

# Angelo Maria Monaco

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## Refining a vernacular idiom and the endless “questione meridionale”. A focus on Francesco Negri Arnoldi’s critical approach to Southern Italian Cinquecento Sculpture

Italian landscape. The ‘Vasarian’ stigma\*

*In memoria di Francesco Negri Arnoldi  
che citava gli studi di un dottorando  
anche se non suo allievo diretto  
Venezia, Maggio 2023*

“His most important contribution to the general history of art lies in his theoretical considerations of the notion of the periphery”.<sup>1</sup> Given the necessary distinctions, it would not be out of place to apply this iconic synthesis of the scientific approach to the Cultural Heritage by Ljubo Karaman (1886–1971) to the Italian Art Historian, Francesco Negri Arnoldi (1932–Rome, 2018). Because, despite the chronological gap, and the geographical focus between them, we can say that they were both strenuous defenders of non-mainstream art. And their common enemy was the hierarchical approach to the ‘histories’ of Art.

Francesco Negri Arnoldi’s position undoubtedly played a fundamental role in combating a hierarchical approach both to works of art and to Art History. Not only by redeeming some categories of works of art from an ancillary or secondary dimension for the major arts such as within the vast range of possibilities offered by sculpture, but, above all by re-tracing

\* It is the author’s wish to express his gratitude to the Conference Curators for accepting the proposal and the essay.

<sup>1</sup> “Introduction,” in *Art history and the discourse on the centre and periphery. An homage to Ljubo Karaman 1886 – 1971*, international conference, ed. Martina Petrinović (Zagreb: Croatian Society of Art Historians, 2022), 2

a geography of the development of artistic craftsmanship, in Southern areas of the Italian peninsula. In his book *Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale* (Sixteenth-century Sculpture in Southern Italy), (Napoli, 1996), Francesco Negri Arnoldi directed his gaze towards phenomena interpreted as being vernacular translations of more noble languages, claiming, a unique identity for the former (Fig. 1, 2). He did this not necessarily in conflict with, but rather as a reaction to a cultural approach that was heavily influenced by the ‘stigma’ of the ‘Vasarian’ geographical division of the peninsula into ‘centers and peripheries’ (as well as a biographical approach to central and peripheral artists).

How does Negri Arnoldi sharpen his critical approach?

An important experience for Negri Arnoldi was when he taught at the newly founded University of Lecce, in Apulia (the regional city of the Salento area, which was still considered very peripheral in those years). This allowed him to acquire a deep knowledge of the artistic heritage of the area, in a period when a large part of such heritage was yet to be rediscovered.

A minor revolution began with the development of the Italian University system, in the 1950s. Universities were founded not only in central but also in peripheral cities. Universities that offered degree courses in Art History, and, soon, also in local Cultural Heritage studies.<sup>2</sup> A turning point in the critical debate that ensued, was without doubt an essay by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, published in the first volume of the colossal, 12 volumes, *Storia dell'Arte Einaudi* entitled *Questioni e Metodi* ‘Subjects and Methodologies’. And another three volumes entitled *La Memoria dell'Antico* – ‘The Memory of Antiquity’, which offered the choral result of an interdisciplinary approach to Art History on a national scale.<sup>3</sup> This mid-20th century period was important in terms of the revision of methodological approaches to historical-artistic studies as part of the process of emancipation from both an idealistic perspective (I refer to Benedetto Croce) and from a formalistic one (I refer to Roberto Longhi).<sup>4</sup>

The book by F. N. A. was based on a critical approach that deals with a solid understanding of the local material culture background he had studied. This applies to limestone sculpture in Puglia and Salento, where several craftsmen shaped a “Renaissance” in local stone i.e. a phenomenon that F. N. A. interpreted not merely as the result of imported fashion but as evidence of a ‘geo-local’ art historical identity.

2 Here is not the place to offer even a short history of the expansion of Universities and Departments of History of Art in Italy during the last century.

3 Enrico Castelnuovo, Carlo Ginzburg, “Centro e periferia,” in *Storia dell'Arte italiana. Materiali e problemi. Questioni e metodi*, ed. G. Previtali, I, vol.1 (Torino: Einaudi, 1979), 285-352.

4 For an overview of the development of methodological approaches to Art History, in the 20th Century, see, for instance: Gianni Carlo Sciolla, *La critica d'arte del Novecento* (Torino: Utet, 2012).



Fig. 1

Professor Francesco Negri Arnaldi in a public speaking (source: HortiHesperidum. "Francesco Negri Arnaldi ci ha lasciati," <https://www.horti-hesperidum.com/hh/2018/07/17/francesco-negri-arnaldi-ci-ha-lasciati/>)

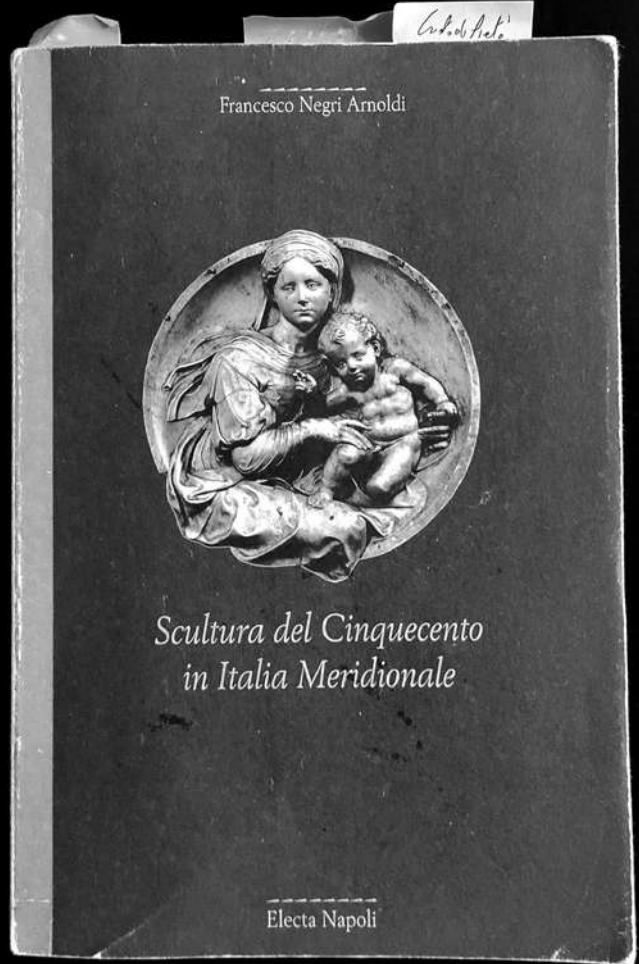


Fig. 2

*Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale*, Napoli 1997 (photo A. M. Monaco)

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In his introduction to the *Il tempio del gusto* (The temple of taste) (Milano 1984),<sup>5</sup> Alvar Gonzales Palacios highlights how important the meaning attributed to words is, even when speaking about “art or Art”.<sup>6</sup> From his eminent point of view, the word given to things reflects the cultural attitude concerning objects of art. His focus is on ‘arti applicate’ and it is interesting to see how the same subject has been named in other European languages. The English definition for ‘Applied Arts’, which has a technical sound is, in French, arts ‘décoratifs’, which is more ephemeral in tone. While the German word ‘Kunstgewerbe’ refers clearly to the mechanic processes of craftsmanship, the most used Italian definition is ‘Arti minori’, connotes not as ‘smaller’ but rather as ‘less important’ indicating a hierarchical approach to the question. In Italy other ‘words of art’ too, such as ‘Scuole and ‘Artistic movements’ are often labeled as ‘maggiori’ or ‘minori’, thus, here too, revealing connotatively, the relationship between a Center and a Periphery. It is not just a question of translation<sup>7</sup>.

A short portrait of F. N. A. and his *La scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale* (Naples, 1997).

Francesco Negri Arnoldi (1932–2018) was first active in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage of Palermo (1968–1972), then for the ICCD (Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione) in Rome (1972–1980). Later he taught, as a full professor, at the universities of Lecce and Viterbo and, from 1997 until he was appointed as professor emeritus, in 2008, at the University of Tor Vergata. During his long career, he was the author of very important essays and monographs on a wide range of art historical topics and on the methodology behind the study of History of Art<sup>8</sup>.

*Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale* (Sixteenth-century Sculpture in Southern Italy), was published in Naples in 1997<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 1).

A short history.

First of all, the author identifies, in the development of the studies on the topic, two major eras: one pre-war, and the other post-war. A further distinction is the progressive diffusion of photography as a device for researchers. Among the first important reconnaissance works include

5 Alvar Gonzales-Palacios, *Il tempio del gusto. Le arti decorative in Italia fra classicismi e barocco* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2020) (1st ed. Milano: Longanesi editrice, 1984), 9-17.

6 I quote the rhetoric question from Ernst Gombrich's introduction to *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1950, 3rd edition), 5.

7 Maurizio Bettini, *Vertere. Un'antropologia della traduzione nella cultura antica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012).

8 For a list of publications check this link: <https://www.horti-hesperidum.com/hh/2018/07/17/francesco-negri-arnoldi-ci-ha-lasciati/> (last check on 16th May 2023), a selected bibliography, in this essay, in the appendix 1.

9 Francesco Negri Arnoldi, *Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale* (Napoli: Electa, 1997).

those of Adolfo Venturi: *La Scultura del '400 del 1908*<sup>10</sup>; *La Scultura del '500* (1935).<sup>11</sup> The post-war phase of sculpture studies in southern Italy sees its founding act in the exhibition *Sculture lignee nella Campania*, curated by Raffaello Causa and Ferdinando Bologna (Naples, 1950).<sup>12</sup> That was relevant for a new methodological approach to the topic.

### Methodology.

The study of sculpture is based on the comparison of several pieces in a given geographical area, examining issues from a perspective that helps retrace the dynamics and relationships between groups or even individual specimens with similar characteristics. His research highlights two key aspects—one methodological and the other critical:

1. The significance of conservation and restoration, particularly in terms of authenticity: How authentic is what we see after restoration? (Fig. 3).
2. The ability to establish semantic connections between works of art, as seen in the case of Montorsoli's *Neptune and Scylla*. This is achieved by linking the sculpture to Montorsoli's role as a restorer of the *Apollo of the Belvedere* and the *Laocoön* (Fig. 4).

### Geography of the book.

The book is divided into four main sections: Napoli, Sicily, Calabria Puglia, and Basilicata (Terra d'Otranto). The starting point is the awareness of having to deal with an irremediably fragmentary catalog of works, corrupted by time, semi-unknown, and in most cases completely devoid of collateral supporting documentation.

Naples. No doubt Naples is a center in itself, but the multiplicity of artistic experiences is linked to the presence of different communities with strong cultural identities in the area. According to F. N. A., at least three factors played a pivotal role here: the presence of the Spaniards, the presence of the Tuscans, and the presence of the Lombards. The results of 16th-century sculpture in Naples are therefore the result of a classicist three-headed *koinè* (communion) ready to spread out in several geographical directions, with a particular focus, on political reasons, in southern Italy. It is worthy to quote the following passage:

“With the administrative political dependence on Naples, seat of the Viceroy, that process of marginalization and provincialization begins for these regions which will determine their slow decline, but as for other Italian peripheral areas, it does not seem to compromise more than a lot the

10 A. Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte italiana. La scultura del Quattrocento* (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1908).

11 A. Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte italiana. La scultura del Cinquecento* (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1935).

12 *Sculture lignee nella Campania*, catalogo della mostra a cura di Raffaello Causa, Ferdinando Bologna, prefazione di Bruno Majoli (Napoli, Palazzo Reale) (Napoli: stab. tip. Giuseppe Montanino, 1950).

23 Giovanni da Nola,  
Sepolcro di Ramon Folch de  
Cardona (prima del restauro),  
Bellpuig (Lerida), chiesa  
parrocchiale

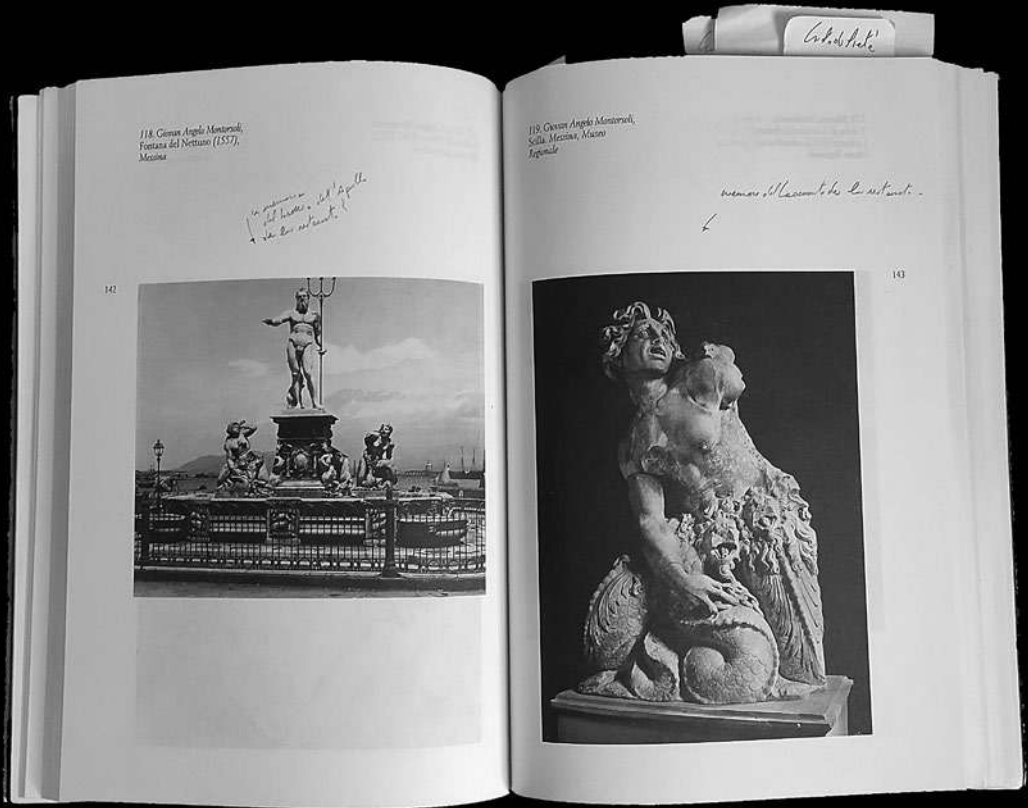


24 Giovanni da Nola,  
Sepolcro di Ramon Folch  
de Cardona (dopo il restauro),  
Bellpuig (Lerida), chiesa  
parrocchiale



Fig. 3

Before and after restoration: Giovanni da Nola,  
Sepolcro di Ramon Folch de Cardona, Bellpuig  
(Lerida) (*Scultura del Cinquecento*: 44-45)  
(photo: A. M. Monaco)



118. Giovan Angelo Montorsoli,  
Fontana del Nettuno (1557),  
Messina

*In occasione  
del lavoro di  
la. la. restanti.*

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119. Giovan Angelo Montorsoli,  
Scilla (Messina, Museo  
Regionale)

*memoria di lavoro del  
di restanti.*

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Fig. 4

Giovan Angelo Montorsoli in Sicily: Neptune fountain  
(Messina) and Scilla (Messina, Museo Regionale)  
(*Scultura del Cinquecento*: 142-143)  
(photo: A. M. Monaco)

economic dynamics and the same artistic activity. In fact, during this period in Puglia and Basilicata, there is a lively recovery also in the field of sculpture, an art which, however, remains more than others linked to local cultural resources. Also in the use of the common materials is the adoption of local soft stone, as is the constant use of the local high tradition of craftsmanship, the practical experience of stonemasons and carvers, which represents the true basic school in the formation of the sculptors themselves.”<sup>13</sup>

Sicily. Is an island, and the sea plays a fundamental role by shifting the axis of commercial and artistic traffic along the routes of the Tyrrhenian Sea. A straight line connects the two ends of the island, Messina and Palermo, with the port of Carrara from which precious marble blocks have come since the 15th century, together with numerous artists looking for important commissions.

As regards the Calabria region, the cultural situation lies, frozen, in a permanent state of passivity. Once again here we find a “Rinascimento di importazione” (imported Renaissance). Equidistant from Campania and Sicily, the geographical area has a series of works of art that seem completely unrelated to the context from which they were commissioned. One interesting aspect, however, is the presence of early works by artists who would later establish themselves in other centers where they would eventually emerge as major figures, as is the case of Pietro Bernini in Naples. Here, then, even the marginality of certain experiences can be positively recovered to retrace a broader design of the history of art and the evolution of style.

Apulia region. The case of the Cinquecento sculpture in Salento, where the phenomenon of importation corresponds to a considerably marked process of translation of forms and models elaborated elsewhere, is unique<sup>14</sup>.

13 This is a free translation from the book: “Con la dipendenza politico amministrativa da Napoli, sede del Vicerè, inizia per queste regioni quel processo di emarginazione e di provincializzazione che determinerà la loro lenta decadenza, ma come per altre aree periferiche italiane, non sembra compromettere più che tanto la dinamica economica e la stessa attività artistica. Non manca infatti in questo periodo in Puglia e in Basilicata una vivace ripresa anche nel campo della scultura, arte che resta tuttavia più di altre legata alle risorse culturali locali. Anche nell'uso dei materiali comune è l'adozione della pietra tenera locale, come costante è il ricorso alla locale altissima tradizione artigiana, all'esperienza pratica di lapidici e intagliatori, che rappresenta la vera scuola di base nella formazione degli stessi scultori di figura”, Negri Arnoldi, *Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale*, 220.

14 One of my contributions went in this direction, in this case aimed at recovering a specific episode. The circulation of a subject matter through the medium of chalcography, and its changing in meaning (resemantization) according to a different purpose and display. This is the case of the *Triumphus Caesaris* by Jacobus Argentoratensis (from Strassburg) inspired by the cycle of canvases by Mantegna (now in Hampton Court, UK), on the façade of two churches in Salento: Galatone, church of San Sebastiano and Mesagne, church of Santa Maria Annunziata). See Angelo Maria Monaco, “Il corteo trionfale a Galatone dal *Triumphus Caesaris* di Jacobus Argentoratensis tratto dal Mantegna. Un caso di circolazione mediterranea di un tema iconografico” in *Ottant'anni di un Maestro. Omaggio a Ferdinando Bologna*, ed. Francesco Abbate (Napoli: Paparo, 2006), 263-276. More insight on the same *suite* Chiara Callegari, “Disegni stampati” a Venezia nel Cinquecento. *Cronologia – bibliografia – glossario* (Venezia: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, 2005), 27-30.

Here a different type of problem arises, already intuited by F. N. A. but developed by subsequent criticism, which had no deep impact on the exhibition in Matera (about which I will write soon).

And that is, what are the sources of supply and updating of the artists active on-site?<sup>15</sup>

“16th-century Apulian sculpture is characterized by an eclectic language in which elements of Veneto-Dalmatian culture converge to varying degrees, predominant as in the past, Tuscan-Abruzzese, Lombard-Neapolitan, and even Calabrian-Sicilian. Certain rare funerary complexes, among the least offended by breakdowns and tampering, attest to the coexistence of these disparate components”.<sup>16</sup>

Artists such as Gabriele Riccardi (Fig. 5, 6), Stefano da Putignano, and Paolo Catalano da Cassano, were very popular in their times. Expert limestone sculptors, and often architects, they were able to keep alive the tradition of the Romanesque construction site (from which Nicola Pisano and Niccolò dell’Arca had emerged, who it should not be forgotten always signed as “de Apulia” i.e. coming from Apulia) by updating the style of the works to satisfy the new influences of the Renaissance. A hybrid style was thus born, in which memory of the past and awareness of the present coexisted, often maintaining a profound identity matrix, one that is linked to the materials used.

F. N. A. was among the first to recognize this important aspect, which stood out in the years in which Apulian regional historiography, on the one hand, – in the north of Bari –, was concentrated on its Romanesque past (reinvented in the “identity” restoration practices of the beginning of the century), and on the other – in Lecce and in Salento – aspired only to affirm the triumphal age of Baroque.

“Still partly linked to the great medieval tradition, also as regards destination and function, it presents formal tendencies opposed to those of the classicist current dominant in the rest of the South. Even the rare takes from the Ancient [...] appear to be marked by an aesthetic ideal of

15 Early studies on Arts in Salento in the 16th century were: Maurizio Calvesi, Mario Manieri Elia, *Personalità e strutture caratterizzanti il 'Barocco' leccese* (Roma: Comunità europea arte e cultura, 1966). Many studies have been published about the circulation of paintings in Apulia which came from Venice, for instance, see Clara Gelao, “I Vivarini in Puglia. Diffusione e committenza,” in *I Vivarini. Lo splendore della pittura tra Gotico e Rinascimento*, catalogo della mostra a cura di G. Romanelli (Conegliano, 20 Feb. – 5 Giu. 2016) (Venezia: Marsilio, 2016), 59-78; for a focus on the Salento area see: *L'oro, la santità, la gloria. Il restauro dei polittici veneti al Museo Castromediano*, a cura di B. Minerva (Galatina: Editrice Salentina, 2020).

16 I freely translate from Italian: “La scultura pugliese del cinquecento è caratterizzata da un linguaggio eclettico in cui confluiscono, in varia misura, elementi di cultura veneto-dalmata, predominante come per il passato, toscano-abruzzese, lombardo-napoletana, e persino calabro-sicula. Attestano il coesistere di tali disparate componenti alcuni rari complessi funerari, tra i meno oltraggiati da guasti e manomissioni”, Negri Arnoldi, *Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale*, 222.

265. *Gabriele Riccardi,  
San Rocco (1556). Lecce,  
chiesa di Sant'Antonio*

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266. Gabriele Riccardi  
(attrib.), Colonne istoriate.  
Otranto, cattedrale (cripta)



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Fig. 5

Gabriele Riccardi scultore e architetto (*San Rocco*, 1556, Lecce, Church of St. Antonio and *Colonne dell'altare reliquiario dei Martiri*, post. 1536, Otranto, Cathedral)  
(photo: A. M. Monaco)



Fig. 6

Gabriele Riccardi, *Colonne dell'altare reliquiario dei Martiri*, post. 1536 (detail with numismatic portraits of "Carolus Rex" and "F. Arao" – Ferdinando II d'Aragona), Otranto, Cathedral (photo: A. M. Monaco)



Fig. 7

Masters and workshops of 16th and 17th centuries, (Gabriele Riccardi, Francesco Antonio Zimbalo, Cesare Penna, Giuseppe Zimbalo), Santa Croce basilica, façade, Lecce  
[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica\\_di\\_Santa\\_Croce\\_%28Lecce%29](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_di_Santa_Croce_%28Lecce%29)

rude essentiality [...] it must be considered, however, that what appears unfinished [...] to us is the result of loss of polychromy.”<sup>17</sup>

One clear example is the Basilica di Santa Croce façade, where Riccardi mixed medieval elements of architectural sculpture with Vitruvius’ orders (probably using the vernacular translation of the treatise by Cesare Cesariano, Como 1521)<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 7).

Worthy of interest also are the iconographic comparisons between works of art by different artists. Iconographic comparisons were made both between simulacra of the same typology, and of the relationship between archetype and copy, their translation into local materials (Fig. 8), and the topic of the “memory of the Antiquity” (Fig. 9). Again, the eye of the connoisseur cannot but be aware of that of the conservator. The reconstruction of the past travels on a double track whose destination, however, is not scholarly knowledge in itself, but wide-ranging dissemination whose goal is to know, to disseminate, and to develop sensitivity in the eye of the observer who is first and foremost a citizen – quoting from the back cover of the book “unaware holder of such a precious art heritage”. It is an important lesson still worth learning.

To provide a temporary conclusion: the stigma is still alive.

After the lesson imparted by F. N. A., things began to change and new generations of scholars in Southern Italy, have taken a broader look at the complex artistic reality that surrounds them, in an attempt to demolish those historiographic categories of center and periphery, both in painting (for example see the work of Sergio Ortese, 1971-2018, a convinced supporter of the autonomy of late Gothic painting in Salento)<sup>19</sup> and in sculpture (and here I turn my gaze for example to Gabriele Riccardi, who I curated<sup>20</sup>). A similar approach in conveying to the reader an idea of the relationship between center and periphery, one that is in no way ancillary

17 I freely translate from Italian: “Ancora in parte legata alla grande tradizione medievale, anche per quanto riguarda destinazione e funzione, essa presenta tendenze formali opposte a quelle della corrente classicista dominante nel resto del Meridione. Anche le rare riprese dall’Antico [...] appaiono improntate ad un ideale estetico di rude essenzialità [...] c’è da considerare, tuttavia, che quanto a noi appare di incompiuto [...] è il risultato della perdita della policromia”, Negri Arnoldi, *Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale*, 221. It is not possible to dwell on the theme of polychromy of the sculpture in this essay.

18 Marcello Fagiolo, “Introduzione a S. Croce: ‘l’ordine prigioniero’, ‘l’ordine atlantico’, l’esaltazione della Croce e la Gerusalemme Celeste”, in *Santa Croce a Lecce. Storia e restauri*, a cura di A. Cassiano, V. Cazzato (Galatina: Congedo, 1997): 31-63. The edition is: Cesare Cesariano, *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de Architectura Libri Decem traducti de Latino in Vulgare affigurati, Commentati; et con mirando ordine Insigniti: per il quale facilmente potrai trovare la moltitudine de li abstrusi et reconditi Vocabuli a li soi loci et in epsa tabula con summo studio expositi et enucleati ad Immensa utilitate de ciascuno Studioso et benivolo di epsa opera. Cum Gratia et Privilegio. Gotardus De Ponte [Como, 1521].*

19 Sergio Ortese, *Pittura tardogotica nel Salento* (Galatina: Congedo, 2014). In memory of the Scholar see: Monaco, Angelo Maria, “Il senso critico di Sergio Ortese per la Storia dell’Arte nel Salento (1971-2019)”, in *La Storia dell’Arte come impegno civile per il territorio. In ricordo di Sergio Ortese (1971-2019)*, a cura di L. Gaeta, N. Cleopazzo, M. Cesari (Galatina: Congedo, 2022): 29-36.

20 Angelo Maria Monaco, “Riccardi, Gabriele,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)*, 87 (Roma: Istituto per l’Enciclopedia Treccani, 2016): 161-164.

312. Stefano da Putignano,  
Madonna adorante, particolare  
del Presepe della Cattedrale  
di Polignano a Mare

314. Domenico Gagini  
(attrib.), Madonna orante.  
Formia, chiesa di Sant'Erasmo

313. Paolo da Cassano  
(attrib.), Madonna orante.  
Bari, Pinacoteca Provinciale

315. Scultore pugliese,  
Madonna orante, particolare  
del Presepe della Cattedrale  
di Lecce

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Fig. 8

Dissemination of models: Masters of the 16th century (Stefano da Putignano, Paolo da Cassano, Domenico Gagini, Scultore pugliese – later attributed to Gabriele Riccardi –), Holy Mary in the Nativity, Stefano da Putignano, illustrations in *Scultura del Cinquecento*: 300. (photo: A. M. Monaco)



Fig. 9

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Workshop from Salento of the 16th and 17th centuries,  
The “Greek” fountain (rather with Ovidian subjects  
matter), Gallipoli. (photo: A. M. Monaco)

but, rather, is programmatic, can be seen in the layout of the volume itself and its rich apparatus of illustrations. Wherever, whenever, a wide choice of material was available to historians, favored by a close relationship with the heritage offices, this tended to encourage, to highlight, of explicit or indirect thematic links between the works of art. In the age of pre-digitalization, one of the main tasks of an Art Historian was to assemble an archive of images designed for use as a personal tool for studying works of art. The archive, hosted in the Photo Library of Bibliotheka Hertziana, in 2015, includes over 7,000 black and white photographs, relating to Negri Arnoldi's most interesting areas of research, especially in southern Italy.<sup>21</sup> If this is so, then this archive is still well worth discussing and examining, at both the national and the international level.

The lack of attention paid to Renaissance beyond Naples towards Puglia and Salento as well is clear: it happened even in the most important exhibition held in Matera recently.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, a "Questione meridionale" (possibly "southern question")<sup>23</sup> is still alive.

Furthermore, to have secondary proof of how a "southern question" still exists in the field of studies, one only has to dwell on the mapping of localities in Italy, as mentioned in the recent volume by Bernard Aikema<sup>24</sup>. While, on the one hand, the geographical map of the peninsula is full of topographical indications in the central-northern geographical area, on the other hand, such indications drastically thin out when one moves south of Naples. This observation is intended as proof of how, even in the most important artistic historiography of our times, and despite the vast opening up of wider geographical horizons (towards central and northern Europe), it is still difficult to free oneself from the Vasarian hierarchies and show little, or no, interest (or perhaps even ignoring) the southern areas of the peninsula, where for decades now equally eminent Scholars (astonishingly poorly quoted in the same book) have reconstructed historiographical scenarios of great interest.<sup>25</sup> I accept responsibility for what

21 See the link provided in note 8.

22 *Rinascimento visto da Sud. L'Italia meridionale e il Mediterraneo tra '400 e '500*, catalogo della mostra a cura di D. Catalano, M. Ceriana, P. Leone de Castris, (Matera 19 Apr. - 19 Ago. 2019) (Matera: Artem, 2019).

23 The definition of "questione meridionale" (the southern matter?) is related to the pure history of the Italian nation, in the conflictual existence between north and south in terms of disadvantage of communities in economic, cultural and social fields. The "questione meridionale" deals with politics and with people. To relate a similar metaphor to the cultural fields is once again to state an inorganic perception of the evolution of studies as well between North and South. On the other hand, it is symptomatic of the lack of interest in southern Italy in not southern studies, reviews, and international conferences.

24 Bernard Aikema, *I Rinascimenti in Europa 1480-1620. Arte, geografia e potere* (Milano: 24 ORE Cultura – Libri Scheiwiller, 2021).

25 On the other hand, about arts in Puglia in the same chronological term, that is another possibility of Renaissance, see: *La Puglia, il manierismo, la controriforma*, catalogo della mostra a cura di A. Cassiano, F. Vona, (Lecce and Bitonto 16 Dic. 2012 – 16 Gen. 2013) (Galatina: Congedo, 2013). In the same catalogue, some insights about the Salento area provided by Angelo Maria Monaco, "La 'memoria dell'antico' in un'epoca di riforme. Alcuni spunti sull'iconografia tra il sacro e il profano in Terra d'Otranto", 17-26. When speaking about history of Art in southern Italy in early modern period, a glaring gap, is not mentioning the contributions by Francesco Abbate, at least: F. Abbate, *La scultura napoletana del Cinquecento* (Roma: Donzelli, 1993); Idem, *Storia dell'arte nell'Italia meridionale. Il Cinquecento* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001).

has been asserted above, completely without controversy, to highlight how, in the end, the process of emancipation from the parameter of the “center and the periphery” has not yet been completely successful. However, there are meaningful exceptions.

A closing remark and a personal memory.

It is worth recounting the following personal episode to give at least an idea of the human stature of the scholar Negri Arnoldi. The year 2004 was a special one for the Cultural Heritage Department of Lecce University. What would have been the most ambitious and most important conference on southern sculpture in recent times (not yet superseded) was being busily prepared, and curated by Letizia Gaeta. Dozens of nationally and internationally renowned scholars had been invited to come to Lecce to discuss their research, once again with the virtuous view of giving the right historiographical dignity to a factually peripheral reality. Two very heavy volumes of proceedings are the proof of such a relevant conference.<sup>26</sup> The significant episode dates back to the months of writing up the conference proceedings, for which the curator was able to rely on a large group of doctoral students including myself.

In charge of taking care of a series of contributions, I was given the privilege of dealing with the text by F. N. A. and had the opportunity to come into direct contact with the Professor, whose erudition made me feel very humble. It was during the first phone call that I was able to talk to him about my field of research, which was Cinquecento Sculpture in Salento, and refer to my first publication on the topic.<sup>27</sup> I was very surprised, once his paper was submitted, to read the list of references quoted, also the title of my book.<sup>28</sup> Beyond this personal memory, I am convinced that the episode serves to reveal the human stature of the scholar. A scholar both generous with suggestions, one ready to place his trust in young recruits, like a PhD student, even if the latter was not his direct pupil.

26 *La scultura meridionale in età moderna nei suoi rapporti con la circolazione mediterranea*: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Lecce 9-11 Giu. 2004), a cura di L. Gaeta, 2 voll. (Galatina: Congedo, 2007).

27 Francesco Negri Arnoldi, “Il progresso degli studi sulla scultura del Rinascimento in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia,” in *La scultura meridionale in età moderna nei suoi rapporti con la circolazione mediterranea*: 1-29; and see also, in the same proceedings, Angelo Maria Monaco, “Continuità e distanza nell’iconografia del Presepe pugliese: la Cavalcata dei Magi di Gabriele Riccardi e l’Adorazione del Bambino nel Duomo di Lecce,”: 379-397.

28 Angelo Maria Monaco, *La ‘Gerusalemme celeste’ di Otranto. Il mito degli ottocento martiri nelle sue riconfigurazioni memoriali* (Galatina: Congedo, 2004). For further research see: Angelo Maria Monaco, “Qui sunt et unde venerunt?. Topoi iconografici per il consenso agiografico nel culto degli ottocento Martiri di Otranto,” in *La conquista turca di Otranto (1480) tra “storia e mito”*, atti del convegno internazionale di studio a cura di Hubert Houben (Otranto / Muro Leccese, 28-31 Marzo 2007) (Galatina: Congedo, 2008): 157-195; see also: Angelo Maria Monaco, “The rhetorical Index in the Portraits of Mehmed II. Some Episodes between Words and Images, from the West Shore of the Mediterranean,” in *Images in the Borderlands: The Mediterranean between Christian and Muslim Worlds in the Early Modern Period*, ed. I. Čapeta Rakić, G. Capirotti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022): 197-222.

## Appendix

## A selected bibliography of studies by Francesco Negri Arnoldi

*Il disegno nella storia dell'arte italiana* (Roma: Carocci, 1986).

*Storia dell'arte. Per le Scuole superiori* (3 voll.) (Milano: Fabbri Editori, 1988).

*Il catalogo dei beni culturali e ambientali. Principi e tecniche di indagine* (Roma: Carocci 1988).

*La scultura del Quattrocento* (Torino: UTET collana Storia dell'arte in Italia, 1994).

*Scultura del Cinquecento in Italia meridionale*, (Napoli: Electa, 1997).

*Il mestiere dell'arte. Introduzione alla storia delle tecniche artistiche* (Napoli: Paparo, 2001).

*Il disegno nella storia dell'arte italiana* (Roma: Carocci, 2003).

*La guida al turismo culturale. Dalla formazione all'attività professionale* (Roma: Carocci, 2003).

"Il progresso degli studi sulla scultura del Rinascimento in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia," in *La scultura meridionale in età moderna nei suoi rapporti con la circolazione mediterranea: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi*, atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Lecce 9-11 Giu. 2004) a cura di L. Gaeta, 2 voll. (Galatina: Congedo, 2007): 1-29.

"Giovanni Dalmata a Roma," *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 67 (2012): [181]-198.

*Arte dell'Illuminismo nelle sculture da studio e da salotto* (Roma: De Luca, 2013).

*Il pannello di Arianna ovvero come vestono le statue* (Roma: collana Didattica di Horti Hesperidum, 2014).

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