

## Bestowing Care and Earning Honour: Female Hospital Donors and Politics in Renaissance Rome

JESSICA HOGBIN  
Syracuse University

On January 15, 1517, Vannozza Cattanei made a significant *inter vivos* donation to the Ospedale del Santissimo Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum, which included half of the Osteria della Vacca, a hotel previously operated by the donor near Campo de' Fiori, along with instructions to redecorate the icon of Christ in the Sancta Sanctorum.<sup>1</sup> While she was best remembered as the mistress of Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia, later Pope Alexander VI, and mother of four of his children, Cattanei's affiliation as prominent donor to Roman charitable organisations had its own afterlife.<sup>2</sup> Upon her funeral in 1518, Venetian Marino Sanudo remarked in his diary regarding Cattanei's charitable reputation as a benefactress to the Ospedale del Salvatore, noting that the event was fit for a cardinal while also chiding that, 'the funerals of the Pope's bedchamber servants are not solemn occasions to some'.<sup>3</sup> Cattanei's charity remained blended with her infamy. Cattanei appeared in Marco Antonio

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<sup>1</sup> Archivio di Stato di Roma (henceforth ASR), Ospedale del SS.mo Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum (henceforth Ospedale del Salvatore), 452, no. 28. For Cattanei as a hotel owner, see CYNTHIA STOLLHANS, 'Vannozza Cattanei: A Hotel Proprietress in Renaissance Rome', *Early Modern Women* 10, no. 1 (2015): 105–13. For her artistic patronage, see SIMONETTA VALTIERI, 'La presenza Borgiana', *Santa Maria del Popolo: Storia e restauri*, eds ILARIA MIARELLI MARIANI and MARIA RICHIELLO (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2009), vol. 2, 217–55 and CYNTHIA STOLLHANS, 'The Artistic Patronage of Vannozza Dei Cattanei and Giulia Farnese: Two Mistresses at the Borgia Papal Court', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 56, no. 1 (2025): 55–87. For the icon, see KIRSTIN NOREEN, 'Re-Covering Christ in Late Medieval Rome: The Icon of Christ in the Sancta Sanctorum', *Gesta* 49, no. 2 (2010): 117–35.

<sup>2</sup> For Cattanei's relationship with Cardinal Borgia, see PAUL STRATHERN, *The Borgias: Power and Fortune* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019) 70–71 and 113–14 and CHRISTOPHER HIBBERT, *The Borgias and Their Enemies: 1431–1519* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2008), 29–31. On the role of mistresses, see HELEN S. ETTLINGER, 'Visibilis et Invisibilis: The Mistress in Italian Renaissance Court Society', *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1994): 770–92 and CATHERINE LAWLESS, 'Women on the margins: the "beloved" and the "mistress" in Renaissance Florence', in *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women: Pawns or Players*, eds CHRISTINE MEEK and CATHERINE LAWLESS (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 111–30.

<sup>3</sup> 'L'altro giorno morì madonna Vannozza, che fu donna di papa Alexandro et madre dil ducha Valentino et di la duchessa di Ferrara. Et quella notte mi trovai in loco donde odii gridar la parte al modo romanescho, con queste formali parole: "Messer Paolo! fate la parle, che l'è morta madonna Vannozza madre dil duca di Candia." È di la compagnia dil Confalone; si sepolisse a Santa Maria dil Popolo; et fu sepolita cum pompa pare quasi ad uno cardinale. Era donna di 66 anni, et ha lassata tutta la sua roba, che non era poca, a San Gianni Laterano. Furono a le essequie gli cubiculari dil Papa, che non soleno gir ad alcuno'. MARINO SANUDO, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, eds FEDERICO STEFANI, GUGLIELMO BERCHE, and NICOLO BAROZZI, 58 vols, vol. 26 (Venice: Stefani, Berchet, and Barozzi, 1889), 252–53. For his discussion of hearing of her death, see SANUDO, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, 233.

Altieri's *Commentario de privilegiis, de gratie et indulti* (1525), a manuscript of influential figures affiliated with the institution, which placed her among popes, cardinals, queens, and other Roman nobles as one of the most prominent figures associated with the upkeep of the Ospedale del Salvatore.<sup>4</sup>

When Roman women prepared for their inevitable deaths through the creation of testaments, donations to hospitals were among several charitable options available to provide communal and spiritual benefit.<sup>5</sup> As James A. Palmer has argued, testators in Rome 'acted with considerable autonomy', while caring for their families and their souls.<sup>6</sup> Roman testators often used their donations to pious organisations as a means to form ties between themselves and others.<sup>7</sup> As Sandra Cavallo has demonstrated, the personal circumstances of substantial donors influenced their charitable motivations and, ultimately, shaped systems of charity in early modern Italy.<sup>8</sup> These early modern women were participating in a long history of Roman women cementing their place within the city and their community through testamentary acts.<sup>9</sup> Through the study of Vannozza Cattanei, Cristofara Margani, Tuzia Colonna Mattei, and over fifty other significant female patrons of the Ospedale del Salvatore from 1450 to 1600—roughly covering the span from the admission of women into the organisation through the years following the Council of Trent—this essay examines how female patrons, in addition to caring for their spiritual wellbeing, benefitted from the charity that they provided to the needy of Rome, as seen through their testaments and the *Commentario* by Marco Antonio Altieri, one of the two elected *Guardiani* who ran the confraternity.<sup>10</sup>

While these charitable gifts could have been accompanied by ulterior motives around the legacy of the donor and their family, this does not detract from the spiritual

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<sup>4</sup> For Altieri's *Commentario*, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373. For a study of Altieri's *Commentario* and the women included within the work, see ELENA DI MAGGIO, *Le Donne dell'Ospedale del Salvatore di Roma: Sistema assistenziale e beneficenza femminile nei secoli XV e XVI* (Pisa: Pacini, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> JAMES A. PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy: Governance, Power, and Piety in Late Medieval Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 102–32.

<sup>6</sup> PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy*, 78.

<sup>7</sup> PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy*, 73.

<sup>8</sup> CAVALLO, *Charity and Power*. For the influence of individuals in the development of hospitals, see DANIEL BORNSTEIN, 'From Farmhouse to House of God: Micro-institutions of Charity in the Tuscan Countryside', in *Charity, Medicine, and Religion in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy: Essays in Memory of Philip R. Gavitt*, eds BETH PETITJEAN and GEORGE DAMERON (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2024), 61–78. On Altieri's other writing, see STEPHEN KOLSKY, 'Culture and Politics in Renaissance Rome: Marco Antonio Altieri's Roman Weddings', *Renaissance Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1987): 49–90.

<sup>9</sup> PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy*, 147.

<sup>10</sup> For Cattanei, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452. For Margani, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 467 and ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 468. For Mattei, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 449, no. 1. For testaments in fifteenth-century Rome, MARIA LUISA LOMBARDO, 'Donne e testamenti a Roma nel Quattrocento', *Archivi e cultura* 25/26 (1992/1993): 23–130 and ISA LORI SANFILIPPO, 'Morire a Roma', in *Alle origini della nuova Roma: Martino V (1417-1431). Atti del convegno: Roma, 2-5 marzo 1992*, ed. MARIA CHIABÒ (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1992), 602–23.

value of such donations, which was the primary purpose of such charitable giving. The fact that these donations occurred later in the lives of these patrons, or after their deaths, also does not mean that the testators had little connection to the organisation outside of their charity. As was seen with the Margani and Altieri families, those women who donated often continued and strengthened preestablished familial association with the confraternity through their donations, even when the women themselves could not participate in leadership roles in the organisation. In this sense, the Ospedale del Salvatore provided patrons with a stage to demonstrate their nobility, charity, wealth, and prestige to other notable members of the Roman community. For these women, the various forms their donations took often reflected their complex familial relationships with ties to both their marital and natal families. Some female donors engaged in reputational laundering through the charity's structures of institutional memory; others maintained an element of control over their wealth, even after death. Through their critical donations to the hospital, these female donors fortified their relationship to Rome—even if they were not natively Roman—and preserved their memory within the charitable context of an organisation interested in preserving its status as a noble and necessary Roman religious institution at a difficult moment in Roman and Catholic history.

### A Resolutely Roman Hospital

As one of the most powerful lay organisations in Rome, with connections across the city, the confraternity of the Raccomandati del Salvatore, which operated the charitable institutions associated with it, boasted both members with ancient, baronial connections and wealthy new figures who desired affiliation with what scholar Barbara Wisch has called a 'resolutely Roman' institution.<sup>11</sup> Established in 1333 and named after the venerated icon of Christ the Saviour in the Lateran Chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum, the organisation was central to public welfare in the Eternal City.<sup>12</sup> While the Santo Spirito was the pope's hospital, the Ospedale del Salvatore served to care for the needy throughout the city of

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<sup>11</sup> For more on the Ospedale del Salvatore, PHILINE HELAS and PATRIZIA TOSINI, eds, *Tra Campidoglio e Curia: l'Ospedale del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Milano: Silvana, 2017). For the 'resolutely Roman' nature of the institution, see BARBARA WISCH, "The noblest Roman of them all": The Raccomandati del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum and Confraternal Rome', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 31–42. On the elite nature of the hospital, see Palmer, *The Virtues of Economy*, 27–28. For hospital identity in a rural context, see DANIEL BORNSTEIN, 'Civic Hospital, Local Identity, and Regional States in Early Modern Italy', in *Brotherhood and Boundaries. Fraternità e barriere*, eds STEFANIA PASTORE, ADRIANO PROSPERI, and NICHOLAS TERPSTRA (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 157–70. For the Renaissance hospital as a civic institution, see JOHN HENDERSON, *The Renaissance Hospital: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). For the confraternity's connections with guilds, see ISA LORI SANFILIPPO, *La Roma dei romani: arti, mestieri e professioni nella Roma del Trecento* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2001), particularly 110–15.

<sup>12</sup> ANNA ESPOSITO, 'Assistenza ospedaliera a Roma tra XIV e XVI secolo: il ruolo della Confraternita del SS. Salvatore', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 43–54. For the relationship between art and confraternities, see BARBARA WISCH and DIANE COLE AHL, eds, *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), particularly 1–19.

Rome.<sup>13</sup> Medieval and early modern hospitals served as orphanages, shelters, and housing for pilgrims, not just as spaces for healthcare.<sup>14</sup> While the early years of the hospital saw it under the control of a handful of powerful families, such as the Colonna and Orsini, the fifteenth century marked a turning point as minor families became more influential in the institution, opening the doors for new figures to access the organisation's power and authority.<sup>15</sup> During this late medieval transition, confraternities such as the Raccomandati del Salvatore, along with their affiliated hospitals and organisations, served as venues for the city's elite to display their status.<sup>16</sup>

While the hospital thrived in the years after the papacy's return to Rome and before the sack of the city in 1527, its role changed after the Council of Trent placed lay confraternities and hospitals under clerical supervision. The Ospedale del Salvatore saw a reduction in its responsibilities in 1566.<sup>17</sup> While confraternities remained an important element of Catholic Europe, the oversight and the promotion of goals in alignment with the Counter-Reformation, including regulating dangerous social elements, resulted in a shift in perception and activities, along with control of the institution.<sup>18</sup> Still, the Ospedale del Salvatore remained a vibrant and essential organisation throughout the Baroque era, but the influence of benefactors and donors from the institution's past remained with the organisation through their records and ceremonies.<sup>19</sup>

Although women did not have equal access to the status and power of the Ospedale del Salvatore—as they were only permitted to join the organisation after 1452—nor was the organisation as a whole geared exclusively toward the care of women, female donors

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<sup>13</sup> On the major hospitals of Rome, ALESSANDRO CANEZZA, *Gli Arcispedali di Roma nella vita cittadina, nella storia e nell'arte* (Rome: A. Canezza & M. Casalini, 1933).

<sup>14</sup> PHILINE HELAS and PATRIZIA TOSINI, 'Introduzione', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 9–15 (9).

<sup>15</sup> ANNA MODIGLIANI, 'Le famiglie dei Raccomandati del SS. Salvatore nei ruoli dirigenziali, cerimoniali e associativi tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 17–30 (18–19).

<sup>16</sup> PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> WISCH, "The noblest Roman of them all", 38–41. This is not to say that the *Ospedale del Salvatore* did not remain an important institution in Baroque Rome.

<sup>18</sup> CHRISTOPHER F. BLACK, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 7–9. For changing roles of confraternities, see CHRISTOPHER F. BLACK, 'The Public Face of Post-Tridentine Italian Confraternities', *Journal of Religious History* 28, no. 1 (2004): 87–101. On wider confraternity reform in Catholic Europe, JOHN PATRICK DONNELLY and MICHAEL W. MAHER, *Confraternities & Catholic Reform in Italy, France, & Spain* (Kirkville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> For more on the hospital following the Council of Trent, see PATRIZIA TOSINI, 'Sedente Sixto Quinto: gli affreschi delle Opere di Misericordia nella casa dei Raccomandati del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 109–24; ENRICO PARLATO, 'Le immagini e l'archivio: la memoria della processione di Ferragosto negli affreschi di primo Seicento nella casa dei Raccomandati del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 125–36; MARTIN RASPE, 'La Corsia Nuova dell'Ospedale del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum e i suoi architetti Giacomo e Giovanni Battista Mola', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 137–48; and GUENDALINA SERAFINELLI, 'Giovanni Maria Mariani e Luigi Garzi per l'Ospedale delle Donne ad Sancta Sanctorum', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 149–64.

nonetheless reaped the benefits of their charitable donations to the hospital.<sup>20</sup> In the early modern period, women were both the primary recipients of charity and the minority of charitable patrons.<sup>21</sup> However, women were still crucial to the financial maintenance of the Ospedale del Salvatore and thus were essential to the financing of charity in Rome. As Carolyn Valone has shown, Roman women used their patronage to develop their public personae within the city.<sup>22</sup> By acting as charitable patrons to one of the most important Roman confraternities, women curated and occasionally reshaped their public personae, not just as Romans but as figures central to the success of a vital institution.

This study focuses on the donations of considerable and notable value made by women, rather than on the smaller donations, such as those given to the collection box. The large donations to the Ospedale del Salvatore from female patrons largely fell into three categories: monetary, property, and finery. These donations fundamentally fit into what Nicholas Terpstra has referred to as ‘patronal charity’, which is reflective of the medieval charity patterns that continued into the early modern period.<sup>23</sup> Through patronal charity, donors emphasised their reciprocal relationship with the recipients of their charity, providing care both to those in need and to the donor’s own spiritual wellbeing. By donating to the hospital, they provided for those in need, but by participating in aiding those in need, the donors themselves were cared for on a spiritual level. However, if they so desired, charitable giving also provided the donors with some limited control over the hospital’s legacy and activities.

### Monetary Donations

While women played a significant role as donors during their own lives, as illustrated by Cattanei’s *inter vivos* donation, their deaths also provided the hospital with financial support, often—although not exclusively—through monetary donations. The most straightforward gain for the hospital came in the form of *anniversari*—annual remembrances for the soul of the deceased—which could be arranged either for the donor or for

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<sup>20</sup> WISCH, “‘The noblest Roman of them all’”, 34. For male and female participation in Roman confraternities, see ANNA ESPOSITO, ‘Men and women in Roman confraternities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: roles, functions, expectations’, in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. NICHOLAS TERPSTRA (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 82–97.

<sup>21</sup> For the paradoxes of women and charity, see SANDRA CAVALLO, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153–82. For women as recipients of charity, see NICHOLAS TERPSTRA, *Cultures of Charity: Women, Politics, and the Reform of Poor Relief in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013) and Philip Gavitt, *Gender, Honor, and Charity in Late Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For women as donors and recipients of charity, see MONICA CHOJNACKA, ‘Women, Charity and Community in Early Modern Venice: The Casa Delle Zitelle’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1998): 68–91.

<sup>22</sup> CAROLYN VALONE, ‘Matrons and Motives: Why Women Built in Early Modern Rome’, in *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy*, eds SHERYLE E. REISS and DAVID G. WILKINS (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 317–35.

<sup>23</sup> TERPSTRA, *Cultures of Charity*, 19–53.

another specified person.<sup>24</sup> The motivation for such charitable giving to the hospital was fundamentally spiritual, providing care for the deceased through the support of an organisation which also cared for the living through medicine. Donations such as these ultimately allowed the donors to have some control over their finances and spiritual wellbeing after death, as the donation promised both care for the needy and care for their departed souls. Some patrons' donations made clear that the desired benefit for their act of charity was the *anniversario*. Paolina Capizucchi, wife of Giovanni Battista Orsini and daughter of Cencio Capizucchi, donated fifty florins to the Ospedale del Salvatore in 1501.<sup>25</sup> It was no coincidence that, since 1408, the minimum donation required for an *anniversario* was fifty florins.<sup>26</sup> In exchange for her substantial financial support, Paolina Capizucchi secured spiritual benefit provided by the guarantee of the *Guardiani* who operated the confraternity. Though less grand than donations such as Elena Conti's 500 pieces of gold, the 1,000 ducats of Vittoria and Giulia Anguillara, or the 1,500 pieces of gold from Elena Anguillara, their aunt, these smaller yet still significant donations—set at the minimum amount required for an *anniversario*—provided spiritual care for the donor and a steady revenue stream for the hospital.<sup>27</sup>

While many individuals paid the customary amount for the *anniversari*, others included their requests for the remembrance as part of their larger donation. Cattanei used her donation to secure several *anniversari*, including one for the soul of Giorgio della Croce, her second husband, to be held on October 13; another for the soul of Carlo Canale, her third husband, on March 24; and finally one for her own soul to be held on the anniversary of her death, along with the souls of her ancestors.<sup>28</sup> By including the *anniversari* for others close to her in addition to herself, Cattanei extracted more personal benefit from the donation than if she had only requested care for her own soul. In this sense, the spiritual care gained from a donation could be extended, allowing the benefactor—or, in this case, benefactress—to act as spiritual caretaker for those already deceased through her own charity. However, Cattanei's *anniversari* also served another function. The donation listed della Croce and Canale as her first and second husbands, respectively, meaning that Cattanei not only declined to give an *anniversario* to her first husband, Domenico da Rignano, but also, in essence, used the donation as a means of partially erasing his

<sup>24</sup> The *anniversario* was custom in Rome and was not particular to the Ospedale del Salvatore. PALMER, *The Virtues of Economy*, 128.

<sup>25</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 455, no. 16.

<sup>26</sup> DI MAGGIO, *Le Donne dell'Ospedale del Salvatore*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> For Conti, ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 20v. For Vittoria and Giulia Anguillara, ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 9r–v and 22r. For Elena Anguillara, ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 165v–166r.

<sup>28</sup> '...celebrari facere anniversaria singulis annis et in perpetuum pro anima quondam Domini Georgi de Cruce eiusdem dominae Donatricis primi viri in dicta Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae De Populo in die qua obiit, quae fuit dies tertia decima Otobris, nec non et dicti quondam Domini Caroli Cavalis eius secundi viri in dicta Ecclesia Sanctae Marie mensis Martii, et pro anima ipsius Dominae Donatricis in eadem Ecclesia in die qua ipsa Domina Donatrix obierit, et pro anima eius parentum...' ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452, no. 28.

connection to her while she cemented her memory within the institution of the Ospedale del Salvatore.

Other donors left more than just a sizable portion of their estates to the hospital. In 1545, Cristofara Margani made the Ospedale del Salvatore her universal heir.<sup>29</sup> The Margani, a Roman noble family, had established ties with the confraternity, with members of the aristocratic household serving terms as *Guardiani*.<sup>30</sup> For three decades, Cristofara Margani made regular donations of wine from her vineyard near Porta Latina to San Giovanni Lateran, with which the confraternity was affiliated, meaning that charity was a part of both Margani's personal identity and her family's broader narrative.<sup>31</sup> In return for making it her universal heir, Margani requested that the Ospedale del Salvatore pay an annuity of twelve florins from her donation to Antonio, the son of Catarina, Margani's companion.<sup>32</sup> Through her donation, she strengthened her family's connection with the charitable organisation, provided care for the indigent of the city, and, importantly, ensured the continued care of an individual close to her in life, with the institution acting as manager of the funds.

### Property Donations

As the Roman housing market began to shift in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the papacy's return to the city, urban housing values began to rise, making the donation of property particularly of interest.<sup>33</sup> By the early modern period, the Ospedale del Salvatore held one of the city's greatest landed patrimonies as a result of donation, and more property contributed to the stability of the organisation.<sup>34</sup> The confraternity had the ability to liquidate any donated immoveable property, but, considering the approximately tenfold increase in price of rental accommodations, these properties were highly profitable investments.<sup>35</sup> Agricultural products were used to feed those in the hospital, with surplus food either given as alms or sold at the market for the benefit of the organisation.<sup>36</sup> The donation of immoveable property by female donors was not uncommon for the Ospedale

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<sup>29</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 467, no. 1. Margani's death left two *buste* of material related to her life and donation, including ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 467 and 468. For another example of patronage from Margani women, see Johanna Heideman, 'The unravelling of a woman's patronage of Franciscan propaganda in Rome', *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 4 (2001): 500–13.

<sup>30</sup> DI MAGGIO, *Le Donne dell'Ospedale del Salvatore*, 23. For Cristofara and family financial dynamics, see IVANA ATT, 'I Margani e le miniere di allume di Tolfa: dinamiche familiari e interessi mercantili fra XIV e XVI secolo', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 168, no. 2 (2010): 231–62.

<sup>31</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 467, no. 21.

<sup>32</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 467, no. 5.

<sup>33</sup> CARLA KEYVANIAN, 'The "Books of Houses" and Their Architects: Surveying Property in Sixteenth-Century Rome', *Thresholds* 28 (2005): 17–22.

<sup>34</sup> WISCH, "The noblest Roman of them all", 34.

<sup>35</sup> WISCH, "The noblest Roman of them all", 37–39.

<sup>36</sup> ALESSANDRA PERI, 'La gestione economica di un ospedale romano: il SS. Salvatore nel primo Rinascimento', in *Tra Campidoglio e Curia*, 55–64.

del Salvatore.<sup>37</sup> Benefactresses included Antonia, wife of Paulo Mastrone, who donated a house in Trastevere in 1456, Benedetta di Giovanni Pecorari, who made a bequest of a house in Monti in 1463 with the consent of her husband, and Catarina, wife of Stefano de Maccaranis, who left the hospital a house in the *riione* of Sant'Angelo, among over a dozen other records of female donors of immoveable property during the period of study.<sup>38</sup>

Even among other charity of immoveable property, Cattanei's property donation was a significant gift for the Ospedale del Salvatore. After all, Cattanei purchased half of the Osteria della Vacca from Leonardo Capocci for 1,370 ducats in 1500, and she purchased the remainder of the building for 1,500 ducats from Pietro, Antonio, and Ciriaco Mattei in 1513.<sup>39</sup> This particularly valuable hotel property made for an excellent and profitable addition to the hospital's portfolio.<sup>40</sup> Immoveable property donations took many forms, from partial donations to granting of the profits earned from a location to total transfer to the hospital. The value of individual properties widely varied, allowing donors to part with the portion of property that they desired and establish any necessary limitations.

Property donations, especially those by female donors, were not always without controversy. In June 1494, Adriana de Sanguigni, daughter of Francesco de Sanguigni, left half of her Casale Trefusa and two houses in the *riione* of Colona to the Ospedale del Salvatore, although with several caveats regarding how she and her husband, Mariano de Alessandrini, would benefit from the donation.<sup>41</sup> Despite litigation following her donation, which involved Girolamo di Cecco de Picchio, a merchant, and her husband Mariano, to whom the Casale Trefusa had previously belonged, the donation had ultimately benefited the activities of the hospital by 1525. Altieri's *Commentario* noted de Sanguigni's care for the poor through the donation of a 'certain amount of money, taken from her *Casale* of Trefusa', meaning that her charity, despite its initial dispute, succeeded in placing de Sanguigni among the best recalled donors to the hospital.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> These records are stored in ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 451, 'Donazioni di case a favore della nostra compagnia'.

<sup>38</sup> For Antonia, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 451, no. 31. For Benedetta, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 451, no. 35. For Catarina, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 451, no. 38.

<sup>39</sup> The other half of the osteria was owned by Francesco Antonio Boccacci in 1500. For the 1500 purchase, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452, no. 31. For the 1513 purchase, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452, no. 34. For Cattanei's ownership history, see STOLLHANS, 'Vannoza Cattanei', 108–10.

<sup>40</sup> For women as hotel owners, see IVANA AIT, 'Donne in affari: il caso di Roma (secoli XIV–XV)', ed. ANNA ESPOSITO, *Donne del Rinascimento a Roma e dintorni* (Rome: Fondazione Marco Besso, 2013), 53–83.

<sup>41</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 454, no. 41.

<sup>42</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 454, no. 42 and no. 43. ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 454, no. 41. 'dette materia per certa summa de denari, retracti de quel suo casaleto de Trefusa dunato allo hospitale', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 8r. For other entries, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 22r and 138v.



### Finery Donations

Other donations were intended to ennoble the Ospedale del Salvatore through expensive gifts that would otherwise not be purchased, intended for ceremonial demonstrations of the organisation's wealth. In 1593, along with 1,300 scudi, Tuzia Colonna Mattei donated 100 scudi to the hospital with the instruction that the money was to be used to purchase and create three silver cups, each inscribed with her name.<sup>43</sup> Per her instruction, these cups were to be used at the table of the *Guardiani* during meals at the hospital and other ceremonial events.<sup>44</sup> This instruction gave Colonna Mattei a certain degree of control—whether imagined or real—over how her donation ought to be spent in order to improve the institution and preserve her memory as a benefactress.

Cattanei similarly included instructions on the execution of the desired decorative project in her donation, although she also included financial guidance on how this ought to be best completed. In half of her donation to the Osteria della Vacca, Cattanei left instructions for how the property was to be used by the *Guardiani* in order to extract the value required to redecorate the icon of Christ in the Sancta Sanctorum. Following her death, the profits from the Osteria della Vacca were to be stored for four years, and then those funds were to be used in the redecoration of the image. The old ornaments were to be removed and replaced by 'gems, pearls, gold, and silver, along with the arms and title of the Lady Donator'.<sup>45</sup> Much like Colonna Mattei, Cattanei intended to use her donation to leave a mark on the hospital. As this acheiropoieton of Christ was central to the confraternity's identity, Cattanei's donation was intended to be visible and oft recollected. These donations of finery did not only ensure the important role of the women's charity in ceremonies even after their deaths, but it also provided them with some perceived control over the donation since they left instructions on the creation and use of this finery.

### Memory

When Altieri wrote his *Commentario* in 1525, just a few short years before the Sack of Rome would plunge the city into crisis, he had been a member of the confraternity for four decades and was serving his third term as *Guardiano*.<sup>46</sup> His work praised both men and women with affiliation to the hospital, oftentimes donors. He provided information on the assistance given to the Ospedale del Salvatore, while also included brief biographies, essentially creating a list of illustrious individuals who had influenced the organisation

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<sup>43</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 449, no. 1.

<sup>44</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 449, no. 1.

<sup>45</sup> 'qua secuta morte ipsius dominae testatris exigatur fructus quatuor annorum dictarum domorum illique deponantur apud idoneam fide et facultatibus dignam personam tenendi usque quo fuerint ex apti dicti fructus quatuor annorum domorum praefatarum quibus exaptis ex illis fiant et fieri mandavit, amotis ornamentis veteribus dictae sacratissimae Imaginis Salvatoris nova ornamenta tum gemmarum, perlarum, auri et argenti tum armis et titulo ipsius Dominare Donatricis...' ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452, no. 28.

<sup>46</sup> WISCH, "The noblest Roman of them all", 34.

throughout recent memory. As Elena di Maggio's research into Altieri's *Commentario* has shown, the inclusion of the profiles of thirty-six women in Altieri's narrative demonstrates the key role that women played in the economic support of the hospital along with their importance to the hospital's own memory and self-imagination by leaders.<sup>47</sup> No patron could have expected a manuscript like the *Commentario* would be written with an entry about their own illustrious lives. However, donors, who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries mostly came from elite and intellectual backgrounds, would have been aware that significant charitable donations would open them to some form of institutional memory.<sup>48</sup> Altieri's *Commentario* underlines the reputational laundering aspired to by women's gifting, in which the confraternity crafted enduring narratives that positively framed both the organisation and its supporters. Altieri's writing on female patrons often differed from his discussion of men, as these women are often defined by their virtues associated with femininity and a heavy emphasis is placed on the women's relationships, whether they be marital, extra-marital, parental, or filial.

While Altieri's *Commentario* did not have an entry for every patron who gave significant funds or assisted the hospital, the work includes entries for famous (and infamous) Romans from the period who were known to have aided the hospital, including Pope Martin V, Pope Alexander VI, and the writer Saturno Gerona da Barcellona.<sup>49</sup> Cattanei's entry framed her primarily as a donor who held the utmost devotion to the icon of Christ the Saviour, which she wished to decorate with jewels.<sup>50</sup> According to Altieri, in order to complete Cattanei's request, two of the recent *Guardiani* had paid two thousand ducats to the silversmith Cristoforo Foppa, known as Caradosso, to accomplish the work. However, Altieri's account left ambiguity about when the work would be finished.<sup>51</sup> Rather than explicitly acknowledging Cattanei's past relationship with a pope, Altieri discussed Cattanei's personal life in relation to her children, listing her as the mother of 'the most illustrious lords, Lord Duke of Gandia [Giovanni Borgia], Lord Duke Valentine [Cesare Borgia], of the Lord Prince of Squillace [Joffre Borgia], and the Lady Lucrezia [Borgia], magnificent Duchess of Ferrara', with the omission of her son, Ottaviano, whom she had

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<sup>47</sup> DI MAGGIO, *Le Donne dell'Ospedale del Salvatore*.

<sup>48</sup> HELAS and TOSINI, 'Introduzione', 12.

<sup>49</sup> For Martin V, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 4v. For Orsini, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 9r and 19r. For Gerona da Barcellona, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 8v, 22r–v, and 139r–v. For Gerona da Barcellona's donation, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 459, no. 6.

<sup>50</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 8v and 23r.

<sup>51</sup> '...alguni anni da poi, per mezzanita et cura delli nobili homini messer Mariano Castellano et del mio si Caro misser Raffaele Casale, poco innanti guardiani, se e convenuta con quello eccellente et celebre argentiero nominato Caradosso darli doi milia ducati, accio che collo eccellente suo artificio se satisfessi al desiderio de quella magnifica et honorata donna', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 8v. For other entries on Cattanei, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 23r and 138v.

with Giorgio della Croce and who died in infancy.<sup>52</sup> While this description is not an explicit reference to her role as a mistress, educated readers would have linked these children with Pope Alexander VI.<sup>53</sup>

Cattanei was not the only woman included in Altieri's *Commentario* who was known for her extramarital relationship. Unlike Cattanei, whose relationship was implicit, Lucrezia d'Alagno's entry began as Altieri wrote that she was 'much loved by the most serene King Alfonso [V of Sicily and I of Naples]'.<sup>54</sup> While never his wife, d'Alagno received a great deal of favour from the king, acting as queen in his court.<sup>55</sup> Despite experiencing diminished wealth and status following the king's death in 1458, d'Alagno left 'a large part of her admirable and laudable dowry' to the Ospedale del Salvatore, although Altieri does not note the exact amount nor its value relative to other donors.<sup>56</sup> Even in death, Altieri maintained d'Alagno's status as a quasi-queen throughout his entry, ending by noting that the honours related with her memory were those belong to a woman 'just like a real, honourable, and most serene queen'.<sup>57</sup>

Other prominent figures discussed in Altieri's *Commentario* include several individuals who held the title of queen, lost their ability to rule over their respective territories, and ended their lives in Rome, such as Catherine of Bosnia and Charlotte of Cyprus.<sup>58</sup> After the 1463 conquest of the Bosnian Kingdom by the Ottoman Empire, Queen Catherine, the wife of the deceased Stephen Tomaš, King of Bosnia, ultimately ended her travels in Rome in 1467, where she remained until her death in 1478.<sup>59</sup> Queen Catherine's entry was included because Altieri wished to 'make record of whoever our hospital might find of use or of magnified honour', making clear that the ultimate goal of

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<sup>52</sup> 'matre felice delli illustrissimi signori signor duca de Candia, signor duca Valentino, dello signor prencipe de Squillace et de madonna Lucretia magnifica duchessa de Ferrara', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 8v. On her child with della Croce, see STOLLHANS, 'Vannozza Cattanei', 107.

<sup>53</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 5v.

<sup>54</sup> 'Della magnifica madona Lucretia de Alagni dal serenissimo re Alfonzo molto amata', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 18v. For another entry, see ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 140r–v.

<sup>55</sup> For d'Alagno's role as a literary muse, see FRANCISCO JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ MESA, 'La relación entre Alfonso el Magnánimo y Lucrezia d'Alagno a través de los poetas italianos de la corte', in *Traducción en las relaciones italo-españolas: lengua, literatura y cultura*, ed. ASSUMPTA CAMPS (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2014), 103–16 and JOSÉ CARLOS ROVIRA, 'Los poemas al amor de Lucrezia D'Alagno y Alfonso V de Aragón', *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 67, no. 240 (1987): 77–108.

<sup>56</sup> 'lassandoce arrietro una gran parte de soe admirande et laudabil dote...' ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 18v.

<sup>57</sup> '...et anche racionare publicamente della sua vita exemplare, come de vera, honorata et serenissima regina', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 18v.

<sup>58</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 6r–v.

<sup>59</sup> KREŠIMIR REGAN, 'From Kozograd to Rome: The Voyages of Queen Catherine of Bosnia', in *Social and Individual Spatial Mobility in Late Medieval and Renaissance Croatia in European Context*, eds SABINE FLORENCE FABIJANEC, ZRINKA NOVAK, and ZORAN LADIĆ (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2022), 37–57.

the *Commentario* was to promote the organisation that he oversaw.<sup>60</sup> Altieri's commentary addressed the tragedy of her political losses in a way that blended reality with rumour, stating she 'saw her kingdom depopulated, her castle ruined, an infinite number of dead and wounded, also her then husband decapitated', although her inclusion in the *Commentario* does not address any outright patronage of the hospital, outside of her recognition of the organisation at the time of her death.<sup>61</sup> Queen Charlotte, another exiled ruler, received a similar treatment from Altieri, describing the tyranny of the half-brother that overthrew her rule and stressing her virtue, while also noting her acknowledgement of the Ospedale del Salvatore at the time of her death.<sup>62</sup> By citing this sympathetic history of an exiled queen, Altieri positively placed his organisation into a narrative about injustice in such a way that might incite future donors who also desired compassionate remembrances. Additionally, the inclusion of these queens gave Altieri the ability to elevate the hospital in a city notably without royalty of its own, even if their true connections to the organisation were flimsier than those of some of the more dubiously regarded individuals.

Other women were included in the *Commentario* less for their own notoriety but because of their connection to Altieri and his family. Rita dei Calvi, who left two houses to the hospital, including an osteria in the Campo de' Fiori known as 'la Galea', which was a donation of significant value, was noted to be the 'wife of my magnificent grandfather, Mister Lorenzo Altieri'.<sup>63</sup> Another entry is for Gregoria delli Albertoni, Altieri's deceased wife.<sup>64</sup> Altieri's positioning of these women as some of the most memorable and honourable donors to the Ospedale del Salvatore not only magnified the memory of those members of his family but also cemented the Altieri family's long-time connection with the institution, framing the author and his kin as fundamental charitable givers. From the inclusion of women close to the author, it is clear that Altieri realised the social benefits of the inclusion of individuals in such a record. Altieri's *Commentario* did more than aggrandise and memorialise the donors and, conversely, the hospital, through its relationship with illustrious individuals. It also served as a means for the author to exalt his own house.

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<sup>60</sup> 'Volendove exequire el medesimo ordine offerito de far memoria de qualunca lo hospital nostro trovasse de utile et de onore magnificato', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, unpaginated recto of 'Della Illustrissima de Cypri Madonna Carula'. Recorded in DI MAGGIO as ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 6r.

<sup>61</sup> 'qual vistase depopolato lo suo segno, ruinate le castella, infinito numero de morti et presonati, el marito anche poi decapitato...' ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, unpaginated.

<sup>62</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, unpaginated, verso of 'Della Illustrissima Regina di Bosna Madonna Catterina'. Recorded in DI MAGGIO as ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 6v. On Charlotte of Cyprus, GEORGE HILL, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), vol. 3, 548–620.

<sup>63</sup> 'fussi già donna del magnifico mio avo misser Lorenzo delli Altieri', ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 11r and 21v.

<sup>64</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 373, 157r.

The diverse backgrounds of those included in the *Commentario* allowed for the Ospedale del Salvatore to envision and present itself as a charity that brought together donors from all elements of the city while celebrating each individual donor through their recollection among other esteemed patrons. There was a mutual benefit for all parties involved in Altieri's *Commentario* through the inclusion of this mix of donors. Renowned outsiders who brought little to the hospital were placed among those with life-long attachments to Rome and people whose donations were of significantly greater value. Altieri skirted around any negative terms for donors with dubious reputations while focusing on the value, outside of name alone, that these individuals provided to the organisation. Finally, by elevating everyone's status, he produced the ideal outcome for the hospital's own self-memory, as a location for charitable giving from some of the most powerful, wealthy, and noble people who lived in Renaissance Rome.

### Conclusion

Significant donations to the Ospedale del Salvatore by no means precluded patrons from giving charity to other organisations. Cattanei, for example, donated the other half of the Osteria della Vacca property to the Ospedale della Consolazione.<sup>65</sup> Camilla Gonzaga, the daughter of Giampietro Gonzaga, Count of Novellara, left 1,000 scudi invested in the Monte della Gabella Grossa and Monte delle Porte di Bologna to various hospitals, including the Ospedale del Salvatore, the Ospedale della Consolazione, the Ospedale di San Giacomo dell'Incurabili, and the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Saxia, along with several monasteries.<sup>66</sup> As these intertwined donations and investments show, those who donated to one organisation recognised, along with its central spiritual value, the systematic social benefit of charitable giving. By giving a sizeable donation to the Ospedale del Salvatore, these donors became attached to the narrative of the hospital and the charity it provided to the community, and, through multiple donations, opened themselves to the same possibility of commemoration at every organisation to which they provided charity. Along with the preservation of their charitable acts through maintenance of their archive, their donations provided these women with a connection to one of the most powerful institutions in Rome which, without their charity, they would have almost certainly been unable to achieve.<sup>67</sup> Just as Cattanei's donations cemented her memory in a charitable context outside of her relationship with the pope, other female donors used their charity as an opportunity to benefit from their preexisting financial holdings, whether it be through assistance with their reputation, control of their financial legacy, or care for their soul.

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<sup>65</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 452, no. 28.

<sup>66</sup> ASR, Ospedale del Salvatore, 448, no. 167.

<sup>67</sup> ANNA ESPOSITO, 'La documentazione degli archivi di ospedali e confraternite come fonte per la storia sociale di Roma', in *Sources of Social History: Private Acts of the Late Middle Ages*, eds PAOLO BREZZI and EGMONT LEE (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 69–79.

The examination of the benefits of charity for female patrons does not discount individual piety or the desire to help those in need; rather, it considers, alongside charitable inclination, how women in Renaissance Rome also used charitable institutions—often not designed for their participation—to promote and integrate themselves within the city, care for their souls, and ultimately control the yield of their finances, even after death. The genuine desire to help others through charity and a true interest in the care of one's own soul could coexist with motivations surrounding memory, finances, and family promotion. These donors used their charity as a means to care for the poor while also placing themselves within the Ospedale del Salvatore's institutional memory. Donors also secured some benefits through their donation that would continue after their deaths, as seen with Margani or any donor who received an *anniversario* for themselves or others. Through the charitable dispersal of wealth, Roman women harnessed the institutional power of organisations such as the Ospedale del Salvatore, worked to create and curate a lasting memory and identity within the city, and ultimately shaped the Renaissance hospital.