

"Belonging of right to our English nation"

The Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, Reginald Pole, and the English Hospice in Rome

Andrea Bacciolo

Abstract

Located in Rome, at the Appian Way, the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis is a circular domed building that has heretofore been dated to Julius III's pontificate (1550–1555) and associated with Cardinal Reginald Pole's patronage. In addition to confirming the role of Reginald Pole, new documentary evidence proves both an earlier date of construction and the involvement in the works of the English Hospice as financial contributor. Considering the cultural and political climate, the Anglo-Roman relations, and the institutional background, this article deals with the oratory as a materialization of the emerging identity of English Catholics in Rome.

Contents

The Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis

New lights on the building

The site as a crucial stage in the route of Charles V's triumphal entry in 1536

Reginald Pole, Henry VIII, and the English in Rome

A materialization of the emerging identity of English Catholics

The Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis

[1] Standing outside the Aurelian Walls, the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis is a small, circular domed building situated in the carefully preserved environment of the Appian Way Regional Park a few kilometres from the city centre of Rome.¹ Located next to the church of Santa Maria in Palmis, it faces

¹ The present essay is based on a paper entitled "Il sacello del Domine Quo Vadis. Un'architettura a pianta circolare, la comunità inglese e il culto petrino nel primo Cinquecento", delivered at the conference "Grand Tour del Terzo Millennio" at the Università di Roma Tor Vergata in 2014. Some findings concerning this particular theme were also presented at the 61st Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America within the panel "Performing Nationhood in Early Modern Rome II". I would like to thank my colleagues and friends in Rome for their comments on those occasions. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Rector of the Venerable

both the Appian Way and Via della Caffarella, marking the fork in the road (Fig. 1).



1 Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, south-east of Rome, at the Appian Way (photo: A. Bacciolo)

[2] Its external appearance shows materials and building techniques that suggest a certain, almost exhibited economy in contrast to a learned architectural lexicon. Alternating with a daubed opus incertum, eight pilasters with peperino bases and capitals rhythmically articulate the chapel's wall. Doric travertine piers define two walled-up portals that initially gave access to the internal space. Until the early twentieth century the interior was adorned by two paintings depicting the meeting between Christ and Peter. Other images in the building showed Peter convicted by Emperor Nero, the same apostle escaping to the Appian Gate, and the Virgin and Child.² A seventeenth-century engraving by Giovanni Maggi (1566-1618) focuses on English College in Rome, who kindly allowed me to study materials from the College's archives. On the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis see: Carmelo Disano, *Guida delle catacombe e dei monumenti dell'Appia Antica*, Rome 1900, 11-13; Giovanni Battista Lugari, "Il sacello 'Domine, quo vadis' sulla Via Appia", in: *Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 7 (1901), 2-25. On the suburban area of the Appian Way see: Giuseppe Tomassetti, *La campagna romana antica, medievale e moderna*, Florence 1979; Lucrezia Spera, *Il paesaggio suburbano di Roma dall'antichità al medioevo*, Rome 1999.

² Disano, *Guida delle catacombe*, 12.

the main painting, while also illustrating the original platform and the belfry, creating an ideal representation of the building (Fig. 2).



2 Giovanni Maggi, "Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae Annunciatae extra Urbis moenia...", in: Giovanni Baglione, *Le Nove chiese di Roma*, Rome 1635, plate 5, detail

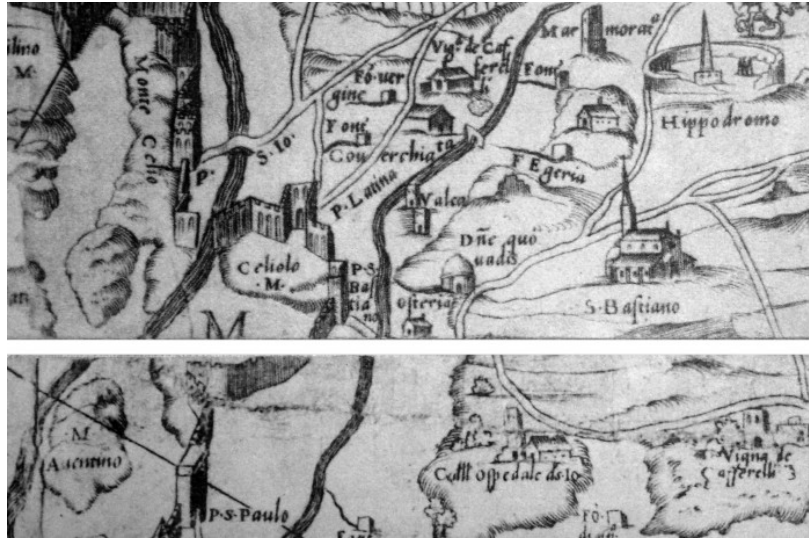
[3] Up until this point, the oratory has not attracted the level of consideration that it deserves, and not much is known about its origin and construction. During the past decades Wolfgang Lotz was among the few academics that called attention to the domed chapel. In his famous 1964 essay on Renaissance centrally-planned churches, Lotz included the Domine Quo Vadis among a series of buildings denoted as *Memorialbauten*, among which were also the octagonal shrine of San Giovanni in Oleo and Bramante's martyrrium in San Pietro in Montorio. Lotz dated the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis to the first half of the 1550s, and associated its construction with Cardinal Reginald Pole (1500–1558), one of the most influential personalities in the Age of Reformation.³

[4] Partially confirming Lotz's hypothesis are sixteenth-century visual and written sources authored by erudite scholars from different cultural backgrounds. While corroborating the hypothesis of Reginald Pole's patronage, these sources shed light on the question of the dates of the

³ Wolfgang Lotz, "Notizen zum kirchlichen Zentralbau der Renaissance", in: *Studien zur toskanischen Kunst. Festschrift für Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich zum 23. März 1963*, eds. Wolfgang Lotz and Lise Lotte Möller, Munich 1964, 157-165.

Domine Quo Vadis's construction while also introducing a forgotten institutional actor in the history of the building.⁴

[5] Representing the most important sites and structures located in the Roman countryside, Eufrosino della Volpaia's *Mappa della Campagna Romana* (1547; Fig. 3) clearly illustrates the outline of the oratory out of the Porta San Sebastiano. This visual reference rejects Lotz's conjectures about the date, also providing a new terminus ante quem.



3 Eufrosino della Volpaia's map of the Roman countryside, 1547, detail (repr. from: *La campagna romana al tempo di Paolo III: mappa della campagna romana del 1547 di Eufrosino Della Volpaia riprodotta dall'unico esemplare esistente nella Biblioteca Vaticana*, Città del Vaticano 1914, attached plate)

[6] According to Onofrio Panvinio's *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctioribusque basilicis* (Rome, 1570):

*[...] via Appia sacellum antiquitus conditum fuit, nostro saeculo Reginaldi Poli cardinalis Britanni iussu, impensa Hospitalis Anglorum renovatum.*⁵

Moreover, as reported by the German theologian Jakob Rabus in the diary of his pilgrimage to Rome (1575):⁶

⁴ Basing his argumentation on different sources, Jens Niebaum has recently come to similar conclusions regarding the construction dates. See Jens Niebaum, *Der kirchliche Zentralbau der Renaissance in Italien*, Munich 2016, 250-251.

⁵ Onofrio Panvinio, *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctioribusque basilicis, quas septem ecclesias vulgo vocant liber*, Roma: Antonius Bladius, 1570, 106.

⁶ Born in 1545 in Strasbourg, Johann Jakob Rabus was son of a Lutheran preacher. He studied theology in Wittenberg and in 1565 he converted to Catholicism. From 1571 Rabus was preacher at the court of Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria. *Rom, eine Münchner*

*Zwischen S. Sebastian und S. Joanne Laterano liegt ein feins Kapellin, so der berühmte Kardinal Polus wiederumb erneuert.*⁷

Finally, in his manuscript work *Roma Sancta* (1581), Gregory Martin⁸ stated that

*As we goe from S. Sebastians to S. John Laterane there standeth this Chappel, belonging of right to our English nation, and in Cardinal Poles time repayred by the Hospitall of our nation.*⁹

These sources suggest, therefore, that Reginald Pole initiated the restoration of an ancient oratory placed in the area of Domine Quo Vadis before 1547, the English Hospice of Rome paid for the works, and decades after the building still belonged to the "English Nation" in Rome.

[7] The aforementioned evidence opens lines of inquiry into both the significance of such a rural zone for the interested parties, and the exact time frame of these restorations. Other questions arise around the circumstances that brought Reginald Pole and the English Hospice to jointly patronize the building of the oratory. Finally, could this new data help us to elucidate the adoption of the architectural solutions that shaped the building? Did the oratory inform a particular identity?

New lights on the building

[8] As noted in several early modern guides, the area of Domine Quo Vadis was considered one of the most relevant stages for the worship of Saint Peter in the Eternal City.¹⁰ According to the Passio of Processus and Martinian, while Saint Peter was fleeing Rome to escape Nero's persecution, the Apostle met Jesus. Peter asked Christ: "Domine, quo vadis?" (Where are you going, Lord?).

Pilgerfahrt im Jubeljahr 1575, beschrieben von Dr. Jakob Rabus, Hofprediger zu München, ed. Karl Schottenloher, Munich 1925.

⁷ *Rom, eine Münchner Pilgerfahrt im Jubeljahr 1575*, ed. Schottenloher, 47. My translation: "Between Saint Sebastian outside the Walls and Saint John Lateran is placed a little chapel, newly restored by the illustrious Cardinal Pole."

⁸ Catholic priest, theologian, and biblical translator, Martin authored some controversialist treatises. He contributed to the English translation of the Vulgate, firstly edited in Rheims in 1582. See: Thomas M. Mc Coog, "Martin, Gregory (1542?-1582)", in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18183> (accessed 22 October 2015).

⁹ Gregory Martin, *Roma Sancta* [1581], ed. George B. Parks, Rome 1969, 33.

¹⁰ Even Flavio Biondo (1392-1463), in his *Roma instaurata* recalled it among the sacred sites in Rome strictly connected with the deeds of the martyrs. Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, Bloomington 1998, 170-171.

Then Jesus answered that he was going to Rome to be crucified. Peter therefore returned to the city, where he was eventually martyred.¹¹

[9] Because of this legendary episode the site was included in the Roman pilgrimage route for centuries and in the Middle Ages the church of Santa Maria in Palmis was built on the very location where, according to the tradition, the meeting between Peter and the risen Jesus took place (Fig. 4).¹²

¹¹ A similar hagiographical account is included in the apocryphal Acts by Pseudo-Lino. The whole story and the localization of this event are also related by Jacobus de Voragine. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, ed. William Granger Ryan, vol. 1, Princeton, NJ, 1993, 345.

¹² On the church see: Sandro Carletti, "Le memorie cristiane e le catacombe dell'Appia", in: *Capitolium* 44 (1969), no. 3, 47-74; Spera, *Il paesaggio suburbano di Roma*, 163-164. See also Daniela Mondini, "'Qui sono varie historie scancellate...': die verlorenen Fresken aus S. Maria de Palmis in Rom nach einer Skizze von Pompeo Ugonio", in: *Opus Tesselatum, Modi und Grenzgänge der Kunstwissenschaft*, eds. Katharina Corsepius and Daniela Mondini, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York 2004, 399-410. The origins of the church date back to the medieval period, but drastic restoration works in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries erased any architectural evidence of the ancient structure. Giacinto Gigli recorded some restoration works in 1637, following the collapse of the roof occurred in January of that year. See Giacinto Gigli, *Diario di Roma*, ed. Manlio Barberito, vol. 1, Rome 1994, 289, 299-300. According to Sandro Carletti a reconstruction took place in 1620. Lucrezia Spera also mentioned a drastic restoration of the interior in 1592. The 1637 rebuilding of the façade, commissioned by Francesco Barberini, is cited by both scholars. Carletti, "Le memorie cristiane e le catacombe dell'Appia", 73-74; Spera, *Il paesaggio suburbano di Roma*, 164. Inside the building two footprints on a marble slab - copy of the ones conserved in the Basilica of San Sebastiano fuori le mura - are popularly held in great reverence as a miraculous sign left by Jesus. The interior is also adorned by frescos depicting the crucifixions of Peter and Jesus and their legendary meeting.



4 Church of Santa Maria in Palmis, south-east of Rome, at the Appian Way, front (photo: A. Bacciolo)

[10] Archival records suggest that some properties in that area were owned by the English Hospice in Rome from the 1370s.¹³ The hospice of the "Holy Trinity and Saint Thomas the Martyr" had been founded few years before, in 1362, in order to give assistance to the poor English pilgrims in Rome.¹⁴ Located along the Via di Monserrato, the hospice was ruled by the *Societas confraternitatis anglicorum Urbis*. Over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the institution developed its influence and increased its holdings, acquiring houses and properties. Especially during the reign of Henry VII (r. 1485–1509) the hospice grew in importance, serving as a place for self-representation of the Tudor monarchy in Rome. During that period the membership of the

¹³ The earliest known rental agreements related to the possessions of the English Hospice in the area of Domine Quo Vadis are dated 1371 and 1372. The documents are included in the acts of the notary Paulus Seromani (Rome, Archivio Storico Capitolino, Notai, sez. I, vol. 649/11, cc. 18r-20v, cc. 50v-51v; Rome, Archivio Storico Capitolino, Notai, sez. I, vol. 649/12, c. 57r-v, cc. 85r-86v). The ownership of vineyards in the area is mentioned also by a 1630 inventory of the Venerable English College's possessions. According to this document the hospice bought the lands in 1370 (Rome, Archives of the Venerable English College, Liber 277, c. 67).

¹⁴ On the English Hospice in Rome, its administration and properties see: Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome, 1362–1420. Portrait of an Expatriate Community*, Cambridge (UK) 1999; Judith Champ, *The English Pilgrimage to Rome: A Dwelling for the Soul*, Leominster 2000; Anthony Majanlahti, "English Properties in Rome, 1450–1517," in: *Papers of the British School at Rome* 71 (2003), 235–257; *The English Hospice in Rome*, 2nd ed., ed. John Francis Allan, Leominster 2005 (1st ed. Exeter 1962 [= *The Venerable*, vol. 21: Sexcentenary issue]).

confraternity was closely tied to the English court: several *confratres* of the institution came from the King's inner circle and even the warden was nominated by royal appointment. At the high point of the conflict between Henry VIII and the Papacy, Pope Paul III (r. 1534–1549) took charge of the hospice and decreed the election of new members, such as Cardinal Reginald Pole, who was designated as warden. Under the protection of the Holy See, the institution became a forge for the construction of English Catholic identity. Throughout the following years the hospice's income from renting houses and vineyards would mainly provide board and lodging to English exiles that escaped from Henry's oppression.

[11] During the papacy of Gregory XIII (1572–1585) the ownership of a plot of land in the area of Domine Quo Vadis was claimed by the hospice. A newly found document conserved at the Archives of the Venerable English College in Rome reports this claim, also providing relevant information about the oratory.¹⁵ According to this act, the quarrel occurred on the occasion of the Holy Year 1575. This dating is significant because in the eyes of foreign communities in Rome the Jubilee was not only a critical moment to raise money from the pilgrims but also an extraordinary opportunity for self-representation in a cosmopolitan scenario. As stated by the document the plot of land had been part of the institution's properties since the late fourteenth century. The sacred building standing in that area was owned by the hospice as testified by the presence of the warden's crest and emblems on the wall, there placed in 1537 in remembrance of the restoration of the structure completed in that year:

¹⁵ Archives of the Venerable English College, Rome, Liber 5, cc. 244r-245v: copy of document entitled "Adeptio possessioni Cappelle Domine Quo Vadis cum terreno contiguo" and dated 6 September 1575 (cf. Liber 5, c. 241: manuscript dated 4 July 1575). The act indicated William Giblet as warden, citing also Robert Talcarne as "camerarius". This information does not comply with the list of officials given by Anthony Kenny. According to the same author, in 1575 Giblet served as auditor together with Edmund Daniel, while John Bavand was warden; "camerarii" were Henry Henshaw and Edward Bromborough. Giblet had already been warden in 1572. Robert Talcarne is cited by George B. Parks among the twelve "commensales" at the hospice in 1553. He acted as business director of the institution for the following twenty-five years, also holding the office of "custos" various times between the early 1550s and 1561. See: Anthony Kenny, "From Hospice to College 1559–1579", in: *The English Hospice in Rome*, 2nd ed., ed. John Francis Allan, Leominster 2005, 218–273; George B. Parks, "The Reformation and the Hospice 1514–1559," in: *The English Hospice in Rome*, 2nd ed., ed. John Francis Allan, Leominster 2005, 193–217.

*... sub proprietate dicti hospitalii [sic] ac tunc restaurationem fuisse <factam> expensis dicti hospitalis ut supra de anno 1537, ut apparet per appositionem armorum et insignium custodii [?]*¹⁶

The use of the term "renovatum" by Panvinio and "restauratio" in the manuscript might imply that in the very same place there was a pre-existing structure.¹⁷ Nevertheless it is necessary to highlight that both these texts were composed for different purposes in the 1570s, and the author of the act likely made use of the rich description by Panvinio to lay claim to a more ancient right over the property.

[12] However it is surely attested that at least in the middle decades of the fifteenth century no structure existed in that location. Between 1447 and 1452 the English hagiographer and theologian John Capgrave (1393–1464) wrote an account of his journey to Rome, known as *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes*.¹⁸ As described by Capgrave,

*Marie de palma is a cherch in the hey way as we go fro porta appia on to sebastianes cherch. This is a praty litil cherch & a place annexid thertoo where is comounly a taverne to the counfort of pilgrimes [...]. Be yond this cherch not fer litil mor than a boweschote stant a crosse thei clepe it domine quo vadis. Ther met our lord with petir whan he fled his martirdam.*¹⁹

Although the author cited the church of Santa Maria in Palmis and even the nearby tavern for pilgrims, he did not mention any other structure.

[13] Therefore the works undertaken by the hospice in 1537 did not alter an extant antique or early-Christian building. Most probably a new structure was built on that occasion and, according to Eufrosino della Volpaia's map, that intervention gave the first and final shape to the sacellum called the Domine Quo Vadis.

[14] As implied by Sandro Carletti, the construction of the oratory could be connected with the ruinous condition of the nearby church of Santa Maria in Palmis.²⁰ This assumption is confirmed by two seventeenth-century publications by Francesco Maria Torriggio, who also remarked on the high

¹⁶ Archives of the Venerable English College, Rome, Liber 5, c. 245r.

¹⁷ A similar term was also used by Rabus ("erneuert").

¹⁸ John Capgrave, *Ye solace of pilgrimes. Una guida di Roma per i pellegrini del Quattrocento*, ed. Daniela Giosuè, Rome 1995, 16-25.

¹⁹ John Capgrave, *Ye solace of pilgrimes: a Description of Rome, circa AD 1450*, ed. C. A. Mills, London 1911, 162. Cf. Capgrave, ed. Giosuè, 201-203.

²⁰ Carletti, "Le memorie", 47-74.

frequency of visits to the devotional chapel.²¹ Nevertheless, not only does the building history of Santa Maria in Palmis remain unclear, but also scholarship has never verified any connection between the English Hospice and the aforementioned church. Therefore, this assertion does not explain the motivations behind the selection of the Domine Quo Vadis area by the English Hospice to erect a devotional building.

[15] In order to understand the circumstances that led to the works and their formal results it is first necessary to illustrate some relevant aspects of the cultural policies pursued by Paul III during the first years of his papacy. Secondly, I will also present an overview of the urban representation of papal authority on the occasion of Charles V's entry into Rome in 1536. Finally, with the purpose of investigating motives and intentions behind the construction of the oratory, I will concentrate on the relations between England and the Holy See. I will focus both on the role of Cardinal Reginald Pole and on the institutional status of the English Hospice during that period.

The site as a crucial stage in the route of Charles V's triumphal entry in 1536

[16] Since the beginning of Paul III's pontificate a syncretic interpretation of Rome informed papal cultural policy. As material traces of the spiritual legacy of the ancient martyrs, the early Christian monuments in Rome were integrated in a new tangible image of the imperial city with the purpose of visualizing the rebirth of the Church.²² In 1534 the pope appointed his former

²¹ Francesco Maria Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte vaticane...*, Roma: Iacomo Facciotti, 1635, 193-194: "e perché il Cardinale Reginaldo Polo dubitava, che la detta Chiesa di s. Maria [in Palmis] non andasse in ruini, fece fabricare vicino ad essa un tempietto rotondo, che anco con divozione è visitato dal Popolo." Francesco Maria Torrigio, *I sacri trofei...*, Roma: Francesco Moneta, 1644, 62: "Stando per l'antichità questa veneranda Cappella [Santa Maria in Palmis] per rovinare scrive Matteo Silvaggio de tribus Peregrinis, che Paolo III vi pose le mani auditrici, acciò non perisse si bella memoria, e temendo il Card. Reginaldo Polo, che questa non cadesse ne fece da fondamenti à sue spese un'altra vicina in figura circolare."

²² For an overview on this theme during the papacy of Paul III Farnese: Eraldo Gaudio, "Paolo III Farnese e la politica delle arti", in: *Gli affreschi di Paolo III a Castel Sant'Angelo. Progetto ed esecuzione 1543-1548*, eds. Filippa Maria Aliberti Gaudio and Eraldo Gaudio, exh. cat., Rome 1981, vol. 1, 23-29; André Chastel, "La cour des Farnèse et l'idéologie romaine", in: *Le Palais Farnèse*, ed. André Chastel, vol. 2, Rome 1981, 457-473; Luigi Spezzaferro, "Place Farnèse: Urbanisme et politique", in: *Le Palais Farnèse*, ed. André Chastel, vol. 1, Rome 1981, 85-123; Richard Harprath, "La formazione umanistica di papa Paolo III e le sue conseguenze nell'arte romana della metà del Cinquecento", in: *Roma e l'Antico nell'arte e nella cultura del Cinquecento*, ed. Marcello Fagiolo, Rome 1985, 63-85; Paolo Berdini, "Il borgo al tempo di Paolo III.

secretary, the antiquarian and diplomat Latino Giovenale Manetti, to the newly established office of *commissario alle antichità*.²³ Manetti's assignment was to restore the ancient ruins, and particularly the imperial buildings in which early Christian martyrs were venerated. In 1536 Manetti, together with several other humanists and artists, such as Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, realized the first manifestation of the melded vision of ancient and contemporary Christian Rome as envisioned by Paul III.

[17] On the occasion of the triumphal entry of Charles V into Rome, ephemeral *apparati* highlighted the landmarks in the urban landscape, and new roads were traced to connect Christian and imperial monuments and sites.²⁴ The event celebrated the conquest of Tunis by Charles V's army in the military campaign against the Ottomans, representing the fruitful results of the imperial actions inspired by Christian virtue. The decorative programme was mostly focused on the figures of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Charles V, and Scipio. The procession route started outside the walls from the Via delle Sette Chiese passing through the Porta San Sebastiano, the Palatine, and the Capitoline hill. Finally, following the *via papalis* from Piazza di San Marco, the route reached Castel Sant'Angelo and terminated at the Apostolic Palace. On 5th April 1536, approaching the city from the monastery of San Paolo fuori le Mura, the imperial cortege had its very first key stage at the Domine Quo Vadis, where the College of Cardinals was waiting for Charles V.²⁵ Then the

Parte prima", in: *Arte Cristiana* 78 (1990), 235-248; Gérard Labrot, *L'image de Rome. Une arme pour la Contre-reforme (1534-1677)*, Seyssel 1987; *I Farnese. Arte e collezionismo*, eds. Lucia Fornari Schianchi and Nicola Spinosa, exh. cat., Milan 1995; Arnaldo Bruschi, "Roma farnesiana. Città e architetture al tempo di Paolo III. Il caso del complesso capitolino", in: *Per Franco Barbieri. Studi di storia dell'arte e dell'architettura*, eds. Maria Elisa Avagnina and Guido Beltramini, Venice 2004, 131-153.

²³ Angela Quattrocchi, *Latino Giovenale de' Manetti commissario delle antichità durante il pontificato di Paolo III*, Ph.D. diss., Università di Roma La Sapienza 1998; Angela Quattrocchi, "Latino Giovenale de' Manetti: un diplomatico 'umanista' nella Curia pontificia", in: *Offices et papauté (XIVe-XVIIe siècle). Charges, hommes, destins*, eds. Armand Jamme and Olivier Poncet, Rome 2005, 829-840; Simona Feci, "Manetti, Latino Giovenale", in: *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 68, Rome 2007, 617-620.

²⁴ Maria Luisa Madonna, "L'ingresso di Carlo V a Roma", in: *La festa a Roma dal Rinascimento al 1870*, ed. Marcello Fagiolo, exh. cat., Torino 1997, vol. 1, 50-67; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Il viaggio cerimoniale di Carlo V dopo Tunisi", in: *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (2001), 5-50.

²⁵ Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte*, 194: "Quando Carlo V. venne à Roma al tempo di Paolo III, li cardinali lo andarono ad incontrare fino alla detta Cappella delle Palme, come si legge in un Diario." Probably Torrigio here cited a text written by Biagio Baroni (de

procession entered Rome through the Porta San Sebastiano, that had been decorated with paintings and stuccoes (Fig. 5).²⁶



5 View of the Porta San Sebastiano, Rome, from the Appian Way (photo: A. Bacciolo)

[18] The central portion of the wall above the gate showed a crowned Romulus bearing a *lituus*. The ephemeral decoration depicted the first king of Rome while he was putting the mitre and the crown on the top of the crests of Paul III and Charles V, which were placed between the figures of Numa Pompilio and Tullio Ostilio. The adjoining towers were embellished with the triumphs of Scipio Africanus and Scipio Emilianus. Other images focused more on the history of that particular site, presenting the retreat of Hannibal by the will of God and the intervention of Quintus Fulvius Flaccus against the same Carthaginian commander. Eagles, rosettes and festoons completed the decorative programme of the gold-painted gate, while the inscriptions defined Charles V as Tertius Africanus. Finally, recalling the Domine Quo Vadis episode, in front of the gate stood two statues depicting Saint Peter and

Martinellis) da Cesena. According to a copy of this diary, conserved at the Vatican Library, Cod. Ottobon. Lat. 2603, part II, cc. 343-356v, here c. 344 r-v: "Sacrum Collegium Reverendissimorum Dominorum Cardinalicum ultra Sancti Sebastiani per quam ingressurus erat Caesar, ultra aquam Marana, in quo dicitur Domine quo vadis firmavit, et exspectavit Caesarem, his omnibus preordinatis, et obviantes."

²⁶ On the 1537 ephemeral decoration of Porta San Sebastiano see also: Nicole Dacos, *Roma quanta fuit: Tre pittori fiamminghi nella Domus Aurea*, Rome 2001, 79.

Christ, with the inscriptions "Domine tu hic eras", and "Redi, hic sedem meam constitue". Moving from Saint Peter's meeting with Christ, the whole decorative programme drew upon both the profane antique heritage and early Christian references. While superimposing past and present times, it celebrated Rome as the motherland of both the profane and the sacred powers.

[19] Therefore, one year before the works were paid by the English Hospice, the area of Domine Quo Vadis had already become a crucial site for the expression of Paul III's ideas about the political relations between the Papal Seat and the Empire as well as the hierarchical order of temporal and spiritual power.

Reginald Pole, Henry VIII, and the English in Rome

[20] The construction of the oratory on such a site acquires a more specific meaning when analysed in the context of the growing disputes over the English religious affairs. In the 1530s tensions arose between Henry VIII and the Papacy, particularly following the Act of Supremacy, and culminated with the publication of the bull of excommunication in 1538.

[21] As mediator between Paul III and the English sovereign, Reginald Pole was the most eminent critic of Henrician religious policies of the time (Fig. 6).²⁷ He was also a leading proponent of a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church that proposed a spiritual renewal based on the study of scripture (especially the Pauline epistles) and a different consideration of the justification by faith. As a distinguished theologian, he was held in high esteem by Henry VIII before the break with Rome, particularly during the debate about the annulment of the marriage with Catherine of Aragon.

²⁷ On Reginald Pole, especially during this turbulent period, see: Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy: Cardinal Pole and the Counter Reformation*, Cambridge (UK) 1972; Thomas F. Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet*, Cambridge (UK) 2000; Thomas F. Mayer, *Cardinal Pole in European Context: a via media in the Reformation*, Aldershot 2000; Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford 2003; Thomas F. Mayer, "Pole, Reginald (1500-1558)", in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22456> (accessed 22 October 2015); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, 2nd ed., New Haven and London 2005; Eamon Duffy, "Cardinal Pole, the Papacy, and the Founding of the Venerabile", in: *The Church of the English College in Rome: Its History, its Restoration*, Rome 2009, 16-33; Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition: Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations*, London and New York 2012.



6 Magdalena van de Passe (1600–ca. 1638), *Reginald Pole*, engraving, London, 1620. Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection (by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a CC BY-SA 4.0 International License)

[22] Great-nephew of Kings Edward IV and Richard III, Pole matriculated at Magdalen College (Oxford) in 1512, graduating in 1515. In 1521 he went to Padua with a stipend from Henry VIII. There he met Pietro Bembo, who introduced him to Gianmatteo Giberti (formerly Leo X's datary), and Jacopo Sadoleto.²⁸ After his return to England, Henry VIII intended to make use of him in the divorce cause, and in October 1529 Pole was sent to Paris with the purpose to search for consensus on that delicate matter. In 1531 Pole expressed to Henry his concern over several complications with regard to pursuing a divorce, especially the political risks for his succession and the dangers from foreign princes.

[23] After having left England in 1532 Pole experienced a religious conversion. Between 1535 and 1536 he composed the *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione*, in which he condensed his positions against Henry's claims, also challenging Richard Sampson's argument for royal supremacy.²⁹

²⁸ During his stay in Padua he became also close to Gianpietro Carafa (the future Paul IV), and met several churchmen and intellectuals, such as Rodolfo Pio, Otto Truchseß von Waldburg, Stanislaus Hosius, Cristoforo Madruzzo, Giovanni Morone, Marcantonio Flaminio, and Alvise Priuli.

²⁹ On both this publication and the debate about the royal supremacy see: Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, Cambridge (UK) 2003, 29-44.

In the same period Pole sought imperial support for his cause. He argued that the current situation in England required severe remedies, and he fervently called for both English aristocrats and Charles V to intervene. He also tried to convince the emperor that there were "whole legions lurking in England" ready to support an invasion, proposing economic warfare.³⁰ On 22 December 1536, Pole was elevated to the cardinalate. Created papal legate on 7 February 1537, he received the informal task of assisting the Pilgrimage of Grace – a rebellion that opposed the Reformation of Henry VIII – by raising funds for their cause in Flanders.³¹ He left Rome on 18 February and arrived in Paris on 10 April. During his journey, on 31 March 1537, Pope Paul III issued a bull, offering a crusading indulgence to anyone who committed to overthrow Henry by force. Thereafter he went to Cambrai, where he escaped several assassination attempts plotted by John Hutton, the English ambassador to Mary of Hungary. After several requests for permission to enter imperial territory, he was finally allowed to reach Liège. At papal request he left the city in late August 1537 and he was back in Rome most likely by the following autumn. Finally on 7 January 1538 Pole was appointed to the commission of cardinals preparing a general council.

[24] While Pole's own opposition to Henry VIII increasingly consolidated, in Rome the English Hospice was run by John Borobrigg.³² Appointed *custos* for life by royal grant in 1532, Borobrigg worked for the interests of the sovereign. As already suggested by other scholars, the survival of this stronghold of monarchical authority in Rome might be explained by the reluctance of the papacy to recognize the conflict with Henry VIII as more than temporary. In fact, a turning point in the administration of the hospice occurred just a few months before the publication of the bull that eventually excommunicated the English sovereign.³³ The hospice then passed into the hands of Reginald Pole and his dependants, and on 8 March 1538 a *motu proprio* by Paul III confirmed the cardinal as head of the institution.³⁴ According to the document, by that time only one member of the confraternity remained at the hospice; this person exercised all the

³⁰ Cited in Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 28.

³¹ The instructions to Pole included several matters, among them the Turks, heresy, and the general council. Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 62.

³² Brian Newns, "The Hospice of St Thomas and the English Crown 1474–1538", in: *The English Hospice in Rome*, 2nd ed., ed. John Francis Allan, Leominster 2005, 145–192.

³³ The bull was issued on 17th December 1538, two years after Henry VIII's condemnation by Paul III.

³⁴ Duffy, "Cardinal Pole", 16–33; Archives of the Venerable English College, Rome, Liber 4, c. 370.

administrative tasks, also applying the incomes to himself. The *motu proprio* here likely referred to Borobrigg, who, however, was so aged and weak to be unable to perform alone the administrative duties formerly assigned to different people on an annual basis. Displacing the warden appointed by the English crown, Paul III established a new foundation and ordered an election of confratres mostly from Pole's entourage. Arranged by the vicar of Rome, the election of these new members was intended to mark the institutional re-foundation of the English Hospice under the protection of the Holy See.

[25] Hence, Pole commissioned the building of the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis during a key phase of the religious and political relations between the English crown and the Papacy. The Cardinal was at that time deeply involved in a severe debate with Henry VIII, as the spokesperson of the English dissentients. Moreover, for several months in 1537 he had also been travelling across Europe with the purpose of raising support for a religious uprising in England. This stormy political moment also coincided with a turning point in the institutional history of the English Hospice, the foundation that patronised the construction of that sacred building. While previously the confraternity served as instrument of the Henrician policies in Rome, it was acknowledged by Paul III in 1538 as a national institution that gathered English expatriates in a common profession of faith against their king. It is likely that Pole took advantage of this climate and decided to make use of the hospice's properties and incomes for an architectural statement in the Domine Quo Vadis area.

A materialization of the emerging identity of English Catholics

[26] During an age of rediscovery of Early Christian sites and monuments, the oratory was built in one of the most significant areas for the worship of Saint Peter. In his *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione* Pole reminded Henry VIII of the meaning of the Petrine foundation: "Romanam ecclesiam cathedram Petri esse, in petro fuisse fundatam ecclesiam Romanam".³⁵ Moreover, in 1536 Charles V's triumphal entry into Rome had marked that site as emblematic for the manifestation of Paul III's idea about the Church, its spiritual authority, and its primacy over the temporal power. On the same occasion the Domine Quo Vadis area was also highlighted as a space for the celebration of the fruitful allegiance between the Holy See and the Empire. During those years

³⁵ Reginald Pole, *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione*, Roma: Antonius Bladus, 1539, 63v. During the following decades Pole stressed the relation between Saint Peter, the Roman Apostolic Church, and the Pope both in *De Concilio* (1562) and *De Summo Pontifice* (1569). On Pole's ecclesiology, see: Vito Mignozzi, "Tenenda est media via". *L'ecclesiologia di Reginald Pole (1500-1558)*, Assisi 2007.

Pole had often appealed to Charles V against Henry VIII,³⁶ and even if the area was located far away from the heart of the *Urbs* there was probably no better place in Rome to legitimize this request, also expressing a clear statement of loyalty to the papacy. Finally, thanks to the frequent visits paid by pilgrims to the Domine Quo Vadis, it was an ideal location where the English in Rome could perform their own confessional identity to an international audience.

[27] The significance of the site both on an urban scale and in the European political context merged with a precise and meaningful architectural solution. In order to comprehend the singularity of this construction, the other architectural examples integrated in the same set by Lotz - Bramante's Tempietto in San Pietro in Montorio and the oratory of San Giovanni in Oleo - serve as a basis for a comparative analysis of the Domine Quo Vadis oratory and its Roman references in the first half of the sixteenth century (Figs. 7-8).³⁷

³⁶ Paul III finally obtained the support of both Charles V and Francis I during the negotiation for the treaty of Nice (1538). Jan L. de Jong, *The Power and the Glorification: Papal Pretensions and the Art of Propaganda in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, University Park, PA, 2013, 115.

³⁷ For recent contributions concerning Bramante's Tempietto see: *Handbuch der Kirchen Roms*, eds. Walther Buchowiecki and Brigitte Kuhn-Forte, vol. 4: *Die Kirchen innerhalb der Mauern Roms: S. Teodoro bis Ss. Vito, Modesto e Crescenzia. Die Kirchen von Trastevere*, ed. Brigitte Kuhn-Forte, Vienna 1997, 1031-1056; Hubertus Günther, "La ricezione dell'antico nel Tempietto", in: *Donato Bramante: ricerche, proposte, riletture*, ed. Francesco Paolo di Teodoro, Urbino 2001, 267-302; Arnaldo Bruschi, "L'architettura a Roma negli ultimi anni del pontificato di Alessandro VI Borgia (1492-1503) e l'edilizia del primo Cinquecento", in: *Storia dell'architettura italiana, il primo Cinquecento*, ed. Arnaldo Bruschi, Milan 2002, 34-75: 56-64; Christoph L. Frommel, "La città come opera d'arte: Bramante e Raffaello (1500-20)", in: *Storia dell'architettura italiana, il primo Cinquecento*, ed. Arnaldo Bruschi, Milan 2002, 76-131: 80-82. On the octagonal oratory of San Giovanni in Oleo, commissioned by the French prelate Benoît Adam, see: Maria Luisa Polidori, *Monumenti e mecenati francesi in Roma (1492-1527)*, Viterbo 1969; Eva Renzulli, "Modelli e reinterpretazioni: l'altare di Santa Maria Maddalena al Laterano e l'Oratorio di San Giovanni in Oleo", in: *Francesco Borromini*, ed. Christoph L. Frommel, Milan 2000, 162-165; Eva Renzulli, "Borromini restauratore: S. Giovanni in Oleo e S. Salvatore a Ponte Rotto", in: *Annali di architettura* 10/11 (1998/1999), 203-220; Sara Buttarelli, "Un disegno cinquecentesco del tempietto romano di San Giovanni in Oleo a Porta Latina", in: *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 13 (2005), no. 2/3, 407-414.



7 Donato Bramante, Tempietto in San Pietro in Montorio, Rome (© Quinok / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA-3.0)



8 Unknown architect, Oratory of San Giovanni in Oleo, Rome, 1509 (photo: A. Bacciolo)

[28] The capitals employed in the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis for the portals and pilasters appear to have been clearly inspired by the great model given by Bramante in his Tempietto (Figs. 9-10).



9 Pilaster capitals: (left) Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, (right) Bramante, Tempietto in San Pietro in Montorio (photos: A. Bacciolo)



10 Bramante, Tempietto in San Pietro in Montorio, pilaster capital (photo: A. Bacciolo)

The bases recall in a simplified way the form of San Giovanni in Oleo (Figs. 11-12).³⁸

³⁸ Some interesting connections might also be traced with the octagonal chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine and located on the Isola Bisentina (Lake Bolsena, Viterbo). The domed chapel was commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, later pope Paul III. The initial project and first phase of realization are attributed to Antonio



11 Pilaster bases: (left) Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, (right) Oratory of San Giovanni in Oleo (photos: A. Bacciolo)



12 Oratory of San Giovanni in Oleo, pilaster base (photo: A. Bacciolo)

da Sangallo the Younger. I am grateful to prof. Claudia Conforti (Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata) for this suggestion. On the works by Antonio da Sangallo on the Isola Bisentina see: Fabiano Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Alessandro Farnese committente di architettura nella Tuscia", in: *Convegno sul Cardinale Alessandro Farnese*, ed. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province Parmensi, Parma 1991, 153-165; Maddalena Scimemi, "Dottrina e autorità dell'antico in Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane. Una 'dieta' per Alessandro Farnese sull'Isola Bisentina", in: *Architettura e identità locali*, eds. Howard Burns and Mauro Mussolin, vol. 2, Florence 2013, 243-260. For a recent examination on the Isola Bisentina as place for the self-representation of the Farnese family see: Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, Rome 2007, 33-41.

[29] The pilasters, the entablature, and the four oculi show a curious employment of brick masonry. The precise workmanship of the brick surface both in the pilaster shafts and in the oculi suggests a deliberate intention to avoid the use of daub (Fig. 13).



13 Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, oculi and pilaster shafts (photo: A. Bacciolo)

Supporting this assumption are several ancient graffiti scratched into the pilasters (Fig. 14).



14 Oratory of Domine Quo Vadis, pilaster with graffiti, detail (photo: A. Bacciolo)

Unlike the common employment of brick in sixteenth-century Roman buildings, here the technique of the brickwork does not articulate the surface of the walls, but instead composes the decorative apparatus, recalling the

nearby ancient example of the so-called cenotaph of Annia Regilla (Fig. 15). This brick structure, known as Tempio del Dio Redicolo, was studied and sketched during the first decades of the century by Baldassarre Peruzzi and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger.³⁹



15 So-called Cenotaph of Annia Regilla, Parco della Caffarella, Rome (© Notafly / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA-3.0)

[30] The adoption of the circular plan in the construction occurred during a phase of great theoretical interest in the circle. Several antique and early-Christian circular structures were carefully studied during that age,⁴⁰ also close to the Domine Quo Vadis in the 1530s.⁴¹ Despite this spreading interest, few Renaissance buildings were realized following this kind of plan. Moreover, the circular layout was mostly applied to Marian sanctuaries, baptisteries,

³⁹ See drawings by Baldassarre Peruzzi (Firenze, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, 481 A Recto) and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (Firenze, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, 1168 A Recto).

⁴⁰ Hubertus Günther, *Das Studium der antiken Architektur in den Zeichnungen der Hochrenaissance*, Tübingen 1988.

⁴¹ The nearby Tomb of Romulus was included by Serlio in his Third Book. See: Sebastiano Serlio, *Il terzo libro...*, Venezia: Francesco Marcolini, 1540, 45.

and martyria.⁴² The oratory is an exceptional example even among these archetypes.

[31] A possible explanation of this peculiarity can be found in Pole's attitude towards a prospective supporter in the battle for the indivisibility of the Church: Charles V. In these terms, the construction of a building that echoed the distinguished model offered by Bramante in San Pietro in Montorio might have also been evaluated as an ideal way to pay homage to that ruler. In fact, the Tempietto was not only a distinctive construction realized where Peter's martyrdom took place, but also part of a prestigious complex patronised by the Spanish crown and a key-space for the self-representation of the emperor as king of Spain.⁴³ During a period in which the English cardinal hoped for Charles V's support, the recurrent references to this architectonic structure both in the circular plan and in the capitals of the Domine Quo Vadis oratory could have effectively marked the integration of confessional message and political statement.

[32] Aimed at the demonstration of the continuity between the Church of Saint Peter and the contemporary Church, the oratory followed a learned lexicon in plan and elevation inspired by renowned antique and modern examples. With regard to the solutions applied to the building, the skilful author of the project made wise use of technique and materials, working within the budgetary constraints of an institution such as the English Hospice. Even if his name still remains unknown, the patterns of choice are clear. Reginald Pole and the English Hospice conceived the oratory as an architectural palimpsest to convey both a universal and a particular message. In that precise site the English expressed their own identity celebrating an episode that symbolized the unity of believers. Along the *Regina Viarum*, in a place owned by the English Hospice and unmarked by royal legacies, Reginald Pole intended to represent that part of the English that sided with the papacy in the conflict against their own king. In December 1538 the expatriates, who had taken control of the hospice, were indicted in England "for betaking themselves to the Roman Pontiff in parts beyond the sea, and renouncing their true prince".⁴⁴ Among Pole's legacy to the English Hospice, the oratory of Domine Quo Vadis was one of the first materializations of the emerging identity of English Catholics in Rome. Having

⁴² Claudia Conforti, "Cupole, chiese a pianta centrale e culto mariano nel Rinascimento italiano", in: *Lo specchio del cielo: forme, significati, tecniche e funzioni della cupola dal Pantheon al Novecento*, ed. Claudia Conforti, Milan 1997, 67-85.

⁴³ For a recent survey on this theme see: Jack Freiberg, *Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown*, Cambridge (UK) 2014.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Newns, "The Hospice", 176.

left their homeland in order to escape a new Nero's persecution, they were now invited to imitate the apostle Peter by following his steps.

[33] Almost four decades after its construction, the oratory was still broadly perceived as an English performance of confessional identity founded on a universal message: the primacy of Saint Peter. In the age of Gregory XIII both the crest and the emblems on the wall clearly denoted the Hospice's rights over the chapel. The patrons were widely known among different contexts, and even a learned pilgrim from the Empire such as Jakob Rabus could recognize the message conveyed by that *Memorialbau*:

Freilich ist ein solch Ort nicht zu versäumen, sondern in alleweg neben andern h. Orten zu Rom andächtiglich zu besuchen, wie es denn fromme Pilgram ohne das gern tun und daselbst Gott danksagen, daß er ihre Glaubens Feste an ein gewiß Ort, nit an zerteilte Zungen geheftet hat. Das Ort ist der Stuhl, das ist die Lehr Petri, wo der ist, da ist die Kirch, die keine Porten der Hölle nit überwältigen, viel weniger zerstören und austilgen können.⁴⁵

About the Author

Andrea Bacciolo earned his Master's degree in Art History and Conservation of the Artistic Heritage from the University of Venice - Ca' Foscari. He was a predoctoral fellow at the Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome from 2012 to 2014 (Minerva Research Group "Roma Communis Patria"). Between 2014 and 2015 he held grants from the Lemmermann Foundation and the Österreichisches Historisches Institut, Rome. Currently, he is a guest scholar at the Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome. His main research interests include urban spaces and the representation of power in Early Modern Rome, English and Irish national churches and colleges in Rome, and the material diplomacy between Rome and the British Isles during the Baroque Age.

Special Issue Editors

Susanne Kubersky-Piredda and Tobias Daniels, eds., *Constructing Nationhood in Early Modern Rome*, in: RIHA Journal 0237-0243.

⁴⁵ *Rom, eine Münchner Pilgerfahrt im Jubeljahr 1575*, ed. Schottenloher, 47. My translation: "It is a place not to miss. Like other sites it has to be solemnly visited as pious pilgrims do praising God for having precisely located faith rather than spreading it in different languages. The place is the Seat, the Chair of Saint Peter. It is where he is, where there is the Church that cannot be overpowered or even less destroyed or eradicated by Hell's gate."

License

The text of this article is provided under the terms of the Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

