In 1685, the polymath, Pompeo Sarnelli published a celebrated guidebook of Naples in which he exhorted his readers to visit the funerary chapel erected by the humanist, Giovanni Pontano, calling it “un libretto co’ fogli di marmo scritto di dentro e di fuori, in versi ed in prosa”\(^1\). Many earlier visitors – including Marcanzonio Michiel, Pietro Appiano and Pietro de Stefano – had been fascinated by the building’s inscriptions, assiduously copying, cataloguing and publishing them, but Sarnelli was the first to define the building as a marble book, thereby inaugurating what would become a typical approach to the chapel in modern scholarly literature from the wide-ranging and thought provoking architectural and cultural analyses of Armando Petrucci\(^2\).

Characterizing Pontano’s private chapel as a written building – as opposed to a fount of elegant ancient and modern inscriptions – prioritizes one of its fundamental features: inscribed text supplants the public functions normally accomplished through other means, most notably figural art. On both the tombs inside the chapel and the exterior plaques on the façades, and in keeping with Pontano’s self-representation as a man of letters, the written word serves as the main form of ornamentation, replacing representations of the virtues, mourners, religious figures, or effigies of the deceased\(^3\). But unlike most figural art in sepulchral settings that the Neo-Latin poet shunned, Pontano’s printed gallery actively promotes dialogue with its visitors, embracing conversation, exchange and, ultimately, introspection as much as it celebrates the virtues of the deceased. Or, said another way, the chapel celebrates the deceased through invited conversations with the living and between the living, an approach congruent with Pontano’s treatise on discourse, *De sermone*, humanists’ reading of classical authors, and social realities created within academies and sodalites, including the Accademia Pontaniana. In this essay, I will explore how Pontano might have conceived of those conversations with his chapel, giving special weight to the twelve *sententiae* which form the bulk of the exterior inscriptions – the *facciate parlanti* – which have received less scholarly attention than the other inscriptions on and inside the building.

Pontano’s chapel, often called a *tempietto* after his friend and fellow poet Jacopo Sanazzaro first called it thus (*Arcadia*, XII, 38)\(^4\), was erected in 1492 in the center of Naples near Pontano’s home as a family memorial chapel, erected after his wife’s death. Occasional meetings of the Accademia Pontaniana also took place there\(^5\). A quasi-monumental building flanking the left-hand façade of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta, the chapel adopts the physical form of an ancient Roman tomb (fig. 1) and has been fruitfully compared to a sepulchral monument from the second century CE in the Parco della Caffarella, just off of the Via Appia Antica, Rome (fig. 2). Like Pontano’s chapel, the Caffarella monument exhibits windows in between engaged Corinthian pilasters and unbroken horizontal bands of molding that absorb the vertical elements\(^6\). It also has two facades, each with doors (to the lower level and to the upper level) and the east facade exhibits framed spaces intended for inscriptions, no longer extant. Pontano must have known this funerary monument, which subsequently would be drawn by Baldassare Peruzzi and Antonio da Sangallo, from his antiquarian visits to Rome\(^7\).

Identified as the Temple of Deus Rediculus in the later 16th century on the basis of a passage in Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, 10.60), and subsequently by other names\(^8\), the ancient Roman funerary structure was once part of a complex set of sacred monuments called the *Triopion* that the Athenian orator and Roman consul, Herodes Atticus, had developed together with his wife, the Roman patrician, Anna Regilla, on properties deriving from her family. The mausoleum is thought to be a cenotaph in her honor as she is known to have been buried in Athens where the two of them spent much of their time. Two columns with Greek inscriptions discovered nearby are currently assumed to have marked the entrance to the precinct (fig. 3), though the

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Maia Wellington Gahtan

**READING PONTANO’S “LIBRETTO CO’ FOGLI DI MARMO”**

*This article explores Pontano’s funerary tempietto in Naples as a building in which inscribed text supplants the public functions normally accomplished through figural art. According special attention to the twelve *sententiae* which form the bulk of the exterior inscriptions – the *facciate parlanti* – the author highlights the uniqueness of placing a collection of ancient maxims on public display and demonstrates how Pontano’s printed gallery actively promotes dialogue with its visitors, embracing conversation, exchange and, ultimately, introspection as much as it celebrates the virtues of the deceased. While all of the *sententiae* draw from ancient literature and are consonant with Pontano’s moral treatises, only one, “know yourself” derives from the facade of a known building: the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Combined with the chapel’s physical source in a Greek-styled freestanding cenotaph for Herodes Atticus’ wife, Anna Regilla, on the Via Appia, such a conceptual source from ancient Greek thought underscores the Greek, Socratic, Neoplatonic, conversational, and communicative contexts in which Pontano desired his tempietto to be read.*

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\(^1\) Identified as the Temple of Deus Rediculus in the later 16th century on the basis of a passage in Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, 10.60), and subsequently by other names, the ancient Roman funerary structure was once part of a complex set of sacred monuments called the *Triopion* that the Athenian orator and Roman consul, Herodes Atticus, had developed together with his wife, the Roman patrician, Anna Regilla, on properties deriving from her family. The mausoleum is thought to be a cenotaph in her honor as she is known to have been buried in Athens where the two of them spent much of their time. Two columns with Greek inscriptions discovered nearby are currently assumed to have marked the entrance to the precinct, though the...
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The warning on the tomb site is one of many inscriptions in the Greek and Latin languages that serve as epitaphs to the deceased. The two Greek and a few of the Latin inscriptions represent a portion of Pontano’s ancient epigraphic collection which may have once included more examples. Originally collocated on the floor of the chapel, the inscriptions were moved to the walls during the restructuring and conservation efforts of 1759. Also, on the walls are much longer and more complex epitaphs Pontano himself wrote on stone slabs for his deceased wife, children who predeceased him, dear friend of more than forty years, Pietro Golino, and himself; the altar of 1759 also bears a dedicatory inscription (fig. 4). Some of the epitaphs are written in elegiac verse while others are in prose. Unsurprisingly, all adopt the ancient Roman epigraphic formats and conventions emerging in humanist circles in the second half of the 15th century. Like many ancient epitaphs, these commemorations represent the sole ornamentation on the tomb slabs, but their visual austerity is also in keeping with the station of a modest humanist by avoiding effigies or ostentatious sculpture. Although verse epitaphs were then going out of fashion in favor of prose memorial inscriptions, Pontano privileges poetic
examples which continued to find favor in published volumes.

The epitaphs themselves are notable for their vivid evocation of interaction between the living and dead and the penetrating sense of grief Pontano exhibits as, for example, in the following epitaph for his eldest son Lucio who died at age 29:

**HAS ARAS PATER IPSA DEO TEMPLUMQUAE / PARABAM, IN QUO, NATE, MEOS CONTE/GERES CI-NERES.**

HEU FATI VIS LEVA ET / LEX VARIABILIS AEVI!

**NAM PATER IPSA / TUOS, NATE, STRUO AEVI!**

**SEPULCRUM / PONO PARENS: HEU, QUID SIDERAM DURAM / PARANT!**

SED QUODCUNQ/UE PARANT, BREVE / SIT, NANOQ/UE OPTIMA VITAE.

**PARS EXACTA / MIHI EST, COETERA SIT, NAMQ/UE OPTIMA VITAE, SED QUODCUNQ/UE PARANT, BRVE / SEPULCRUM / INFERIAS / PUERO SENIOR, NANOQ/UE TUMULOS.**

**NAM PATER IPSE / TUOS, NATE, STRUO AEVI!**

**Heu fati vis leva et / lex variabilis in quo, nate, meos congeneres ci- / Neris.**

I, the father, was preparing these altars and this temple for God, in which you, oh son, should be burying my ashes. The evil power of fate and the laws of time are unpredictable. I, the father, now build your tomb, dear son. For a boy, I, the older man, hold the funeral and for a son, I set up the sepulchre. What does harsh destiny have in store? That which is in store for me shall be brief as I have finished the best part of my life; only the funeral bier remains. I, father and inheritor of sorrow, place this as a testament to you: accept this tomb as your inheritance. Lucio Francesco, the son, lived 29 years, 5 months, 3 days Pontano, the father, in the year of Our Lord 24 August 1498). Several family members including his son Lucio, his daughter, Lucia and his wife, Adriana Sassone, possess two epitaphs, one in prose and the other in elegiac verse (Lucio received two verse epitaphs). His wife’s prose epitaph indicates that it was placed there on the fifth anniversary of her death. Pontano envisioned her tomb site as a place where he could speak to her:

**QUINQVENNIO POSTQUAM UXOR ABI- / ISTI, DEDICATA PRIUS / AEDICULA, MONUMENTUM HOC TIBI STATUI, TE-CUM QUOT/IDIANUS UT LOQUERER, NEC SI MIHI NON / RESPONDES…**

(Five years after you, my wife, passed away, the little chapel was first dedicated. I have set up this monument for you, to speak with you every day, even if you do not answer me…).
A similar votive attention to anniversaries is exhibited in his epitaph for his tiny son, Lucio, in whose epitaph he refers to ANNUA VOTA PIIS, HEI MIHI, CUM LACHRIMIS. / HAECE, LUCI, TIBI ET AD TUMULOS POSITUMQUE PHERETRUM (pious vows placed each year for you on your tomb, Lucio, with tears). Such references suggest that Pontano held special anniversary conversations with his kin which, in addition to meditation and prayer, probably included writing votive epitaphs on slips of paper and attaching them to their tombs, as is known to have been current practice in a variety of humanist and political contexts. Those loose slips of paper were sometimes collected in manuscripts and/or published in books, as was the case for Dante, Dominio Calderini, and Antonio Squarcialupi, among others. Pontano unusually took the further step of having some of those later commemorative epitaphs inscribed on additional tombstones, thereby ensuring the preservation of the slips of paper in stone and broadening their readership.

About the same time that he had the second commemoration to his wife incised, he also fashioned the first version of his Tumulus (1496), a collection of epitaphs for colleagues, friends and family which was given its final structure for publication in two books (Venetiae 1505) just before Pontano’s death in 1502; the second book is dedicated to epitaphs for his family, including many that are not inscribed in the chapel. Giovanni Parenti argued that Pontano’s choice of the word tumulus for his epitaph collection was novel in that it emphasized the physical monument over the literary inscription, a terminology that would have an afterlife in works such as Clément Marot’s Cemetaire. Building on his work in her elegant meditation on the Tumulus in relation to the chapel epitaphs, Donatella Coppini concludes that the experience of the verses inscribed in the chapel differ from those in the Tumulus publication since their monumental form focuses on future commemoration as opposed to a nostalgic and lyrical view of the past. By accumulating epitaphic inscriptions over time and entitling his epitaphic book a tumulus, Pontano blurs the two genres, thus reconciling commemoration with nostalgia.

Like many humanists, Pontano believed in the greater longevity of the written word with respect to the figural arts due to the reproducibility of texts over time. By devising a paper as well as an inscribed Tumulus, Pontano was seeking to assure the survival of his family sepulchre through its immaterial reflection in manuscript. Pontano’s bias against the monumental arts is particularly acute with respect to works in bronze because those risk being melted down in times of need. His desire for sepulchral immortality may also have contributed to the inclusion of multiple ceramic floor tiles imprinted with the words, PONTANUS FECIT, AVE MARIA, LAURA BELLA, and the name of his wife, ADRIANA SAXONA. In a brilliant article about Pontano’s approach to patronage, Bianca de Divitiis elucidates Pontano’s role as artist and patron of his chapel, with his patronage identified on the dedicatory inscription over the entrance door and his artistic/architectural pretensions identified in his use of the word, fecit inside. To this undoubtedly correct and well-supported analysis, it can perhaps be added that by making so many such tiles, Pontano also sought to overcome the test of time, helping guarantee that his name as maker would remain attached to any future ruins of this monument. Although partaking of a different genre, Pontanus fecit tiles might on some level offer an economical alternative to the commemorative medals that Sigismondo Malatesta incorporated into the foundations of his Tempio Malatestiano so that the building, even in some future ruined state, site would forever be identified with him.

28 M. W. Gahtan, “Reading Pontano’s ‘libretto co’ fogli di marmo’ Maia Wellington Gahtan


30 De Divitiis, PONTANUS FECIT ... cit., pp. 14-31.

31 M. Schraeven, Out of Sight, Yet Still in Place: On the Use of Italian Renaissance Portrait Medals as Building Deposits, “Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics”, LVI-LVII, 2009, pp. 182-195. It is not known whether Pontano included portrait medals in his own chapel’s foundations; however, it is amusing to entertain the idea that he chose ceramic plaques over bronze medals to assure the continuity of his name over time.
Exterior Writing

While the Tumulus and the contents of the chapel reflect private concerns and intimate conversations even though it was also used for academy meetings, the exterior speaks to the general public of Naples. Interior and exterior inscriptions reflect his broader divisions between the private and public spheres in De magnificenza and De splendore. It is on the exterior that Pontano announces the chapel’s dedication to the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist and his own and his wife’s patronage, along with his and his wife’s coats of arms, their full names, and the date of dedication, 1492. In keeping with his advice to Isabella d’Este to include only the subject and patron on the inscription of a Virgil monument, Pontano avoids naming the archi...
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15 De Divitis, PONTANUS FECIT… cit., p. 6, nn. 1-2 for the range of authors addressing this question, and pp. 5-14 for a discussion of the dedicatory inscriptions on the exterior of the building.

16 G. Pontano, De Prudentia, Nepoli 1588, fol. 3r. He also mentions having conversations in the Sacellum on fol. 95r (book V). The chapel is also mentioned in the Antonius and the Actius, see FURSTENBERG-LEVI, The ‘Accademia Pontaniana’… cit. and L. Monti Sabia, Per l’edizione critica del De prudentia di Giovanni Pontano, in Tradizione classica e letteratura umanistica. Per Alessandro Pensia, a cura di R. Cardini, B. Roma 1985, pp. 599-615.

17 G. Germano, II ‘De aspiratione’ di Giovanni Pontano e la cultura del suo tempo, con un’antologia di brani scelti dal De aspiratione in edizione critica corredata di introduzione, traduzione e commento, Napoli 2005, p. 221, n. 21. He apparently liked them except for one which was too “Lutheran”.


20 With one exception, identified as a quotation from Livy (Ab urbe condita, VIII.7.17), see for example, A. Quondam. La fondazione di una tipologia etica e politica: il trionfo di Cesare (e von solo), “Studi Rinascimentali”, XV, 2017, pp. 13-24. 23-24; Germano, Il De aspiratione… cit., p. 221.

21 Sarcone, Il Libro di pieta… cit., p. 38. In addition to the Livy passage noted above in note 40, Sarcone, whose book is focused on the many inscriptions inside and outside of the chapel, recognizes a second citation from Livy (Ab urbe condita, XXII.14.14) and another from Juvenal (Satire, V.13.1-4), and also mentions Socrates, Plutarch, and Cicero, though he neglects to include precise textual references (see Sarcone, Il Libro di pieta… cit., pp. 38-45). I am not aware of any other attempts to identify the ancient sources of Pontano’s collection of adages or to study them in any detail. Early modern collectors of inscriptions appear to have taken it for granted that they were citations from ancient literature, but do not offer identifications or commentary.

22 M. de Nichilo, Per la biblioteca del Pontano, in Bibliotheca nel Regno fra Tre e Cinquecento, atti del convegno (Bari, 6-7 febbraio 2006), a cura di C. Corbati, M. de Nichilo, Lecce 2009, pp. 151-169. 164 and nn. 27-28. When Pontano died his personal library was divided between his daughters, Eugenia and Aurelia, though only an inventory of Eugenia’s half has been preserved. Neither the Livy nor the Sallust are listed on his having solicited Egidio da Viterbo’s opinion about them in advance29.

23 Like the epitaphs which invite reading as a unit due to their association with Pontano’s Tumulus, the exterior sententiae positioned at regular intervals on the two facades also function as parts of a larger whole. Representing Pontano’s personal selection of ancient words of wisdom, they recall the numerous ancient and medieval florilegia of proverbs and maxims that were edited and copied for the benefit of preachers and as school texts, as well as the proliferation of commonplace books30. Works of this genre include the “Sayings of the Seven Sages”, eventually enve-

24 tected, much to the chagrin of modern scholarship where the authorship of the building remains a vexed question31. The dedicatory inscriptions on the two facades are identical except for one detail: that on via dei Tribunali contains only Pontano’s coat of arms, suggesting that the doors may have had distinct functions. The door on the church square which opens to a vista towards the altar might be most appropriate for family services for the dead, while the street door on the side might have welcomed Pontano’s academy colleagues to philosophical discussions. At the beginning of his De Prudentia, written in 1490s, Pontano promised that the chapel would inspire prudence and happiness in the context of the academy discussions32.

25 The lion’s share of the inscriptions on the exterior are mounted on stone plaques on either side of the small windows between the engaged pilasters on each façade (figs. 1, 5). These plaques exhibit a series of twelve sententiae largely deriving from ancient Greek and Roman literature. The content is unusual and contributes substantially to the overall impression of a written building. That Pontano was concerned about how the maxims would be perceived is apparent in his having solicited Egidio da Viterbo’s opinion about them in advance33.

26 Contemporary scholarly literature on Pontano’s chapel tends to incorrectly ascribe authorship of most of these sententiae to Pontano himself34. A recent monograph by Italo Sarcone correctly identifies the classical origin of a few more of them while making the important observation that Pontano’s choices of maxims reflects his interest in the ancient literary contexts from which they derive35. Several of the sententiae are from Livy, an author to whom Pontano was particularly attached and whose manuscripts with Pontano’s annotations are currently housed in the national library of Naples, along with his copy of Sallust36. Pontano owned a relic thought to have been Livy’s arm which he acquired from his mentor, Panormita, who had collected it when
Livy’s supposed body was unearthed in Padua. Guidebooks record the presence of an inscription referring to the arm on the altar or outside of the chapel, suggesting that Pontano may have buried it there, but already by the mid-17th century both inscription and relic had disappeared without a trace.

While all of the sententiae are rooted in ancient philosophy, history, and politics, I have not been able to identify the sources of them all. One of the difficulties in their precise identification is that some derive from Greek texts that either Pontano or another 16th century humanist had translated and/or paraphrased into Latin. Others may belong to ancient or medieval compilations of the type mentioned above that never made it to print. What follows, though incomplete, is meant to offer a deeper sense of the sources and interpretations of the texts with which Pontano was working. Further study of how these moments in the ancient textual tradition inform Pontano’s thought and writings would be a welcome addition to scholarship. Like the Tumulus poems, the sententiae and their sources demonstrate affinities with Pontano’s books, particularly his moral treatises, De magnanimitate, De magnificia, De prudencia and De fortuna, all written and revised in the decade after the raising of the chapel. Although not presented in dialogue form, these treatises embrace a dialogue across time, ancient and contemporary – and with Livy in particular – so much so that De prudencia is considered the key model for Machiavelli’s Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio. Published in monumental form, the sententiae represent the kind of ancient food for thought meant to light the fire of academic minds and the public alike.

The sententiae on the facade facing the square of Santa Maria Maggiore (fig. 1) adopt state-building as their theme. Drawn largely from historians and political philosophers, they illustrate practices that lead to a powerful state run by worthy statesmen. The two on the left are direct quotations from Livy: NON POTIUS / NOSTRO DE- LICTO / PLECTAMUR, QUA(M) / RESPUBLICA / MAGNO SUO / DAMNO PECCA- TA / LUAT. (We are less punished by our faults than the state is, which is damaged by atoning for them) (Ab urbe condita, VIII.7.17) and: AU- DENDO AGENDOQ(UE) / RESPUBLICA CRESCIIT/ NON IIS CONSILIIS, / QUAE TIMIDI CAUTA APPELLANT (It was by daring and action that the republic grew, not by those measures that cowards call ‘cautious’) (Ab urbe condita, XXII.14.14). Those on the right side of the door focus on statesmen, rather than on the state itself. One is a Latin translation from an Early Modern version of the sayings of anonymous Spartans from Plutarch’s Apophthegmat- ta: EXCELLENTIUM / VIRORUM EST / IM- PROBORUM / NEGLIGERE / CONTUME- LIAM, / A QUBUS ETIAM / LAUDARI TUR- PE. (Great men are able to disregard the insults of those even whose praise would be an embarrassment), while the other paraphrases Cicero’s De Officis, II.46: NON SOLUM TE / PRAESTES / EGREGIUM VIRUM, / SED ET ALIQUEM / TIBI SIMILEM / EDUCES PATRIAE (You should not only be excellent but also educate someone like yourself for the fatherland).

Unlike on the main façade where the quotations concentrate affairs of state, the eight sententiae on the street side of the building (fig. 5) are more universally applicable to the human condition. Addressing the side of Pontano displayed in his moral treatises, as opposed to his governmental role, these maxims implore their readers to consider their own personal behavior, moral disposition, and overall approach to life. The two sen- tentiae surrounding the leftmost window concern how one should behave in the face of the fickle nature of Fortune. The first, IN MAGNIS / OPIBUS, UT / ADMODUM / DIFFICILE,
Polybius, Histories, XXIX.20. “Then Aemilius Paulus speaking once more in Latin bade the members of his council, ‘With such a sight before their eyes,’ – pointing to Pescennius, – ‘not to be too boastful in the hour of success, nor to take any extreme or inhuman measures against anyone, nor in fact ever to feel confidence in the permanence of their present good fortune. Rather it was precisely at the time of greatest success, either private or public, that a man should be most alive to the possibility of a reverse. Even so it was difficult for a man to exhibit moderation in good fortune. But the distinction between fools and wise was that the former only learnt by their own misfortunes, the latter by those of others.’ The same episode and sentiment are reported in Livy, Ab urbe condita, XL.8.6–7 and Deiidorus Siculus, Library, IX.33.3.


Cicero, Pro Caecina, 36: “habebis hominem singulari pudore, virtute cognita et spectata fide, amplissimo toto Etruriae nomine, in utraque fortuna cognitum multis signis et virtute et humanitatis” (“you have a man of singular modesty, known virtue and proven loyalty, known in both good and bad fortune. Rather it was precisely at the time of greatest success, either private or public, that a man should be most alive to the possibility of a reverse. Even so it was difficult for a man to exhibit moderation in good fortune. But the distinction between fools and wise was that the former only learnt by their own misfortunes, the latter by those of others.” The same episode and sentiment are reported in Livy, Ab urbe condita, XL.8.6–7 and Deiidorus Siculus, Library, IX.33.3.

Menander, Fragementa, 631: “προφήτηται πολλάς ἐστιν οὕτων οἰκία κατοικήτω” (“For many people haste is the source of troubles). In his Adagia entry on festina lente, Erasmus discusses Menander’s text, which he calls “well-known”, among other related dictums by Sophocles, Publianus, Plato and Cato.

Discussing the same historical episode, Plutarch notes that it is “difficult for the same man to always have good fortune” (Plutarch, Fabius Maximus, XXVI.4).

The third from the left is closest to the sententiae or fragments of Menander (no. 631), though there are many ancient Greek texts with similar sentiments: SERO POENITET, QUAM Q/AM CITO POENITET, / QUI IN RE DUBIA NIMIS CITO / DECERNIT (He who decided too quickly, never repents too soon). A more famous related adage is festina lente or σπεῦδε βραδέως adopted according to Suetonius (De vita Caesarum, Divus Augustus, 25.4) by Augustus; it was later embraced by Aldus Manutius and Cosimo I de’ Medici, though Pontano’s chapel inscription precedes both of these Renaissance adaptations, as well as Erasmus’ long essay in his Adagia (II.1.1).

The double sententia inscribed on the left of the next window (fifth from the left on the façade) describes a congruent approach to decision-making that balances risk and caution, embodied by two clashing figures in Roman military history: NEC TEME/ RITAS SEM/PER FOELIX, / NEC / PRUDENTIA / UBIQUE / TUTA (Neither does rashness always lead to success, nor prudence to security). The first portion is a quotation from Livy, Ab urbe condita, XXVIII.42.7 reporting the words of Quintus Fabius Maximus to the senate opposing Scipio’s intentions in Africa, while the second summarizes Scipio Africanus’ response, if not his reported words.

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Fig. 4 G. Pontano, Interior of Funerary Chapel, Naples, 1492 (photo G. Guida; CC-BY-SA-4.0).
The right sides of both windows retreat from a military context and from historical examples, both addressing the human capacity for building relationships through sincerity, loyalty, and forgiveness. The fourth from the left adopts themes and language from Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, 44.13: INTEGRITATE FIDES / ALITUR, / FIDE VERO / AMICITIA (Loyalty is nourished by integrity, and friendship by loyalty), while the sixth from the left, injects a meditative element into one of Publilius Syrus’ *Sententiae* (1.21; 250): HOMINEM ESSE / SE HAUD MEMINIT, QUI NUNQUAM INIURIARUM / OBLIVISCITUR (He who never forgets offences, does not remember that he is human).53

Finally, the set of *sententiae* flanking the furthermost window on the right reflect upon the role of interior conscience and introspection. The first paraphrases the first lines of Juvenal’s 13th satire, possibly replicating an early commentary on, or an ancient aphorism derived from, that text: FRUSTRA LEGES / PRAETEREUNT, / QUEM NON / ABSOLVERIT / CONSCIENSIA (Laws absolve in vain what one’s conscience cannot).54 The second is attributed to one of the Seven Sages (usually Solon or Thales) and was one of the three maxims inscribed at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo, Delphi: IPSUM / NOSCERE (In all stages of life, the first principle is to know yourself) (the other two are “certainty brings insanity” and “nothing in excess”). In ancient literature, “Know yourself” was usually directly associated with the Delphic shrine. Plutarch, for example, in introducing his *Parallel Lives*, 5, on Demosthenes and Cicero refers to it as a divine injunction of the oracle which is difficult for men to follow. Pausanias describes the placement of this and the other two maxims in the fore-temple, considering the phrases to have been dedications to Apollo by those philosophers (*Description of Greece*, X.24.1): “In the fore-temple at Delphi are written maxims useful for the life of men, inscribed by those whom the Greeks say were sages […]. These sages, then, came to Delphi and dedicated to Apollo the celebrated maxims, ‘Know yourself’, and ‘Nothing in excess’.”55

The most extensive discussions of the aphorism occur in Socratic, Platonic and Neo-Platonic contexts. Both Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, IV.2.24-3) and Plato (*Achilles*, I 124a-b, 129a, 132c-133d; *Charmides*, 164d-165a; *Protagoras*, 343a-b, 29e-230a; *Philebus*, 48c; Laws, XI.923a), describe Socrates’ repeated use of the “Delphic inscription” of “know yourself”56. In the *Charmides*, the phrase is revealed as an admonition to visitors about to enter the temple, reminding them to be temperate. Plato suggests
The providence of Apollo, as cited and translated by W. O’Neill, he is, being uninitiated and profane is unfit to partake of the guide of the purgative life, but he who does not know who be united with the god who is the revealer of the whole truth the knowledge of himself, by beginning at the beginning, can most effective path towards purification, practically stating manner, I presume, of ascent to the divine (Greek) and the thyself' on the front of the Delphi sanctuary indicated the inscription ‘Know yourself' was inscribed on the doorpost of the temple.

From what other source indeed, should one begin one’s own purification and perfection than from where the god at Delphi exhorted us? For as the public notice warned those entering the precincts of the Eleusinian Mysteries not to pass within the inner shrine (Greek) if they were profane and uninstructed, so also the inscription ‘Know yourself' on the front of the Delphi sanctuary indicated the manner, I presume, of ascent to the divine (Greek) and the most effective path towards purification, practically stating clearly to those able to understand, that he who has attained the knowledge of himself, by beginning at the beginning, can be united with the god who is the revealer of the whole truth and guide of the purgative life, but he who does not know who he is, being uninitiated and profane is unfit to partake of the road to the divine (Greek) and that Pontano associated the chapel with happiness and prudence in the preface to De prudentia and that Pontano surely would have remembered that Prudence’s most typical attribute was the mirror denoting self-knowledge. Referenced in a similar way in relation to the soul’s beatitude by Plotinus (Enneads, IV.3.1), Porphyry (Sententiae, XXXIII.8), and Proclus (on Alcibiades, I.11.14-18), knowing yourself also was considered central to reaching God by Marsilio Ficino in his preface to the Theologia Platonica, first published in 1482, and later in works by Poliziano. Finally, as discussed by Matthias Roick, the mirror surfaces in Pontano’s sacred inscribed context, serving as a So-cratic foundation to the interpretation and dialogue invited by the other eleven.
Recognizing Pontano’s tempietto as a modern shrine to self-knowledge and dialogue – one which wears the antique dress of a Roman cenotaph and the antique dictum of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi – is perfectly in keeping with the “ancient” persona Pontano cultivated – as he wrote in the inscription once adorning his home, he considered himself “a relic of earlier times” (“prisci reliquiae temporis”) and his garden even included a semi-circular exedra and seats, following Strabo’s description of Aristotle’s Lyceum and Ptolemy’s Mouseion (Geography, XVII.1.8). The inscriptions and their association with Socratic dialogue invite their readers, including members of Pontano’s own Accademia Pontaniana, to respond and consider their own thoughts and actions, just as the ancients would have done when entering the Delphic temple under the curtain of its own inscribed words of wisdom. And for the visitor entering the chapel who might need reminding of the vital importance of the Delphic ‘Know yourself’ amidst the twelve pithy inscribed sententiae, Pontano made sure that he would see it again were he to be invited inside, as he incorporated it into his own tomb’s epitaph. This final gesture to the reader signals that he should begin with that Socratic concept as a precondition, before engaging in fruitful dialogue with the individuals and ideas therein commemorated.

VIVUS DOMUM HANC MIHI PARA/VI, IN QUA QUIESCEREM MORTUUS. / NON-LI, OPSECO, INIURIAM MORT/IO FACERE, VIVENS QUAM FECER/IM NEMINI. SUM ETENIM IOANNES IOVIANUS PONTANUS, QUEM AMA/VERUNT BONAE MUSAE, SUSPEXE/RUNT VIRI PROBI, HONESTAYER/UNT REGES DOMINI. SCIS IAM QUI / SIM, AUT QUI POTIUS FUERIM. EGO / VERO TE, HOSPES, NE/SCERE IN TE/NEBRIS NESEQE, SED TE IPSUM / UT NOSCAS ROGO. VALE!

(While alive I set up the house in which I would reside in death. I beseech you not to wrong the dead, which I did not do to anyone while alive. I am Giovanni Gioviano Pontano who was loved by the good Muses, admired by the virtuous, honored by regal men. You already know who I am, or who I was. Oh visitor, from darkness I cannot know you, but I ask you to know yourself. Farewell).

63 Filangieri di Candida, Il tempietto... cit., p. 6, cf. Furstenberg-Levi, The Accademia Pontaniana... cit., pp. 60-75, on the terms porticus, lyceum, and accademia for sites of the Academy meetings. See note 15 for references to the inscription reported in the Aegidius.