Dosso Dossi, Garofalo, and the Costabili Polyptych: Imaging Spiritual Authority

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In the 1568 edition of his Life of the Ferrarese painter Benvenuto Tisi, called Garofalo (ca. 1476 or 1481–1559), Giorgio Vasari provides a detailed account of the artist’s education and early career, including specific information on the genesis of the extraordinary Costabili polyptych (with frame, 51 feet 6 inches by 18 feet 11 inches, or 9.6 by 5.8 meters), now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Ferrara (Fig. 1). The dating of the Costabili polyptych, which Garofalo executed in collaboration with the artist Giovanni di Niccolò de Luteri, known as Dosso Dossi (ca. 1486—1542), lies at the center of a controversy. One art historian has recently stated that the entire chronology of northern Italian painting in the early sixteenth century hinges on knowing precisely when these two artists achieved the stylistic innovations exhibited by the polyptych—from the textural complexities to the embodiment of bodily form. Since questions of artistic choice have direct bearing on the experience and historical status of the image, Vasari’s early reception of the Costabili polyptych is primary in the establishment of a contextual framework. It is important to note that Vasari met Garofalo personally during his two visits to Ferrara between 1540 and 1542, gaining firsthand information on the artist’s work. Vasari relates that Garofalo had been called back to Ferrara from his sojourn in Rome, where he had studied under Raphael, in order to decorate a small chapel in the ducal castle (this probably occurred toward the end of 1512). Once he had completed this project (“[l]a quale finita”), the artist took up the commission to paint the polyptych for Antonio Costabili (ca. 1450–1527), the chief magistrate (giudice) of the communal magistracy known as the Dodici Savi of Ferrara. Only after fulfilling his obligations for the giudice’s polyptych (”[l]a quale finita”) did Garofalo begin work on several other pressing commissions in the city, including an altarpiece for the church of S. Spirito, which Vasari describes as follows: “the Virgin in the air with the Child in her arms, and below some other figures.” This is unquestionably Garofalo’s celebrated Suxena Altarpiece, now also in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Ferrara, which has a provenance from S. Spirito, in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception patronized by the Suxena family of Ferrara (Fig. 2). It is well known that Garofalo imitated the composition of Raphael’s Madonna di Foligno of 1512 for his own altarpiece, which shows the Virgin and Child appearing in the clouds above Saints Jerome and Francis and two donors, who kneel in worship before a magnificent landscape. Garofalo dated the Suxena Altarpiece December 1514—a date that strongly implies the Costabili polyptych was completed by the end of that year.

Vasari’s chronology agrees with a series of payments to Garofalo and Dosso recorded in the municipal ledger, or zornale, of the Commune of Ferrara (now housed in the Archivio di Stato of Ferrara); these payments have been published recently by Adriano Franceschini. The first document, dated July 11, 1513, indicates that Antonio Costabili had commissioned Dosso and Garofalo to paint a polyptych for the high altar of the church of S. Andrea in Ferrara (now in ruins), at that time occupied by the Eremitani friars of the Augustinian order. According to the initial payment, work was already in progress on the altarpiece (“l’imposta che depinzono”). A reimbursement to the artists on August 6, 1513, for the purchase of costly pigments in Venice, and interim payments on November 15 and 21 totaling 210 lire marchesane, suggest that Dosso and Garofalo worked continuously and closely together on the enormous Costabili polyptych. Early sources confirm that Costabili possessed the patronage rights for the high altar and chancel of S. Andrea, his parish church, and that his altarpiece stood in the back of the chancel raised above the choir stalls. Unfortunately, the municipal registers for 1514 and the following years are largely missing from the archives, thereby leaving Vasari’s implicit date of completion for this imposing work open to question.

The Costabili polyptych still retains its original frame, albeit reconstructed after suffering severe damage during World War II. The towering central panel is set within a classical arch and shows the Virgin and Child enthroned, with the infant Saint John the Baptist to one side. A number of saints gather at the foot of the throne: those securely identifiable are Saint Andrew, the patron saint of the church, who bears a cross and gestures toward the Virgin; Saint Jerome, who holds an open book while resting his foot on a skull; and the youthful John the Evangelist, who, sitting cross-legged on the steps of the Virgin’s throne, turns to address her as he pauses from writing his Gospel. The angels who float in the clouds above support the luxurious tapestry adorning the Madonna’s high-backed throne, while several spiritelli, in a motif echoed in the Suxena Altarpiece, display folios with citations from the Vulgate Book of Isaiah 9:6 written in bold majuscules: DEUS FORTIS; PRINCEPS FACIS. These phrases are unprecedented in Ferrarese painting, and a major part of this study will be devoted to determining their meaning within the framework of the polyptych. A pronounced display of chiaroscuro enshrouds the entire composition, and its dramatic effect is especially prominent in the lower side panels depicting Saints George, the patron saint of Ferrara, and Sebastian, another Christian soldier. In the spandrel above Saint George sits Saint Augustin, who appears as a hermit dressed in the habit of the Eremitani (also known as the Austin friars), wearing a scapular, his bishop’s miter resting at his feet. While the saint’s dress denotes the eremitic character of the order of friars at S. Andrea, a remarkable and unexampled feature is the fiery red halo shining around Augustine’s head. Equally arresting is the rain of fire shooting from within the interior of the cell that the saint points to urgently. The significance of these details has never been fully explained and demands.
1 Dosso Dossi and Garofalo, Costabili polyptych. Ferrara, Pinacoteca Nazionale (photo: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Bologna)
attention. In the pendant panel, Saint Ambrose sits in contemplation with one hand at his breast and a manuscript resting on his lap. The oculus windows depicted in each of their two cells illuminate the figures with an otherworldly silvery light. The pediment contains an image of the Risen Christ emerging triumphantly from his tomb, another rare subject for the pinnacle of an altarpiece that deserves closer scrutiny.

The State of the Question
Very few paintings by Dosso can be securely dated, and it is important to note that the zornale documents anticipate the
conventional dating of the Costabili polyptych, based on stylistic arguments, by more than ten years.14 Previously, Alessandra Pattanaro’s important discovery of Costabili’s testament, dated July 30, 1527, which mentions the Costabili polyptych as extant, led scholars to all but anchor its date to about 1523-24 and assert that the commission arose in the context of the aging patron’s funerary plans.15 Alessandro Ballarin, who dismissed Vasari’s chronology, compared the monumental portrayal of the saintly body to such works as Dosso’s Saint Sebastian Altarpiece (Fig. 3), commissioned in 1518 and installed in 1522 in the cathedral in Modena, and the composition of the central panel to Garofalo’s Madonna Enthroned with Saints, painted in 1524 for the high altar of the church of S. Silvestro in Ferrara, and now in the cathedral.16 Judgments on the division of labor have more or less followed Roberto Longhi, who attributed to Dosso the panels of Saints George and Augustine, as well as the Risen Christ, the Madonna and Child, the saint sitting on the steps, and those standing to the right of the throne.17 Debate has arisen over the artist responsible for executing the panel of Saint Ambrose, yet it appears that Garofalo depicted this figure, along with the angels, John the Baptist, and the saints to the left of the throne in the central panel, as well as the panel of Saint Sebastian.18 In their recent reconstruction of Dosso’s chronology, Peter Humfrey and Mauro Lucco have endorsed Franceschini’s dating of the polyptych’s completion to 1514, citing artistic precedents in the works of Titian, Giorgione, and especially Raphael’s early Roman works.19 Despite the lack of documentary evidence, the authors suggested that Dosso himself had visited Rome prior to working on the polyptych, and Humfrey even entertained the idea that Dosso had already begun painting the altarpiece by late 1512.20 However, in response to the reopened question of date, Andrea de Marchi and Luisa Ciammitti, among others, have deemed the altarpiece an unorthodox collaboration resulting from two distinct campaigns, with Dosso extensively repainting and “transforming” Garofalo’s passages some years after 1513–14.21 The impetus behind this evaluation comes from the detailed photography complemented by an examination report on the Costabili polyptych published by Vincenzo Gheroldi.22 The photographs show very impressionistic brushstrokes over more tightly controlled areas of modeling and detail, which are most prominent in the highlights for the hair of the angels and spiritelli in the central panel (Fig. 4), and on the face and robe (especially the knee) of Saint Ambrose (Fig. 5). These “gestures of sprezzatura” are attributed to the hand of Dosso, who presumably, after a period of interruption, completed his panels and altered the work of Garofalo in a style that is seen to comply with the pictorial advancements made by Romanino and Parmigianino in the 1520s.

These observations have already made an impact on the scholarship of Ferrarese painting, but they require qualification because not enough emphasis is placed on the viewpoint of the beholder. If we refrain from a microscopic viewing of the work and instead look at the polyptych in its entirety and consider its original setting, these broad tonal and textural juxtapositions and evocative displays of surface description may be seen as sophisticated technical solutions for achieving balanced perspective and proper foreshortening. Because the Costabili polyptych is so immense and would have been viewed at a considerable distance, it posed a formidable optical and artistic challenge. Without these exaggerated and somewhat untamed gestures in the highlights, which resemble the bold and dazzling manipulation of paint exhibited by Titian’s late paintings, the entire perspective of the altarpiece (based on an implied light source coming from the right) would collapse and the work would be visually incoherent. Perspective, as Erwin Panofsky teaches us, privileges the viewer, enabling the readability and experience of the image as composition and “symbolic form.”23 Admittedly, Dosso’s vocabulary is innovative and dramatic, especially regarding the punctuation of chiaroscuro and exuberant touches of color for the panels of Saints George and Augustine. Yet the assumption that Dosso painted over Garofalo’s work after a considerable hiatus (especially regarding the splashes of yellow highlight for the hair of the spiritelli and the traces of impasto) in order to “modernize” the polyptych fails to grasp Dosso’s working methods and the intention behind such exaggerated brushstrokes. In Dosso’s stunning Virgin and Child with Saints George and Michael Archangel (Galleria Estense, Modena) of about 1519, the artist applied the highlights on the wings and hair of the Archangel Michael with modulated strokes of iridescent hues over more finely articulated passages (Fig. 6). The commission for this undated altarpiece,
which has a provenance from S. Agostino in Modena, was probably awarded to the artist by the Eremitani friars of S. Agostino based on their knowledge of Dosso’s work for the Ferrarese Eremitani. The pictorial effect resembles that of the Costabili polyptych, though less exaggerated since the Modenese altarpiece is significantly smaller (111 1/2 by 69 3/4 inches, or 283 by 177 centimeters). Such overwrought artifice (contemporary to the rest of the composition) was necessary in order to achieve the proper perspective and modeling with the available lighting and the given viewpoint of the beholder.

Alternatively, there is no reason to assume that the highlights and impasto in question are not by Garofalo himself, who could have adjusted his technique according to the visual demands of this monumental work and yet maintained a coherency with Dosso’s manner. We can detect a loosening of the brush in some of Garofalo’s other paintings, notably in the drapery and visually resonant landscape of the Suxena Altarpiece. In other words, either artist could have—and, indeed, must have—painted these passages of sprezzatura for the altarpiece to be legible from a distance. No historian prior to the publication of Gheroldi’s photographs in 1998 deemed
the altarpiece as uneven or inconsistent in its execution.\textsuperscript{25} Ironically enough, debate continues over the division of labor and the artist responsible for the design of the central panel.\textsuperscript{26} Furthermore, from a technical point of view, there is no evidence that would impinge on the dating of the Costabili polyptych to 1513–14. Since no cross sections of pigment were taken from the polyptych, Gheroldi could not determine from the numerous infrared reflectographs whether the vigorous brushstrokes were applied contemporaneously or after the paint had dried.\textsuperscript{27} Nor, surprisingly, is there any mention of the evaluation made in 1782 by Cesare Cittadella, who reported that the polyptych had been poorly cleaned and retouched in the areas of shading by imprudent restorers, which may account for certain inconsistencies in the paint layers or the small traces of pigment above areas of cracking.\textsuperscript{28} It is also worth observing that Garofalo imitated the ornamental throne and shape of the grand steps of the Costabili polyptych in his \textit{Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Lazarus and Job} (Pinacoteca Civica, Argenta), which the artist painted for the church of the Madonna della Celletta in Argenta and dated October 21, 1513 (Fig. 7).\textsuperscript{29}

As Franceschini himself duly noted, the Costabili polyptych was more than likely completed by 1514 because both Dosso and Garofalo enjoyed subsequent patronage from within the
Eremitani community and from Antonio Costabili. Would not the patron and the friars first have ensured that the artists satisfied their obligations for what Francesco Scannelli judged to be one of the greatest accomplishments of Emilian art before allocating or overseeing other commissions of the artists? Documents record that by September 1517, Garofalo had completed his Saint William Altarpiece (National Gallery, London), for which he received his final payments from the Franciscan sisters of S. Guglielmo in Ferrara only after Costabili intervened on the artist’s behalf. There is evidence that Costabili also intervened in a compensatory dispute between Garofalo and the Eremitani regarding the artist’s fresco of the Allegory of the Crucifixion (1523), executed for the refectory of S. Andrea (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara). New documents reveal, furthermore, that Garofalo, together with the painter Tommaso da Carpi, decorated a chapel dedicated to the Crucifixion and the Madonna in S. Andrea in 1524.

More is at stake concerning the 1513 commission for the Costabili polypych than the reconstruction of a stylistic chronology for both Dosso and Garofalo and defining their artistic sources. The debate involves radically different and incompatible interpretations of this image in relation to its religious, civic, and historical context if one dates the work to the mid-1520s as opposed to 1513–14. Thus, the state of the question on the Costabili polypych is really one of methodological inquiry. There has yet to be a focused or convincing attempt to consider why two artists working in Ferrara in the early sixteenth century would have adopted such a striking
pictorial vocabulary. What are the cultural function and rhetorical effect of their artistic performance? Moreover, what would a clerical or lay audience expect from the high altarpiece of S. Andrea in 1513 as opposed to the mid-1520s? Among these unresolved questions lies a certainty: the zornale documents clearly state that work on the Costabili polyptych was initiated in 1513, meaning that the carpentry was already designed and an iconography already designated. Even though the painters’ discovery of visible forms through which to express the message of the polyptych is itself a process of invention, their figures and stylistic devices must have enhanced the subject matter that was negotiated beforehand and dictated to them by the patron and, as we shall see, the friars of S. Andrea. Significantly, the technical evidence does not reveal any trace of alterations to the subject matter.

Another point to consider is that the patron’s family chapel, dedicated to the Virgin and dating back to the fourteenth century, had no explicit funerary function prior to 1527. This calls into question previous assumptions about the motivation underlying the patron’s commission. Surely Costabili envisioned his polyptych as a lavish gift to the friars in the hopes of securing future burial rights at the high altar for himself, his descendants, and the remains of his ancestors, who were buried in other churches throughout the city, as his testament specifies.

On the other hand, the unprecedented inscriptions from the Book of Isaiah, the prominent figure of the Risen Christ in the pediment, and the singular appearance of Saint Augustine are testimonies to other initiatives and interests that an explanation of the work solely in terms of a sepulchral function would not allow us to specify. Therefore, any investigation into the altarpiece’s meaning must come to grips with the historical circumstances surrounding its commission: this would be Ferrara’s involvement in the Cambrai Wars.

Duke Alfonso I d’Este, Antonio Costabili, and the Cambrai Wars

On April 19, 1509, Pope Julius II made Alfonso I d’Este (1476–1534, duke from 1505) gonfaloniere della Chiesa (defender of the papal standard), enlisting him in the Anti-Venetian League of Cambrai (created December 10, 1508) along with the French king and the Holy Roman emperor. The League of Cambrai aimed to curtail Venice’s aggressive territorial expansion and monopolization of the trade routes of the Adriatic Sea. The duke of Ferrara played a pivotal role in the resulting war against Venice; his decisive victory over the Republic of Venice’s naval forces at the Battle of Polesella on December 22, 1509, compelled the latter to sign a peace agreement in February 1510 favorable to Julius II. For all Alfonso’s military efforts in the service of the papacy, the duke irritated the pope by consolidating his alliance with the French, who had been a perennial threat to the balance of power in Italy since their capture of Milan in 1499. Julius II also litigated with Alfonso over a license to produce salt in the Papal States, sending his ambassador to deal specifically with Antonio Costabili, a long-trusted diplomat of the Este. Furthermore, notwithstanding the Venetian surrender, Alfonso continued his attacks on the Republic of Venice in order to secure his patrimony in the Polesine that he had recently regained. Infuriated by Alfonso’s actions, the pope turned against him by forming an alliance with the Venetians, and with an appeal to Divine Providence announced to an envoy of the republic that “it is the will of God to punish the duke of Ferrara and liberate Italy from the hands of the French.”

On August 9, 1510, the pope stripped Alfonso of his title of gonfaloniere and published a bull of excommunication against him. On September 14, 1510, Julius II placed the entire city of Ferrara, a traditionally papal territory where the Este served as vicars, under interdict, thus seeking to demoralize Ferrara’s civic life and turn the citizenry against its leader.

According to the Ferrarese chronicler Paolo di Tommaso Zerbinati, director of the ducal mint, the interdict of Ferrara stunned the citizens and threatened to turn Ferrara into a religious wasteland: no daily masses were held, many other religious offices were suspended, and most of the priests and monks fled the city. Worse still, Julius II was relentless in his attack on Ferrara and the Este dominions, conquering Modena (August 18, 1510) and Reggio (July 4, 1512), two important ducal states. Nonetheless, Alfonso successfully defended the city of Ferrara, and his brilliant military skills enabled the Ferrarese, with the aid of the French, to destroy the papal alliance at the famous Battle of Ravenna fought on Easter Sunday, 1512. The war slowly took its toll on Julius II, and toward the end of that year the pope’s health declined sharply. Consequently, in what must have been seen as a miracle to the Ferrarese after enduring years of ecclesiastical censure and military oppression, on the night of February 20–21, 1513, Julius II died. With the election of the new Medici pope, Leo X, an armistice was declared, made official by a papal bull published on March 13, 1513, that annulled Ferrara’s interdict and readmitted Alfonso to the Church.

Immediately following the peace agreement, Ferrara accelerated its campaign designed to reconstruct its fortifications and repair damages to its religious and civic monuments. Antonio Costabili, Ferrara’s chief magistrate, was in charge of this crucial project. Costabili, who was elected giudice of the Dodici Savi on April 18, 1506, also served as the private counselor (consigliere segreto) to the duke of Ferrara. During the war he assumed the position of acting duke (vice duca) and played an instrumental role in maintaining security within the city and upholding the spirits of the Ferrarese citizens while Alfonso commanded his troops on the battlefield. At the conclusion of the conflict, the giudice even held a quasi-official celebration of Ferrara’s independence by throwing a lavish banquet at his private residence attended by the most illustrious personalities in Ferrara. In recognition of Costabili’s role as communal spokesperson and his postwar civic efforts, Daniele Fini, the poet and chancellor of the University of Ferrara, labeled him “pater patriae.” A look at the zornale of the Commune for the year 1513 reveals the impressive monetary scope of Costabili’s rebuilding initiative. Notably, it is among these records that Costabili’s compensation to Dosso and Garofalo appears. Although these payments do not fall under the rubric of “war expense [spesa della guerra]” in the zornale, the chronology suggests that Costabili conceived his polyptych within the context of the war and the campaign following its resolution. Since the court society of Ferrara witnessed a considerable overlap of personal and official interests, it is tempting to see the Costabili polyptych as...
strategically designed to address the entire Ferrarese community—the clergy, the court, and its subjects.\textsuperscript{50}

**Hypothesis of “Just War”**

Support for interpreting the Costabili polyptych as a civic-oriented monument comes from the displayed folios quoting Isaiah 9:6 in its central panel. The Book of Isaiah opens with a vision of Israel in the throes of sin and corruption, where civil unrest has turned to open violence and insoulen rules. In the ninth chapter, the prophet names God as the bearer of justice, vindicating the afflictions suffered by Israel at the hands of ruthless kings who have waged war against its cities. God’s purpose unfolds as Isaiah foretells the deliverance of Jerusalem from years of war and oppression with the birth of a promised child, whose kingdom of peace shall flourish forever:

For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty [\textit{Deus fortis}], the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace [\textit{Principe pacis}].

Peace establishes God’s covenant with Jerusalem and inaugurates an ideal of justice and righteousness in the context of war.\textsuperscript{51} Peace is synonymous with strength, with victory, with completion. God puts an end to warfare, political oppression, and social injustice in both the spiritual and political senses; thus, these verses from the Book of Isaiah carry strong implications for the duchy of Ferrara and its rulers.

The interpretative schemata governing the Costabili polyptych, as we shall see, incorporate a specific set of religious and civic ideas designed to cast Ferrara’s fight against the pope as a “just war.” The thesis and policy of “just war” reached the order to overcome Ferrara’s historical and spiritual conflicts—its losses and victories, its court and city. In particular, the writings of Andrea Baura and Antonio Meli, two Augustinian friars from S. Andrea, provided new ways of interpreting the evangelical message in order to overcome Ferrara’s historical and spiritual conflicts—present and future. Image and text substantiate one another and promise salvation. Accordingly, my focus on questions of meaning and audience intends to reevaluate the pictorial language of the altarpiece in terms of these broader cultural tendencies.

**Humanist Responses to War**

Faced with papal oppression and spiritual censure, the Ferrarese community stood poised between ecclesiastical obedience and patriotic loyalty, meditating on God’s providential mastery over history. The accomplished yet little-known poet and courtier Francesco Bovio (Ferrara, 1472–after 1543) yearned for peace in a number of his writings and sought to reestablish an ideal of justice that is promised in God’s covenant with man.\textsuperscript{54} A characteristic example appears in an unpublished poem, dated August 1512, addressed to Bovio’s friend and spiritual companion named Alexander, a certain Augustinian from the congregation of the Lateran canons, who occupied the church of S. Lazzaro of Ferrara. The context of the poem is Ferrara’s struggle (ultimately futile) to defend the city of Rovigo against enemy capture. In his lament over a land swarming with hostile militia, Bovio explains that soldiers generate only ruin, whereas God generates peace; the relevant closing lines read as follows:

This is the way of soldiers, they cannot endure quiet but always love uproar from which they can enrich themselves.

We desire peace, God of Peace [\textit{pacis Deus}], O, make it turn out well, and by your gift restore to us peace which is henceforth stable. You, nourishing God, I pray, foster us with peace of the body and of the spirit, which this world itself cannot supply.\textsuperscript{55}

It is clear that the doctrine of peace is here being promoted and deployed within strongly ideological arguments against the war and the maneuverings of Christianity’s leader. Even though Julius II proclaimed his war as the will of God, in his quest to consolidate an unbroken chain of Papal States from Rome to the Adriatic Sea, he was ruthlessly killing innocent Christians. It was for this reason that Erasmus of Rotterdam considered the pope the greatest offender against peace, labeling him a barbarian tyrant, a new Caesar, whom the theologian denies access to Heaven in his \textit{Dialogus Julius exclusus e coelis}, published (anonymously) in 1517.\textsuperscript{56} Bovio’s poem participates in humanist discourses on reconciliation by contrasting peace to war in order to plea for the end of hostilities and foster concord. When the poet invokes the God of Peace (\textit{pacis Deus}) he is assimilating a traditional prophetic language calling for the defeat of wickedness and the fulfillment of God’s covenant with man.

A parallel development of scriptural themes occurs in the Costabili polyptych with the strong visual presence of the same prophecy by Isaiah. The Book of Isaiah proclaims God as the bearer of justice, the vindicator. The replacement of war with peace that is manifest in the birth of a promised child orchestrates Israel’s participation in its own redemption.\textsuperscript{57} Clearly, the quotation of Isaiah 9:6 in the Costabili polyptych is uniquely determined by Ferrara’s historical situation and responds to the emotional climate of the community. But if we claim that Ferrara envisioned its war against the pope as historically and conceptually a reenactment of the trials and joys experienced by the biblical nation of Israel, then we need to examine more closely how the Word of God was read, mediated on, and experienced in Ferrara. It is helpful to examine divergent readings of Scripture in relation to historical crisis.
Consider, for example, Erasmus’s *Querela Pacis (A Complaint of Peace)*, written in 1516 (published in 1517) while he was the counselor to Prince Charles of Burgundy (later Charles V). The theologian dedicated his work to Philip of Burgundy, bishop of Utrecht, urging reconciliation between France and the Holy Roman Empire. Erasmus, who centers his discourse on Christ, advocated peace as a powerful political weapon. By means of rhetorical argumentation, Erasmus develops his discourse using Isaiah 9:6 as his primary topos. In the process is Baura’s exposition on Psalm 17:2. “Diligam te Domine fortitudo mea” (I will love thee, O Lord, my strength), which concerns King David’s thanks to God for victory in battle and deliverance from persecution by the tyrant Saul. Baura labels David a figure of the Church Militant (chiesa militante), interpreting these passages as the need for faith to ensure victory and purify the Church. Peace comes through God’s strength, which in turn nourishes King David’s soul:

*Diligam te domine: O Lord I continue to think about what I must do so as not to be ungrateful to your majesty, which is of such grace that you conceded to liberate me from so many calamities. Yet I do not know what works for me because all of my deeds are nothing in front of your infinite majesty; I know that you do not need my deeds. . . . Fortitudo mea: This is my strength through which I will save myself if ever I were tormented by my enemies. And if you are my strength, who will there be with the presumption to offend me by any means? Other times when I was not loving you I put my confidence in earthly defenses, in weapons, in soldiers, in strong walls, and in fortifications, which appeared impregnable; but I was deceiving myself, because there is no strength where you are not.*

Additional references to the fallen pagan cities of Rome and Carthage invite both a literal and metaphoric (or spiritual) reading of Scripture, exploring the full semantic dimensions of the biblical text under inquiry. Baura’s exegesis of David’s thanksgiving for military victory must be read against the Book of Isaiah because Isaiah’s prophecy is filled with references to Davidic monarchy. In their different ways, Isaiah 9:6 and Psalm 17 both evoke the themes of peace through strength and divine intervention, and would therefore legitimate the use of arms with recourse to Divine Providence.

The invention of the Costabili polyptych correlates with the philological interpretation of Scripture practiced by Andrea Baura, whose profoundly humanist method historicizes the biblical text. The reading habits of the Augustinians at S. Andrea suggest that Psalm 17 functioned as a subtext informing the interpretative schemata of the Costabili polyptych. In turn, this could indicate that Andrea Baura participated in devising the invention of the altarpiece, a point to which I shall return.

That the inscriptions pronounce a divinely ordained victory is corroborated by the overall format of the polyptych. The magnificent frame with its impressive central arch may have been designed to evoke triumph. In a related argument, Deborah Howard has suggested that Titian’s *The Assumption of the Virgin* (ca. 1515–18), painted immediately following the Cambrai Wars for the high altar of the S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice, carries implicit political connotations of Venetian victory through its triumphal arch–like frame and coronation imagery (Fig. 9). The “ecstatic tone” of Titian’s altarpiece, which is notably flanked by tombs of the doges, shows a “radiant” and “victorious” Mary that Howard describes as “tinged with patriotic allegory.” An equally powerful image in the Costabili polyptych is the Resurrection of Christ in its gabled pinnacle. In addition to seeing it as a symbol of salvation, we might interpret the image of the Risen
Christ as an allusion to Ferrara’s victory at the Battle of Ravenna. As I noted earlier, a decisive victory for the Ferrarese came on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1512, when Alfonso’s forces, armed with his mighty cannons, obliterated Spanish and papal troops in one of the bloodiest confrontations of their conflict. So stirring was the defeat for the papacy that in his inaugural oration for the Fifth Lateran Council sponsored by Julius II in Rome on May 3, 1512, the Augustinian Egidio da Viterbo, prior general of the Eremitani, described the defeat at Ravenna as a sign of “divine displeasure” of the Church’s reliance on arms. Egidio interpreted historical events eschatologically with recourse to Scripture, believing that history yielded an understanding of God and prefigured the fate of the Church. The Battle of Ravenna represented Ferrara’s one true victory, a show of strength. Reading the image of the Resurrection in the Costabili polyptych as a symbol of Ferrarese victory would have thus made all the more immediate the eternal truth of the divine miracle, when Christ conquered death. It is plain that the historical semantic of the prophecy of Isaiah, complemented by forms and themes affirming triumph, serves to cast the city of Ferrara as a new Jerusalem, enjoying God’s favor and protection. The altarpiece fosters religion as much as it celebrates the political ambitions of the duchy.

Saints Ambrose and Augustine on “Just War”

What I have been arguing thus far is that the Costabili polyptych is a highly allusive work that creates layers of meaning through its close engagement with the biblical text and exegetical traditions. The selection and arrangement of saints, far from being eclectic or arbitrary, contribute to the complexity of meaning. With regard to the representation of Saint Jerome, Renaissance humanists considered the saint the “Christian Cicero”; philological investigation so dominated his life that he became the personification of biblical scholarship. Accordingly, the emphasis on books, intellectual pursuits, and meditation is meant to sustain a theological discourse in a move from verbal to visual exegesis. The experience of a work of art for the visually literate Ferrarese audience becomes a discursive exercise, requiring a variety of interpretative techniques. On a certain level of reception, therefore, the strategic pairing of Saints Ambrose and Augustine directly flanking the citations from Isaiah would serve to deepen the question of the legitimate use of arms to preserve a Christian state.

In a number of his writings Saint Ambrose sets out a political theology with the promise of military victory in return for doctrinal obedience. A notable example is his funeral oration for Emperor Theodosius of 395 (De obitu Theodosii), which was composed when barbarian invaders threatened the fate of the Roman Empire turned Christian state. Ambrose champions Theodosius as the exemplary Christian ruler, the guardian of the Church, distinguished by his piety and zeal. With fervor Ambrose exclaims: “He bore the heavy yoke, since he endured exile because of filial devotion and since he assumed the imperial power when the Roman Empire was overrun by barbarians. He bore the heavy yoke that he might remove tyrants from the Roman Empire. But, because he labored here, he rests [in heaven].” The defense of the Christian state by just means was so vital to the theology of Saint Ambrose that he went so far as to claim that Theodosius “gained the grace of Christ and the loyalty of the army, to which he was a proof that God cherishes devotion and is the avenger of treachery.” The whip at Ambrose’s feet in the Costabili polyptych is an important iconographic detail that corroborates this theology, symbolizing the saint’s defense of orthodoxy in 386 against the Arian and pagan parties; the scourge is also a symbol of the saint’s miraculous appearance and protection of the Milanese army against rebels at the Battle of Parabiago on February 21, 1359.

Significantly, Saint Augustine drew from the writings of Ambrose to develop the doctrine of bellum justum, which in the De civitate Dei concerns the expansion of the Roman Empire as divinely ordained. Augustine, who calls war “a necessary evil,” explains in book 4 how the Romans brought jus to their hostile neighbors: “It was certainly the injustice of those against whom they waged just wars that helped the [Roman] empire to grow, since it would undoubtedly have remained small if peaceful and honest neighbors had never
Augustine mandated that Christians desire victory; it follows that they desire peace. The presence of יהוּדָה serves as a critique of imperial subjugation voiced by Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457), considered war a destruction of God's providence. War, as a historical reality in early sixteenth-century Europe, meant Christian fighting Christian, and this, according to the theologian, directly conflicted with Mosaic law. Yet the Ferrarese appealed to such biblical warriors as King David, who, as Saint Ambrose remarks in his De officis and De apologia prophetae David, was an exemplum of Christian faith, a servant of God who never engaged in battle unless provoked or by divine command. The precedent set by David informs a recurring argument in De civitate Dei, in which Augustine concedes war insofar as its battles and campaigns contribute to God's end—the punishment of the wicked and the establishment of peace and concord: "For even they who choose warfare desire nothing but victory; it follows that they desire by waging war to arrive at a glorious peace." Furthermore, Augustine mandated that Christians rulers and magistrates must wield their power not only to secure peace but also to promote religion. The message of peace communicated in Antonio Costabili's altarpiece represents God's covenant with man as much as it represents the cornerstone of a Christian state. While we shall return to the peculiarities posed by the images of Saints Ambrose and Augustine, their very presence flanking the citations from Isaiah serves as testimony in support of "just war."

"Princeps Pacis": Princely Allusions or Divine Intervention in Battle?
Did Antonio Costabili intend the verse "Princeps pacis" in his altarpiece to celebrate the duke of Ferrara? Certainly Isaiah's prophecy recalls eschatological verses (such as the verse "Rex pacificus" from the poem "In adventu regis") sung during imperial triumphal receptions throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; indeed, Duke Alfonso I d'Este legitimately raised arms in defense of his homeland in order to secure peace. The appellation "Prince of Peace" might allude to earlier Este ceremonial monuments, namely, the equestrian monument constructed in 1451 and dedicated to the twelfth marquis of Ferrara, Niccolò III d'Este (1383-1441), which once carried the inscription (now lost) on its supporting arch declaring Niccolò thrice creator of peace in Italy (TER PACIS ITALIAE AUCTORI). Moreover, the inscriptions from the Hebrew Bible in the Costabili polyptych correspond to Duke Alfonso's self-conscious political identity, whereby he fashioned himself as biblical warrior and model of Christian virtue. For example, a coin minted by the duke in 1505 (Fig. 10) shows his portrait on the obverse, while the reverse bears the inscription "De fortii dulcedo," which derives from Judges 14:14: "de fortii egressa dulcedo" (out of the strong came forth sweetness). The figure on the reverse is the biblical hero Samson, who was blessed by God and who in the medal holds the head of a lion he has just slain, from which bees make a hive and produce honey. The underlying themes from Judges 14:14 and Isaiah 9:6, though developed in different contexts, are intimately related, pronouncing the sweet rewards resulting from God's favor and might.

However, there are no direct allusions to the Este, nor even a donor portrait or Costabili's coat of arms to make overt any honorific intentions. Alternatively, there seems to be an emphatic address to God in his role as the almighty Prince of Peace as well as the theme of divine intervention. The Christ Child holds his orb of dominion while resting lovingly in the lap of the Virgin, who is seated triumphantly directly under the regalia adorning the Madonna and Child in the central panel are quasitheatrical; the triumphal arch, opulent tapestry, hanging decorative tassels, and offering of a silver bowl teeming with fragrant fruits on the steps invite a comparison with well-documented ceremonial entries, spettacoli, and sacre rappresentazioni held in Ferrara and throughout Italy. Although the Madonna's majestic throne and the assembly of saints relate to the sacre conversazioni of such Emilian and Venetian artists as Lorenzo Costa, Giovanni Bellini, and Cima da Conegliano, the fact that the female saints are placed in the background further reflects the spatial parameters defined by sacred spectacles. These symbolic and ceremonial details of the altarpiece suggest that the Ferrarese celebrated the Madonna's role as merciful intercessor.

A look at the Ferrarese chronicles for the year 1511 casts light on this process. Throughout this year Alfonso I d'Este
was busy fortifying the defensive walls around the city. Amid the rubble of the demolished bastion at the Porta di Sotto, not far from the church of S. Andrea, a painted image of the Madonna was found intact (Fig. 11). The citizens considered the very survival of the image miraculous. From an enthusiastic report given by the chronicler Zerbinati, we learn that the image had the power to perform miracles, including, significantly, creating an image of the Christ Child:

[1511] In the same month of June Our Lady began to perform miracles in a newly constructed pilaster of stone in the bastion of the Porta di Sotto. There was an image of Our Lady, just her head and face, in this pilaster, which was above the gate and bridge of the aforementioned Porta di Sotto. And when it was destroyed and everything torn down last winter, the very head was not ruined in any way, and having been rediscovered thus intact, it was shown to our duke, and our lord had a pilaster made in the same bastion to place the image inside, and there it began to perform many miracles. Then it happened that the entire figure was completed, seated with her son standing, by a painter who said and claimed that, wishing to make the child and not knowing how to do so, after having returned from lunch, found a whiteness where he had later depicted the child and the head of the child. He showed the whiteness to many people, and proceeded to make the standing little boy in that very place where the whiteness was appearing. Later the image performed infinite miracles for many foreigners, who came to visit that spot, and one began to make a capital above the pilaster and then a bigger one was made so the people could stand under cover; and many people assembled together, both citizens and outsiders.86

The Madonna di Porta di Sotto had a profound psychological effect on the city, and it is certain that the duke of Ferrara, by ordering that the image be placed back into the newly fortified bastion, believed the Madonna could protect the city from the pope’s wrath.87 The intense channeling of public devotion toward the miraculous image generated a series of canzoni (largely unpublished) in the Virgin Mary’s honor. A compelling example is Francesco Bovio’s “Ad illibatam Virginis imaginem ad Portam Inferiorem,” dated 1511 (see App. below), in which the poet refers to the Madonna di Porta di Sotto as the city’s Magna Parens (Great Mother), beseeching her to end the many months of punishment endured by his community. So great was the belief in the image’s miraculous power that in 1512 worshipers established a confraternity named in honor of the Virgin’s intercession or “visit” to Ferrara during their conflict: the Società della Visitazione della Porta di Sotto.88

The venerated image of the Madonna di Porta di Sotto, Ferrara’s Magna Parens, became the focus of civic care at the conclusion of the war. The civic official responsible for finding a permanent home for the miraculous image was Antonio Costabili. On April 8, 1513, Costabili assembled thirty-two high-ranking citizens in his private residence in order to discuss the construction of a church that would house the image that had protected the city.89 Ferrarese church historians dispute the date of the completion of the church, called in the vernacular tongue the Madonnina, located near the church of S. Andrea and the palace of Antonio Costabili (Fig. 12). Marc’ Antonio Guarini records the construction date as July 24, 1526, whereas Giuseppe Scalabrini lists it as July 24, 1531.90 In either case, it is clear that Costabili had an intense and, as Isabella Fedozzi has suggested, long-standing devotion to the Virgin.91 Costabili’s direct involvement with the civic interests of the community regarding the Madonna di Porta di Sotto may have prompted him to celebrate in his own altarpiece the Madonna’s role as Ferrara’s intercessor. The ostentation displayed toward the Madonna in the Costabili polyptych becomes all the more meaningful when we recall that the patron’s chapel was dedicated to the Virgin. Moreover, the church of S. Andrea was consecrated on March 13 (1438), the very same day in 1513 on which a papal bull nullified all spiritual censures in Ferrara.92

**Saints George and Sebastian**

The prominent status afforded to Saints Sebastian (Fig. 13) and George (Fig. 14) caters to the various expectations of an audience that would have encountered the image immediately following a war. Both saints stand symbolically as soldiers of God and of Ferrara. Dosso stages Saint George in a poised contrapposto as he stands triumphant over the dragon, who exhales his final puffs of smoke. In his study of Cosmé Tura’s Roverella Altarpiece (ca. 1479, now dispersed), which included an image of Saint George decorated with Este heraldry, Stephen Campbell has demonstrated the relevance of the story of Saint George as told in the *Legenda aurea* for establishing the theme of harmony between Church and
In the Costabili polyptych, the city’s patron saint, ready in his gleaming armor, personifies the image of personal fortitude, communal strength, and spiritual leadership. In the opposite panel, Saint Sebastian is bound to a column with his armor cast at his feet; the pious centurion wears only the green cloak of hope, thereby underscoring his miraculous defiance of execution by arrows. The way in which Garofalo bathes the saint’s nude body in an intense light that articulates the soft contours of his skin provides an image of wholeness. Garofalo’s artifice contributes to the sense of delivery from suffering that finds its visual and conceptual parallel in the body of the Risen Christ in the pediment of the polyptych.

The dialectical relationship between the Madonna and the saints allows us to associate the Costabili polyptych with Andrea Mantegna’s Madonna of Victory (Musée du Louvre, Paris), a painting that commemorates Francesco II Gonzaga’s rout of the French army at the Battle of Fornovo on July 6, 1495 (Fig. 15). Francisco Gonzaga, the marquis of Mantua and husband of Isabella d’Este (Alfonso’s sister), declared that he sought refuge under the Virgin’s protection at a pivotal moment in the conflict, when the Madonna revived his courage and ensured him victory. In the altarpiece Mantegna portrays the Madonna extending her hand and bestowing special favor on the marquis, who is dressed in full armor. Simultaneously, Saints Michael and George raise the Virgin’s mantle to shield Francesco, who is portrayed as a warrior of God—the underlying value of “just war.” Notably, Saints Andrew and Longinus, the patron saints of Mantua, accompany the Virgin in her festive bower of Paradise, teeming with exotic birds and fruits. Likewise, the way in which Dosso and Garofalo depicted the Madonna’s blue robe and the green tapestry as spilling over the sides of the Virgin’s throne serves both a formal and metaphoric function (Fig. 16). On the one hand, the triangle created by the fabrics functions as a stabilizing pyramid for the composition. On the other hand, when we consider the Virgin’s gesture, her position under the prophetic inscriptions, and the way she touches Christ’s orb of dominion, the open mantle and tapestry make a striking visual impact symbolizing protection. The warrior saints flanking the Madonna, as in Mantegna’s altarpiece, complement the shielding nature of the Virgin,
whom the Ferrarese believed intervened for their safety and protection. Prior to 1513, Dosso Dossi and Garofalo both worked in Mantua, and Costabili himself had visited the city twice on diplomatic missions. The artists and patron certainly knew and admired Mantegna’s altarpiece, which was housed in a church built and dedicated to the Madonna della Vittoria. The thematic analogy between the Madonna of Victory and the Costabili polyptych helps us to understand the celebratory function of the Ferrarese altarpiece and establishes a pattern of Este iconography in the context of war as well.

Friar Antonio Meli and the Vocational Pursuits of the Eremitani

The saints in the Costabili polyptych encourage various facets of theological discourse; this is especially true for the figure of Saint Augustine, who is dressed in the habit of an Austin hermit. Augustine’s conversion to Christianity is marked by his discovery of monasticism as described in book 8 of his Confessions. Thus, the image carries strong vocational implications for the Augustinian hermits of S. Andrea. As we have seen, the friars at S. Andrea took an active role in cultivating the spiritual life of the Ferrarese community. In addition to Andrea Baura, Friar Antonio Meli, the prior general of the Eremitani congregation at S. Andrea, also proved himself a religious leader. Meli furthermore had close ties with Antonio Costabili, standing as witness to his last will and testament. In 1511, the prior general composed a treatise on the reform of the female members of the Augustinian order. His best-known and most important work is an exegetical treatise entitled Libro de vida contemplativa: Intitulato Scala del Paradiso, which he also dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia on April 10, 1513 (it was not published until 1527). The rich composition offers practical methods for leading a virtuous Christian life—from decorous dress codes to meditative practices—and contains prayers composed for the safety of Ferrara’s rulers. The text is devoid of mysticism, calling for interpretative readings of the biblical text that explore its moral and didactic value—“per metaforica similitudine et imitatione.” An exemplary and relevant exegesis involves the friar’s study
of Psalm 136, a lament and prayer for the vengeance of the people of God on Israel’s enemies. Meli glosses Psalm 136 with chapter 2 of the Book of Isaiah, in which the prophet envisions an age of peace following God’s judgment, and also with recourse to Saint Augustine’s thesis on retributive justice. First, the friar explains that the adversaries of God are rocklike, noting for example that the name Esau, an enemy of God, means hard (duro), or lapidary (lapideo). Then he bids his readers—here, specifically female—to pray for divine retribution for those adversaries who bring harm to the allegorical (tropologica) city of Jerusalem, or the spiritual self:

Remember O Lord to take revenge on these men who are worldly, hard, rocklike, who were the destroyers of my allegorical city of Jerusalem, raising my sensible passions and sensual parts to the rebellion of reason, and the destruction of my spiritual parts. And what vengeance must be submitted? Nothing other than what God says through the prophet Isaiah. I will avenge myself on my enemies (that is killing and extinguishing the error in them and stimulating my assiduous faith) as Augustine expounds.101

While we shall momentarily explore the recurrence of the themes of retribution and deliverance with regard to their historical significance for Ferrara, the new Jerusalem, it is more important to note at this point how Meli’s philological and allegorical approach to Scripture benefits the individual’s spiritual self. The friar’s teachings shed light on the message of salvation communicated by the Costabili polyptych. The Book of Isaiah remained central to the Church because it contains, according to Christian tradition, the whole story of Christ’s life, from his birth to his death and subsequent resurrection. The theme of salvation is reinforced by the image of the Madonna who extends her hand over the Baptist in a tender gesture signifying protective motherly care.102 The Gospel of Saint John (1:6-8) recognizes the Baptist as the one divinely chosen to “give testimony of the light.” He was the last prophet who verified Christ and foreshadowed his suffering for mankind’s salvation. Furthermore, Isaiah 9:1–6 also had a liturgical function: these verses were read at the Mass of Christmas, thereby situating the high altarpiece within sacred and ordained ritual.

According to Meli’s Scala del Paradiso, reading (lectione) was the first of four stages of spiritual development, followed by meditation (meditazione), prayer (oratione), and contemplation (contemplazione), the final step that leads to revelation. It is tempting to see the divine colloquium of saints in the central panel as practicing Meli’s precepts of graduated difficulty by which the soul could progress from practical morality in quotidian life to the contemplation of the highest spiritual truth and the love of God: Saints Jerome and John the Evangelist, with texts in hand, represent lectione; the female saint in the right background and Saint Andrew, the patron saint of the church who directs the beholder to the Madonna and Child, invite oratione; while the saint behind Jerome with his hand to his mouth in a pensive gesture possibly stands for meditazione (Fig. 17). The Ferrarese painter Giovanni Battista Benvenuti, called Ortolano (ca. 1480/85–after 1527) adopted this gesture for the figure of Saint Demetrius in his altarpiece of about 1520 (National Gallery, London), executed for the church of S. Maria in Bondeno, outside Ferrara (Fig. 18).103 Ortolano’s employment of this gesture reveals how Ferrarese artists studied the Costabili polyptych as a visual paradigm of spiritual expression. Furthermore, the steps leading up to the Virgin seem to visualize Meli’s metaphorical Scala del Paradiso, a spiritual ladder having been reached metaphorically by Saint Ambrose, who sits in the heavenly zone enrapt in contemplazione. The image of Saint Ambrose elevates the worshiper’s mind to an inward vision through his intensity of concentration.104 Collectively, the saints in the Costabili polyptych exemplify the various behavioral methods designed to constitute a particularly spiritual subjectivity, manifesting what the friars believed was true and essential for the communal well-being. The rhetorical and liturgical force of the imagery suggests that Antonio Meli, along with Andrea Baura, may have assisted in devising the invention of the Costabili polyptych.
An involvement in the altarpiece’s invention by Meli may also explain the peculiar halo of fire around Saint Augustine’s head (Fig. 19) as well as the central position of Saint John the Evangelist (Fig. 20). As the leader of the Eremitani in Ferrara, the friar would have been involved in the debate with the Canons Regular over the antiquity and primacy of their order—a debate that originated in the late fifteenth century and was in full force by the 1510s throughout Italy. The confrontation centered on which order best developed Augustine’s theology and “Rule,” thereby achieving the ideal Christian life, which in turn led to a dispute as to whether images of Augustine should show the saint dressed in the habit of an Austin canon or of an Austin hermit.¹⁰⁵ To corroborate their argument, the hermits turned to the eschatological writings of Joachim del Fiore (ca. 1135–1202), who had been the first to interpret the Book of the Apocalypse in light of contemporary figures and events.¹⁰⁶ Such learned sixteenth-century Eremitani as Egidio da Viterbo and Silvestro Meuccio of S. Cristoforo della Pace (Venice) made use of Joachim’s *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, which contains a famous prophecy of a new order of spiritual men, dressed in black (*nigris vestibus*), who will be called from the contemplative to the active life. The following commentary by Joachim on the various angels in chapter 14 of the Book of the Apocalypse served as testimony to the authority of the hermits and was believed to foreshadow their order: “They shall increase and their fame shall spread abroad; they shall preach the faith and defend it until the consummation of the world in the spirit and power of Elias. There shall be an order of hermits living like angels, whose life shall be as a burning fire to consume all tares.”¹⁰⁷ The startling image of Saint August-
ine in the Costabili polyptych, pointedly dressed as a hermit, and whom the painter Dosso Dossi has punctuated with fervent brushstrokes for his halo of fire, carries an especially charged meaning as it ostensibly visualizes Joachim’s prophecy. Dosso’s virtuosic display cannot be explained by appealing to visual precedents in Rome or Venice; rather, this unparalleled detail caters to an audience of clerics who fashioned their identity in the image of angelic fire. Considering the artist’s representations of Saint Augustine and Saint George, small wonder that Luigi Lanzi, who in his *Storia pittorica della Italia* was the first to recognize an autonomous Ferrarese school of painting, championed Dosso for assimilating the “antico” manner of Francesco Francia and Lorenzo Costa into his own “moderno” manner by means of his novel inventions and daring exploration of color and light.108

**Pope Julius II and Divine Retribution**

Until now I have not claimed that the Costabili polyptych takes a direct antipapal stance. Yet contemporary attacks on Pope Julius II’s character and authority are relevant to our analysis of the most peculiar feature of the altarpiece: the fiery hail in Augustine’s cell.

When Alfonso I d’Este sought to legitimate his position as an excommunicated ruler in crisis, he and his courtiers initiated a campaign designed to characterize Julius II as an impetuous tyrant, one warranting retributive justice. Alfonso’s sumptuous Book of Hours (ca. 1505–12),109 executed at the time Ferrara was plunged into war with Rome and Venice, provides a bitter commentary on the sufferings of Ferrara at the hands of the pope. A historiated leaf in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon (inv. L.A. 149, fol. 13r), depicts Alfonso dressed in full armor and kneeling in prayer to God set inside the initial Q whereby the duke fashions himself as a warrior under God’s command. Certain illuminations from his Book of Hours condemn the duke’s enemies, the most striking example being a folio accompanying the *Vigils of the Dead* (Fig. 21). In this full-page miniature now in the Strossmayerova Galerija, Zagreb, the illuminator Matteo da Milano interprets the Triumph of Death as a false pope clutching his money bag while fleeing from the skeletal personification of Death. A devil standing behind the pope holds up a book.

18 Ortolano, *Saints Sebastian, Roch, and Demetrius*, London, National Gallery

19 Detail of Fig. 1 with Saint Augustine
inscribed with the words “Vide quanta sunt s[e]lera... ” (Observe how many are the impious deeds). Under this macabre Dance of Death lies a mass of bodies, while in the background fire consumes a building. Jonathan Alexander has rightly interpreted this image in the context of Alfonso’s intense enmity toward Pope Julius II. The bearded pope in the illumination lends further proof that the figure is meant to be seen as a satirical portrait of Julius II, who began growing his beard in October 1510. Matteo’s highly sophisticated illumination thus damns the vengeful, greed-driven pontiff and his quest for temporal dominion over Italy. The keen rhetorical deployment of the Triumph of Death enabled the duke of Ferrara to submit the wicked deeds of the pope to God’s judgment.

Accordingly, if we consider the practice of eschatological readings of historical events and signs, the startling image of flames shooting from within Augustine’s cell in the Costabili polyptych may in fact figure as divine retribution against Ferrara’s adversaries. Notably, the saint sees these flames with a gesture that imitates that of the spirito who calls attention to the inscriptions, the Word of God, in the central panel. The authoritative text on retribution is once again the Book of Isaiah. In his vision of Judgment Day, the prophet foresees retribution for the wicked, exclaiming God’s revelation with thunderous force (Isaiah 66:15-16):

For behold the Lord will come with fire [in igne veniet], and his chariots are like a whirlwind, to render his wrath in indignation, and his rebuke with flames of fire [in flamma ignis].

For the Lord shall judge by fire, and by his sword unto all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

As Augustine relates in his Confessions (9.5), it was Saint Ambrose who directed him to read Isaiah, whose prophecy became an important source for Augustine’s thesis on retributive justice in his De civitate Dei. In his exegesis of Isaiah 66:15-16, Augustine discusses the prophet’s blending of figurative and literal expressions, explaining by “fire,” “whirlwind,” and “sword” that Isaiah means “... the punishment of judgment; for he says that the Lord himself shall come as a fire, to those, of course, for whom his coming is a punishment.” According to the prophet, God shall comfort the saved in Jerusalem, a place of heavenly bliss and peace.

The theme of retribution by fire figures even more prominently in Andrea Baura’s exposition on Psalm 17, a text that also provides a useful gloss for interpreting the Saint Augustinian panel. In Psalm 17:13-16, David sings of his delivery from his enemies through God’s intervention, whom he envisions as coming in “hail and coals of fire [granida et carbonis ignis].” According to Baura, the hail and coals of fire signify bloody
battles, explaining in his exposition that God must eliminate the wicked through bloodshed in order to bring about a purified Church. The friar’s interpretation accords with the doctrine of *bellum justum*, since battle is necessary to obtain divine “justice [iustitia]” and “peace [pace]”:

> Grando et carbones ignis: that is, God will send hail and coal of ardent fire, which will be bloody battles. . . . *Et fulgura multiplicavit:* And God will multiply over a long time these lightnings, or these afflictions, until he will have troubled them. . . . *Et apparuerunt fontes aquarum:* And alas God will make appear the fountains of his sacred waters, and there will appear through all the Church the fountain of peace, the fountain of clemency, the fountain of justice, the fountain of grace, charity, and faith, and all the other virtues.114

The metaphor of justice and peace pouring forth like a fountain recalls the imagery of Isaiah 66:12, whereby God will comfort the saved in Jerusalem and “will bring upon her as it were a river of peace [*declinabo super eam quasi fluviwm pacis.*]” Moreover, there appears to be a quite specific relationship between Psalm 17 and the hail of fire in the Saint Augustine panel. Conventionally, one would expect to see golden rays of divine light inspiring Augustine or signaling his conversion. Here, however, Dosso offers a compelling visualization of God’s potential fury, interpreting Scripture, be it Isaiah or the Psalms, according to his own personal, self-conscious stylistic devices. Such artifice may well have offered the Ferrarese audience, recently liberated from the wrath of a warrior pope both physically and spiritually, psychological reassurance. According to Saint Augustine, a “spiritual vision,” such as that of the prophet Isaiah, is a revelation through symbols and divine signs.115 The pictorial transmission of these signs connects the topology of the Costabili polyptych to such apocalyptic images as Sandro Botticelli’s *Mystic Crucifixion* of about 1497 (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., Fig. 22).116

The artist shows Mary Magdalen embracing Christ’s crucifix before dark storm clouds that release burning torches—a scourge summoned by God the Father, who appears in the sky along with angels holding white shields blazoned with red crosses. The imagery corresponds, in part, to the sermons of the Dominican Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), who was born in Ferrara and later resided at the convent of S. Marco in Florence. Especially relevant for Botticelli’s invention is Savonarola’s *The Compendium of Revelations*, a text composed in 1495 and filled with related apocalyptic visions warning against the punishment for sins and corruption that God would inflict on Florence.117 In the background of his picture Botticelli depicts the city of Florence shining like a new Jerusalem purified after God’s wrath. Likewise, Dosso and Garofalo have depicted a serene, hilly landscape and city set under tranquil skies behind the Virgin’s throne. Given the close rapport among the Eretimani, the Este, and Antonio Costabili, reading the imagery in the Costabili polyptych as symbols of Ferrara’s triumph and the downfall of its enemies would have amplified rather than conflicted with its religious import.

On or around May 1, 1514, while Dosso and Garofalo were in the process of completing the altarpiece for Antonio Costabili, lightning struck the church of S. Andrea, with one bolt blasting the head off the crucifix at the high altar and another hitting the pilaster that housed the tabernacle.118 The lightning may have been seen as a *flagellum Dei*, a reminder to all that God scourges the wicked—an image vividly evoked in the Book of Isaiah as well as in the Psalms and, moreover, visualized in the Costabili polyptych.119 That the Ferrarese did indeed envision the death of Pope Julius II as a sign of God’s punishment is further evidenced by an epigram composed by the eminent Ferrarese rhetorician Celio Calcagnini (1479–1541). Calcagnini earned his doctorate in canon law, and his rhetorical skills and sophisticated wit won him the positions of Este court historian, chair of the faculty of rhetoric at the University of Ferrara, and apostolic notary.120 The rhetorician was also a close friend of and artistic advisor to Antonio Costabili, devising the invention for Garofalo’s frescoes depicting the myth of Anteros in the Stanza del Tesoro of Costabili’s palace.121 In a classically inspired epigram entitled “De obitu Iulii II pontifex maximus,” composed in 1513, Calcagnini admonishes Pope Leo X to keep peace with Ferrara by reminding him of his predecessor’s fate in the following manner:

Hard Julius had stirred up dreadful arms against Alfonso, when God knocked away the weapons from his hands. Leo tried to take up again those same weapons, and he himself sensed straight away the anger of the gods. Whosoever you will be who is bid to sit upon this sacred throne, be mindful that peace is characteristic of your office. However, if an evil disposition or a mad passion for dominance drags you into criminality and back again into forbidden war, the gods as avengers of wickedness will stir their own weapons again so that future generations may learn by your example.122

Calcagnini absorbs Divine Providence into the political fortunes of the Ferrarese community. His reaction to the defeat of Pope Julius II, here envisioned as a result of God’s anger, encourages a reading of the message of peace through strength communicated by the Costabili polyptych as a gloss on Ferrara’s conflict with Rome. Accordingly, the responsive practices of the Ferrarese audience may also explain the absence of any papal references from the altarpiece, namely Saints Peter and Maurelius, the patron bishop of Ferrara who was appointed by the pope.123 Even though humanists in Italy hailed Leo X as “Rex pacificus,” the Ferrarese remained mindful of the motives of Christ’s terrestrial vicars.124

**Prospects for Future Inquiry**

My investigation into the Costabili polyptych aimed to provide a framework in which to understand how the representational techniques at work enable a cognitive as well as affective experience of the altarpiece. Concerning the issue of date, even if it were proven that Dosso’s contribution extended into the 1520s, there can be no doubt that the altarpiece was wholly conceived and the painting underway by 1513. Interpreting the artistic development of Dosso and Garofalo is immensely challenging, but too often their innovations have been seen as merely symptomatic of the artists’ submission to more powerful artistic “influences” generated in Venice and
Research into the efficaciousness of the styles of Dosso and Garofalo, the public and private currency of their art, is necessary in order to put questions regarding chronology and stylistic hierarchies into sharper focus. In this regard, more needs to be said concerning Antonio Costabili’s strategic pairing of the singularity of Dosso’s manner with the more pietistic language of Garofalo. We know that Costabili played an instrumental role in establishing the Lombard painter Boccaccio Boccaccino (ca. 1467–1525) in Ferrara between 1497 and 1500. Garofalo trained under Boccaccino, as Vasari himself reported and documents recently discovered by Franceschini confirm. By 1513, the patron had already gained the artistic sensibility to orchestrate the collaboration between Dosso and Garofalo, who together amplified the artistic traditions of Ferrara while they discovered a new and dramatic pictorial vocabulary that expressed the spiritual and civic values of their Ferrarese audience. The promise of peace offered by the Costabili polypych, designed at the close of Ferrara’s participation in the Cambrai Wars, corresponds with a promised Golden Age, both divine and secular, that allows the arts to flourish.

Appendix

Francisci Bernardini Bovii Ferrariensis (Francesco Bovio), “Carmina (Elegiae, Epigrammata, Tumuli),” BAF ms CI.169, fol. 1r–1v:

Ad Illibatam Virginis Imaginem ad Portam Inferiorem (1511)
And equally it encloses within itself this honest prayer, O chaste present to us, it may be pleasing to you now to assist our wretched devout, if for the very best of reasons your image is not recently grace for my dear friends. I pray, restore me unharmed, whole, bring it about that I have strength to cultivate your godhead and be moved by my chaste prayers. We do not seek gold, nor does Great Mother, you who have always had mercy upon the toils of name with a full heart. So let the mandates from the second set of have been God and virtue and benign charity. Thus while alive discern the sun after the long overcast. If God made you a against such great wickedness, and that I may have the strength to covered in darkness, that I may now be permitted to raise myself miserable hearts, that are immersed under foul shadows and Mother I beseech you, lift to the stars our eyes, accompanying our tangled up like the knot of ancient Gordius. Still O Divine tender years, and in what great and unending waves my mind

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Notes

I wish to thank Professors Charles Dempsey, Elizabeth Cropper, and Salvatore Camporeale for reading a version of this essay, and the anonymous readers of the Art Bulletin for their helpful comments. Adriano Franceschini and Don Enrico Preverada provided kind assistance in the archives and with transcription of documents. I am very grateful to Doct. Giada Agostini for giving me permission to study the Costabili polyptych on scaffolding. I am also indebted to Anthony Colantuono and Stephen Campbell for sharing their insight into Ferrarese art and culture. Research for my dissertation on Dosso Dossi, from which this essay derives, has been supported by a Jane and Morgan Whitney Fellowship from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and two Travel Fellowships from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Where necessary, I have adapted Italian and Latin texts according to modern convention, spelling out abbreviations, adding diacritical marks, and replacing u for v and i for j. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

1. Bentini, 126–28, inv. nos. 189–94; Vasari, vol. 6, 457–69, esp. 462. Although Vasari does not mention Dosso Dossi specifically in connection with the Costabili polypych, he nevertheless recognizes that Garofalo collaborated with Dosso (and later with his brother Battista Dossi) on various projects: “lavorando ... alcune in compagnia de’ Dossi.”
4. The issue of Garofalo’s sojourn(s) to Rome has yet to be clarified. It appears that the artist was in Rome by 1512 (or even earlier according to
judged the Roman manner in Garofalo’s art to be so important that he also
which see Pattanaro, 136-41, app.
Vasari), but returned to Ferrara toward the end of that year, at which time he
infernal, or essences of pure sensations) in the context of Renaissance art and
the painter Dosso Dossi that were to be inventoried and donated to the sacristy
Ballarin first published his chronology of Dosso’s works in Le sidcle de Titien:
annulled his previous one, cited as having been drawn up on Dec. 17, 1523,
Ferrarese (Dosso Giovane),” Vita Artistica 2 (1927): 31-35 (early 1520s);

Barotti, Pitture e scolture che si trovano nelle chiese, luoghi pubblici, e sobborghi della
Fortini, “La chiesa di Sant’Andrea e il polittico Costabili,” in Ciammitti,

the figures of Raphael are supple (svelte) and delicate (gentile), whereas
those of Dosso are fleshier (carnoso) and more robust (robuste). Alternatively,

Cesare Cittadella, Catalogo istorico de’ pittori e scultori ferraresi e delle opere loro

Faustino Baraldi, 112-13; and the entry by Concetto Nicosia in Sovrane
Magnifico Messer Antonio di Costabili lire trenta de marchesani per compto

Daniele Benati, Francesco Bianchi Ferrari e la pittura a Modena frt4 ‘4
published in Daniele Benati, Francesco Bianchi Ferrari e la pittura a Modena fra
’4 e ’40, register of documents by Oriana Baracchi (Modena: Artioli, 1990),
176-77; Carlo Giovanniini, “Nuovi documenti sul Dosso,” Prospettiva, no. 68
(1992): 57-60; and idem, “Notizie inediti sull’altare di S. Sebastiano e sul
presbiterio del Bagelauri nel Duomo Moderno,” in Il Duomo e la sua storia. Nuovi
documenti e ricerche, ed. Oriana Baracchi and Carlo Giovanniinni (Modena:
Aedes Muratoriana, 1988), 207-26. For Garofalo’s altarpiece, see Fioravanti
Baraldi, 169-71.

17. Roberto Longhi, Officina ferrarese (1934), in Le opere complete da Roberto
Longhi (Florence: Sansoni, 1965), vol. 5, 88. Longhi also attributed to Dosso
the figure of Saint Andrew, yet I feel that this saint is by Garofalo and relates to
the artist’s treatment of the saintly body in his Suxena Altarpiece.

18. Beginning with Mezzetti (as in n. 14), 84, art historians, namely Ballarin,
vol. 1, 90, and Humfrey and Lucco, 23, have frequently assigned the figure
to the hand of Dosso. I agree with Pattanaro, 134 n. 17, who sees the work as
caracteristic of Garofalo, especially in comparison with the treatment of
imprint in the cloud of angels in the central panel.

19. Humfrey and Lucco, esp. n. 28, where they briefly mention Vasari’s
chronology. The authors’ observations on the Costabili polyptych have been
incorporated into the catalogue entry by Humfrey in Bayer, 98-105. See also
Peter Humfrey, “Dosso Dosso e la peinture de rebales,” Revue de l’Art 119

20. Humfrey, in Bayer, 102. Whether Dosso visited Rome prior to 1513, or
any point in his career, continues to be a vexing question for art historians.
While it is clear that Dosso assimilated the art of Rome in his own works, what
is important to this inquiry is the calculated, self-conscious difference of
Dossian as an Orator from artists such as Raphael. A look at the question from
the point of view of historiography provides further insight into this observation.
Lanzi, vol. 3, 155, celebrated the unexampled style of Dosso and his brother
Battista Dossi, claiming, “Formaron cosi ‘un lor proprio carattere,’ ma in gener
diverso. Dosso riacquista maravigliosamente nelle figure; Giovanni Battista forse
maggiormente il mezzanegazion.” (The artists’ different styles, yet in different
ways. Dosso succeeded wonderfully in making figures, whereas
Giovanni Battista achieved maybe less than average quality.) Camillo Lader-
chi, La pittrura ferrarese: Memorie (Ferrara: Abram Servadio, 1850), 69, empha-
ized the clear difference between the art of Raphael and Dosso, observing
that the figures of Raphael are supple (volte) and delicate (gentile), whereas
those of Dosso are more robust (Robustas). Alternatively, Cesare Cattaline,
Catalogo historico de’ pittori e scolturnri ferraresi e delle opere loro
(Ferrara: Francesco Pometalli, 1872-86), vol. 1, 157-38, preferred, as Franc-
esco Scannelli had before him, to compare Dosso to Correggio, especially
regarding their strength in coloring (“la forza del colorito”).

21. Andrea de Marchi (as in n. 2), 158-61; Ciammitti, introduction, 9-26;
Nicholas Penny, review of the exhibition Dosso Dossi: Pittore di Corte a Ferrara nel
Rinascimento, Burlington Magazine 141 (1999): 253-54. Francis Haskell, “Myster-
skepticism over the completion of the polyptych by 1514.

For further technical analysis on Dosso’s paintings, see idem, “Painting a Caleus of
Sprezzatura in the 1530s: A Technical Context for Dosso,” in Ciammitti et al.,
115-39; Andrea Rothe and Dawson W. Carr, “Poetry with Paint,” in Bayer,
55-64; Jadranka Bentini, “Dosso’s Works in the Galleria Estense, Modena,
23. Erwin Panofsky, Perspective as Symbolic Form, trans. Christopher Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 40–41: “But if perspective is not a factor of value, it is surely a factor of style. Indeed, it may even be characterized as to (Ernst Cassirer’s felicitous term to the history of art) one of those ‘symbolic forms’ in which ‘spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign.’ This is why it is essential to ask of artistic periods and regions not only whether they have perspective, but also which perspective they have.”

24. Ballarin, vol. 1, 314–15; and see the entry by Concetto Nicosia in Bentini (as in n. 4), 310.

25. Significantly, the Ferrarese historian Agostino Superbi understood that there was an equal division of labor between Dosso and Garofalo on the Costabili polyptych (as he notes in his Apparato de gli uomini illustri della città di Ferrara (Ferrara: Francesco Suzzi, 1620), 124: “... vedesi nella Patria nostra nella Chiesa de’ Padri di S. Andrea l’Altare Maggiore la metà sua [Garofalo], e l’altra metà del Dosso” (... one sees [among the many works of Garofalo] an another half by Garofalo, the other half by Dosso).

26. Ballarin, vol. 1, 90–91, attributes the design of the central panel to Dosso, whereas Humfrey and Lucco, 25, argue the case for Garofalo. Andrea de Marchi (as in n. 2), 159–60, suggests that the structure of the drawing for nearly all the saints in the central panel is by Garofalo, with some of the surface paint later transferred to Dosso.

27. Gheroldi (as in dosso), 103. The traces of pentimenti in the Costabili polyptych, some visible with the naked eye, are common in the practice of Dosso, for which see the essay concerning the artist’s working methods by Rothe and Carr (as in n. 22).

28. Cittadella (as in n. 20), vol. 1, 141: “Questa Tavola a miei giorni ... fu più ingiuria da chi si pretende di ritorrare, malamente lavandola, e scorticodanna negli ombreggiamenti, che dal lungo tratto del tempo; con tutto ciò considerato, in gran parte è sua bellezza di un’innata bellezza, ad alti colori con cui [...] painting in my days was so well maintained by those who purported to restore it—cleaning it poorly and skinning it in the areas of shading—than by weathering over a long time. Despite all this it maintains in large part its beauty.” Gheroldi (as in n. 22), 77–78, does take into careful consideration 19th-century restorations.


30. Sannelli (as in n. 14), 316: “Nella Chiesa detta di S. Andrea de’ Padri Agostiniani vi è la Tavola del Chorotheria, dove si scopre la Beata Vergine col Christo Bambino, e varii Santi dalle parti, e la figura della Santissima Madre è così ben presa che non si può desiderar altitudine, e meggiornamente maestosa, e per ogni parte compita, e degna... ed il tutto sta assai bene, ma la figura della B. Vergine viene in ogni tempo riconoscita di più eccellente bellezza” (In the church of S. Andrea of the Augustinian fathers there is a painting in the choir, where one finds the Blessed Virgin with the Christ Child, and various saints in the panels; and the figure of the most Blessed Mother is so well expressed with grace and decorum that it is certain one cannot desire a character more majestic, and with every part perfected and worthy. ... The entire altarpiece is very well made, but the figure of the Blessed Virgin is recognized throughout time for its most excellent beauty).


33. Cittadella (as in n. 20), vol. 1, 141: “Questa Tavola a miei giorni ... fu più ingiuria da chi si pretende di ritorrare, malamente lavandola, e scorticodanna negli ombreggiamenti, che dal lungo tratto del tempo; con tutto ciò considerato, in gran parte è sua bellezza di un’innata bellezza, ad alti colori con cui [...] painting in my days was so well maintained by those who purported to restore it—cleaning it poorly and skinning it in the areas of shading—than by weathering over a long time. Despite all this it maintains in large part its beauty.” Gheroldi (as in n. 22), 77–78, does take into careful consideration 19th-century restorations.

34. The question of Dosso’s place of birth and education is still debated in Franceschini’s Artisti a Ferrara in età umanistica e rinascimentali: Testimonianze archivistiche, doc. 121. However, Carlo Giovannini, 1992 (as in n. 16) claims that Dosso was born at Quistello, and Revere.

35. Scannelli (as in n. 14), 316: “Nella Chiesa detta di S. Andrea de’ Padri Agostiniani vi è la Tavola del Chorotheria, dove si scopre la Beata Vergine col Christo Bambino, e varii Santi dalle parti, e la figura della Santissima Madre è così ben presa che non si può desiderar altitudine, e meggiornamente maestosa, e per ogni parte compita, e degna... ed il tutto sta assai bene, ma la figura della B. Vergine viene in ogni tempo riconoscita di più eccellente bellezza” (In the church of S. Andrea of the Augustinian fathers there is a painting in the choir, where one finds the Blessed Virgin with the Christ Child, and various saints in the panels; and the figure of the most Blessed Mother is so well expressed with grace and decorum that it is certain one cannot desire a character more majestic, and with every part perfected and worthy. ... The entire altarpiece is very well made, but the figure of the Blessed Virgin is recognized throughout time for its most excellent beauty).

36. Isabella Fedozzi has convincingly identified the sitter in Dosso’s portrait as Antonio Costabili, in “Antonio Costabili, in “Antonio Costabili: Un ritratto: Cenni sulla committenza d’arte a Ferrara nel primo Cinquecento,” in Gimattini, 55–73. The author also connects the figure of a man in Garofalo’s Allegory of the Crucifixion, executed for the refectory of S. Andrea. Ballarin, vol. 1, 313, first attributed the portrait to Dosso, dating it to about 1519. Mauro Lucco dates the work to about 1520 but questions the attribution to Dosso in his entry for the recent exhibition catalogue, in Bayer, 238–39. I am very grateful to Andrea Bayer for helping me obtain photographs.
Julii II, predecessor noster, te [Alfonso I d'Este] et civitatem ferrariensem et
A. Taddei et Figli, 1920), 34; and idem, Vita di Ludovico Ariosto ricostruita su
wars that the most serene Duke Alfonso I waged, Costabili remained as vice
War," Journal of the History of Ideas 34 (1973): 220 n. 44. See further Robert
William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 240-48. On the biblical concept of peace, see The
Archivio Storico Lombardo 42 (1915): 165-67; Michele Catalano, Lucrezia Borgia
qua gens vel civitas, quae bello petenda est, vel vindicare neglexerit quod a suis
Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism (Princeton: Princeton University
published in Silvio Pasquazi, Poeti Estensi del Rinascimento (Florence: Felice Le
Pictura" and 'De Statua," ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon,
H.W. Regout, La doctrine de la guerrejuste de Saint Augustin d nosjours (Paris: A.
50. Sociological studies into court culture include Werner Gundersheimer,
Ferrara: The Style of a Renaisssance Despotism (Princeton: Princeton University
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
poems in praise of Alfonso I d’Este’s military triumphs.
51. Oswalt (as in n. 51), 240–48; John F.A. Sawyer, The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in
52. Desiderius Erasmus, Quaesitio in 237, 238, 239: “Quod Deus pacem, et
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
poems in praise of Alfonso I d’Este’s military triumphs.
53. Desiderius Erasmus, Prima legem, 27: “Quam non ipse potest munda

deliberatio pacis, num satrapam pollicetur, num urbium eversorem, num bellato-
dominii tui, subdicta invidat, et te civitatem ferrariensem, et omnium subditarum
tos, pro menses duos a presentatione huic nostris, ut alia ad placitum nostrum suspendimus, relaxamus teque absolvimus etc. Datum
beneplacitum nostrum suspendimus, relaxamus teque absolvimus etc. Datum

H.W. Regout, La doctrine de la guerre juste de Saint Augustin à nos jours (Paris: A.
Pedone, 1934), 1–130; Dictionnaire de théologie catholique (Paris: Librairie
Letouzey et Aîné, 1947), vol. 6, s.v. "Guerre," cols. 1899-962; and Roland H.
Bainton, Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical
55. For a discussion of the religious and artistic exchange in early 16th-
century Ferrara that takes a different view from my own study, see Anna Maria
Fioravanti Baraldi, “Vita artistica e dibattiti religioso a Ferrara nella prima
trecentina, in Emilia e in Romagna, un romanzo polifonico tra Riforma e Controriforma (Milan: Electa, 1995), 105–25; and idem, “Ludovico Pittorico e la figura
56. Geralomo Baruffaldi, Dissertatio, de poeta ferrarissimuius (Ferrara: Bernar-
dini Pometalli, 1698); 58; Ferrante Borsetti, Historia almi ferrarissin gymnasii
(Ferrara: Bernardi Pometalli, 1755), vol. 2, 392; Giammaria Mazzuchelli, Gl
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
poems in praise of Alfonso I d’Este’s military triumphs.
57. The poem is in Bovio’s autobiograph manuscript: Francescini Bovii Ferrarinisii, Carmina (Elegiae, Epigrammas, Tumuli), BAF MQ 169, fol. 123v–124r: “Hic mos miliitus, nequente tolerare quietem. / Sed semper motus, unde lucrunt, amant. / Nos cumpacem, pacis Deus, o, bene vere, / Pacumque iam stultum munere reddere tuo. / Quam non ipse potest munda dare, / Corporis atque animae nos, rogo pace, fove.”
58. Desiderius Erasmus, Quaestio in 237, 238, 239: “Quod Deus pacem, et
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
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60. Desiderius Erasmus, Quaestio in 237, 238, 239: “Quod Deus pacem, et
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
poems in praise of Alfonso I d’Este’s military triumphs.
61. Desiderius Erasmus, Quaestio in 237, 238, 239: “Quod Deus pacem, et
(1971), s.v. "Bovio, Francesco Bernardino," 550. Bovio composed a number of
poems in praise of Alfonso I d’Este’s military triumphs.
Lutherum, for which see Antonio Samaritani, "La defensio di Pietro Scazzano.

"Diligentia mea: La mia fortezza nella quale mi salvaro se mai piu sero dali nullia apreso la infinita maiesta tua, scio che non hai bisogno dele operatione sei tu.

"Fortitudo mea: La mia fortezza nela quale mi salvaro se mai piu sero dali nullia apreso la infinita maiesta tua, scio che non hai bisogno dele operatione sei tu.

"La mia fortezza nella quale mi salvaro se mai piu sero dali nullia apreso la infinita maiesta tua, scio che non hai bisogno dele operatione sei tu.

"E占比nota inexpugnabili, ma me inganava, perch? non 6 forteza dove non ingrato ala tua maiesta di tanta gratia quanta mi hai concessa liberandomi de


"And obsolescent without considering its potential symbolism; Gibbons (as in n. 71.


"and obsolescent without considering its potential symbolism; Gibbons (as in n. 71.


entry and the construction of a church, when time permits, and where the duke pleases; and I was one of the aforementioned thirty-two.


91. La Miniatura estense, ed. Federica Toniolo (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1996), 160–61, 65–66, 75, claims that the donor portrayed in the Lamentation by Battista Benvenuti, called Ortolano (Galleria Borghese, Rome) is Antonio Costabili, whom she identifies on the basis of physiognomic similarities with his portrait by Dosso. Ortolano’s painting, datable to about 1506, has a provenance from the church of the Most Holy Trinity. According to Fedozi, it was probably housed in a temporary oratory constructed for the Madonna di Porta di Sotto. On the painting and its provenance, see Ballarin, vol. 1, 271–72.


94. Carolynn Walker Rynum, Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 231–35, discusses the symbolic function of the martyr body. It may be worth exploring the possible connection between the Costabili polyptych and a series of altarpieces commissioned in Venice from 1509 to 1511 from such artists as Giovanni Buonsignorio and Titian, which Alessandro Nova points out were meant “as petitions for protection against the plague” and “simultaneously celebrated the end of the worst of the political threats” to the city; Nova, “Giorgione’s Inferno with Amen and Aschises for Taddeo Contarini,” in Cammotti et al., 53–54.


96. Ibid., 177.

97. Costabili was in Mantua on diplomatic missions in 1506 and again in 1509. Clifford Brown has republished a document from the Archivio di Stato of Mantua indicating that on Apr. 11, 1512, Dosso was paid for a painting with eleven figures in the Palazzo di S. Sebastiano, “in the Palazzo di San Sebastiano (1506–1512)” and the Art Patronage of Francesco II Gonzaga, Fourth Marquis of Mantua,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts 129 (1997): 151–55. Vasari, vol. 6, 460, claims that Garofalo worked for two years in Mantua with Lorenzo Costa. Furthermore, in Nov. 1519 Alfonso I d’Este sent both Dosso and Titian to Mantua to study the works of the artists owned by Isabella d’Este. A list of the artists’ visit is described in a letter to Isabella d’Este by her correspondent Girolamo da Sestola, which was first published by Alessandro Luzio, La galleria dei Gonzaga venduta all’Inghiottera nel 1627–28: Documenti degli archivi di Mantova e Londra (1915; reprint, Rome: Bardi, 1974), 218.


100. Meli (as in n. 100), 75r–75v: “Ricordate signore di fare vendetta de quelli innocenti terini, duri, e lapidi, gli quali sono stati destruttori della mia tropicola Cittá di Hiresulam: accendendo le mi sensibili passioni e parti sensuali, alla rebellioni della ragione: e destruzione della parte mia spirituale. E quale vendetta debbano dimandare? Non altra che quella quale’ si addice ad esse fidele e tesorere altre volte in essi eraierio: e sustando la fede mia operosa” come Augustin expose.”


102. The author also makes a visual comparison between Dosso’s figure of Saint George and the figures of Saint Demetrius (vol. 2, figs. 648, 650). Tiziano, whereby he finds his own expression in the rich overtures and sumptuousness of gemlike colors and glimmers of gold.

103. The Dominican maintained close ties with the court of Ferrara: on Aug. 1, 1497, Savonarola presented Duke Ercole I d’Este to Pope Alexander VI Borgia at the court of Ferrara. The Dominican maintained close ties with the court of Ferrara: on Aug. 1, 1497, Savonarola presented Duke Ercole I d’Este to Pope Alexander VI Borgia at the court of Ferrara. The Dominicans held a hereditary seat in Ferrara in 1372–1473, with a prior of Ferrara who held a priorate in Ferrara and a priorate in Mantua, when time permits, and where the duke pleases; and I was one of the aforementioned thirty-two.


saetta diede nelle Chiese di Sant’Andrea, e getto via la testa al crucifisso grande, e die de anco nel Pilastro, dove è il tabernacolo col sacramento. In questo tempo predicava il vespere un frate di questo ordine detto Frate Andrea dalla Barba (Andrea Baura?).

119. Mario Equicola, “Genealogia de signori estensi,” RAP ms CLII.549, Equicola, fol. 91, describes a comet that hit Ferrara in Borgo S. Angeli on March 4, 1501, which Duke Ercole I d’Este interpreted as a sign from God, and he subsequently erected a church, S. Maria degli Angeli, on the very site where it landed.

120. Studies on Calcagnini’s biography and work include Ferrante Borsetti (as in n. 54), vol. 2, 115-22; Giannandrea Barotti, Memorie storiche di letterati ferraresi (Ferrara: Gli Eredi di Giuseppi Rinaldi, 1792), vol. I, 287-306; Ernesto Ferrarese del secolo XVI (Rovigo: A. Conzatti, 1899); Alfonso Lazzari, “Un frate di questo ordine detto Frate saetta diede nelle Chiesa di Sant’Andrea, e getto via la testa al crucifisso, and it landed.
