



Editorial

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‘Adi 26 ... obris 1742 (1712?) d’ordine della Sig. N.N. feci questa memoria e la Sig.ra teneva il lume’.¹ We can imagine a woman, holding a candle or a lantern, and another person – a man –, engraving a few words on a wall or, more precisely, on a door jamb. The setting of this scene is a room on the ground floor of the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino, currently mainly used for temporary exhibitions (the Palace is today the home of the National Gallery of the Marche Region). The writing explains the circumstances of its production, which is rather unusual, even exceptional, I would say. It also explains its purpose: it was a record, a memento (of sexual intercourse, by the way). This is less uncommon: other wall writings, too, explicitly state that they were written to leave a memento: ‘Adi 6 Agosto 1565 a memoria di un grave e giusto sdegno’.² In others such an aim is not explicit, but can be gleaned from a variety of features (the presence of a date, the content, sometimes also, at least in part, the form and the position). However, those writings and drawings which were not written to leave a (long-lasting) memento but for other purposes – for instance the lines that almost certainly were the scores of a game – also represent clues to past lives.

If scholars respond to the call for memory-keeping of these writings and drawings and, more generally, take them seriously, these almost forgotten scribbles that for centuries have been waiting to be photographed, copied, catalogued, filed and studied turn into an archive: a huge archive, in fact. The walls, columns, door frames and lintels of the Palace carry thousands of drawings, symbols, names, dates, sentences in Italian, Latin, French, German, Spanish ... Most of the drawings and writings have been carved using sharp instruments; they are literally graffiti. Others have been made using charcoal, red chalk, ink, pencil, ball-point pens. The oldest dates found so far are from the mid-fifteenth century: in the Terrazzo del Gallo it is possible to read, ‘AD 1453’. This even predates the building of the palace as we see it today since, according to existing documents, architectural work began in 1454, although it proceeded by incorporating older buildings.

¹ ‘Today 26 October 1742 (1712?) I wrote this memento by order of Lady N.N. and the Lady held the light’. Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

² ‘Today 6 August 1565 in memory of a serious and just indignation’.

The most recent are from the present, and (obviously) were made evading the surveillance of the palace staff (Sarti 2009, 52; Sarti *et al.* 2017, 28).

Although some wall writings from the Palace were already mentioned in nineteenth-century guides of the city and in later studies,³ systematic analysis started only in the late 1990s (Sarti 2017, 177-180) and is far from being complete, due to the huge number of writings and drawings (maybe as many as 5,000) and the problems arising from the difficulty of cataloguing them: there are often dozens of scribbles overlapping each other; because of this and other reasons (the vanishing of the material used for writing and drawing, the deterioration of the walls, refurbishing work), many of them are no longer readable or clearly visible. Furthermore, on walls now whitewashed there certainly were (and are) other writings and drawings, as shown where the paint has been removed.

Research carried out so far has resulted in the publication of some scholarly essays (Sarti 2007, 2009) and a short article published online addressing a larger audience (Sarti 2011), followed by an MA dissertation in Cultural Heritage Photography (Marraccini 2015). More recently, it has led to an exhibition,⁴ the publication of its catalogue,⁵ a virtual tour,⁶ a conference that aimed at creating an arena where the case of Urbino could be compared with others and contextualised within research on what is generally defined as historical graffiti, which offered researchers from a different background but interested in the subject an opportunity for exchange and discussion. The conference, which focused on writings in palaces and castles on the one hand and on rocks on the other, paid particular attention to the variety of writings and, to a lesser extent, drawings, to the categories used to study them and to the state of the art of research on the subject. Furthermore, it discussed ways of enhancing the value of historical graffiti as cultural heritage and preserving historical sites from vandalism without completely interrupting the tradition of writing on them (*Pietre, castelli e palazzi da leggere nell'Europa medievale e moderna / Stones, Castles and Palaces to be Read in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Urbino, University of Urbino, 15-17 May 2017).⁷ The reflections elaborated by the researchers who attended the Conference can be considered a starting point for the project which is at the basis of the present volume.

The research on the wall writings and drawings of the Palazzo Ducale and its linked activities, which have also had a certain resonance in the mass-media (for instance Smargiassi 2017a, 2017b), have contributed and are contributing not only to making the graffiti of the Palace (better) known among researchers, but also to raising attention to them from outside the scholarly world. An entire section of the Lonely Planet tourist guide now deals with them;⁸

³ Gherardi and Gherardi 1890, 85; Rossi and Peruzzi 1967; Batini 1968, 14; Olsen 1971, 48; Fontebuoni 1985, *passim*; Bernini, 2000, 42; Dal Poggetto 2003, 184.

⁴ *La pietra racconta. Un palazzo da leggere / Stone with a Story. Reading the Palace*, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino, 29 March – 21 Mai 2017, <<http://www.gallerianazionalemarche.it/la-pietra-racconta-un-palazzo-da-leggere-29-marzo-21-maggio-2017/>>; <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/home/archives/9159>>, accessed 10 January 2020. See Marraccini and Rachiele in this volume. The exhibition was held in the very rooms on whose walls many of the graffiti illustrated in the tables set up for that occasion are engraved, including the one mentioned at the beginning of this *Editorial* (and not included in the exhibition).

⁵ The catalogue was published by the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Isia, Urbino and the Università degli Studi of Urbino; see Sarti *et al.* 2017.

⁶ <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/>>, accessed 10 January 2020. See Rachiele in this special issue.

⁷ The programme is available on <<http://www.people.uniurb.it/RaffaellaSarti/Pietre,%20castelli%20e%20palazzi%20da%20leggere-Stones,%20Castles,%20Palaces%20to%20be%20read-Urbino,%2015-17.05.2017.pdf>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁸ 'Le cronache minime sui muri del Palazzo Ducale' ('The minimal chronicles on the walls of Palazzo Ducale', Bassi 2016, Kindle position 4950). In the Italian version of the Lonely Planet Guide, the description of a graffiti

they are addressed as part of the activities organised by the Gallery for the children of the local schools;⁹ some of them were discussed in a TV documentary on Urbino by the well-known Italian journalist and populariser Alberto Angela,¹⁰ to mention only some examples.

While the case of Urbino has some peculiar features, especially thanks to the exhibition and the creation of the virtual tour, a growing interest towards wall writings and drawings – usually called graffiti – can be recorded in many other contexts, in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas. Research is carried out by people ranging from simple lovers of the cultural heritage of their cities, towns, villages and the environment, to highly specialised researchers: archaeologists, palaeographers, historians, art historians, anthropologists, ethnologists, and so on. Several associations, websites, blogs, digital museums, have been created;¹¹ many conferences have been and are going to be organised,¹² and plenty of books, special issues of journals and collections of essays have been and are going to be published.¹³

Surfing among all these webpages and publications we realise that the label ‘graffiti’ is used to address an enormous variety of human expressions of creativity, religiosity, emotions, desire or need for communication, protest etc., from the most remote antiquity to the present, from prehistoric rock art to spray paint graffiti. Some authors deal with a variety of types in a single book, both popular and academic, reinforcing the idea that they all belong to this broad category.¹⁴ For instance, the *Popular History of Graffiti* by Fiona McDonald, aims ‘to look at as many aspects and types of graffiti as possible, from the distant past to the most up-to-date practices’ (2013, Kindle position 53), and encompasses chapters ranging from prehistoric graffiti to ‘Sidewalk Art, Reverse Graffiti, installations, and even performance and mixed

referring to the authorities in Urbino around 1660 is inaccurate; for a detailed description of it see Sarti 2017, 90-93. See also <<http://www.isiurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/10-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁹ Palazzo Ducale di Urbino 2018-2019, 34-35.

¹⁰ *Meraviglie. La penisola dei tesori - Tra vette e colline: da Urbino al Monte Bianco*, Italy, season 2019, <<https://www.raiplay.it/video/2019/04/Meraviglie-La-penisola-dei-tesori-Tra-vette-e-colline-da-Urbino-al-Monte-Bianco-a6d2c9f5-f64f-49fd-93a6-89bba967afca.html>>, accessed 10 January 2020, from minute 17:20 onwards.

¹¹ <<http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/>>; <<https://grga.fr/>>; <<https://graffiti.monuments-nationaux.fr/>>; <<http://www.memoiredesmurs.com/musee-graffiti-anciens.html>>; <<https://elgrafitohistorico.wordpress.com/>>; <<https://historischegrffiti.wordpress.com/author/pollyglotta/page/2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020, etc.

¹² For instance, *Historische Graffiti als Quellen - Methoden und Perspektiven eines jungen Forschungsbereichs*, Institut für Klassische Archäologie der LMU München, 20-22 April 2017, <https://www.hgw.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/archiv/archiv_termine/workshop_graffiti1/index.html> (see Lohmann in this volume); *Inquisizione e testimonio - Graffiti, iscrizioni e disegni delle carceri di Palermo*, Palermo, 14 June 2017, <<https://www.unipa.it/Convegno-internazionale-Inquisizione-e-testimonio---Graffiti-iscrizioni-e-disegni-delle-carceri-di-Palermo/>>; *Making Your Mark: The First National Symposium for the Study of Historic Graffiti*, The University of Southampton, 5 October 2019, <<http://historicgraffiti.co.uk/>>; *Stone canvas. Towards a better integration of Rock Art and Graffiti studies in Egypt and Sudan*, Cairo, IFAO and PCMA, 10-11 November 2019 <<https://www.fasticongressuum.com/single-post/2019/04/13/CALL-30052019-Stone-canvas-Towards-a-better-integration-of-Rock-Art-and-Graffiti-studies-in-Egypt-and-Sudan--Cairo-Egypt>>; *22nd International Glyptographic Conference, Stone stories across Europe: study and valorization of stones' marks and signs*, Larnaca, Cyprus, 29 June-4 July 2020, <https://www.academia.edu/39054630/extended_deadline_cfp_stone_stories_across_europe_study_and_valorization_of_stones_marks_and_signs>, accessed 10 January 2020.

¹³ See Fleming, Castillo Gómez and Lohmann in this volume. Among the publications of the last few years (2015-2020) see Bérroujon 2015; Giovè Marchioli 2015; Lovata and Olton 2016; Romero Medina 2015a; Castillo Gómez 2016; Reyes Téllez and Viñuales Ferreiro 2016; Mélard *et al.* 2016; Civale 2017, 2018; Fiume 2017a, 2017b; Bertamoni and Ghidotti 2018; Champion and Williams 2017; Demesticha *et al.* 2017; Dirven and van Gelder 2018; Errani and Palma 2018; Fiume and García-Arenal 2018a, 2018b; Lohmann 2018; Ragazzoli *et al.* 2018a; Sarti 2018; Schulz 2018; Stern 2018.

¹⁴ One of the first books to propose a long-term history of graffiti was Reisner 1971.

media art' (2013, Kindle position 2218).¹⁵ Cave painting, petroglyphs, *rongorongo* (pieces of wood with symbols and pictures on them) from Easter Island, the Rosetta Stone, chalk figures, writings by Russian soldiers on the German *Reichstag* from the Second World War and many others are all included in the book. At a different level, to mention another case, an academic collection such as Lovata and Olton's *Understanding Graffiti* gathers multidisciplinary studies also ranging from prehistory to the present. Their aim, in this case, 'is to show how insightful scholars from different disciplines and perspectives approach and understand graffiti. Rather than defining what graffiti is or is not' the fifteen chapters 'demonstrate the varieties of contemporary practice in analyzing the expression (known as graffiti)' (2015, 11). While the book has chapters on prehistoric Peru and anti-nuclear activists (see Pozorski and Pozorski 2015; Beck *et al.* 2015, to mention only two), it is also interesting to approach the issue from a historical perspective, trying to understand where the term graffiti comes from. 'Graffiti' spread to other languages from Italian. In Italian 'graffito' means 'carved' or 'engraved' and was originally used as an adjective. In 1840, for instance, Achille Gennarelli published a discourse on graffiti Etruscan mirrors, i.e. mirrors on which words were engraved (Gennarelli 1840). As a noun, graffiti was used at least as early as the 1840s-1850s to describe wall writings and drawings of ancient Pompeii. In 1841, Francesco Maria Avellino, dealing with such matters, used it as a noun in some passages, although still employing it mainly as an adjective.¹⁶ Some years later, Raffaele Garrucci in a sense canonised its use as a noun, entitling his rather influential book *Graffiti de Pompéi: inscriptions et gravures tracées au stylet* (1856).¹⁷ As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, and possibly even earlier, the term was also employed in relation to carved writings and drawings from the Middle Ages (Coulton 1915; Styger 1915, 106; Fasiolo 1915, 206) and Early Modern times (Styger 1915, 106);¹⁸ then it later came to describe those dating from later times.¹⁹

¹⁵ 'Prehistoric Graffiti' (chapter 1); 'Graffiti in Ancient Civilizations' (chapter 2); 'Medieval Graffiti' (chapter 3); 'Graffiti Up Until the Twentieth Century' (chapter 4); 'Modern Day Graffiti' (chapter 5); 'Street Art and Urban Artists' (chapter 6); 'Beyond Traditional Graffiti' (chapter 7).

¹⁶ See Avellino 1841, 8: 'Questa visiera pure sembra che siesi accennata nel nostro graffito pompeiano' ('This visor also seems to be outlined in our Pompeian graffiti').

¹⁷ Garrucci had started to focus on these writings because he aimed at establishing the origins of cursive script. He explained in his book that the first inscriptions he defined graffiti had been documented in the *Journal des fouilles* in 1765 and provided the readers with a detailed survey of the later studies which recorded and analysed some of them: 'Les premières données relatives aux graffiti de Pompéi se trouvent dans le *Journal des fouilles* (1). Ce journal publié par les ordres du gouvernement était formé des procès-verbaux que le préposé aux fouilles devait adresser chaque jour et chaque semaine au ministre de la maison du roi ... La première inscription au stylet, rapportée dans le *Journal des fouilles*, se trouve dans le n° du 18 octobre 1765: cette date précède de vingt-huit ans celle de la première publication spéciale concernant les inscriptions *cursives* de Pompéi, puisque celle-ci parut à Nuremberg, ainsi que nous le verrons, en 1792 et 1793' (1856, 8). ('The first data on graffiti in Pompeii can be found in the *Journal des fouilles*. This journal, published on the orders of the government, was made up of the minutes that the official responsible for the excavations had to send daily and weekly to the minister of the king's house ... The first stylus-made inscription reported in the *Journal des fouilles* can be found in the number of 18 October 1765: that is twenty-eight years earlier than the first publication focussing on the cursive inscriptions of Pompeii, since this one appeared in Nuremberg, as we shall see, in 1792 and 1793'). According to Lohmann (2018, 4-5), the word 'graffiti' started to be used in the eighteenth century; Milnor 2014, 21 stresses the role of Garrucci in popularising it. See also Ragazzoli *et al.* (2018a, 1-2). Pompeii's wall writings and drawings are the object of numerous studies; besides those already mentioned, see for instance, Canali and Cavallo 1991; Weeber 1996; Baird and Taylor 2010; Hunink 2013.

¹⁸ On medieval graffiti see for instance Pritchard 1967; Trentin 2010-2011; Miglio and Tedeschi 2012; Tedeschi 2012; Champion 2015; Champion and Williams 2017.

¹⁹ Kraack and Lingens 2001; Tedeschi 2014. For publications of the years 2015-2020 see note 13; among earlier publications not yet mentioned see for instance Pugliese Carratelli 1997; Gimeno Blay and Mandingorra Llavata 1997; Fleming 2001; Northoff 2005; Guichard 2014.

Furthermore, while the first uses of the term referred to Italy, in later times it was employed to refer to other geographical contexts all around the world.²⁰

In the numerous publications now available we can distinguish different strands of study according to the location of the writings and drawings (graffiti in churches and other religious sites;²¹ graffiti in palaces, castles, towers;²² graffiti in prisons;²³ graffiti on rocks;²⁴ graffiti on trees (see Kruschwitz 2010; Lovata 2015); latrinalia (see Meade 2015; Trahan 2016), etc.; according to the subject represented – the studies on graffiti of ships, for instance, are particularly numerous;²⁵ according to specific subjects (pilgrims, prisoners, tourists, soldiers, students, scholars, political activists, shepherds, women)²⁶; purposes (tagging, protesting, expressing love, etc.) and circumstances, such as the World Wars or the Nazi persecution of Jews.²⁷ Furthermore, we can distinguish studies on graffiti as a type of writing (or drawing) to be understood within the history of writing (see Castillo Gómez in this volume), and graffiti as a source for a huge variety of different themes, from religiosity to political protest, from court life to changing use of certain spaces,²⁸ to mention only a few. As any other historical source, graffiti can be studied from many different perspectives in order to investigate a virtually unlimited number of topics.

Until the nineteenth century, our ancestors did not have any particular word to distinguish what today is called (historical) graffiti from other types of writing and drawing. As a consequence, the (etic) categories of historical graffiti used by scholars does not have any relationship with the (emic) categories used by those who made them.²⁹ But, by now, graffiti has become a common word: scholars studying modern and contemporary graffiti on the one hand and those who made/make them on the other are likely to share more or less the same notion of graffiti. On the other hand, the success of the notion of graffiti and the practices it refers to is likely to lead to anachronism while studying the past: because features of contemporary graffiti are likely to be ‘projected’ on historical ones. One of these aspects is graffiti’s legitimacy, an aspect I shall discuss below.³⁰

²⁰ See, for instance, Crone and Moreh 2000; Romero Medina 2015a; Stern 2018.

²¹ Palmucci Genolini 1886; Santarelli 1998; Kraack 2002; Persic 2002; Plesch 2002, 2005, 2010; Biganzoli and Pizzigoni 2006; Dimitriadis *et al.* 2006; Schmitz-Esser 2006; Owen 2010; Trentin 2010-2011; Champion 2015; Hollis 2017; Bertamoni and Ghidotti 2018.

²² Boretta 1995; Bruzzone and Melis 1998; Passini 2001; Carosi 2003; Pucci 2006; González Gozalo 2015; Motte and Mélard 2015; Mélard *et al.* 2016; Barrera Maturana 2016; Schulz 2018 and Schulz’s article in this volume; Schmitz-Esser in this volume.

²³ Lombroso 1888; Pitre and Sciascia 1999; Bruzzone and Melis 1998; Prosperi 1999; Pugliese 2002; Nini 2002, 2007; Candau and Hameau 2004; Bucherie 2006; Carletti 2010; Giovè Marchioli 2015; Civale 2017; Fiume 2017a, 2017b; Civale 2018; Fiume and García-Arenal 2018a, 2018b.

²⁴ Several articles in Mannoni *et al.* 2006; Stagno 2013; Bazzanella and Kezich 2013; Bazzanella in this volume, with further references.

²⁵ Bucherie and González 1998; Rivera-Collazo 2006; Parizzi 2014; Demesticha *et al.* 2017; González Gozalo 2017, etc.

²⁶ For some examples from a rich literature, on pilgrims see Kraack 2002; Wozniak 2014 and note 21; on prisoners see note 23; on tourists and travellers, see below (*infra*, 15-16); on artists see Guichard 2014; Koering and Pludermacher 2014; on soldiers see the graffiti left in Rome by German landsknecht soldiers from Charles V’s imperial army during the Sacking of Roma in 1527 in Schmitz-Esser’s article in this volume (figure 7), Guichard 2014, 41-42, Sherer 2019; Polli and Cortese 2007, Scrimali and Scrimali 2007; Sarti 2017, 112-117; on students and scholars, see Errani and Palma 2018; on political activists see Ciappelli 2012; on shepherds see Bazzanella in this volume. As for women, studies on latrinalia especially focus on differences between female and male graffiti, see, for instance, Meade 2015 and Trahan 2016.

²⁷ Pugliese 2002; Polli and Cortese 2007; Scrimali and Scrimali 2007; Felix 2019.

²⁸ On court life see Sarti, Schmitz-Esser and Schulz in this volume; on graffiti as evidence of changing use of rooms Sarti 2009.

²⁹ Pike (1967) defined *etic* the categories of the observers of a social group; *emic* those used within a social group.

³⁰ For an interesting discussion of this issue see Champion 2017b.

As mentioned before, ‘graffito’ literally means carved: the common feature of the writings and drawings analysed in many studies is exactly the technique of their production, whereas the location on walls or the kind of support is not always considered essential: we have studies on graffiti carved on ceramics, wood, rocks,³¹ On the contrary, what is common in other studies is the location on walls and public places (both inside buildings and in the open air), whereas the technique used might not be crucial, and writings and drawings carved, painted and made with other materials are likely to be dealt with together.³² Today, common understanding of the word generally highlights the location.

While several authors have engaged with defining graffiti, for instance distinguishing them from masons’ marks,³³ a feature often considered important to label some writings and drawings as graffiti is their unofficial or even illegal character. Such a feature, too, is generally considered crucial by (more or less popular) current dictionaries and encyclopedias. According to *Lexico*, graffiti are ‘writing or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in a public place’³⁴; according to *Wikipedia* ‘writing or drawings made on a wall or other surface, usually as a form of artistic expression, without permission and within public view’³⁵. In a similar perspective, some scholars have suggested the word ‘graffiti’ be used in relation to writings and drawings unauthorised by the owner of the building or wall where they were left, or even made against his/her will, thus limiting this definition to signs which, as such, regardless of their content, were the outcome of transgressive, undisciplined, insubordinate acts, or even a contestation of power. On the contrary, the definition of ‘inscription’ should be reserved to writings with an official character, such as official headstones and epigraphs.³⁶

On the one hand, such a distinction may be useful; on the other, however, the same scholars who have contributed to articulate it, stress that it is not always applicable. They mention, for instance, the case of priests who allowed the faithful to write and draw in churches,³⁷ and of hotel keepers who considered the scribbles on the walls of their hotels made by their customers as useful advertisements, especially if the latter were important people (Kraack and Lingens 2001, 23, 26). These writings were not official but they were not unauthorised either.

The applicability of the aforementioned dichotomy depends on specific contexts. Let us go back to the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. As mentioned, some writings were made recently, for instance ‘Mirco 2000’ (carved on a door frame opening onto the Palace’s main courtyard)³⁸ or the tag left by one Lucia and dated 2016: according to Italian law, they are not only unauthorised, but also liable to be punished as a criminal offences (Sarti 2017, 28, 34).³⁹ Thus, they fit into

³¹ As written by Miglio and Tedeschi (2012, 606), proper graffiti were technically carved with a sharp tool.

³² Oliver and Neal write that ‘From Classical Greece and Rome ... to post-Revolutionary France ... to nineteenth century Puerto Rico ... graffiti adorned the walls of public places’ but also acknowledge, when referring to the studies by Juliet Fleming, that ‘the prohibition against wall writing broadly accepted today was not necessarily shared in Elizabethan England: in this context the line between texts attached to interior walls and texts inscribed on them was not a hard and fast distinction’ (2010, 1).

³³ Coulton 1915, 53; Owen 2010, 39. It is true, however, that both masons’ marks and ‘spontaneous’ graffiti are the object of glyptography, which focuses on engraved stones, see Romero Medina 2015a, and the webpage of the Centre International de Recherches Glyptographiques (C.I.R.G.), <<http://www.cirg.be/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

³⁴ <<https://www.lexico.com/definizione/graffiti>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

³⁵ <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

³⁶ Kraack and Lingens 2001, 9-10. On this issue see Fleming and Castillo Gómez in this volume.

³⁷ Bucherie 1984, 2, does not consider votive images as graffiti because they had an official character.

³⁸ See <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/2-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

³⁹ Art. 639 of the Italian Penal Code: ‘Deturpamento e imbrattamento di cose altrui’ (‘Disfiguring and smearing someone’s property’). See, in this volume, the essay by Schmitz-Esser.

the graffiti category as defined by Kraack and Lingens and other authors. Yet today many people contest that graffiti are illegal: 'If graffiti encompasses only unsolicited text and images, then where does cave art fit in? Or pieces that have been commissioned by school or city councils? And who should say if graffiti should be illegal, painted over, or not? And in the same vein, we must ask if the graffiti that sells for thousands of dollars through art galleries is really, in effect, graffiti or some new art form' (McDonald 2013, Kindle position 43). Social life is conflictual and people have different views and ideas. Although controversial, the boundary between licit and illicit writing and drawing practices is not the same today as it used to be centuries ago. No doubt, in some cases, wall writing and drawing were stigmatised in the past, too.

For instance, the Dominican friar from Ulm, Felix Fabri (c. 1441-1502), in his *Evagatorium* (an account of the author's journey to Palestine in 1483-1484) harshly denounced nobles visiting holy places who left signs with their names and coats of arms, or wrote and drew their names and coats of arms on the walls, or carved them on columns with sharpened metal tools, in perpetual memory, Felix deemed, not of their nobility but their fatuity.⁴⁰ As shown by Antonio Castillo Gómez in this volume, in early modern Europe stigmatisation and repression of wall writing and drawing was not uncommon. Frequently, however, people were stigmatised or even punished because of what they wrote and drew – i.e. because of content considered offensive, transgressive or heretical by the authorities (see, for instance, Evangelisti 1992, 2018) – rather than for the simple fact of writing, drawing, scribbling on walls or other surfaces.

In many contexts, writing on mainly vertical surfaces rather than on paper was very common. Fleming (2001) has stressed that in Elizabethan England, which had no paper mills, paper had to be imported and was rather scarce, whereas there was no lack of walls and other surfaces where one could write. Furthermore, preparing ink and pen was laborious. As a consequence, a large share of everything that was written was recorded in charcoal, chalk, soot, red ochre, pencil, or with nails, knives, or other sharp tools on walls, doors, windows and furniture, both in public and domestic spaces. In fact, it was very common for people to write on the walls of their own houses and, in their books, some authors, notably Thomas Tusser in 1570, even suggested that readers copy some parts of them on the walls of their homes. This established an exchange, a dialogue, a circulation between walls, books and other surfaces: sentences were likely to be copied from walls on paper and then on another wall. These writings offered content to be read and were at the same time wall decorations. A genre consisting of short texts intended to be copied on a support (*posies*) also existed. All this created a variety of writings that makes any simple opposition (paper-wall; licit-illicit; outside-inside; etc.) impossible.

At first glance, in the case of the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino, the opposition 'inscription' vs. 'graffiti' works better than in the houses described by Fleming, since elegant inscriptions in capital letters made by skilled stonecutters are present all around the Palace and appear very different from the set of writings and drawings on the walls, columns, doorframes, etc. (Sarti 2017, 13-26). Yet, looking carefully at the scribbles, one realises that at least two were very likely written by dukes, several refer to the life of the ducal family and dozens provide readers with names, dates and sometimes other circumstances about the Papal legates and vice-legates, i.e. those who, after the inclusion of Urbino in the Papal State in 1631, were, so to say, the masters of the house. Such writings were certainly not made without the permission of the persons who had authority over the Palace. On the other hand, there are some well written ones that have a rather official character (as the one announcing the victory in the 1683 battle

⁴⁰ Fabri 1843, vol. 2, 94. See Kraack 1997, 343-353 and Kraack and Lingens 2001, 225.

of Vienna against the Turks).⁴¹ The very abundance of writings and drawings makes one think that they could not have been made in secret; on the contrary, some might have been encouraged by the *domini* of the Palace.⁴²

Interestingly, some writings clearly tried to reproduce inscriptions in capital letters,⁴³ or are introduced by formulas used in official inscriptions, such as ‘D.O.M.’ (‘Deo Optimo Maximo’) or ‘A.P.R.M.’ (‘Ad Perpetuam Rei Memoriam’), and/or have a frame, as if the writer wanted to make them similar to a headstone or a tablet: in a sense, they were ‘rudimentary epigraphs’.⁴⁴ All in all, the case of Urbino contributes to undermining the opposition official inscriptions vs. unauthorised graffiti, showing a wide range of writings instead: official epigraphic inscriptions in capital letters, ‘spontaneous’ writings made by the masters of the house, ‘spontaneous’ writings made by a large variety of other people. Such ‘spontaneous’ writings (and drawings) can be defined as graffiti only if no transgressive intention or meaning is attached to the term ‘graffiti’ and if it is used only to distinguish such writings from those made by professional stonemasons.⁴⁵ Some writings and drawings were certainly rather transgressive because of their content or position but not all of them were, and not as writing and drawing acts.

On the other hand, in addition to categorising them as graffiti, other categories can be used to pinpoint the characteristics of much writing in the Palace, notably that of ‘scrittura esposte’ (‘exposed writing’) introduced by Armando Petrucci and defined as ‘any type of writing designed to be used in open or closed spaces, which allows for a plural (in-group, massive) reading, from a distance, of a text written on an exposed surface’. This category therefore includes writing with a conscious function of exhibition, which must be sufficiently large and present the message in a clear (verbal and/or visual) way (1986, xx).⁴⁶ Using it implies placing the writings analysed in a different set from graffiti, only partially overlapping with the latter. As shown by Castillo Gómez in this volume, exposed writing covers a huge variety of writing, from monumental epigraphy to ephemeral advertisements, from edicts to infamous libels, to mention only some examples.⁴⁷

Archaeology has shown that on the walls of ancient Rome or Pompeii there were plenty of written signs: people’s names, commemorations of events, advertisements for shops, erotic and obscene graffiti, complaints about corrupt officials, electoral writing, protests against unpopular emperors and so on. This writing might have a formal similarity with epigraphic writing, for instance as far as highlighting techniques, usually done with minium, are concerned.⁴⁸ While in the Middle Ages there was initially a decline in literacy, the reversal of this trend led to the spreading of writing. Walls, columns, monuments but also rocks, stones, trees, as well as

⁴¹ Sarti 2017, 128-130; see <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/44-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁴² See for instance <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/10-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁴³ An example is ‘Niclaus Müller von Ruswil 1766’, written on the lintel of a door in the main entrance; see Sarti 2017, 161-164; <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/22-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁴⁴ Troncarelli 1997 (‘epigrafi rudimentali’). For some examples see Sarti 2017, 81-83, 161-163; <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/25-2/>>; <www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/44-2/>, accessed 10 January 2020.

⁴⁵ This is the case, for instance, made by Romero Medina 2015b, 37, who is interested in distinguishing graffiti from signs made by stonemasons.

⁴⁶ As noted by Castillo Gómez in this volume, there is an English version of this work by Petrucci, but it does not include the preface to the Italian edition, where ‘scrittura esposte’ are defined. I borrow the English translation from Castillo Gómez’s article, which focuses on exposed writing.

⁴⁷ See also, for instance, Evangelisti 1992, 2018; Niccoli 2010; De Vivo 2012.

⁴⁸ Troncarelli 1997 and *supra*, note 17. In such a context, too, the opposition ‘inscription’ vs. ‘graffiti’ is not applicable. However, Canali and Cavallo 1991, 6-7 distinguish ‘free writing’ from institutional writing (both public and private), i.e. on monuments, mosaics, celebrative epigraphs, milestones, gromatic stones, gravestones, *tabulae* with treaties, constitutions, *senatus consulta* and decrees.

benches and other pieces of furniture increasingly became locations where people could write and actually wrote tags, devotions, advertisements, defamations, slanders, protests, obscenities, declarations of love, and much more (Boretta 1995, 5). Armies of people with different levels of literacy and writing abilities left written signs of their existence both in open air and interior spaces, from the pilgrims and faithful who wrote in churches to the shepherds who left their marks on rocks, as those from the Fiemme Valley analysed in this volume by Marta Bazzanella, from the prisoners who covered the walls of their jail with writings and drawings to the tourists and artists who tagged the monuments they visited, to the students who ‘soiled’ the benches and walls of their schools, to quote but a few examples (see notes 21-26).

A good proportion of this writing certainly fits in the category of ‘scrittura esposta’ which, articulated around an explicit or implicit search for readers, allows us to understand what is common to otherwise different written expressions. However, not everything written on a wall, stone, rock etc. can be considered a case of exposed writing (Sarti 2009, 2017; Miglio and Tedeschi 2012). Let us go back to Urbino: in addition to writing that can be read from a certain distance and has evidently been written in order to be read, there are many other examples that are small, only superficially carved and/or located in hidden places: as in the case of the Ludwigsburg Palace analysed in this volume by Daniel Schulz, many are ‘verborgene Spuren’ (‘hidden traces’). Furthermore, some appear as intimate writing that did not address any particular reader but rather implied a dialogue with, or an analysis of, oneself: ‘Io non mi aritrovai / mai piu tanto / malenconico’.⁴⁹

In the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino, as in many other historical sites, visitors and tourists have left traces of their presence. In a sense, also the writing by the Papal legates and vice-legates, who were short-term *domini* of the Palace, can be seen as a case of the so-called ‘I-was-here-syndrome’ that led travellers to leave their names or other traces in the places they visited (Reisner 1971, 10; Kraack 1997, 379 and *passim*). While such custom is rooted in a distant past, and thousands-year-old visitors’ and tourists’ graffiti are attested in ancient Egypt (Peden 2001), the alleged syndrome had peculiar features in different periods. In the Middle Ages and Early Modern times, many people shared the idea that travelling was a source of honour (Kraack 1997, 6-7). The nobles travelled a great deal and left signs of their presence in the places they visited, generally attaching their coats of arms painted on wood or paper, or engraving them, alongside their names, on the walls of hotels, sanctuaries, castles, palaces, baths and universities. Other visitors noted and often appreciated them (Kraack 1997). In the Castle of Issogne, in the Aosta Valley, from the seventeenth century onwards the number of graffiti declined and this, according to Omar Boretta (1995, 47), testifies as to the loss of importance of the castle, by then less frequently visited than in previous times. As already noted, the aforementioned practices were sometimes stigmatised, but stigmatisation was not very common and the custom continued until the seventeenth century. Over that century, however, according to Detlev Kraack, both the features of trips and the location of the coats of arms changed, the latter especially thanks to the widening use of the so called *album amicorum*, a volume that travellers brought with them where they recorded or had recorded the coats of arms and names of, and other information about the important people they visited (1997, 334-343, 375, 381-382). While such books were common among German travellers (Rosenheim 1910; Rosenthal 2009), their increased use did not imply that *élite* voyagers suddenly gave up the well-rooted tradition of leaving signs of their presence in the places they visited. Although the custom of attaching or engraving one’s coat of arms de-

⁴⁹ ‘I never felt so melancholy’; Sarti 2017, 57-59, see <<http://www.isiaurbino.net/palazzodaleggere/18-2/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

clined, the practice of tagging monuments with one's name, however, did not (some examples in Sarti 2007), and became more popular among people who were not noble, thanks to increasing literacy. On 8 December 1615, for instance, Pietro Della Valle, a member of Rome's patriciate who travelled in Turkey, the Middle East, Egypt, Persia and India, wrote in his journal that he had visited the pyramids not far from Cairo, had climbed on the top of one of the biggest and had engraved his name in the stone.⁵⁰ While in Egypt many others, both long before Della Valle and after him, tagged the pyramids, back in Rome travellers did the same on the local monuments. Recent research shows the huge evidence of tags and dates on monuments, frescoes and paintings in the city between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries (Guichard 2014).

According to Kraack (1997), the spread of the practice among people who were not noble was matched by its growing stigmatisation. The issue of the licit or illicit character of this writing is multifaceted. The growing literacy certainly increased the numbers of (potential) writers. Furthermore, the introduction of the movable-type printing press increasingly (but slowly) associated public writing with printed matter, whereas (licit) handwriting, in the long-run, was confined to the expression of private issues (Troncarelli 1997, 458). Official writing in public spaces (signs, plates, tablets, posters etc.) were less often made by hand, and more frequently produced by specialists in places other than those in full view. This transformation of the urban environment has contributed to marginalising hand-made writings. Finally, during early modern times, authorities often increased their control over the different types of writings, trying to discipline them (Béroujon 2015).

Yet, while there is certainly a difference between the present and the past, transformations appear to be complex. First, it is not necessary to be literate in order to scribble or draw on a wall: many graffiti are signs, symbols and drawings. Furthermore, as shown by the case of sixteenth-century Paris street walls - the proliferation of writing of all types (inscriptions, wall posters, shop, workshop, tavern signs, libelles etc.) was likely to take place when many city dwellers were still illiterate (Béroujon 2015, 33). Furthermore, both in the case of the writings made by the shepherds studied by Bazzanella and in those of the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino analysed by Sarti, as early as the sixteenth century rock/wall writing did not seem a privilege reserved to the elite. In Urbino, both the writings made by servants or guards and those made by the masters of the house (legates and vice-legates, from 1631) are more numerous in the seventeenth and eighteenth century than at earlier times. Thus, the growing number of graffiti made by the staff cannot be interpreted as a sign of diffusion of graffiti writing among the lower classes corresponding to the fact that it was no longer practised by the elites.

There is evidence of the absence of stigmatisation elsewhere, too. Lady Montagu, to quote only an example from the eighteenth century, writing about the Castle of Fontainebleau in 1718, noted that 'The late King passed some months every year at this seat, and all the rocks around it, by the pious sentences inscribed on them, shew the devotion in fashion at this court, which, I believe, died with him; at least I see no exterior marks of it at Paris, where all peoples' thoughts seem to be on present diversion' (1767, 268). About a century later, in 1816, Bernardino Drovetti wrote his name and the date on the Egyptian temple of Dendur; he certainly

⁵⁰ Della Valle 1996: '[Martedì] 8 dicembre. Andai a veder le piramidi ... Giunsi finalmente alle piramidi più vicine dove tra l'altre ci si è una delle più grandi, e sono lontano dal Cairo dodici o quindici miglia in circa ... Salij in cima, dove nella parte che guarda verso Italia, cioè a Ponente e Maestro, lasciai scritto il mio nome intagliato nella pietra' ('[Tuesday] 8 December. I went to see the pyramids ... At last I reached the nearest pyramids, where one of the largest stands, and they are at a distance of about 12 to 15 miles from Cairo ... I climbed to the top, where on the side facing Italy, that is west-north-west, I engraved my name on the stone', Sarti 2007, 424).

was not someone who disregarded the conservation of the cultural heritage, although with a western-centric perspective, being the founder of the Egyptian Museum of Turin (Sarti 2007, 424-425, figure 13). On the other hand, the name of one of his friends, the explorer Carlo Vidua, deeply engraved on many monuments, irritated Gustave Flaubert, who stigmatised this custom and did not write his own name on the Egyptian monuments he visited.⁵¹

Commenting on another of Flaubert's letters also condemning the practice of writing one's name on historical sites, Champion argues that the French writer

was expressing a growing sense of concern and frustration at the proliferation of such inscriptions at ancient sites. At the very same time that serious academic study was being directed at earlier inscriptions, most notably at ancient Roman sites such as Pompeii, the increasing number of modern inscriptions was, in Flaubert's eyes, damaging and defacing the monuments themselves. Still, Flaubert was merely articulating the concern of 'his' age. (2017b, 18-19)

According to Champion, it is possible to pinpoint a chronology of changing attitudes towards graffiti: 'in the late medieval and through to the beginning of the early modern period there is no evidence of condemnation of graffiti as a physical act, with the only criticism being at the content of individual inscriptions, or the context in which they are created'. In his view, a shift took place by the early seventeenth century, when creating graffiti in an ecclesiastical setting began to attract criticism, if not condemnation. On the contrary, 'the creation of graffiti inscriptions outside the ecclesiastical setting, and most particularly on historic monuments, largely fails to attract any critical literature until well into the nineteenth century', when 'the condemnation of graffiti, as an entire genre, becomes what may be considered universal' (2017b, 25). While this chronology may be useful, the pace and features of the historical transformation in the attitudes toward graffiti may not have been the same everywhere and needs to be identified for each specific case (also considering that in any particular context there were people with different, often conflictual, views).

The case of Urbino, where there are tags and inscriptions very probably made by nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists, professionals, teachers, once again contributes to clarify the complexity of historical change (Sarti 2017, 166-169). Similarly, in the Oratorio of San Sebastiano in Arborio, a small town on the Italian Piedmontese Plain, there are graffiti bearing dates ranging from 1531 to 1889. As noted by Véronique Plesch who has studied them, 'graffiti making was carried on for at least four centuries and therefore must have been at least tolerated by the authorities' (2010, 157). The Oratorio is similar to many other churches and chapels, all around Europe, where historical graffiti are frequently present. In England, where systematic analysis on medieval churches – 'church by church, county by county' – has been undertaken 'to discover the early graffiti inscriptions that lie hidden in plain sight upon the walls', tens of thousands of inscriptions have been catalogued and recorded. 'They had meaning to those who made them, and an intended function that went far, far beyond modern preconceptions of vandalism and mark making'. They were largely 'medieval prayers made solid in stone' (Champion 2017a, 2).

⁵¹ On 22 April 1850 Flaubert wrote a letter to his mother stigmatising Vidua: 'Nous lisons dans les temples les noms des voyageurs; cela nous paraît bien grêle et bien vain. – Nous n'avons mis les nôtres nulle part. – Il y en a qui ont dû demander trois jours à être gravés, tant c'est profondément entaillé dans la pierre. Quelques-uns se retrouvent partout avec une constance de bêtise sublime. – Il y a un nommé Vidua, surtout, qui ne nous quitte pas' (Flaubert 1850) ('We read the names of voyagers in the temples; this seems to me to be rather frail and vain. Nowhere did we write our names. There are names whose writing must have taken three days, so deeply are they carved in the stone. Some are found everywhere, with a constance that appears to be sublime stupidity. There is one named Vidua, above all, who is always with us'). See also Sarti 2007, 424-425.

While the Arborio graffiti are still there, in the nearby chapel of Santa Maria dei Campi in Lenta (also called Madonna di Campagna), recent restoration rendered several graffiti that could be read until a few years ago illegible (Plesch 2010, 143). From a (still dominant) art history and conservation of heritage perspective, they belong to the category of anthropic damage. Therefore, in order to restore the artwork, they must be removed. This may be surprising, if we pay attention to the fact that Garrucci, who, as mentioned, played a crucial role in elaborating the notion of graffiti, considered them as testimonies of the past that should be catalogued and studied, and worried about their degradation: in a sense he saw his own work of collection and transcription as a way to record them before they disappeared.⁵² Ancient graffiti tended 'to be discreet and unobtrusive'; they were usually small and did 'not run across decorative elements; rather, they show a certain respect for wall decoration and for the space taken up by other graffiti'. Furthermore, 'leading citizens and slaves, male and female, inhabitants and visitors to the town all engaged in writing and reading graffiti' (Benefiel 2018, 102). Nonetheless, many scholars already in the nineteenth century considered them less important than other writings and associated them with children and lower-class people (Lohmann 2018, 39-41). The spreading of the word 'graffiti' in the common language intermingled with its growing connotation as transgressive graphic acts and vandalism, although, as mentioned, ideas on the subject were and are different.

However, the growing interest in historical graffiti also calls for yet another shift in attitude: according to a growing number of scholars and researchers, graffiti, too, are part of the historical heritage, and must be preserved, catalogued, studied, shown to a larger public, as it has been done, in Urbino, with the exhibition 'Stone with a story: Reading the Palace' (2017) and the associated virtual tour. As explained in this volume by Manuele Marraccini and Valentina Rachiele, modern photography, new technologies of multimedia communication and interaction design offer the opportunity to perceive the artifacts in a way that would not be possible in a traditional exhibition, providing an enhanced understanding of the execution, writing and/or drawing process and meaning of each specific example of graffiti.⁵³ We hope that this monographic issue of *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, too, will contribute to boost the value of historical graffiti as part of our cultural heritage.

But if historical graffiti are valuable traces of past lives, thoughts, emotions, what about contemporary ones? Especially if they are created on monuments and historical sites, they are considered vandalic acts, although many people see them, on the contrary, as street art. While it is not possible to deal with such a complex discussion in this *Editorial*, it is worth mentioning that in some historical sites new solutions are currently found to preserve monuments without completely interrupting the old tradition of leaving a tag, writing one's name or a comment on them. In Florence, in particular, as explained by Alice Filipponi, to protect the immense patrimony of the Opera del Duomo (The Cathedral Fabric), a new medium has been created by means of which tourists can state 'I was here!'. It is called *Autography*. Tablets are available to tourists before they walk up Giotto's Bell Tower and Brunelleschi's Dome; tourists can write on the tablet, choosing the means and support, what they would otherwise have written on the

⁵² 'Très-peu de ces inscriptions au trait ont été transportées dans le musée Bourbon, le reste est demeuré à Pompéii; mais de dire ce qui en existe encore, c'est ce que je ne pourrais faire. L'enduit des murailles se dégrade tous les jours et sa chute entraîne celle des inscriptions' (Garrucci 1856, 1-2, 'Very few of these line inscriptions have been transported to the Bourbon museum; the others remain in Pompeii; but I cannot say which ones are still there. The plaster on the walls deteriorates every day, and its fall also implies the fall of the inscriptions').

⁵³ See also Marraccini *et al.* 2017; Tortoioli Ricci 2017; Salvucci 2017.

monument. In a sense, the application ‘transforms vandalism in the “real world” into testimony and memory in the “digital world” ’ (Filipponi 2017, 1). Furthermore, writing and comments by tourists are published in paper books, creating a new, interesting connection between walls - in this case digital ones - and paper, and, in a sense, establishing strong links between different types of writing that the spreading of the term graffiti had contributed to weakening.⁵⁴

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⁵⁴ <<https://autography.operaduomo.firenze.it/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

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PART ONE

Preliminary Statements

