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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.*

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 Marcantonio 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 Bianca De Divitis to the magisterial and passionate paleographical studies 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 facades, 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[5] 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[6]. A quasi-freestanding 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[7]. 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[8].

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[9], 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, Annia 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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Fig. 1 *G. Pontano, Funerary Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist, Naples, 1492 (photo: B. Werner; CC-BY-SA-3.0).*

[1] P. Sarnelli, *Guida de' forestieri curiosi di vedere e d'intendere le cose più notabili della regal città di Napoli e del suo amenissimo distretto…*, a cura di F. De Rosa, A. Rullo, S. Starita, Napoli 1688, p. 74, as cited in *Memofonte* (https://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/SARNELLI_1688.pdf; accessed 15 april 2022).
[2] B. de Divitiis, *PONTANUS FECIT: Inscriptions and Artistic Authorship in the Pontano Chapel*, "California Italian Studies", III, 2012, 1, pp. 1-36: 6. A. Petrucci, *Le scritture ultime: ideologia della morte e strategie dello scrivere nella tradizione occidentale*, Torino 1995, pp. 111-112. In similar vein, see P. Laurens, F. Vuilleumier Laurens, *L'âge de l'inscription: la rhétorique du monument en Europe du XV^e^ au XVII^e^ siècle*, Paris 2010, pp. 49-66; J. Sparrow, *Visible Words. A Study of Inscriptions in and as Books and Works of Art*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 18-25, and the aptly titled, I. Sarcone, *Il libro di pietra. Le iscrizioni della Cappella Pontano in Napoli*, Napoli 2014.
[3] A. Butterfield, *Social Structure and the Typology of Funerary Monuments in Early Renaissance Florence*, "Res", XXVI, 1994, pp. 47-67. See also E. Welch, *Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni Pontano's "De splendore (1498) and the Domestic Arts*, "Journal of Design History", XV, 2002, 4, pp. 211-221 and B. de Divitiis, *Giovanni Pontano and His Idea of Patronage*, in *Some Degree of Happiness. Studi di storia dell'arte in onore di Howard Burns*, edited by M. Beltramini, C. Elam, Pisa 2010, pp. 107-132: 32-33. The sole piece of figural art in the chapel is a fresco behind the altar representing the Virgin flanked by St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist.
[4] Pontano calls it a *sacellum* in his *De prudentia*, Neapoli 1508, f. 3r. See S. Furstenberg-Levi, *The 'Accademia Pontaniana': A Model of a Humanist Network*, Leiden-Boston 2016, p. 66ff.
[5] One recalls how Pontano praised the public nature of Ovid's tomb, reportedly constructed "in the most visible place" in G. Pontano, *De magnificentia*, in *I trattati delle virtù sociali*, a cura di F. Tateo, Roma 1965, p.112.
[6] For example, in Pontano, *De prudentia*… cit., ff. 3r, 95r. See note 36.
[7] F. Benelli, *Baccio Pontelli e Francesco di Giorgio: alcuni confronti stilistici fra rocche, chiese, cappelle e palazzi*, in *Francesco di Giorgio alla corte di Federico da Montefeltro*, II (*Origini e fortuna di un linguaggio architettonico*), atti del convegno (Urbino, Monastero di Santa Chiara, 11-13 ottobre 2001), a cura di F.P. Fiore, Firenze 2004, pp. 517-555: 554; De Divitis, *Giovanni Pontano and His Idea of Patronage*… cit., p. 122.
[8] Baldassare Peruzzi surveyed the entire Caffarella zone, cf. R. Dubbini, *La valle della Caffarella nei secoli: storia di un paesaggio archeologico della Campagna Romana*, Roma 2017, pp. 104-121.
[9] See H. Kammerer-Grothaus, *Der Deus Rediculus im Triopion des Herodes Atticus*, "Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung", LXXXI, 1974, pp. 131-252: 162-166.
[10] Biblioteca Nazionale, Napoli, ms. XIII B 10, fol. 75, see R. Cara, *Scheda Catalogo "2104 A"*, attributed to Antonio da Sangallo, in *Progetto Euploos* (https://euploos.uffizi.it/scheda-catalogo.php?invn=2104+A; accessed 15 april 2022); F. Rausa, *Pirro Ligorio. Tombe e mausolei dei Romani*, Roma 1997, pp. 57-58.
[11] *Inscriptiones Grecae*, XIV 72-73, see M. Gleason, *Making space for bicultural identity: Herodes Atticus commemorates* 16th century artist and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio thought that they belonged to a small round dedicated to Proserpina[10]. The inscriptions indicate that the lands once belonged to Annia Regilla, wife of Herodes Atticus, that the columns were an offering, and that "no one is permitted to remove anything from the Triopion" and that "no good will come to him that moves it"[11]. According to Maud Gleason, the inscribed warnings, along with other curses embedded in Regilla's poetic epitaphs unearthed a century later[12], were typical of Greek-speaking Anatolia (and also of Herodes' other commemorations in Marathon and Athens), but unique in the sepulchral context of the via Appia in Rome[13]. The rarity matters because Pontano, rather unusually, inscribed a similar warning on the slab covering the entrance to family crypt inside his chapel: AB HOC PONTANORUM CONDITORIO NE MAS NE FOEMINA / EX AGNATIONE ARCEATUR[14] (Let no one of Pontano's family, male or female, be removed from the crypt), as well as on a plaque on his house reported in his *Aegidius* which appears to have been reproduced in the chapel after his house was demolished in 1564: "Qui si lapidi huic iniuriam iniurius feceris, irati dii sint tibi" (If anyone should unjustly injure this stone, may the gods be angry with you)[15].

By the late 15th century, knowledge of Herodes' columns and their inscriptions were circulating among antiquarians such as Fra Giocondo who included them in his silloge[16]. The Herodian inscriptions may even have belonged to the silloge Pontano himself compiled and used in preparing his *De aspiratione* (Neapoli 1481) but which, unfortunately, has not survived[17]. It is also possible that Pontano and his antiquarian circle had made the association between the funerary building and the columns' references to Herodes Atticus and Annia Regilla, in which case Herodes' elaborate displays of grief after losing his wife (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, II.i.6), might represent a further model for Pontano's own elegiac lamentations[18]. What the combination of Pontano's unusual, inscribed warnings and the architectural similarity to the Annia Regilla cenotaph suggest is that Pontano was looking carefully at Herodes Atticus' memorial precinct in Rome when fashioning his own family sepulchre. Taken together, these ancient sources provide a suitable and a unique 'antique' monumental context for the wealth of inscriptions on both the interior and exterior of his funerary chapel.

Interior Writing

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[19]. Originally collocated on the floor of the chapel, the inscriptions were moved to the walls during the restructuring and conservation efforts of 1759[20]. 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 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[21]. 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[22]. Although verse epitaphs were then going out of fashion in favor of prose memorial inscriptions, Pontano privileges poetic

Fig. 2 *Rome, Cenotaph of Annia Regilla, 160 CE ca. (photo: M. Gahtan).*

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 IPSE DEO TEMPLUM-Q(UE) / PARABAM,
IN QUO, NATE, MEOS CONTE/GERES CINERES.
HEU FATI VIS LEVA ET / LEX VARIABILIS AEVI!
NAM PATER IPSE / TUOS, NATE, STRUO TUMULOS.
INFERIAS / PUERO SENIOR, NATOQ(UE) SEPULCRUM /
PONO PARENS: HEU, QUID SIDERA DURA / PARANT!
SED QUODCUNQ(UE) PARANT, BREVE / SIT, NANQ(UE) OPTIMA VITAE
PARS EXACTA / MIHI EST, COETERA FUNUS ERIT.
HOC / TIBI PRO TABULIS STATUO PATER, IPSE DOLO/RUM
HAERES: TU TUMULOS PRO PATRIMON/IO HABE.
VIX(IT). AN(NOS) XXIX M(ENSES). V D(IES) III / L(UCIO). FRANCISCO FILIO PONTANUS PATER / AN(NO) CHRISTI MCCCCIIC D(IE) XXIIII AUG(USTI)[23].

(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:

QUINQUENNIO POSTQUAM UXOR ABISTI, DEDICATA PRIUS / AEDICULA, MONUMENTUM HOC TIBI STATUI, TECUM 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…).

Regilla, in *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World*, edited by T. Whitmarsh, Cambridge 2010, pp. 125-162.

[12] The long panegyric in verse by Marcellus of Side was found inscribed on two slabs in 1607 and 1617, see W. Stenhouse, *The Greekness of Greek Inscriptions in Early Modern Scholarship*, in *Receptions of Hellenism in Early Modern Europe*, edited by N. Constantinidou, H. Lamers, Leiden-Boston 2020, pp. 307-324: 311.

[13] Gleason, *Making space*… cit., pp. 154-156, especially n. 112. Requests not to move tombs as opposed to curses are included in ancient and medieval epitaphs. In the Neapolitan context see Sarcone, *Il Libro di pietra*… cit., p. 53.

[14] See also: R. Filangieri di Candida, *Il tempietto di Giovi-ano Pontano in Napoli*, "Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana", LVI, 1926, pp. 5-41: 8.

[15] Filangieri di Candida, *Il tempietto*… cit., p. 24 and D. Coppini, *Memoria e ricordo. Tumuli di carta e tumuli di pietra nella poesia di Giovanni Pontano*, in *Mémoire en pièces*, actes de congrès (Paris, Sorbonne Université, 28-30 novembre 2016), sous la direction A. Raffarin, G. Marcellino, Paris 2020, pp. 389-416: 403 n. 42; for the plaque on the house: G. Pontano, *Aegidius and Asinus*, edited by J.H. Gaisser, Cambridge 2020, pp. 2-3. Pontano's own inscribed epitaph, cited at the end of this article, also contains a warning.

[16] By the early 16th century, the columns were in the Farnese collection, and they are now housed in the archaeological museum in Naples. de Divitiis, *Giovanni Pontano and His Idea of Patronage*… cit., p. 108 n. 3 notes that Fra Giocondo was in Naples from 1489-92, and that this is one of the reasons Roberto Pane attributes the chapel to him.

[17] G. Germano, *Il De aspiratione di Giovanni Pontano e la cultura del suo tempo*, Napoli 2005, pp. 219-268; see also de Divitiis, *Giovanni Pontano and His Idea of Patronage*… cit., pp. 125-126.

[18] Both Pirro Ligorio, who referred to the "campo di Herode di quello secondo Alcuni che fu amico di Augusto" (Rausa, *Pirro Ligorio. Tombe e mausolei dei Romani*… cit., p. 57) and Ulisse Aldovrandi who noted, "una Colonna in tre pezzi Bellissima, con molte antiche inscrittioni Greche che male si possono leggere proveniente del Pago Triopio" (U. Aldrovrandi, *Delle Statue Antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi Luoghi & Case si veggono*, Venetia 1556, p. 161 and Rausa, *Pirro Ligorio. Tombe e mausolei dei Romani*… cit., p. 58 n. 39) knew the columns came from Herodes Atticus' Triopion, see also Cara, *Scheda*… cit.

[19] The inscriptions are transcribed in Filangieri di Candida, *Il tempietto*… cit., pp. 33-41. For their references in classical corpus', see de Divitiis, *PONTANUS FECIT*… cit., p. 3, n. 7.

[20] Filangieri di Candida, *Il tempietto*… cit., pp. 33-41, G. Greco, *"Mi raccomando l'onore della bella chiesa del Giovanni Pontano": il re, il popolo e gli intellettuali in difesa del patrimonio storico-artistico nella Napoli di metà Settecento*, "Riche miniere", V, 10, 2018, pp. 75-85.

[21] I. Kajanto, *Origin and Characteristics of the Humanist Epitaph*, "Epigraphica", XL, 1978, pp. 7-31; Sparrow, *Visible Words*… cit.

[22] Butterfield, *Social Structure*… cit., cf. G. Pontano, *De Magnificentia* on sepulchres and funerals, *I trattati delle virtù sociali*… cit., pp. 108-112.

[23] The epitaph for Lucio Pontano has been transcribed as poetry, but also preserving the lines as they are engraved on the tombstone.

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. / HAEC, 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[24]. Those loose slips of paper were sometimes collected in manuscripts and/or published in books, as was the case for Dante, Domizio Calderini, and Antonio Squarcialupi, among others[25]. 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[26]. 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*[27]. 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[28].

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[29]. 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[30]. 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[31].

[24] M.W. Gahtan, *Appended Epitaphs*, in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Monasteriensis. Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, conference papers (Münster, 5-11 august 2012), edited by A. Steiner-Weber *et al.*, Leiden 2015, pp. 214-226, and bibliography cited. Sarcone, *Il Libro di pietra*… cit., p. 57 notes that services were held for his deceased wife on the first of each month, citing Pontano's *De prudentia*.

[25] M.W. Gahtan, *Epitaphs in Giorgio Vasari's* Lives, "Journal of Art Historiography", V, 2011, pp. 1-24: 13.

[26] See Coppini, *Memoria e ricordo*… cit.

[27] G. Parenti, *L'invenzione di un genere, il "tumulus" Pontaniano*, "Interpres. Rivista di studi quattrocenteschi", VII, 1987, pp. 125-158; see also Id., *Poëta Proteus Alter. Forme e storia di tre libri di Pontano*, Firenze 1985, pp. 19-79.

[28] Coppini, *Memoria e ricordo*… cit., pp. 415-16.

[29] C.H. Hessler, *Giovanni Pontano sulla pittura e sulla scultura*, "Studi Rinascimentali", XVII, 2019, pp. 59-71: 67f, discussing Pontano, *Actius*, IV.12, V.3f and Id., *De magnificentia*, IX-XI.

[30] de Divitiis, *PONTANUS FECIT*… cit., pp. 14-31.

[31] M. Schraven, *Out of Sight, Yet Still in Place: On the Use of Italian Renaissance Portrait Medals as Building Deposits*, "Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics", LV-LVI, 2009, pp. 182-193. 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.

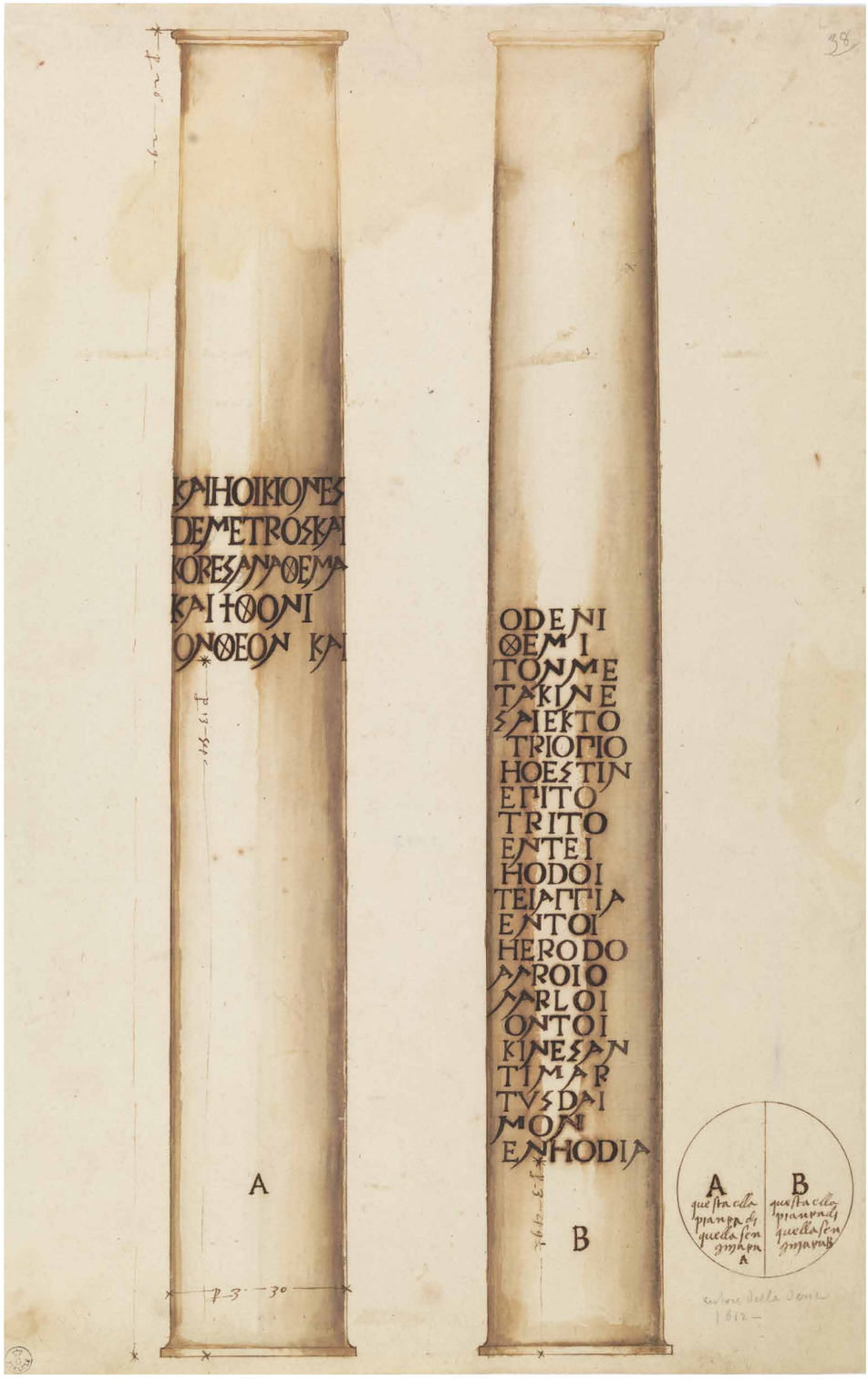

Fig. 3 *Antonio da Sangallo (attrib.), Drawing of Columns with Inscriptions Marking the Triopion Precinct, 160 CE ca. (Firenze, GDSU, 2104A).*

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 magnificentia* and *De splendore*[32]. 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[33]. In keeping with his advice to Isabella d'Este to include only the subject and patron on the inscription of a Virgil monument[34], Pontano avoids naming the archi-

[32] See Welch, *Public Magnificence*… cit., and Y. Ascher, *Politics and Commemoration in Renaissance Naples. The Case of Caterina Pignatelli*, "Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte", LXIX, 2006, 2, pp. 145-168: 164-165, referring to Pontano's *De splendore* and *De magnificentia*.

[33] The inscription plays with the names and their antique counterparts, Adriana – Hadriana and Ioannis – Iovianus.

[34] De Divitiis, *Giovanni Pontano and His Idea of Patronage*… cit., p. 119, n. 38.

tect, much to the chagrin of modern scholarship where the authorship of the building remains a vexed question[35]. 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 discussions[36].

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 advance[37].

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 books[38]. Works of this genre include the "Sayings of the Seven Sages", eventually enveloped in Strobaeus' *Anthology*, Plutarch's *Apophthegmata*, Cato's *Distichs*, or for the medieval period, Thomas of Ireland's *Manipulus florum*. The Renaissance augmented the genre by re-editing ancient collections such as the *Planudian Anthology* first published in Florence by Janus Lascaris in 1494. Pontano himself had translated and commented on the astrologically focused *Centiloquium* then attributed to Ptolemy[39]. The more philologically advanced efforts of the 15th century humanists would eventually reach their apex in the monumental *Adagia* by Erasmus (first published in Paris 1500) and the emblematic tradition inaugurated by Andrea Alciati in 1531. Such books elicit dialogue between the reader and the author/complier in the form of interpretive commentary offering related maxims and interpretive glosses. Pontano's *sententiae* may have served his own teaching or academic purposes; it is not known whether he derived his selection of adages from his own readings, from previous ancient and medieval collections he may have possessed or consulted in manuscript, or from a combination of the two. Either way, the maxims on Pontano's *tempietto* represent the first humanist collection of this type and are unique among such humanist efforts in that they are inscribed on a public monument.

Contemporary scholarly literature on Pontano's chapel tends to incorrectly ascribe authorship of most of these *sententiae* to Pontano himself[40]. 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 derive[41]. 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 Sallust[42]. Pontano owned a relic thought to have been Livy's arm which he acquired from his mentor, Panormita, who had collected it when

[35] De Divitiis, *PONTANUS FECIT*… cit., p. 6, nn.1-2 for the range of authors addressing this question, and pp. 8-14 for a discussion of the dedicatory inscriptions on the exterior of the building.

[36] G. Pontano, *De Prudentia*, Neapoli 1508, fol. 3*r*. 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 Perosa*, a cura di R. Cardini, II, Roma 1985, pp. 595-615.

[37] G. Germano, *Il "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 all except for one which was too "Lutheran".

[38] R.H. Finnigan, *Why do We Quote? The Culture and History of Quotation*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 113-152; B. Taylor, *Medieval Proverb Collections: The West European Tradition*, "Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes", LV, 1992, pp. 19-35; P. Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396-1529: Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts*, "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society", C, 2010, 2, pp. 1-270: 77. On commonplace books, see A. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, Oxford 1996.

[39] M. Roick, *Pontano's Virtues: Aristotelian Moral and Political Thought in the Renaissance*, London 2018, pp. 171-172.

[40] 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 non solo)*, "Studi Rinascimentali", XV, 2017, pp. 13-24: 23-24, Germano, *Il De aspiratione*… cit., p. 221.

[41] Sarcone, *Il Libro di pietra*… 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 (*Saturae*, V.13.1-4), and also mentions Socrates, Plutarch, and Cicero, though he neglects to include precise textual references (see Sarcone, *Il Libro di pietra*… 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.

[42] M. de Nichilo, *Per la biblioteca del Pontano*, in *Biblioteche nel Regno fra Tre e Cinquecento*, atti del convegno (Bari, 6-7 febbraio 2008), a cura di C. Corfiati, 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 in that inventory. A more general account of the libraries and books used by Pontano is provided by S. Furstenberg-Levi, *Giovanni Pontano's Library: a Meeting Place with the 'Auctores'*, "History of Humanities", V, 2020, 2, pp. 487-496. On the Livy manuscripts, see L. Monti Sabia, *La mano di Giovanni Pontano in due Livii della Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli (mss. ex Vind. Lat. 33 e IV C 20)*, "Italia Medioevale e Umanistica", XXXIX, 1996, pp. 171-208.

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[43].

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 15th 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 magnificentia*, *De prudentia* and *De fortuna*, all written and revised in the decade after the raising of the chapel[44]. 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 prudentia* is considered the key model for Machiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio*[45]. *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 DELICTO / PLECTAMUR, QUA(M) / RESPUBLICA / MAGNO SUO / DAMNO PECCATA / 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: AUDENDO AGENDOQ(UE) / RESPUBLICA CRESCIT,/ 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)[46]. 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 *Apophthegmata*: EXCELLENTIUM / VIRORUM EST / IMPROBORUM / NEGLIGERE / CONTUMELIAM, / A QUIBUS ETIAM / LAUDARI TURPE (Great men are able to disregard the insults of those even whose praise would be an embarrassment)[47], 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 *sententiae* 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,

[43] Carlo de Lellis (*Parte seconda, overo supplimento a "Napoli sacra" di don Cesare d'Engenio Caracciolo…*, Napoli 1654, pp. 114-115) recounts that Pontano had buried the arm outside of his chapel, but reports the inscription from P. Appianus, *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis…*, Ingolstadii 1534, p. 114, where it is printed right after a spurious inscription that also disappeared. The fact that it was supposedly viewed by foreign visitors like John Evelyn in the 17th century (or Evelyn's probable source, H. Pflaumern, *Mercurius Italicus*, Augustae 1629, p. 463), is a testament to how much these travel writers copied from earlier books of the genre.

[44] *De magnificentia* was written around 1493, *De magnanimitate* was written between 1498 and 1499, *De prudentia* is from 1501, and *De fortuna* was revised in 1501. Most of his treatises as well as his *Tumulus* were not published in Pontano's lifetime but rather were edited for publication by his student, Pietro Summonte.

[45] P. Ginzburg, *Pontano, Machiavelli and Prudence: Some Further Reflections*, in *From Florence to the Mediterranean and Beyond. Essays in Honor of Anthony Molho*, edited by D.R. Curto, Firenze 2009, pp. 117-125; B. Richardson, *Pontano's* De Prudentia *and Machiavelli's* Discorsi, "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme e Renaissance", XXXIII, 1971, pp. 353-357.

[46] The standard modern version is slightly different: "audendo atque agendo res Romana crevit, non his segnibus consiliis quae timidi 'cauta' vocant".

[47] This exact phrase is included in Erasmus' translation/elaboration of the *Apophthegmata* and many later versions that depend on his but not in modern editions: D. Erasmus, *Apophthegmatum libri I-IV*, edited by T. Ter Meer, Leiden 2010, (II.358), p. 153.

Fig. 4 *G. Pontano, Interior of Funerary Chapel, Naples, 1492 (photo G. Guida; CC-BY-SA-4.0).*

/ SIC MAXIME / PULCHRUM / EST, SE IPSUM / CONTINERE (In circumstances of good fortune, it is particularly difficult, yet most desirable, to practice restraint), is a paraphrase of a longer statement attributed to the Roman general, Aemilius Paulus in Polybius, *Histories*, XXIX.20[48]. The importance of moderation underlies the maxim flanking the other side of the window: IN UTRAQUE / FORTUNA, FOR/TUNAE IPSIUS / MEMOR ESTO (Whichever your fortune, good or bad, remember that it is fortune) which reminds the visitor of his impotence to design his own fate, a rather more pessimistic view of man's potential than the sentiment expressed in a famous Roman maxim attributed by Sallust (*Epistulae ad Caesarem senem*, I.1.2) to Appius Claudius Caecus, *homo faber suae quisque fortunae* (man is the maker of his own destiny), popular among Renaissance humanists. In keeping with Aemilius Paulus' attitude, elsewhere in his writings and particularly in the *De prudentia* and *De fortuna*, Pontano emphasizes the changeability of fortune and man's inability to control it[49]. In this inscription, speaking through ancient wisdom and partly in the words of Cicero[50], he reminds his readers to behave modestly with the knowledge that their fortune is not of their own doing.

The paired maxims closest to the door do not appear to share common themes or authors. 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 POENI/TET, QUAMQ/UAM CITO POENITET, / QUI IN RE DUBIA NIMIS CITO / DECERNIT (He who decided too quickly, never repents too soon)[51]. 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[52].

[48] 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 Perseus, – '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 Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, IX.33.3.

[49] On Pontano's view of fortune, see V. Kahn, *Giovanni Pontano's Rhetoric of Prudence*, "Philosophy & Rhetoric", XVI, 1983, 1, pp. 16-34: 21-31, and Roick, *Pontano's Virtues*… cit., pp. 141-156.

[50] Cicero, *Pro Caecina*, 36: "habetis hominem singulari pudore, virtute cognita et spectata fide, amplissimo totius Etruriae nomine, in utraque fortuna cognitum multis signis et virtutis et humanitatis" ("you have a man of singular modestry, known virtue and proven loyalty, known in both good and bad fortune to the whole of Etruria by many signs of virtue and humanity").

[51] Menander, *Fragmenta*, 631: "προπέτεια πολλοῖς ἐστιν αἰτία κακῶν" ("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.

[52] 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).

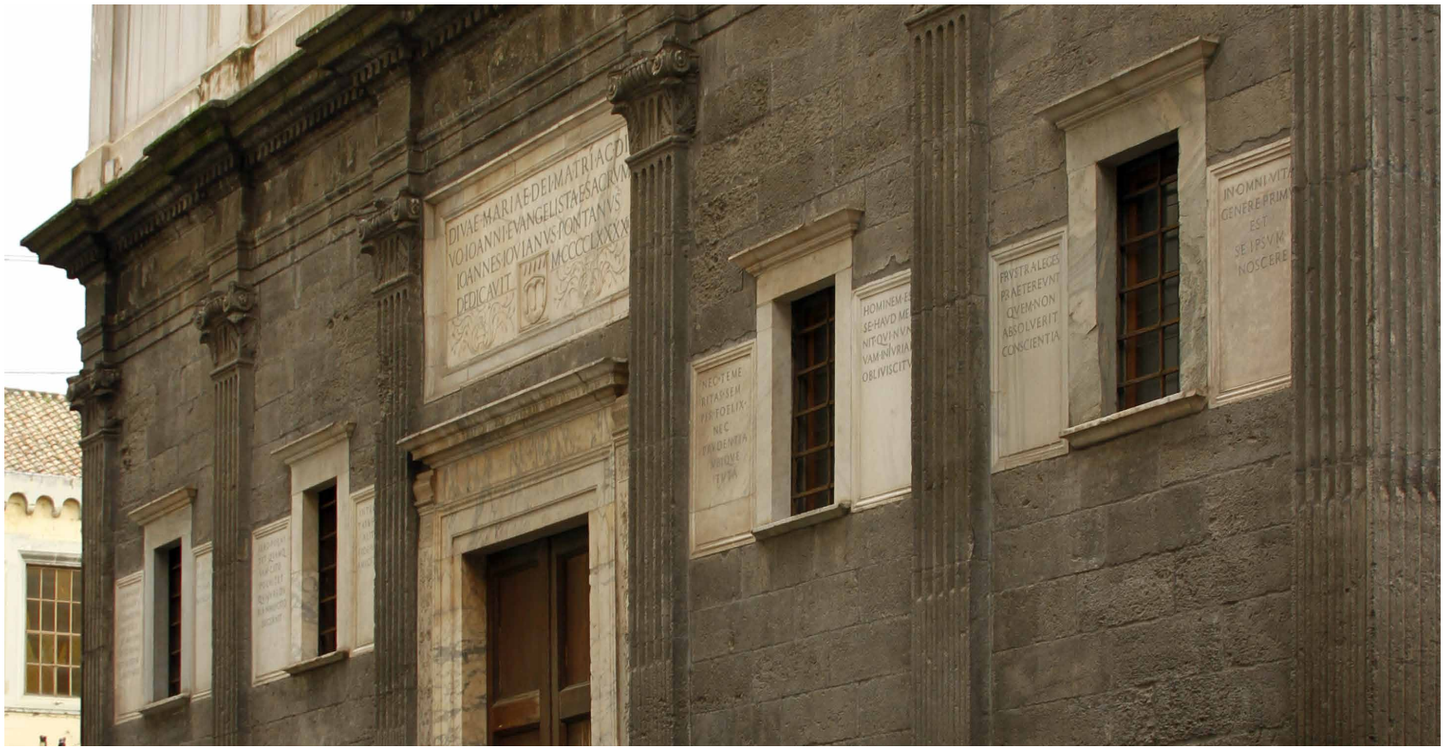

Fig. 5 *G. Pontano, Funerary Chapel, Detail of Sententiae, Naples, 1492 (photo J.L. Bernardes Ribeiro; CC-BY-SA-4.0).*

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: INTEGRI/TATE 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* (I.21; 250): HOMINEM ESSE / SE HAUD MEMI/NIT, QUI NUNQ/UAM INIURIARU(M) / 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 / CONSCIENTIA (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: IN OMNI VITAE / GENERE PRIMUM / EST / SE 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 thyself', 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 (*Alcibiades*, I 124a-b, 129a, 132c-133d; *Charmides*, 164d-165a; *Protagoras*, 343a-b, 229e-230a; *Philibus*, 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

[53] Publilius Syrus, *Sententiae*, I.21 (sometimes cited as n. 250): "Iniuriarum remedium est oblivio".

[54] Juvenal, *Saturae*, V.13.3: "se iudice nemo nocens absolvitur" ("no guilty man is acquitted by his own conscience"). Much closer to the chapel inscription is a phrase included in a commentary published in 1603 by Lubin on Juvenal who claims to have utilized old manuscript commentaries; "Frustra eum praetereunt leges, quem non absolvit conscientia" is printed in italics as a citation following the phrase "Hinc recte dictum" but no source is given (Juvenal, *D. Iunii Iuvenalis Satyrarum libri V: ex duobus manuscriptis exemplaribus, & vetustiss. Manuscripto commentario plus quam ducentis locis correcti*, editio E. Lubini, Hanouiae 1603, p. 435).

[55] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, translated by W.H.S. Jones, H.A. Ormerod, Cambridge 1918, as cited in Perseus (https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D10%3Achapter%3D24%3Asection%3D1; accessed 15 april 2022).

[56] See the still useful dissertation by E.G. Wilkins, *"Know Thyself" in Greek and Latin Literature*, dissertation, University of Chicago, 1917.

that "know yourself" was the first aphorism to have been inscribed, which was then followed by other maxims dedicated by wise men to the God. In the *Alciabiades*, such self-knowledge is a property of the enlightened soul, an approach that serves as a foundation to Neo-Platonic interpretations.

In his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (I.9.2), Macrobius asserts that the road to the eternal happiness of the soul begins with knowing yourself[57], an interpretation that might be of particular relevance given, as previously noted, 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)[58], 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[59]. Finally, as discussed by Matthias Roick, the maxim surfaces in Pontano's own, *De magnanimitate*, in which magnanimous man is especially called upon to reflect upon himself and practice moderation, or else he may risk making mistakes: "Nam si privatim cuiquam magis quam universim cunctis praeceptum illud traditum est 'Nosce te ipsum,' praecipue videri potest magnanimo traditum" (If the famous precept 'Know yourself' is passed down individually rather than universally, it can be seen as a quality meant for magnanimous)[60]. By placing this maxim in the public context of the chapel's façade, Pontano instead reinforces its universal application for all who would seek to enter this sacred realm of Socratic dialogue – Pontano's personal version of the portico he describes in *Antonius*, about his friend and mentor, Panormita[61].

Unlike the other *sententiae* inscribed on his chapel, 'Know yourself' was both well-known in classical and Renaissance literature and linked to spiritual pursuits. Associated with the figure of Socrates and Socratic dialogue and later interpreted as a path for the soul to ascend and know God, 'Know yourself' was also the only one of the *sententiae* whose origins can be traced to an inscription from ancient monumental context known in the Renaissance[62]. Pontano may have even conceived of the other eleven as being subordinate to the Delphic maxim, as Plato intimated in the *Charmides*. At the very least this *sententia* must have held a special place within Pontano's sacred inscribed context, serving as a Socratic foundation to the interpretation and dialogue invited by the other eleven.

[57] Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, I.9.2: "de caelo descendit γνῶθι σεαυτόν. nam et Delphici vox haec fertur oraculi. consulenti ad beatitatem quo itinere perveniret: si te, inquit, agnoveris. sed et ipsius fronti templi haec inscripta sententia est" ("From the sky came, 'Know yourself'. It is said to have been the advice of the Delphic oracle. If you ask to know the path for reaching blessedness the reply is, 'Know yourself'. The maxim is inscribed on the front of the temple at Delphi"). At *Saturnalia*, I.6.6, Macrobius notes that "Know yourself" was inscribed on the doorpost of the temple.

[58] Proclus, *Alcibiades*, I.5: "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 uninitiated, so also the inscription 'Know thyself' 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 providence of Apollo", as cited and translated by W. O'Neill, *Proclus: Alcibiades I. A Translation and Commentary*, The Hague 1971, pp. 3-4.

[59] M. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, edited and translated by M. J.B. Allen, Cambridge 2004, preface, pp.8-9: "Quoniam vero animum esse tamquam speculum arbitratur, in quo facile divini vultus imago reluceat, idcirco dum per per vestigia singula deum ipsum diligenter indagat, in animi speciem ubique divertit, intellegens oraculum illud 'nosce te ipsum' id potissimum admonere, ut quicumque deum optat agnoscere, seipsum ante cognoscat". ("[Plato] considers man's soul to be like a mirror in which the image of the divine countenance is readily reflected; and in his eager hunt for God, as he tracks down every footprint, he everywhere turns hither and thither to the form of the soul. For he knows that this is the most important meaning of those famous words of the oracle, "know thyself," namely, if you wish to be able to recognize God, you must first learn to know yourself"). For Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola and others, see I. Candido, *The Role of the Philosopher in late Quattrocento Florence*, in *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia. Text, Translation, and Introductory Studies*, edited by C.S. Celenza, Leiden 2010, pp. 95-129.

[60] G. Pontano, *De magnanimitate*, 24, 1,18.5, as cited in Roick, *Pontano's Virtues*…cit., p. 251, n. 126.

[61] Sarcone, *Il Libro di pietra*… cit., p. 38.

[62] Alberti (L.B. Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, VII. 11) mentions offerings to the temple at Delphi, Cyriaco d'Ancona describes visiting it in a 1436 letter to Leonardo Bruni (Cyriaco d'Ancona, *Life and early travels*, Cambridge 2015, pp. 222-223). Pontano used Cyriaco's inscriptions to write *De aspirazione*, see Laurens, Vuilleumier Laurens, *L'âge de l'inscription*… cit., pp. 49-66.

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 excedra and seats, following Strabo's description of Aristotle's *Lyceum* and Ptolemy's *Mouseion* (*Geography*, XVII.1.8)[63]. 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. / NOLI, OPSECRO, INIURIAM MORT/UO FACERE. VIVENS QUAM FECER/IM NEMINI. SUM ETENIM IOANNES IOVIANUS PONTANUS, QUEM AMA/VERUNT BONAE MUSAE, SUSPEXE/RUNT VIRI PROBI, HONESTAVER/UNT REGES DOMINI. SCIS IAM QUI / SIM, AUT QUI POTIUS FUERIM. EGO / VERO TE, HOSPES, NOSCERE IN TE/NEBRIS NEQUEO, 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*.