



with that of Francesco Guicciardini, if less disabused than the latter on the constitutional difference his opinion could actually make.

There is one major way in which Black's Machiavelli did not pivot. Throughout his life he was and remained a virulent anti-Christian, a devotee of "atheism or Lucretian proto-atheism" (183). So important to Black is this claim that he sees anti-Christian blasphemy as the main point of *Mandragola*, *Clizia*, and *Belfagor*. Black deals with Machiavelli's confraternity membership, his *Exhortation to Penitence*, and his burial without ecclesiastical demur in the family tomb in Santa Croce by omitting any reference to them. With respect to the selective and manipulative use of evidence in support of his desired conclusions, Black appears to have taken a leaf from Machiavelli's own book. There are also some selective omissions in his slender bibliography of English titles and, in his fifth and last chapter, on Machiavelli's legacy. There we meet many of the usual suspects, from the amoral Old Nick to the proponent of *raison d'état* to the godfather of modern republicanism. Absent are Machiavelli the proto-democrat and Machiavelli the consigliere of the wily business executive. In all, *RQ* readers looking for an introductory biography of Machiavelli to recommend to undergraduates may well prefer another of the available alternatives.

Marcia L. Colish, *Yale University, USA*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2024.26

In the Footsteps of Antonello Da Messina: The Antonelliani between Sicily and Venice. Charlene Vella.

Malta: Midsea Books, 2022. xviii + 428 pp. €120.

This is a book about the followers of Antonello da Messina (ca. 1430–79), with a sustained focus on his nephew Antonio de Saliba (1466/67–ca. 1535). Like the older and more famous Antonello, De Saliba was well traveled, working in Venice, where he found some success trading on the name of his illustrious uncle. He returned to Messina in 1497, where his workshop produced polyptychs, *gonfaloni*, and painted crucifixes for patrons in this great Sicilian city as well as for its hinterland, winning notable popularity with the Franciscan Order.

The first chapter sets the context for the rest of the book, presenting the generations of relations that worked in and later inherited Antonello's shop, from his brother Giordano to Antonello's son and immediate heir Jacobello, as well as four individuals who continued their older relation's school of painting well into the Cinquecento. The second chapter explores the presence of *Antonelliani* in Venice (particularly Antonio), where they were exposed to the art of Giovanni Bellini's circle, whose innovations had a deep impact upon them, as testified by their surviving paintings from this period. Chapter 3 focuses on Antonio's return to his homeland, and the ways in which the production of his workshop

diversified to meet the needs of the local and provincial clientele, whose conservative tastes Antonio appears to have satisfied. In Vella's opinion, it was Antonio's capacity to cater to the requirements of this clientele that explains the renown he enjoyed, as well as his talent for forging networks of patrons spread over a significant geographical area: from Eastern Sicily to Calabria and to Malta. The final chapter looks at Salvo d'Antonio, Antonio de Saliba's first cousin, who ran a separate workshop in Messina. Only a few extant paintings can be reliably attributed to Salvo, but, compared to his other relations, Vella believes that he relied less on Antonello's drawings and demonstrated more of a willingness to branch out stylistically. In contrast to Antonio's retardataire polyptychs, Salvo succeeded in creating a unified *pala* for Messina cathedral: the *Dormition of the Virgin* of 1509–10.

Vella wisely makes no grand claims for the artistic talents of the younger Antonio de Saliba compared to his more renowned ancestor, instead concluding that his artistic maturity in Sicily was prosperous "but ultimately provincial." Vella demonstrates that his Sicilian patrons were content with his works, in contrast to later criticism that harshly judged the "incapable hands" of the "provincial followers" of Antonello. Vella's study contains much detailed research, which means that it will undoubtedly become a point of reference for subsequent studies on the *Antonelliani*. Vella is less interested in the meaning of the paintings she examines than in analyzing them so that the different artistic personalities of the *Antonelliani* can be distinguished from one another and compared stylistically. The book contains a very useful appendix of documents, a catalogue of paintings that includes all the foundational factual information on each work, and an extensive index. In writing this book, Vella has faced considerable research challenges, such as the remote location of many of these images, which she has diligently tracked down, and the fact that so many paintings were destroyed in the disastrous *maremoto* of 1908 along with the relevant documentary evidence (fortuitously, some of this was transcribed shortly before the earthquake). This means that any conclusions must be tempered by taking into consideration these lacunae, which Vella does consistently.

This is the book of the author's 2015 doctoral thesis of the same title. Although it is expanded in some areas, in many places the text is identical to the thesis. Unlike the image reproductions usually found in a thesis, however, this volume is beautifully illustrated throughout. Vella's approach is scrupulously empirical, and in some places this is at the expense of an engaging narrative. There is perhaps a slight reticence to push the analysis further in order to produce a truly thought-provoking argument. The information presented in this volume will be of use to curators, as well as for scholars working on family workshops, artistic exchange, and early modern painting in the *mezzogiorno*.

Marie-Louise Lillywhite, *Keble College, University of Oxford, England*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2024.24