Heresy at Play: Academies and the Literary Underground in Counter-Reformation Siena*

by George McClure

This article examines an anonymous manuscript from the Sienese academies, likely composed between 1584 and 1593, during the period in which these societies were closed by the Medici grand dukes. The work is a dialogue that depicts a contest between the emblems of the academies of the Intronati, the Accesi, and the Travagliati, all vying for cultural primacy. Purportedly written by a zealous monk who appraises these worldly emblems and mottoes in preposterously flattering, even blasphemous, religious terms, the dialogue is actually a hoax that mocks the proselytizing efforts of Counter-Reformation forces in the city. This article attempts to roughly date this underground work, identify its principal targets, and consider its importance: as a telling depiction of a contest between secular images and sacred symbols, as a parody of feigned orthodoxy, and as a possible expression of freethinking well before the Enlightenment.

1. Introduction

In a volume of papers of several of the Sienese academies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is an odd document. Anonymous, illustrated, and chaotically assembled, it is entitled "Capricciosa contentione tra la Zucca dell'Intronati et il Vaglio di Travagliati, e nel perfetto numero, l'Accesa Pina degli Accesi, Intronandosi, Travagliandosi, et Accendendosi fra lor; chi sia di lor piu nobile, maggiore, di piu virtuoso valore, e di piu alto misterio" ("Fanciful Dispute among the Pumpkin of the Intronati, the Sieve of the Travagliati, and — in the Perfect Number — the Burning Pine Cone of the Accesi, Stunning, Travailing, and Burning among Themselves as to Which of Them Is the Most Noble, the Greatest, of Most Virtuous Valor, and of the Highest Mystery"). That this bizarre

A version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of The Renaissance Society of America in 2009 in Los Angeles. For thoughtful criticisms and helpful suggestions I am grateful to the anonymous readers for *RQ*. I am also indebted to the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena for permission to reproduce images. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

¹The dialogue is found in Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati (hereafter BCI), Y.II.23, fols. 298^v–378^r. At the end of the ms. (fols. 379^r–390^v) there is a copy of portions of the dialogue in another hand. The dialogue itself and the two preliminary pieces are probably from the same hand, even though at first glance variations in size, ink, and mood suggest multiple hands. I assume and refer to a single author.

Renaissance Quarterly 63 (2010): 1151-1207 [1151]

eighty-folio manuscript remains anonymous is not a surprise. A jibe at the Trinity appears in the very title, in the "perfect number" of three academy emblems — a pumpkin, a sieve, and a pine cone — who vie for supremacy. And many of the comments in the course of the dialogue will go much further, revealing a satire that is often heretical and blasphemous. By analyzing this dialogue, we can reconstruct a moment in sixteenth-century Siena that illustrates the tensions between literary academies and Counter-Reformation energies in the city. This episode reveals several ways in which the larger process of secularization in early modern Italy played out: a complaint on the part of the laity about religious restraints on culture, a semiotic battle between secular emblems and sacred images, and a tug-of-war between materialism and secularism in which the academic banquet vies with the Holy Communion. The dialogue's humor thus works on two fronts. Most immediately, it depicts a lighthearted rivalry among the academies of the Intronati, the Travagliati, and the Accesi. But beneath this rivalry lies a far more important satire that exposes a more serious cultural contest in sixteenthcentury Italy: the Counter-Reformation bumping up against late Renaissance culture.

Probably written when the Sienese academies were closed down by the Medici grand dukes, this unsigned, undated work presents an unusual case history in the genre of underground literature. Playful and burlesque, the dialogue likely had roots in the rich ludic culture of Cinquecento Siena, but how and why did such a work transform the comic to the sacrilegious? Constructed as a hoax (but one that readers could see through), the text operates on two levels, one offered by the fictive author, another by the actual author. The tension between the two texts, moreover, generates the singular historical meaning of this work as a dramatization of Nicodemism, or feigned orthodoxy, in sixteenth-century Italy. This mordant picture of religious simulation offers new evidence for understanding the nature of heterodoxy, or even unbelief, in the sixteenth century.

2. THE SIENESE ACADEMIES

The emergence of the sixteenth-century Italian academies changed intellectual, social, and religious culture. Above all, they marked an effort to reclaim the vernacular after a century and a half of Latin-dominated humanist culture. In fact, the famous Academy of the Crusca in Florence had as its chief goal the standardizing of the *volgare*, as evidenced in its

production of a Vocabolario in 1612.2 With the collaboration of an increasingly popular press, translations of classical works into Italian and learned original works in Italian began to appear, a trend notably pioneered in Siena by Alessandro Piccolomini (1508-78) of the Academy of the Intronati.³ When the Reformers' call for vernacular scriptures began to percolate, the emphasis on the volgare became a potential threat to scholastic learning and ecclesiastical authority. And when these academies sponsored lectures on, for instance, Dante — who was sometimes referred to as the Theologian — the literary societies broached a realm that the Church saw as its own. Finally, because the academies, especially in Siena, sometimes sought to draw women into their cultural orbit, the traditional gender boundaries of intellectual life were partially dismantled. This mix of a resurgent vernacular, intellectual popularization, religious reform, and social innovation created a stew of cultural change and even subversion.⁴ This was particularly the case in Siena, where the academies of the sixteenth century were known for their parlor games, a ludic tradition that could alternately imitate and subvert reality.5

Emerging in the later 1520s and early '30s, the two earliest enduring academies in Siena were the Intronati and the Rozzi, the former an association of the elite, the latter an artisan group. Both academies staged plays, and their theatrical productions accounted for their notoriety. In the case of the Intronati, these productions were a natural extension of their festive gatherings that honored and entreated elite women of the city, as evidenced by their production of the *Sacrifice* (1532), in which, weary of being rebuffed by the Sienese women, Intronati members sacrificed their

²Vocabolario. Much later in Siena, in the early eighteenth century the Intronati notable Girolamo Gigli also began to compile a dictionary of Sienese dialect, the Vocabolario Cateriniano, based largely on writings (or dictations) of Saint Catherine: see Gigli, 2008; Spera, 678; on the controversy between Gigli and the Florentines over his dictionary and on the question of Catherine's literacy, see Tylus, esp. 1–52.

³See Ceretta, 12, 35–41, 67–71, 173–96; Grendler, 1969, 3–19.

⁴On the Italian academies, see Maylender; Cochrane.

⁵On parlor games, see McClure, 2004, 51–69; on the anthropology of play, see Turner, esp. 20–59; Davis, 97–151.

⁶The Intronati arose ca. 1525–27; there was an earlier academy called the Grande, which included Claudio Tolomei and Giovanbattista Polito, but it did not last: G. Bargagli, 1982, 58. The first set of statutes for the Rozzi is dated 1531, though their 1561 statutes claim that their earliest gatherings date from 1520: Mazzi, 1:342–79, 381. On the Intronati, the Rozzi, and their comedies, see Mazzi; Iacometti; Petracchi Costantini; Sbaragli; Seragnoli; Riccò; Maylender, 3:351–54; Andrews, 91–108, 225–37.

love tokens on the altar of love. Such ludic performances blossomed into full-fledged comedies that treated amatory themes, often involving the use of sexual disguise and the defiant triumph of romantic love over arranged matches. And if these comedies could at times critique social conventions, such as marital practices, they could also challenge the political and religious order. The Intronati's *L'Ingannati* (1532) and the Rozzi's *Travaglio* (1552) both took aim at the imperial Spanish occupation of the city, which had begun in 1530: in the preface to the latter play the author reports that "this comedy made such a great war on [the Spanish], they wished to seize us." By the time the Intronati's play *La Pellegrina*, written in the 1560s, was performed in Florence in 1589 for the wedding of Ferdinando de' Medici, some of its anticlerical content had been necessarily excised. Thus the academies' comedies, their most overt form of public culture, could be a source of tension for various reasons. It was, however, not only their plays that could be subversive, but also their ludic life in general.

The leading academy for the well-born in Siena called itself the Intronati (the Stunned), because the members aspired to be oblivious to the affairs of the world: *De mundo non curare*, as one their six precepts states. ¹⁰ The desire for escapism was occasioned by the Italian wars of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which had "banished any thought other than that of war

⁷See Academy of Intronati, 1559 (*Il Sacrificio de gl'Intronati, celibrato ne' giuochi dei Carnovale in Siena, l'anno mdxxxi* [1532]), to which was appended their formal comedy, *L'ingannati*, written quickly upon its heels.

⁸Mazzi, 1:254–55: "Questo è un caso ch'avvenne l'altr'anno / Quando che stavan li Spagniuoi a Siena. // Questa Commedia fece tanta guerra / A loro, che gli ci volsen tarpare." See also ibid., 240–57; Andrews, 92–100.

⁹Borsellino, 103, argues that the anticlericalism of the Intronati's comedies was rather pronounced and that the antimonastic satire in *La Pellegrina* had a "mordacità aggressiva." Ibid., 107–09, also suggests that Fausto Sozzini, who earlier had fled Siena because of his heretical beliefs, may have been responsible for the anticlerical content of the play. See also Bruno Ferraro's comments in G. Bargagli, 1988, 15–16; Saslow, 36–37.

¹⁰BCI, Y.I.1, fol. 2^v. At ibid., in what is probably the earliest record of the statutes of the Intronati, three precepts in large letters are paired with three in smaller letters that seem to elaborate on them: thus, "ORARE — Neminem I[a]edere; STUDERE — Nemini credere; GAUDERE — De mundo non curare." In a much later constitution, following the unification of the Intronati with the Academy of the Filomati in 1654, these pairings are absent and "Orare" is changed to "Deum colere" and "nemini credere" to "non temere credere": see BCI, Y.I.1, fol. 45^r. And as for the precept "To Pray" — or, later, "To Cultivate God" — Cantimori, 347, suggests that this might indicate some religious agenda, as there were reform thinkers among the sixteenth-century Intronati. I do not find much evidence, however, of religious pursuits in the academy, but rather literary, theatrical, and ludic ones. Indeed, the more operative precepts would seem to be the escapist and skeptical ones "To Be Happy," "To Believe No One," and "To Not Care About the World."

and interrupted and destroyed all literary endeavors." This last statement, in the undated earliest statutes of the academy, followed upon an allusion to the Sack of Rome of 1527, and thus this date is taken by some to be the founding date. In any case, the Intronati expressly forbade political discussion, and prescribed literary pursuits in the liberal arts as well as provided for a more playful realm, "giving freedom to everyone of the said group to be able through the exercise especially of wit to propose conclusions, mottoes, jargon, emblems, and new idioms." Emblems and mottoes were indeed at the heart of the academies, as they each formulated a group emblem and accompanying motto; and the creation of personal emblems would become one of the Intronati's favorite parlor games.

The Intronati's emblem was a pumpkin crowned with two pestles and the adjoining motto MELIORA LATENT ("The better things lie hidden"). Dried pumpkin gourds were often used to store salt that had been ground with pestles. At one level the emblem suggests that the wit and worth of the individual lies in the head, and thus the Italian phrase for a numbskull was one *non avere sale in zucca*. ¹⁵ In his *Dell'imprese*, Intronati member Scipione Bargagli (1540–1612) offers a thorough explanation of the motto, suggesting that the salt is wisdom and is the fruit of "virtuous exercise," akin to the use of the pestles to pound and refine the salt. Recognizing the dichotomy between the imperfect body and the perfectible mind, the academy aspires to develop this higher part of the individual to "greater nobility, stability, and perfection." ¹⁶ The result is the rare and valuable refinement of salt (the mind) inside the outwardly rough pumpkin (the head). Given, however, the sometimes bawdy tone of the academy and the

¹¹BCI, Y.I.1, fol. 1^v: "In quel tempo che le Armi di barbari chiamati da la discordia de nostri principi per infin dalle extreme parti d'occidente intrate nella santa casa di Dio, havevano non pur di Toscana ma di tutti le parti d'Italia cacciato ogni altro pensiero che quel de la guerra & interrotti e guasti tutti le exercitii de le lettere." On the founding, see Maylender, 3:350–55; Sbaragli; Vignali, 13.

¹²Vignali, 13. Another contemporary suggested the founding date to have been 1525. ¹³BCI, Y.I.1, fol. 1^v: "dando liberta a ciascuno di detta congregatione di potere per exercitatione maggiormente del ingegno prepor conclusioni, motti, gerghi, imprese, nuove lingue." As for the proscription on political discussion, see BCI, Y.I.1, fol. 8^r (chap. 15 of the statutes, "Della pena di chi parlassi di stati").

¹⁴See Caldwell, esp. 150–57.

¹⁵In fact, at BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 301^r, a version of this phrase appears in the Pumpkin's first statement in this dialogue when he refers to "haver poco sale in zucca"; and this idiom is cited by Luca Contile, 41^v, who, explaining the Intronati's emblem, says that "these high intellects have wished to imply a man without wisdom to be a pumpkin without salt, and it is a proverb in Tuscan."

¹⁶S. Bargagli, 1594, 220–24, esp. 222–23.

pornographic turn of one of the founders — Antonio Vignali, who wrote the highly obscene *La cazzaria* — there is likely an alternate sexual meaning as well: the pumpkin could be construed as a scrotum, the salt as semen (or testicles), the pestles as phalluses.¹⁷ This vulgar subtext becomes all the more relevant when juxtaposed with the theological interpretations given to the emblem in the "Fanciful Dispute."

This lewd dimension also has a larger context within the activities of the Intronati during the season of Carnival. A traditional time for bawdy behavior, this period was the setting for many of the festive, theatrical pursuits of the Intronati, including parlor games that included women. In the 1560s Girolamo Bargagli (1537-86), Scipione's brother, wrote a Dialogo de' giuochi che nelle vegghie sanesi si usano di fare (Dialogue Concerning the Games Customarily Played at Sienese Soirees), and shortly thereafter Scipione himself wrote his Trattenimenti, a literary depiction of games set during the siege of Siena in the previous decade. 18 Girolamo's dialogue is especially relevant to us here, because this retrospective work discusses the emergence of the Intronati, catalogues 130 of their games, and reflects on the cultural theory of such play. It appears that games could be an area of controversy, not only in the realm of sexual propriety but also in that of religious orthodoxy. One section of the treatise purports to disapprove of obscene games and similarly classifies a questionable group of religiously themed games in an "index of forbidden games," an obvious echo of the papal *Index of Forbidden Books*, which first appeared in 1559. 19 Heretical currents in the city date from the later 1530s and '40s, with Agostino Museo's predestinarian preaching in 1537, the influence of Juan de Valdés on Aonio Paleario and Bartolomeo Carli Piccolomini, and the exiled Bernardino Ochino's 1543 letter on solifidianism to the Sienese Balia.

¹⁷This sexual subtext becomes all the more likely if it is indeed true that Vignali, considered the instrumental founder, devised the emblem. On Vignali, see Vignali, 1–70 (translator's introduction). Domenichi, 236–37, suggests that "this most excellent emblem was afterward counterfeited by some of their rivals as a joke together with the motto: in place of the pestles they depicted two male members with testicles inside the pumpkin, and the same motto." Nerida Newbigin suggests, however, that this sexual interpretation was likely always beneath the surface: see Academy of Intronati, 1996, 252. On the pestles as phallic symbols, see Toscan, 997, 1373–74, 1385, 1612.

¹⁸The *Dialogo* (G. Bargagli, 1982) was probably written in 1563–64 and first published in 1572. The *Trattenimenti* was likely written between 1564 and 1569, and possibly revised until its publication in 1587: see S. Bargagli, 1989, xv–xvi, xxxv, xxxviii, lxxx.

¹⁹G. Bargagli, 1982, 79–85, esp. 84. Prior to the launching of the papal *Index*, however, there had already appeared a list of banned books in Siena in 1548; this precedent may have been a subtext for Bargagli's index as well: see Marchetti, 1975, 124–27; Grendler, 1977, 79.

The first major crackdown by the authorities came with the investigation of Socinianism that led to the exile of Lelio and Camillo Sozzini in 1545; the Church began to intrude on the Intronati in the aftermath of Florence's official absorption of the city in 1557. Questions concerning some members of the Intronati, such as Girolamo's good friend Fausto Sozzini, nephew of Lelio and Camillo, prompted the entry of the Inquisition into the city in 1559.²⁰

When the general of the Jesuits Giacomo Laínez launched an investigation of the Intronati, two members of the academy, Alessandro Piccolomini and Giovanni Biringucci, argued that of the "sixty or seventy [Intronati], fifty are good Catholics."21 The decision was made to proceed against only particular individuals: while awaiting officials from the Inquisition the Augustinian figure Father Adeodato of the Leccetan order headed up the investigation, and requested the help of the Jesuits. 22 By September of 1560 Fausto had fled the city, and in a letter to him the following year Girolamo wrote, "Today the Travagliati celebrate their state but with not a little travail [travaglio], because, as their lecturer Bart[olomeo] chose to discuss the beginning of canto 21 of the *Purgatorio* of Dante where he mentions faith and grace, the monks, know-it-alls, and theologians are angry. They have made a fuss and proclaimed that it is not appropriate for theological matters to be discussed in academies and profane places especially by the laity, and that [such discussions] can be a source of great scandal. Whence the archbishop . . . early this morning issued an edict that in the academies it is not permitted to treat sacred matters, or to cite or interpret sacred doctors, and it is particularly prohibited to lecture on any place in Dante where he mentions theological matters."23

The irony is that this Travagliati lecturer likely chose this particular passage not so much because he aspired to poach on theologians' turf, but rather because these lines from Dante (*Purg.* 21.1–3), dealing with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:7–15, made use of the term *travagliava*, their eponym. In a letter of 1562 Bargagli dissuades an acquaintance from coming to Siena to improve his spirits by warning that

²⁰Marchetti, 1975, 1–35, 247–54; Belladonna; Caponetto, 100–03, 300–03. Occult learning could also lead to suspicion: for two trials regarding magic at midcentury, see Turrini; Di Simplicio.

²¹Marchetti, 1975, 175: "de todos, que serán cerca 60 o 70, los 50 son buenos cathólicos."

²²Ibid., 174–78. On anti-Jesuit sentiments and writings in Siena in this period, see Caponetto, 303–05.

²³For a transcription of this passage from a letter of June 1561 in Bargagli's letter-book, see Marchetti, 1969, 83–84.

the city is currently no fun and quite oppressive: "Here, anyone who talks of the Yule log, of parties, of symbols is accused of heresy; anyone who designs pleasant entertainments for Carnival is accused of plotting against the state." This reference to symbols could be particularly revealing with regard to the Church's objections to some of the interests of the Intronati, and indeed earlier in this letter collection Bargagli alludes to the gift of an unnamed "book of symbols [that] has been . . . dear to me." That "symbols" were lumped with "parties" as a perceived source of heresy indicates that, aside from theology — even that found in the poetry of Dante — visual symbols could be a contested territory as well. It is quite possible that the book of symbols to which Girolamo refers was the recent *Symbolicarum quaestionum de universo genere* of Achille Bocchi, a work Carlo Ginzburg classifies as Nicomedist in its overtures to Reform-minded figures. ²⁶

By the time Bargagli composed his dialogue on games a couple of years later, he thought it prudent to identify five religious games as among those on the forbidden list. Of course, he finds a way to have his cake and eat it too, because by identifying and describing these games, he ensures their survival, while his interlocutors' prohibiting them appeases the censors. Among the games were three that involved monks and nuns — for example, accusing each other of not performing assigned duties properly²⁷ — but two deal with

²⁴BCI, P.IV.27, no. 13, fol. 45^v: "Qua chi ragionasse di ceppo, di veglie, di sembollo ragionarebbe d'heresia; che disegnasse intertenienti piacevoli per il Carnovale, machinarebbe contro lo stato." This letter to Ascanio Salimbeni is immediately preceded in the *copialettere* by one dated 18 October [1562], so this letter presumably falls sometime in the last quarter of that year.

²⁵Ibid., fol. 23^r: "Il libro de simboli mi è stato tanto caro quanto ricercava la bellezza del dono e la prontezza del'animo del donatore."

²⁶Bocchi. Girolamo's use of the term *simboli* rather than the more common *imprese* buttresses the likelihood that he is referring to Bocchi's work of 1555, rather than the emblem books of Andrea Alciati, Lodovico Domenichi, or others. Bargagli apparently knew the work, as Watson, 111, suggests that G. Bargagli, 1982, 175, discusses the emblem and motto found in Bocchi's symbol 119, though he does not cite Bocchi as the source. Ginzburg, 1970, 179–81; and Visser, 144–46, place Bocchi in the Nicomedist camp of humanists who advocated silence and a "supra-confessional" communication, since Bocchi dedicated some of his symbols to figures such as the Protestant Renée of France, the Duchess of Ferrara, and had ties to various *spirituali* and to the heretic Camillo Renato; Watson, 24–50, however, would place him only on the fringes of Nicodemism.

²⁷G. Bargagli, 1982, 84–85. These include the Game of Nuns and Monks Defending Themselves, in which pairs of monks and nuns either defend companions when accused by others, or berate them when praised; the Game of Nuns and Monks Distributing Duties; and the Game of Alms and Prayers, in which men impersonate monks of some order and beg alms from women in return for offering prayers for them.

more sensitive theological matters. One is a Game of the Temple of Venus, in which players entreat the goddess for "some amorous grace," a game that flirts with idolatry, as Bargagli agrees, when a youth kneels on the ground before the woman posing as Venus. ²⁸ Although this game potentially offends in the realm of religious ritual, another of these games, Of the Amorous Inferno, potentially offends in the area of "theological concepts." ²⁹ This game is the first described when Bargagli turns to those games "placing in ridicule our religion and where sacred things are profaned by involvement with worldly ones." ³⁰ In this game, the souls of lovers appear before Minos and confess "what sin they have committed in loving" and are assigned their appropriate punishment. This game is offensive not only for trivializing "the infernal pains" that scripture threatens for the wicked, "but also because, in putting it in practice, things are said whereby in yet another way theological concepts are mocked." ³¹

The speaker here, Marcantonio Piccolomini (1505–79), then recounts enactments of the game that suggest players at times toyed with some of the central soteriological issues being contested by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. He recalls one time when "a youth said how he was conducted to the infernal fire for having the opinion that it was possible to acquire the beatitude of love with work, without faith, and that with serving without the loyalty of love, one can merit divine grace." This Pelagian position (albeit applied here to romantic love) was the first of the positions on justification anathematized at the Council of Trent in 1547 — just as the Protestant position of justification by faith alone was condemned.³³ Clearly,

²⁸Of course, the conflation of the religious and the amorous was common — the role of Beatrice in the *Commedia* being just one famous example — and an earlier game-book of Innocenzio Ringhieri has as its longest game a Game of Ceremonies or the Sacrifice of Venus and Love, which essentially transmutes the altar of God to the altar of love: Ringhieri, fols. 68^v–70^v. Given, however, that some of Ringhieri's debate questions at the end of this game have a whiff of reform sentiment — e.g., "Whether it behooves a Christian to be ceremonious" and "Having to sin in ceremonies in which one would wish to be ceremonious" (ibid., fol. 70^v) — and given that he had some communications on religious matters with the heretical Renée of France (Watson, 32) — it is possible that Ringhieri's ludic treatment of ceremony may itself have had a subversive subtext. In any case, in Bargagli's *Dialogo* such imitations of the religious realm are now subject to self-censorship to avoid controversy.

²⁹G. Bargagli, 1982, 82.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³²Ibid.; Marchetti, 1982, 182.

³³See the decree and canons concerning justification from the sixth session (1547) in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 308–24. It is also worth noting that Bernardino Ochino's 1543 letter to the Sienese dealt with solifidianism: Marchetti, 1975, 1–15, 247–54.

the game-player here mocks an issue of considerable consequence to the contemporary Church. Similarly, Bargagli's speaker mentions another case of "heretical" love: "And another [young man] said that he had been brought into the infernal cloister for not having served one love only, and for not having one true faith." Certainly these ludic appropriations of theological concepts could have been intended and perceived as derisive sentiments in the highly charged atmosphere of confessional strife. In any case, by the time of Bargagli's writing of his *Dialogo* in the mid-1560s he took pains to pretend to censure, but also to repeat, such questionable games and comments.

As made evident in Bargagli's letter of 1561 concerning the archbishop's curb on "academic" discussions of theology, the academy that occasioned an official crackdown early in that decade was the Travagliati (the Troubled), another of the three academies in the "Fanciful Dispute." Little is known of this academy, but one of its few surviving documents dates the founding to "around the time of the fall of the republic," when Siena succumbed to the combined forces of Charles V and the Florentines in 1555.35 The Travagliati's emblem was a vaglio (sieve) with the motto DONEC IMPURUM (or, according to our manuscript, DONEC IN PURUM). Since the academy's name, the Travagliati (or tra vagliati), might imply the process of sifting through a sieve, its emblem suggests that the academy purifies and improves its members.³⁶ Because of the ambiguity of *donec*, which can mean either "while" or "until," these two versions of the motto end in the same result. The standard version, DONEC IMPURUM, then, would suggest that initiates would be sifted and tested "while impure." This more common version appeared in Scipione Bargagli's Dell'imprese, where he suggests that all academies using the sieve as emblem intended it to indicate a desire "to render clean, pure, and unadulterated that which is mixed with other material impure, filthy, and harmful, just as it is with grain

³⁴G. Bargagli, 1982, 82: "E un altro disse, sé esser nell'infernal chiostro venuto, per non aver servito un solo amore, e per non aver tenuta una sola fede."

³⁵Mazzi, 2:424–25; on the fall of Siena, see Cantagalli, 1962. As for the traces of the Travagliati, what appears to be its only notable production was a set of *venture*, a collection of emblems and fortunes composed for women in a Befana celebration of 1572 [old style 1571]: BCI, Y.II.23, fols. 406^r–549^r ("La Ventura delli Accademici Travagliati con i discorsi di M. Giugurta Tomasi"); see also Maylender, 5:346–47.

³⁶Mazzi, 2:424–25. In BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 1^{r-v}, the anonymous compiler in a prefatory "A chi legge" contends that the name derives from the trials of the recent war, so that the members were named "the Travailed, as if agitated and shaken by the sieve, alluding to the state of war and revolutions." As for the Travagliati's implicit etymology of their name, this is perhaps fanciful, as the unattested root of the word is usually traced to the Latin *tripalium*, a torture device with three stakes.

that may be gathered with tare, lupins, spelt, and similar mixtures."³⁷ The version of the motto in the "Fanciful Dispute," DONEC IN PURUM, would imply that individuals are sifted "until pure." Either way, the meaning is clear that the activities of the academy "refine" its members.

The fruits of academic life are also indicated in the motto of the third of the three academies, the Accesi ("the Inflamed"). Their motto, which graced a burning pine cone, was HINC ODOR ET FRUCTUS ("Hence the aroma and enjoyment"). This academy was founded by Bellisario Bulgarini (1539–1619) in his home in 1558.³⁸ Several clues in the "Fanciful Dispute" suggest that, in fact, this treatise was most likely the product of the Accesi. At the beginning of the section of the volume of papers in which the treatise is included is the rubric: "To the Academicians of Siena and particularly to the Accesi. Consigned to Mr. Belisario Bolgarini and to Mr. Scipione Bargagli." Moreover, the pine cone, the emblem of the Accesi, seems to enjoy pride of place, as it has the opening lines in the dialogue and takes the lead when the three emblems reassemble at the end. ⁴⁰ And, as we shall see, the anonymous monk in the dialogue identifies himself as a former Accesi.

This, then, is the trinity of academies that compete for primacy, and they will do so at the hands of a religious arbiter. This fictive submission to higher authority mirrors the actual submission of the academies to ducal authority from the 1560s until the first decade of the following century. Although there are some disagreements as to the exact dates and circumstances of the closing of the academies, scholars generally agree that there was a suppression of associative life, and most scholars follow Curzio Mazzi's contention that the academies were closed from 1568 to 1603, owing to the "suspicion and distrust of Cosimo de' Medici." He appears to base his statement on a comment he cites from the "Deliberations of the Rozzi" that "in 1568 there reigned in our city of Siena many academies and

³⁷S. Bargagli, 1594, 214bis. In the same vein, a seventeenth-century Jesuit emblem collector, drawing on Scipione's treatise (but incorrectly misattributing this emblem to the Intronati), suggests that the motto indicates that by "debating and practicing we harass the students": Masen, 578–79.

³⁸Mazzi, 2:344–45. In the ms. collection entitled "La Toscane compositioni, degli Accesi, che dall'edificazion' del'Academia anno per anno si son raccolte: cioé sonnetti" the anthology opens with a 1560 celebration of the second anniversary (suggesting a 1558 founding): see BCI, H.X.13. For an early biography of Bulgarini, see Ugurgieri Azzolini, 1:585–88.

³⁹BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 267^r. Although one might suspect Bulgarini to be the author, the hand of the ms. does not appear to be Bulgarini's (or Scipione's).

⁴⁰Ibid., fols. 301^r, 372^r.

⁴¹Mazzi, 1:92.

societies . . . that . . . were all made to close down in deference to our masters [and] now with the good graces of these same [masters] the society of the Rozzi was reconstituted and they began to gather . . . the day of 31 August 1603." ⁴² In December of that same year the Intronati also reopened with an elaborate ceremony that slavishly honored the Medici Grand Duke Ferdinando and his wife Christine of Lorraine, and an oration in praise of the Intronati by Scipione Bargagli. ⁴³ What led to this shuttering of the Sienese academies and how did it relate to the larger history of restraints on associative and festive life in the city?

Early in his reign Grand Duke Cosimo I (1519–74) recognized the political ramifications of cultural life in Florence, as evinced in the early 1540s, when he swiftly co-opted the newly formed Academy of the Umidi and transformed it into the Florentine Academy. 44 In the following decade he was reminded of the dangers of ignoring unlicensed festive life. 45 As for academic and festive life in Siena, local authorities had sought to rein in revelry and private gatherings a couple of times in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. In 1535, apparently targeting a popular political group called the Bardotti, the Balia issued proscriptions against academies and "private congregations"; in 1542 it issued restrictions on parties and masquerades during Carnival, even punishing individuals participating in a comedy staged in a private home. 46 Closer to the period examined here, the potential hazards of festive life and the potential for conflict between lay and

⁴²Ibid., 1:93: "Nel mjle cinquecento sesanta otto regnjava nela nostra cjtta di siena moltte academje e congre [congreghe] regnjava la nostra sugara e congrega de rozi qualj academje e congrege per buono rjspetto funo fatte tutte chudare da nostrj padronj ora con buona grazia de medesimj la congrega de rozi si erjmessa su e comjnciono aragunasi . . . sotto il di 31di agosto 1603." On the closing of the academies, see the Appendix below at p. 1201.

⁴³See Academy of Intronati, 1611, 2:411–51 (*Breve descrittione del nuovo risorgimento dell'Accademia degli Intronati di Siena*), which describes effigies of the ducal family and laudatory emblems in honor of Ferdinando, as Maecenas, and Christine of Lorraine; see also ibid., 452–535 (*Oratione in lode dell'accademia degli Intronati*).

⁴⁴See Plaisance; Zanrè, 2004.

⁴⁵As Zanrè, 2001, has shown, when members of an Academy of Piano staged a mock funeral ceremony following the death of the Medici protégé Onofrio Bartolini, the Archbishop of Pisa, this irreverent roast so alarmed the ducal secretary Lorenzo Pagni that he urged Cosimo to invoke a law of 1549 against unauthorized assemblies and reminded him of Alessandro de' Medici's assassination in 1537. Cosimo demurred, opining that the ever-restive Florentines' minds might as well be diverted by amusement rather than be allowed to brood. But Pagni's suspicions may have had some merit, as a conspiracy mounted three years later included members of this academy. For the law of 11 March 1549 — "against those who plot against the person or state of His Highness or his illustrious children or descendants" — see Salimbeni, 13.

⁴⁶Mazzi, 1:91–92, 259–63; Seragnoli, 73–74; Catoni, 1986, 27–29.

religious groups were made evident in a 1656 incident that ended in violence. At the start of Carnival the university students made their customary canvass of the city for funds to underwrite the seasonal festivities. When they arrived at the Augustinian monastery, the monks pelted them with rocks and bricks from the roof, exulting in their victory as if, according to one report, they had been battling the Turks. There were fatalities, arrests and other punishments were meted out all around — with some of the German students reported to the Inquisition — and the matter was taken to the authorities in Florence by an embassy of students. ⁴⁷ As this last point reveals, such Sienese events had by now become the official concern of the Florentine overlords, and the subsequent years saw the tightening grip of the grand dukes in concert with the intensifying zeal of the Counter-Reformation.

In fact, not long after Siena fell under the official control of the Medici grand dukes in 1557, papal politics and personal ambition conspired to drive Cosimo toward an increasingly harsh stance on religious dissent. In 1559, with the ascension of Gian Angelo de' Medici (from a Milanese branch of the family) as Pius IV, the ties between Florence and the papacy were strengthened, as a cardinal's hat went to Cosimo's sons, Giovanni and Ferdinando, in succession over the next few years. As for Cosimo's pursuit of heresy in Siena, in a letter of 1560 to the Inquisition he proclaims himself "the fiercest persecutor of heretics." In 1566 Cardinal Michele Ghislieri, who in 1559 had headed the Inquisition's investigations of Sienese heretics, became Pius V, and the Tridentine persecution of Sienese figures intensified. Various intellectuals were caught up in the purge, including Achille Benvoglienti, to whom some Intronati members had ties; the Intronati member Marcantonio Cinuzzi, whose poem De la Papeide was strongly anticlerical; and the Intronati member Mino Celsi, who fled the city in 1569 and later wrote a treatise on toleration. ⁴⁹ Cosimo's complicity in stepping up persecutions was clearly tied to his desire to be elevated to Grand Duke of Tuscany, a title bestowed as a gift from the pope. The extradition of Cosimo's Florentine acquaintance Pietro Carnesecchi, who was executed in 1566, was undoubtedly the greatest concession that Cosimo made to earn his title,

⁴⁷See Battistini; Catoni, 1986, 31; Davies, 155–56.

⁴⁸Piccolomini, 163: "ch'io sia acerrimo persecutore delli heretici." On Cosimo's political policy regarding the papacy, see Jedin; Diaz, 186–88, 194; Cantagalli, 1985, 239, 271–78.

⁴⁹On Benvoglienti, detained by the Inquisition for Calvinist views in December 1568, and the ties of Intronati member Attilio Marsili and Cristoforo Turamini to his group, see Seragnoli, 162n82; Marchetti, 1970, 69; Celsi, 588n1; Piccolomini, 170–88. On Marsili's indictment for heresy along with Benvoglienti in December 1568, see ibid., 170–74. On Cinuzzi, see Marchetti, 1975, 152–53; Marchetti, 1970, 63–65. On Celsi, who wrote a brief history of the Intronati, and his treatise *In haereticis coërcendis quatenus progredi liceat*, see Celsi, esp. 538–41.

which the pope conferred on him in August 1569.⁵⁰ When enumerating the sixteen reasons for bestowing this honor on Cosimo, Pius V listed first his vigilance in safeguarding Tuscany from heresy.⁵¹ It is likely that the combined forces of the pope's religious convictions and Cosimo's political ambitions led to the hardening stance against heresy in Siena in the late 1560s.

Cosimo's son Francesco, who from 1564 served as Cosimo's coregent, also played a notable part in the tightening control over religion in Siena. In March 1567 he wrote his deputed governor of the city, Federigo Barbolani da Montauto, that he had heard that German — that is, Lutheran — students at the university were contaminating the city with "their false opinions." ⁵² Ten days later Francesco's wife, Joanna of Austria, daughter of Emperor Ferdinand, also wrote Federigo, asking that he facilitate a transfer of a benefice from the local parish clergy to the Jesuits.⁵³ These letters from husband and wife on the religious life of Siena were surely not unconnected. As for Francesco's concern about the German students, Federigo responded with letters in May and June of 1568 ordering that officials at the customs gates and elsewhere should be on guard for those bringing in "damned books." He added that he had alerted proprietors of inns and other establishments to determine what stripe of foreigners were afoot in the city, "in order to execute your orders against them, as occasions present themselves," and that he would enlist the aid of local religious groups, including the Jesuits, to help with this surveillance. 54 In December of the following year, a bonfire of banned books took place in the piazza of San Francesco, the seat of the Inquisitors.⁵⁵ Certainly, all the

⁵⁰Cantagalli, 1985, 271–78; Diaz, 188–91.

⁵¹Gigli, 1854, 1:84; D'Addario, 154.

⁵²Bertini, 118–19; ibid., 116, argues that "that odor [of heresy] obsessed Francesco de' Medici around 1567–68."

⁵³Ibid., 100, 120, 169n101.

⁵⁴Piccolomini, 168–69: "Ho dato ordine alle porte in Dogana et in altro luoghi che si tenga sotto altro colore bona cura se ci capitassino persone che portassino le maladetti libri, et similmente all osterie, case et altrove per intendere che qualità de forestieri comparischino o ci sieno in questa città, per essequir contro di essi, secondo le occasioni che si porgeranno, il volere di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima." See also Bertini, 119. If any single document, short of a decree, indicates the Medici's tight control of the city in 1568, it is this one. In a letter of July 1569, Francesco wrote to Federigo that he wanted him to root out the nests of heresy in the city, and there are letters of that same month from Cosimo to the Cardinal of Pisa and to Pius V on his efforts to lure Mino Celsi back to Siena to uncover "any nestful of scoundrels" and informing the pope that "I will not pardon anyone in these matters, not even my own sons." For his part, Federigo, in a letter of 31 July 1569, reassures Cosimo that he will tirelessly pursue heresy, and mentions the recent detention of Achille Benvoglienti, the flight of Celsi Mino, and the recent capture in Rome of Aonio Palaerio: Celsi, 417n2, 587–88; Piccolomini, 188–89.

⁵⁵Catoni, 1996, 142.

evidence points to a serious lockdown of the city in the period motivated by religious concerns — or, in Cosimo's case, religious politics.

According to the most prominent Intronati memorialist of the following century, Girolamo Gigli, the suppression of associative life in this period applied not only to academies such as the Intronati and the Rozzi, but even to the Confraternity of Madonna sotto lo Spedale: so much were all lay organizations under suspicion. As we have seen, the blight on festive life was evident already in 1562, when Girolamo Bargagli lamented that games and parties were seen as heretical and Carnival entertainments as seditious. By January 1569, this repressive chill had become a deep freeze. During Carnival of that year, a group of men wanted to gather into a festive "court" strictly devoted to women. The chronicler of this court, an Intronati figure called Fortunio Martini, remarked on the boldness of such a gathering (at the home of Pietro and Gironimo Cerretani) in such a troubled political climate: "the bad temper of the times that came before and after this decision [to form this court], as everyone knows, was such that in Siena [it] virtually impeded others from leaving their own homes, and did not even allow [citizens] to be found together."

Finally, if Cosimo wanted unauthorized groups to be less visible in Siena, he certainly wanted an authorized group to be very visible. Surely it is no coincidence that in this same period, June 1568, he established a new order of knights, drawn from the nobility, to police Florence and Siena and to be the standard-bearers of ducal power. Sa Jürgen Habermas might frame it, the unlicensed "public culture" of the academies' comedies and assemblies was countered by a traditional courtly culture: in 1591 Scipione Bargagli himself published a set of emblems he and other Sienese literati composed in honor of

⁵⁶In BCI, Y.I.3, fol. 129° (a letter of 1696 to the Florentine librarian Antonio Magliabechi), Gigli discusses the cessation of gatherings of the Intronati "on account of not making the vigilant eyes of the new ruler jealous with particular meetings," and he adds a marginal note that "conferences were suspended not only in the Intronati, but also in the ancient Company Under the Hospital, in the Society of the Rozzi"; Gigli, 1854, 1:278 (*Diario sanese*), also discusses the closings, though he dates it to 1563 rather than the more-plausible 1568: see the Appendix.

⁵⁷Mazzi, 2:359, suggests that this court, called the Ferraiuoli, would not have vexed the Medici overlords in this period in which the academies were closed: "It is notable that this *Court* originated and existed in that period in which all the academies and societies were compelled to close by the new duke and lord, who truly having nothing to fear from a brigade of gentlemen solely intended to host and entertain fine ladies."

⁵⁸Riccò, 148: "O felice, e saggia resolutione! La mala qualità del tempo che andò innanzi e doppo a questa deliberatione fu, come ciascuno sa, a Siena tale che non che altro impediva altrui a uscire delle proprie case e non concedeva pure il ritrovarsi insieme."

⁵⁹See Cantini, 7:22–26, for the decree regarding "Capitoli et Privilegi degli Huomini d'Arme del dì 25, Giugno 1568"; Catoni, 1996, 142.

this band.⁶⁰ Both by overt suppression and aristocratic revanchism, the Medici grand dukes seem to have successfully silenced and co-opted the strongest of the Sienese voices. It would appear, however, that there were some dissenting voices, even if they remained anonymous and behind the scenes.

3. A COMIC EMBLEM CONTEST

The treatise's dialogue per se opens with the three emblems, which, contending among themselves for moral and spiritual status, agree to take the case to "one who may tell us the truth." This arbiter turns out to be an unnamed monk, identified in the margins throughout as "A" and twice in the text as "Brother And.", at whose monastery the three emblems convene. Two documents that precede the dialogue purport to be written by this same monk. The first, headed with monograms of Jesus and Mary, is addressed "To the Academicians" and is joined on the facing page with images of the three emblems-cum-mottoes of the Intronati, Accesi, and Travagliati (fig. 1). The one-page address signals an attempt at conversion by opening with a punning invocation to the academy members to mend their ways and come to the straight and narrow: "Oh come Travagliati from the devil, Oh come Intronati from the filthy world, Oh come Accesi from carnal lust to these better emblems, to these insignias more sifting in purity, and to this brighter and better lit pine cone."62 The imagery overtly encroaches upon the theological realm when the Travagliati, "troubled in the Cross of the sieve," are beckoned to come "to him, until pure, and you Travagliati will be restored and find peace in your souls."63 This invocation then welcomes all to partake of bread

⁶⁰See S. Bargagli, 1591. The creation by Scipione and others of emblems for this band — and the purging of Scipione's brother's and Fausto Sozzini's *Pellegrina* for production at Ferdinando's wedding in 1589 — perhaps reflects the Medici's successful co-opting of Sienese academic culture, just as Cosimo in the 1540s had co-opted the Florentine Academy of the Umidi. On the contrast between courtly, aristocratic public culture (orchestrated from above), and the emergence of "bourgeois" public culture (orchestrated from below by, for instance, academies and salons), see Habermas, 1–56; on Siena's move from civic to courtly culture in the period of Medici domination, see Hook, 198; Riccò, 131–33; on the political uses of festive life generally, see Marcus, 1–23.

⁶¹At BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 301^r, the Pine Cone suggests, "parmi espediente cosa, che tutti ci rimettiamo in che ci dica il vero."

⁶²Ibid., 298^v: "Ò Travagliati dal demonio, Ò Intronati dal mondo [inmondo?], Ò Accesi dall libidine carnale, venite à queste megliore Imprese, à queste piu valiganti In Pure Insegne, et à piu e meglio Accesa Pina."

⁶³Ibid.: "Però Travagliati, donec in Purum, in Cruce Vaglium Travagliato, et in Puro ritrovato, Venite à lui, donec in Purum, e voi, Travagliati sarei ricreati, et requiem animabus vestris invenietis." The last phrase of the quotation — "to find peace in your souls" — is from Matthew 11:29.

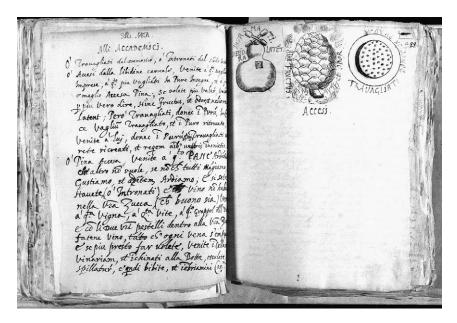


FIGURE 1. Preliminary page and illustration of the emblems of the Academies of the Intronati, Accesi, and Travagliati in "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fols. 298^v–299^r.

and wine in terms that allow ambiguity as to whether a Eucharist or a drunken revelry is indicated: "Oh Burning Pine Cone, come to this BREAD ardently that anyone does not want unless we all eat, enjoy, and ardently desire; and (O Intronati) if you are thirsty . . . come to this vineyard, to this vine, to this bunch of grapes and with your two pestles make wine inside your pumpkin, so that each vein is filled, and if you want to obtain some sooner, come into the wine cellar, and bending to the cask kiss the taps and then drink and become drunk, dear friends." This invitation is riddled with contradiction and irony. On the one hand, this summons echoes a call to Communion to partake of bread, which all should ardently desire, and of wine, to be sought in the true

⁶⁴Ibid.: "Ò Pina Accesa, venite à questo PANE Ardentissime che altro non vuole, se non che tutti Mangiamo, Gustiamo, et ardentemente Ardiamo; E si [se?] sete Havete (Ò Intronati) . . . [venite?] à questa Vigna, à questa Vite, à questo grappol dell'[uvo?] e con li due vostri pestelli dentro alla vostra Zucca fatene vino, tanto ch'ogni vena s'empia e se piu presto far volete, venite in cellam vinarium, et inchinati alla Botte, osculate [le?] spillature, e quindi bibite, et inebriamini Carissimi." In this and n62 above, brackets indicate words submerged in the fold. The phrases "come into the wine cellar" and "drink and become drunk, dear friends" are from Song of Songs 2:4, 5:1.

vineyard and vine.⁶⁵ On the other hand, the closing lines draw from the Song of Songs, the most sensual of the Bible's books, and urge all comers to bend to the cask, kiss the taps, and get drunk.⁶⁶ This closing line is probably the best indication that the document, despite its supposed religious authorship, might really be the product of ludic, drunken revelry.

The second of the treatise's preliminary documents adds a framework that is unequivocally religious. This piece, with the heading "In Christ, Dearest Friends, with Health and Peace," purports to have been written by a Sienese monk who has been in an Augustinian monastery in Rome for the past two years.⁶⁷ This figure recounts how members of three academies frequented this monastery in Rome — which even displayed their emblems and how they were often invited to hear, or even to present, lectures. He reports furthermore that these visitors were greatly improved by hearing the lectures of an unnamed chapter head and theologian: "seeing these [academy members] profiting more each day in the studies of philosophy and theology under the guidance of Reverend Father Master Evangelist _____, who with such great exemplary life and Catholic doctrine guides and conducts them to the gate of doctrine and health."68 The edification of these academy members in Rome set him to thinking of the academicians in his native Siena, and he decided that he would try to emulate his Roman chapter head by writing a work to similarly uplift them. He claims that his attempt "to weave a certain whimsical fabric" did not fully come to completion because of the "obligations of the Church and religious obedience," so he gave over the manuscript in its raw condition to two old friends. The crucial passage of this fictive framework comes in the monk's statement of his specific goal, namely, to create a "fabric of actions and words that would persuade and prevail in your academies to make all of the Intronati into wise Jesuits, all the Travagliati into pure and good Inchiodati, all the Accesi into seraphic and devout Bernabites of our oratory in San Martino." The dialogue, then, is

⁶⁵Cf. John 6:35, 15:1, for bread and the vine as metaphors for Christ.

⁶⁶On the ritual similarities between the academy feast and Holy Communion, see Davies, 144–45. On the Renaissance banquet, religious tradition, and convivial literature, see Bakhtin, 278–302; Jeanneret, esp. 17–19, 176–85, 191–98.

⁶⁷At BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 300^r, the monk says, "io sia stato gia piu di due anni, e mezo in questo nostro convento di Roma, intitolato col nome del N. P. S. Ag.": the author thereby cancels the reference to the Augustinian monastery.

⁶⁸Ibid.: "e vedendo questi andar profittando ogni giorno piu nelli studii di filosofia e di teologia sotto il Timone del R. P. M. Evangelista _____ quale con tanto buon' esemplar vita e cattolica dottrina li guida, e conduce al porto della dottrina e della salute."

⁶⁹Ibid., fol. 300^v: "farvi una tela d'opere, e di parole, ch'havessero persuaso e prevalso nelle vostre Accademie à farvi tutti di'Intronati [sapienti *inserted*] Giesuiti; e di Travagliati

framed as an attempt on the part of an Augustinian monk to convert secular academies into religious orders and congregations. The context of the forthcoming "Fanciful Dispute" is now truly evident. Rather than being a contest for spiritual primacy among secular academies, its putative subject, it is actually a struggle between secular societies and religious ones.

This passage also lays out the religious landscape of Siena and offers clues as to who the supposed religious author of the dialogue was intended to be. Obviously, he would come from one of the three religious groups mentioned in the passage above. Jesuits had a presence in Siena at least by 1556, and, as mentioned earlier, outside Jesuit officials came into the city in 1559 to investigate heretical currents that implicated the Intronati. 70 But the author likely was not intended to be identified as a Jesuit or an outsider, but as someone from one of the two societies named, both of which were native to Siena. The reference to the Inchiodati alludes to the Congregazione de' Sacri Chiodi, a religious sodality that was established in 1579 in the Capella del Chiodo (the Chapel of the Nail, alluding to the nails of the cross) located in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala; the Chiodi moved to the church of San Giorgio in 1584. The group was founded by Matteo Guerra, a leatherworker who since 1567 had worked as a volunteer in the hospital, where he ministered to those near death.⁷¹ As a youth, Guerra had accompanied an older acquaintance, Mariano Tantucci, to the Council of Trent, which energized his religious tendencies, as he returned to Siena "resolved to give himself wholly to the contempt of the world."⁷² He was a particular enemy of cards, dice, and gambling — and this "zeal against gambling" might be a relevant factor in understanding the conflict between the academies, with their sometime ludic activities, and the religious orders.⁷³ In fact, one of the Chiodi's later statutes from 1620 provided that members should monitor initiates to learn whether they went "to comedies, parties, banquets... whether they gambled, and [engaged in] other such things not appropriate to anyone professing a spiritual life."⁷⁴ Gambling could overlap

[[]Puri e ben' inserted] Inchiodati; e d'Accesi [sarafici e devoti inserted] Bernabiti del nostro oratorio in San Martino."

⁷⁰In 1556 Loyola sent Girolamo Rubiola di Valenzia to launch a college in the city: Tacchi Venturi, vol. 1, pt. 2:86n1.

⁷¹Daniele Nardi, 12–148, esp. 25, 30–44.

⁷²In BCI, A.XI.33, fol. 40^r, there is a lengthy biography of Guerra, Father "Teo," which reveals that the trip to Trent left him "sentendosi accendere il cuore di spirito celestiale," and that he "si risolti di darsi tutto al disprezzo del mondo."

⁷³BCI, A.XI.33, fol. 48^r: "zelo contro l'giuoco" is a marginal notation at the section of the biography that describes his assault on "ogni sorti di giuoco pericoloso."

⁷⁴Daniele Nardi, 121.

with heresy as a target of Guerra's society: in the year of the congregation's founding Guerra and his associates raided the house of a devotee of the heretic Bernardino Ochino (1487–1564), confiscated all his gaming paraphernalia, and took it to the altar of the chapel.⁷⁵ Clearly, the dissolute ways of heresy and all manner of gaming and entertainment were lumped into one heap of deviance by this Counter-Reformation association.

The third religious group mentioned in the prefatory piece is rather confusingly identified as the "Bernabites of our oratory in San Martino": confusing because the Barnabites, named after the church of San Barnabas in Milan, were indeed an order that emerged in the sixteenth century — but the group at San Martino in Siena was the oratory of San Bernardo.⁷⁶ Perhaps the author was attempting to humorously combine the two into "Bernabites." In any case, the Siena group was founded by the Augustinian monk Andromaco d'Elci, who lived at the monastery of San Martino, was a friend of Matteo Guerra, and became a member of the Chiodi.⁷⁷ This Andromaco was probably the figure parodied as Brother A, or, more tellingly, Brother And.co, which surely must be "Andromaco." As Andromaco d'Elci not only founded the oratory of San Bernardo but also joined and aided the Chiodi, he links these two groups satirized in the dialogue.⁷⁹ In fact, Andromaco helped secure the Florentine grand duke's support of the Chiodi, shortly after it was officially recognized by Pope Sixtus V in 1585 and granted possession of the church of San Giorgio. 80 The composition of the work, then, likely dates between 1584,

⁷⁵Ibid., 39.

⁷⁶As for another possible local context for "Bernabites," there had been a convent of nuns at a church of San Barnaba, but this church was largely displaced by the building of the Porta Romana, and by the 1460s these nuns had abandoned the site and joined with the nuns of Ognisanti: see Liberati, 241–47.

⁷⁷Daniele Nardi, 23–24.

 $^{^{78}}$ I know of no other Italian names that could be derived from the abbreviation "And." The abbreviation occurs at BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 307^{r} ; also, at ibid., fol. 372^{r} , adjoined to a reference to the oratory at San Martino.

⁷⁹It bears repeating that, prior to the arrival of the Inquisition, once a decision was made to investigate suspected heretics in Siena, the inquest was headed up by an Augustinian figure, Padre Adeodato of the Leccetan order, who called on the Jesuits for help: Marchetti, 1975, 176. On anticlerical satire in Renaissance Italy, see Niccoli.

⁸⁰Daniele Nardi, 48, asserts that upon returning to Siena from Rome, where he had obtained the pope's grant of San Giorgio, Matteo Guerra "asked [his] confidant Andromaco d'Elci, whose brother was friends with the grand duke, to intercede on his behalf, pleading his cause." Once the grand duke embraced the Chiodi, the archbishop soon followed suit, confirming the papal decree and finalizing the Chiodi's official control of San Giorgio in 1586.

when the Chiodi moved to San Giorgio, and 1593, the year of Andromaco d'Elci's death. Owing to its mockery of religious societies, it is likely that the treatise was written during the period when the academies were closed down by the Medici grand dukes, and thus unlikely that it was composed after their reopening in 1603. As for 1593 as the terminus ad quem, the author would probably not have targeted Andromaco after his death: this would have been bad form and little fun.

4. SECULAR EMBLEMS AND SACRED MEANINGS

The monastic judge A, or Andromaco, is depicted in the dialogue as a not-particularly-focused monk. In a string of puns rooted in the names of the academies, he reveals that his spiritual constitution is weak, that he is "troubled" and little able to become "inflamed" in prayer. While such double entendres occur throughout the dialogue, in this instance they emphasize the rivalry between monastic societies and lay ones. Brother A prays for help to resist the distractions of the city, and he says that he has never been able to achieve the contemplative peace of a John the Baptist, a Paul, or an Anthony. God hears his plaint and delivers the chatter of the emblems outside his door to remind him of the disturbances of lay life. But the opposite result ensues. The monk smells the aroma of the burning Pine Cone of the Accesi and is enticed to venture forth. Thus, even as sensuous temptation lures him out, he cites the demands of charity in the model of Martha and the active life to engage the visiting emblems (fig. 2). Based on the string emblems (fig. 2).

That the smell of the Accesi Pine Cone seduces him reinforces the likelihood that this treatise is the work of the underground Accesi academy. This is even more evident when Brother A reveals that he himself is a former Accesi member. When the emblems appear before him, they profess their literary and cultural domains, proclaiming that under their standards were to be found "clear and famous rhetoric, charming and terse poetry, and the most learned and widespread philosophy." At the same time, however, they apologize for asking a monk to rule on their dispute, because theirs is such a vain realm, and they confess to having no aspirations to spiritual

 $^{^{81}}$ BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 372^{v} , locates the Chiodi at San Giorgio, making 1584 the terminus a quo for composition of the treatise.

⁸² Ibid., fol. 301 v: "travagliarsi di maniera," "accendermi nell'oratione."

⁸³ Ibid., fols. 301 v-303 r.

⁸⁴Ibid., fol. 304^r: "palesi, & famose Rettoriche, vaghe, e tersse Poesie; e dottissime, propalatissime Filosofie."

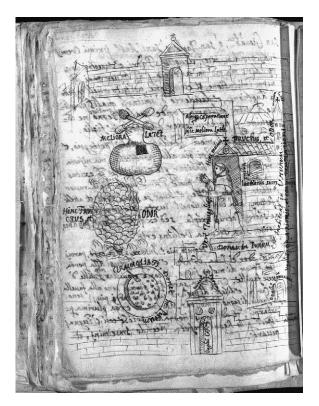


FIGURE 2. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 302^v.

matters. In fact, they even (facetiously) own up to a certain "holy envy" of other pious souls in the city who follow the higher path "under the guidance of priests and monks." But just as the emblems disavow their own spirituality, Brother A disavows his own secular talents. He admits that he has always lacked skills in rhetoric and poetry, and that before he became a monk all of his literary efforts, despite the investment in "much time and oil," were in vain. And then the other shoe drops, as he reveals that he is a former Accesi member: "When the time came (it suiting whomever) when I separated myself *ab hoc vano seculo* and from my most friendly Accesi Academicians, every observance of Tuscan writing, poetry, and rhetoric was

⁸⁵Ibid.: "poiche sotto l'Insegne nostre non s'attende al quella maniera di dottrina, e di spirito, che sentiamo, che si fanno [molti *inserted*] spirituali anime in questa Città, et in altre sotto la Guida, e cura di voi altri Reverendi Preti, e Frati, d' haverne loro certamente una santa Invidia."

given to the Accesi flames." The author of the dialogue has thus made of Brother A a failed Accesi member, whose lackluster literary efforts were consigned to the fire. The poor fellow is portrayed not only as a spiritually distracted monk, but also as a literary failure from their ranks: he is neither good monk nor successful Acceso. This contest is visually expressed in an illustration in the manuscript in which the images and mottoes on the left side of the picture represent the three academies, and those on the right represent the Church (fig. 2). The religious mottoes attempt to trump the lay ones in their own terms. Thus adorning a monastic structure is "without comparison hence the better things lie hidden"; the monk's own cell proclaims "hence the better enjoyment and aroma"; and several of the rounded entries of the monastery bear labels of the *vaglium* (sieve): for instance, the "sieve of communion," the "sieve of sacred reading," the "sieve of prayer and contemplation."

Next comes the contest of which emblem is "more worthy of praise, of virtue, and of the highest, more excellent, and divine mysteries." This last category is the most controversial and the one that propels this dialogue past the realm of the merely comic to that of the potentially sacrilegious. As Girolamo Bargagli's letterbook of 1562 makes clear, the realm of "parties" and "symbols" often led to suspicion of heresy in the city. Some years later, in 1578, when Girolamo's brother Scipione published the first part of his book *On Emblems*, he too seemed aware of the potential theological dangers in this semiotic realm. Following other writers such as Girolamo Ruscelli and Alessandro Farra, he traced the origins of emblems back to the sacred images in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Orphic theology, Pythagorean number symbolism, and the Jewish Kabbalah, and surveyed as well the crowns of the Greeks, the reverses of Roman medals, the arms and insignias of medieval

⁸⁶Ibid., fol. 305^r: "poiche non hebbi mai vena di Poeta avanti, ch'io me facesse fratre [non che poi *inserted*] quantunque molto m'hò da rendere in colpa del molto tempo, e olio consumatavoi per far poi un non so che, ch'era un nulla; e pero poi, quando venne il tempo, che piacque a' chi mi separò ab hoc vano seculo, e dalli Accesi miei amicissimi Accademici, diedesi ogni osservanza di Toscanaria, di poesia, e di Rettorico parlare all' Accesi fiamme, che dar pur troppo ancora io ambivo dare agli' Accesu Carboni dell'odorifera, e fruttifera vostra Pina."

⁸⁷The details of the real Andromaco d'Elci are sketchy. Aside from being a member of the oratory of San Bernardo and, later, of the Chiodi, he was also by 1562 a member of the Congregation of San Girolamo, which he headed by 1576: Daniele Nardi, 23–24. I do not know whether d'Elci was also a failed Acceso, although it is more likely that this is an embellishment that further ties the treatise to the Accesi and further heightens the rivalry between secular and religious culture.

 88 BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 302^{v} : "absque comparatione hinc meliora latent," "hinc melius fructus et odor."

⁸⁹At ibid., fol. 309°, Brother A agrees to "aiutare dove, e chi vedrò, che sia piu degno di lode, di virtù e di piu alti, et eccellenti, e Divini Misterii."

families, finally bringing his history up to the modern emblem. ⁹⁰ The interlocutors in his dialogue make a distinction between the ancient focus on "divine and natural concepts" and the modern emphasis on "human thought and affects" in order to warn that modern emblems should avoid the loftier mystical character of the ancient tradition and instead apply strictly to the human, intellectual, and moral realm. Because certain images drawn from the Bible have an established iconographic association — the lyre with David, the dove with Solomon, the lamb with Christ — these should not be used to indicate anything other than "mysteries lofty and worthy of our most sacred religion." ⁹¹ Scipione Bargagli's injunction to respect the symbolic integrity of the *mistieri alti* here stands in notable contrast to the very title of the "Fanciful Dispute," which describes a contest between secular emblems to lay claim to their *alto misterio*.

Thus the template for an unholy conflation is set. After resolving the unstated problem of talking to a pumpkin, sieve, and pine cone — by invoking such precedents as St. Anthony preaching to the fish, a blind Venerable Bede preaching to a pile of rocks, Moses and the burning bush — Brother A takes up the task of assessing which of the emblems is most praiseworthy and most steeped in divine mysteries. The emblems state their hope for the miracle of not feeling envy when each hears good things said of the others, and even venture, "who knows, but with a little more time and more arguments of religious zealots, we may be able to become good emulators and emulate the better gifts?" The text thus teases that perhaps even reprobate literary-academy types can be moved to piety by Brother A.

Befitting the Intronati's being the earliest of these academies, the emblem analysis of the Pumpkin comes first. This fellow endures the most abuse in the dialogue: partly because of the innate humor and mockability of pumpkins — as Seneca realized in his satire on the "Pumpkinification" of Emperor Claudius⁹³ — and partly because the Accesi are keen to take jabs at

⁹⁰S. Bargagli, 1594, 4. See also Ruscelli. Discussing liveries and emblems accompanied by a motto, ibid., 63, singles out the Sienese as being distinguished in this tradition, citing their many recent travails but also their flourishing "in joists, masquerades, and other festivals." As for a theological and philosophical view of emblems, see Farra,**6, entitled pt. 7 of his book *Symbolic Philosophy or Concerning Emblems*. S. Bargagli, 1594, also draws on Contile.

⁹¹S. Bargagli, 1594, 6: "per queste simili figure, non si accenni, che mistieri alti, e degni della santissima nostra religione."

⁹²BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 309^v: "chi sà, che con un poco piu di tempo, e con piu ragionamenti di Zelanti Religiosi, potessimo divenire buoni emulatori et emulari charismata meliora?" The last phrase of the quotation, "emulate the better gifts," is from 1 Corinthians 12:31.

⁹³Seneca, 1–4. *Apocolocyntosis* (literally, *Pumpkinification*) is Seneca's lampoon of Emperor Claudius's apotheosis.

the Intronati, their forerunners and most prominent competitors. In an opening speech, the Pumpkin laments his lowly, derided stature and describes how he mightily resists, but loses, the battle of being plucked from the ground at harvest time. Once plucked, he becomes food for the poor, and when not eaten, he is saved by poor farmers as a repository of salt. The Pumpkin's self-denigration is countered by Brother A's lengthy praise of simplicity — partly in Latin and drawn from Jan van Ruusbroec's mystical *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* — and a paean to humility, a spiritual virtue that can lead to a "heroic humility." As for the ridicule the Pumpkin endures, the monk combs scholastic theology and the Bible for warnings against this vice, which is doubly ironic because the dialogue applies moral virtues and vices to a pumpkin and, in mocking the clergy, engages in this very sin of derision. The exhaustive analysis Brother A delivers, with citations from the likes of Thomas Aquinas and Ranieri Giordani da Pisa, satirizes the method and excesses of scholastic learning. ⁹⁵

The assault on the religious world, however, becomes much more irreverent, when the dialogue renders the mystical meanings of the pestles. These objects, placed "in the mode of a cross," are said to represent the "humanity and divinity of Christ" on the cross. The motto now has a fully theological significance tied to Christianity's most dramatic moment: "The motto, The Better Things Are Hidden, could be said to denote Christ crucified in the middle of the two thieves in outward appearance as King of thieves and culprit but inside lies hidden Innocence, Goodness, Sanctity, Wisdom, and Divinity, etc." This motif is then extended to the pestles, which, it should be remembered, are objects to grind salt and are also phallic symbols. These now are equated with the two precepts of charity, fear (of damnation) and hope (of divine grace); with hell and paradise; with the active and contemplative life; and so on. A highpoint in the dialogue's juxtaposition of the ridiculous and the sublime concerns the motif of the

⁹⁴BCI, Y.II.23, fols. 312^{r-v}, 314^r. The author identifies his mostly verbatim passages from chap. 62 of Ruusbroec's treatise as being from a "mistica teologia": cf. Ruusbroec, 347, 349. His citing this piece of theology could either be seen as his attempt to generally deride both mystical as well as scholastic theology, or as part of his particular familiarity with (or his attempt to associate himself with) the mystical tenor of Bernard, who similarly wrote on humility and the mystical interpretation of marriage in the Song of Songs.

⁹⁵For citations of Aquinas and Raineri Giordani's fourteenth-century work *Pantheologia*, see BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 314°. Ibid., fol. 313°, also cites Bonaventure; and at ibid., fol. 316°, Gregory's *Moralia on Job*.

⁹⁶Ibid., fol. 321r: "Il motto, cio è Meliora Latent, che ci possi denotare Christo crocifisso in mezo di due ladri, in apparenza, come Re dei ladri, e reo; ma dentro latebant Innocentia, Bonitas, Sanctitas, Sapientia, et Divinitas, etc."

pumpkin as a "teacher of the spiritual life that instructs us in swimming in the water of this world and does not let us sink, submerge, or drown." In a striking parody of religious analogy, the author explains this in absurd detail: "Just as those who learn to swim do not place the pumpkin in front on the stomach but rather in back on the shoulders, so one ought to do with good works and spiritual life, as St. Augustine teaches: namely, that all the good deeds we do ought to be placed after [or behind] the back and before we ought to place our sins, our evil life, and the omission of the precepts and counsels of Christ and of the Holy Roman Catholic Church." Dried pumpkin gourds were a common flotation device, and here mockingly symbolize the buoying of a Christian to a proper spiritual life.

The monk's exegesis of the mysteries of the Intronati's emblem ends with his citation of the seven transformative properties of salt, which he ascribes to a recently published lecture on the same by his mentor the Rev. Father Master Evangelist back in Rome. According to this learned treatise, salt is likened to the "wisdom of evangelical preaching" as an agent that effects, for instance, a transformation in man "from the state of sin to that of grace through the contrition of the heart of the true penitent," and so on. The seven examples of "transmutation" do not go so far as to incorporate the notion of transubstantiation, a key issue in the confessional wars of the century, but the implication is there. And the seven transmutations call to mind the seven sacraments, which themselves all achieve the transference of divine grace and transmute the worldly into the spiritual. At times this

⁹⁷Ibid., fol. 322^r (recopied at ibid., fol. 382^v): "La Zucca possiamo intendere l'ammaestratione della vita spirituale, che c'insegna à notare all'acque di questo mondo, e non ci lascia affondare [nè sommergere *inserted*] nè affogare nell'acque."

⁹⁸Ibid., fol. 322^v (recopied at ibid., fols. 382^v–383^r): "E si come quelli, che imparano à notare non si pongano la Zucca davanti al ventre, ma dietro alle spalle, e così si deve fare delle buon'opere, e vita spirituale, come c'insegna il P. S. Ag.^{no}, cioè che tutti li beni che si fanno, ci doviamo mettere doppo le spalle; e davanti, metterci li nostri peccati e la nostra mala vita, e l'omissione de precetti, e consegli di Christo, e della Santa Chiesa Cattolica Romana." Presumably the reference to Augustine concerns his affirmation of his mother's delay of his baptism until after he had committed the sins of his youth in Augustine, 13–14 (*Confessions*, 1:11).

⁹⁹In his 1614 Brieve racconto di tutte le radici di tutte l'erbe e di tutti i frutti che crudi o cotti in Italia si mangiano, Giacomo Castelvetro remarks on the use of pumpkins gourds for buoying timorous or novice swimmers: "Their popular name is 'marine pumpkins,' perhaps because they are used by inexperienced swimmers, scared of drowning, who strap a whole dried gourd under their chests, to keep from sinking into the sea. Small children learn to swim in the rivers with them": Castelvetro, 132.

¹⁰⁰BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 324^r: "La sapienza della predicatione evangelica"; ibid., fol. 326^r: "dallo stato del peccato a quel della gratia mediante la contrittione del cuore del vero penitente."

section may reveal Protestant irony. One of the transformative properties of salt is its capacity to improve the lot of man (as does salt the meal), bringing about — in Latin here — a "transmutation through which there may be effected a transition from the pursuit of the active life to the choice of the contemplative life."101 And while the active/contemplative paradigm of course had a long tradition before the Reformation, the primacy of the celibate clerical and monastic life over married lay life certainly remained a contested issue in the confessional debates. 102 Even more striking, in the introduction to this section of the treatise there is an indication of the clerical estate's desire to impose its regimen of spirituality onto the laity, a common complaint in the urban Protestant populations of sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland. 103 Turning to enumerate salt's seven powers, Brother A comments, "I come now to the learned lecture of the abovementioned Reverend Father Master Evangelist to show the seven properties of salt, where one learns not only the qualities required of the Pastors of the Church, the Doctors, the Preachers, the Confessors, and all the Curates and the Religious, but also how the true Catholic laity would be able through the seven conditions of salt to arrive at the perfection of the spiritual life more necessary to the altar of the conscience of each of the faithful than salt is to the dinner table." This catalogue of the divisions within the Church Militant and the belief that the standards of clerical piety must be applied to the laity has added meaning in the context of this treatise's putative goal to remake lay academies in the image of religious orders.

When next the emblems of the Travagliati and the Accesi come up for review, the same burlesque template holds, as these mundane images are invested with absurdly elevated meaning. The Travagliati's Sieve is equated with the Catholic Church, the body of Christ on the cross, and the sacrament of penance, sifting good and bad deeds through contrition and confession. Blasphemous heights are reached when the monk equates the

 $^{^{101}}$ Ibid., fol. 326^{v} : "transmutatione, qua ab operatione vitae activae fit transitus ad electionem vitae contemplativae."

¹⁰²See, for instance, Loyola, 139, the fourth of Loyola's "Rules for Thinking with the Church" in his *Spiritual Exercises*, in which he privileges the religious life and celibacy over matrimony.

¹⁰³Ozment, 21–32, 49–56, 116–20.

¹⁰⁴BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 324° (recopied at fol. 384°): "Vengo hora con la dotta lettione del sopradetto mio R. P. M.º Evangelista à demostrare sette proprietà del sale, dove non solo s'intendono le qualità che devono havere li Pastori della Chiesa, li Dottori, Predicatori, Confessori, e tutti li Curati e Religiosi, ma ancora come li veri Cattolici laici possino à modo delle sette conditioni del sale pervenire alla perfettione della vita spirituale necessarissima all mensa dell della conscienza di ciascuna fedele piu che'l sale alla mensa corporale."

round Sieve with the mystery and eternity of God, as a "most perfect form, surpassing all other forms and shapes in material and in the mystery of perfection and significance, because it denotes the Divine eternal, ineffable Circle . . . of God himself, who is called the beginning and the end." 105 The complete conflation of the Sieve with the qualities of God comes in a section in which the Sieve (an object used for refining grain) is visually depicted as an icon embracing such qualities as "ineffability," "necessity," "incomprehensiblity," "eternity," and "infinity" (fig. 3). Brother A crosses the threshold to idolatry when he says that he lifts the Sieve on high and contemplates the "God Himself triune and one, and with all these things attributed to God that are in the present sieve." Then the monk replicates the Creation account of Genesis by describing the Sieve sifting the matter of the universe, from chaos separating sky from earth; sifting again to separate sun, moon, and stars; sifting again to separate plants, animals, and so on. 107 Similarly, the aroma of the Accesi's lit Pine Cone, equated with the incense of the altar, is hailed as a "thing sacerdotal, sacred, holy, and divine." The "fruit" and aroma of the burning cone mirror the Virgin, who bore the "fruit of health to the world" and who sends out the "aroma of her virginity" to attract all who may smell it. 109 Going further, he suggests that the emissions of the lit cone remind him of "Christ as God and man" and in the fire he sees "God, since the Prophet says, 'Fire is God." Given the lowly nature of all

¹⁰⁵Ibid., fol. 342^r: "Per abbreviare li misteri, et significationi del nostro misterioso, e perfettissimo vaglio per la sua perfettissima forma trapassando tutte l'altre forme, e linee in materia, e misterio di perfettione, e significatione, poiche ci denote il Circolo Divino, eterno, et ineffabile [come s'è detto di sopra *inserted*] dell'Istesso Iddio, che si dice Principio, e fine."

¹⁰⁶Ibid., fol. 345^v (see fig. 3): "lo levo in alto, e contemplo, prima come Genere Generalissimo nell'Altissimo Cielo Divino, et Eterno [?] è l'Istesso Iddio Trino, et Uno, e con tutti questi attribuiti a Dio, che sono dentro al presente vaglio." Brackets indicate a word submerged in the fold.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.: "E tal divino VAGLIO con una vagliata d'un FIAT, vagliò un Caos con mescaglio di Terra, di'Acqua."

¹⁰⁸Ibid., fol. 358^r: "L'Acessa Pina parmi che ci significhi cosa sacerdotale, sacra, santa, e divina."

¹⁰⁹Ibid., fol. 359^r. The monk's suggestion that the tree of the pine cone is tall and difficult to climb leads to a reflection on Jacob's ladder and an insertion at ibid., fol. 360^{r–v} (probably by the author, but in a much smaller hand) labeled "addition that pertains to material of the lit Pine Cone in the figure of Jacob."

¹¹⁰Ibid., fol. 359°: "Nell' Accesa Pina, che mando fuor'odore, e frutto, medito Christo, com'Iddio, et huomo; e nel fuoco considero Iddio; poiche dice il Profeta, 'Ignis est Deus.'" I do not find this statement per se among the prophets, though cf. Isaiah 30:27; it may also be an irreverent inversion of "God is a consuming fire," as in Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29.

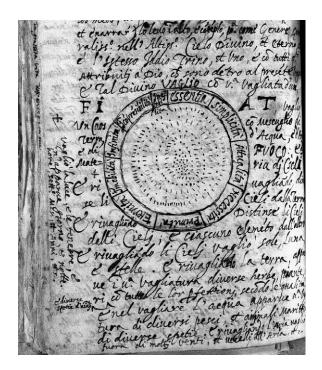


FIGURE 3. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 345°.

these academy emblems and the common knowledge that they all had secular connotations, these conflations of material objects with the most sacred figures of the Christian faith are harshly irreverent.

Aside from this assault on the sacred, however, there is also a revolt against the ascetic. During his review of the Sieve, Brother A enumerates the "seven notable aspects of the art of serving God well" and, in good scholastic fashion, adjoins "nine considerations and conditions." His rigorous spiritual regimen includes the advice that a proper religious life entails a recognition of the vile and transitory nature of worldly life and a willingness to endure the contempt and suffering that Christ experienced. This *contemptus mundi* grows all the more satirical as it waxes on at great length about the importance of self-hatred: "And should anyone exercise himself much in the above-stated rules and methods and not

 $^{^{111}\}mbox{Bid}$, fol. 328^{v} : "sette notabili dell'arte di ben servire à Dio"; "nove consideration, e conditioni."

feel that he is making headway, he ought to beware what can result from the common negligence of acquiring the proper hatred of oneself." Anyone who cannot acquire this is "not worthy of the name of Religious, or Christian, since he does not succeed in imitating Christ in such necessary work of hating oneself." This lengthy discourse that equates the love of God and the imitation of Christ with self-hatred underscores the harsh asceticism of a monastic regimen, one especially alien to the setting of an academic drinking party (where this comic treatise was likely conceived).

The monk's review of the "higher mysteries" of these emblems parodies the most sacred reaches of the Christian faith, whether it be the sacraments and altar, or Christ and God. His imaginative interpretations simultaneously signal several things. First, they mock the rigor and excess of scholastic exegesis, a target Erasmus found easy to hit in the *Praise of Folly* when he ridiculed theologians for manipulating scripture as if they were shaping wax to suit their needs. Second, the monk's interpretations directly contradict the intended messages of the emblems and mottoes, all of which allude chiefly to the process of cultivating "hidden" literary (or even sexual) talents, or "refining" cultural persona, or "sparking" literary efforts. Third, the monk's misguided attempts at flattery and conversion result, not in the pious elevation of the secular, but rather in a blasphemous lowering of the sacred. This conflation of the material and the spiritual comes to a boil in the descriptions of a meal at the dialogue's close.

5. A MEAL MANQUÉ

There is no definitive verdict in the emblem contest, but the monastic author includes some printed religious plates in the section on the Accesi, which would seem to give them the nod, especially as one of the plates, depicting St. Bernard carrying the myrrh, presumably emanated from Brother A's oratory of St. Bernardo. ¹¹⁵ Following his assessments of the three

¹¹²Ibid., fol. 334^r: "E s' alcuno s'esercitasse molto nelle sopradette regole, e modi, e non si sentisse far profitto; deve avertire, che potria procedere dall neglizenza, che usasse nel procurar d'acquistare l'odio proprio di se stesso."

¹¹³Ibid., fol. 335^r: "e chi non v'attende (dice un Dottore) ad acquistare questo odio santo non è degno di'esser nominato con nome di Religioso, nè di Christiano, poiche non viene ad immitar Christo in così necessaria opera d'odiar sestesso."

¹¹⁴Erasmus, 129.

¹¹⁵The discussion of the Accesi emblem rather abruptly ends (after a lengthy comparison of the properties of fire to divine love) and there are two-and-a-half blank pages at BCI, Y.II.23, fols. 367^r – 68^r , as if this section and a clear verdict were to be added later. As for the religious plates, see ibid., fol. 361^v .

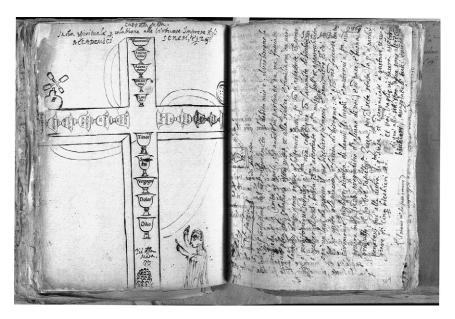


FIGURE 4. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fols. 368^{v} – 369^{r} .

emblems, the monk invites all to partake of some lunch, described as a "Spiritual Table for Lunch for the Virtuous Emblems of the Sienese Academies and for Everyone" (fig. 4). 116 In both Latin and Italian *table* (*mensa*) can mean both "table" (for a meal) and "altar," and the ambiguity is certainly relevant here, as elsewhere in the treatise. The diagram of the table in a cross is intended to be rotated to the left, so that the base would lie at the top of Brother A's invitation to the emblems on the facing page to drink and eat their fill. 117 On the two arms of the transverse are situated five goblets of wine each for the Intronati and the Travagliati, and on the upright ten goblets for the privileged Accesi, with whom Brother A once again here professes greater intimacy. These goblets were labeled with various spiritual qualities: thus, those for the Accesi, whose virtue ascends in flames,

¹¹⁶Ibid., fol. 368^v: "Mensa spirituale per colatione alle virtuose Imprese degli ACCADEMICI SENESI, e per tutti."

¹¹⁷The real author makes it appear that the putative author, Brother A, made a mistake here: thus the comment on the side (or, when turned, bottom) of ibid., fol. 369^r, that "somno m'ha fatto errare." More likely, however, the proper drawing of a cross, given its verticality, required a vertical placement on the facing page.

appropriately progress from negative or base emotions (such as grief or shame) to loftier ones (praise, reverence).

But this banquet is deficient. The emblems object that the invitation promised a little meal, but "you have not put anything on the table but wine." This disjunction between a spiritual and material meal becomes even more pronounced in Brother A's response. He urges them to go to the residence of the "Reverend and devout Fathers of the Company of Jesus" so that they "arrive promptly at the dinner hour, [for] here you will find their table prepared and full of all these dishes."119 The Jesuits' meal is similarly laid out on a table shaped as a cross (fig. 5), and the generic categories are identified on this cross as bread, meat, first and second condiments (on the upright), and wine and water (on the transverse). But the true components are identified in the theological fine print, which shows this meal to be wholly spiritual. The bread will be the "Triune God"; the meat will be the body of Christ in the Eucharist and the wine his blood (from the flagellation, the crown of thorns, the five wounds); the water, his sweat and tears. The irony becomes sharper with the identification of the second condiment, "in which you will have all the writings divine and human, sacred and profane, that are not prohibited by the Holy Roman Catholic Church." Not only then is the meal's seasoning allegorized as literature, but also it is restricted to writings that have not been prohibited, presumably alluding to the newly established Index of Forbidden Books. This "abundance of the Holy Ghost and of spiritual food, and of all the other above-named dishes, you will find on this table in the greatest abundance, healthier and sweeter than milk and honey, etc."121 In general, then, this Jesuit meal is an even bigger disappointment on the material front than the collation offered up by Brother A, which at least included actual wine. (As a former Acceso, this monk probably knew better than to allegorize the wine.) But both of these religious meals depict a spiritualized, ascetic ideal, an ideal even more naïve

¹¹⁸Ibid., fol. 369^v: "ne vi sete accorto, che l'invito fu à far [una poca di *inserted*] colatione? E sopra della mensa non ci havete posto altro, che vino." Possibly, the author intends here an ironic inversion of the call for utraquism, though reversing the terms by having the laity call for the bread rather than the wine (traditionally withheld from them).

¹¹⁹Ibid., fol. 370^r: "però inviatevi prestamente alli Reverendi, e devoti Padri della Compagnia del Giesu, ch'arrivarete à pontò [pronto?] all'hora della Cena, dove trovarete tal mensa loro tutta apparecchiata, e piena di tutte queste vivande."

¹²⁰Ibid.: "Nel 2° condimento haverete per cibo tutte le scritture divine, et humane, sacre, & profane non proibite dalla Santa Chiesa Romana."

¹²¹Ibid: "E l'abundanza de' Spiriti Sancti e de' cibi spirituali, e di tutte le sopradette vivande sopra à tal mensa trovarete in grandissima abondanza, salutifere, e dolcissime super lac, e mel, etc."

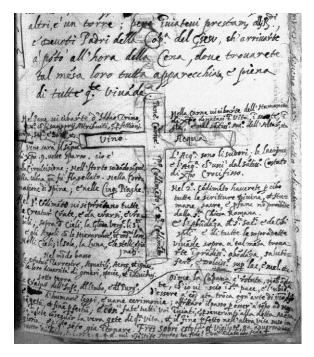


FIGURE 5. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 370^r.

as it is presented to the material emblems of wholly secular academies. Indeed, the treatise has come full circle from its opening invocation to academy members, to come eat and "become drunk" in a rite and a revelry that allowed for some ambiguity between a Eucharist and a bacchanalia. There is no ambiguity in this fully spiritualized Jesuit meal.

6. FAUX CONVERSIONS

The last part of the treatise reveals whether or not Brother A succeeds in his proselytizing, as the three emblems reconvene and, proclaiming themselves thirstier and hungrier than ever, decide to split up and visit respective religious groups to see if they will be admitted and seated, literally and metaphorically, at the table. The Accesi Pine Cone says that he will remain at San Martino and visit the oratory of San Bernardo, where one finds the "methods, and brief and easy rules for learning how to pray and to meditate on the Passion of Christ and on the compassion of his most pious mother; and to meditate on the Pater Noster, and the Ave Maria in a manner that few

learned [word concealed] know." The Sieve offers to visit San Giorgio, where the Congregation of the Chiodi is located. There he will learn the "Twelve Rules of Dying Well, which the father has mentioned as being very necessary to any person." There was, of course, the established tradition of the Ars moriendi, but caring for the dying was a particular concern of Matteo Guerra and the Chiodi. The dunce of the group, the Pumpkin, offers to go wherever the others want, so the Sieve assigns him to visit the Jesuits to partake of the meal described earlier.

The treatise visually reifies this planned conversion of the academies with semiotic conversions of the emblems and mottoes (fig. 6). Each of the three emblems is paired with a religious image that roughly mirrors its shape. The Pumpkin with its crossed pestles is paired with an urn surmounted by a woman holding a cross. This urn is labeled the "Vase of Wisdom" and, like the Pumpkin, carries the Intronati's motto MELIORA LATENT. The round Sieve is paired with a crucifix framed by a circle of phrases invoking the Travagliati whom Christ consoles with "Per me in purum." The Accesi's Pine Cone is coupled with Moses' burning bush, or lit tree, which "burns and is not extinguished" and bears their motto HINC ODOR ET FRUCTUS. The placement of the secular emblems at the top of the page and the religious transformations below is necessary for the narrative clarity of the story, as these academies are supposedly undergoing a conversion from the secular to the sacred. But in another gesture of orthodoxy, Brother A has written on the side of the page that "these emblems ought to be placed beneath, and the spiritual ones above." Such visual symbolism reinforces the aim of this fictive conversion narrative to subordinate the sacred to the secular. In figure 2, which depicts the emblems appearing at the cell of

122 Ibid., fol. 372 r: "io per la mia parte prometto aspettar qui in San Martino e veder d'entrare un paiolino nell'oratorio del quale ci ha parlato fratre And.co; e massimo ch'io intendo haverai [Brother And.co?] mandato modi, e Regole brevi, e facile per imparare à far'oratione, et à meditare la Passione di Christo e la compassione della Madre sua Pietosissima e che insegna à dire, e meditare il Paternostro, e l'Avemaria in una maniera ch' pochi dotti ______ la sappiano." This facetious depiction of the rules for prayer has a specific target that someone concealed with a strip of paper pasted onto the manuscript, here represented by underlining. This cover-up is indeed a rather delicious mystery: perhaps someone feared that the suppressed word might reveal too much about the source of the treatise, or enrage too much a particular target.

¹²³Ibid., fol. 372^v: "quelle 12. Regole del Ben Morire, che il Padre ci ha accennato esser molto necessario à qualsivoglia persona."

¹²⁴Tenenti, 62–120; McClure, 1998; on Guerra and the Chiodi's care of the sick and dying, see Daniele Nardi, esp. 25–32.

¹²⁵BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 373^r: "Queste imprese deveno stare di sotto, e di sopra le imprese spirituale."



FIGURE 6. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 373^r.

Brother A, the mottoes of the emblems are paired with lateral versions that emanate from the monastery: this left-right axis suggests a contest of equal forces. In figure 6, such parity gives way to hierarchy defined by a high-low axis: after the emblems are converted into religious symbols, Brother A instructs that the figures should be inverted with the spiritual images atop the secular ones.

In the closing section of the treatise the three emblems recount their experiences in visitations to their respective religious societies. Each of the three reports is illustrated with a picture that completes the process of the subordination of the secular to the religious. In the case of the Accesi Pine Cone, the emblem of the oval, lit Pine Cone, placed at the bottom, is dwarfed by an image of the Virgin (whose halo models the burning of the Pine Cone) and Christ ministering to the devoted, with the oval shape completed at the bottom by the same religious plate of St. Bernard carrying

a bundle of myrrh found earlier in the manuscript (fig. 7). Likewise, the Intronati's Pumpkin crowned with pestles is subordinated in size and placement to the emblem of the Jesuits, which resembles it with its circular shape topped with a cross; and the circular Sieve of the Travagliati is paired with a circular crown of thorns, placed slightly higher on the facing page (figs. 8–9). The three religious societies win the semiotic battle. But what about the battle of hearts and minds?

All three emblems report remarkable ecclesiastic privileges, spiritual practices, and pious acts with a sense of explicit awe and implicit irony. The awe reinforces the fictive narrative frame that the work was written by a monk; the irony reinforces the real author's view that these religious societies promise more than they deliver — or, in fact, promise little of interest to the lay mind. The Accesi Pine Cone reports that the officials at the oratory of San Bernardo at the Augustinian convent of San Martino showed him a "book of the Centurati of Father Saint Augustine, full of grace, treasures, and spiritual privileges, etc." ¹²⁷ In 1575 the Compagnia de' Centurati was recognized by Pope Gregory XIII, and three years later there appeared a massive Libro delle gratie et indulgenze (Book of Graces and Indulgences), detailing their statutes, duties, and many privileges. 128 The Pine Cone says that while he learned much at the oratory about the primacy of spiritual benefits over worldly ones, he especially heard about the "eternal goods" that can be acquired "by means of the privileges and merits of the Holy Centura of the most learned St. Augustine and of his mother, St. Monica, privileges that are such and so great that I by myself would not be able nor know how to explain to you." He suggests that perhaps they can all return and be given

¹²⁶Surrounding the plate at ibid., fol. 373°, is the passage "My beloved to me is a little bunch of myrrh; he will abide between my breasts" ("Fasciculus mirrhe dilectus meus mihi, inter ubera mea commorabitur"), from Song of Songs 1:12. This same plate (together with two others) appears earlier in the ms., at ibid., fol. 361°, and on the last page of the treatise, at ibid., fol. 377°; elsewhere, at ibid., fol. 367°, part of this passage — "inter ubera mea commorabitur," which seems to be the motto of the supposed author — also appears. Saint Bernard wrote eighty-six sermons on the Song of Songs, the forty-third of which dealt with this passage: see Bernard, 2:41–44. The presence of these plates and mottoes further suggests the association of Brother A with the oratory of San Bernardo. In fact, his possession of the plates might indicate the author's contacts with, or even membership in, this oratory.

¹²⁷BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 374^r: "un libro de Centurai del P. S. Ag.º pieno di grati[,] tesori, e privilegii spirituali, etc."

128 This Libro delle gratie et indulgenze was first published in Bologna in 1578. I have not been able to see this princeps edition, but I have seen in Siena's BCI an edition published in 1600 (Bologna) with the title Libro delle gratie, e privilegi, dalli sommi Pontefici concesse alli Cinturati della Beata Vergine di Consolatione, et del glorioso Padre S. Agostino, & S. Monica. This is the title that heads the second book of the volume at p387, as the volume's initial title page is missing.



FIGURE 7. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 373^v.

such a book so that "[they] could learn about the many hidden spiritual treasures, and then . . . hear how the blessed and mysterious Centura originated," and so on. ¹²⁹ As this book's section on the confraternity's "special indulgences and stations in diverse churches in Rome" runs to 116 pages in the 488-page book, there is an obvious irony in the Pine Cone's statement that he could not possibly replicate their many spiritual privileges. ¹³⁰

¹²⁹BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 374^r: "li beni, e riccheze, ch'ho inteso hoggi sono una gran caparra de beni eterni col mezo de privilegii, e meriti della Santa Centura del dottissimo Santo Agostino e della sua Madre Santa Monica, che tali, e tanti sono, ch'io per me non ve li potrei, nè saprei esplicare; ma ritornandovi un'altro giorno potremo farci dare un di quei libri, e quivi à pieno, e con piu agio, e consideratione potremo intendere animarum multa teshaura [thesaura] abscondita, e quivi sentiremo come la benedetta e misteriosa Centura hebbe origine da Dio."

¹³⁰See *Libro delle gratie*, 233–349, the section entitled "Queste son spetiali Induglenze, & stationi, in diversi Chiese di Roma, concesse per diversi sommi Pontifici oltra le sudette."



FIGURE 8. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fol. 374°.

As for his visit to the Jesuits, the Pumpkin (*Zucca*) reports that even if he could become all sugar (*zuccaro*) and honey he could hardly report the "unspeakable sweetness of that most holy name, to whom all celestial, worldly, and infernal persons kneel, of whom they have explained the grandest virtues and graces and most salutary and holy privileges." When the Sieve assigned this visit to him, he did so because the Pumpkin is "more tasty, corpulent, and retentive of good and flavorful dishes." Indeed, as the only one of the group who is himself edible and a keeper of seasoning, he is the most gustatory of the emblems. That makes it all the worse that he never

¹³¹BCI, Y.II.23, fol. 374^v: "l'indicibil dolcezza di quel santissimo nome, al quale si genuflettono tutte le persone celestum terresti, et infernali; del quale m' hanno esplicato grandissime virtù, gratie, e privilegii salutari, e santissimi."

¹³²Ibid., fol. 372^v: "voi, come piu saporosa, corpulente, e ritenitiva delle buone, e saporose vivande."



FIGURE 9. "Capricciosa contentione." Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. Y.II.23, fols. 375^{v} – 376^{r} .

gets to eat his meal: "And although I did not enter to taste that meal in any way, I was filled with an unspeakable sweetness and taste, and they have promised me a meal at another time." Although the slow Pumpkin does not see it, the Jesuits promise more than they actually deliver in tangible terms. Easily fooled, he says that he is "content to defer it to another time," when his fellow emblems can come. But for now, "for this first time I am content to have understood the unspeakable virtues, graces, powers, and mercies of the most holy name of Jesus," and he goes on to rehearse a litany of arguments about the merits and honor of loving Jesus. This love, however, can apparently best be gained and kept only through instruction, and he suggests that he and his fellow emblems return some other time to learn "the rule for acquiring that love." He ends his report with another reference to meditating on the passion of Christ and the compassion of Mary

¹³³Ibid., fol. 374^v: "e se bene non sono entrata à gustare di quella mensa ad ogni modo mi sono ripiena d'indicibili dolcezza, e gusto, et all mensa m' hanno promesso per un'altra volta."

¹³⁴ Ibid.: "contentata differirla ad altro tempo, che vi siate presenti ancor voi."

¹³⁵Ibid., fols. 374^v–375^r: "e per questa prima volta me sono contento d'havere intenso, l'indicibili virtù, gratie, potentie, e misericordie del santissimo nome di Giesu."

¹³⁶Ibid., fol. 375^r: "E la regola per acquistare tal'amore voglio che vi ritorniamo tutte insieme ad impararla."

"with unspeakable spiritual enjoyment for souls." Four times in his account the Pumpkin speaks of the "unspeakable" sweetness, virtue, and enjoyment he encountered during his trip to the Jesuits: the ineffable is unspeakable, perhaps as the meal is intangible. The satirical point is that the naïve Pumpkin seems to have been converted.

Finally, the Sieve reports his visit to the Company of the Chiodi, whose image of the nails of the cross is discussed in light of an image of the crown of thorns. He describes the Chiodi's "many devotions and frequency of work of corporeal and spiritual mercy." 138 As the Sieve's function is to sift grain, this metaphor underlies his understanding of their piety: "I would never have thought nor believed, my dear companions, such a grand and good sowing of pious and salutary works if I had not first with my Sieve sifted and conducted them to pure truth."139 So impressed was the Sieve, that he was tempted to remain there, but his affection toward his companions and his promise to return sent him back to report that they too can come and "participate in all these good things they do." And so it ends. All three emblems profess that they and their companions should return to their societies, to acquire the huge book of privileges accorded the Augustinians, to eat a meal never to be delivered by the Jesuits, and to partake of the many good deeds of the Chiodi. This is the point of Brother A's naïve proselytizing to these emblems and societies. The text mocks the presumption that Sienese academy members could possibly be tempted by these religious practices, rules, and privileges. The emblems may talk of coming back, but they never will. Nor will their members be made into Augustinians, Jesuits, or Chiodi.

7. A NICODEMIST PARODY

Who wrote this treatise, and why? Although the document is found among papers consigned to Bellisario Bulgarini and Scipione Bargagli, the hand

¹³⁷Ibid.: "e finalmente v'è da imparare molti modi di meditar la santissima passione di Christo, e la pietosissima compassione della sua Madre con indicibile spiritual frutto per l'anime."

¹³⁸Ibid., fol. 376^r: "molte devotioni, e frequenza d'opere di misericordia corporale, e spirituale."

¹³⁹Ibid.: "Non haverei mai pensato, nè creso (compagne mie carissime) tanto grande, e buona sementa di pie, e salutifere opere, s'io col mio vaglio non l'havesse prima molto ben Travagliate, e condotti in pura verità."

¹⁴⁰Ibid.: "per il che ancor voi altre possiate venir quivi à sentire, et à participare di tutti quei benni [beni], che vi si fanno."

does not appear to match either of theirs. All the signs point to the treatise as the product of the Accesi Academy during the period when the Sienese academies were officially closed down, and specifically between 1584 and 1593. The fictive framework of the "Fanciful Dispute" suggests that the earnest monk who is the supposed author of the dialogue was a former Acceso. Given, however, the author's familiarity with scholastic learning and theological exegesis, the opposite is likelier to be true: namely, that the real author was a disenchanted religious figure — whether monk, priest, or confraternity member — who was a current member of the Accesi. Indeed, the author's possession of the Bernard plates certainly suggests a former membership in, or close association with, Andromaco d'Elci's oratory of San Bernardo. ¹⁴¹

Whatever the identity and background of the anonymous author, the core meaning of this penetrable hoax lies in the tension generated by the two layers of the text. Thus the fictive author's naïveté and piety underscore the real author's cynicism and libertinism. Brother A's absurd attempt at spiritualizing emblems and mottoes that have only worldly meaning sets up the true author's sacrilege of materializing divine entities that should have only otherworldly meaning. Most importantly, this tension between the feigned purpose of the work, to spiritually correct and elevate worldly folk, and its real purpose, to mock such proselytizing, reveals this to be a clever dramatization of Nicodemism as experienced in Counter-Reformation Siena. Nicodemism — derived from Nicodemus, who hid his belief in Christ — took shape in the Reformation to refer often to closet Protestants who simulated Catholic orthodoxy. Calvin unwittingly canonized the term in his 1544 Excuse à messieurs les Nicomedites, in which he chides, for instance, those who feign belief for purposes of advancement, those intellectuals who are more Platonist than Christian, and those "Lucianists or Epicureans, that is to say all the disdainers of God, who, while appearing to adhere [to belief] in word, inside their hearts mock him and think him no more than a fable." 142 It is this last category that may apply to the

¹⁴¹If the author was indeed a former religious gone astray, he would join the ranks of such figures as ex-Capuchin Bernardino Ochino, ex-Carmelite Giulio Cesare Vanini, and ex-Lateranensi canon Ferrante Pallavacino.

¹⁴²Calvin, 141: "Lucianiques ou Epicuriens, cestadire tous contempteurs de Dieu, qui font semblant d'adherer à la parolle, et dedans leurs cueurs s'en moquent, et ne l'estiment non plus qu'une fable." See Ginzburg, 1970, 154–58; Williams, 603–04. For a critique of Ginzburg and a treatment of the complex history of the term *Nicodemism* — which Calvin himself did not fully embrace because of its negative characterization of Nicodemus — and its relationship to spiritualism and libertinism, see Eire; on Italian Nicodemism, see also Zagorin, 83–99.

anonymous author. The emblems profess their admiration for the religious societies they visit: they claim their intention to return to them. But the author makes clear that these sentiments are just simulations. The dialogue thus enacts the circumstances of the suppressed academies that would be silenced, chastened, and converted by the religious societies of the day. In the "Fanciful Dispute," Nicodemism thus receives a star turn as a satirical literary motif, demonstrating the meaninglessness of feigned and forced conformity. We cannot know whether or how much this work may have circulated among academy members, but the partial copy in another hand that follows the manuscript does suggest some interest in it. Was it passed around for laughs? If so, what exactly might readers have been laughing at?¹⁴³

It is possible, of course, that the author was a newly converted Protestant, since the Sienese academies, or at least the Intronati, had tilted with the Jesuits and Augustinians before. 144 Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in his campaign against gambling Matteo Guerra had raided the house of a follower of Bernardino Ochino, a former Capuchin whose apostasy was all the worse for his prominence as a popular preacher. 145 Several themes in the treatise sound Protestant notes, but some of these same themes — on the absurdities of scholastic theology, or the ceremonial inanities of the religious orders — had been forcefully voiced earlier by the Catholic Erasmus. Moreover, one fact might argue against mainstream Protestant hands: namely, the nature of the work's heresy, which is more akin to blasphemy in its insolent treatment of religious themes and symbols. Protestants, who could be censorious of Catholic festivals and play, would likely not have mocked iconic symbols of the faith, even if they did so by putting them in the mouth of a monk. 146 And in fact, considering the opening invocation to eat and drink that precedes the "Fanciful Dispute," as well as the popularity of emblem games in the academies, this treatise may well have arisen out of a spirited Accesi revelry enacting such a game. Rather than an earnest Protestant, then, this Nicodemist author was more likely a disenchanted

¹⁴³On the history of laughter, see Bakhtin, 59–144.

¹⁴⁴This conflict resulted in some notable exiles from the city, including Intronati members Fausto Sozzini and later, in 1569, Mino Celsi, whose work urging religious toleration was published in 1577. On Celsi, see Caponetto, 305, 375–76.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 100–03.

¹⁴⁶Bakhtin, 99–100, observes that Protestants could adapt the festive mode to their satires of Catholicism; Davis, 152–87, has shown that Protestants desecrated Catholic images, altars, and the Host in the religious riots in France — however, this is different from mocking God, Christ, and the Virgin. Furthermore, the iconoclastic tendencies of Protestantism likely would not be operative here, as the academies themselves were invested in their emblems and images.

believer, or a freethinker uninterested in religion whatsoever. If Nicodemism, in some of its faces at least, has been defined as a "prudential spiritualism," in this case it is closer to being a prudential secularism: prudential in its anonymity, secular in its contempt for constrained religious simulation. ¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is this contempt that drives the document's flirtation with atheism by trivializing the Virgin as a pine cone, Christ's humanity and divinity as pestles, and God the Creator as a sieve. Indeed, in this last image the materialist theme is most pronounced, as the sieve becomes the God of Genesis sifting out of primordial chaos the physical components of firmament and earth.

This confusion, or conflation, of materialism and spiritualism could have some roots in unbelief. The author's sacrilege of materialism is not of an unwitting nature, as was that of Carlo Ginzburg's simple Friulian miller, who garbled religious truths through a filter of oral peasant culture. 148 Rather, this materialism is intentional, and based on a clever misreading or allegorizing of religious texts and images. The author's use of the Song of Songs is especially ironic in this regard. Despite Bernard's mystical reading of this work in his sermons, it is obviously the biblical text most susceptible to a secular, erotic reading, and one that sixteenth-century French freethinkers would cite as evidence of scripture's human provenance. 149 Perhaps it is partly for this reason that our author tucks in some lines from the Song of Songs 2:4 and 5:1 in the invocation to take communion or perhaps get drunk in the opening document of the manuscript. Bernard's effort to allegorize this book is here undone by this insertion that would deallegorize it. As Andromaco d'Elci's oratory of San Bernardo was the likely target of the treatise, the author would seem to take the material battle right to the door of the "Bernabites." Together with the theme of the Jesuits' nonmaterial meal, this appropriation of the sensual Song of Songs suggests that the author is certainly toying with the theme of the carnal versus the spiritual. And if this materialism should not be classed with the more philosophical and scientific materialism that blossoms later, it should nonetheless be

¹⁴⁷Williams, 578, 604; Eire, 52.

¹⁴⁸Ginzburg, 1982.

¹⁴⁹See Herminjard, 8:230; Gauna, 74, for Antoine Fumée's ca. 1542 reply to Calvin's inquiry concerning French freethinkers (whom Fumée termed *achrists*), in which he paraphrases those who would say "'Ha! Such sacred scriptures, they say, which, crammed with so many shameless words and songs in the *Song of Songs*, are found culpable throughout.'"

¹⁵⁰In this case the author is speaking only to cognoscenti, as the lines from Song of Songs are not identified as such, but stand out only by their citation in Latin.

seen in the satirical context of Rabelais, whose celebration of gigantism, gargantuan meals, drunkenness, and corporeal King Lent all bespeak a revolt of the material.¹⁵¹

This material assault on the spiritual may well have been driven in part by a resentment on the part of the laity against the imposition of standards of piety by monastic orders and ascetic religious congregations. The rigors of the Counter-Reformation on religious life were evinced, for example, by the introduction of the Quarant'ore (Forty Hours), a lengthy devotion commemorating the time between Christ's burial and resurrection. 152 A letter from a Sienese Jesuit to a Roman colleague indicates that the Jesuits introduced the practice in Siena on Sundays and feast days beginning in 1563, and that by 1566 they had succeeded in spreading the practice to twenty-two other religious congregations and societies in the city. 153 Moreover, the visits by the emblems to the religious orders in the "Fanciful Dispute" parody the many methods and rules for praying, meditating, and loving God; the rules for dying; and the many privileges and indulgences afforded new religious societies such as the Augustinian Centurati. All of these objections, however, need not have been made by Protestants, but could also have been voiced by lay Catholics resentful of the Counter-Reformation asceticism being imposed upon them, or by nonbelievers resentful of the demands of religious conformity in general.

In fact, the battle lines perhaps may have been not so much Protestant versus Catholic as they were secular versus religious, and the issues may have been not so much theological as social and institutional. These new literary academies represented new corporate entities that stood outside of the Latin-based Church and university. They could have been all the more threatening to the traditional associative bodies of Catholic religious life — whether monastic orders or religious congregations or confraternities — in their institutional emulation of them. Long ago Paul Oskar Kristeller suggested that Renaissance academies mirrored features of the lay confraternity, especially in

¹⁵¹Aside from the images of food, drink, and the body that abound in *Gangantua and Pantagruel*, see Rabelais, 513–20, 672–74 (bks. 4.30–32, 5.29), for the three-chapter description of the anatomy of King Lent and the subsequent discussion of the season of Lent. On Rabelais, food, the bodily realm, and the festive tradition, see Bakhtin; Jeanneret, 99–106, 118–31.

¹⁵²On the Forty Hours, see Eisenbichler, 163–66.

¹⁵³Tacchi Venturi, vol. 1, pt. 1:229, 240; for an edition of this letter of 15 October 1566 (from Giovan Leonardo Ferrerio in Siena to Francesco Borgia in Rome), see ibid., pt. 2, 85–86.

the sixteenth century, when their institutional structure coalesced in corporate statutes, rosters, and routinized activities. 154 Moreover, the assumption of new names by members and the practice of common ownership and corporate productions further suggest the modeling of religious bodies. Such practices, however, should not be seen as travesties of religious life, but as necessary ritual transitions in a movement from spiritual associative forms to purely secular ones. 155 And while the institutional structure of religious groups and the academies may be parallel, the ideologies certainly differ: the "Fanciful Dispute" captures a moment in which these two visions of society contend. As academies began to proliferate, Counter-Reformation groups — obviously concerned about the threat posed by Protestant sects — were perhaps increasingly jealous of their monopoly on corporate forms. The academies, for their part, resented the Church's intrusions, and an assault on religious symbols and devotional practices would have been a logical vocabulary of revolt. Mary Douglas has argued that "social change must be expressed in a revolt against ritual. Ritual and antiritual are the idiom which natural systems of symbols afford for acting out theories of society." ¹⁵⁶ The conflict was thus fundamentally between secular groups protective of their purpose and identity, and Counter-Reformation religious groups nervous about any doctrinal threat to orthodoxy, or about any secular institutional threat to traditional forms of corporatism. Academy members wanted to be left alone. There was no reason that their groups could not peacefully coexist with Jesuits, Augustinians, and the Chiodi, rather than being transformed into them. This is the crux of the "Fanciful Dispute." While it is indeed a humorous contest between secular emblems for primacy (which contest, by the way, is never resolved), it is also a serious contest between secular and sacred associative forms (which is likewise left unsettled by the unconvincing conversions at the end). The revealing feature of this treatise is the degree of resentment at religious intrusion. So great was the author's ire, or so deep was his unbelief, that he was moved to compose a blasphemous text. 157 Never published, his underground work suggests the presence not of wrong belief, but of no belief — and well before the Enlightenment.

If the "Fanciful Dispute" was indeed written between 1584 and 1593, the contest between the academies and the established order certainly favored the latter at that time. By 1603, however, the academies were

¹⁵⁴Kristeller, esp. 114.

¹⁵⁵I am referring here to the sixteenth century; later, in the eighteenth-century Hell-Fire clubs, religious ritual would be parodied: see Lord.

¹⁵⁶ Douglas, 158.

¹⁵⁷On blasphemy as a response to an oppressive religious regime, see Flynn, esp. 55.

allowed to reopen, and the subsequent change in their tone is striking. In commemoration of this reopening, the Intronati staged a fawning homage to Medici Grand Duke Ferdinand I and his wife, and Scipione Bargagli composed a lengthy oration on the respectable contribution of his academy. 158 A couple of months later, a rival academy, the Filomati, staged a few nights of Carnival festivities meant to counter the Intronati's gala. In conscious opposition to the Intronati's depiction of their academy in Athenian terms, the Filomati framed theirs as a sober Spartan affair — ironic in the customarily decadent setting of Carnival. The Filomati's revelries were described by an anonymous observer and published in 1618. In large measure their parlor game consisted of displays and discussions of emblems, but the whole affair was very tame: mythological gods and images prevailed, and the tone was highly classical, safe, and rather cerebral. 159 This sedate, published battle of the academies, celebrating their renewal, stands in sharp contrast to the unpublished, heretical "Fanciful Dispute" of the preceding period. In fact, it serves as an establishment foil to the counter-establishment dialogue, with no whiff of matters religious or controversial.

Furthermore, the semiotic battle between the Intronati, Travagliati, and Accesi and the Jesuits, Chiodi, and Augustinians seems to arrive at a détente in this period. In 1629 an Intronati member named Alcibiades Lucarini published a book of emblems, the entire second part of which consists of "Spiritual, Moral, and Political Emblems with Expositions of Holy Scripture or of Other Approved and Eminent Authors." The careful avoidance of iconic religious symbols that Scipione Bargagli urged in the modern emblem world, and the flagrant violation of this proscription in the "Fanciful Dispute," is resolved with a complete and orthodox absorption of the sacred in Lucarini's emblem collection. Lucarini is rather reverential of

¹⁵⁸Academy of Intronati, 1611, 2:411–51. For Scipione Bargagli's *L'Oratione in lode* of the academy, see ibid., 452–535. In the latter, although it is intended as a well-heeled establishment praise of the academy, it is interesting that Scipione at ibid., 480–81, uses the term *capricciosi* (as in "Capricciosa contentione") when referring to the Intronati's sometimes iconoclastic concepts — "belli, strani, e capricciosi concetti contra la comune oppinione ordenariamente portati" — in their book of *Paradoxes*.

¹⁵⁹For a discussion and modern edition of this *Delle feste fatte da' Filomati*, *lettera scritta dal S. N. N. al Signor N. N.*, see Quiviger.

¹⁶⁰See Lucarini ("L'Imprese spirituali, morali, & politiche, con espositione della Scrittura Sacra, ò d'altri autori approvati, & eminenti"). The first part of the collection consists of emblems of well-known personages both secular and ecclesiastical. A projected third part, which never appeared, was to include those emblems emanating from parties, weddings, masquerades, and games: see ibid., [pt. 1]:+2.

the Jesuits in his work, praising Scipione Bargagli's early education by the "excellent masters of the Society of Jesus." He also includes emblems of various Jesuits, Mary Magdalen, Pope Gregory VII, and even Matteo Guerra, the founder of the Confraternity of the Chiodi. 162

This rapprochement may have reflected a sense of gratitude that the forces of the Florentine grand dukes and the Counter-Reformation had finally loosened the reins, just as the 1603-04 Intronati and Filomati celebrations could show how well-behaved and bland the Sienese academies could be. And if the academies, in this instance at least, became more receptive to the Jesuits, the latter, in one sense, returned the favor. Their interest in emblems, briefly exemplified in Lucarini's book, was ongoing in the early modern period, as countless collections were published by Jesuits: emblem competitions even figured in the activities of Jesuit schools, just as they had in the parlor-game book of Girolamo Bargagli. 163 This Jesuit embrace of emblems that cultivate an ambiguity of image and motto shows an appropriation of a predominantly secular form of public identity, one different from the traditional, static iconography of Christian tradition. If the Jesuits joined the opposition, the Church did not give up the battle concerning images, as later struggles between the Church and the Freemasons doubtlessly stemmed in part from the Church's concerns about unregulated mystical symbols and competing associative loyalties. 164 As for Siena, the early modern battle between the academies and the Jesuits was by no means at an end. In the early eighteenth century the prominent Intronati member Girolamo Gigli was a tireless critic of the Jesuits, mocking their hypocrisy and

¹⁶¹Ibid., [pt. 1]:4, ++4.

¹⁶²Ibid., pt. 2:130–31, 134–35, 159. Lucarini's collection even extends to religious creeds, concepts, and divine figures themselves, such as "Twelve Articles, concerning the principal articles of our Faith," including the "Believe in the God the Father," which has the emblem of the sun and the motto "Unique, and Author of all things" (pt. 2:162), and one "And in Jesus Christ" (pt. 2:163), etc., and even one on "Salutary Fasting" (pt. 2:206). On the rise of religious emblems in the seventeenth century, see Caldwell, 254–74.

¹⁶³Dimler, 1, estimates that the number of Jesuit editions in the *Corpus Librorum Emblematum* to be in the range of 1600 (around 500 of which were first editions). Ibid., 55–72 (quotation at 61), also shows how the composition of emblems was part of the study of rhetoric in Jesuit education, and that in the 1559 *Ratio studiorum* one of the rules for teaching in the lower school included the following: "Emblematic compositions and poems that are to be displayed on the greater feast days should be read by two judges appointed by the rector," which sounds somewhat like a recreational competition.

¹⁶⁴On Freemasonry and the Enlightenment, see Jacob.

educational models in numerous comic works, a posture that cost him his chair in eloquence at the University of Siena in 1709. 165

8. CONCLUSION

As for the semiotic battle in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the "Fanciful Dispute" shows how serious a contest of images could be. Already in 1562, Girolamo Bargagli wrote of the Church's suspicion of talk of symbols. In the following decade his brother Scipione warned readers that modern emblems should deal not with theological matters, but with individual attributes and personality traits. Italian emblems were adapted from the aristocratic and military realm when the Italians borrowed them from the invading French and Spanish, and in Italian hands they became forceful statements of identity for nonnoble, nonmilitary, and even female self-fashioning. The "Fanciful Dispute" shows that this experimentation with a new public identity could be adapted to collective bodies as well. By personifying the three academies with talking emblems, the author allowed these new groups to speak as one, defining their own cultural realm in the most worldly, material, and visual terms.

Certainly, this text adds new evidence for the debate on the nature of heterodoxy and unbelief in the sixteenth century. In his famous but flawed work on Rabelais, Lucien Febvre argues that atheism was not a plausible intellectual position before the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because the scientific base was lacking to provide an alternative to a divinely created world. Even if one were to accept this as a precondition for unbelief — and the views of Protagoras, to name one from the ancient world, would certainly belie such a prerequisite — it would apply only to a positive philosophical atheism, but would not account for an agnostic

¹⁶⁵His ousting came the year after the appearance of his *Don Pilone*, which mocked a Jesuit archetype: see Gigli, 1963, 261–62. The Jesuits unsuccessfully tried to block publication of his *La sorellina di don Pilone*, which appeared in 1712. His *Il seminario degli affetti ovvero l'ipocrisia* ridiculed the Jesuit education of the city's Collegio Tolomei and his *Collegio Petroniano delle balie latine* of 1719 mocked the curriculum in the Jesuit's *ratio studiorum*. See Gigli, 1719, 1865, and 1963; see also L. Bianchi's biography in Gigli, 1865, vii–xxxiv, 99n1; Spera.

¹⁶⁶Ruscelli, 61^v, discusses how the tradition of liveries was far older in France and Spain, and only in recent times flowered in Italy in jousts and masquerades. See also G. Bargagli, 1982, 166n343. On emblems and the meaning of naming ceremonies, see van Gennep, 101–02. On the emergence of female emblems, see S. Bargagli, 1594, 432–71.

¹⁶⁷Febvre. For a general survey of the historiography of early modern atheism, including Febvre's overstated refutation of Abel Lefranc's assessment of Rabelais, see Gauna, 15–107; Zagorin, 289–91.

realm of doubt. An interesting bit of testimony of sixteenth-century unbelief comes from Lelio Sozzini. In a letter to Calvin in May 1549, Sozzini, recently exiled in Zurich, raised certain issues relating to Nicodemist practices: for example, whether one of the reform party may marry a Catholic, honor Catholic baptism, or attend Mass. In discussing the last of these, Sozzini simulates what such a generic pretender might say: that an appearance at Mass is merely perfunctory, social, and that "indeed, my associates would laugh to discover that I truly have even minimal faith in such nonsense; they are so well educated that there are few who believe that God exists."168 Sozzini's comment certainly suggests that some among the intelligentsia were unbelievers. His nephew Fausto, friend of Girolamo Bargagli and later himself an exile, wrote a now-lost work called Contra atheos, which, at least in its title, implies the existence of a population of freethinkers. 169 And while scholars have shown that the term freethinker could be elastically applied to all manner of deviants and libertines, figures such as Giulio Cesare Vanini, executed in 1619, prove that the term had some precise applicability well before the Enlightenment. 170

On the continuum of heresy from mainstream Lutheranism, to the radical rationalism Delio Cantimori finds to be a distinctive feature in Italian heretics, to freethinking atheism, we should perhaps situate the author of the "Fanciful Dispute" somewhere between the second and third categories. ¹⁷¹ As such, the work offers us reason to challenge Febvre's assumptions about the origins of unbelief. In fact, considering the implicit links between debauchery and blasphemy in the text, it anticipates a pattern that fully flowered in the Enlightenment Hell-Fire clubs, in which drink, lewdness, and blasphemy conspired. ¹⁷² And while it may have required the

¹⁶⁸Sozzini, 136: "Quin imo riderent socii, si possent animadvertere ex corde vel minimam fidem talibus nugis me habere; adeo bene instituti ut pauci sint qui vel Deum esse habeant persuasum." Cf. Lazzaro, 129; Davidson, 55.

¹⁶⁹Davidson, 58n13.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 73–74; on Vanini's thought, see also Vasoli. Gauna, 85, cites Calvin's statement in his *Tractatus de scandalis*, which condemns blasphemers who carouse and mock religion for fun, claiming that "all religions have been forged in the minds of men" and that "hope of eternal life is for the amusement of idiots."

¹⁷¹In his assessment of Italian heresy, Cantimori, 29, remarks "in the doctrines of the Italian heretics of the Cinquecento, we find interwoven one with another anti-Trinitarian ideas, Neoplatonic conceptions, Anabaptist doctrines, rationalist and moral aspirations of a humanistic character." See also Martin, esp. 3–9, 232.

¹⁷²For a royal proclamation (and proposed bill in the House of Commons) in England in 1721 that targeted "certain scandalous Clubs or Societies of young Persons who meet together, and in the most impious and blasphemous Manner, insult the most sacred Principles of Holy Religion, [and] affront Almighty God himself," see Lord, 45.

assumptions of seventeenth-century science and eighteenth-century reason to inspire the flagrant blasphemy reported to occur in these clubs, the seeds of the Enlightenment may have already been present in Cinquecento academies, albeit with a gentler, more ironic, agnostic tone. In this regard, the "Fanciful Dispute" bespeaks both faces of libertinism: doctrinal freethinking and behavioral free-living. 173 Moreover, the conflict depicted in the dialogue anticipates the battle Edward Muir finds somewhat later in Venice, where Ferrante Pallavicino — a former Lateranensi canon who satirized the papacy and the Jesuits and who defended naturalism — paid with his life in 1644. 174 But, whereas, Muir argues, in Venice a climate of relative freedom nourished the writings of Pallavicino, in Siena the circumstances of repression provoked the animus of the earlier "Fanciful Dispute."175 And likely because of these constraints its author realized that discretion (that is, anonymity) is the better part of valor. But if he did not speak under his own name, he did allow the Sienese academies to speak in their own voice. The message to their religious counterparts was clear. Academies are for writing poetry, staging plays, drinking, eating, playing emblem games, and telling jokes. Leave us alone, they seem to say, in this anonymous bid for a broader secular space — and perhaps even a zone of unbelief — in a landscape of confessional strife.

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¹⁷³On "libertinage d'esprit" and "libertinage de moeurs," see Gauna, 22.

¹⁷⁴Muir, 63–107; on the overlap of libertinism and Nicodemism and on the works of Pallavicino, see Varese.

¹⁷⁵Cf. Rowland, 46–53, 151–52, who situates the hoax perpetrated by Curzio Inghirami in the 1630s and '40s — the "scarith" of Scornello — in the context of the prosecution of Galileo. On the motives, methods, and perpetrators of forgeries and hoaxes generally, see ibid.; Grafton.

Appendix: The Closing of the Sienese Academies

The specific terms and motives for the closing of the academies (see nn41-42) are elusive. Cléder, lviii, suggests that there was an "interdiction" in 1568 that halted meetings of the academies. Many other scholars have repeated this, such as Petracchi Costantini, 48, who remarks that "in 1568, in fact, we see all of the academies of Siena inexorably struck by a decree of interdiction." I have not, however, found evidence of an actual decree issued by the Medici grand dukes in Cantini's Legislazione toscana, though this does not rule out an informally conveyed wish or a locally imposed decree by Medici surrogates. Petracchi Costantini, 47-48, has shown that there are also disagreements as to when the closing of the Intronati began: some suggest 1563 because of the Inquisition, some 1565 because of failing interest, and the majority 1568 because of political reasons. In the case of the Intronati, as the letter of Girolamo Bargagli (see n23 above) reveals, a climate of repression was already in evidence by 1562, and in April of 1563 Fausto Sozzini wrote to Bargagli (from exile), lamenting that "our Accademia is thus in smoke": cited in Cantù, 2:494. Gigli, 1854, 1:278, dates the closing of the academies to 1563 in the general context of the fall of the republic, and says that "all the most celebrated assemblies in Siena suspended meetings and this applied even to the Confraternity of the Madonna sotto lo Spedale and other associations, in order to secure from any suspicion the jealousy of the new principality." The problem with this date, however, is that Girolamo Bargagli likely wrote his Dialogo de' giuochi in the summer of 1563 and dedicated it to Francesco de' Medici's sister Isabella at Carnival in 1564 (G. Bargagli, 1982, 48n16); he makes no mention of a closing in the Dialogo and his dedication to Isabella would be a most unlikely dedication if the Intronati were already shut down. As for the Rozzi, Uberto Benvoglienti in a letter of 1712 suggests that they were closed from 1539 until 1544 "by order of the Commune of Siena, and then in 1568 it was ordered by the Medici that this academy be closed" (BCI, C.IV.27, 428 [alternate pagination 215^v]). Most moderns scholars — such as Iacometti, 7; Riccò, 140; Catoni, 1996, 142; De Gregorio, 31; Quiviger, 209 — accept 1568 as the operative date of the closing of the academies in accordance with Cléder; Mazzi, 1:92-93. And the statement from the Rozzi records of a shuttering from 1568 to 1603 and of the reopening of the Intronati in that year suggests these dates as the most likely. Even though the disappearance of academies in this period was apparently not absolute, as evidenced by the formation of the Filomati ca. 1580 (Mazzi, 2:362-64), the first public celebration of this academy appears to have been in 1604 on the heels of the 1603 reopening celebration of the Intronati (Quiviger, 209). And as for the motives of a Medici crackdown in the late 1560s, both Cosimo and his coregent Francesco, as my discussion above shows, were quite concerned with the control of heresy in this period.

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