

SEGNALAZIONI BIBLIOGRAFICHE

Emanuela Garofalo, Francesca Mattei (a cura di),
I Gonzaga fuori Mantova: Architettura, relazioni, potere,
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Dynastic families loom large in the history and historiography of Italian architecture. Rooted in the rich intellectual and artistic ecosystem of Mantua, the Gonzaga have long provided scholars with fertile ground for studies of early modern patronage. The family's ties to well-known figures – Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Mantegna, Giulio Romano and Jacopo Tintoretto foremost among them – have attracted particular interest. But as Claudia Conforti rightly notes in the prologue to the new volume *I Gonzaga fuori Mantova: Architettura, relazioni, potere*, edited by Emanuela Garofalo (Università degli Studi di Palermo) and Francesca Mattei (Università degli Studi Roma Tre), literature on the family has long suffered from myopia, rarely looking beyond the confines of the Mantuan court. With their revisionist history of the Gonzaga, Garofalo and Mattei have paved the way for a wholesale reconsideration of the family's sphere of influence between the mid-fifteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. The family's reach was sweeping in scope: the generations of the Gonzaga treated by the volume included political titans, celebrated *condottieri*, and prominent clergymen who galvanized developments in the visual arts and civic architecture, as well as innovations in the design of urban infrastructure, from hydrological systems to military engineering. By foregrounding the transmedial nature of Gonzaga patronage during the period, the editors have crafted a narrative of relevance to scholars working across multiple subfields.

The volume's seven tightly-focused essays, which grow out of a study day held at the Accademia di San Luca in Roma in 2019, leverage a renewed interest in microhistorical analysis. A response to the expansive, and often unwieldy, reach of new global histories of early modernity, this recent re-investment in the cultural dynamics of local environments offers scholars a methodological foothold in a discipline caught up in a moment of rapid reinvention. But as the editors deftly show, microhistory is itself a powerful tool in efforts to expand the geographical boundaries of the period⁽¹⁾. With close attention to the circulation of people, things,

ELIZABETH KASSLER-TAUB

Dartmouth College (New Hampshire, USA)

⁽¹⁾ See, e.g., John-Paul Ghobrial (ed.), "Global History and Microhistory", *Past and Present*, 242, supplement 14 (November 2019).

and ideas, the seven contributions together chart a constellation of geographies shaped by the Gonzaga, moving between the familiar centers of Florence, Milan, and Rome and key – albeit understudied – courts in the Italian South, with an emphasis on sixteenth-century Sicily. In this way, the volume participates in ongoing efforts to reframe the history of early modernity as a history of networks – economic, cultural, and political – which connected far-flung nodes into an emergent global system.

Whereas a comprehensive survey of the Gonzaga's participation in early modern architectural culture would yield only a superficial view of a subject of this scale, the volume's compelling, 'episodic' structure instead affords what the editors describe as a 'panoramic' view of the family's architectural entanglements. The volume's case studies are indeed wide ranging. The volume begins with Amedeo Belluzzi's exploration of Ludovico Gonzaga's patronage of the *tribuna* of Santissima Annunziata in Florence, with special consideration of local resistance to his foreign intervention in the project. Readers are subsequently transported to Milan, where, as Claudia Candia recounts, Francesco II Gonzaga pursued the construction of a new residence – an unrealized project that she suggests may appear in designs by Leonardo da Vinci. Bianca de Divitiis, in turn, proposes that a fresco cycle of life-sized horses realized in the Castello Pandone in Venafrò – an echo of the cycle in the Palazzo Te in Mantua – functions as an index of diplomatic relationships between the Gonzaga and their contemporaries. Emanuela Garofalo expands the volume's treatment of southern Italy with an account of Ferrante Gonzaga's deep investment in the urban development of sixteenth-century Palermo during his lengthy viceregal tenure in the city, emphasizing his architectural activity beyond the military domain with which he is most commonly associated. Francesca Mattei shifts our attention northward to Rome, where Ercole Gonzaga, appointed cardinal by Clemente VII, quickly made a name for himself as a collector and prolific patron, though his tenuous financial situation hampered his ambitions for a new residential palace in the city. The volume's final essays return our gaze to the South. Fulvia Scaduto offers a detailed account of the patronage of Francesco Gonzaga, the bishop of Cefalù, whose interests centered in large part on restructuring the city's monumental, medieval cathedral in response to changing liturgical traditions. And finally, Isabella Balestreri and Cristiana Coscarella detail the patronage of Gonzaga bishops in Calabria, which included a campaign to renovate existing edifices in Cariati, a heavily-fortified town perched on the Ionian coast that had been named the seat of the diocese in the early fifteenth century. Situating the Gonzaga within this flexible geographical framework enables the editors to achieve one of the volume's stated aims: the revitalization of the study

of early modern court culture, a subject traditionally stunted by provincialism. Far from being mere figureheads doling out favors in distant courts, what takes shape is instead a sprawling cast of protagonists intimately involved in the mechanics of making and building. For the Gonzaga, patronage was not simply an instrument of political legitimation or a convenient diplomatic tool, but was in fact essential to the construction of individual and familial identities. Among the volume's many contributions to the field, the choice to emphasize the Gonzaga's involvement in southern Italy is of particular value. In this respect, the editors expand upon an important collection of essays on the Habsburg viceroys in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sicily, among them a rigorous account of Ferrante Gonzaga's public and private patronage by Garofalo⁽²⁾. By considering Ferrante's presence in Palermo in the context of Gonzaga involvement in Cefalù and Calabria, the volume successfully counters the marginalization of the South in existing literature on early modern courts.

I Gonzaga fuori Mantova boasts an expansive, bilingual bibliography. In addition to offering a cross-section of scholarship on the Gonzaga over the last fifty years, the authors bring to light a wealth of primary sources conserved in archival collections across central and northern Italy, as well as key *fondi* in Sicily. Throughout, close attention is paid to the correspondence that undergirded the quotidian dealings of the Gonzaga courts. Of particular note are two appendices which accompany de Divitiis' contribution, which offer readers a revealing cross-section of letters sent to Francesco II Gonzaga, marchese di Mantua, by various *baroni del regno* in the summer of 1514, and from his wife, Isabella d'Este, to members of the court of Venafro. The volume also benefits from the inclusion of graphic sources culled from those same collections – including unpublished vedute, little-known urban plans, and the frenetic pages of period codices – which are juxtaposed with architectural reconstructions and strategically annotated cartographic sources.

Among the multiple 'red threads' identified by Garofalo and Mattei in their introductory remarks to the volume, the active role played by intermediaries in shepherding and sustaining Gonzaga patronage warrants special recognition. Whether directly or indirectly, each of the essays attests to the importance of these figures – merchants, humanists, and political operatives – whose very involvement chips away at our inclination to treat dynastic families as monolithic institutions. A core focus of a recent monograph authored by Mattei, the Gonzaga's intermediaries were anything but 'middle-men'⁽³⁾. Instead, their deft maneuvering cracks complex familial dynamics and shifting allegiances open to view. For example, as Candia relates, letters sent by Benedetto Capilupi to Francesco II Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este in the final years of the fifteenth century indicate that the Mantuan orator

⁽²⁾ Emanuela Garofalo, "L'impeto de l'animo al vincere e l'ardore de la mente a la gloria. Il governo di Don Ferrante Gonzaga (1535-1546), tra opere pubbliche e committenza privata", in Stefano Piazza (a cura di), *La Sicilia dei viceré nell'età degli Asburgo (1516-1700). La difesa dell'isola, le città capitali, la celebrazione della monarchia* (Palermo, Edizioni Caracol, 2016), 61-86.

⁽³⁾ See Francesca Mattei, *Architettura e committenza intorno ai Gonzaga. Modelli, strategie, intermediari* (Roma, Campisano, 2019).

was at the helm of efforts to establish a new residence for the Gonzaga in Milan. The patronage of Gonzaga women likewise introduces points of connection between essays. The aforementioned Isabella d'Este, a much-studied champion of the arts who figures prominently de Divitiis' discussion, re-emerges in Garofalo's treatment of her son, Ferrante Gonzaga. Isabella di Capua, Ferrante's wife and a close confidant of Isabella d'Este, similarly wielded significant influence as *viceregina*. While the participation of secular women in artistic and architectural culture across the early modern Mediterranean world has garnered significant interest in scholarship in recent decades, their contributions most often find a home in edited volumes and monographs dedicated to the deconstruction of longstanding stereotypes of female patronage⁽⁴⁾. By instead treating the Gonzaga women alongside their male counterparts, *I Gonzaga fuori Mantova* offers a fresh model for an integrative approach to the study of familial patronage. For example, on the basis of correspondence detailing the design of a wooden model for a villa to be constructed by the Tuscan architect Domenico Giunti in Palermo's immediate environs, Garofalo argues that architectural patronage previously attributed to Ferrante alone likely bears the mark of Isabella's direct involvement. Finally, the volume's chronological organizational scheme, beginning in fifteenth-century Florence and ending in seventeenth-century Calabria, makes a convincing case for the Gonzaga's expanding sphere of influence over the course of the centuries under consideration. Clustering the essays thematically, or highlighting existing convergences through the selective use of sub-sections, might have further encouraged readers to draw insights between and across individual case studies. For instance, the final three essays of the volume – by Mattei, Scaduto, and Balestreri and Coscarelli – all deal with members of the Gonzaga family in the clerical ranks, naturally inviting a comparative gaze. Meticulously researched, clearly argued, and evocatively illustrated, *I Gonzaga fuori Mantova* promises to be an essential resource for early modernists writing new histories of familiar and overlooked figures alike.

⁽⁴⁾ On Isabella d'Este's patronage of the visual arts, see, e.g., Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins (eds.), *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy* (University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Stephen J. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006). On the role of women in Ottoman architectural culture, see, e.g., Lucienne Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006).