodorus and The Defeat of Sennacherib.

Numbers 33 and 34 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.141.



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Figure 67: The Annunciation to the Shepherds and Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, inner sides of the arch piers, Lay Brothers' Choir.

Numbers 35 and 36 on diagram.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.142.

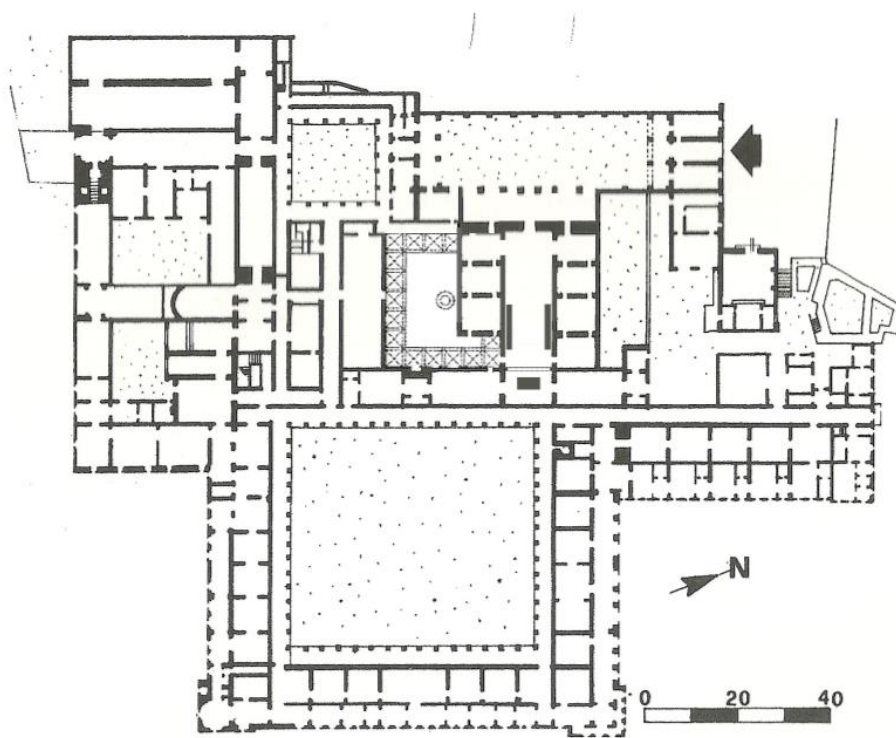


Figure 34. Reconstruction of the church of the Certosa di San Martino during Dom Saverio Turboli's priorate (plan by Andrea Dragani)

Figure 68: Reconstruction of the Certosa di San Martino church plan before the relocation of the monks' choir.
Source: Dragani, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p188; fig. 34.



Figure 69: View of the vault frescos, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 70: Detail of the vault fresco in the Lay Brothers' Choir.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 71: View of Sala 14, the 'prima galleria' of the Prior's Quarters, Certosa di San Martino. Painted by Micco Spadaro after 1642, fresco.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 72: Detail of a hermit in the corner of the Prior's Quarters vault fresco.
Illusionistic painted framework, with corbels, cornice and ribs to the right.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 73: Detail showing a hermit in the corner of the vault fresco.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 74: Detail of a hermit in vault fresco.
Source: author's own photo.



Figure 75: View of the monks' choir at the Certosa di Padula.

Door towards the lay brothers' choir visible in the background.

http://www.livesalerno.com/images/sightseeing/churches/certosadipadula/certosa_di_padula.jpg



Figure 76: Certosa di Padula, view towards the monks' choir from the entrance of the church.

http://museoguide.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/padula_certosa_di_san_lorenzo_INT_001.jpg



Figure 77: Certosa di Trisulti, view towards the monks' choir.

<https://media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/09/e1/af/b1/certosa-di-trisulti.jpg>



Figure 78: Micco Spadaro, Moses Producing Water from the Rock, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino. Set above Cosimo Fanzago's marble lavamano.

Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.139.



Figure 79: View of the wall adjoining the Chapter House, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino, showing the multiple levels of pictorial compartments in elevation.

Source: Roettgen, Italian Frescoes, plate 79, p.203.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 80: Vera et accurata descriptio situationis Magnae Cartusiae, 1630, engraved by Leonard Gaultier.
Figure 59a showing the fictive tapestry in Figure 23 for comparison.
Source: Bibliotheque nationale de France, GE DD-627 (99 RES).





Figure 81: Detail of the fictive tapestry showing the valley of the Grande Chartreuse.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.131.



Figure 82: Detail of the billowing fictive tapestry, Lay Brothers' Choir, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: Sestieri and Dapra, *Micco Spadaro*, p.131.



Figure 83: Great Chamber, Knole House, Kent (now known as the Ballroom), 1604-1608.

Window and door towards Withdrawing Room to the left of the chimneypiece; door to the Painted Stair out of shot to the right.

Source: National trust conservation team blog, <https://knoleconservationteam.wordpress.com/2012/07/20/focus-on-the-ballroom-part-one/>



Figure 84: Great Chamber, Knole, Kent. View towards the door leading to the Painted Stair.

Source: National trust conservation team blog <https://knoleconservationteam.wordpress.com/2012/07/20/focus-on-the-ballroom-part-one/>

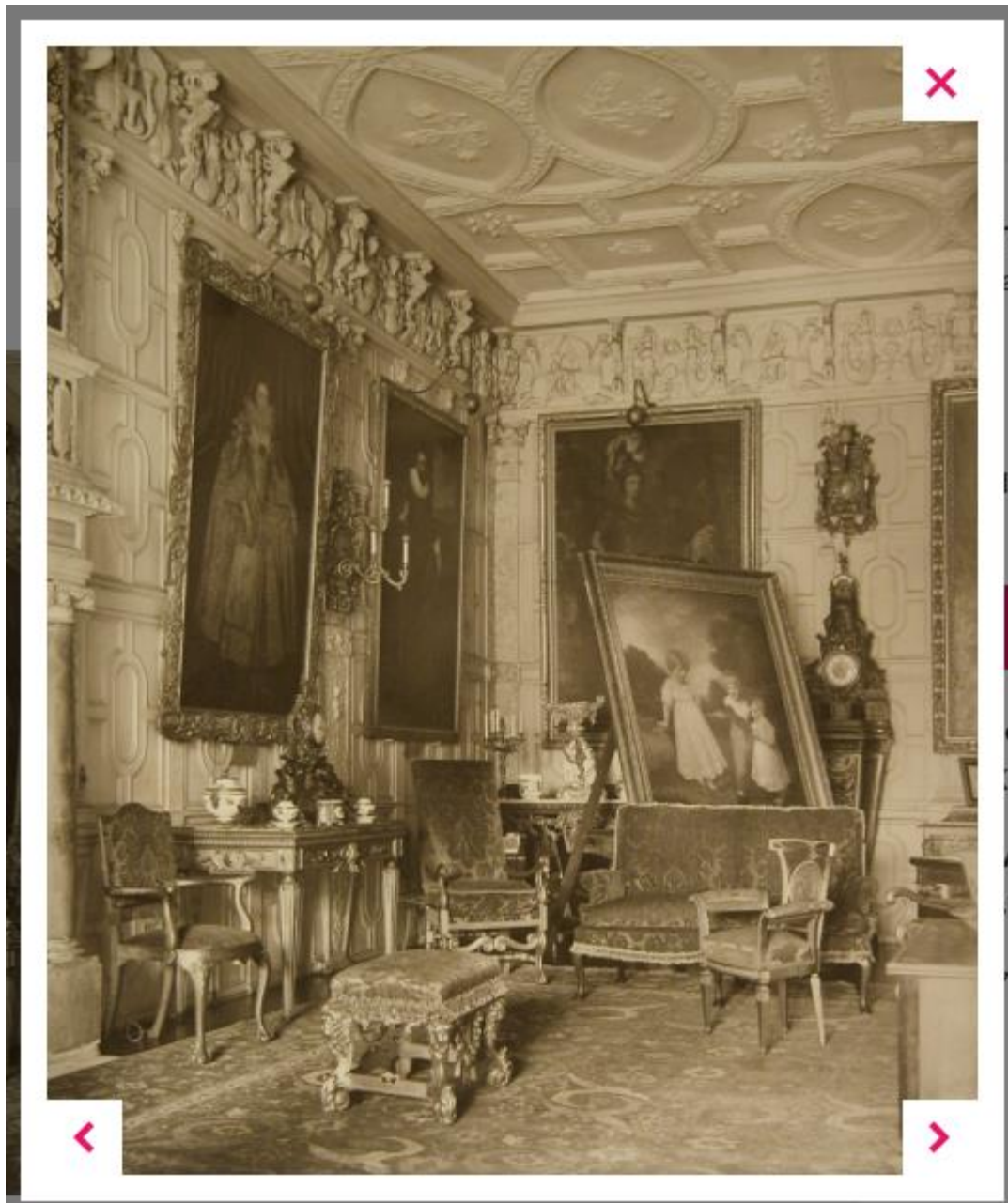


Figure 85: Photograph of the Great Chamber c. 1900. Top left of the figure shows the frieze in profile, demonstrating the powerful projection of the carved figures.
Source: National Trust Collections.



Figure 86: Two views of the Great Chamber, Knoles, showing effects of shadow and light on wainscot and frieze. The light from the single large window at the end of the room (to the right in these photographs) can create dramatic light effects. Shadows gather especially in the corners.

Source: Town, *A House Re-Edified*, p270, fig. 47 (above) and Corbis, via the Independent, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/witchmarks-to-protect-king-james-i-from-evil-found-at-knoles-9841094.html>





Figure 87: View of the wainscot in the Great Chamber, Knole, looking towards the door to the Painted Stair.
Source: <https://1rs84j3vm0ob2asu30vmou8p-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ballroom.-Credit-National-Trust-Images-James-Dobson.jpg>



Figure 88: Great Chamber, Knole, Kent. View of the wainscot on the wall opposite the chimneypiece.

The removal of the paintings hints at the effect of the panelling, subdivided by a main full-length pilaster order and smaller pilasters, posts and terms. Under the right-hand sconce, the high relief of the 'quartered' man and leopards is picked out by the light from the large window, see also Figure 94.

Source: National Trust, A year of change at Knole, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole/features/a-year-of-change-at-knole>



Figure 89: View of the Great Chamber, Knole, Kent.

Dramatic projection and shadows of the carved frieze visible at the top.

Source: Pinterest, <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/f6/47/c7/f647c7507f026084260cc3df22f7c355--english-manor-houses-england-houses.jpg> <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/544020829971352311/>



Figure 90: View of the Great Chamber, Knole, towards the second stairwell and Withdrawing Room beyond. When shut, the door is matched to the panelling of the Great Chamber.
Source: Inside Kent, <http://insidekentmagazine.co.uk/a-day-out-at-knole/>



Figure 91: Great Chamber, Knole, Kent. Carved marble fireplace, Cornelius Cure and workshop.
Source: National Trust Conservation Blog.



Figure 92: Detail of marble chimneypiece and the main pilaster order of the wainscot, Great Chamber, Knole.
Source: Robert Sackville-West, Knole, Kent, p60.



Figure 93: Detail of chimneypiece and wainscot in the Great Chamber, Knole.

Crouching satyr figure in the frieze top left; sea creatures and grotesque mask in the pilaster capital, bottom left; carved marble cartouches, fruit, flowers and baskets, right.

Source: Robert Sackville-West, *Knole, Kent*, p60.



Figure 94: Detail of 'quartered' man and leopards in the wainscot, Great Chamber, Knole.
See also Figure 88.

Source: Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 66, fig. 80.



Figure 95: Section of the frieze (a), Great Chamber, Knole, with details of mermen pair (b) and dragons (c).
Source: Knole Guidebook, p31 top; and Town, "A House Re-Edified", p282, figs. 71-72 (middle and bottom).



Figure 96: Detail of frieze at Knole, showing shackled satyr figure.



Figure 97: Detail of main pilaster order, Great Chamber wainscot, Knole, Kent.
Volutes are substituted by sea creatures and the rosette by a grotesque mask/sun badge. Another mask on the shaft of the pilaster below. Detail of Figure 92.



Figure 98: Great Chamber chimneypiece, Loseley Park, Surrey, c. 1565.

Source: Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, p152, fig. 165.

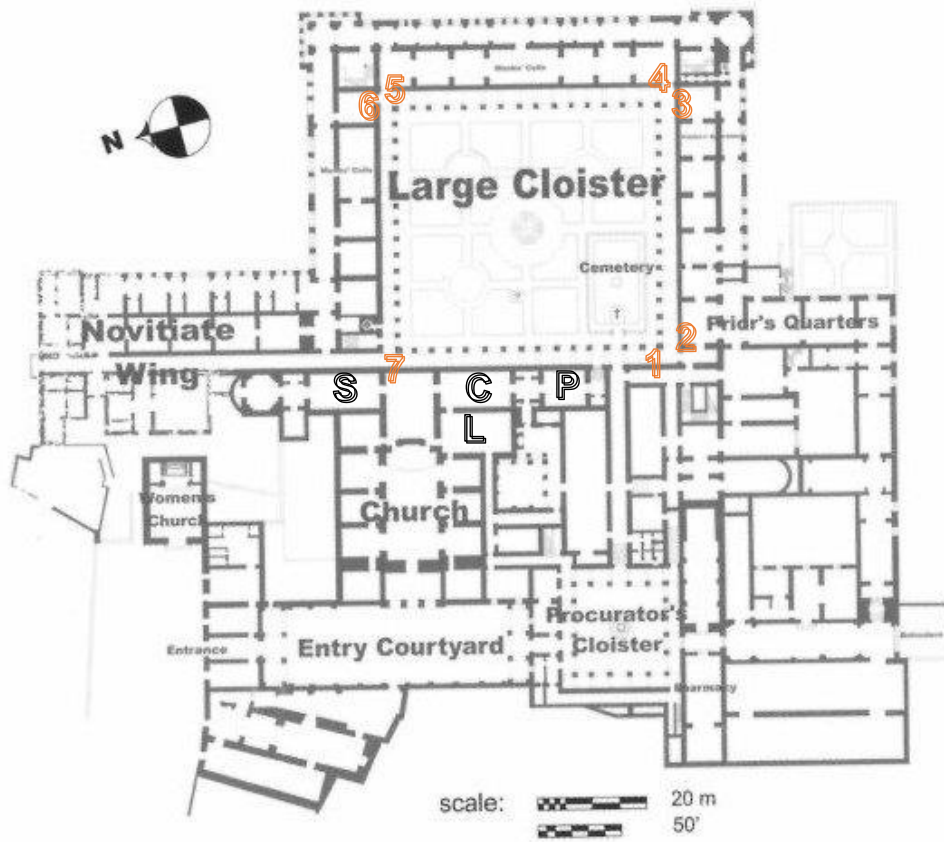


Figure 99: Plan of the Carthusian Monastery of San Martino after the renovation works of the late sixteenth century. 1 – St Anselm; 2 – Blessed Nicola Albergati; 3 – St Bruno; 4 – St Hugh; 5 – St Martin; 6 – Blessed Landuin; 7 – St Januarius; S – Sacristy; C – Chapter Room; P – Parlour; LB – Lay Brother’s Choir.
 Source: adapted from Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament*, p32, fig7.



Figure 100: View of the Great Cloister at San Martino.

Works in the cloister largely completed under the supervision of Cosimo Fanzago between 1623 and 1656.

In the background, the western run of the cloister arcade, with cemetery enclosure to the left and doors toward Procurators' Cloister (l) and Parlour (r) opposite the cemetery. Corner with doors to Prior's Quarters in the left corner of the arcade; the only unpaired doorway (with bust of St Januarius) to the right.

Source: Capri Travel Guide, Certosa di San Martino, Naples, <http://www.capritravelguide.com/en/certosa-san-martino-naples/>

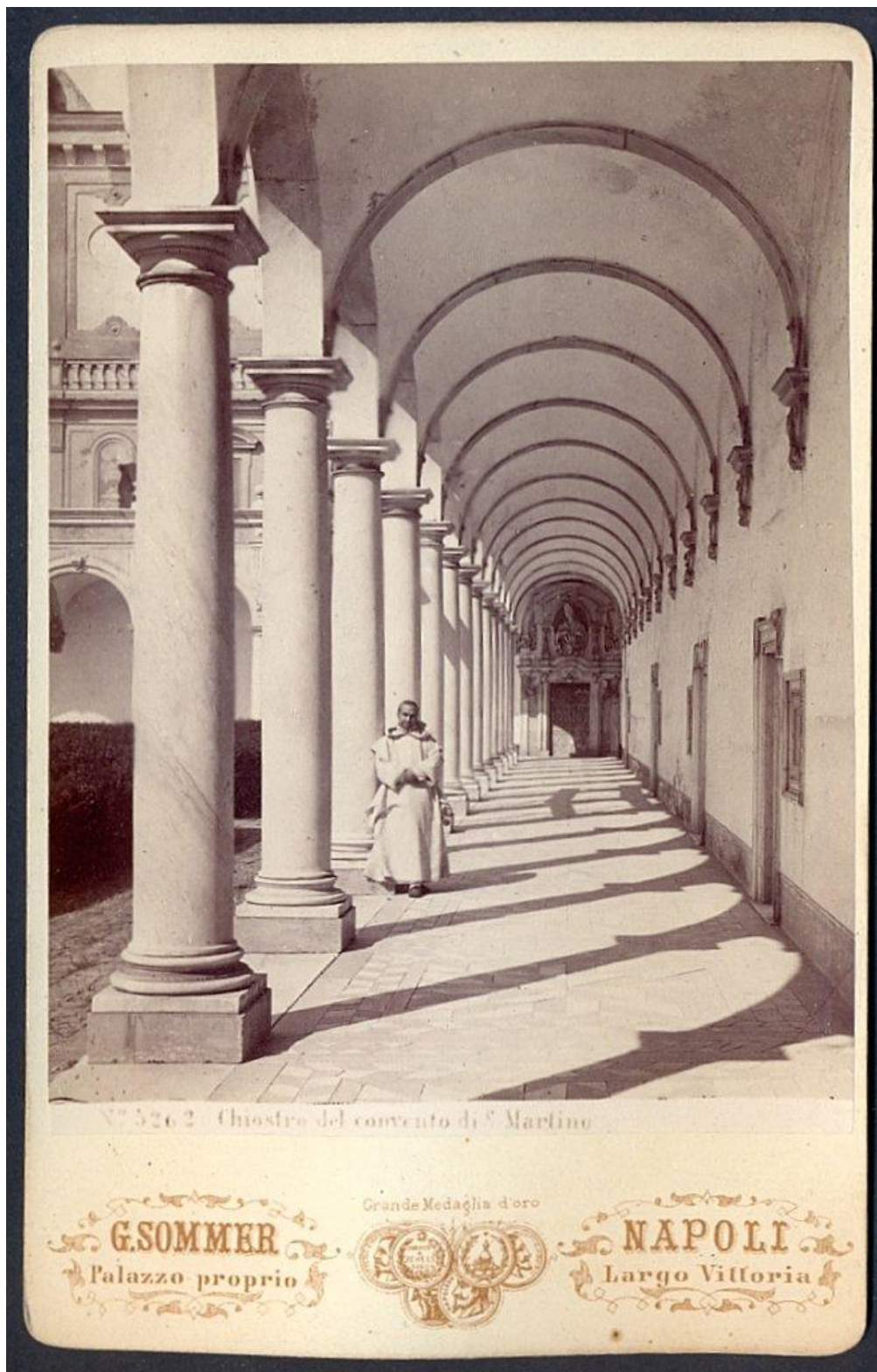


Figure 101: Giorgio Sommer, View of the cloister of San Martino, [mid-nineteenth century].

Door with bust of St Januarius in the background. Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sommer,_Giorgio_\(1834-1914\)_-_n._5262_Chiostro_del_convento_di_S._Martino.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sommer,_Giorgio_(1834-1914)_-_n._5262_Chiostro_del_convento_di_S._Martino.jpg)



Figure 102: View of the western walk of the Great Cloister arcade; corridor towards the Procurators' Cloister and Parlour on the left; passage of the novitiate in the background.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 103: Detail of the 'ornaments' of the Great Cloister at San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 104: View of the west cloister arcading in the Great Cloister, San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 105: Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino. Detail of individual cell door, with food hatch to the left.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 106: View of the Great Cloister at San Martino, with cemetery enclosure in the foreground. Openings to Parlour and Procurators' Cloister behind.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 107: Detail of the cemetery enclosure in the Great Cloister at San Martino, showing the elaborate forms of the balusters, and the vocabulary of ribbons and wreaths shared with Fanzago's corner doors.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 108: Detail of cemetery enclosure in the Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino, showing the decoration of balustrade with bone and skull motifs.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 109: Detail showing one of the skulls decorating the cemetery enclosure, Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino. Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 110: Detail showing the elaborate console of the responding arches of the Great Cloister walks, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 111: Detail of Cosimo Fanzago's 'ornaments' of the Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino, showing the flourish finishing the rib of the responding arches above the capital of the order.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 112: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of St Anselm. Door 1, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 113: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of Blessed Cardinal Nicola Albergati. Door 2, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 114: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of St Bruno. Door 3, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

This door is selected by Bernardo De Dominici for special praise in his *Vite*.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 115: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of St Hugh. Door 4, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 116: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of St Martin by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro, 1709-1718.

Door 5, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 117: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of Blessed Landuin. Door 6, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 118: Cosimo Fanzago, corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino, with bust of St Januarius by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro, 1709-1718.

Door 7, counter-clockwise from entrance to cloister.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 119: View of the Parlour in the Certosa di San Martino, decorated by Avanzino Nucci, 1596-7. Door towards cloister in the centre, with scene of the founding of the Carthusian order, and a Resurrection of Christ above. Note the heavy frames of the 'fold-out' corners showing Carthusian monks. Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 120: Parlour, Certosa di San Martino. Corner showing Denis of Ryckel and Ludolph of Saxony.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 121: Parlour, Certosa di San Martino. Corner showing Blesseds Petronius and Stephanus.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 122: Parlour, Certosa di San Martino. Corner showing Saints Hugh and Bruno.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 123: Parlour, Certosa di San Martino. Corner showing Blessed Cardinal Nicola Albergati and St. Anselm.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 124: The Granting of the Wilderness of Chartreuse to Bruno and his Companions, with a scene of the Dream of St Hugh of Grenoble. Parlour.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 125: Bruno and his companions before Pope Urban II. Parlour.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 126: St Bruno Appearing to Roger of Sicily. Parlour.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 127: Roger of Sicily coming across Bruno and his Companions. Parlour.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 128: Parlour, Resurrected Christ Appearing to the Apostles, flanked by Prophets.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 129: Parlour, Miracle of the Fishes, flanked by Prophets.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 130: Parlour, Miracle of the Fishes, flanked by Prophets.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 131: Parlour, Doubting Thomas, flanked by Prophets.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 132: Parlour, central vault panel of the Descent of the Holy Spirit.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 133: 'St Bruno' door (3), in the corner of the Great Cloister of San Martino.

Red selection shows the grey bardiglio 'ground' that separates the inner and outer armature of the door frame, creating a perspectival effect.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 134: 'St Bruno' door (3), in the corner of the Great Cloister of San Martino.
Red selection shows the central arrangement of the door surround.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 135: Detail of the corner door in the Great Cloister at San Martino.

The red selection shows the doubled cornice, 'pulled' in two different directions: the console of the first responding arch of the walkway (the moulded rib curving 'outward' towards the viewer's space), and the outer edge/arch of the door frontispiece, flat against the wall, curving towards the top left of the image.

Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 136: Corner door surround in the Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino, showing the space opened up in the entablature separating the two registers of the central, 'frame' arrangement.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 137: Certosa di San Martino, door 5 with bust of St Martin.
Note the more direct hand gesture and parted lips.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 138: Certosa di San Martino, door 7 in the Great Cloister, with bust of St Januarius.
Note the hand clasped to chest and parted lips showing greater degree of animation than the Fanzago busts.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 139: View of the Great Cloister arcade, the door with bust of St Martin (door 5) terminating the vista. The exuberant detail of the door is softened by shadow, presenting instead a more unified effect.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

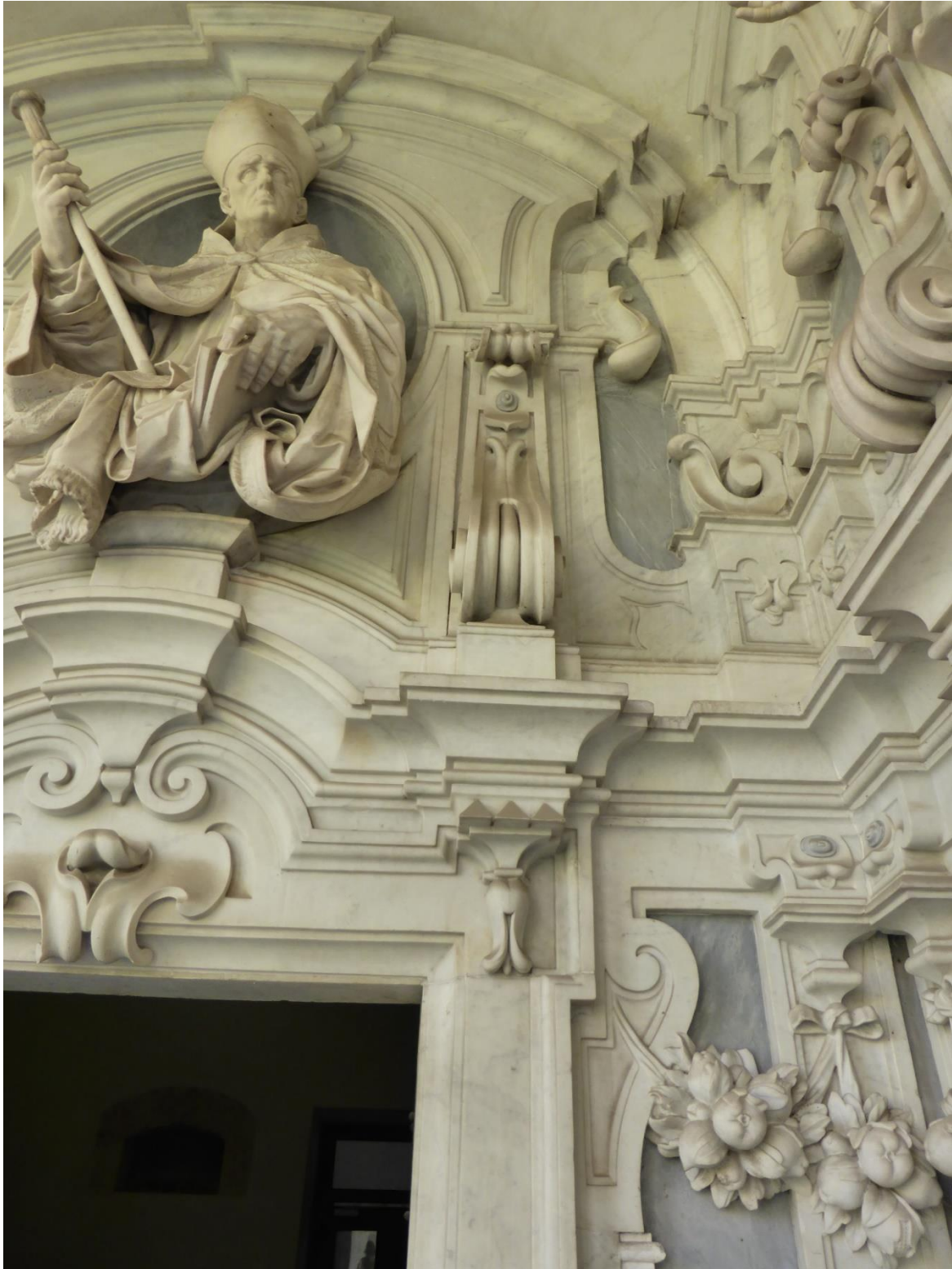


Figure 140: Detail of doors 3 and 4 (Sts Hugh and Bruno), Great Cloister at San Martino.
Note both the repetition of console, volute and curlicue motifs, as well as their doubling across the corner.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 141: Profile view of door 7 (bust of Saint Januarius) in the Great Cloister of San Martino. The sharp cutting and layering of the marble fortifies and thickens the corner. Note the door with bust of Nicola Albergati in terminating the arcaded vista in the background. Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 142: Detail of corner in the Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino, with 'twinned' corner pier and the busts of Blessed Nicola Albergati and St Anselm.

Source: Cartusialover Blog, Buone vacanze dal Chiostro Grande della Certosa di San Martino, <https://cartusialover.wordpress.com/2012/07/14/buone-vacanze-dal-chiostro-grande-della-certosa-di-san-martino/beato-nicola-albergati-e-santugo-cosimo-fanzago-south-west-corn/>



Figure 143: Corner of the cemetery enclosure in the Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino. The corner pier traces out a void. Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 144: 'St Bruno' door (3), in the corner of the Great Cloister of San Martino.

Red selection shows the outer framework of the doorway, tracing the shape of the arc that describes the arcade walks. Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 145: Detail of 'Blessed Nicola Albergati' door (2), Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 146: Detail of scroll in corner doorway, Great Cloister, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.

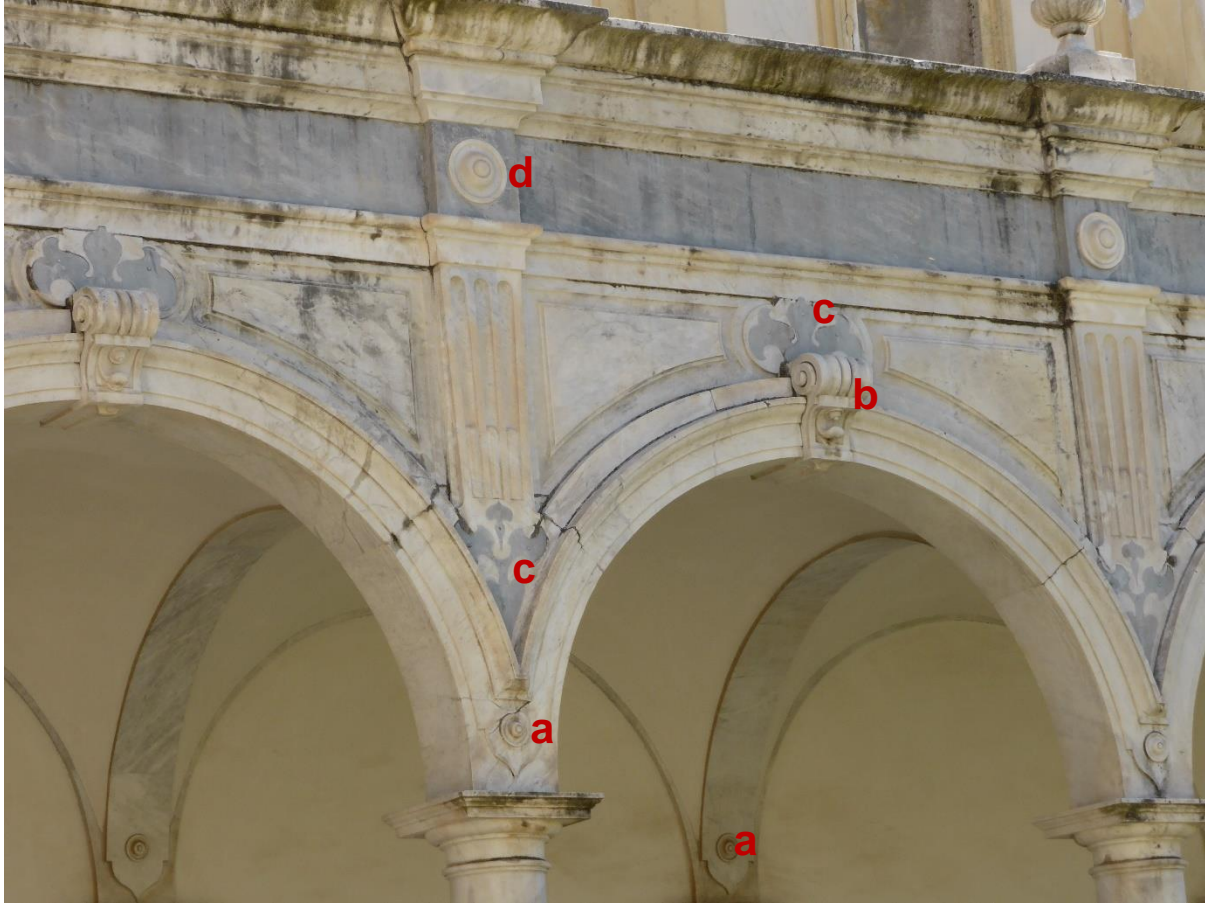


Figure 147: Detail of the Great Cloister arcade, Certosa di San Martino.

Showing pieces mentioned in the appraisal of 1631:
a – ‘borciette’; b – ‘mensole’; c – ‘fiori’; d – ‘borcie’.

Source: author’s own photograph.



Figure 148: Detail of marble ornament over door to the Old Treasury, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.



Figure 149: Detail of the facade of the church, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.





Figure 150: Doorway leading from the Great Cloister to the Parlour, Certosa di San Martino.
Source: author's own photograph.

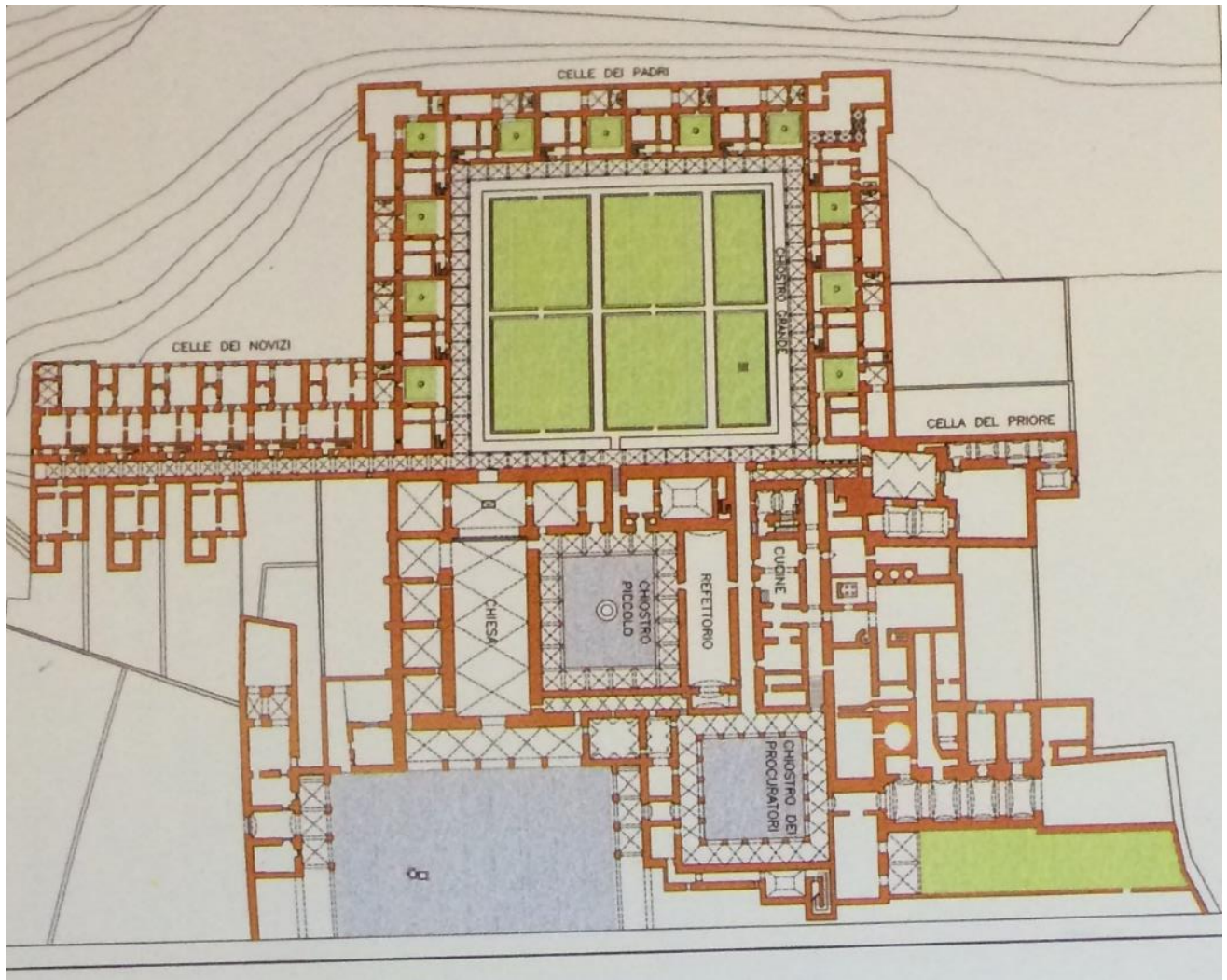


Figure 151: Reconstruction of the fourteenth-century plan of San Martino by Adele Pezzullo. See seventeenth-century plan from Napoli, *Ethics of Ornament* for comparison. Source: Pezzullo, "Rivisitando la Certosa", p40.

