

Baptising the Putto: Transmigration of Infantile Forms in Sacred Settings between the Adriatic and the Alps

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Holy Children and Liminality in Early Modern Art, ed. by Chiara Franceschini and Cloe Cavero de Carondelet, SACRIMA, 2 (Turnhout, 2024), pp. 48–71.

BREPOLS  PUBLISHERS

DOI 10.1484/M.SACRIMA-EB.5.144402

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The figure of a nude boy usually referred to as *putto* became a norm in Renaissance visual culture: from the first years of the fifteenth century, the motif deriving from Roman sarcophagi enjoyed vast popularity in secular and sacred settings.¹ Numerous studies have explored the transmission of this ancient motif and reverberations of its semantic field while recognising an innovative role of Donatello's 1429 tridimensional dancing putti at the top of the Sienese baptismal font.² The agency of these small *all'antica* bronze figures within the otherwise coherent baptismal biblical program of this font may well have been configured considering a liminal role of this fundamental rite of passage habitually officiated on children from the end of the fourth century.³ Therefore, to better understand the status and materiality of infancy in fifteenth-century art, it is of particular significance to further explore an appropriation of putti figures within the liturgical space at the very centre of both religious and social initiation – the baptistery.

By the fifteenth century, several interconnected centuries-long processes regarding baptism reached their conclusion. Medieval Catholic doctrinal developments defined baptism as crucial for the salvation of the soul, while the question of the destiny of unbaptised infants inspired debates and visualisations of Limbo.⁴ Moreover, after seeing their peak between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in communal Italy and around the Adriatic rim, important civic ceremonies celebrating the baptism of a large number of individuals, marking their acceptance of the faith and the society on specific feast days, especially Easter, gradually took more symbolic form.⁵ Simultaneously, the baptismal font was also undergoing gradual transformation, from an early Christian and medieval *piscina* into a much smaller vase-like object. Assimilated to *cantharus paradisus*, this receptacle for holy water was already a standard in late medieval northern Europe for climate reasons.⁶ It is also important to note that the extensive embellishments of the Florence and Siena baptisteries in the first quarter of the Quattrocento signal the public attention given to these rites and buildings and demonstrate that the innovations in artistic expression related to them cannot be overestimated.

While Central Italian examples do remain a point of reference, for the more elaborate fifteenth-century ensembles in which large-scale figures of putti are an integral part of the baptismal fonts, the area between the Lombard lakes, Venice and its eastern Adriatic territories, especially Friuli and central Dalmatia, must be taken into consideration. In the decades following Donatello's invention, three important baptisteries – one in Lombardy (Castiglione Olona) and two in artistic centres of Venetian Dalmatia (Šibenik/Sebenico and Trogir/Trau) – were newly built or extensively refurbished. Their interior decorative programs are characterised by the entwined experiences of trans-Alpine, Lombard, Tuscan and Dalmatian artists. These solutions inspired a particular formal migratory phenomenon concerning more than thirty baptismal fonts and holy-water stoups between the Alps and the Adriatic.⁷

Finally, one of the important Renaissance written documents illustrating a hierarchy of the infant figures within a sacred space is a 1468 contract for the most lavish interior of the Dalmatian Renaissance, the chapel of Blessed John of Trogir.⁸ The Trogir baptistery shares the same site, commissioners and artists with said chapel and the contract even references the chapel as

a model, suggesting a shared theological underpinning. The agreement with stonecutters describes different infant figures: the text defines as *spiritelli* twenty-one boys with torches in their hands stepping through the doors along the chapel walls.⁹ Above them, among the apostles, the contract foresees a figure of Christ with two *anzoletti* and two *anzoli*.¹⁰ High up, above the niches with large figures of saints, nude *putini* playfully hold the vault. A choir of *anzoli* surrounds the relief of the Coronation of the Virgin in the semicircular space under the vault. The bust of God the Father dominates the vault's centre, surrounded by coffers with winged heads of *serafini*. The result is a hierarchical cosmos with infant figures embodying the beings from both the underworld and the heavens in clear vertical succession. While keeping in mind that the mentioned text is a legal document and not theological, the iconographic innovation of *spiritelli* with burning torches entering the sacred space through the doors needs to be underlined **FIGURE 1**. While it does correspond to the iconographic convention of souls represented as children, the fact that the contract envisioned the Christ of Ascension as the central figure of the program, only to be substituted in 1494 by the Christ of Last Judgement, fits within the contemporary discussions of Limbo inhabited by, among others, unbaptised children.¹¹ This concept is worth exploring in commensurate baptismal contexts, given the rite's liminal meaning for the living and represented infant protagonists. Therefore, a comparative analysis permits a more nuanced inquiry into the adaptation and the agency of the infant figures in different liturgical, social and artistic environments in a period of intense appropriation of classical motifs within Christian art.



A New Space for Baptism: Castiglione Olona

During the second quarter of the fifteenth century, the Lombard cardinal Branda Castiglione transformed his ancestral village of Castiglione Olona near Varese in the diocese of Milan.¹² His extensive interventions included reconstructing the old, ruined family palace on the top of the hill into a newly established collegial complex, which included a new baptistery. The adaptation and decoration of a separate baptismal chapel far exceeding the small community's needs is an endeavour worth further exploration **FIGURE 2**.¹³

The baptistery is inserted into the ground floor of the northern tower of the ancient castle and consists of a cross-vaulted rectangular space, with a narrower barrel-vaulted addition, divided from the main space by a lower arch. The pre-existing walls certainly conditioned the form of the newly devised space, its exterior undistinguishable as a separate volume. It has been suggested that Cardinal Castiglione initially envisioned this room as

FIGURE 1. Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino, *Spiritello*, after 1468. Trogir Cathedral, Chapel of Blessed John.



FIGURE 2. Baptistery
(interior), Castiglione Olona.



a palatine chapel where his monumental sculptural tomb would have been installed.¹⁴ While it is probable that some conceptual changes occurred during realisation of the complex which spanned almost two decades, the result achieved during the cardinal's lifetime is a space coherently celebrating John the Baptist in both its painted and sculpted decorations. A separated baptismal chapel also must have been a question of the prestige of a new collegiate, a reminiscence of exclusivity of *ius baptisandi* once granted only to bishops.

Around 1435, the Tuscan artist Masolino da Panicale, probably aided by Lorenzo di Pietro, called *il Vecchietta*, painted a fresco cycle illustrating the Life of John the Baptist, completely covering the Olona baptistery walls.¹⁵ The same team of painters adorned the main baptistery vault with figures of the four Evangelists, the intrados of the division arch bearing the Doctors of the Church, while the vault of the smaller space features the medallion containing a bust of God the Father surrounded by angels **FIGURE 3**.

The sculpted baptismal font **FIGURE 4** was originally located in this smaller space, centred in the vertical axis with the medallion and lit by two windows on the eastern and the northern sides.¹⁶ The font must have been conceived at the same time or immediately following the execution of the frescoes, corresponding to their liturgical and decorative program. Also, it defined the space with the visually complete Trinity formula to be read vertically: as God the Father gestures with both hands, the Holy Spirit descends upon the Baptism of Christ. The river Jordan is overflowing the window,

FIGURE 3. Masolino da Panicale, *God the Father surrounded by angels and Baptism of Christ*, ca 1435. Castiglione Olona, Baptistery.

FIGURE 4. Filippo and Andrea da Carona, *Baptismal Font*, ca 1436. Castiglione Olona, Baptistery.

turning into the light shimmering over the holy water of the font. Moreover, when seen from the entrance, the font and the Baptism scene appear framed by the Annunciation depicted on the external wall.

The font, carved out of white stone, features an octagonal basin decorated with the relief of yet another Baptism of Christ, while on the opposite side there is the representation of original sin. The other sides of the receptacle bear the Castiglione family coat of arms and acanthus leaves. These are an apparent reference to *cantharus paradisi*, a goblet of paradise (garden) containing the water capable of cancelling original sin.¹⁷ The octagonal support is surrounded by bulky foliage, among which three large and almost three-dimensional putti simulate a circular motion around the font. The infants vary their postures: one is supporting the burden with both hands; the second is helping with one hand, leaning with the other against his bent knee; while the third infant, laurel wreath on his head, carries a long stick and presses his right hand on his left shoulder, thus only gently helping with the weight.

Sculpted putti undoubtedly play an active part in the ritual iconography. Given the setting, one is compelled to recognise in the putto with the long stick a reference to the infant John the Baptist. Three small boys also appear in the Easter baptism liturgy of the Ambrosian rite, their names are always John, Peter and Paul, thus standing both as boys to be baptised and as precursors and immediate followers of Christ.¹⁸ This horizontal condensation of a before-and- after paradigm is in a certain opposition to the vertical reading of the font's iconographic axis, which suggests the understanding of infant figures as unbaptised children. The three putti coexist with the living participants in the ritual's performative space, although carrying the weight: their motion and almost paradisiac setting between the acanthus leaves suggests a concept of natural beatitude of infants in Limbo.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the true spiritual blessing is only possible if taken from the vertical axis – that is, through baptism.

At this point, it is important to note that the famous scene of the Banquet of Herod on the south wall of the baptistery has a frieze adorned by putti holding festoons **FIGURE 5**.²⁰ Given that this motif is not repeated elsewhere in the cycle, one is compelled to read it not only as decoration but

also as an illusionistic calcified reminiscence of the Herod Antipas's ancestry and the massacre of Holy Innocents ordered by his father, Herod the Great.²¹ The coexistence in the same space of the different groups of 'petrified' infants, although in rather diverse dimensions, medium and narrative context, is a substantial contribution to the visual discussion of their salvation.²² The centrality given to the baptismal rite's transformative power is fundamental, offered as an accessible and participatory path. Therefore, the composition created for Branda Castiglione firmly inserted the *allantica* infant figures within the most crucial Christian rite of passage, giving them an active role and the tectonic purpose of basin carriers within a baptistery mise-en-scène.



FIGURE 5. Masolino da Panicale, *Banquet of Herodus*, detail, ca 1435. Castiglione Olona, Baptistery.

The font is now tentatively dated to 1436 and convincingly attributed to the workshop of Filippo and Andrea, the so-called Masters of Carona, active in Venice and later in Lombardy, Liguria, Parma and Friuli in the 1430s and 1440s.²³ Their *bottega* was active on all of Cardinal Castiglione's construction sites in Olona, and it is in this ambient that the various experiences of Caronese masters come to fruition, producing a particular fusion of Lombard, Venetian and Tuscan elements.

Therefore, the baptistery at Castiglione Olona can be considered an attempt to create a complete and innovative model building and decorative program for the fundamental ritual of the Christian faith.²⁴ It seems to be the only monumental fifteenth-century baptistery in Italy envisioned for a smaller *cantharos*-type font.²⁵ Furthermore, it is possible that the space had other, parallel usages. The sixteenth-century architect Pellegrino Pellegrini (Tibaldi) mentions that baptisteries in Lombardy were used for chapter reunions,²⁶ a praxis possibly corroborated by numerous graffiti on walls at Castiglione Olona.²⁷ This aspect is yet to be explored but is also comparable to the Dalmatian examples analysed in this chapter.

There seems to be a consensus that a baptismal font in the Venetian church of San Giovanni in Bragora, attributed to the same workshop of masters from Carona, is slightly earlier than the Olona font **FIGURE 6**.²⁸ This assumption is based on the fact that the Venetian font is a pastiche: its basin is an adjusted octagonal capital of red Verona marble covered with luxurious moving foliage, datable on stylistic grounds to the 1430s.²⁹ The octagonal base is made of Istrian stone and is conceived similarly to the one at Olona, covered with acanthus leaves and containing figures of four well-carved putti. The children are bent under the weight of the basin with their faces turned towards the ground. Their agency is of tectonic and not ludic quality, as their gestures indicate genuine effort in carrying the font, not just playfully supporting it. This compositional choice does inspire a cautious interpretation as the weight for unbaptised souls, although on a rather subliminal level. In any case, the flamboyant character of the reused basin and the concept of putti as telamons stemming from the tradition of capitals populated by figurative elements are a fortunate find, if not a complete iconographic invention.

It is rather difficult to establish if this ensemble was realised before or after the Castiglione Olona font. While the Olona example has only slightly changed its position, still enabling a systematic iconographic analysis of the ensemble, virtually no information exists on the Venetian font's original setting.³⁰ The parochial church of San Giovanni in Bragora has ancient origins, but it was extensively rebuilt in the second half of the fifteenth century, stimulated by the rise to the pontificate of Paolo II Barbo (b. 1417, r. 1464–71), who was baptised in the church.³¹ We know that the font was assembled



FIGURE 6. Filippo and Andrea da Carona, Baptismal Font, ca 1436. Venice, San Giovanni in Bragora.

when the future pope was in his twenties, but the lack of sources precludes other reliable information on its history until the late sixteenth century. This font remains one of the early examples of monumentalised *cantharus* baptismal fonts in Venice, a type that would even replace the medieval basin at the baptistery of San Marco in the sixteenth century. Moreover, it is an important work of the Caronesi masters' workshop in a place where it was more likely seen by more people than in the remote alpine village of Castiglione Olona.

After Olona and Venice, it seems that the baptismal basin held by putti became a successful formula for the Carona masters' workshop. The stone font in the collegiate church baptistery of their home village of Carona also features putti.³² Despite their gestures, these figures are only an addition to the font's polygonal stem, not load-bearing carriers, while the carved decoration no longer includes acanthus. The oscillations of artistic quality and the figures' static treatment may be explained by typical fluctuations in workshop production. However, while the Carona font exemplifies an iconographic formula's consumption, the evolution of the visual baptismal program proposed by Cardinal Castiglione's ensemble found fertile ground in another region, Dalmatia, with the most inventive outcomes.

Dalmatian Civic Microarchitectures

While patrons in Italy ceased to show particular interest in the construction of the new baptistery buildings, in fifteenth-century Dalmatia two important baptisteries were constructed: the quadrifoil chapel in the new cathedral in Šibenik built in the early 1440s, and the cathedral baptistery in Trogir, finished in 1467.³³ Both feature elegant baptismal fonts held by putti, sculpted by the most prominent artists of the Dalmatian Quattrocento. The political, religious and social context in which these highly original realisations occur is worth describing and comparing to Italian experiences, as they contribute to the general understanding of processes related to the normalisation of the infant figures in baptismal spaces.³⁴

Between 1409 and 1420, Dalmatia passed under the Serenissima's stable rule, and the eastern Adriatic towns started reinventing their civic identities within the new system of *Stato da mar* territories.³⁵ In the fifteenth century, Šibenik and Trogir in particular underwent major refurbishing of their historical cores, including an update of cathedrals' baptismal spaces.³⁶ Therefore, unlike Olona's cardinal commissioner, Dalmatian examples were to meet civic, religious, and state officials' representative needs.

Set in Stone: Giorgio Dalmata and the Baptistery of Šibenik Cathedral

By the fifteenth century, Šibenik, a medieval town with no earlier Roman or early Christian remains of its own, became one of the major trading and administrative centres as well as the most populous town of the eastern

Adriatic. A diocese was founded in 1298, while the cathedral, built throughout the fifteenth century, was the most significant regional architectural achievement of the period. The construction was led by the series of *capomastri*, among which the contributions by Giorgio Orsini (Giorgio Dalmata/Juraj Dalmatinac, ca 1410–75) and Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino (Nikola Ivanov Firentinac, 1418(?)–1506) are considered decisive.³⁷

Giorgio Orsini, who was in charge of the cathedral construction from 1421, designed the new baptistery **FIGURES 7, 8**.³⁸ He inserted it underneath the south apse, masterfully levelling out the sloping terrain.³⁹ In 1443, the construction of a chapel dedicated to John the Baptist was mentioned, while in December 1444 a font was already in place.⁴⁰ The small quadrifoil space was inscribed within the south apse's complex polygonal wall,

perforated with high windows and a door corresponding to the south niche, with the west niche leading up to the church across a flight of steps.

The highly original baptistery of Šibenik was inspired by an early Christian baptistery within the cathedral complex in the nearby city of Zadar/Zara. This sixfoil inscribed into an octagon is also perforated by doors connecting the cathedral with other parts of the complex.⁴¹ The smaller baptistery in Šibenik corresponds to restrictions of a steeply sloping site and pre-existing buildings. It is clearly designed for a more intimate rite, with a corresponding smaller font. Different doors still enable access from the exterior; it is also worth mentioning that both in Zadar and in Šibenik the secondary doors led towards bishops' palaces.⁴² The existence of the various passages suggests an elaborate baptismal ritual, closely connected with civic identity; in Šibenik, the south door opens onto a semi-public and semi-open space under the sacristy, ennobled by a coffered vault standing on pillars, thus framing the view of the font within the baptistery.⁴³

The baptistery vault in Šibenik is a peculiar solution achieved through the assemblage of large stone slabs but still suggesting a four-part vaulting with a round headstone. The illusion of weight resting on piers between the niches is also obtained through the insertion of elaborate gothic columns and niches hosting figures of prophets, of which two survive. They are identified by inscriptions on the scrolls, as David shows a verse from Psalm 29, 'Vox Domini super aquas' (The voice of the Lord is over the waters), and Simon, the incipit of the canticle 'Nunc dimittis Domine servum' (Lord, now let your servant depart in peace), part of the description of the Presentation at the Temple (Luke 2:29).⁴⁴ The decorated ribs continue to meet in the central medallion, creating a spatial cross over the font; the suggestion is that of a division of the water in four parts – that is, four rivers of paradise—a gesture practised by the pope in the ancient baptismal liturgical procedure.⁴⁵ The four segments of the vault are filled with delicately carved angels and cherubs' heads **FIGURE 8**. The bust of God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit in the central medallion dominate the space, the scroll wrapped

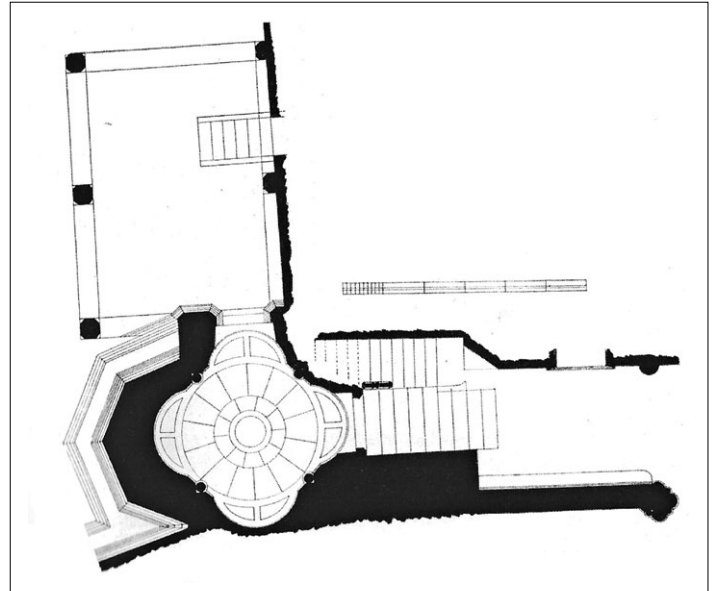


FIGURE 7. Giorgio Orsini, Baptistery
Plan of Šibenik Cathedral, 1443–44.

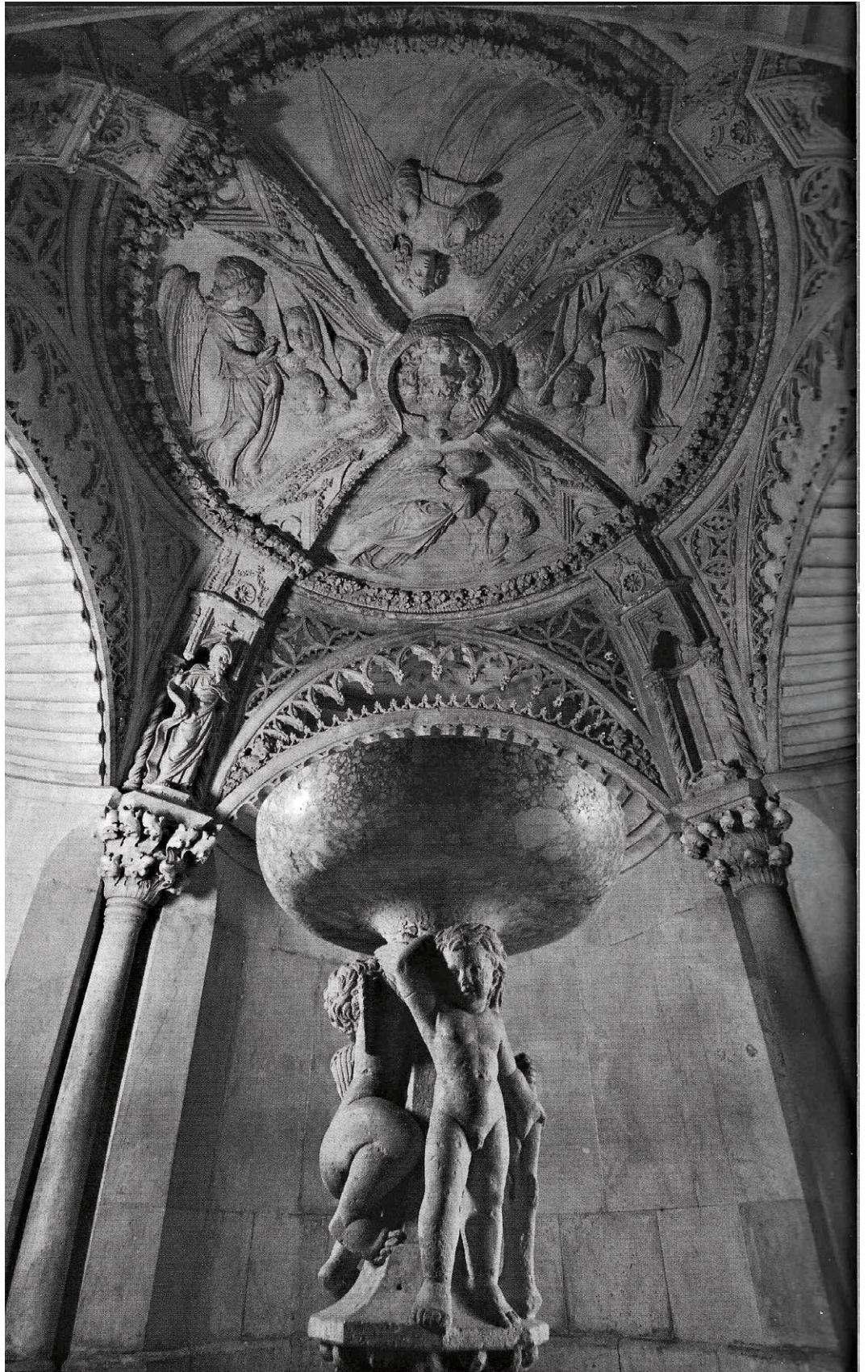


FIGURE 8. Giorgio Orsini, Baptistry, 1443–44. Šibenik Cathedral.

around the laurel wreath reading 'Hic est filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite' (This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him).⁴⁶ These words refer to two episodes: the Baptism of Christ (as in Matthew 13:17, the first sentence) and the Transfiguration (as in Matthew 17:5, the entire quotation).

This formula may have been chosen for its transfigurative value for the sacrament of baptism and because the scene on Mount Tabor includes Saint James the Great, the titular saint of Šibenik Cathedral. The quotation held by David refers to the power of the Lord's voice over the (holy) water(s). Simon enlivens the episode of the life of Christ that prefigures the civic and religious rite to be performed in the space.⁴⁷ It is also a reference to death and resurrection contained in the sacrament of baptism. It may be added that the cult of Saint Simon was one of the Zadar civic cults, with the scene of the Presentation at the Temple taking the central part of the Casket of Saint Simon, which in the fifteenth century was held in the church of Sv. Marija Velika (Santa Maria Maggiore).⁴⁸ The Šibenik iconographic program, with its biblical quotations on scrolls, provides a unique insight into the local fifteenth-century understanding of the rite. If the baptism/transfiguration paradigm is valid, the two missing figures in the niches may have been Moses and Elijah, both connected to water, the primary medium of baptism.⁴⁹

The Šibenik baptistery is a visually coherent whole that centripetally revolves around the font, a Dalmatian Renaissance sculptural masterpiece. The three putti surrounding the recipient made from red Arbe Island's *mandulato* stone are carved nearly in the round: two of them slip out of the octagonal pedestal on which they stand, while the third is turned around and strives to support the great weight of the font. The club facing down and held by the two brave boys looking outwards suggests a relationship with Hercules's iconography; moreover, the same attribute also characterises Saint James the Less, often exchanged with the other James(es). The putti also have wings, clearly exhibited by the one whose back is visible. Here, the Dalmatian sculptor created a highly original synthesis between antiquity and Christianity. A sculptural-spatial ensemble reveals a sophisticated patron aware of the regional hagiographic horizon and the importance of the designated space for baptism within the new diocesan complex.

Comparing the Šibenik situation with the original setting of the font at Castiglione Olona reveals an almost identical vertical sequence of putti holding a recipient underneath the medallion with God the Father surrounded by angels. At Olona, the dove of the Holy Spirit is incorporated into a large painted Baptism of Christ, with waters of the river Jordan overflowing the actual water in the font. The long and colourful cycle by Masolino and the white stone putti holding the font define this baptistery as space of both narration and performance, exploring the possibility of different mediums in contraposition. Giorgio Orsini's visual strategy reduces the narration, only hinted through biblical quotations; his baptismal space is complete through fruition – that is, the sacrament's performance. In both settings, putti enliven the rite of passage, bearing the basin and alluding to the cathedral's titular saint. Given the boys' accentuated playful character, tempered by the suggestion of weight, they can be explained by the same concept of natural blessing of children in Limbo. However, the true spiritual beatitude is to be achieved

through advancement on the vertical axes of the composition – that is, baptism. There is a carefully staged scenic view of the font from the semi-public porches in both cases: at Olona through a painted scene, and monumentalised at Šibenik by the coffered vault under the sacristy.

Moreover, the commissioners, especially the learned Dominican bishop Juraj Šižgorić (Giorgio Sığoreo), must have had an important role in devising the Šibenik baptistery, given the sophisticated iconographic program of the cathedral.⁵⁰ Here, a significant coincidence must be underscored: as mentioned above, Ciriaco d'Ancona, who was one of the most important mediators of the *all'antica* solutions around the Adriatic, visited Castiglione Olona in 1442–43.⁵¹ A year later, he is known to have travelled to the eastern Adriatic and spent winter 1443–44 in Dubrovnik, where he praised the architect Onofrio de la Cava.⁵² Although there is no known surviving evidence of their direct contact, the bishop of Šibenik and Giorgio Dalmata likely knew the artistic and ideological solutions of Branda Castiglione's program 'for a modern baptistery'.

Matrix of Use: Andrea Alessi and the Trogir Baptistery

The other prestigious architectural-sculptural Dalmatian ensemble with putti bearing a baptismal font is the baptistery of Trogir **FIGURE 9**. Unlike Šibenik, Trogir was a town of Greek origin, with the sizeable Romanesque cathedral of Saint Lawrence defining the north side of the main square. This urban space underwent an extensive restaging, which included the elimination of the medieval baptistery, situated in the vicinity of a sixfoil church of Saint Mary on the south side of the square.⁵³ In 1467, the former collaborator of Giorgio Dalmata, Andrea Alessi from Durazzo (Andrea Alexi or Andrija Aleši, ca 1425–ca 1505), finished a new baptistery on the north side of the cathedral porch. This is attested by the inscription inside the new structure, which also mentions the bishop Jacopo Torlono from Ancona and the Venetian Count Carlo Capello.⁵⁴ Several scholars have also argued for the active participation of another protagonist of the Dalmatian Quattrocento, the sculptor Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino, confirmed by a 1468 payment for works in the chapel of John the Baptist.⁵⁵

The cathedral's vestibule leading to the baptistery door is a semi-public and sacred space dominated by a 1240 Romanesque portal signed by master Radovan.⁵⁶ Its lunette is adorned with the Nativity and the Bathing of the Christ Child, and it thus contains an image of a baby climbing into a font-like receptacle. Responding to the abundance of the existing sculpted content in the space, Alessi paid particular attention to his new baptistery entrance. He framed its wide rectangular door with a rich festoon emerging from two *cantharos*, flanked by narrow fluted illusionistic niches and rounded angular columns with rhomboidal foliage. A heavy, classically decorated entablature divides the upper and the lower registers of the wall. Finally, framed by continuous angular columns bearing a semicircular laurel wreath is a monumental relief of the Baptism of Christ. Scholars have indicated some important similarities to contemporary paintings of the same theme, usually refer-



FIGURE 9. Andrea Alessi, Baptistry, ca 1467. Trogir Cathedral.

ring to Piero della Francesca's and Andrea Mantegna's examples as models for the lower part of the composition.⁵⁷

The baptistery building has a simple rectangular form with a pointed barrel vault and is inspired by the so-called small Jupiter temple in nearby Split, used as the cathedral baptistery since the Middle Ages. Therefore, as in Šibenik, the newly built baptistery in Trogir is modelled upon an older cathedral baptistery in a nearby city. Moreover, this ancient model, ennobled through centuries of use for the Christian rite, seems especially well suited for the Trogir humanist elite of the 1460s.⁵⁸

The baptistery exterior is a simple white rectangular structure opened only by a high rose window on its west wall. The interior **FIGURE 9** reveals updated solutions already tested in Šibenik.⁵⁹ The lowest zone, as in the Šibenik cathedral vestibule, is dominated by a stone bench that runs around the walls, interrupted only by the door. Above it, shell-cupped illusionistic niches alternate with fluted pilasters, all carved into vertical building blocks. On the top of them is a frieze with putti holding festoons: these infants stand directly on pilaster capitals, thus reaffirming the post-and-lintel system's visual logic, in which the niches open illusionistically behind the plane of the pilasters.⁶⁰ The corner solution with rounded column capitals respects this correspondence, enriching the spatial illusion of overlapping planes. The sculpted children in the frieze are supposed to move behind these circular

elements, as figures belonging to the same suggested spatial layer as the pilasters, albeit there must have been some misunderstandings in the execution. Therefore, putti with festoons do not exist in the same spatial (and spiritual) dimension as interactive elements such as the bench and the font. Yet another dimension is added by a considerable relief representing Saint Jerome in a cave under the vault on the baptistery's eastern wall.

The baptismal font in Trogir is also an original part of the composition **FIGURE 10**. Here, the putti are concentrated on carrying a ring-like garland that constitutes the base for the large circular receptacle. Thus, the font is divided into clear zones, similar to the geometric pattern-like logic defining the walls and the vault. These are large well-carved figures of small boys, all three of them facing out, their wings touching as they lead the observer around the font. They are not particularly keen carriers, and the force behind their movement is centrifugal, originating in the lower portion of the font and redirecting the observer's gaze towards the frieze. Like Castiglione Olona, here infant figures are both under and above the holy water, again not belonging to the same real and suggested dimensions of legibility and usability of the space. If put in relation with the other examples analysed here, it is likely that Alessi's putti also belong to the



FIGURE 10. Andrea Alessi, Baptistry Font, ca 1467. Trogir Cathedral.

theme of the natural beatitude of unbaptised children in Limbo, although their disposition has a somewhat different function.⁶¹

The changed location of the font now distorts the reading of the fifteenth-century Trogir baptistery. Its present location near the western wall is not original since it leaves both the font and the western section of the bench inaccessible. The font was probably moved to accommodate a Baroque altar on the east side, while the floor tiles have been reshuffled several times **FIGURE 11**.⁶² Given the structure's interior shape, I am inclined to believe that the font was initially placed on the intersection of the entrance and the longitudinal axis of the baptistery. This would maximise its approachability and visibility from the church vestibule, uniting it with the entrance wall's elaborate decoration. Seen through the open door, the font would be right under the relief of the Baptism of Christ, thus reprising the iconographical vertical axis of the earlier baptisteries **FIGURE 12**. This is an ingenious solution to unite from an external point of view the gesture of John the Baptist pouring water over the head of Christ and its emulation through the rite. It is important to note that Alessi's relief contains the figure of God the Father surrounded by cherubs, missing in Piero's and Mantegna's compositions but present in both the Olona and the Šibenik ensembles, and, in sculpture, in Lorenzo Ghiberti's composition of the same theme on the Siena font. Moreover, the interplay of planes in which the relief and the font coexist restitutes the division between spiritual dimensions that was obtained at Olona through the painting and sculpture, signalling a certain discomfort with the absolute enlivenment of the Šibenik baptistery space. Therefore, the Trogir baptistery is a unique life-size elaboration in stone of experiments in perspective typical of Donatello and the masters of *architectura picta* of the period. This approach has been already noted in the new buildings' disposition on the opposite side of the square, as seen from the church vestibule.⁶³

The question arises regarding the choice of an oblong plan for the baptistery, other than following the Split model and space availability. The highly elaborate interior decoration, with benches and niches, resembles choir stalls. It also matches Leon Battista Alberti's descriptions of interiors for *curia* buildings, successfully merging the vaulted space for the priests with a rectangular form of the Curia de' Senatori.⁶⁴ Moreover, the seated public in the baptistery is directed towards the relief discussed above, an example of the regional merging of the theme of Saint Jerome in the desert with the representations of Saint Jerome in his study.⁶⁵ It is reasonable to assume that the most monumental representation of the ideal of ascetic and intellectual

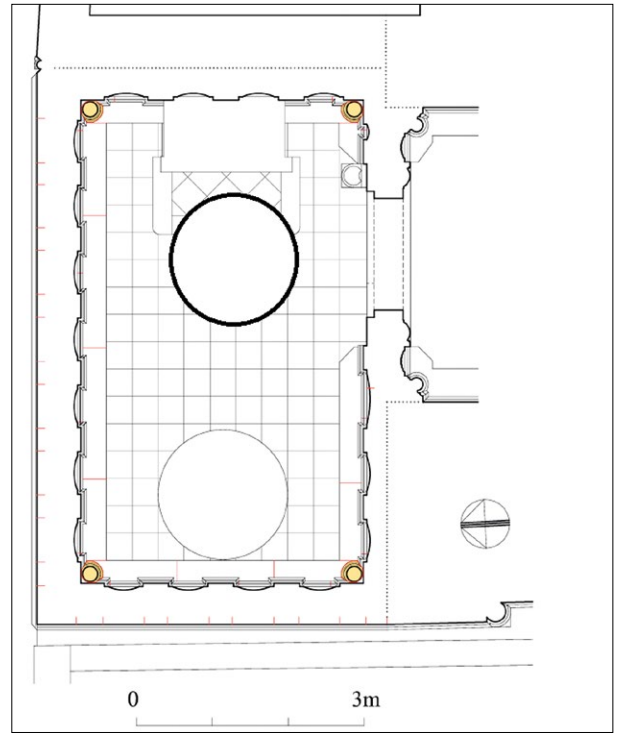


FIGURE 11. Andrea Alessi, Baptistery Plan of Trogir Cathedral with the font's suggested original position, ca 1467.

FIGURE 12. Andrea Alessi, *Baptism of Christ* with simulation of the original font's position in Trogir Cathedral, ca 1467.



life in the region was created for a particular public: cathedral canons and maybe even *operarii*, who were responsible for the institution and for the construction and maintenance of the cathedral, respectively.⁶⁶ Hence, the staging of the space is highly innovative, with the baptismal font acting as a gear between the 'baptismal' perpendicular axis open towards the vestibule and the long 'intellectual' axis of the men responsible for the cathedral. Basically, the font is placed as a centre of civic and religious identities and duties.

This almost obsessive insistence on a clear geometrical matrix produces a certain rigidity of forms. This would be completely overcome in the chapel of the Blessed John, begun only in 1475 or 1477, with Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino taking the leading role.⁶⁷ Both commissions were civic, and they should be considered as an expression of the reformulated identity of Trogir following the new political circumstances.⁶⁸ Finally, the Trogir baptistery easily may have been one of the last examples built *ex-novo* as such, at least in the wider cisalpine-Adriatic region: the rite was extensively officiated in parochial churches, as numerous baptismal fonts seem to suggest.⁶⁹

Alessi's dancing putti carrying the font became a model for other fonts and, by similarity, for stoups still in the region's churches. Unconscious of

the weight they bear, dancing putti are present on a holy-water stoup in Saint Michael's church in Zadar **FIGURE 13**. This liturgical object has been assembled from previously existing pieces (the putti are usually dated to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century) and hence represents a particular case of emulation of the Šibenik and Trogir fonts, with a noticeable weakening of sculptural quality.⁷⁰ The duration of this phenomenon is significant: even in the mid-sixteenth century, a similar font was carved by Šibenik masters in the parochial church of Mola di Bari, a small centre on the coast of Puglia, clearly lacking the freshness and spiritual depth of the fifteenth-century ensembles.⁷¹

Enlivened Liturgical Objects: Baptismal Fonts Held by Putti in Patria del Friuli

There is yet another region, Friuli, where important elaborations of the formula devised by Caronesi masters were put into action during the fifteenth century. More than twenty examples exist between fonts and stoups with figures of putti listed so far. Unfortunately, it seems that none of them survives in its original setting, and many were significantly altered.⁷²

FIGURE 13. Holy water stoup, late 15th-early 16th century. Zadar, Church of Saint Michael.

In the early fifteenth century, Patria of Friuli had also become part of the Venetian dominions. After the end of the Patriarch of Aquileia's temporal power, government structures underwent significant secularisation. The reformulation of the regional identity in these new circumstances stimulated a vivacious market for sculptural and stone products, attracting numerous *lapicidae* from the area of the Lombard lakes between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, remaining open for artistic stimuli from both the Alps and the Adriatic.⁷³

As with previously discussed regions, in Friuli it is also necessary to concentrate on the fifteenth-century examples of the baptismal fonts that set the trend. The holy-water receptacle of the Duomo of Spilimbergo, now serving as a stoup near the lateral door into the church, is probably the earliest regional example **FIGURE 14**. The historiography connects it, although with reservations, to a 1466 documented payment to an otherwise unknown 'maestro Zorzi tagliapiera'.⁷⁴ This high-quality sculptural ensemble stems from an octagonal coffered base, which becomes a massive, rounded baluster topped by an elaborate circular receptacle decorated with classical motifs. The four putti around the stem recall antique models with their dry classicism, expressive adult faces and a translucent veil that partially covers the most exposed among them. Their plump bodies change positions, one turning his back with his small wings poking out, their hands playing with a thin garland behind them; however, there is no joy in their dance, and these elegiac creatures transmit the feeling of the underworld and death.

As the figures' movement suggests, the liturgical object in question is not in its original position, as it must have been accessible from all sides, similar to the Olona and Dalmatian fonts.⁷⁵ There is no mention of a baptistery building related to the medieval church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Spilimbergo.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the rite's importance is confirmed by the existence of a second, much more substantial and elaborate baptismal font (without putti) by the most prominent sculptor in Renaissance Friuli, Giovanni Antonio Pilacorte.⁷⁷ Possibly, this larger font replaced the earlier one, now degraded to a stoup. The new font has also been moved into the presbytery zone, and virtually no elements survive that might help define the immediate environment for which either of them was initially envisioned.⁷⁸

The earlier font attributed to 'maestro Zorzi' remains a *unicum* among the analysed examples for its elegiac atmosphere, as if corresponding to Cardinal Federico Borromeo's recommendations on how the souls in Limbo should be represented.⁷⁹ This suggests that both sculptor and commissioner(s) were well acquainted with the humanistic-theological views underpinning the sad fate of the unbaptised. Spilimbergo cultivated humanist studies, and its renowned *scuola di grammatica* was directly dependant on the collegiate church of Santa Maria Maggiore.⁸⁰ The font might plausibly be related to these scholarly circles, somewhat like the feudal context of the collegiate church of Castiglione Olona. On the other hand, the early font lacks any symbols of patrons or al-



FIGURE 14. Maestro Giorgio, Holy water stoup/ baptismal font, 1466. Spilimbergo, Duomo.

lusions to local identity, but it remains a suggestive liturgical object that may have been an inspiration fomenting the regional popularity of the formula.

If the Spilimbergo example was a probable fruit of local humanist fervour, the new font in the medieval baptistery of the Duomo of Udine, the central church complex of Friuli during the Venetian domination, was of a very different scope **FIGURE 15**.⁸¹ The Udine Duomo chapter commissioned the font in 1479 from a certain Giovanni di Biagio from nearby Zuglio for the octagonal building adjacent to the cathedral transept.⁸² This elaborate object with dancing putti is currently in the eighteenth-century Oratory of Purity, where it arrived in 1793.

The new receptacle for the holy water of Udine Cathedral, inserted in 1480, entered a context that underwent significant transformations in the fifteenth century, as the fourteenth-century baptistery became the base for the new bell tower. In 1441, the communal council entrusted the design to Cristoforo di Milano, and the construction began under Bartolomeo delle Cisterne, who was responsible for the site until 1450.⁸³ The tower construction stopped due to structural problems, but the vaulted octagonal space on the ground floor continued to be used as a baptistery. Nothing is known on the earlier font, but it may have been a larger hexagonal or rectangular *piscina*, analogous to other early baptisteries in Friuli,

such as those in Grado, Aquileia or Concordia, all placed in the middle of the space.⁸⁴ Giovanni da Zuglio's font also stood in the centre of the building, as noted during the 1601 pastoral visit.⁸⁵ In terms of visual connection with the architectural context, the Renaissance font was inserted under the keystone of the octagonal ribbed vault decorated with a carved bust of John the Baptist, his right hand gesturing downwards, while the scroll in his left hand reads *ECCE AGNUS DEI* (John 1:29).⁸⁶ Therefore, even with the insertion of the Renaissance font with putti in the much earlier building, infant figures assumed a role in the vertical reading of space as well, here with an eschatological value.

The Udine font features elegant, lyric dancing putti around the somewhat undefined conical support of the round receptacle. Their gestures echo the Spilimbergo font, although here putti carry ribbons with coats of arms of the noble families Sbrojavacca and Del Torso. The communal coat of arms is on the upper border of the font. Between the infant figures is a large eagle, a symbol of the Patriarchate of Aquileia – by the fifteenth century, Udine had become the stable See of both the Patriarch and the regional Parliament. Wingless and adorned with long locks of hair, the putti remain more an enlivened ornament than protagonists of the baptismal rite, conveying their symbolic message through emblems, all to be seen in movement around the



FIGURE 15. Giovanni di Biagio da Zuglio, Baptismal Font, 1480. Udine, Oratory of Purity.

font. In the fifteenth century, the updated baptistery of Udine presented a significant visual capital within the regional system of secular and ecclesiastic power, confirming the significance of this rite of passage for the centre of Patriarchate of Aquileia.⁸⁷

The Spilimbergo and the Udine fonts must have provided continuous inspiration for the reuse of formulas in the less prestigious contexts of regional parochial churches. Moreover, in Friuli, the sculptors from the Lombard lakes were a constant presence, both seasonal and stable; thus, their inspiration may have also stemmed from Carona or Castiglione Olona. The inventive and well-carved solutions produced by the fertile workshop of the sculptor Giovanni Antonio Pilacorte present some interesting developments.⁸⁸ Among these, the putti musicians in churches at San Pietro di Travesio and Beano (1519) are striking for their resemblance to both Donatellian Siena prototypes and to solutions deriving from Venetian painting, especially the workshops of Giovanni Bellini and the Vivarini brothers.⁸⁹ Pilacorte compositions do not entirely lack Quattrocento Spilimbergo elegiac children's spiritual participation, but the atmosphere they produce is of joyous music. The emotional temperature of all cited Friuli examples is very different, their symbolic and, consequently, cultural value fluctuating greatly: the complexity of the baptismal rite and its social implications probably had a decisive impact on the appropriation and diversification of the images of children in this context.

Conclusions

The evolution of the baptismal rite and the popularity of Renaissance putti figures conveyed the formulation of the baptismal font carried by infants during the fourth decade of the fifteenth century. Possibly stemming from a fortunate juxtaposition of a repurposed capital and the northern-European typology of the font as *cantharos paradisus*, the formula that included sculpted infants into the baptismal rite was brought to life in the baptistery of Castiglione Olona, innovatively staged as both narrative and performative space framing the initial rite of passage in the life of a Christian. This layered program was a fruit of Tuscan and Veneto-Lombard artistic collaboration, acting upon wishes of the learned Cardinal Branda Castiglione.

In Dalmatia, this new visual synthesis of baptismal ritual inspired Giorgio Dalmata in his ingenious kinetic solution for the Šibenik baptistery. Here the liturgical narrative is reduced to biblical citations written on scrolls, while the sculpted elements enliven the otherworldly within the rite's performance. The eclectic Dalmatian sculptor-architect, whose roots sink into the vibrant Venetian atmosphere of the 1430s, touches on Caronese's experiences and achieves a personal synthesis of ancient and Gothic formulas. These contacts between the Lombard lakes and Dalmatia need to be clarified, but they seem significant, enriching the panorama of fifteenth-century transmissions and diffusions. Andrea Alessi's and Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino's Trogir baptistery is yet another take on the theme, an interesting interpretation of an ancient model and a polyfunctional space within the ritual and visual mech-

anism of the cathedral complex. The dancing putti around this font guide the viewer through space, corresponding with the relief of the Baptism of Christ, staged to be seen from the vestibule.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, baptismal fonts with putti became trendy in Friuli, probably diffused by migrant sculptors from the Lombard lakes. The particularly elegiac example from Spilimbergo seems to have set the trend, as even the centre of the region, Udine, renovated its medieval cathedral baptistery with the new putti-ornamented font. The Udine font was inserted in a vertical correspondence with an existing biblical quotation emphasising the eschatological dimension of the baptismal rite, while putti also featured symbols of regional identity.

In conclusion, the process of the appropriation of the infant figure in fifteenth-century Christian art had a vital chapter related to liturgical installations used for baptism. The new baptisteries in Castiglione Olona, Dalmatia and Friuli all share modest dimensions, the concentration on the interior, and a particular formula for the baptismal fonts carried by putti. The fonts are all staged to enable the rite's performance within a vertical axis with clear iconographical reference, connecting the underworld, the world of the living and the heavens. A more nuanced comparative study of the baptismal liturgy in the fifteenth century might provide more answers, especially since the examples taken into consideration served Ambrosian, Roman and Aquileian rites. Finally, defining this migratory phenomenon's trajectory also sheds more light on the intricate web of influences and sources, often transversal to historiographically defined assumptions.

This chapter is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (GA n. 865863 ERC-AdriArchCult). I would like to thank Irena Latin Benyovski, Ines Ivić, Petar Strunje, Igor Fisković, Emil Hilje and Andrea Spiriti as well as the members of the ERC-SACRIMA team for their help with this article.

1 See Charles Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; Marc Bormand, "Gli 'spiritelli' del Rinascimento", in *La primavera del Rinascimento. La scultura e le arti a Firenze 1400-1460*, ed. by Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Marc Bormand (Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 23 March-18 August 2013; Paris, Musée du Louvre, 26 September 2013-6 January 2014), Florence: Mandragora, 2013, 111-18; and Chiara Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 2017, pp. 194-205.

2 Horst W. Janson, "Donatello and the Antique", in *Donatello e il suo tempo* (atti del VIII Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento; Florence and Padua, 25 September-1 October 1966), Florence: Civelli, 1968, 77-96 (esp. p. 81 n. 3); Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, p. 18; Francesco Caglioti, "Donatello e il Fonte Battesimale di Siena. Per una rivalutazione dello 'Spiritello danzante' nel Museo Nazionale di Firenze", *Prospettiva*, 110/111 (2003), 18-29; Francesco Caglioti, "A Spiritello Rediscovered", in *Donatello in Motion. A Spiritello Rediscovered*, ed. by Andrew Butterfield, New York: Strada, 2015, 14-43; Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, pp. 196-98.

3 Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, pp. 142-46.

4 See Marco Navoni, "La concezione liturgico-rituale del battesimo in epoca medievale", in *Il Battistero di Parma. Iconografia, iconologia, fonti letterarie*, ed. by Giorgio Schianchi, Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1999, 41-76; Gérard-Henry Baudry, *I simboli del battesimo. Alle fonti della salvezza*, Milan: Jaca Book, 2007; and Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*.

5 Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125-1325*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005; *L'architettura del battistero. Storia e progetto*, ed. by Andrea Longhi, Milan: Skira, 2003; *L'edificio battesimale in Italia. Aspetti e problemi* (atti del VIII Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana; Genova, Sarzana, Albenga, Finale Ligure, Ventimiglia, 21-26 September 1998), ed. by Daniela Gandolfi, Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2001.

6 Folke Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts: An Iconographical Study*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1984, pp. 18-19; Enrico Bassan, "Fonte battesimale", in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols, Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1991-2002, VI (1995), 282-93; and *The Visual Culture of Baptism in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Fonts, Settings and Beliefs*, ed. by Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens and Miguel A. Torrens, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

7 For a short overview of the phenomenon with focus on putti as anthropomorphic bearers, see Jasenka Gudelj, "Dai putti ai satiri. Sostegni antropomorfi nella cultura architettonica del Rinascimento dalmata", in *Construire avec le corps humain: Les ordres anthropomorphes et leurs avatars dans l'art européen de l'antiquité à la fin du XVIe siècle / Bauen mit dem menschlichen Körper: anthropomorphe Stützen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Sabine Frommel, Eckhard Leuschner, Vincent Droguet and Thomas Kirchner, 2 vols, Rome: Campisano Editore, 2018, I, 223-39.

8 On the chapel of Trogir town protector, see Igor Fisković, "Nebeski Jeruzalem' u kapeli blaženog Ivana trogirskog", *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji*, 32:1 (1992), 481-531; Samo Štefanac, "Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino e la cappella del Beato Giovanni Orsini a Traù: il progetto, l'architettura, la decorazione scultorea", in *Quattrocento Adriatico: Fifteenth-Century Art of the Adriatic Rim* (Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1994), ed. and intro. by Charles Dempsey, Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1996, 123-42; Joško Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", in *La Renaissance en Croatie*, ed. by Alain Erlande-Brandenburg and Miljenko Jurković (Écouen, Musée national de la Renaissance, 8 April-12 July 2004; Zagreb, Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 26 August-21 November 2004), Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2004, 133-56; Anne Markham Schulz, *The History of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture, ca. 1400-1530*, 2 vols, Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2017, I, pp. 146-47. The documents are published by Petar Kolendić, "Dokumenti o Andriji Alešiju u Trogiru", *Arhiv za arbanasku starinu, jezik i etnologiju*, 2:1 (1924), 70-78 (pp. 74-76), and republished in Dempsey, *Quattrocento Adriatico*, pp. 225-30.

9 For the discussion of different terms such as *putti*, *puttini*, *spiritelli*, see Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*; and Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, p. 196 n. 53. It has been noted that the Trogir spiritelli with torches are an innovative combination of two separate ancient motifs, putti with torches (*genii funebri*) and semi-open doors of Hades. See Štefanac,

"Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino", pp. 133-34; and Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", p. 153.

10 The figure of Christ with two small winged boys in ancient dress, attributed to Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino and related to the chapel, is now in the Civic Museum of Trogir. See Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", p. 151.

11 This iconographical change, probably a result of changed circumstances following the deaths of bishop Turlono and Coriolano Cippico, has been much debated in the historiography. See Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", p. 153; and Radoslav Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac i trogiriska 'renovatio Urbis'*, Split: Književni krug, 2012, pp. 29-46. For the discussions on Limbo, see Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*.

12 Carol Pulin, "Early Renaissance Sculpture and Architecture at Castiglione Olona in Northern Italy and the Patronage of a Humanist, Cardinal Branda Castiglione", PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1984; *Lo specchio di Castiglione Olona: Il Palazzo del cardinale Branda e il suo contesto*, ed. by Alberto Bertoni and Rosangela Cervini, Varese: Edizioni Arterigere, 2009; *Storia dell'arte a Varese e nel suo territorio*, ed. by Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, 2 vols, Varese: Insubria University Press, 2011; Schulz, *The History of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture*, I, pp. 103-15; and Andrea Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona. La prima città ideale dell'Umanesimo*, Milan: Mimesis, 2018.

13 Carlo Tosco, "Dal battistero alla cappella battesimale: trasformazioni liturgiche e sociali tra Medioevo e Rinascimento", in *L'architettura del battistero. Storia e progetto*, ed. by Andrea Longhi, Milan: Skira, 2003, 63-84 (p. 81).

14 See Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, p. 167.

15 Eiko M. L. Wakayama, "Novità di Masolino a Castiglione Olona", *Arte Lombarda*, 16 (1971), 1-16; Eiko M. L. Wakayama, "Il programma iconografico degli affreschi di Masolino nel Battistero di Castiglione Olona", *Arte Lombarda*, 50 (1978), 20-32; Andrea Spiriti, "Imago urbis': problemi iconografici e iconologici del battistero di Castiglione Olona fra Lombardia e Ungheria", *Arte Lombarda*, 139:3 (2003), 64-70; Carlo Bertelli, "Masolino a Castiglione Olona", in *Storia dell'Arte a Varese e nel suo territorio*, ed. by Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, 2 vols, Varese: Insubria University Press, 2011, I, 294-325; and Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, pp. 155-68.

16 Filippo Piazza, "Battesimo di Cristo" (2016), in *SIRBeC - Sistema Informativo dei Beni Culturali di Regione Lombardia*

- [accessible at: <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/1j570-00041/>, accessed 12.10.2020].
- 17 Navoni, "La concezione liturgico-rituale", p. 51. The large octagonal medieval *piscina* in the Varese baptistery also features the Baptism scene, while other sides are decorated with large figures of apostles in niches.
- 18 The Roman rite uses the names John, Peter and Maria. See Navoni, "La concezione liturgico-rituale", pp. 64–65.
- 19 Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, pp. 186–87.
- 20 For an elaborate reading of this scene in political terms, see Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, pp. 162–64.
- 21 This frieze is consequently repeated in a relief on a slightly later portal on the church of Villa in Castiglione Olona by the same sculptors that modelled the baptismal font, confirming the exchange and appropriation of models between the artists. See *ibid.*, p. 162. Given its different context, the sculpted frieze seems to remain in the sphere of elaborate decoration.
- 22 For the discussion on different understandings of the Holy Innocents, sanctified by martyrdom, and unbaptized children in medieval and Renaissance art and theology, see Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, in particular pp. 138–41.
- 23 For a summary on the Caronesi workshop see Andrea Spiriti, "I Caronesi a Castiglione Olona", in *Scultori dello Stato di Milano (1395–1535)*, proceedings of conference held in Mendrisio in 2018, ed. by Mirko Moizi and Andrea Spiriti, forthcoming. I would like to thank Andrea Spiriti for sharing the manuscript of his contribution.
- 24 The historiography also insists on the importance of the fusion of Eastern and Western iconographical elements in the frescoes, related to the cardinal's diplomatic work. For example, the large representation of Rome on the internal façade wall, a prefiguration of Jerusalem, undoubtedly had clear political value in the epoch of reassessment of the Urbe as the centre of the papacy. See Wakayama, "Il programma iconografico", p. 23; Spiriti, "Imago Urbis", pp. 64–68; and Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, pp. 155–68.
- 25 Filippo Piazza's suggestion (Piazza, "Battesimo di Cristo") that the font was inserted only well after Branda Castiglione's death in 1443 is not likely, given the coherence of the baptistery program and the fact that the ensemble influenced Dalmatian examples discussed in this chapter.
- 26 Pellegrino Pellegrini, *L'architettura*, ed. by Giorgio Panizza with intro. by Adele
- Buratti Mazzotta, Milan: Il Polifilo, 1990, p. 44; Tosco, "Dal Battistero alla cappella battesimale", p. 83.
- 27 On graffiti see Riccardo Valente, "I graffiti del Battistero di Castiglione Olona", *Aevum*, 87:3 (2013), 807–74. On uses of baptismal space in medieval Italy see Thompson, *Cities of God*, pp. 26–33.
- 28 Wolfgang Wolters, *La scultura veneziana gotica (1300–1460)*, 2 vols, Venice: Alfieri, 1976, I, p. 257, n. 196; and Aldo Galli, "Introduzione alla scultura di Castiglione Olona", in *Lo specchio di Castiglione Olona: Il Palazzo del cardinale Branda e il suo contesto*, ed. by Alberto Bertoni and Rosangela Cervini, Varese: Edizioni Arterigere, 2009, 62–67; Schulz, *The History of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture*, I, p. 114.
- 29 Gaetano Andreis, *Cenni storici sulla chiesa e parrocchia di S. Gio. Battista in Bragora*, Venice: Tip. A. Filippi, 1885, p. 17, dates the font to 1430, while later authors (see n. 28), noting the resemblance with Castiglione Olona, date it around 1435.
- 30 In 1581, the font is documented in the left aisle, only to be moved in 1585 to another place, and complemented with a now lost altarpiece by Paolo Fiammingo, while Alessandro Vittoria constructed a pedestal out of red Verona marble and inserted a Gritti coat of arms among the foliage of the vessel. In 1726 Giorgio Massari designed the present architectural frame for the niche holding the font. See Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, *Chiesa di San Giovanni in Bragora: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1994, pp. 34–36; and Irene Galifi, Caterina Novello and Emanuela Zucchetta, *Chiesa di San Giovanni in Bragora, Venezia*, Saonara: Il Prato, 2007, p. 10.
- 31 Galifi, Novello and Zucchetta, *Chiesa di San Giovanni*, p. 10.
- 32 Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, p. 168.
- 33 The early Christian and medieval baptisteries in the area have been extensively researched as building types, see: Pavuša Vežić, "Krstionica u Zadru", *Peristil*, 34:1 (1991), 13–23 (pp. 20–23) On the *long-durée* and meaning for civic rituals of the Dubrovnik baptistery, see Ana Marinković, "O gradnji, funkciji i rušenju krstionice-zvonika dubrovačke romaničke katedrale", *Ars Adriatica*, 7 (2017), 83–98.
- 34 For a general discussion of the figure of the putto in Dalmatia, see Milan Pelc, "Putti und die Frührenaissance in Dalmatien: über die Regionale Rezeption, Funktion und Evolution eines 'stilbildenden' Motivs", in *De l'objet culturel à l'oeuvre d'art en Europe: repères de transition*, ed. by Frank Müller, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2013, 151–71.
- 35 Irena Benyovsky Latin, "The Venetian Impact on Urban Change in Dalmatian Towns in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century", *Acta Histriae*, 22:3 (2014), 573–616.
- 36 For an overview on the Dalmatian Quattrocento, see *Quattrocento Adriatico: Fifteenth-Century Art of the Adriatic Rim* (Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1994), ed. by Charles Dempsey, Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1996; and *La Renaissance en Croatie*, ed. by Alain Erlande-Brandenburg and Miljenko Jurković (Écouen, Musée national de la Renaissance, 8 April–12 July 2004; Zagreb, Galerija Klovičevi davori, 26 August–21 November 2004), Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2004.
- 37 Predrag Marković, *Katedrala sv. Jakova u Šibeniku. Prvih 150 godina*, Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2010.
- 38 Giorgio Dalmata was active in Venice, Dalmatia and Le Marche. See the articles contained in *Juraj Matejev Dalmatinac*, special issue of *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, ed. by Radovan Ivančević, 3–6 (1982); and for more recent bibliography see Stanko Kokole, "A Venetian Work by Giorgio da Sebenico: New Attribution to the Mid-Fifteenth-Century Master Sculptor from Dalmatia", in *Historia artis magistra: amicorum discipulorumque munuscula Johanni Höfler septuagenario dicata*, ed. by Renata Novak Klemenčič and Janez Höfler, Ljubljana: Znanstvena Založba Filozofske fakultete, 2012, 153–64.
- 39 For a discussion on the construction logic of the baptistery and related stylistic issues, see Marković, *Katedrala sv. Jakova*, pp. 225–67.
- 40 Petar Kolendić, "Stube na crkvi sv. Ivana u Šibeniku", *Starinar SANU*, 3:1 (1922/23), 65–94 (p. 73), mentions two documents concerning the baptistery, now in the State Archives in Šibenik (Državni arhiv u Šibeniku, hereafter HR-DAŠi). The first is dated 29 May 1443 and registers the bequest of the shoemaker Iohannes Giuaç towards the construction of the cathedral and in particular the unfinished chapel of his eponym John the Baptist, or the baptistery with its font (HR-DAŠi-263-Bilježnici Šibenika [1414. - 1797.], box. 10, 11/I, Antonio Campolongo, F 10/If, fol. 121). Citizens of Šibenik regularly left money for construction of the cathedral, its construction a proper civic endeavor. The second document mentioning the baptistery is a contract stipulated in the cathedral, near the baptismal font, on 11 December 1444, signaling that by that date the ensemble has been finished (HR-DAŠi-263-Bilježnici Šibenika [1414. - 1797.], box. 11/IV, 11/V, Antonio Campolongo, F 10/II, fol. 354'). I would

like to thank Professor Emil Hilje of Zadar University and Nataša Mučalo of Šibenik archive for their valuable help with these documents.

41 The Zadar baptistery is a sixfoil space inscribed in an octagon, with shallow octagonal vault resting on pillars between niches. The space was lit through high widows in the octagonal drum, somewhat analogous to the Šibenik solution. The building was destroyed in 1943 bombings and rebuilt in 1989. There is virtually no evidence about the interior of Zadar baptistery, apart from the large octagonal font. See Vežić, "Krstionica".

42 In Zadar, this door received a particularly ornate entrance commissioned by Matteo Valaresso, bishop of Zadar between 1450 and 1496. See *ibid.*, p. 16.

43 On the Šibenik sacristy see Predrag Marković, "Sakristija šibenske katedrale: ugovor, realizacija i rekonstrukcija", *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, 34 (2010), 31–50.

44 Marković, *Katedrala sv. Jakova*, p. 249.

45 Nordström, *Mediaeval baptismal fonts*, pp. 18–19; and Navoni, "La concezione liturgico-rituale", pp. 62–63.

46 Radovan Ivančević, *Šibenska katedrala*, Šibenik: Gradska knjižnica Juraj Šižgorić, 1998, p. 39; and Marković, *Katedrala sv. Jakova*, p. 249 n. 430.

47 On the concept of enlèvement see Alina Payne, *L'Architecture parmi les arts: Matérialité, transferts et travail artistique dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris: Louvre éditions, 2016, pp. 74–79.

48 On the casket and its political value, see Nikola Jakšić, "Od hagiografskog obrasca do političkog elaborata – škrinja Sv. Šimuna, zadarska arca d'oro", *Ars Adriatica*, 4 (2014), 95–124.

49 Marković, *Katedrala sv. Jakova*, p. 249 n. 431 suggests with caution that one of the figures might be John the Baptist and the other Moses or Isaiah, given that the latter announced of the birth of Christ.

50 On the iconography of Šibenik cathedral, see *ibid.*, pp. 216–23. Sisgoreo is still awaiting a more nuanced study, but it is important to note that in 1437 he was elected bishop among the members of the chapter and then confirmed without objection by Pope Eugene IV (Gabriele Condulmer, a Venetian and an uncle of Paolo II Barbo), as one of the last native Eastern Adriatic bishops. See Jadranka Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine. Rimska Kurija i Dalmacija u 15. stoljeću*, Split: Književni krug, 2007, pp. 253–54.

51 Spiriti, *Castiglione Olona*, p. 73.

52 Jasenka Gudelj, "The King of Naples Emulates Salvia Postuma? The Arch of Castelnuovo in Naples and Its Antique Model", in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, ed. by Alina Payne, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 426–56 (p. 449).

53 On the medieval sixfoil church as a derivation from the Zadar baptistery, see Vežić, "Krstionica", p. 22.

54 The inscription reads: jacobo/turlono/pontefice/carolo/capello/praetore/andreas/ alexius/durrachinvs/opifex. mccccxvii. On the baptistery, see Kolenđić, "Dokumenti o Andriji Alešiju"; Radovan Ivančević, *Rana renesansa u Trogiru*, Split: Književni krug, 1997, pp. 19–89; Ivan Matejčić, "Prilozi za Nikolu Firentinca i njegov krug", *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji*, 27:1 (1988), 181–94; Ivan Josipović, "Nikola Firentinac i Alešijeva Krstionica Trogirske katedrale", *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, 33 (2009), 47–66; Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, pp. 82–90; and Predrag Marković, "Dekonstrukcija rekonstrukcije: o krstionici trogirске katedrale ponovo i s razlogom", *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, 37 (2013), 45–60.

55 Josipović, "Nikola Firentinac"; and Marković, "Dekonstrukcija rekonstrukcije".

56 On this portal, see *Majstor Radovan i njegovo doba* (Zbornik radova međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog u Trogiru 26–30. rujna 1990. godine.), ed. by Ivo Babić, Trogir: Muzej Grada, 1994.

57 Radovan Ivančević, "Slikarski predložak renesansnog reljefa Krštenja u Trogiru", *Peristil*, 27/28 (1984/85), 75–92; Matejčić, "Prilozi za Nikolu Firentinca", p. 187; and Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, p. 87.

58 On the Trogir humanist circle, see Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, pp. 23–28.

59 This motif appears on the apses of the cathedral, and on the exterior of the three-level sacristy in Šibenik, under construction between 1450 and 1454. The sacristy was used as a chapter hall and treasury, while its ground floor consisted of a vaulted porch leading to the baptistery. See Marković, "Sakristija šibenske katedrale".

60 See Gudelj, "Dai putti ai satiri", p. 227.

61 See Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, pp. 186–87.

62 For example, in 1861, Rudolf Eitelberger in the baptistery notes both the altar (in its present position) and the thumb of bishop Turlono. Rudolf

Eitelberger von Edelberg, *Die mittelalterlichen Kunstdenkmale Dalmatiens in Arbe, Zara, Nona, Sebenico, Trau, Spalato und Ragusa*, Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1861, pp. 131–312 (p. 204 n. 1). Turlono's slab has been removed from the chapel of St. John Orsini in the seventeenth century, and is now inserted into the cathedral wall, see Joško Belamarić, "Barokizacija kapele sv. Ivana Trogirskog", in *Umjetnički dodiri dviju jadranskih obala u 17. i 18. stoljeću* (zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanog 21. i 22. studenog 2003 godine u Splitu), ed. by Vladimir Marković and Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić, Split: Književni krug Split, 2007, 273–98. The fifteenth-century statue of John the Baptist now on the altar, convincingly attributed to Niccolò di Giovanni by Ivan Matejčić in "Prilozi za Nikolu Firentinca", pp. 182–86, may have been made for a different space, possibly a Benedictine church dedicated to the same saint on the east side of the same square.

63 See Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, p. 157.

64 Leon Battista Alberti, *L'architettura*, trans. by Giovanni Orlandi, ed. and intro. by Paolo Portoghesi, Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966, p. 422. The analogy with Alberti's text and the correspondence with Cosimo Bartoli's sixteenth-century illustration of the Curia de Sacerdoti for the chapel of Blessed John of Trogir, was noticed by Štefanac, "Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino", p. 135.

65 Ines Ivić, "The 'Making' of a National Saint: Reflections on the Formation of the Cult of Saint Jerome in the Eastern Adriatic", *Il Capitale Culturale*, supp 7 (2018): Visualizing Past in a Foreign Country: Schiavoni/Illyrian Confraternities and Colleges in Early Modern Italy in comparative perspective, 247–78 (pp. 265–66).

66 In Trogir, the *operarius* (head of Operaria) is one of the four noblemen that had been suggested by the city councils and then confirmed by the bishop. The humanist Coriolano Cippico had the most prominent role within this institution during the years decisive for the construction of the baptistery and the chapel of Blessed John. See Irena Benyovski Latin, "Razvoj srednjovjekovne Operarije – institucije za izgradnju katedrale u Trogiru", *Croatica Christiana Periodica*, 34:65 (2010), 1–18; Štefanac, "Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino", pp. 124–25; Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", p. 142; and Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, pp. 23–30.

67 On the chronology of the chapel, see Štefanac, "Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino", p. 130; and Belamarić, "La chapelle du bienheureux Jean de Trogir", p. 147. On the different tectonic roles of the putti, see Gudelj, "Dai putti ai satiri", pp. 228–30.

- 68 For a summary, see Irena Benyovski Latin, *Srednjovjekovni Trogir: prostor i društvo*, Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009; and Bužančić, *Nikola Ivanov Firentinac*, pp. 159–74.
- 69 For a discussion on the *long-durée* of the Dubrovnik baptistery, see Marinković, “O gradnji, funkciji i rušenju”.
- 70 Laris Borić, “Festoni i putti u zadarskoj ranorenesansnoj skulpturi”, in *Metamorfoze mita, mitologija u umjetnosti od srednjeg vijeka do moderne*, ed. by Joško Belamarić and Dino Milinović, Zagreb: FFPress, 2012, 53–66 (pp. 61–62).
- 71 Paola Lisimberti and Antonio Todisco, *Un gioiello del Rinascimento adriatico. La Chiesa Matrice a Mola di Bari*, Fasano di Brindisi: Schena Editore, 2002, pp. 53–56; and Gudelj, “Dai putti ai satiri”, p. 226.
- 72 Paolo Goi, “Il rito e il luogo”, in *Baptizatorum liber. Il primo registro dei battesimi di Santa Maria Maggiore di Spilimbergo (1534–1603)*, ed. by Renzo Peressini, Pordenone: Accademia San Marco, 2015, 601–17.
- 73 Giuseppe Bergamini, “Il Quattrocento e il Cinquecento”, in *La scultura nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, ed. by Paolo Goi, 2 vols, Pordenone: GEAP, 1988, II, 11–132.
- 74 Paolo Goi, *Lapicidi del Rinascimento nel Friuli occidentale*, San Vito al Tagliamento: Edizioni Tipografia Sanvitese Ellerani, 1973, p. 20; Giuseppe Bergamini, “Sculture del Rinascimento”, in *Duomo di Spilimbergo: 1284–1984*, ed. by Caterina Furlan and Italo Zannier, Spilimbergo: Comune di Spilimbergo, 1985, 217–33 (pp. 217–18); and Goi, “Il rito e il luogo”, pp. 607–8.
- 75 Goi, “Il rito e il luogo”, p. 607.
- 76 Gianpaolo Trevisan, “Il duomo e gli altri edifici di culto”, in *Spilimbergo e la patria del Friuli nel basso Medioevo ‘forte d’huomeni et bello d’ornamenti’*, ed. by Maurizio d’Arcano Grattoni, Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2013, pp. 89–98.
- 77 Goi, “Il rito e il luogo”, pp. 615–17.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 606 suggests the font stood in left aisle, near the main door, as prescribed by the *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesasticae* (1577) of Carlo Borromeo. A possible iconographic connection may be suggested with a large pala of the *Presentation at the Temple* by Giovanni Martini, now in the chapel of the Rosary, but it was painted in the first decade of the sixteenth century. See Caterina Furlan, “Rapporti tra pittori e intagliatori nella prima metà del Cinquecento in Friuli: Pellegrino da San Daniele, Giovanni Martini, il Pordenone”, in *L’arte del legno in Italia. Esperienze e indagini a confronto* (atti del convegno, Pergola 9–12 May 2002), ed. by Giovan Battista Fianza, Perugia: Quattroemme, 2005, 35–46.
- 79 Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, pp. 178–82.
- 80 Laura Casarsa, “La scuola di grammatica di Spilimbergo tra Tre e Quattrocento: dai testi devozionali alla lettura dei classici”, in *Bernardino Partenio e l’Accademia di Spilimbergo, 1538–1543*, ed. by Caterina Furlan, 2 vols, Venice: Marsilio, 2002, I: Gli statuti, il palazzo, 15–29.
- 81 On Udine baptistery, see Carlo Someda de Marco, *Il duomo di Udine*, Udine: Arti grafiche friulane, 1970, pp. 89–95; and Leonardo Miani, “Il battistero della cattedrale di Udine: arte, committenza e liturgia 1348–2007”, *Atti dell’Accademia Udinese di Scienze, Lettere e Arti*, 101 (2008), 55–84.
- 82 Someda de Marco, *Il duomo di Udine*, p. 91.
- 83 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 84 Eva Spinazzè, “Il battistero e il fonte: un’interpretazione sull’orientazione degli edifici battesimali medioevali nel medio-basso Friuli”, *Atti dell’Accademia “San Marco” di Pordenone*, 18 (2016), 491–550.
- 85 ‘In medio capellę huius est fons baptismi’, see Vittoria Masutti and Egidio Screm, “Contributo per una ricostruzione degli interni del Duomo di Udine e della loro iconografia all’inizio del XVII secolo”, *Memorie Storiche Forogiuliesi*, 98 (2018), 11–82 (p. 45).
- 86 Someda de Marco, *Il duomo di Udine*, p. 91.
- 87 On Aquileian liturgy, see Goi, “Il rito e il luogo”, pp. 601–6.
- 88 Giuseppe Bergamini, *Giovanni Antonio Pilacorte lapicida*, Udine: Società filologica friulana, 1970; Paolo Goi, “Pilacorte, Giovanni Antonio”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 83 (2015) [accessible at: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-antonio-pilacorte_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-antonio-pilacorte_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)] accessed 12.04.2020.
- 89 Goi, “Pilacorte”.