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«S'ODA IN CIEL SEMPR'ECHEGIARE:  
"VIVA PUR FELSINA VIVA!"»: PATRIOTISM IN  
BOLOGNESE ORATORIOS

The Italian Baroque oratorio came in many different guises, from overtly didactic works intended to instruct the populace in the rudiments of Christianity, to opera substitutes that closely resemble their secular counterparts. In Bologna, the second city of the Papal States, the genre flourished in all of its forms; Juliane Riepe describes the city as «una delle sedi più prestigiose e feconde dell'oratorio italiano», whilst Victor Crowther lists 300 oratorios performed there between 1659 and 1730.<sup>1</sup> One important feature of the Bolognese oratorio, noted by Crowther, is the extent to which it was bound up with local pride and patriotism.<sup>2</sup> This is evident not only in the manner in which Bolognese institutions enthusiastically adopted the genre, or the fact that they deliberately chose the work of local composers and poets over imported offerings, even when these were readily available.<sup>3</sup> But it is also evident in the content and subject matter of the oratorios

<sup>1</sup> JULIANE RIEPE, *Gli oratorii di Giacomo Antonio Perti*, «Studi musicali», 22, 1993, p. 119; VICTOR CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna (1650-1730)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> «I would argue that a proper understanding of the development of oratorio in Bologna should take account of civic pride»: V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. V.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Mischiati has published an inventory of the holdings of the library of the Bolognese Oratorians, believed to date from 1682. The «Nota de gli Oratorij in Musica, che sono appresso i PP. della Congregatione dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri di Bologna» lists over 300 oratorios and related genres such as

themselves, which frequently refer to Bologna and her history, providing the citizens with a means of celebrating their city and constructing their national identity.<sup>4</sup> Patriotism is found across a range of types of oratorio, from didactic works based on the lives of local saints, to those that seem as much a celebration of the city as of God. A survey of a number of libretti from the decades around the turn of the eighteenth century reveals some of the ways in which this patriotism manifests itself, allowing an insight into how the oratorio was used to create the image of itself that Bologna wished to convey.

Seventeenth-century Bologna occupied a unique place in the political landscape.<sup>5</sup> Part of the Papal States since 1506, it was ruled by a cardinal legate appointed by Rome. However, it maintained its own system of government, comprising a *Gonfaloniere* and twelve *Anziani*, and was accorded the privilege of sending an ambassador to Rome, something noted by travellers to the city who commented that «Bologna is treated by Rome rather like a

the cantata, including a large number by non-Bolognese (particularly Roman) composers. Added to this is a list of the works donated to the Bolognese Oratorians by their Roman brethren (*Nota delle composizioni Musicali che donò la Congregazione di Roma alla n[ost]ra Congregazione li 22. 9bre 1682*), again featuring a number of oratorios by Roman composers; OSCAR MISCHIATI, *Per la storia dell'Oratorio a Bologna: Tre inventari del 1620, 1622 e 1682*, «Collectanea Historiae Musicae», 3, 1963, pp. 131-170. However, there is no evidence that any of these works were actually performed. According to Crowther, «for Colonna [the maestro di cappella], it seems the Oratory's slender resurces were better spent in encouraging young Bolognese composers than in reviving imported products from Rome»; V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the way in which, on a more local level, Bolognese confraternities used the oratorio to project an image of themselves to the city see JULIANE RIEPE, 'Per gloria del nostro Santissimo Protettore, per propria divotione, e per honore della Compagnia'. Osservazioni sulle esecuzioni di oratori delle confraternite in Italia nel XVII e XVIII secolo, in *L'oratorio musicale italiano e i suoi contesti* (secc. XVII-XVIII), Atti del convegno internazionale (Perugia, 18-20 settembre 1997), a cura di Paola Besutti, Firenze, Olschki, 2002, pp. 341-364: 353-357.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the political situation see CARRIE CHURNSIDE, *A Study of Sacred Cantatas Printed in Bologna (1659-1717)*, Ph. D. Diss., University of Birmingham, 2008, pp. 38-39.

Sister, than a Subject».<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the Bolognese government was limited by the fact that each term of office lasted only two months, the ambassador was mocked as the «ambasciadore della mortadella» and ultimately Rome had the final say in all important decisions.<sup>7</sup> This uneasy relationship with the Eternal City is often reflected in the oratorio repertory: there is deference to their rulers and the home of Catholicism, yet a fierce patriotism and pride in Bologna as an equally ancient and devout city. Similarly, the mixture of the ecclesiastical and secular that was a feature of government was replicated in many parts of everyday life, including the oratorio, which was performed not only in many of the city's numerous religious institutions, but also in the palazzi of the aristocracy and official government buildings. Two main strategies are adopted by poets here: the first is to focus on a local saint; the second to have Bologna as either a character or prominent location in the drama.

The saint most immediately associated with Bologna was its patron saint, Petronius. His presence in the city was unmistakable; the imposing basilica that bears his name and still dominates the piazza maggiore today was the scene of all official civic masses and celebrations, as well as the centre of the city's thriving musical tradition.<sup>8</sup> Giacomo Antonio Perti's *San Petronio preconizzato da*

<sup>6</sup> RICHARD LASSELS, *The Voyage of Italy: or, a Compleat Journey Through Italy*, London, Robert Clavel and Jonathan Robinson, 1686, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> ANTONIO BRIGHETTI, *Bologna e la peste del 1630*, Bologna, Gaggi, 1968, p. 29. John Clenche sums up this unusual balance of power in his travel diary of 1675: «Though they [the Bolognese] Coyn their own money with the Popes Armes upon it, they also impale their own device of Libertas with it; and as a farther mark of liberty, they constantly maintain at Rome an Ambassador, but the Legate lives in greater state amongst them, and at their charge too, having Guards of Horse and Foot which continually attend him, and besides the charge of Vice-Legate and other Officers sends the Pope yearly a hundred thousand crowns clear, which arises from Impositions on Salt and Fish; the Post and the Secretary-Office for senceless Dispensations, &c»; see JOHN CLENCHE, *A Tour in France and Italy, Made by an English Gentleman, 1675*, London, Printed for the author, 1676, pp. 32-33.

<sup>8</sup> SEE ANNE SCHNOEBELEN, *The Concerted Mass at San Petronio in Bologna ca.*

*Dio vescovo di Bologna* of 1720, a setting of a text by Giovanni Battista Rampognani, is a well-known example.<sup>9</sup> It was first performed on Passion Sunday in the church of the Oratorians, Madonna di Galliera, the scene of many of the city's oratorio performances. In their discussions of this work Victor Crowther, Carlo Vitali and Juliane Riepe all emphasise the nationalistic elements; according to Crowther it is «unashamedly a product of Bolognese patriotism».<sup>10</sup> This is evident not only in the subject matter (in which St Peter himself conveys God's will that Petronius take on the archbishopric of the city), but in details that make the fifth-century tale firmly relevant to contemporary audiences: the prominent role of the Bolognese ambassador (a nod to the privilege enjoyed by the eighteenth-century city), and the plot that emphasises the long history of Christianity in the city, at a time when Rome was threatened by the barbarians.<sup>11</sup>

However, whilst musicologists have drawn attention to the obvious patriotism in Perti's work, it is far from being a lone example. Audiences attending Madonna della Galliera the following year would have heard the legend continued where Rampognani left off in another oratorio on the subject: *S. Petronio, Vescovo e Protettore di Bologna*, with a text by Count Antonio Zaniboni and

1660-1730. *A Documentary and Analytical Study*, Ph. D. Diss., University of Illinois, 1966; MARC VANSCHEEUWIJCK, *The Cappella Musicale of San Petronio in Bologna under Giovanni Paolo Colonna (1674-95)*, Brussels, Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> *S. Petronio preconizzato da Dio vescovo di Bologna. Oratorio a 4 voci da cantarsi nella chiesa de' MM. RR. PP. dell'oratorio di S. Filippo Neri detti della Madonna di Galliera la Domenica di Passione. Poesia del Sig. D. Gio: Battista Rampognani. Posto in musica dal Sig. Giacomo Perti Mastro di Cappella della Perinsigne Basilica Collegiata di S. Petronio, & Accademico Filarmonico, Bologna, Pisarri, 1720.* All libretti referred to in this chapter are housed in I-Bc.

<sup>10</sup> V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. 136; CARLO VITALI - JULIANE RIEPE, «To gladden such a beautiful day»: *Town Pride and Stylistic Renovation in Perti's San Petronio*, in GIACOMO ANTONIO PERTI, *San Petronio*, Ensemble Seicentonovecento, dir. Flavio Colusso, Bongiovanni, GB 10004-2, 1990, pp. 4-13.

<sup>11</sup> V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. 2.

music by Giuseppe Maria Buini.<sup>12</sup> The oratorio depicts the saint's arrival in the city, accompanied by the Emperor Theodosius II. Given the subject matter, it is no surprise that both Bologna and her people feature heavily.

As the pair approach the city, Theodosius draws Petronius's attention to the famous «torri altere | e le mura dilette» [*high towers and beloved walls*] that for an eighteenth-century audience (but not the fifth-century protagonists) were the local landmarks for which the city was famous. Zaniboni emphasises Bologna's ancient heritage, with Theodosius describing it as being the home of heroes:

[...] questa tua cittade antica  
Nido d'eroiche genti io tutto impegno  
Il mio poter, la mia corona, il regno.

[*To this your ancient city, home of heroic people do I pledge my power, my crown, the kingdom.*]

Furthermore, it is also home to a devout and faithful population who throng to greet the saint and Theodosius: «gregge amato | Turba fedel, che ad incontrarci arriva» [*beloved flock a faithful crowd who arrive to meet us*]. These come from all different sections of society: magistrates, clergy, the elderly, women and children all clamour to meet him.

[**Teodosio**]

[...] veggo  
Lo stuolo illustre, i magistrati, e quelle  
Candide insegne, e in esse  
La rubiconda croce, e 'l generoso  
Leon, che addita libertà, e valore:

<sup>12</sup> S. Petronio vescovo e protettore di Bologna. Oratorio per musica da cantarsi nella chiesa de' MM. RR. PP. dell'oratorio di S. Filippo Neri detti della Madonna di Galiera la sera della solennità di Tutti li Santi l'anno MDCCXXI. Poesia del sig. Co. Antonio Zaniboni. Musica del Sig. Giuseppe Maria Buini, accademico filarmonico, Bologna, Pisarri, 1721.

Veggo, il clero divoto, e le dilette  
Alme, che scorti al Ciel co' dogmi tuoi,  
Vecchi, donne, fanciulli, in man recando  
Rami di verde ulivo [...]

*[... I see the illustrious crowd, the magistrates, and those candid flags which bear the red cross and the noble lion which indicates freedom and valour; I see the devout clergy and the beloved souls who you guide to heaven with your teachings; the old, women, the young, carrying in their hands green olive branches ...]*

Theodosius first notes the city's rulers; as we have seen, these were a source of great pride to the Bolognese in the eighteenth century. He goes on to explain the significance of the heraldry of the city's flag: the red cross (a reference to the crucifix) underlines their devout nature, whilst the lion represents their freedom. In the fifth, as well as the eighteenth century, Bologna was governed by Rome; having the Roman emperor make a pointed reference to liberty is a reminder that throughout history the Bolognese have maintained a certain level of independence from their rulers. However, Zaniboni nonetheless emphasises the city's long-standing fidelity to Rome, as the crowds rush to pay tribute to Theodosius:

**[San Petronio]**  
Dalla città giuliva  
Escon per tributarti ossequiosi  
Omaggio, e fede i cittadini [...]

*[From the joyful city the citizens come out to pay tribute to you with respect, homage and faith...]*

As a reward for their devotion Saint Petronius describes how the Bolognese will hold a special place in his heart («Te del mio core | nella parte più cara [...] amabile città» [*beloved city [...] you will always hold a dear place in my heart*]); before blessing them with the sign of the cross. The city's long tradition of honouring Petronius, which was carried on with just as much vigour in the eighteenth century, thus grants its inhabitants special favour.

The oratorio has little sense of plot, lacking the three stages of *protasis*, *epitasis* and *catastrophe* that Arcangelo Spagna considered to be requirements of the form.<sup>13</sup> The sole dramatic development is the decision made by Santa Giuliana de' Banzi's son, Lorenzo, to take monastic vows. Giuliana is a local saint whose descendents remained part of the Bolognese aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that members of the Banzi were present at this performance, as Zaniboni (himself a local aristocrat) has Saint Petronius predict the future blessings, both worldly and heavenly, that the family will enjoy:

**[San Petronio]**

[...] bendetta  
Sarà per essa la famiglia intera  
Ne' secoli futuri ognor più chiara  
A principi diletta, e a Dio più cara.

[... *Blessed will be, because of her [Giuliana], the entire family in the coming centuries, becoming even more renowned, a delight to princes, and dearer to God.*]

The story of Petronius is clearly a rich seam for a patriotic text. However, a number of other local *beati* and saints were the subject of oratorios during the period.

<sup>13</sup> ARCANGELO SPAGNA, *Oratorii, ovvero melodrammi sacri con un discorso dogmatico intorno l'istessa materia*, Roma, Gio. Francesco Buagni, 1706; repr. Lucca, LIM, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Giuliana's body is conserved in the city's Santo Stefano church. This was founded by Saint Petronius and modelled on the church of the Holy Sepulchre, which the latter visited when in Jerusalem. Documents in the state archive describe how in 1639-1640 her relics were transferred into a more elaborate casket, in the presence and at the expense of the Banzi family: GIOVAMBATISTA MELLONI, *Atti, o memorie degli uomini illustri in santità nati, o morti in Bologna*, Bologna, Lelio dalla Volpe, 1786, pp. 366, 519-521. Later on in the century Alessandro Banzi was the dedicatee of MAURIZIO CAZZATI's, *Lamento di S. Francesco Saverio per la perdita del suo crocefisso in mare e recuperato da un granchio marino*, Bologna, s.n., 1668. In the dedication (p. 3) the composer makes explicit reference to the fact that the saint is his ancestor: «ch'Elleno c'hanno hereditaria nella loro Casa non meno la Nobilità d'un Sangue Illustre, che la Santità più sublime d'una Santa Giuliana Banzi».

A further two works are based on the lives of figures who, like Giuliana de' Banzi, had descendents who held prominent positions in contemporary Bologna. The first Bolognese oratorio on the subject of a local saint was the anonymous libretto *La Beata Imelde Lambertini Bolognese*, set by Perti in 1686.<sup>15</sup> In the dedication to Senator Cesare Giosepe Lambertini, Perti emphasises that Imelde's acts enhance her family's reputation («il lustro, che riceve la nobilissima Famiglia di V. S. Illustrissima da i raggi di questa Eroina fanciulla») [*the lustre that your most noble family receives from the rays of this young heroine*] and that she ought to be remembered by her «patria». From the very outset of the oratorio her place of birth is emphasised by the anonymous poet:

Qui dove scorre il Reno,  
 E con placidi orgogli,  
 Non so se fenda, o se vezzeggi il seno  
 Di Felsina guerriera,  
 Ebbe Imelde l'onor di cuna altera.

[*Here, where the Reno flows with such serene majesty that one knows not whether it cleaves or caresses the breast of the warrior-maiden Felsina, Imelde had the honour of a high-born cradle.*]<sup>16</sup>

The references to both the river Reno and the Etruscan goddess Felsina are two common devices in the repertory that act as shorthand for particular aspects of Bologna's reputation. The river Reno (whose name derives from «acqua che scorre», here echoed by the poet) is the source of Bologna's fertile land, and thus her reputation as «la Grassa».<sup>17</sup> The goddess Felsina is said to have founded the city, and the Etruscan settlement bore her name. She serves as a reminder of Bologna's ancient heritage, as well as

<sup>15</sup> *La B. Imelde Lambertini bolognese. Oratorio a cinque voci posto in musica da Giacomo Antonio Perti. Dedicato all'Illustrissimo Signor Senatore Cesare Giosepe Lambertini, Marchese del Poggio, Rogniatico, &c., Bologna, Eredi del Sarti, 1686.*

<sup>16</sup> Translation by V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> OTTAVIO MAZZONI TOSELLI, *Origine della lingua italiana*, Bologna, della Volpe, 1831, I, p. 77. The River Reno was a object of some discussion throughout



evoking a time when the city was not ruled by Rome (whether as part of the Roman Empire or the Papal States). Felsina features frequently in artwork of the period, often in a curious mix of Christianity and patriotism, as in the depiction from the *Insignia degli Anziani* of 1599, which shows the goddess watching over Bologna alongside its patron saints Petronius, Francis and Dominic (see Fig. 1).<sup>18</sup> *La Beata Imelde Lambertini* is the straightforward narrative of a young nun who, when denied communion by her priest, miraculously received the Host from heaven. Entirely Counter-Reformation in its devotion to communion, it highlights the steadfast religious devotion of the Bolognese, even in the face of discouragement from others.

Nicolò Albergati is another *beato* from a prominent local family. His descendent, the composer Count Pirro Capacelli Albergati, set to music Rainaldo Mollicia's libretto *L'Iride di Pace, o sia il B. Nicolò Albergati* in 1690.<sup>19</sup> The oratorio depicts Nicolò in his finest moment: negotiating peace between France and England in the 1435 Congress of Aras.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to his eloquence, he also performed a miracle of turning bread into carbon and back again, convincing both parties

the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as various plans were formed with regards to altering its course and its relationship to the River Po. Successive popes issued orders concerning its fate and sent important delegates to make reports, such as the visit in 1693 made by Cardinals D'Adda and Barberini at the behest of Innocent XII. The subject was therefore topical in this period. See FRANCESCO LEOPOLDO BERTOLDI, *Memorie per la storia del Reno di Bologna*, Ferrara, Bianchi e Negri, 1807.

<sup>18</sup> The *Insignia degli Anziani* are an official iconographical record of events in the city, produced once every two months with the change of government. A descriptive catalogue of the illustrations is provided in *Le insignia degli anziani del comune dal 1530 al 1796. Catalogo-inventario*, a cura di Giuseppe Plessi (Ministero dell'Interno, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato 16), Roma, Ministero dell'Interno, 1954.

<sup>19</sup> *L'Iride di Pace, o sia il B. Nicolò Albergati. Oratorio posto in musica dal Co. Pirro Albergati, poesia del Sig. D. Rainaldo Mollicia, cantato nella chiesa de RR. PP. dell'oratorio di S. Filippo Neri la Domenica delle Palme l'anno 1690*, Bologna, Monti, 1690.

<sup>20</sup> See EDITH PÄSZTOR, s.v. «Albergati, Niccolò» in *Dizionario Biografico degli*



Fig. 1 - *Felsina and Saints Petronio, Francesco and Domenico watching over the city.* (Bologna, Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca, *Insignia degli Anziani*, VI bimestre, 1599).  
(Per gentile concessione)

of his divine authority and thus – according to the *argomento*, if not historical fact – managing to effect world peace: «guadagnò l'ossequi alla fede, la riverenza all'ecclesiastica potenza, e la pace à tutto il mondo» [*he gained respect for the faith, reverence for ecclesiastical power and peace for all the world*]. The libretto celebrates an occasion when one of Bologna's sons played an important role on the international stage. In addition Nicolò was acting as the pope's deputy, mirroring the way in which, as the second city of the Papal States, Bologna saw her role in the Catholic Church.

One of the greatest sources of patriotism in this repertory is the life of Santa Caterina de' Vigri. She was remembered for founding the convent of Corpus Domini, which still played a prominent

*Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1,1960; [available at: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/niccolo-albergati\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/niccolo-albergati_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/(Dizionario-Biografico))] [accessed 27 March 2013 and BUONAVENTURA CAVALLO, *Vita del B. Nicolò Albergati. Cardinale di Santa Croce*, Roma, Mascardi, 1654. Albergati was only officially beatified by the Bolognese Pope Benedict XIV in 1744, but was considered *beato* in Bologna long before then.

role in the city. She also featured heavily in the public's imagination during the four decades (from 1669 to 1712) during which the city lobbied for her canonization.<sup>21</sup> Three oratorios are dedicated to her from the period: Albergati's *La B. Catterina da Bologna tentata di solitudine* (1697), *Il trionfo della carità, ovvero S. Caterina da Bologna* (with music by Giuseppe Maria Nelvi and poetry by Ercole Corazzi, 1721) and *La tentazione d'incredulità ch'ebbe S. Caterina da Bologna* (with music by Giacomo Agazini and poetry by Giovanni Battista Neri, 1725).<sup>22</sup> All three draw on Caterina's writings, *Le sette armi spirituali*, in which she detailed her struggles against the devil's temptation.<sup>23</sup> Thus in *La tentazione d'incredulità* the devil tries to convince her that she is unworthy of the Eucharist; in Albergati's oratorio she is tempted into the wilderness before realising that her vocation is in the world, and in *Il trionfo della carità* the devil tries to convince her not to move to Bologna to found *Corpus Domini*. Unsurprisingly, it is the third of these that is the most strident in terms of Bolognese patriotism.

<sup>21</sup> V. CROWTHER, *The Oratorio in Bologna* cit., p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *La B. Caterina da Bologna tentata di solitudine. Oratorio per la solennità di tutti i Santi nella Congregazione di S. Gabriele. Musica del Sig. Co. Pirro Albergati. Poesia del Sig. N. N., Bologna, Eredi del Pisarri, 1697*; (this work was reprinted, after Caterina's canonization, as *Santa Catterina Vigri da Bologna in PIRRO ALBERGATI'S, Cantate, et Oratorii Spirituali a una, due, o tre voci con strumenti [...]. Opera Decima, Bologna, Fratelli Silvani, 1714*); *Il trionfo della carità ovvero S. Caterina da Bologna [...] da cantarsi nella Chiesa de' MM. RR. PP. dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri detti della Madonna di Galliera la sera della Domenica seconda di Quaresima 9 Marzo 1721 festa insieme della Santa suddetta. Poesia del Reverendissimo Padre Abate Don Ercole Corazzi Olivetano, Pubblico Lettore nell'università di Bologna. Musica del Sig. Giuseppe Maria Nelvi, Bologna, Costantino Pisarri, 1721*; *La tentazione d'incredulità ch'ebbe Santa Caterina da Bologna [...] da cantarsi nella chiesa de' MM. RR. Padri dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri detti della Madonna di Galliera. Poesia del sig. dottore Gio. Battista Neri, musica del sig. D. Giacomo Agazini, Bologna, Costantino Pisarri, 1725*. For a discussion of an annotated manuscript libretto of *Il trionfo della carità* and the relationship between librettist and composer in the genesis of the work see CARRIE CHURNSIDE, *Text-Music Relations in the Early Settecento: The Case of Il trionfo della carità*, «Ars Lyrica», 21, 2012, pp. 41-69.

<sup>23</sup> GIACOMO GRASSETTI, *Vita della B. Caterina da Bologna [...] aggiuntovi le armi necessarie alla battaglia spirituale composte da detta beata*, Bologna, Herede del Benacci, 1652.

Corazzi is at pains to demonstrate Caterina's Bolognese nationality and the fact that it was God's will she return to the city of her birth. Thus it is the devil's sole purpose to ensure that Caterina fails to return to her hometown, and he urges his demons to prevent her from doing so:

**[Lucifero]**

Preparatevi pur, fidi ministri,  
Armati d'empietà, d'odio, e d'inganni,  
Per abbatter la Vigri,  
Affin ch'ella non torni al patrio Reno  
Con quella carità, che nutre in seno.

*[Prepare yourselves, then, faithful servants, armed with wickedness, hate and tricks, to bring down la Vigri, so that she may not return to her native Reno with the charity that she nurtures in her heart.]*

In direct opposition, however, is an angel who predicts that the Lord has destined great glory for Caterina by the banks of the Reno: «La gloria si vedrà | In te del mio Signor | Sul picciol Reno» [*The glory of my Lord will be seen in you on the banks of the little Reno*]. Once the saint realises that the seemingly pious man offering her advice is in fact the devil in disguise, Caterina asserts her intentions of returning to her «dolce patria», where she finds herself miraculously cured of the illness that had plagued her for years. Meanwhile the effect of the saint's arrival on the city is dramatic, bringing an end to civil war:

**[Angelo]**

Eccoti giunta al fine  
Tra le Felsinee mura,  
Per ubbidire il Cielo,  
E consolar della tua patria i voti  
Ed ecco in lei cessate al tuo apparire  
L'aspre guerre civili, e spente l'ire.

*[Here you are, arrived at last amongst the walls of Felsina, to obey heaven and bring consolation to the prayers of your home town; and here the bitter civil wars have stopped at your appearance, and the anger is now spent.]*

Caterina's uncorrupted body remains in Bologna to this day («Così la Patria allora | Ti avrà viva nel Cielo, e in Terra ancora») [*Thus your home town will have you alive in heaven and still on earth*], and the final part of the oratorio outlines the fame and renown she brings the city. She expresses her wish that her own love for her *patria* may grant her fellow citizens a special place in God's favour:

[S. Caterina]

Altro più non mi resta,  
Che bramare per sempre alla mia patria  
Un vero, e vivo amore  
Verso il mio Redentore...  
E che l'anime tutte...  
Per grazia del mio Dio sien custodite.

[*Nothing remains but for me to desire that my hometown always has a true and deep love towards my Redeemer ... and that all of the souls..., by the grace of my God, may be taken care of.*]

The saint also attracts more worldly recognition. As an angel predicts, Caterina's body becomes a pilgrimage destination, attracting «da strani luoghi, e più remote [...] fedeli innumerabili» [*from strange and remote places [...] countless numbers of the faithful*]. These include «le famose regine» who «cingeran col lor diadema il crine» [*the famous queens [who] put their diadems on your head*]. This is a reference to the fifteenth-century Queen Isabella of Naples and her daughter-in-law Ippolita, both of whom made a pilgrimage to *Corpus Domini* to pay homage to Caterina's body, symbolically offering the saint their crowns.<sup>24</sup> Corazzi's libretto thus highlights the role that the city played in Caterina's sainthood, as well as the divine favour and worldly fame that Bologna enjoys through her.

<sup>24</sup> For a full account see GIACOMO GRASSETTI, *Vita di S. Caterina da Bologna [...]* Aggiuntavi l'opera delle armi necessarie alla battaglia spiritual [...] E di più ancora tutta la Narrativa delle Funzioni fattesi in Bologna, in occasione della di Lei Canonizzazione [...], Bologna, Sassi, 1724, pp. 215-218.

In addition to oratorios on the lives of local saints, there are also others in which Bologna features either as a character in the drama, or the action is explicitly set in the city. It is in these works that the line between sacred and secular is perhaps most blurred.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly true of *Felsina protetta dalla Beata Vergine* (music by Antonio Maria Fornasini, poetry Antonio Zaniboni) from 1706.<sup>26</sup> Written in celebration of a religious festival, the Vigil of the Annunciation, it was – like a number of contemporary oratorios and sacred cantatas – performed in a secular location, in this case the seat of the Bolognese government («la sala annessa alla capella degli [...] anziani»), at the instigation of the government (the *famiglia palatina*).<sup>27</sup> The *Insignia degli Anziani* contains a depiction of a concert held for the Annunciation the previous year in the «sala d’Ercole», which may well be the same ‘room attached to the chapel of the Anziani’ in which *Felsina protetta dalla Beata Vergine* was performed (see Fig. 2). Both instrumentalists and singers are clearly visible on the stage, so it is very possible that the work they

<sup>25</sup> Other related examples include the secular *Il Reno sacrificante* (music by Girolamo Giacobbi and text by Ridolfo Campeggi, 1617) and *Felsina grata* (music by Francesco Maria Farnè, text by Tommaso Cervioni, 1697). The latter is particularly interesting given that it was written for a religious archconfraternity, SS. Sebastiano e Rocco, and celebrates the city’s salvation from the plague of 1631 through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, yet is entirely secular in tone.

<sup>26</sup> *Felsina protetta dalla Beata Vergine. Poesia d’Antonio Zaniboni, musica del Sig. Antonio Maria Fornasini, Da cantarsi nella sala annessa alla capella degli Illustrissimi, & Eccelsi Signori Anziani di Bologna la sera delli 24. Marzo Vigilia della Santissima Annunziata, per la festa della Miracolosa Immagine della B. V. Liberatrice della nostra Patria, dal Terremoto, celebrata decorosamente dalla Famiglia Palatina di detti Illustrissimi Signori, Bologna, Pisarri, 1706.*

<sup>27</sup> See FRANCESCO LONGHI, *Informazione alli forestieri delle cose più notabili della città, e stato di Bologna*, Bologna, Longhi, 1773, p. 38. I use the term ‘oratorio’ here, although none of the libretti actually bear this genre designation on their frontpage (the term is used in the *prologo* of *Felsina protetta*). Each is divided into two and has parts for four characters, as is common for the oratorio in this period, yet there is equally a case for considering them as sacred cantatas (see C. CHURNSIDE, *Sacred Cantatas Printed in Bologna* cit., pp. 43-44). Regardless of genre labels, their depiction of Bologna is nonetheless relevant to the present discussion.

are performing is an oratorio or sacred cantata. There is a sizeable audience including members of the nobility of both sexes and numerous other spectators on foot. Both civic and ecclesiastical authority are represented, as the archbishop (Giacomo Boncompagni) sits in pride of place, flanked by the Anziani.

The introductory material in printed libretti gives us an important insight into the tradition of the Anziani oratorios.<sup>28</sup> As the title page of *Felsina protetta dalla Beata Vergine* states, the Vigil of the Annunciation was also a local feast day: «la festa della Miracolosa Immagine della B. V. Liberatrice della nostra Patria». The libretto of the following year's oratorio, *Santa Maria Liberatrice dal terremoto*

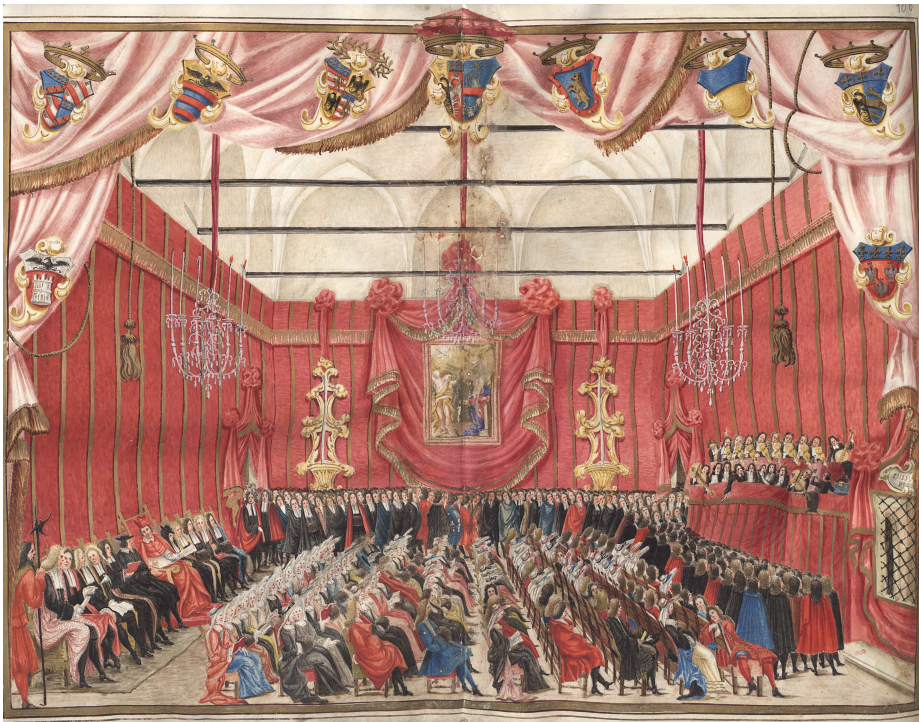


Fig. 2 - Concert held in the Sala d'Ercole to celebrate the Annunciation in 1705. (Bologna, Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca, *Insignia degli Anziani*, II bimestre 1705). (Per gentile concessione)

<sup>28</sup> Surviving evidence only documents this tradition taking place in the years 1704-1707, the earliest Anziani oratorio being *Gli oracoli della grazia*. *Poesia del sig. Tomaso Stanzani, musica del Signor Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni, organista de' RR.*

to (poetry: Giuseppe Carlo Maggi; music Antonio Maria Fornasini, 1707) explains the feast in greater detail, as well as including a drawing of the icon, in which Mary watches over the city, offering her protection, with the infant Christ in her arms (see Fig. 3).<sup>29</sup> The prefatory matter describes how in 1505, after a terrible earthquake, the Anziani commissioned an image of the Virgin Mary to give thanks for the city's deliverance. As the years passed the picture was forgotten, but it was rediscovered and rescued from obscurity by the Anziani of 1685, who moved it to the altar of their chapel



Fig. 3 - GIUSEPPE CARLO MAGGI - ANTONIO MARIA FORNASINI, *Santa Maria Liberatrice dal Terremoto*, Frontispiece, (Bologna, 1707).  
(Per gentile concessione)

PP. Agostiniani di S. Giacomo, *accademico filarmonico*, da cantarsi nella sala annessa alla Capella degl' *Illustrissimi, Eccelsi Signori Anziani* di Bologna. Dedicata alla gloriosissima Vergine Maria Liberatrice dal Terremoto la sera del 24 marzo 1704 antecedente alla festa della Santissima Annunziata solennità decorosamente celebrata dalla famiglia Palatina di detti Signori, Bologna, Erede del Benacci, 1704. However, given the fact that both scores and libretti of oratorios frequently do not survive today, this is not to say that the tradition did not last for a longer period.

<sup>29</sup> *Santa Maria Liberatrice dal Terremoto*. Poesia di Giuseppe Carlo Maggi. Musica



«dove ora pubblicamente si venera» [*where now it is publically revered*].<sup>30</sup> This oratorio tradition is a perfect example of a marriage of civic pride and religious devotion: both works laud the city as much as Mary, and by celebrating the image of the Madonna dal Terremoto they are in fact praising the Anziani's role in both commissioning the image and reinstating it. This is most explicit in *Santa Maria Liberatrice Dal Terremoto*, which concludes with Penitenza recalling the «memorabil anno» [*memorable year*] in which the Anziani chose the artist who painted the icon. Initially this was the scene of private worship («Ricevè nel primier privato sito | Privati voti») [*It received in the first private site, private prayers*], but its transference to a public site in the chapel during the seventeenth century meant that the wider city had access to it. The Anziani thus allowed the people of Bologna to give thanks to the Virgin and remember her intervention during the city's hour of need: «con generoso | Trasporto esposto a le Felsinee Genti | Of-

*del Sig. Antonio Maria Fornasini, da cantarsi nella sala annessa alla Cappella de gli Illustrissimi, ed Eccelsi Signori Anziani di Bologna per la festa della miracolosa immagine della B. Vergine Liberatrice dal Terremoto, decorosamente celebrata il giorno della Santissima annunziata dalla Famiglia Palatina di detti illustrissimi signori, Bologna, Pulzoni, 1707.*

<sup>30</sup> Masini describes the scale of the earthquake in some detail, as well as the city's reaction, which was to turn to God to ask for deliverance: «Del 1504 cominciò di notte tempo à tremare la terra, e durò quel tremore circa un quarto d' hora, facendo assai danno alle Case per la Citta; passato un giorno, cioè adì 2. Genaro 1505, il Terremoto cinque volte in un' hora si rinforzò sempre più gagliardo, cadette parte della Torre de' Bentivogli, e la merlatura della facciata del Palazzo, 32. merli del Palazzo nuovo del Commune di Bologna, la cupola, e merli della Torre Asinella, meza la Torre de' Servi, e molt'altre ancora, ruinando quantità di Chiese, Palazzi, e Case, e durò 40 giorni, che d' ogn' hora si vedevano nuove ruine di guastamenti di Chiese, Torri, Palazzi, e patirono quasi tutte le Case de' Cittadini, li quali per fuggir la morte, non guardando alla rigida stagion Vernale, habitavano fuori delle Case ne' Giardini, e luoghi scoperti, sotto le Trabacche, e Padiglioni, & altri nelle Botti da Vino; si fecero processioni con la Madonna di S. Luca, e molte Reliquie, passando tutto il Carnevale in devotioni, e continue Orationi. Laonde i Terremoti s' andarono sempre sminuendo, sì che alla fine di Maggio furono cessati del tutto»; ANTONIO DI PAOLO MASINI, *Bologna Perlustrata, Terza impressione notabilmente accresciuta*, Bologna, Benacci, 1666, p. 573.

frongli ossequiosi | Tributo i Cuor» [*with generous transport displayed to the Bolognese people, who offer it reverently their hearts in tribute*]. The work as a whole concludes in praise of both the Virgin and the Bolognese government.

The Anziani oratorio of 1706, *Felsina protetta dalla Beata Vergine*, has abstractions as characters. Felsina's happiness is threatened by Guerra, undoubtedly a concern for the city with Europe in the grip of the War of Spanish Succession.<sup>31</sup> Encouraged by Zelo, Felsina continues to place her faith in the Virgin Mary, ultimately leading to Guerra's defeat. Several characteristics that were a source of pride for the Bolognese are highlighted in this work. The first is the Bolognese musical tradition. Music plays an important part in Felsina's celebration of the Assumption:

[Felsina]

Di gioir tra suoni, e canti  
Già risolvo in questo dì ...  
Rispondan d'ogni intorno  
A' miei giulivi accenti,  
I musici concenti

[*I have resolved to celebrate this day with playing and singing  
... The harmonious musicians respond to my merry accents*]

This is both an obvious reference to Bologna's famous musicians and a description of the oratorio taking place at that very moment: Felsina is literally singing about singing in praise of the Assumption.<sup>32</sup> Guerra questions Felsina's decision to continue singing when war is impending, but Felsina merely responds by inciting the singers to keep making music: «[...] seguite | O voi del picciol Ren saggi cantori | Il diletto a spiegar di tutti i cori» [*... follow O you wise singers from the little Reno, follow in spreading delight to all*]

<sup>31</sup> The frequent calls for peace that occur in the oratorios of this period were not limited to this genre; the *Insignia degli Anziani* of the same year (1706) includes an «allegoria della pace di cui gode Bologna tra le guerre divampanti in Italia e in Europa»: cfr. *Le Insignia degli Anziani* cit., p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> It is a common conceit in *poesia per musica* for authors to write poetry

hearts]. Later on Favore Divino commends the act of «i cittadin divoti» [*devout citizens*] gathering together to praise Mary with music:

Entro la nobil corte osserva come  
Sudita riverenza  
Festeggia in questo punto  
Le più fauste memorie  
Di sua liberatrice  
[...]  
Tributando al suo nome, e suoni, e canti.

[*Within the noble court observe how a subject, in an act of reverence, celebrates in this way the most happy memories of her deliverer [...] offering in tribute to her name both playing and singing.*]

Furthermore Zelo instructs Felsina to «Consagra i tuoi pensieri, i tuoi accenti | Carmi, Cantì, Armonie, Suoni, e Concerti» [*Dedicate your thoughts, your words, hymns, songs, harmonies, playing and accord*] to the Virgin. The frequent references to music are, of course, a way of legitimating the very idea of sacred vocal music, but the fact that they are universally directed towards Felsina is undoubtedly meant to emphasize the very strong Bolognese tradition in the field of sacred music.

Unsurprisingly, given the circumstances for which it was written, the work also highlights the city's fidelity to Mary. Marian devotion is, of course, common throughout the repertory, but it is expressed here in particularly local terms. Felsina asks Mary to protect the city from its enemies, just as she did from the 1505 earthquake, thereby reminding the listeners of the anniversary they are celebrating «quel braccio, che usato | A stabilire il suolo | Tremolo, e vacillante [...]» [*that arm, which you used to calm the trembling and unstable earth...*]. Later in the work Favore Divino makes reference

that draws attention to what the singer is doing: see MARGARET MURATA, *Singing about Singing, or the Power of Music Sixty Years Later*, in *In cantu et in sermone: For Nino Pirrotta on his 80th Birthday*, a cura di Fabrizio Della Seta e Franco Piperno, Firenze, Olschki, 1989, pp. 363-382.

to a local Marian icon that was held in high regard by the Bolognese: the famous Madonna di San Luca, housed in a sanctuary atop Monte della Guardia, just outside the city walls. In 1505 the Madonna di San Luca was carried in procession around the city as the citizens prayed for deliverance from the seemingly never-ending earthquakes.<sup>33</sup> Here Favore Divino states that the Madonna di San Luca will protect and defend the city:

**[Favore Divino]**

In lei ravvisa al fin, che stà sul monte,  
 Le tue guardie, e difese armate, e pronte.  
 La regina a cui sul colle  
 Ergi il soglio  
 Ti difende.

*[Recognise in the end, in Her who is on the mountain, your guards and defences, armed and ready. The queen who you raise on a throne on the hill defends you.]*

Later on she describes the great number of images of the Madonna throughout Bologna; there are «cento imagini, e mille | appese in ogni lato | della bella cittade» [*and thousands of images hung everywhere in this beautiful city*] which ensure that «i cittadin divoti | del divino favor sicuri, e certi» [*the devout citizens are sure and certain of divine favour*].

The countless references to the special regard in which Bologna is viewed by heaven because of its devotion are not limited to the Anziani oratorios. In 1701 the Congregazione di Mantova attached to the Carmelite church of S. Martino Maggiore promoted the oratorio *La pietà trionfante in Bologna* (poetry by F. Elia Vajani; music by Giacomo Goccini).<sup>34</sup> Here it is the Virgin Mary herself who declares her special devotion to the city, pledging to have the watchfulness of an 'Argus of love' as she protects them: «O Felsina diletta, | Per tua pietà 'l mio core | Sarà per te nel Ciel Argo d'amore» [O

<sup>33</sup> A. MASINI, *Bologna perlustrata* cit., p. 575 [see fn. 30].

<sup>34</sup> *La pietà trionfante in Bologna a' sollievo de fedeli defonti. Oratorio per musica*

*beloved Felsina, for your piety my heart will be an Argus of love in heaven for you*].<sup>35</sup> The oratorio closes with an unashamedly patriotic chorus, with heaven resounding to cries of 'long live Bologna!': «S'oda in Ciel sempr'ecchegiare | "Viva pur Felsina viva!"» [*One hears in heaven echoing forever: "long live Bologna!"*].

In a city in which the sacred and civic intermingled at virtually every level, it is unsurprising that a similar mixture is also found in the oratorios. Whether by choosing local saints, including Felsina as a character, or making reference to the contemporary city, there are numerous examples in which praise of Bologna is given just as much prominence as any religious message. Time and time again audiences were made aware that their devotion to figures such as Saint Petronius and Caterina de' Vigri, or icons such as the Madonna di Terremoto or the Madonna di San Luca, would grant them special favour. Depictions of passages from history when Bologna remained loyal to Rome yet retained its freedom reflect the peculiar balance of power that characterized the city throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Oratorios were also a means of complimenting prominent figures in contemporary society, whether those whose ancestors had attained renown for their holiness, or the government itself for its actions in promoting devotion amongst the people. References to music-making are a reminder of the strong tradition of church music, of which the city was rightly proud. The survival of a relatively large number of libretti makes Bologna a convenient case study, but similar themes and poetical

*composto dal M. R. P. Maestro F. Elia Vajani de Borghi [...] Posto in musica dal Sig. Giacomo Goccini [...] e cantato nella chiesa de MM. RR. PP. Carmelitani di S. Martino Maggiore la domenica seconda di novembre precedente il solito annuo Ufficio Generale de confratelli e consorelle del Carmine, Bologna, Peri, 1701. The «annuo officio» to which the titlepage refers is described by Masini: «Alla Chiesa di S. Martino maggiore de' Padri Carmelitani della Congregazione di Mantova, il primo Mercordi non impedito dopo la festa di S. Martino si fa la solenne Commemorazione de' Fedeli Defonti della Compagnia del Carmine, & il dopo pranso, con l'espositione del Santissimo Sacramento si sermoneggia»; A. MASINI, *Bologna perlustrata* cit., p. 520.*

<sup>35</sup> In this work Felsina is no longer a character, but is used here to refer to the city itself.

strategies were undoubtedly adopted in oratorios produced throughout Italy during the period. Bologna's unique position as the second city of the Papal States did, however, make the genre particularly appropriate as a means of projecting an image of itself as a devout city that enjoyed heaven's favour.