
New Evidence for a Scribal-Nun's Art Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi at San Gaggio

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“Maria Ormani” has been considered so far the rare case of a fifteenth-century Italian nun who signed and painted a self-portrait in her breviary (Fig. 1). A white scroll inscribed “Ancilla Jhesu Christi Maria / Ormani filia / scripsit / MCCCCLIII”, meaning “handmaiden of Jesus Christ Maria / daughter of Ormanno / wrote this / 1453”, frames the nun’s image on the frontispiece of the *temporale*. Set against a bright checkered background, a half-length image of an Augustinian Hermit nun appears with hands folded in prayer. Her head tilts to the left and her face, set at a slightly three-quarter angle, peeps out from a voluminous black veil pinned over a white flax headcloth. Almond-shaped eyes looking to the right, a long narrow nose, small lips and a receding chin suggest an individual likeness. This portrait-signature has been celebrated as an icon in women’s history since the 1970s,

mentioned often in scholarly literature, but has not been investigated in its manuscript context.¹ The codex is catalogued as a Tuscan breviary for Augustinian Hermit use, but the nun’s family or convent name and location has never been found.² Scholars have attempted without success to trace “Ormani” as a surname or patronymic in Florentine records.³ The current description as a Sieneese nun from an unknown Florentine convent, who may have been related to the Sieneese bronze-worker and painter Antonio di Giacomo Ormani and whose miniatures resemble the style of Sano di Pietro, dates from the nineteenth century.⁴

This essay presents recently discovered archival evidence demonstrating that “Maria Ormani” was Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi, an Augustinian Hermit nun at Santa Caterina al Monte (known as San Gaggio) outside Porta Romana, Florence.

¹ Karen Petersen/J. J. Wilson, *Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, New York 1976, pp. 11f.; Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, New York 1979, pp. 161–163; Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, London 2002 (1990), p. 68; Catherine King, “Portrait of the Artist as a Woman”, in: *Gender and Art*, ed. by Gill Perry, New Haven et al. 1999, pp. 37–60: 37–40; Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women’s Self-Portraits*, New York 1998, p. 38; Liana De Girolami Cheney/Alicia Craig Faxon/Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-Portraits by Women Painters*, Ashgate 2000, pp. 31f.

² Michael Denis, *Codices manuscripti theologici Bibliothecae palatinae vindobonensis latini aliarumque occidentis linguarum*, Vienna 1792–1802, I, cols. 3083–3085; *Tabulae codicum manu scriptorum praeter graecos et orientales in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi asservatorum*, Graz 1965 (reprint of the ed. Vienna 1864–1899), I, p. 301b; Julius Hermann Hermann, *Die Handschriften und Inkunabeln der italienischen Renaissance* (Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der illuminierten Handschriften in Österreich, VIII.6), Leipzig 1930–1933, III, pp. 11–17; Franz Unterkircher, *Inventar der illuminierten Handschriften, Inkunabeln und Frühdrucke der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Vienna 1957, I.2, p. 56; Adolar Zumkeller, *Ma-*

nuskripte von Werken der Autoren des Augustiner-Eremitenordens in mitteleuropäischen Bibliotheken, Würzburg 1966, p. 759; Franz Unterkircher, *Die datierten Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek von 1451 bis 1500*, Vienna 1974, I, pp. 32f.; Emma Condello/Giuseppe Gregorio, *Scribi e colofoni: le sottoscrizioni di copisti dalle origini all’avvento della stampa*, Spoleto 1995, p. 262; Sigrid Krämer, *Scriptores codicum medii aevi: Datenbank von Schreibern mittelalterlicher Handschriften*, Augsburg 2003 (cd-rom). The codex measures 125 × 176 mm.

³ In an earlier contribution, I have proposed that Maria was descended from the Florentine Ormani family mentioned in Dante’s “Paradiso”, Canto XVI; see Kathleen G. Arthur, “Maria Ormani: Fashioning a Noble Image for an Augustinian Hermit Nun”, in: *Southeastern College Art Conference Review*, XVI (2005), p. 516. Melissa Moreton, “Pious Voices: Nun-Scribes and the Language of Colophons in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy”, in: *Essays in Medieval Studies*, XXIX (2014), pp. 43–73, esp. pp. 57f., p. 71, note 39, observes that Maria identified with her family rather than her order. I wish to thank Melissa Moreton for discussing the question and sharing photographs of the manuscript.

⁴ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. by Gaetano Milanesi, Florence 1878–1885, III, p. 518, note I.

The breviary's provenance was located by an electronic search for colophons that included the uncommon phrase, "Qui legentium orationes pro merito caritatis expostulat".⁵ Two other manuscripts with the same wording in the colophon are extant and can be located by ownership inscriptions: the manuscript of the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome (Vitt. Em. 856), is dated 1453 and inscribed both "Iste liber est monialium sancte Katherine de Monte" and "Questo Libro è delle monache di Santa Caterina Monte detto San Gaggio".⁶ The *Liber moralium* of Saint Gregory in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (Mscr. Dresd. OB.5) is dated 22 September 1460 and inscribed "Questo libro è delle monache di Santa Caterina Monte detto San Gaggio".⁷ After this probable origin had been determined, a search through *catasto* records of the Florentine *vescovado*, which reported on Santa Caterina al Monte, reveals a "Suora Maria d'Ormanno degli Albizzi" living there as a novice in 1438.⁸ An investigation of the archival records from San Gaggio sheds new light on the nuns' scribal activities, the process of manuscript production, and their relationship with the friars of Santo Spirito. The style of frontispiece, illuminated initials, and the breviary's pristine condition suggests it was gifted to someone in northern Italy and decorated by professional artists there.

Once Maria's surname is known, her life as a member of the elite Florentine Albizzi family can be reconstructed. Ormanno lived with his father Rinaldo degli Albizzi, whose tax return reported fourteen *bocche* in his household in 1428, including "Maria figliola d'Ormanno nata a dì 27 aprile 1428".⁹ This provides her

birth date and verifies her identity as a daughter of Ormanno di Rinaldo degli Albizzi (1398–ca. 1460), who had married Leonarda Frescobaldi in 1420 and had five children.¹⁰ Maria's grandfather Rinaldo degli Albizzi was head of the conservative Guelph oligarchy and responsible for exiling the Medici in 1433.¹¹ Both he and his son were exiled when the Medici returned in 1434. Maria lived through the turmoil of their condemnation, departure, and confiscation of family properties. While the men attempted to regain their status through alliance with the Visconti, her mother fled to the Gonzaga court in Mantua and afterwards resettled in Gaeta at the court of Alfonso of Aragon. By 1440 eight Albizzi relatives had been declared traitors and several were painted on the Bargello wall in *pittura d'infamia* by Andrea del Castagno.¹² In 1455 and 1457 hopes were raised that Maria's family could return to Florence after Alfonso of Aragon wrote twice to Cosimo de' Medici pleading for Ormanno's pardon, but Cosimo refused.

Maria did not accompany her family into exile, but became a novice at San Gaggio on 20 November 1438, with her dowry paid through the Florentine Comune.¹³ This convent offered family connections, an aristocratic community, and a fine library.¹⁴ Tracing Albizzi surnames through convent records, we find that her aunt Felice had entered in 1424, taking the name Suor Caterina Maria; Francesca di Piero degli Albizzi followed in 1432 and became abbess in 1435.¹⁵ Her exquisite handwriting appears in a convent *giornale* from 1438 to 1441, and she may have taught Maria d'Ormanno to write in a beautiful scribal hand.¹⁶ Scribal work and education at San Gaggio was facilitated by an extraordinary library bequeathed to the convent in 1406 by Cardinal

⁵ The whole colophon is "Qui scripsit scribat / et semper cum domino vivat / qui legentium orationes pro merito caritatis expostulat" (*Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVI^e siècle*, Fribourg 1976, IV, p. 469).

⁶ See http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac_SchedaScheda.php?ID=67839 (accessed 1 February 2014).

⁷ See <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/103577/1/> (accessed 26 June 2017); *Katalog der Handschriften der Königl. Öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Dresden*, III, ed. by Ludwig Schmidt, Dresden 1982 (first ed. Leipzig 1906), pp. 74f.

⁸ ASF, Catasto, 602 (1438), fol. 244v. This lists 22 professed nuns, eight novices, ten *converse*, and four other residents.

⁹ ASF, Catasto, microfilm, I49.80 (1428), fol. 122v.

¹⁰ Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri in Italia*, Milan 1876, Pl. XVI. He lists "Maria monaca in San Gaggio nel 1458".

¹¹ On Rinaldo degli Albizzi see Arnaldo D'Addario, s.v. Albizzi, Rinaldo, in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, II, Rome 1960, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rinaldo-albizzi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rinaldo-albizzi_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed 2 January 2015).

¹² See Cesare Guasti, *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il Comune di Firenze*, I: *Dal 1399 al 1433*, Florence 1867, p. 669; Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution During the Florentine Renaissance*, Ithaca 1985, pp. 100–102. Edgerton claims that the defaming portraits were so potent that Rinaldo degli Albizzi never challenged Florence again. In fact, Rinaldo and Ormanno went to Milan to join Filippo Maria Visconti and fought on the losing side in the Battle of Anghiari in 1440.

¹³ ASF, CRSGF, 234.79, fol. 20v: "Suor Maria d'Ormanno [...]. Chomune di Firenze de' dare fiorini ottanta a dì per la dota della Maria figliuola di Ormanno di messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi da Firenze / e' quali lui pose sul monte della fanciulla insino dall'ano [...] a dì [...] di [...] e perché la detta Maria fu ricevuta per monacha per farsi al nostro munistero insino dal 20 novembre dal'anno 1438 pro quando avrà fatta professione dobbiamo avere questi fiorini ottanta da' lloro ab mano perché chosì fu predetti per gli opportuni chonsigli di detto chomune insino a dì 6 di giugno 1437 de detto deposito di fiorini 80 è scritto al libro de' depositi delle fanciulle a c. 123."

¹⁴ On San Gaggio see Domenico Moreni, *Notizie istoriche dei contorni di Firenze*, II: *Dalla Porta Romana fino alla Certosa*, Florence 1792, p. 87; Osanna Fantozzi Micali/Franco Lombardi/Piero Roselli, *Il Monastero di San Gaggio a Firenze*, Florence 1966; Sharon T. Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore 2009, pp. 126–131.

¹⁵ ASF, Catasto, 602 (1438), *Vescovado di Firenze*, fol. 244v: "suora Francesca di Piero degli Albizzi badessa [...]; suora Chaterina di messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi [...]; suora Maria d'Ormanno degli Albizzi". See also Georges Dumon, *Les Albizzi: histoire et généalogie d'une famille à Florence et en Provence du onzième siècle à nos jours*, Amiens 1977, p. 149: "religieuse à San Gaggio sous le nom de sœur Caterina Maria".

¹⁶ ASF, CRSGF, 234.I, *Giornali I*, fol. Ir. Francesca di Piero di Luca degli Albizzi was the widow of Bonaccorso di Neri di Bonaccorso Pitti (1354–1432).



1 Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi (?), portrait-signature in her breviary. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1923, fol. 89r, detail

Pietro Corsini.¹⁷ The inventory lists 132 religious texts, including the letters of Saints Paul, Jerome, and Bernardo, the homilies of Saint John Chrysostom, the sermons of Innocent III, Clement VI, writings by Peter Damian and Jacobus de Voragine, and doctrinal works by Saints Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. There were decorated missals, breviaries, and bibles that provided models for copy work, as well as grammar books and dictionaries for the nuns' education. Maria lived in this elite cultural environment with daughters of patrician families including the Medici, Orsini, and Rinuccini until sometime before 1471 when she disappeared from lists of convent residents.¹⁸ Her brother Rinaldo di Ormanno degli Albizzi bequeathed money to San Gaggio in 1477, which suggests that some Albizzi connections still remained.¹⁹ As

a matter of fact, Maria's cousin Domitilla di Marco degli Albizzi followed Maria as a novice in 1447, was still living in the convent in 1472, and eventually became prioress; she acquired her own illuminated breviary in 1481/82.²⁰

New data on Maria d'Ormanno and other nuns' scribal activities is found in San Gaggio registers. Mirella Levi D'Ancona used some of these volumes, but focused on professional male miniaturists and omitted many references to the process of manuscript production in convents.²¹ For example, in 1437 the nuns purchased vellum from *cartolaio* Agnolo d'Antonio Tucci to begin Suor Andreda Rinuccini's breviary.²² They organized the stages of production and fronted expenses, which were reimbursed by Andreda's brother Giovanni di Simone Rinuccini. The breviary

¹⁷ Giovanna Rasario, "Il Graduale di Pietro Corsini: riflessi della cultura avignonese", in: *Miniatura del '400 a San Marco: dalle suggestioni avignonesi all'ambiente dell'Angelico*, ed. by *eadem*/Magnolia Scudieri, Florence 2003, pp. 232–238.

¹⁸ ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, I0084, fol. 181r–v (1471), fol. 292v (1472).

¹⁹ ASF, CRSGF, 234.35, fol. 46r (1477): "Da ser Rinaldo d'Ormano degli Albizi e per lui dai frati di Bad[i]a a d[i] 13 ottobre fiorini cinque larghe quali de' decto ser Rinaldo lassò alla morte ... al munistero nostro per elemosina e per l'anima sua."

²⁰ ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, I0084, fol. 292v (1477). See also CRSGF, 243.39 (1476–1496): a certain Andrea dallo Xandria in Santo Spirito mentioned as their confessor (fol. 66v) was paid in 1481 for miniatures (fol. 58v) and clasps ("per ha fatto e' fibiali per il breviario di priora Domitilla", fol. 64r) in 1482. Domitilla herself may have copied the breviary, which was then illuminated and bound under the supervision of the friars of Santo Spirito.

²¹ Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *Miniatura e miniatori a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo: documenti per la storia della miniatura*, Florence 1962, p. 8 (Andrea da Fi-

renze), pp. 58f. (Battista di Biagio Sanguigni), p. 73 (Berto di ser Marco), p. 87 (Domenico Cavelli), pp. 264f. (Francesco di Benedetto and Zanobi di Benedetto Strozzi), p. 376 (Archivio Santa Caterina in San Gaggio). For the extant San Gaggio antiphonaries illuminated by Battista di Biagio Sanguigni (Florence, Museo di San Marco, Ms. 10073 and Ms. 10074) see Magnolia Scudieri, "Sanguigni, Beato Angelico, Zanobi Strozzi: attività parallele o intersecanti?", in: *Miniatura del '400* (note 17), pp. 33–43; Angela Dillon Bussi, "Battista miniatore", *ibidem*, pp. 44–51; Lawrence Kanter, "Battista di Biagio Sanguigni and Zanobi Strozzi", in: *idem*/Pia Palladino, *Fra Angelico*, exh. cat. New York 2005/06, New York 2005, pp. 226–230.

²² ASF, CRSGF, 234.77, fol. 66v, shows four payments in the years 1437–1439 to "Agnolo d'Antonio Tucci e compagni cartolaii" for a breviary given to Suor Andreda by her brother ("gli fece fare Giovanni di Simone Renuccini per suora Andreda [*sic*] sua sirochia per il breviario di lei"). This is omitted in Levi D'Ancona (note 21), pp. 1–4. Suor Andreda Rinuccini was a senior member of the community according to the 1438 *catasto* (ASF, *Catasto*, no. 602 [1438], fol. 244v).

took a decade to be written, illuminated, bound in wood, and provided with a pair of silver clasps in 1448.²³ During this time, among other items, the nuns copied several “small books for women”, likely small books of hours.²⁴ In May 1449 the first record of Maria d’Ormanno’s scribal work appears: she was copying Bartolomeo da San Concordio’s *Summa de casibus conscientiae*, known in the vernacular as *La Summa Pisanella*, for the cleric Antonio di Paolo di Valdambra.²⁵ Maria began her breviary ca. 1450, but the convent register that covered this period was damaged in the flood of 1966.²⁶ In 1450 the nuns purchased new locks for the desks of “Suor Magdalena e Suor Maria”.²⁷ As stated above, the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine now in Rome were completed in 1453, the same year as Maria’s breviary, while the *Liber Moralium* now in Dresden were completed a few years later, in 1460. Suor Giovanna (Lena di Bernardo d’Alamanno de’ Medici), a fellow nun who had entered San Gaggio in 1431, wrote her breviary in the 1450s and it was illuminated by “Andrea di . . . [Paolo di Giovanni da Firenze] miniatore” in 1457.²⁸

The close relationship between the San Gaggio scriptorium and the Augustinian friars at Santo Spirito is shown by a set of transactions in convent *Debitori-Creditori* accounts dating from 1448 to 1452, published in the appendix. As we are told by a nun writing in the first person, the nuns’ procurator, Friar Francesco d’Antonio of Santo Spirito, asked her to copy choral books for their Augustinian sisters at the new convent of Santa Monaca:

Master Francesco, prior of Santo Spirito on . . . June 1448 gave me to write a book in big letters, larger than those in psalters, for the women of Santa Monica, in which he wishes me to write only the antiphonies, chanted responses, and versicles beginning with Advent continuing from time to time the whole breviary,

²³ ASF, CRSGF, 234.2, *Giornali 2* (1441–1451), fol. 45v (1448): “[...] alle spese del munistero a di 6 novembre grossi dodici d’ariento per un paio di fibiali d’ariento per lo breviario di suora Andreea pagai a Bartolo di messer horafo in Mercato Nuovo.” Other references in this volume include purchases of vellum for a missal (fol. 9r, 10r), of two *temporales* (fol. 15r), of red leather for book covers (fol. 42r), payment to a *cartolaio* for a psalter for a novice (fol. 43r), payment to a friar for writing a psalter for Suor Lisabetta Gianfigliuzzi in 1447 (fol. 43r). This shows the nuns both purchased and wrote their own copies of office books.

²⁴ ASF, CRSGF, 234.1, *Giornali 1* (1438–1441), fol. 3r (1438): “Da Simone d’Antonio Chanigiani a di 7 d’aprile fiorini 7 per un libriciuolo di donna si scrisse diretto nel munistero rechò suora Brigida a madonna”; *ibidem*, fol. 49r: “per la cavretta per suor Brigida Griffoni”; *ibidem*, fol. 86r: “alle spese delle sore a di 25 per una pellicina caveretto [li]sciato per libricciuoli delle donne.” A *libricciuolo* was often a synonym for *uffiziuolo* and contained the little offices of the Virgin, the Seven Psalms, and other prayers. See *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Venezia 1612, p. 485.

²⁵ See the entries under 10 May, an unspecified day in June, and 21 August 1449 in the document published in the appendix, p. 278. Bartolomeo’s *Summa de casibus conscientiae* was translated into Italian ca. 1390. An example is

which he wants for the said women of Santa Monica to keep on the lectern in the choir because they only have one breviary and so that each of them can see and read from this from afar.²⁹

The nun further states that on 9 July 1448 she received supplies to write the codices from Michele *cartolaio* and that she would record every subsequent withdrawal of quires. After a first large group of 10 *quinterni*, she generally took two *quinterni* at once in intervals from two weeks to two months, except in September 1449, when she withdrew 8 *quinterni*, and in July 1451, when she took 6 *quinterni*. In April 1452 a second *cartolaio* named Bartolomeo appears, from whom she received the last quire on 5 May 1452; by 27 May 1452 she had completed the work and recorded it in the *debitori* section on fol. 138v.³⁰

The final accounting found on this page summarizes the total cost of the choral books for Santa Monaca. In the first volume the cost of writing (“scriptura”) of 33 quires was 54 *lire* and 9 *soldi*; the second volume consisting of 35 *quinterni* cost 57 *lire* and 15 *soldi*. While Bartolomeo *cartoraio* apparently had the first volume illuminated and bound (“fecelo miniare et legare liii a Bartolomeo cartoraio”), the second volume was completed in San Gaggio. The nun was paid for 20 large letters in red and blue penwork (“per la miniatura di questi 35 nei quali o fatte 20 lettere grandi di cinabro et d’azurre tutte di penna”), 810 medium-size letters, and 302 smaller letters. The listing continues with the cost of the binding, red leather for the cover, and metal clasps. The accounting shows that the nun executed larger letters in red and blue ink as well as smaller letters. It is noteworthy that the term “miniatura” is used although it refers to penwork initials. There is no evidence that she painted full-color initials, but the calligraphic initials may have had curvilinear designs or faces and animals intertwined with

Beinecke Ms. 759, Yale University, New Haven; see <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3817069> (accessed 18 February 2016).

²⁶ ASF, CRSGF, 234.34, *Entrata e Uscita* (1435–1456); the volume – not used by Levi D’Ancona (note 21), p. 379 – was restored but the ink had washed out. The text is almost impossible to read even with ultraviolet light except for scattered pages, e.g. fol. 48v–57r, 67v, 73v (payment to Francesco di Neri *cartolaio*); fol. 105r–171v (1450f.) contain some references to *speciali* and weaving.

²⁷ ASF, CRSGF, 234.2, *Giornali 2*, fol. 47r: “alle spese di sopradetto per un [sic] chiavicina nuova per lo scrittoio di suor Magdalena per tutto soldi xx –; alle spese del munistero per una chiavicina per lo scrittoio di suor Maria.”

²⁸ ASF, CRSGF, 234.79, *Debitori e Creditori* (1435–1560), fol. 4v: “Giovanni d’Alamanno de’ Medici di Firenze insino a di 19 marzo dell’anno 1431 per Lena sua figliuola che oggi si è detta suora Giovanna – pagato 150 fiorini dota.” ASF, CRSGF, 234.35, *Entrata e Uscita* (1456–1481), fol. 53r: “Ad Andreea di (...) miniatore a di 26 settembre [1457] lire dieci per parte di lavoro fatto nel breviale di suor Giovanna.” See also Levi D’Ancona (note 21), pp. 8f.

²⁹ See appendix, p. 278. The vernacular text lacks grammatical structure as if written quickly to record the instructions.

³⁰ The second *cartolaio* was likely Bartolomeo di Francesco di Neri since San Gaggio had dealt with his father. See ASF, CRSGF, 234.34, fol. 73v.

the letters similar to those in the earlier San Gaggio antiphony.³¹ The *debitori* entry shows that the same nun coordinated the production and payment of the Santa Monaca codices. Suor Elisabetta di Piero Adimari Gianfigliuzzi, named in the document, worked with the scribe narrator. San Gaggio received installment payments from the friars of Santo Spirito for more than a decade – from June 1451 to August 1464.³² The description of a commission, its process of fulfillment and final payment gives a clear picture of San Gaggio's participation in the writing and graphic illustration of liturgical manuscripts. This complements our knowledge of practices in other Florentine convent scriptoria, such as that of the Murate in Florence.³³

Maria d'Ormanno degli Albizzi's portrait-signature can be re-examined in relation to the newly-identified manuscripts and better understanding of scribal operations at San Gaggio. The image is placed in the central *bas de page* for the first Sunday of Advent, which often hosted coats-of-arms, donor portraits, religious narratives, or patron saints and served an indexical function for the reader.³⁴ This prominent location and the Latin signature convey Maria d'Ormanno degli Albizzi's pride and her social status as a member of the Florentine elite.³⁵ A close study of the face and scroll shows they were first drawn in silverpoint (Fig. 1), and then the nun's habit, scroll, and border were painted. The bust image is almost overpowered by the extravagant gilding, ornate borders, and keyhole initial "Fratres" with the Apostle Paul (Fig. 2). These stylistic elements differ significantly from the San Gaggio *Confessions* frontispiece, which also dates from 1453 (Fig. 3). One breviary initial, the one relating to the feast of Saint Augustine (Fig. 4), is stylistically similar to the latter: it shows softly-drawn figures of Augustine and Monica above a delicate landscape and flat leaf foliate extenders similar to those in miniatures produced by Filippo di Matteo Torelli's workshop. The drawing of the figures is tentative, possibly indicating an apprentice's hand. The style of the remaining 14 large figural and narrative initials show they were produced in an entirely different artistic environment: rich foliate

borders, gilded keyhole or notched initials, darkly modeled saints' faces, along with cramped landscapes in the *Nativity*, *Adoration of the Magi*, and *David playing the harp* (Fig. 5), point to northern Italy, possibly Bologna, Ferrara or Modena.³⁶ The initials with saints' heads are repetitive workshop types with dark modeling close to Giorgio d'Alemagna; the decoration appears to date from ca. 1455–ca. 1480.³⁷ Over 40 small initials with foliate or geometric designs appear to have been executed by the same illuminators.

While Suor Maria did not illuminate the breviary she may have experimented with drawing her likeness in the portrait-signature. In 1453 she was a 25-year-old experienced scribe who had copied *La Summa Pisanello* and possibly helped with the Santa Monaca choral books. Living in San Gaggio's aristocratic and literate convent culture she had seen other illuminated manuscripts. The Augustinian community and individual nuns had been depicted earlier by a professional male artist. In an antiphony illuminated by Battista di Biagio Sanguigni for San Gaggio, a large initial shows Saint Augustine presenting the rule to four older nuns and a novice. In the marginal space of the initial extender another nun with a more individualized face (perhaps the abbess) looks on with hands devoutly folded in prayer.³⁸ Such images could have encouraged Maria to move beyond scribal work and attempt small scale figural drawing.

When and why the manuscript traveled northward and then to Vienna has not yet been discovered. The codex is in pristine condition, indicating it was never subject to daily use. The illuminations may have been executed when the breviary became a gift or presentation object. Its first shelf-mark and inclusion in an early library inventory shows the breviary left Italy and arrived in Vienna prior to 1576.³⁹ One hypothesis is that it was brought from Milan by Bianca Maria Sforza when she married Emperor Maximilian I in 1494. Establishing Suor Maria's identity and scribal activity at San Gaggio, Florence, is only the beginning of studying this codex, whose complex history invites further research and analysis.⁴⁰

³¹ Museum of San Marco, Florence, Ms. 10073, fol. 6r, 7v, 10v, 12v, 17r.

³² See appendix, p. 279: payments on this account were made 25 June 1451, 5 June 1452, 26 April 1460, and 28 August 1464. The largest payment (43 lire) in 1460 was made "in sala dove stiamo a mangiare", possibly the refectory.

³³ See Kate Lowe, "Women's Work at the Benedictine Convent of Le Murate in Florence: Suora Battista Carducci's Roman Missal of 1509", in: *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Jane H. M. Taylor/Lesley Smith, Toronto 1997 (first ed. London 1996), pp. 133–146.

³⁴ See Cecilia O'Brien, "The Illustration of the First Sunday in Advent in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Italian Breviaries", in: *Il codice miniato: rapporti tra codice, testo e figurazione*, conference proceedings Cortona 1988, ed. by Melania Ceccanti/Maria Cristina Castelli, Florence 1992, pp. 147–157.

³⁵ For two similar colophons reflecting Medici and Bernabuzzi family pride, see Moreton (note 3), pp. 53–58.

³⁶ See Hermann (note 2), Pl. III for *David*, fol. 29r, the *Nativity*, fol. 108r,

the *Apostle Andreas*, fol. 279v. Several digital reproductions are found under Codex Vindobonensis Palatinus 1923 in *Vivarium*, <http://www.hmml.org/vivarium.html> (accessed 6 June 2017).

³⁷ For north Italian comparisons, see *La miniatura a Ferrara dal tempo di Cosmè Tura all'eredità di Ercole de' Roberti*, exh. cat. Ferrara 1998, ed. by Federica Toniolo, Modena 1998, pp. 238f. (e.g. the psalter from San Pietro in Modena, attributed to the Erri workshop and Martino da Modena).

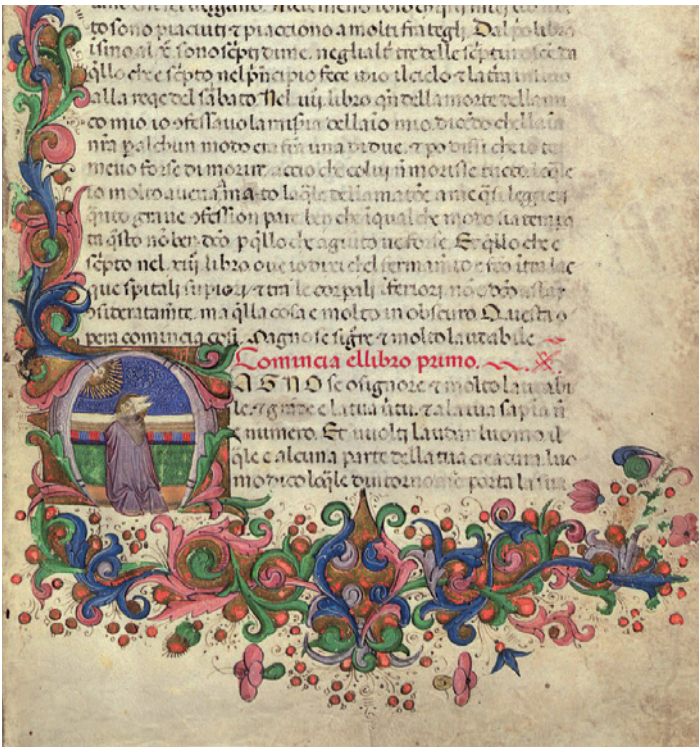
³⁸ Museum of San Marco, Florence, Ms. 10073, fol. 19v (main initial and lower left extender); cfr. the literature quoted in note 21.

³⁹ See Hermann (note 2), p. II. The early acquisition is shown by the number "Cod. Ms. Theol. N. DCCXXIX". Before rebinding it was believed to have the signature of Hugo Blotius, the first librarian who inventoried the imperial library in 1576.

⁴⁰ This breviary and its north Italian connections is the subject of further study by the present author.



2 Breviary of Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi, frontispiece to the *temporale*. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1923, fol. 89r



3 Frontispiece of the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, detail. Rome, Biblioteca Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, Cod. 856, fol. 1r



4 Breviary of Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi, *Saints Augustine and Monica*. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1923, fol. 386r



5 Breviary of Maria di Ormanno degli Albizzi, *David playing the harp*. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1923, fol. 29r

fol. 104r (1448–1452)

Maestro Francesco priore di Sancto Spirito a dì ... di giugno 1448 mi diede a scrive[re] uno libro di lettera grossa più che da salteri per le donne di Sancta Monica in sul quale vuole ch'io scriva solo antifone e respons[or]i invitorii [e] versiculi incominciando al'avvento e seguire di tempo in tempo tutto il breviario il quale vuole per le dicte donne di Sancta Monica per tenere in sul legio in coro per cagione che non anno altro che uno breviario e perché ciascuna di loro possa vedere e leggere da lungi in su questo.

Per insino a questo dì 9 di luglio 1448 o ricevuti da Michele cartoraio per cominciare a scrivere dicto libro	quinterni	10
quinterni X mettendo in conto ii quinterni già incominciati e già forniti, avuti ne' dì di sopra scritti e così		
scriverò qui ogni volta che ne l'averò più	quinterni	4
E a dì 14 di novembre 1448 ebbi da Michele quattro quinterni di dicte carte	quinterni	2
E a dì 18 di febbraio 1448 [1449] ebbi due quinterni di dicte carte	quinterni	2
E a dì 5 di marzo dicto anno ebbi ii quinterni di dicte carte	quinterni	2
E a dì 22 di marzo dicto ano ebbi ii quinterni di dicte carte	quinterni	2
E a dì 16 d'aprile 1449 ebbi da Michele ii quinterni di carte	quinterni	2
E a dì 10 di maggio 1449 ebbi da Michele ii quinterni di dicte carte	quinterni	2
2 e ii quinterni d'altre carte per la Pisanella che scrive suor Maria		
E a dì 26 di maggio 1449 ebbi da dicto Michele uno quintero di dicte carte	[quinterni]	1
E a dì 5 di giugno 1449 ebbi ii quinterni di dicte carte da Michele	quinterni	2
4 E a dì ... di giugno dicto ebbi iiii quinterni per la Pisanella		
E a dì 21 di giugno 1449 ebbi da Michele ii quinterni delle sopradicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì ... di luglio ii quinterni di dicte carte recò Antonio nostro cherico	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 21 d'agosto 1449 ebbi da Michele dicto ii quinterni di dicte carte grandi	[quinterni]	2
8 e otto quinterni piccoli per la Pisanella recò Antonio di Pagolo di Valdambra mio cherico		
E a dì 6 di settembre 1449 ebbi da Michele quinterni otto de dicte	[quinterni]	8
E a dì 14 febbraio 1449 [1450] ebbi da Miche[le] quinterni due di dicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 24 aprile ebbi da Michele quinterni due di dicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì ... di luglio ebbi da Michele quinterni ii di dicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 5 di settembre 1450 ebbi da Michele quinterni ii di dicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 19 di febbraio 1450 [1451] ebbi da Michele quinterni tre di dicte carte	[quinterni]	3
E a dì 7 d'aprile 1451 ebbi da Michele quinterni ii di dicte carte recò il cherico mio	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 13 di maggio ebbi da Michele dicte quinterni ii di dicte carte	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 29 di luglio 1451 ebbi da Michele quinterni vi di dicte carte	[quinterni]	6
E a dì 24 1451 [1452] di febbraio ebbi da Bartolomeo cartoraio due quinterni di carte per sopradetto libro		
di maestro Francesco che mi fa fare nostro Antonio chierico	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 15 d'aprile 1452 ebbi da Bartolomeo sopradecto due quinterni di dicte carte per dicto libro recai		
io ser Filippo	[quinterni]	2
E a dì 5 di maggio 1452 ebbi da Bartolomeo sopradecto uno quintero di dicte carte recò il suo fanciulo	[quinterni]	1
Fornito di tutto a dì 27 di maggio 1452 e posto debitore il maestro soprascripto in questo [folio] 138.		

fol. 138v (1452–1464)

Maestro Francescho d'Antonio frate di Sancto Spirito di Firenze dee dare insino a dì 3 di giugno per scriptura di due vilumi di libri di lettera grossa come di psalteri da choro e' quali m'è fatti scrivere per le donne di Sancta Monica di Firenze come apare in questo [folio] 104 / nel primo entronono quinterni xxxiii per soldi xxxiii il quintero scriptura monta in [tutto] fecelo miniare et legare liii a Bartolomeo cartoraio lire 54 soldi 9 denari

Et nell'altro vilume sono entrati quinterni xxx(v) soldi xxxiii il quinterno montano lire 57 soldi 15 la scriptura fornito a dì 27 di maggio 1452	lire 55 soldi 2 denari
Et per la miniatura di decti 35 quinterni ne' quali o fatte 20 lettere grandi di cinabro et d'azzurro tutte di penna per soldi 2 denari 4 l'una	lire 2 soldi 6 denari 8
Et per ottocentodieci lette[re] mezzane sono entrate in dicto vilume a soldi xx il centinaio	lire 8 soldi 6
Et per 302 paragrafi p[er] soldi ii il centinaio	lire – soldi 6
Et per la legatura lire ii soldi – denari –	lire 2 soldi
Et per una pellicina rossa pagai soldi xvi et per fornimenti degli affibbiatoi soldi x somma pagai di contanti soldi 26 – 12 – 16 [?] – 8	lire I soldi 6 denari
Anne dati insino a dì 25 di giugno 1451 ducati iiii d'oro per parte di sopradicta ragione	lire 18 soldi 16 denari
Anne dati a dì 5 di giugno 1452 grossi xvi in arie[n]to per parte di sopra detta ragione	lire 4 soldi 8 denari
Anne dati a dì 26 d'aprile 1460 fiorini otto larghi ebbi io ser Filippo dal maestro sopradicto a San Gaggio in sala dove stiamo a mangiare	lire 43 soldi 4 denari
Anne dati lire sedici per me a suora Lisabetta di Piero (A)damari Gianfigliuzzi monaca in San Gaggio per mia poliza – 82 [?] – 8	lire 16
Anne dati a dì 28 d'agosto 1464 fiorini ii larghi recò Andrea mi[o] n[i]pote et mio cherico.	

Abbreviations

ASF Archivio di Stato di Firenze
CRSGF Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese

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Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna: Figs. 1, 2, 4, 5. – Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome: Fig. 3.

Umschlagbild | Copertina:

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Cleopatra*. Florence, Casa Buonarroti, inv. 2 F r
(Abb. 6, S. 209 | fig. 6, p. 209)

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