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CONTINUING RITUAL THEATRE: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
OF THE SORRENTINE PENINSULA AND THE COAST OF
AMALFI.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1973
Theater

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1973

CONTINUING RITUAL THEATRE: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
OF THE
SORRENTINE PENINSULA AND THE COAST OF AMALFI

by
MIRIAM GISOLFI D'APONTE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
of New York.

1973

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty
in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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In Italy

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Here and There

For his help on both sides of the Atlantic, continuing thanks to my husband Nello--for his initial support and generous encouragement

of a difficult project, for his constant help in translation and in the obtaining of necessary materials, and for his sense of humor and timely impatience which helped to bring the work to a conclusion.

IN MEMORIA DI FRANCESCO D'APONTE

1938 - 1969

ED ALLA SUA FAMIGLIA

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Sorrentine Peninsula and the Coast of Amalfi are extraordinarily beautiful places. Powerful princes from the time of the Caesars to foreign literati of recent centuries have been enticed and won over by the beauty they found here. Three Roman emperors built palaces in Sorrento.¹ Nietzsche wrote that his love for Sorrento was so strong that he was unable to express it.² Wagner, upon seeing Ravello for the first time, is said to have exclaimed, "I have found the enchanted garden of Klingsor!"³ Longfellow described the Amalfi Drive as "the most beautiful road in the world."⁴ The people who inherit this area have been imbued with the spirit of independence. The small towns which dot their coasts and diminutive mountains have remained as autonomous as possible despite the tiny distances which usually

¹Caesar Augustus, Tiberius, Marcus Aurelius. See Manfred Pasulo, La penisola sorrentina (Napoli: Gennaro Priore, 1906), p. 23.

²Wladimiro Frankel, Guida di Sorrento e dintorni (Torre del Greco: H. Bernard-Frankel, 1929), p. 23.

³Wagner, as quoted by Guiseppe Imperato, Ravello, trans. by Augusto De Maria (Amalfi-Salerno: De Luca, n.d.), p. 7.

⁴Longfellow, as quoted by Galileo Savastano, La costiera del sole (Piano di Sorrento: "La Moderna," 1971), p. 19.

separate them.⁵ When inter-town rule has existed, it has come about under the strong hand of such men as Ruggiero the Norman, Ferdinand II, or Mussolini, and then ceased when such leadership ended. People whose towns earlier belonged to Sorrento proper, for example, are as insistent today about having "Sorrento" dropped from their mailing addresses as they once were about gaining their autonomy. Beauty and independence have been tempered by a third persistent and notable characteristic--endurance. The history of this small Peninsula which juts into the Gulf of Naples to the North, and the Gulf of Salerno to the South,⁶ is rife with both natural and man-made disasters. Volcanic eruptions, floods and plagues were almost as frequent as the numerous invasions and counter-invasions of rulers from three continents. It seems that the people who endured so turbulent and eventful a past have become inured to change itself: the visitor is most impressed by a sense of timelessness, as if both the place and its inhabitants have never changed.

These three cornerstones of beauty, independence and endurance are reflected in the continued existence of celebrations organized and performed in this part of the world. These celebrations are closely tied, either directly or indirectly, with the rites of the Roman Catholic

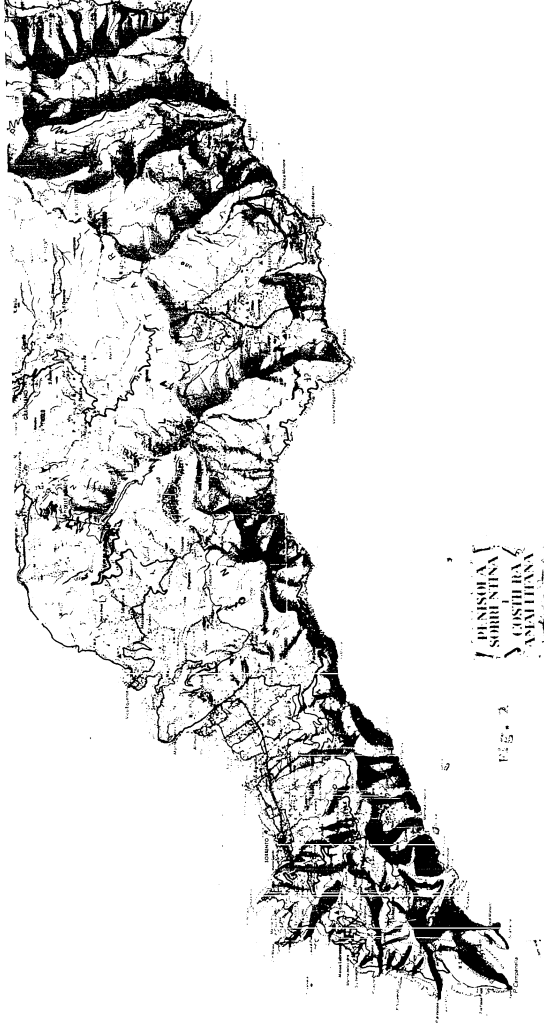
⁵For example, Sorrento is three quarters of a mile from S. Agnello, S. Agnello half a mile from Piano, Piano a mile from Meta di Sorrento.

⁶See below, Figures 1 and 2 on pp. 3 and 4, for maps of the area.



Fig. 1.

THE PROVINCES OF SOUTHERN ITALY



Church. They constitute a form of theatre in that, with the exception of scenic representations, they demand the contemporaneous participation of actors and audience. An appropriate term, therefore, for these celebrations, seems to be "ritual theatre."⁷ Although the celebrations are Christian, and many have medieval origins, the wellsprings of their creation are to be found within a people attuned to pagan ritual. Their settings on local streets and countryside have remained unchanged for centuries. Their forms have remained stable and representative of specific traditions.

The purpose of this study is to present the panorama of ritual theatre enacted during the liturgical year in the Sorrento-Amalfi region. There are three genres to be examined: (1) processions, (2) traditional religious dramas, and (3) specialized forms of graphic scenic representations. Most numerous are the processions which form the central part of the feste esterne (outdoor feasts) of the saints, of the Madonna, and of Corpus Domini. Most locales organize at least two or three such processions annually. These follow liturgical celebrations within the churches, and become occasions of both special devotion and merry-making. The Christmas and Easter seasons are other occasions for street processions.

⁷The religious-theatrical relationship which underlies ritual theatre is examined in detail below, pp. 20-29.

Also during Christmas and Easter there are performances of the second type of ritual theatre of the area--religious dramas. At Christmas time a seventeenth-century Neapolitan play entitled La cantata dei pastori ("A Song of the Shepherds") is often produced in various towns. A new passion play completed in 1960, La passione di Gesù Cristo ("The Passion of Jesus Christ"), is performed annually on Good Friday in Agerola, a small town north of Amalfi.

The third type of ritual theatre to be discussed, scenic representation, is also occasional. At Christmas time presepi (crèches) are built by clerics, youth organizations, and private individuals in churches, social clubs and private houses. Often as long as six months in the making, these presepi are destroyed immediately following the Feast of Epiphany on January 6. Tappetti di seccatura (rugs of sawdust) refer to scenes created out of colored sawdust upon the marble floors of churches during Holy Week, the week immediately preceding Easter. These designs constitute one form of sepolcro (tomb), a display of various kinds before the altar where consecrated hosts are "entombed" on Holy Thursday, the Thursday preceding Easter Sunday. Other forms of sepolcri include stage sets of the Last Supper and elaborate scenic representations. Altari (altars), which are often huge "flats" or canvases stretched upon wooden frames, are erected along the streets of some towns for the annual May or June feasts of

Corpus Domini (referred to in the American Catholic Church by its other Latin designation, Corpus Christi).

A survey of the existing literature concerning theatre of this kind in Italy reveals the usefulness of this study. The two major histories of Italian religious drama are D'Ancona's Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli XV e XVI, 1872, and De Bartholomaeis' Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre, published in 1943 in three volumes. Toschi's fine works of the 1950's and 1960's treat the origins of Italian theatre, its ancient religious theatre and Italian folklore in great detail.⁸ De Martino's La terra del rimorso and Sud e Magia are excellent studies of the character of southern Italy, and of the relationship between superstition and religion in that part of the world.⁹ None of these, however, have treated the Sorrento-Amalfi region specifically.

There have been a number of scholarly articles and several books written about the processional rites, particularly surrounding Holy Week, of the other provinces of southern Italy: Abruzzi e Molise,

⁸See Paolo Toschi, Il folklore (Roma: Universale Studium, 1957); Invito al folklore italiano (Roma: Editrice Studium, 1963); L'Antico teatro religioso italiano (Matera: Biblioteca di Cultura, 1966); Le origini del teatro italiano (Torino: Edizione scientifiche Einaudi, 1955); Tradizione popolari italiane (Torino: ERI, 1959).

⁹Ernesto di Martino, Sud e magia (Feltrinelli Editore, 1959); La terra del rimorso (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1959).

Basilicata, Apulia, Calabria, Sicily, and Sardinia.¹⁰ Annabella Rossi's

¹⁰A representative bibliography concerning the Easter dramas and processions of the six provinces of Southern Italy, apart from Campania follows:

Basilicata--Enzo Cervellino, "Processione dei misteri a Bacile," Reliquie viventi del dramma sacro in Lucania, VIII mostro di documentazione (Roma: Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni popolari, 1962), pp. 16-25.

Abruzzi e Molise--Donatangelo Lupinetti, La Santa Passione, Canti e tradizioni abruzzesi del tempo pasquale (Luciano: Cooperativa Editoriale, 1967).

_____, "La letteratura religiosa del popolo abruzzese nel medioevo," Lares, Anno XXV (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1959), pp. 104-144.

Apulia--Esther Lojodice, Venerdi Santo a Foggia (Roma, V. Bonacci, 1955).

Calabria--A. Basile, "Il rito del sangue del Giovedì Santo in Nolera terinese," Folklore della Calabria, n. 13 (Palmi: Jan.-March, 1959), pp. 7-14.

E. Ascoli, "Drammi sacri sulla passione in Calabria," Folklore, n. 13 (Palmi: Jan.-March, 1959), pp. 15-25.

Gaetano Gallo, "Vecchi canti del popolo per la Passione," Brutum (Reggio Calabria: Jan.-March, 1966), pp. 8-9.

Giovanni Tucci, "Canti e riti di Pasqua in Calabria," La Festa, Anno VIII--N. 16, April 1939, p. 308.

Sicily--M. Alesi, "La processione dei misteri," Tutta Sicilia, I, n. 2, 1953, pp. 32-33.

M. Alessio, Il Giovedì Santo a Caltanissetta (Caltanissetta: P. Castaldi-Petrarchum, 1903).

Sardinia--Eleonora D'Arborea, La Pasqua in Sardegna, Conferenza tenuta a Castel Sant'Angelo il 10 aprile 1936 (Roma: Editoriale Modema, 1967).

Pasquale Marica-Franz Silesu, "La settimana Santa a Sanluri," Lares, Anno XXV, 1959, pp. 237-244.

A comparative article regarding songs of the passion on Malta appears in Lares in 1954: [G. Cassar Pollicino! "Canti sulla Passione nelle isole di Malta," Anno XX, N. 3-4, pp. 138-158.

Le feste dei poveri is a fascinating sociological study of the pilgrimages and shrines of this area frequented exclusively by the poor.¹¹

The literature treating extra-liturgical religious celebrations within the province of Campania itself, where the Sorrento-Amalfi region is located, consists of encyclopedia articles, as well as historical and touristic publications.¹² Predominant among the feste described in these articles are the Neapolitan feasts of Piedigrotta and San Gennaro, the Pompeian Festa della Madonna, the Festa di Montevergine in Avellino, the Festa dei Gigli of Nola, and Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni in Positano.

There is a wealth of literature in Italian available regarding Neapolitan presepi; there are several scholarly references devoted to La cantata dei pastori;¹³ there is much discussion of feste esterne in the histories and guide books of the area itself. The single book, however, which undertakes a part of the subject of this study is an

¹¹Annabella Rossi, Le feste dei poveri (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1969).

¹²For the reader of Italian, the following books offer information concerning these feste: Enciclopedia cattolica (Roma: Sansoni, 1948-54); Dizionario enciclopedico italiano (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello stato, 1958); Oggi, spettacolo, Libro dei giorni italiani, Anno XVII--1968 (Milano: Alfieri & Lacroix, 1967); Il folklore, Conosci L'Italia, ed. by Touring Club Italiano (Milano: Sagdos, 1967). For further references concerning Lo sbarco dei Saraceni see Chapter III, pp. 159-161 below; further references concerning La Festa dei Gigli appear in Appendix III, pp. 357-375 below.

¹³See below, pp. 235-239.

Italian thesis written at the University of Palermo: Folklore di Sorrento e dintorni by Iolanda Callea, 1955-56.¹⁴ Callea treats the traditional customs of the people generally, giving specific examples of each type of tradition to be found in the Sorrento area. All of the works mentioned above are in Italian and, except for short articles appearing in multi-lingual publications especially prepared for tourists, none have been translated into English.

The bibliography related to the subject which is written in English consists of books and articles, the majority of which are by British authors. These, for the most part, treat particular cities of the area. They are written in order to introduce the reader and would-be visitor to the historical and artistic treasures and to the natural beauty of the particular locales discussed, and may incidentally touch upon descriptions of processions or other aspects of ritual theatre. The most recent publications of this nature are: (1) an article entitled, "The Amalfi Drive," which appears in the February 1972 Gourmet magazine, and (2) a book entitled, Amalfi: Aspects of the City and her Ancient Territories by Robert Gathorne-Hardy, published in London in 1968. There have been no American publications concerning either the ritual theatre or the religious traditions of the Sorrento-Amalfi area. And there is no evidence available which indicates that an academic study of the subject has been completed in English.

¹⁴Iolanda Callea, Folklore di Sorrento e dintorni (Universita degli Studi di Palermo: Anno Accademico 1955-56).

The present study has been undertaken for several reasons. Religious processions and the rituals which accompany them are on the decline in Italy. The eminent Italian scholar of theatre, Vito Pandolfi, wrote in 1954 that sacre rappresentazioni often performed on the occasion of feste of the patron saints "are disappearing more and more, and it is always increasingly difficult to attend such performances, particularly because they are not necessarily repeated every year."¹⁵ In 1967, Paolo Toschi claimed: "As far as the disappearance of popular traditions is concerned, it is not necessary wasting many words, since we are all eyewitnesses of the intense levelling and standardizing action of our mechanized civilization."¹⁶ Such a statement points to the often-noted fact that in the more highly industrial areas of Northern Italy, the decline of processions has been greater than in the more rural South. Pasquale Natella, a noted scholar of Italian folklore, believes that the new attitude of modernity adopted by the Church since the Second Vatican Council will cause some processions to disappear, but that the most frequented processions will

¹⁵Vito Pandolfi, "Teatro popolare," Cinquanta Anni di teatro in Italia, ed. by Centro di ricerche teatrali (Rome: Carlo Beatetti, Edizioni d'Arte, 1954), p. 55. (Translations of Italian texts by the author unless otherwise stated).

¹⁶Il folklore, Conosci L'Italia, Vol. XI, by Paolo Toschi (Milano: Touring club italiano, 1967), p. 11.

continue to be organized.¹⁷ Against such a background, the recording of the panorama of ritual theatre presently existing in a small area of the province of Campania seems particularly desirable, especially since comparable ritual celebrations of Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia have been carefully studied.

Another reason for undertaking this study is that it offers an interesting footnote to theatre history. A process of evolution seems to be taking place in Italy at this time which presents a fascinating parallel to medieval church and theatre separation. Just as the Church expelled theatre from the cathedrals of the Middle Ages because it was becoming too secular, so today, the Catholic Church in Italy is threatening to curtail or diminish or abolish certain ritual theatre events which it feels do not enhance the image of a modern church in today's society. Conflict exists between clerical authorities and the populace concerning both quality and quantity of processions in the Sorrento-Amalfi area. Such conflict is not restricted to a particular region; rather, it seems to represent a general change in both social and religious attitudes.

¹⁷Written correspondence with Professor Pasquale Natella, Assistant Director of the Biblioteca Provinciale di Salerno, February 16, 1972. A specific discussion of the influence of the Second Vatican Council upon ritual theatre in the area appears below, pp. 53-55.

The processions, religious dramas and scenic representations of the area will be described, as will the specific details concerning their production. The rather ambiguous and controversial role of the Catholic Church in producing, while often discouraging, these activities will also be discussed.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF RITUAL THEATRE IN THE AREA

Before undertaking individual descriptions of the celebrations to be studied, some historical and institutional background concerning the Sorrento-Amalfi area is desirable. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present a brief picture of those historical and institutional elements which have been fundamental both to the development of these celebrations and to their survival. The elements to be discussed are: (1) history; (2) the organization of the Roman Catholic Church in the area; (3) the religious-theatrical relationship which has provided an environment in which individual celebrations have, taken as a whole, become a form of ritual theatre; (4) the present day organization of these celebrations, and the controversy between Church hierarchy and both clergy and laity about their relative importance.

A Brief History of the Region

The concluding chapter of a recent study of Naples by the Englishman, Peter Gunn, begins in this way:

Naples is a palimpsest, a city where, beneath the most ordinary scenes and the commonest gestures or actions, appears the only half-erased configuration of something that has happened

before, much of it long ago, set deep in the historical past, but not obscured or developed out of recognition by the passage of centuries.¹

This sense of the living presence of the past which Gunn finds so evident in Naples is evident as well in the Sorrento-Amalfi region which has, through-out its long history, undergone transformation upon transformation.

The pre-Roman history of Naples and environs is largely conjectural. It seems clear to the majority of Italian scholars,² however, that the first identifiable group to inhabit the area later known as the region of Campania were thought to be one of the primitive tribes of the Pelasgi,³ known as the Opici. Their territory became known as Opicia, from Ops, goddess of fertility.⁴ These primitive farming people were invaded and conquered by the Phoenicians perhaps⁵ and

¹Peter Gunn, Naples a Palimpsest (London: Chapman & Hall, 1961), p. 236.

²The following discuss the history of the area: Gino Doria, Napoli e dintomi (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1966); Vittorio Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1969); Manfredi Fasulo, La penisola sorrentina (Napoli: Gennaro Priore, 1906); Gennaro Maldacea, Storia di Sorrento (Napoli: Matteo Vara, 1843); Riccardo Filangieri di Candida, Storia di Massa Lubrense (Napoli: Luigi Pierro, 1910); Iolanda Callea, Folklore di Sorrento e dintomi. See also Dizionario Enciclopedico italiano, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1958), and Enciclopedia Garzanti (Milano: Garzanti Editore, 1959).

³Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano, p. 7. ⁴Ibid.

⁵Filangieri, Storia di Massa Lubrense, p. 2.

certainly by the Etruscans and the Greeks. It is certain that Opicia had become part of Magna Graecia well before 326 B.C., the date when the one-time Partenope, later known as Palepoli, fell under the domination of the Roman Empire and was re-named Neapolis. The long Roman rule was spent in continuous resistance to Longobard attacks from the North.

When the Empire split during the sixth century A.D., the Campania area came under Byzantine rule. It was dominated by the Oriental Empire for two centuries, until the rise of Naples as an independent duchy during the eighth century. This autonomous state, which began under the duke-bishop Stefano I, fought off constant invasions of both Longobards and Saracens. It came to an end in 1139 when Ruggiero II, the Norman, added it to his Kingdom of Sicily.

Two Swabian rulers followed: Enrico IV in 1194, and Federico II who founded the University in 1224. Then came the dominion of the house of Anjou, 1266-1441. Carlo I moved the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily from Palermo to Naples, and when in 1282 Sicily cut mainland political ties and came under the dominion of the House of Aragon, the Angiuvian rulers in Naples spoke of the Kingdom of Naples. Aragonese supremacy became complete in 1442, however, when Alfonzo V reunited the two possessions under his rule.

French rule lasted for only a half century; then the French-Spanish struggle for domination for the kingdom led to the two centuries of

Neapolitan subservience as viceregno (vice-kingdom) under Spanish rule, 1504-1707. One of the great achievements of the Neapolitans during this period was their continued and successful resistance of all Spanish attempts to instate the Inquisition as a form of politican control in Naples.⁶ It was during this era also that the most terrible plague in Neapolitan history occurred: in 1656 approximately 400,000 people died.⁷

The Kingdom of Naples became an Austrian possession in 1707; it was given in 1734 to Carlo Borbone, son of Philip V of Spain, as an autonomous dukedom. When Carlo became King of Spain in 1759, Ferdinand IV was proclaimed King of Naples, and ruled until 1825. In 1815, however, he became Ferdinand I and ruler of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Thus the Bourbons, sprung from the Spanish line of the ruling house, firmly established themselves in Naples and Sicily, and continued to rule until the abdication of Francis II and the creation of Italian unity in 1860.

Development of the Archdioceses of Sorrento and Amalfi

The Archdiocese of Sorrento, separated from that of Naples in 425, when the French S. Renato was named its bishop, included all the Sorrentine Peninsula with Stabia and Capri. The first to

⁶Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 11. The leader of the most notable popular revolt against the Inquisition was Masaniello, a fish-vendor from Amalfi. See Gino Doria, Storia di un capitale (Napoli: Alfredo Guida Editore, 1936), p. 201.

⁷Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 12.

break away was Stabia in the seventh century; it was probably in the ninth century that Capri broke away--taken from the dukedom of Naples, it was annexed to the Republic of Amalfi and made a part of that diocese. In 987 it broke away from Amalfi and became a supporting diocese of Sorrento.⁸

So reads part of a history of the Archdiocese of Sorrento. Further research, however, indicates that in these years Sorrento was a diocese.⁹ Then, as now, a diocese, which includes a number of parishes, is defined as that district under a bishop's jurisdiction. An archdiocese is that district presided over by an archbishop, a bishop of the highest rank. Each bishop has his seat of authority, or see, in a cathedral, so named because that church houses the bishop's cathedra or throne.

Padre Bonaventura, a nineteenth-century Capuchin monk and historian of Sorrento, described the ancient methods of determining who should be bishop. Originally the bishop was elected, by both clergy and people. Then the custom deteriorated somewhat and he was elected by the clergy alone, with the Pope reserving the right to intervene and make another selection should the choice not prove judicious. The Concord of 1818 between the Kingdom of Naples and the Papacy, however,

⁸Padre Bonaventura di Sorrento, Cappuccino, Sorrento sacra e Sorrento illustre (S. Agnello: Tipografia di S. Francesco d'Assisi, 1877), p. 41. This work is really a condensation of Bartolommeo Cappasso's Memorie storiche della Chiesa Sorrentina (Napoli: Antologia Legale, 1854).

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

designated that the selection of bishops should be the exclusive right of the Pope. This same document also made Sorrento "an ecclesiastic province, the first after Naples."¹⁰ This "province" included the diocese of Sorrento, as well as those of Vico Equense and Massa Lubrense.¹¹ When these two dioceses were disbanded, their cathedrals remained, under the new titles of ex-cathedrals.¹²

The diocese of Amalfi is ancient, and its beginning is subject to some discussion. A letter of Pope Gregory the Great, written in 596, refers to a certain Primenio as Bishop of Amalfi.¹³ In 987, under the reign of Mansone III, Doge of the Republic of Amalfi, and by order of Pope John XV, the diocese became an archdiocese. The new archdiocese included not only the diocese of Amalfi, but those of Minori and Lettere as well. During the eleventh century Ravello was also included in the Archdiocese of Amalfi, as was Scala. Finally, with the Concord of 1818, Capri was made a part of the Archdiocese of Sorrento, and Lettere became part of another archdiocese.¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹See map above, p. 4, and tables below, pp. 63-65.

¹²Sorrento's earliest bishops included two men who were later canonized as saints--Valerio and Attanasio. Today the aristocratic Sorrentine lines from which numerous bishops sprang continue to populate the city: Mastrogiudice, Brancia, Sersole.

¹³Many historians believe, however, that other bishops preceded Primenio, and that the founding of the diocese dates further back.

¹⁴2/13/72, correspondence with Father Vincenzo Taiani of Maiori, a Professor of Theology. Information taken from his published dissertation

The Nature of the Relationship Between
Religion and Theatre

In the Sorrento-Amalfi area, as in most of southern Italy, religious celebration has always been the primary source of theatrical experience. The assumption that the origin of this source is buried in pagan rituals and beliefs which preceded Christianity seems commonplace today. For example, a current Italian publication dedicated to the promotion of tourism offers this casual statement in an article about Easter celebration:

If the Christian Christmas has taken the place of the solar festivals, the Christian Easter has "absorbed" certain rites that are far more ancient, those of a god who dies and is resurrected as a symbol of the resurgence of life at the reawakening of spring. . . . The thread of these traditions . . . runs through right from the most ancient agricultural civilizations of the Mediterranean to the Christian Easter.¹⁵

There is abundant specific evidence, however, to be found in the local cities and towns treated in this study to support such an assumption. In the article cited above, the author offers this specific Roman/Christian analogy:

In ancient Roman times it was the custom to adorn the statue of Dionysius [Bacchus], the god who was reborn every spring, with

entitled Le vocazioni ecclesiastiche nella diocesi di Amalfi 1636-1965 (Salerno: M. Pepe, 1970). See also Matteo Camera, Istoria della città e costiera di Amalfi (Napoli: Fibreno, 1836), p. 32.

¹⁵Roberto Leydi, "Easter--A Journey into the Past," L'Italia, ed. by ENIT (no. 1, 1972, English Edition), p. 36.

bowls of wheat cultivated in the dark so that the plant grew white and colorless.

And don't we still sometimes find white wheat, grown in a cellar around sepulchral images of Christ who was also God who died and rose again?¹⁶

In fact this particular ritual of growing white wheat and using it as adornment at sepolcri is wide-spread in the Sorrento-Amalfi area, and will be discussed in Chapter V.¹⁷

A scholarly poet of Massa Lubrense, the small city located at the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula and part of the Archdiocese of Sorrento, collated some notes concerning evidence of pagan customs to be found in local Christian rituals. One of his entries reads as follows:

At Torca, a small town of Massa Lubrense, it was the custom, up until a century ago, to carry a living, meowing cat upon a standard. Such a custom, referred to wittily [in an essay] by Giuseppe Ortigano [collected] in Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni of Francesco De Bourcard, is perhaps associated with a cult--probably that of Apollo Smiteo, exterminator of mice in the underlying seaside town of Crapolla. . . . The question concerns a village of fishermen, and even today one can understand attention, if not veneration, paid to the animal in the shop who keeps the mice away from the nets!¹⁸

There is also local data concerning Christian churches which are thought to have been built upon the sites of pagan temples.¹⁹ And there is the

¹⁶Leydi, "Easter--A Journey into the Past," p. 36.

¹⁷See Chapter V, pp.262-263, of this study.

¹⁸F. Saverio Mollo, Antichi culti e tradizioni religiose in Penisola Sorrentina (Appunti per la Signora Mimi Gisolfi D'Aponte, 1971), p. 2.

¹⁹For Massa Lubrense, see below, p. 115; for Meta di Sorrento, see p. 76; for Vico Equense, see p. 103.

scholarly suggestion that ever-popular local cults of the Madonna are successors of those once dedicated to pagan sea-goddesses.²⁰

Such observations suggest the validity of Hunningher's conclusions regarding the origin of Western theatre generally:

Theatre was not reborn in the Church, but was adopted and taken in by her We may assume that the Easter trope was not transferred to the end of the Matins for reasons of space alone, but to make it coincide with those pagan rites performed on the eve and night of the spring festival, in order to Christianize those heathen vigils and exercises by means of holy dialogue. . . . Such a development certainly makes the rites of drama in the Church's liturgy entirely understandable: now it finds a natural breeding ground from which it can draw its strength for further growth.²¹

Once the assumption of pagan origins behind many Christian rituals has been made, the pertinent question with reference to this study becomes the following: to what extent are these Christian rituals theatrical in nature? Harriet Beecher Stowe, in one of her characteristic historical asides, suggests an answer in her novel about Sorrento:

Christianity, when it entered Italy, came among a people every act of whose life was coloured and consecrated by symbolic and ritual acts of heathenism. The only possible way to uproot this was in supplanting it by Christian ritual and symbolism equally minute and pervading. Besides, in those ages when the Christian preacher was utterly destitute of all such help as the press now

²⁰See below, p. 115. "The madonnas of Naples are all reincarnations of antique shapes, of the Sirens, of Leucothea, Euploia, and the Nereids, and their cult to this day is pagan rather than Christian." Norman Douglas, Siren-Land (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 9.

²¹Benjamin Hunningher, The Origin of the Theater (1st Amer. ed., 4th printing; New York: Hill & Wang, 1969), p. 105.

gives in keeping under the eye of converts the great inspiring truths of religion, it was one of the first offices of every saint whose preaching stirred the heart of the people, to devise symbolic forms, signs and observances, by which the multitude might crystalize into habits of devote remembrance. The rosary, the crucifix, the shrine, the banner, the processions, were catechisms and tracts invented for those who could not read, wherein the substance of pages was condensed, and gave itself to the eye and to the touch.²²

The nature of Catholic liturgy, apart from its need to overcome earlier ritual, provides the clearest explanation of the theatrical forms which it has engendered and/or nurtured.

Southern [Italian] Catholicism, with its notes of showiness and of outward appearance and with emphasis upon ceremony and ritual, has formed a recurring object of observation.²³

And if, for the sake of argument, the additional "showiness" of "Southern Catholicism" is discounted, what remains is, nevertheless, intensely theatrical. The central ritual of the Mass encompasses within its structure symbolic representations of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It also contains what is, according to the faithful, the literal transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus known as the Consecration. Through the performance of this central ritual, the Church not only celebrates the most dramatic events of Christ's life, but also remembers, during the course of the liturgical year, a cavalcade

²²Harriet Beecher Stowe, Agnes of Sorrento (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1900), p. 352.

²³Ernesto de Martino, Sud e Magia ("The South and Magic") (Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1959), p. 8.

of saints and martyrs whose lives and teachings bore witness to those of their teacher. During this year there are moments of great joy and of great sorrow; then the never-ending pattern repeats itself. The extremes of mourning and rejoicing observed--Advent and Christmas, for example, or Lent and Easter--may be compared to what Theodor Gaster, in his study of ritual, myth and drama in the Ancient Near East, terms "rites of Kenosis, or Emptying, and rites of Pelerosis, or Filling."²⁴

These elements of the Mass continue in tact despite the enormous reforms it has undergone during the last ten years since the Second Vatican Council.²⁵ These reforms have directly affected language and music as well as the choice of prayers utilized within the basic structure. The following assertion of O. B. Hardison, Jr., in his contemporary study of medieval Christian ritual and drama remains valid:

Just as the Mass is the sacred drama encompassing all history and embodying in its structure the central pattern of Christian life on which all Christian drama must draw, the celebration of the Mass contains all elements necessary to secular performances. The Mass is the general case--for Christian culture the arch-type. Individual dramas are shaped in its mold.²⁶

Hardison's use of the term "drama" suggests the written script of the Mass. The earlier medieval studies scholar Karl Young found, however,

²⁴Theodor H. Gaster, Thespis (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 17.

²⁵For a discussion of several of these reforms, see below, pp. 46-53.

²⁶O. B. Hardison, Jr., Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 79.

that while the liturgy of the Mass is dramatic or theatrical, it falls short of being drama, that is to say, a play, because, in his estimation it lacks impersonation.²⁷ This is an excerpt from his general definition of drama.

Dialogue is not essential, for a monologue is drama when the speaker impersonates the one from whom the utterance is represented as proceeding. Even spoken language may be dispensed with, for pantomime is a true, though limited form of drama, provided a story is successfully conveyed, and provided the actors pretend to be personages concerned in this story.

It [impersonation] consists in physical imitation. In some external and recognizable manner the actor must pretend to be the person whose words he is speaking, and whose actions he is imitating. The performer must do more than merely represent the chosen personage; he must also resemble him, or at least show his intention of doing so.²⁸

As Hardison observes in his critique of this definition, the presence or absence of impersonation is Young's manner of distinguishing between liturgy and drama.²⁹ I take exception to Young's opinion that the Mass lacks impersonation, since the priest, during the Mass, "resembles" a Christ figure, both in his intention of preaching Christ's gospel and in his action of consecration.

By the full standards of Young's definition, the impersonators of Christ, Mary, the mourning women, and the Roman soldiers who appear

²⁷Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church (Oxford: University Press, 1933), Vol. I, p. 80.

²⁹Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages, p. 23.

in certain processions create drama. So too do those actors appearing in the Christmas and Easter plays. The term "theatre," however, provides a more accurate description of the majority of these celebrations. For the most part, these rely not upon the written and spoken word, but simply upon the actions of one group of people which are intended to involve a second group of people. "Drama," writes Richard Southern, "may be the thing done, but theatre is doing. Theatre is an act."³⁰ Most processions of the area, for example, do not depend for their effectiveness upon either dialog or impersonation; they do depend strongly upon two elements which Southern regards as crucial to the "doing" which is theatre--(1) the direct personal presence of those presenting the action, and (2) a strong sense of the "One Occasion."³¹

I have suggested the term "ritual theatre" to make clear on the one hand the strong dependence upon the central ritual of the Mass which influences these processions, scenic representations and religious plays alike, and to emphasize the strong sense of happening which each imparts, on the other. The relationship between theatre and ritual representation has often been discussed in the past, and continues to provoke consideration. "The difference between a performance and a feast or celebration is that the former is presented for others, the latter is

³⁰Richard Southern, The Seven Ages of the Theatre (New York: Hill & Wang, 1960), p. 22.

³¹Ibid., p. 23.

something in which everyone participates."³² The ambiguous and unique quality of ritual theatre such as that of the Sorrento-Amalfi area is its just claim to both celebration and performance. For everyone who lends his physical presence to the side lines of a procession, or to the crowds examining a presepio at Christmas time or a sepolcro during Holy Week, becomes himself a part of the act--as a potential believer as well as an observer.

A final point must be made concerning the nature of the ritual theatre to be discussed. Although particulars are supplied by history and geography--Greek and Roman ritual supplanted by Christian ritual, from which local genres of ritual theatre are developed--the essence of both ritual and theatre found here is not limited in either time or place. Gaster, for example, offers a definition of seasonal ritual found in the Ancient Near East which is totally appropriate to this study:

Seasonal rituals are functional in character. Their purpose is periodically to revive the topocosm, that is the entire complex of any given locality conceived as a living organism. But this topocosm possesses both a punctual and a durative aspect, representing, not only the actual and present community, but also that ideal and continuous entity of which the latter is but a current manifestation.³³

Southern, in his consideration of the primitive rituals of Bavarian Wild Men, discusses what he terms "processional Theatre":

³²"Sounding the Drum" (an interview with Jerome Savary by Bettina Knapp), The Drama Review, XV (Fall, 1970), p. 94.

³³Gaster, Thespis, p. 17.

We have the notion of processional theatre because the Wild Men go through the streets from house to house. They do this, almost certainly, for the reason that is the original reason for all processional theatre; namely, to spread the magic about a whole community. This may perhaps be an earlier idea even than the public assembly gathered for the same purpose. However, the reason for both the assembly of people at an act of theatre and for the procession from house to house among the people's homes is to effect a communal spreading of the magic of a ritual act. . . . When we realize that much of primitive theatre consists in giving--the distribution of Good Omen--we may well see that a primitive people would wish the omen to be communicated not only to themselves personally but to their flocks, to their crops, to their very hearths and homes for the coming year.³⁴

Certainly the "topocosm" found in the Ancient Near East has a parallel in the ritual theatre of the Sorrento-Amalfi area, as evidenced by the strong sense of rivalry which exists among so many of these cities and towns in regard to the quality of their feste esterne. An even stronger parallel exists between the processional theatre of the Bavarian Wild Men and the celebrations discussed in this study. For not only is the image of the saint or the Madonna being carried through the streets meant to "spread the magic about a whole community," but the sacrament of the Eucharist carried in procession on the feast of Corpus Domini is met with personal overtures by every doorway it passes (flowers, tapestries, candles, or donations), precisely because it is believed that the body of Christ himself is passing. There is also, during the Easter season, what is called the blessing of the houses: the parish priest of each locale must, before that season is over, bless individually

³⁴Southern, The Seven Ages of the Theatre, p. 39.

and in person, each home within the confines of his parish whose owner so requests. The ritual includes the sprinkling of holy water and the recitation of prayers. In this very concrete way, the "Good Omen" is spread.

Continuation of the Religious-Theatrical
Relationship

The continuation of local genres of ritual theatre, despite such twentieth century phenomena as tourism, traffic and television, is dependent upon several factors:

(1) Most obvious is the continued strength of the Church in Southern Italy, both socially and politically. And although reliance upon religion as the sole answer to earthy ills has decreased, a large body of the faithful remains active. The various manifestations of ritual theatre have welded together what have been the Church's principle functions for centuries: religious--spreading the gospel of Christ; social--building and bringing together a Christian community; and educational--impressing gospel upon community by means of activities many of which, consciously or not, have answered a basic need for theatre.

(2) Another factor which has been a positive force in the maintenance of ritual theatre is the climate of the Sorrento-Amalfi area. The constant sun and blue skies for which the area is famous are the rule from May to October. From November to April, however, morning sun gives way to bone-penetrating dampness which comes up from the sea

by late afternoon, and which is to be outdone only by the foggy dampness which envelops the mountainous area. The British author, Norman Douglas, recognized a great seasonal difference in another aspect of the climate.

In the summer it is a simple matter; sea-breeze by day and land breeze by night, stepping into each other's shoes with praiseworthy regularity; but later on things become more complicated and the catalogue of winds swells to a formidable size.³⁵

There is an explosive quality to the climate as well. It is almost as if the seemingly implacable mountains and sea must erupt periodically so that the general tenor of peace might continue. Such eruptions do not belong to past history alone. A landslide in Positano caused great damage in 1965; the Amalfi drive is subject to both minor and major landslides every spring. Rain is abrupt in this region: water pours down for half an hour at a time and then ceases. Hailstorms are almost as common as rain bursts: hailstones as large as four inches in diameter come pounding down for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then the sun returns.

Such a climate seems to assure a return to traditional ways for better than half of each year, for night life outside the home seems to vanish with the passing of summer. Nightclubs and dancing places do not function during the winter months; bars and cafes which are large, sprawling affairs during the tourist season return to their original,

³⁵Douglas, Siren-Land, p. 51.

interior sizes; the shops have sales, most hotels close down. Thus the traditional feste of the Church become, for this part of the year at any rate, the major local diversions.

(3) Local geography has also been a positive force in maintaining century-old traditions, although it is generally accounted a negative factor in this area because of its mountainous terrain, for purposes of industrial and economic development.³⁶ This agrarian-maritime society of towns and tiny cities was, until Mussolini's era, essentially independent and without much intercommunication except in times of war and natural disaster. The Church served each locale, not only as administrator of the sacraments and as public instrument of hope and faith in periods of crisis and of rejoicing, but also as the organizer of social life and entertainment. And to a great extent, particularly in the small rings of towns which surround a city such as Sorrento or Amalfi or Vico Equense,³⁷ this multiple role of the Church remains intact. The first road capable of bearing automobile traffic from Sorrento to the small mountainous farm community of Casarano,³⁸ for example, is almost completed. The automobile road connecting the towns in the mountains above Vico Equense was completed before 1900; its repair in 1970-71, however,

³⁶D. S. Walker, A Geography of Italy (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1958), pp. 183-185.

³⁷See Tables 4 and 5 below, pp. 63 and 64.

³⁸Casarano is described below, p. 174.

made many of these towns accessible only via circuitous and often dangerous mountain routes. Automobile and bus passengers bound from Agerola to Amalfi, the closest city, undertake nearly an hour of hazardous hairpin turns down the mountain. With the exception of those who commute to Naples, most of the population of the area remain in their home towns, and only on rare occasions travel to neighboring locales.

(4) A final factor which contributes to the endurance of ritual theatre in the Sorrento-Amalfi area and one suggested by this tendency to remain at home, is the temperament of the people themselves. A manner of seeming never to have changed is attributed to its inhabitants in the Introduction. Changes are accepted as they come: enjoyed if they are beneficial, endured if harmful, but usually neither sought nor contended. On the other hand, this seemingly pacific nature is countered occasionally by a strongly reactive nature. A somewhat poetic analogy may be drawn between the people and their climate, for just as wind, rain and hail appear and disappear abruptly, so when these people become strongly moved--by happiness or sorrow or anger--there is an outburst, an explosion, a "downpour" of that particular emotion. Then the calm, tranquil, almost stoic acceptance and enjoyment of every day for its own sake takes over again. This pacific-reactive blend of character suggests a people of dramatic temperament who thrive upon the theatrical elements of their religion and nourish their continuation and further development. Conversely, of course, it seems likely that

Christian custom and belief have strongly effected the temperament of the people. The inexorable pattern of the liturgical calendar, with its celebrated moments of mourning and rejoicing juxtaposed to its unchanging central ritual, offers a second analogy to the dramatic temperament of the people suggested above.

Manifestations of the Religious-Theatrical Relationship

The relationship between religion and theatre on the Sorrentine Peninsula and the Coast of Amalfi becomes somewhat metaphysical and not truly representative unless reference is made to its concrete and technical manifestations which are so often in evidence. Costumes and properties for the feste esterne, for example, are the objects of great interest and careful attention. In Positano the congrega, at one time the chapel belonging to the local confraternity,³⁹ has become a room for costumes, stage properties and meetings. The instruments of torture, although no longer carried in Positano's Good Friday procession, are on display. A life-sized, papier mâché Christ with movable arms is found here, as is his cross of heavy black wood. In the Church of SS.⁴⁰ Trinità in Piano di Sorrento, the beautiful panelled room behind

³⁹"Confraternity" is defined below, p. 37. It is not unusual to find the congrega serving as something other than a chapel.

⁴⁰"SS." is the Italian abbreviation for santissima (most holy), and "S." the Italian abbreviation for santo (saint). Both are used throughout this study.

the sacristy, although marked Archivio (Archive), might better read "Costumes and Props." When heavy wooden doors are unlatched and drawn back, one does not find books and ancient documents, but rather stacks upon stacks of confraternity robes in prepared condition for the next procession. The people of Piano are proud of their marvelous scarlet hue, for no other confraternity, either on the Peninsula or the Coast, possesses scarlet robes. In another part of the Archivio, hung unobtrusively behind a heavy door which hides it completely when one enters, is a ten-foot crucifix which appears to be hewn from the heaviest of trees and covered with the roughest and most grating bark imaginable. But not at all. The crucifix is made of a hollow cylinder of plywood which has been covered with papier mache. It so light that the man carrying it must feign fatigue if he wishes to resemble Christ.

The costume and property rooms of Positano and Piano have counterparts in nearly every parish in the area. It is interesting to note that these costumes and properties seem to take on an importance of their own, apart from their functional use on specific occasions during the year. They are viewed with possessive pride by those clerics and lay people who have a serious interest in the production of feste esterne. It seems important that red robes, rather than the usual white or blue, are used in Piano; it seems important to conserve the instruments of torture in Positano as museum pieces since they are no longer used.

This religious-theatrical relationship also seems particularly concrete when it comes to the financing of feste esterne. This subject will be discussed in detail below;⁴¹ the fact, however, that "collecting enough money to have the procession" is a common subject of conversation among laity as well as clergy suggests the sense of theatrical venture which often dominates the festa esterna production.

The degree to which any particular parish cultivates those elements of ritual theatre which are a part of its liturgical schedule depends, to a great extent, upon the inclination of the pastor. Many of the priests who lead these parishes seem to consider the role of director of feste as part of their vocation. In such parishes the technical aspects of feste esterne receive particular attention.

There is a vignette to be observed fifteen minutes before every procession begins just inside and outside of the church producing it which characterizes as succinctly as possible this relationship between religion and theatre. The properties are inside. Crucifixes, standards, canopies, and often bells and candles are set in varying positions of readiness for the dramatic exit which is to follow the final blessing of the Mass. The costumed actors are outside. The front steps of the church and the piazza before it have become green room and orchestra pit respectively. On the higher level, adult confraternity members adjust one another's robes as they smoke and chat, while the altar boys

⁴¹See below, pp. 42 and 43.

of varying sizes, already disheveled, play tag. Below, uniformed band members alternate tuning up with smoking and chatting. Here is an expression of natural and long-standing religious-theatrical relationship.

Present Organization of the Archdioceses of
Sorrento and Amalfi

There are several terms referring to the functioning of the Archdioceses which lose a certain degree of meaning in translation, and which require explanation.

Parrocchia--simply translated means parish. However, the Italian meaning is more extensive in that a parrocchia is the central parish within a city or town and bears general responsibility for representing the hierarchy and its wishes, as well as for organizing the religious activities of that city or town along lines desired by the hierarchy. Thus a small town may have a single church which is a parrocchia, or will be under the jurisdiction of the parrocchia of a neighboring town. Conversely, a larger town or city may have more than one parrocchia, as well as numerous churches which are not parrocchie.

Parroco--means pastor. Literally the parroco can only be the pastor of a parrocchia, but the term is used to refer to the chief officiating priest of any church.

Curia--the bishop's court: that group of offices where the bishop or archbishop works and meets with clergy and laity.

Manifesti--public notices pasted upon certain walls of every wall; these notices are similar to play bills. Manifesti announce feste esterne, and often feste interne as well; they also announce deaths and funerals, movies, concerts and other entertainment. There are no local daily newspapers in the towns and cities of the area, and these notices are the citizens' guide to what is happening locally.

Feste esterne⁴²--outdoor feasts. The term may be applied to all extra-liturgical activities sponsored by the Church on special feast days. Usually the term refers to outdoor processions and whatever manifestations accompany them.

Feste interne--special religious celebrations, often referred to as feste liturgiche (liturgical feasts), which take place as the liturgical preface of the feste esterne, or by themselves, in honor of secondary patrons of the town or city.

Confraternità--confraternity, or a religious organization of men originally devoted to praying for its deceased brothers, thereby affording them swifter entrance into heaven. Now their primary concern is with processions.⁴³

Visita pastorale--literally, a pastoral visit. The term refers to an official visit of the bishop or archbishop to every city or town under

⁴²As mentioned above, p. 5.

⁴³For a detailed discussion of confraternities see below, pp. 97 and 98.

his jurisdiction. Such a visit occurs every ten years, and includes a thorough examination of every aspect of each church.⁴⁴

There are forty parrocchie within the Archdiocese of Sorrento today; there are presently fifty-three parrocchie in the Archdiocese of Amalfi.

Table 1

Parrocchie of the Archdiocese of Sorrento

Massa Lubrense	10 ⁴⁵
Meta di Sorrento	2
Piano di Sorrento	3
S. Agnello	3
Sorrento	7
Vico Equense	13
(Anacapri	1
Capri	1) ⁴⁶

Table 2

Parrocchie of the Archdiocese of Amalfi

Amalfi	6
Agerola	6
Atrani	1
Cetara	1
Furore	1
Conca dei Marini	3
Maiori	6

⁴⁴See below, p. 55.

⁴⁵When the number of parrocchie reaches six or more, what is represented by this chart is both those parrocchie within the city proper and those of the individual small towns which surround that city. See Tables 4 and 5 on pp. 63-64.

⁴⁶Capri and Anacapri are not included in this study since they are not a part of neither the Sorrentine Peninsula nor the Coast of Amalfi.

Table 2 (continued)

Minori	3
Positano	2
Praiano	2
Ravello	4
Scala	5
Tramonti	13

This count of parrocchie in no way suggests the number of churches existing and functioning in these Archdioceses. In Sorrento alone, for example, besides the seven official parrocchie, there are an additional sixteen churches, chapels and monasteries, each offering the sacraments and almost all, until recent times and injunctions,⁴⁷ producing celebrations of various kinds.

In the areas of both Sorrento and Amalfi, the title "Archdiocese" has remained following the death of a former archbishop; in each case, however, the Archdiocese is managed by a bishop whose title in regard to this position is "Apostolic Administrator." For example, His Excellency Mons. Raffaele Pellicchia is Apostolic Administrator of Sorrento, and Bishop of Castellammare di Stabia--the city immediately to the north of the Sorrentine Peninsula. The Apostolic Administrator of Amalfi seems even busier, for His Excellency Mons. Jolando Nuzzi possesses three titles. He is Bishop of Nocera and Apostolic Administrator of Campagna--cities to the north and west of the Coast of Amalfi

⁴⁷See p. 46, below, concerning the bishop's decree of 1969.

respectively, as well as being Apostolic Administrator of Amalfi. The complexity of these Administrators' geographical responsibilities conflict to some degree with the wishes of the people of their Archdioceses. Accustomed for several centuries to finding "their" bishop in the cathedral of "their" city, the citizens of Sorrento or Amalfi must often travel to Castellammare or to Nocera in order to obtain special pastoral advice.

The economic lives of individual priests and individual churches in this part of Italy is another matter of some complexity. While sources of income are multiple, the incomes themselves are small. Every parroco receives between 45 and 55,000 lire (\$72 and \$88 U.S.) per month,⁴⁸ depending upon the amount of property of that particular church (more property, less money).⁴⁹ Many priests are teachers, and as such are paid by the state. Masses for the Dead are another fairly stable source of income. Most daily Masses are said for the "special intention" of a particular deceased person whose family has requested

⁴⁸By way of comparison, a Sorrentine policeman might earn between \$140 and \$160 (U.S.) per month.

⁴⁹6/5/71, conversation with Father Pasquale Ercolano, parroco of the Church of the Madonna delle Grazie in Trasaella. This stipend was, according to Father Pasquale, begun as one of the results of the Concordato between Mussolini and Pope Pius XI in 1927. The most important state-church transaction preceding this ruling had occurred in 1870 when the state appropriated three-fourths of the Church's property in exchange for a token sum of money. An interesting continuation of this policy one hundred years later is reflected in the state law regarding the buying and selling of church property: permission must always be granted by the local prefettura. When the Church is selling, the request is always granted; when the Church wishes to buy, permission is often denied. Taxes must be paid on Church property other than the church buildings and grounds per se.

the Mass in return for a monetary offering. Less stable sources of income include marriages, funerals, special invitations to preach and processions. These events occur only occasionally, and if there is more than one priest working at a particular church, the individual priest is never certain that he will be the cleric invited to officiate.

In the geographic area with which this study is concerned, as in most of Italy, priests do not live in rectories with other priests as has long been the custom in the United States. The parroco usually has a house or apartment adjacent to the church which he leads. And in most cases his mother or sister lives with him. Those priests who serve as assistants or as teachers do not necessarily live near the church, but anywhere in town; usually, again, with a mother or sister. In Amalfi and Sorrento and surrounding towns, the priests are so overworked that many both manage a parish and teach, or manage a parish and work in the Curia as well. American priests generally take a month's vacation each year; such a luxury does not exist for the priests of Southern Italy. There are no other men to relieve them, and the sacraments must continue to be administered.

The variables in the economic life of the Italian priest are many: he may have several dependents or none; he may serve a rich or a poor community; his personal dynamism may earn or lose him money (Is he popular among the young couples who wish to be married, and among the older people who must bury their dead? Is he popular as a preacher

and invited to cities and towns beyond his own?).⁵⁰ Making a living as a priest in Italy is a very individual affair, and the complexity of the economics suggested above bear some relation to the economics of the feste of the Church.

The Feste: Economics, Protocol,
and Controversy

All funds spent on feste esterne come from the people of the community themselves and not from Church sources. There is always a lay committee formed to organize these feste, and one of their jobs is to solicit money. The parroco of Minori, a fairly representative city in population,⁵¹ says, "One needs 5,000,000 lire [\$8,100 U.S.] to have a beautiful festa esterna, and 10,000,000 lire [\$16,200 U.S.] to have a great one."⁵² Two high-ranking officials at the Curia of Amalfi agreed that even the smallest mountain town or seaside village spends a minimum of 5,000,000 lire on feste esterne annually.⁵³ The greater part of these sums are spent on the illumination of the town or city, the purchase of fireworks, the hiring of a band for the procession and often,

⁵⁰Those priests with independent wealth provide the exceptions to the rule; they are very few in the area of this study.

⁵¹5/20/71, conversation with Mons. Andrea di Nardo, parroco of the Church of S. Trofimena Minori.

⁵²See below, p. 66, Table 3, for population figures of the area.

⁵³11/5/70, conversation with Father Riccardo Alpino, Chancellor, and Father Giuseppe Imperato, Vice-Chancellor, the Curia of Amalfi.

singers for outdoor evening entertainment. Minor sums go to the priests who walk in the procession, the preacher of the day, and the clearing and replacing of the robes worn by the confraternity. In some instances, when the job is difficult, the statue bearers will be paid. Finally, there is a token sum to be paid to the Curia of the Archdiocese involved for every feste esterne undertaken.

It is customary for the churches themselves to pay for the expenses of the feste interne or liturgiche. Neither is it unusual, however, for the people to be asked to contribute to these feste as well as to the feste esterne.

There is definite protocol to be followed for the organization of every festa. A letter requesting permission to produce a particular procession must be submitted by either the parroco or the lay committee well before the date proposed, and permission must be granted. This letter includes a schedule of events anticipated (perhaps a Novena--a nine-day period of special prayer preceding a feast day, a number of High Masses, a procession, some musical entertainment). It must also include the route which the procession is to follow. Although usually a matter of paperwork, this procedure insures Church control over the number and kind of feste within each Archdiocese. With the recent restrictions upon these feste,⁵⁴ the Curia's seal of approval has become crucial in a number of instances.

⁵⁴See pp. 46-52, below, for decrees limiting the number and kinds of processions in the area.

Within the town itself, festa protocol involves the cooperation of numerous groups. Clergy and lay committee act as organizers. Religious schools, the confraternity, clergy and altar boys, the mayor and his contingent all walk in procession. The local police are divided; some join the procession while others attempt to manage the traffic problems incurred by it. And the townspeople answer the summons of the manifesti on the town walls which have announced the event and its schedule for perhaps a week beforehand, as well as the immediate summons of the church bells which toll almost continuously from dawn to dusk of the festa day. Many people come out on the street, either to watch or to follow the procession. Some simply look out from their balconies and, from that most comfortable vantage point, become part both of the audience and of the street scene.

Attendance figures for the feste esterne can only be approximated; however, even such approximation is revealing. An average of the statistics offered by the parish priests of five cities of the area⁵⁵ suggests that, while 45% of the local populations attend church on Sundays, 80% of these same citizens attend the feste esterne. Such a consensus could be used to support three widely differing theories. There are those who say:

⁵⁵Sorrento and Massa Lubrense of the Sorrentine Peninsula, and Maiori, Minori and Ravello of the Amalfi coast.

So many people are misguided in thinking that, by following a statue around the town and even into the country one or two days a year they thereby fulfill their obligations as Christians. This is simply a religion of superstition, and not what the Church has in mind at all.⁵⁶

Others contend: "these are a people of great faith; more the faith in a particular saint than that of constant attendance in church."⁵⁷ And a third argument, my own, claims: 35% more people come to processions than to Sunday Mass because a procession equals street theatre, because it is a special event which doesn't happen every week, because it is exciting to get dressed up and go out and mingle with family and friends and either follow or watch a procession, because it is Sunday only more so--the bells keep ringing,⁵⁸ the stores are closed half a day,⁵⁹ something special is happening.

Behind economics and organization and attendance figures and protocol, a struggle of wills is taking place within the Church. It

⁵⁶5/15/71, conversation with Father Giuseppe Esposito, parroco of the Ex-Cathedral in Massa Lubrense.

⁵⁷5/6/71, conversation with Mons. Carlo Persico, parroco of the Church of S. Antonino in Sorrento.

⁵⁸A single paragraph article on p. 18 of the Bolletino Ecclesiastico cited below is entitled, "This, too, is Charity." It reads as follows: "Many times pastors and rectors of the Church have been extorted not to disturb the rest of citizens with the sound of bells, and on the occasions of feasts, with prolonged and irritating fireworks. There are still some who pretend not to have understood."

⁵⁹Stores still close only half a day on Sunday in the area, although the merchants of many locales are organizing themselves in opposition to this custom. On major feast days, stores close half a day, as on Sunday.

concerns the desirability of street feste and processions. Recent writings of both Mons. Pellecchia of Sorrento and Mons. Nuzzi of Amalfi reflect careful consideration of the question. The Bollettino Ecclesiastico ("Ecclesiastic Bulletin") of the Archdiocese of Sorrento and the Diocese of Castellammare di Stabia, May-June 1969, printed the following six directives which, wrote Mons. Pellecchia, "will become obligatory beginning July 1, 1969."⁶⁰

- 1) The procession of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the festivity of Corpus Domini, according to the rule of Canon 1291 C.I.C., must be promoted solely by the principal church of the locale; and members of the diocesan and regular clergy, the religious, the associations, etc., are obliged to participate.

The other parishes of the same community may encourage [a Corpus Domini procession] on another festive day, provided that they are in little towns a considerable distance from the center.

- 2) In the urban centers the other processions, with the exception of that of the principal patron of the locale, are prohibited.
- 3) The route of every procession must always be very brief and contained within the limits of the parish confines, preserving the long and legitimate custom of him [the patron] mentioned in 2. It is prohibited in any instance to create grave obstacles to the intense traffic of the city streets.
- 4) It is severely prohibited to attach money to the statue of the saint or to make stops before houses for the request of money.
- 5) The participation of the confraternities is subordinated to the decorous personal participation of its members. There must be no substitutions whatsoever permitted in the manner of performance.

⁶⁰Mons. Raffaele Pellecchia, "Disposizioni per le processioni" ("Regulations for the Processions"), Bollettino Ecclesiastico, Arcidiocesi di Sorrento--Diocesi di Castellammare di Stabia, N. 3 (May-June) 1969, p. 17.

- 6) The parish priest or the priest legitimately designated, is alone responsible for the good deportment of the processions, and is charged with the observation of these regulations.⁶¹

Directives No. 2 and 3 indicate the strong stand which the Church is officially taking in limiting feste activities. Clearly, rituals which were once encouraged and highly developed by the Church itself are being cut back. A comparison may be suggested between this present situation which exists in many parts of Italy and that prevailing in many parts of Europe during the twelfth century. Perhaps the medieval Church attempted to curtail the development of dramatic tropes within the liturgy of the Mass before their actual expulsion. It is surmised that either dramatic representation left the Church proper in order to seek more space in the churchyard,⁶² or in order to escape the opposition of Church officials who felt it was becoming detrimental to acts of worship.⁶³ Church officials are opposing the popularity of ritual theatre in the form of feste esterne in the Sorrentine-Amalfi area today. It may be surmised from evidence gathered in this study that an underlying reason for this opposition is the fear that processional celebrations are becoming detrimental to acts of worship as the Church interprets

⁶¹Pellecchia, "Disposizioni per le processioni," pp. 17 and 18.

⁶²Vera Mowry Roberts, On Stage: A History of the Theatre (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1962), p. 36.

⁶³Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 89.

the concept of worship today.⁶⁴ In The Drama of the Medieval Church, Young examines with precision all available medieval pronouncements from the Papacy concerning the production of plays within the Church. He draws the following conclusion:

On the whole, then, it is clear that the hierarchy of the medieval Church discriminated effectually between its own edifying dramatic performances and the ludi of secular entertainers and louts who lurked within ecclesiastical boundaries. . . . We may assume, then, that the removal of literary and dramatic interpolations from the Roman service-books legalized by the council of Trent (1545-63), and the gradual disappearance of such instructions from local uses, were inspired less by hostility to religious drama than by a fundamental determination to return in all things to the puerer and simpler liturgical tradition of the early Middle Ages.⁶⁵

Clearly, a "fundamental determination to return in all things to . . . simpler liturgical tradition" would describe the logic behind the Church's present-day curtailment of feste esterne in the Sorrento-Amalfi area as well as it does the medieval "removal of literary and dramatic interpolations from Roman service-books . . . and the gradual disappearance of such intrusions from local uses."

I asked Mons. Pellecchia for a statement regarding his attitude concerning processions; his answer strongly reflects the document he had authored eighteen months earlier and serves to underline again the

⁶⁴See the quotation at the top of p. 45 above which exemplifies this viewpoint. See also the bishop's thinking as expressed during the visita pastorale in S. Agnello below, p. 56.

⁶⁵Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, p. 421. See pp. 416-421 for the papal pronouncements mentioned above.

transition in church activity required by directives No. 2 and 3:

Given that today all are not in agreement regarding religion, we must be modern and have more respect for other opinions. There is also the problem of traffic, which on the Sorrentine Peninsula becomes always more difficult. During these past years processions have grown in numbers beyond the point of reason: that is, they have been organized by anyone, many times for motives which are not truly spiritual--for example, profit and devotion-alism.

Thus, these limits regarding processions have been established:

- 1) A procession may exit only from the parrocchia itself, and not from convents, monasteries or private houses;
- 2) There are two occasions (aside from Christmas and Easter) when the parrocchia may organize a procession: the feast of Corpus Domini and the feast of the patron saint.⁶⁶

The bishop, upon questioning, defined "devotionalism" in the first paragraph of this statement as "the corruption of devotion." This definition offers another clue to the Church's position on the curtailment of feste esterne. The directives taken as a whole suggest a fear of corruption--by traffic, by money, by impious attitudes of onlookers--of what has been devotional activity. It is revealing to juxtapose this interpretation of the corruption of devotion to another suggested by Jane Harrison over fifty years ago: "It may seem surprising to some that the decay of religious faith should be an impulse to the birth of art."⁶⁷

⁶⁶This statement, composed from 10/30/70 conversation with Mons. Pellecchia, was approved by His Excellency on 11/20/70. Both meetings were held at the Curia in Sorrento.

⁶⁷Jane E. Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915), p. 136.

Mons. Nuzzi published, also in 1969, a sixteen-page booklet entitled, Pastoral Directions to the Clergy of the Dioceses of Amalfi and Campagna. Among the various directives concerning sacraments, funerals, etc., are those which treat the feste of the Church:

The Christian feste have been instituted as a profession of faith of the community in the truth and essential values of Christianity; by means of outward manifestations, the grandeur of Christianity appears alive even to the most distracted man: that which in the scholastic teaching of religion or of the catechism has remained an overly dry formula, takes on life and becomes worthy of life. For him who knows how to delve deeply, the remote "once upon a time" of the mystery which the celebration recalls to mind becomes an immediate "today," bringing with it grace, courage and joy. This is the true motive which places the festa above a simple commemoration to become an intimate part of life, breaking the monotony or the sadness of the individual life in order that the spirit of community may re-emerge vivid and life-giving. In her feste the Church reveals herself intensely, manifesting her structure and her sacramental order. Today the festa evokes the final phase of God's reign: the meeting of the wandering Church with the Church which has reached the end of the journey.

"The Church, according to her tradition, venerated the saints and honors their authentic relics and images. In fact, the feste of the saints proclaim the miracles of Christ in his servants and offer in the faithful opportune examples to imitate." (Sacra Congregazione, n. 111)⁶⁸

But "the feste of the saints must not predominate over those feste which celebrate the mysteries of salvation; therefore "the soul of the faithful is to be directed first of all toward the feste of God, in which, during the course of the year, the mysteries of salvation are celebrated." (Sacra Congregazione, n. 108)⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Mons. Nuzzi's sources are documents authored by the "Sacred Congregation of the Divine Cult" referred to on p. 53 below. The text of these and all other official documents emanating from the Papacy appear in Acta Apostolicae Sedis ("The Record of the Holy See"). This is a monthly Vatican publication available in many American reference libraries.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

It is necessary to bring the feste back to their original function of announcing the word of God. Celebration and instruction must be intimately connected in such a way that a festa perfectly celebrated is transformed into transparent and intelligible teaching filled with exaltation and true joy.

- a) Every religious festa is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the ecclesiastic authority, whose concern is to constitute a committee of persons, morally and religiously worthy, obedient to the ecclesiastic and civil regulations.
- b) Every religious festa must be prepared for by a sermon and must set aside ten percent of the sum collected for the support of the church where the festa is being celebrated: said sum is deposited in postal book or bank, entered in the account of the church or the parroco for the time being, and deposited in the Curia.

The express authorization of the Ordinario is required to spend the ten percent, which will be given upon the request of the parroco, signed also by member of the committee, indicating clearly the use for which it is intended.

- c) On feste occasions the decoration of the churches is to be sober and decorous without permitting those apparatuses which deform holy buildings and expose them to fires; the program of the religious manifestations⁷⁰ is not to be confused with that of the external manifestations, which must always be in co-operation with a religious festa.
- d) The faithful are exhorted to avoid useless spendings in lights and fireworks and to remember the poor and the works of the Church.
- e) In the sacred processions, those things which are in any way contrary to their sacred and liturgical character are absolutely prohibited; in particular it is forbidden:
 - 1) to prolong processions for many hours in order not to impede the circulation of vehicles, on national roads or [those] of great vehicular traffic and to avoid causing discomfort to the users of the street. This duty is to be considered a precise act of charity and of justice toward those who are in haste to attend to their own affairs;
 - 2) to conduct them on streets or paths where the seriousness and ease of those who carry the image are compromised; this also is a form of true respect;

⁷⁰"Religious manifestations" in this text refers to feste interne or liturgiche, and "external manifestations" to feste esterne.

- 3) to attach money to sacred images, while offerings may be decorously deposited in baskets carried by girls and boys;
- 4) to stop the sacred images to collect offerings or to introduce them into private houses or to sing responses at the request of the faithful;
- 5) to carry the pallium or canopy;
- 6) to introduce new processions without the precise authorization of the Curia.⁷¹

The similarities between this document and that of Mons. Pellecchia are major. Each is a stern reminder of the Church's control over the protocol of the feste esterne, and is concerned about the conservation of dignity in these proceedings; each limits the feste and their boundaries; each expresses the desire to see the functioning of the locale producing the festa undisturbed. Mons. Nuzzi's reference to "the Church which has reached the end of the journey" is tantalizing: he seems to be suggesting that now the Church has reached the perfection of development.

An action taken by Mons. Nuzzi which exemplifies the spirit of reform expressed in his document was to curtail the number of processions in Agerola. Until 1969, each of the six towns which constitute Agerola would have a procession honoring their common patron saint, S. Antonio Abate. The first would be celebrated on the Sunday closest to the feast day, January 17. Then, five additional processions would be organized--one for each of the following five Sundays. The Monsignor prohibited this repetition of processions. Now a single procession

⁷¹Mons. Jolando Nuzzi, Indicazioni pastorali al clero delle Diocesi di Amalfi e Campagna (Atrani: Jovane, 1969), pp. 15-17.

honoring S. Antonio is organized each year for all of Agerola. The sense of mutual participation among the towns is enhanced by the practice of having this procession begin in one locale and proceed to another. Thus in 1969 it began in Camfora and went to S. Lazzaro, in 1970 it began in S. Lazzaro and went to Bomerano, in 1971 it began in Bomerano and went to Pianillo. This semi-circular pattern will continue until each of the six mountain villages has both initiated and received a procession honoring its patron. And then the pattern will begin again.

It is interesting to examine the ecclesiastic pronouncements which preceded the local directives offered above.⁷² Under Pope Pius XII⁷³ the "Sacred Congregation of Holy Rites" (now called the "Sacred Congregation of the Divine Cult"),⁷⁴ the legislative body of the Vatican, published the General Decree of Holy Week in 1955 which concerned its reform. This document very specifically effected the processional life of the Church in that one of its requirements called for the celebration of Holy Week events according to a historical time table (a procession carrying the image of the dead Christ would have to occur in the

⁷²This research was undertaken with the kind assistance and libraries of Father Gaetano Iaccarino, Father Antonio Ercolano, and Father Antonino Davide--all of the Cathedral of Sorrento.

⁷³It was under Pius XII that massive reform of the fast laws of the Church were enacted.

⁷⁴For two rulings of this body quoted by Mons. Nuzzi in his directives, see p. 50 above. These and other documents emanating from the Holy See may be found in Acta Apostolicae Sedis.

late afternoon or evening of Good Friday, for example). The Second Vatican Council was begun in 1962 under Pope John XXIII and was concluded in 1965. The first document which made its massive reform of the liturgy official was published in January 1964--seven months following John's death. This "Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy" has been followed and supported in detail during the papacy of Pope Paul VI⁷⁵ by "The First Instruction" of September 1964, "The Second Instruction" of May 1967 and "The Third Instruction" of September 1970. Finally there is, under Paul, "Instruction on the Mystery of the Eucharist" of May 1967. Article 59 of this Encyclical discusses the processions of Corpus Domini (Corpus Christi):

The Christian people, in the processions in which the Eucharist is solemnly carried through the streets with songs, above all in the feast of "Corpus Domini" testify faith and veneration toward this Sacrament.

However, it is beholden upon the bishop of the locale to judge the opportunity, in the actual circumstances, of the locale and the organization of such processions, so that they be disciplined with dignity and without detriment to the reverence of this Sacrament.⁷⁶

These documents, both generally and specifically, have affected attitudes and actions reaching the feste esterne of the Church in southern Italy. Generally, because the ambience of reform created has permitted individual bishops to arbitrate against them should they feel so

⁷⁵The reform of indulgences has been a major undertaking of Paul VI.

⁷⁶Pope Paul VI, "Instruction on the Mystery of the Eucharist," May 1967, Art. 59.

inclined; specifically because the Church has warned of the necessity of protecting the dignity of sacred symbols when they appear in public-- a warning which would not have been necessary in a more religious century.

Another effect of liturgical reform and its revived interest in an active laical role has been the encouragement of dialogue between laity and clergy which emphasizes the open discussion of the laity's thinking and desires regarding the affairs of the church. Evidence of such an effect has been clearly demonstrated during the Visita pastorale of the Archdiocese of Sorrento. This traditional examination of parishes by the Church hierarchy, which takes place every ten years, was begun in late 1970 and will complete its official findings concerning the Sorrentino area in 1972. Every church within the Archdiocese is examined regarding property (including pieces of art), economic condition, population, frequency of church attendance, frequency of the administration of the sacraments, and feste. Encounters, called Incontri pastorali, take place between the religious and the visiting bishop or archbishop, the clerics and the bishop, the associations (confraternities, youth organizations, auxiliaries) and the bishop, and the faithful at large and the bishop. The revolutionary aspect of this pastoral visit of the 1970's has been its emphasis upon dialogue. These encounters, which had in the past consisted mainly of an address by the bishop, have encouraged the open exchange of ideas between the group being addressed and the visiting hierarchy.

The subject of processions was mentioned in the May 1971 dialogue in the parrocchia of S. Agnello. It was introduced by the bishop, in a somewhat derogatory manner--to the effect that processions without the spine of belief, which is the following of Christ, meant nothing, and could delude us into thinking that we are Christians because we participate or pray to a particular saint. At a later point in the dialogue, a young man whose opinion had been solicited specifically because he was young, objected to the bishop's anti-divorce position, but agreed with him concerning the futility of processions. There was no further discussion of the subject.⁷⁷

Such response, taken by itself, seems most negative as far as processions are concerned. During the previous months of examination and dialogue in the city and environs of Vico Equense, however, the clergy had vigorously opposed Mons. Pellecchia's decree⁷⁸ limiting processions in such a united and determined way that he had softened a crucial stipulation: although generally speaking, each parrocchia could organize only two processions (one for a patron saint and one for Corpus Domini), if there were a strong cult of the Madonna within a particular parrocchia, a third procession might be prepared in her honor as well. It is fascinating to discover the effect which this opposition

⁷⁷5/2 /71, Incontro pastorale between Mons. Pellecchia and laity in the parrocchia of S. Agnello.

⁷⁸For quotation of complete decree, see above, pp. 46-47.

and its result had upon other communities. A preacher from Meta di Sorrento, addressing the populace of Massa Lubrense, mentioned this change which had resulted from the visita pastorale in Vico. The people of Massa, in turn, immediately demanded and received permission to hold a procession in honor of their second patron, S. Cataldo--a celebration which had been reduced to a bi-annual event. This procession was technically acceptable given the bishop's new leniency, since one of the "two" processions scheduled in Massa Lubrense was in honor of the Madonna who happens to be the principal patroness of that city.⁷⁹

The opinions of the people regarding the curtailment of the processions are as strong, one way or the other, outside the Incontri Pastoral as within. Among the learned and well-established, the gambit runs from the person who would be delighted to see the entire tradition of processions die, to him who sees the Church's curtailment of the tradition as a means of its revitalization, to the person who strongly resents what he considers the Church's false posture of modernity and lack of concern for a tradition which ought to be treasured and preserved. The average older person met at a procession is saddened by their diminution, and thinks of this as merely another manifestation of a world so changed as to be almost unknown. The opinions of the young vary: there are those who would agree with the youth spokesman at the

⁷⁹5/15/71, conversation with Father Esposito, parroco of Massa Lubrense.

bishop-laity encounter in S. Agnello that processions are futile; there are those who are the principal organizers and innovators of their towns' celebrations.

Priestly opinion is equally divided. There is a marked generation gap about this question among the priests of the Peninsula and the Coast: the older group is more closely attached to procession ritual and dreads its loss; the younger group tends to be more flexible in its understanding of the Church's concern for true spirituality versus the annual honoring of a saint, as well as its interest in erasing the obsolete image it fears. This, however, is a generalized interpretation of the priestly opinion sought. The most impressive quality of the clergy's generously-shared thinking on the matter of processions was the variety of opinions expressed. Such individual thinking seemed to represent a group of strong-willed, intelligent men, each trying to create, through his own church, the balance between outward show and inner experience which he believed salutary. So many of these men would agree with the statement of one of their number: "The southern Italian people are a warm people whose emotions are brought into everything, even into those aspects of religion which are not necessarily emotional." And then they would differ concerning the methods by which such emotions might best be put to the service of religion.

Ritual, writes Harrison, is a "re-presentation, a re-doing or pre-doing, a copy or imitation of life, but always with a practical end.

Art is also a representation of life and the actions of life, but cut loose from immediate action."⁸⁰ It would seem that the feste esterne of the area have in the past served what were once considered highly practical ends: supplication of the patron in moments of crisis,⁸¹ for example, as well as the regular annual or bi-annual worship of that patron, who, it was believed, might protect the locale and its people from future harm. The official viewpoint of the Church regarding such practicality has obviously changed, as has been evidenced by the directives, the incontri pastorali and the diversity of general opinion discussed above. The Church's curtailment of processional activities reflects its desire to become contemporary in a modern world. It also parallels strongly the action of the medieval Church in regard to drama: that which is no longer practical for purposes of instructing the faithful in matters of faith, that which has become a distraction to the spiritual life is to be expelled. "How many thunderous interdictions has the Church not hurled at the theater down the ages,"⁸²

Perhaps the comparison suggested on p. 49 bears repetition. The bishop of Sorrento would avoid the corruption of what has been a devotional activity (processions); Harrison suggests that the decay of

⁸⁰Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual, p. 135.

⁸¹An example of special processions organized because of earthquake vibrations appears below on pp. 77-78 of Chapter II.

⁸²Hunningher, The Origin of Theatre, p. 1.

religious faith may prove "an impulse to the birth of art."⁸³ It would seem that the art form born of these processional celebrations is theatre. Thus, if what was primarily ritual has become primarily ritual theatre, then it is no longer vital to the interests of the Church hierarchy.

And yet, to the body of the Church--the laity, street processions, as well as the companion forms of scenic representations and occasional religious plays, seem to remain important. For the faithful, feste esterne are still thought to have the practical end of invoking divine protection. Also, the eulogy of a saint's life and the veneration of his image often bring about what can be called catharsis among both participants and observers of processions, who seem to experience both purging and exaltation from the vicarious re-living of their patron's sufferings.

For many who are not religious believers, these forms of ritual theatre also remain important. "It [the Easter procession of Sorrento] is a tradition, a thing well done, aesthetic. Then there is a bit of religion in this even for him who does not believe."⁸⁴ So speaks a representative of that sophisticated segment of the population which commutes daily to Naples and does not follow the rigors of the liturgical year in a personal way. For him and for many like him, these traditions have become part of the mind and of the blood, and are not easily dislodged.

⁸³Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual, p. 137.

⁸⁴2/21/71, conversation with Bruno Balsamo, an executive of the Italian Line, Naples office.

CHAPTER II

INDIVIDUAL LOCALES AND THE FESTE ESTERNE OF THEIR SAINTS

There are three major types of feste esterne, apart from those concerning Christmas and Easter, which take place in the Sorrento-Amalfi area during the liturgical year: those of patron saints, of the Madonna, who is principal patroness of many locales, and of Corpus Domini. In recent years the Corpus Domini processions have been encouraged by the Church since it is Christ who is the central figure of such celebrations. The feste esterne of the saints and of the Madonna have been curtailed to some degree, as has been discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter will present brief background sketches of all of the cities of the area, as well as of those towns whose feste are discussed. These sketches are included first, to point out those historical occurrences which seem to have bearing upon present-day celebrations, and second, to identify those prominent characteristics which distinguish one locale from another. Descriptions of the feste esterne of their patron saints follow. Table 3 offers population statistics and Table 4 a guide to the relationships of towns to cities on both the

Sorrentine Peninsula and the Coast of Amalfi. Table 5 lists the feste of the saints to be discussed. These are presented as I witnessed them as well as in essential correspondence with the liturgical year (the liturgical year officially begins with the season of Advent which fell on November 29th in 1970; my study of these feste began November 1st). Since many feste are nearly identical, excepting the name of the saint honored or the band playing, this presentation will attempt to offer representative examples of what has become a ritual genre, as well as describing interesting variations of this genre. The representative examples are chosen from the feste of the Sorrento area; the variations to be found in both areas are discussed.

TABLE 3

GENERAL POPULATIONS OF THE CITIES AND
LARGE TOWNS OF THE AREA*

<u>SORRENTINE PENINSULA</u>		<u>COAST OF AMALFI</u>	
Vico Equense	14,500	Amalfi	7,300
Meta di Sorrento	5,000	Atrani	1,500
Piano di Sorrento	7,000	Agerola	7,300
S. Agnello	6,000	Positano	3,200
Sorrento	14,000	Tramonti	5,600
Massa Lubrense	14,000	Praiano	1,500
		Furore	630
		Conca dei Monti	750
		Ravello	2,600
		Scala	1,700

*These figures include the populations of those small towns which pertain to the cities listed above.

TABLE 4
TOWNS OR SECTIONS PERTAINING TO THE CITIES/TOWNS
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SORRENTO

<u>Sorrento</u>	<u>S. Agnello</u>	<u>Vico Equense</u>
Martha Grande	Trasaella	S. Salvatore
Casartano	Colli di Fontanella	Bonea
Priola		Seiano
Puoli	<u>Piano di Sorrento</u>	Fomacella
Capo di Sorrento	Mortora	Arola
	La Trinita	Breazzano
	Cassano	Pacognano
		Ticciano
		Molano
	<u>Meta di Sorrento</u>	Faito
	Alberi	Massaquano
	Montechiaro	
<u>Massa Lubrense</u>		
Marciano		
Schialuzzano		
Monticchio		
Termini		
Nerano		
Aquara		
Pastena		
S. Agata		
Torca		

TABLE 5
TOWNS OR SECTIONS PERTAINING TO THE CITIES/TOWNS
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF AMALFI

<u>Amalfi</u>	<u>Furore</u>	<u>Scala</u>
Lone		Campidoglio
Pastena	<u>Maiori</u>	Minuto
Pogerola	Erchie	Ontone
Tovere	Ponteprimario	S. Caterina
Vettica Minore	S. Maria delle Grazie	<u>Tramonti</u>
	S. Pietro	Polvica
	Vecite	Campinola
<u>Agerola</u>	<u>Minori</u>	Capitignano
Pianillo	Torre	Cesarano
Bomerano	Villamena	Corsano
Campora		Gigliano
Ponte	<u>Positano</u>	Gete
S. Lazzaro	Montepertusso	Novella
S. Maria		Paterno Inferiore
<u>Atrani</u>		Paterno Superiore
	<u>Praiano</u>	Pietre
<u>Cetara</u>	Vettica Maggiore	Ponte
<u>Conca dei Monti</u>		Pucara
	<u>Ravello</u>	
Penna	Iacco	
S. Pancrazio	S. Pietro	
	Torello	

TABLE 6

FESTE ESTERNE OF THE SAINTS IN THE
SORRENTO-AMALFI AREA, 1970-71*

<u>November</u> ¹	1	Tutti Santi
	2	Tutti Morti
	11	S. Martino--Campora (of Agerola) Vecite (above Maiori)
	5	S. Trofimenia--Minori
	30	S. Andrea--Amalfi Marciano (above Massa Lubrense)
<u>December</u>	13	S. Lucia--Sorrento
	14	S. Agnello--S. Agnello
<u>January</u>	17	S. Antonio Abata--Agerola
	26	S. Attanasio--Priora (above Sorrento)
	31	S. Ciro--Vico Equense
<u>February</u>	5	S. Agata--S. Agata (above Massa Lubrense)
	14	S. Antonino--Sorrento Arola (above Vico Equense)
<u>April</u>	5	S. Vincenzo Ferresi--Preazzano (above Vico)
<u>May</u>	10	S. Cataldo--Massa Lubrense
	16	S. Antonino--Sorrento
<u>June</u>	13	S. Antonio di Padova--Capuchins in S. Agnello, Amalfi, Maiori, Conca dei Monti
	15	S. Vito--Positano
	24	S. Giovanni Battista--Tramonti Massaquano (above Vico) Conca dei Monti
	29	S. Pietro--Cetara; Piano; Fornacella (above Vico); Tovere (above Amalfi); Pianillo (of Agerola)

¹As mentioned on p. 62 above, the study of saints feste begins in November. The official beginning of the liturgical year in 1970 was November 29th, the first Sunday of Advent.

*This listing includes the feste esterne of all cities in the area, as well as those of most towns.

TABLE 6--Continued

<u>July</u>	13	S. Trofimenà--Minori
	22	S. Maria Magdalena--Atrani
	27	S. Panteleone--Ravello
<u>August</u>	2	S. Alfonso--Pacognano (above Vico)
	6	S. Salvatore--S. Salvatore (above Vico)
	9	S. Lorenzo--Scala
	16	S. Rocco--Maiori
	29	S. Ciro--Vico Equense
	29	S. Gregorio--S. Lazzaro (of Agerola)
<u>September</u>	21	S. Matteo--Bomerano (of Agerola)
	22	S. Gennaro--Vettica Maggiore (near Praiano) Villamena (above Minori)
	29	S. Michele Arcangelo--Piano; Furore; Tramonti; Vettica Minore (near Amalfi); Torre (above Minori)
<u>October</u>	4	S. Renato--Moiانو (above Vico)
	18	S. Lucca--Praiano

Patron Saints

Several generalizations may be made concerning the patron saints of the area. The history and/or legends of each saint form a part of the inherited culture of each locale. The name of the patron is common among the citizens who live under his "protection." The feast day of the patron is a major holiday; often, however, the day of celebration will be moved to the nearest Sunday in order that everyone, including the busiest shopkeepers, will be able to participate. Finally, for the large majority of the inhabitants of the area, patron saints are held in high esteem--whether for reasons of faith or for reasons of tradition:

This religion, or rather this worship of the saint, is more than respect, confidence [sic]. The whole population has confidence in him as a father. The worship of him is love of him. Here are none of the excesses of fanaticism of the blood martyrs, of the wearers of haircloth, it is not the hysterical fanaticism of the Islamites, who make Balaam's ass pass over their backs; but it is affectionate confidence and gratitude felt in the highest degree. These people have had continual favors from the saint, recall infinite benefits, immense proofs of affection and benevolence received from him, therefore why should they abandon this worship, this grateful affection, which is acceptable to the saint, their kind intercessor with God, and dear to them?²

Their Processions

Processions honoring patron saints share a number of basic characteristics regardless of locale. (1) These processions are invariably preceded by the celebration of the Mass in the church responsible for organizing the particular procession in question. They seem always to be preceded as well by a pre-processional rush which involves the last-minute unification of various processional elements: personnel, costumes, and properties. (2) These processions always include some representation of the following groups: clergy, religious lay organizations, school children, and the general population. They nearly always include members of the local confraternity and members of a band hired for the occasion. (3) Costumes, often in the form of uniforms or clerical garb, are an integral part of these processions. They are always worn by clergy, band members and confraternity members,

²Angelo Flavio Guidi, Sorrentine Memories and Anecdotes, trans. by Elise Lathrop (Napoli: Tipografia Inglese A. Colavecchia, 1906), p. 25.

and are often worn by school children and the men carrying statues and properties. The obvious effect of such clothing is to enhance the sense of occasion and the theatricality of the procession itself. (4) A modelled representation of the patron saint is always carried in the procession organized in his honor. This usually takes the form, either of a life-size statue or of a larger-than-life bust. Whichever representation is used, it is usually the most popular image of the saint displayed in the church bearing his name, and it is usually made of precious metal. In some cases the statues are clothed and/or wigged. The purpose of bearing the image of the saint in procession is two-fold: on the one hand, its appearance in public brings about public veneration of the patron; on the other, the sight of the saint's image passing through local streets re-enforces the concept of his ability to protect and intercede for the city or town and its inhabitants in times of crisis. Thus the statues carried about many seaside locales are said to "bless" the waters by being moved in a manner signifying benediction. In the tiny seaside village of Cetara the opposite phenomenon takes place as well--several days prior to the procession in his honor, the statue of S. Pietro is "blessed" with sea water by the children of the village. (5) Additional symbols are never lacking from saint's-day processions. One, two, or three crucifixes are carried, generally in accordance with the size of the procession. Banners are always included: those of confraternities, those of other organizations represented by the

marchers, and occasionally those of the community where the procession is taking place. It is unusual to witness a saint's procession without some floral arrangements either adorning the base of the statue or carried in close proximity to it. Less frequently employed processional properties include special bells, ornate umbrellas or canopies, and displays pertaining to the saint being honored (a boat in the case of S. Pietro, for example). (6) Sound effects for saint's-day processions are always provided by church bells and bands; singing and praying often complement chimes and music. (7) In the majority of cases, fireworks are considered to be an integral part of saint's-day processions. They are ignited in a variety of places: on the sides of mountains, over the sea, on street corners, or in church piazzas. Their explosive presence is meant to convey a single meaning: honor of the saint.

A striking characteristic of some saint's day processions is the presence, on or about the day of the procession, of a complete outdoor fiera (fair) along the main street or streets of the locale in question. These fairs or markets add greatly to the festive air of the occasion, both visually and in terms of the additional sense of urgency and excitement they engender. Almost every imaginable household item, as well as a selection of holiday foodstuffs, is purchased and sold at such fairs before, during and after the procession of the day has taken place.

An important characteristic which varies from one procession to another is that of theme. Although the general theme of protection is common to every festa of a patron saint, the particular manifestations of this saint-as-guardian theme vary tremendously. In many cases the patron saint offers protection from the natural elements which threaten the particular locale: certain saints, for example, are said to protect sea-faring people and their towns or cities from the ravages of the sea (S. Anna, S. Pietro, S. Andrea). In the case of farming communities, the special protection of the patron saint is thought to influence the harvest upon which the locale's economy largely depended for centuries (S. Antonino). Other, even more specific, forms of protection are believed to be afforded by other saints--for example, the protection of the sense of sight (S. Lucia) or the protection of the state of pregnancy (S. Agnello). The protection of all the saints is invoked for the blessings of a good afterlife during the feasts of All Saints and All Souls.

With these characteristics in mind, the following section includes the brief background sketches of the locales and the descriptions of the feste esterne of their patron saints.

S. Agnello

The hills of S. Agnello extend southward to the tiny parish of Trasaella and to the farming community of Colli di Fontanella. To the north of the town several historic edifices overlook the Mediterranean.

The famous Hotel Cocumella, the oldest on the Peninsula, has for centuries served tourists in times of peace and victorious military personnel in times of war. Nearby, to the east, are a beautiful, ancient castle endowed as a retirement home for elderly nuns, and an ancient monastery with an extensive library belonging to the Capuchin monks.

The church of the patron saint, who is the original founder of Neapolitan hospitals and after whom the town is named, overlooks Corso Italia, that single road which supports every kind of traffic from Naples to Punto di Campanella, and then becomes, as it rounds the curve of the Peninsula, the famed Amalfi drive. S. Agnello the saint is most famous, not for his good works, but for his reputation as patron and protector of pregnant women. He is visited on his feast day by the pregnant women of the Peninsula, and by those farmers whose animals are about to give birth as well. Among the more famous local proverbs is this one: "Said S. Agnello leaning out of his little window, 'Now, you poor people, screw yourselves!'"³ Its implication is that the saint's powers of vindictiveness are vast when he is ignored. This idea is based upon the superstition that the pregnant woman who leaves her home on December 14th and does not pay a visit to S. Agnello had better beware of the malformation of her unborn child.

³Giovanni Tucci, Dicette Pulicenella . . . (Milano: Silva Editore, 1966), p. 25.

November 1--TUTTI SANTI (Feast of All Saints)

The Feast of All Saints takes place in every town of the area large enough to have its own cemetery. This festa, as well as that of November 2nd, can be considered a variation upon the processional genre, since the subject of its attention is not a single saint which a whole town venerates, but every saint. On this occasion every citizen honors his dead relatives since, according to the beliefs of the faithful, they may be becoming or may have already become, saints. On both occasions the audience is supplied by two groups: (1) the families who observe each other honoring their dead, and (2) it is believed by the faithful, the dead themselves.

In S. Agnello the parish bells begin to toll at 1:30 p.m. It is not the usual marking of the time of day, but a signal to the people: in one hour the procession bound for the cemetery in the hills will depart. The 1970 procession is tiny--a crucifix, four priests, three altar boys, three nuns, about ten women, one family in its entirety. The greater part of S. Agnello answers the call of the bells in small automobiles. And as the human procession winds its way up the narrow road pressed between vineyards and tiny dwellings, it is itself pressed hard against the road walls to permit the automobile procession passage. It seems to grow in strength, however, for every one hundred yards or so a new family group emerges from some tiny doorway and melts into the praying walkers, so that the procession grows

to about fifty people by the time it finishes its half-hour walk to the cemetery's entrance.

There are two theatrical features of the celebration in the cemetery to consider: production aspects and the sense of communion with the dead which is engendered. Production considerations are extensive and exacting. The week preceding the feast day finds every available electrician and electrician's helper in the cemetery rigging the lighting--electric candles of every imaginable size and shape are strung between recent earth graves, around stone tombs, up wall burials. Wax candles of white and red, also in various sizes and shapes, are prepared in large quantities. Local florists accept no orders during this week except for those pertaining to this honoring of the dead. Beauty parlors are crowded, new clothes are purchased. Young widows and old rise early on this morning and are seen in the cemetery, brushing and sweeping and polishing the graves of their husbands--almost as if they are making again, ritualistically, the beds they had shared in life. On the day of the fešta the formal honoring the dead by visit and prayer takes place. The flashy bell bottoms of the young mingle with the drab, shapeless, mourning black of the old as grandmother and teenager, mother and children, fiances and husband wife gather reverently around family graves in unbroken silence. These groupings occur throughout the day, in improvised yet simultaneous fashion; and when these informal moments of prayer and

communion are over, the circular groups break up as easily as they had come together. Families then stroll about the cemetery to visit other deceased and to greet the living. The scene is busy with movement and with voices, enriched by occasional snatches of the sung Mass in the chapel of the cemetery and bells tolling from the church below the hills. The people of S. Agnello visit their dead as one visits dear friends rarely seen: with gifts, with a sense of the value of the occasion, with love.

Piano di Sorrento

Robert Browning described Piano di Sorrento in his poem, "The Englishman in Italy." The town is located between S. Agnello and Meta di Sorrento and, like these, stretches from the sea up to the mountains. Its geography and resulting modes of existence are indicated in Browning's lines:

But today not a boat reached Salerno,
So back to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began.⁴

S. Michele Arcangelo is Piano's patron saint,⁵ and the church of his name, which seems to have existed as far back as 1410,⁶ is

⁴Robert Browning, "An Englishman in Italy," quoted in Alfredo Ammendola, Cuore di Madre (Napoli: Cenacolo, 1963), p. 195.

⁵S. Michele is also patron of Furore, a tiny town of the Amalfi Coast located near Positano.

⁶Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 56.

the dominant parrocchia in town. The two most interesting churches within its boundaries, however, are found at the extremes of sea and mountains. Piano's fishermen congregate at the little seaside chapel of S. Maria delle Grazie, and many farmers attend SS. Trinità, a parrocchia in its own right, which is in the hills. Trinità has been honored with the title of Basilica and boasts the oldest confraternity of the Peninsula, L'Arciconfraternità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti.⁷ Because of the seniority of this organization, the processions of Trinita have the right of way over all others should street encounters occur on days of special devotion.⁸ It was within this same parish that a buffalo-fight, modelled after the Spanish bullfight, used to be held as part of the festa of S. Pietro.⁹

November 2--TUTTI MORTI (Feast of All Souls)

The tone is quieter on the Feast of All Souls than it was on the Feast of All Saints. There is careful and more individual visiting in the cemetery of Piano today, and Masses for the Dead are said every half hour in the cemetery chapel. The burned-out candles are replaced, the leaves of wilting flowers pruned, the housekeeping of the grave

⁷The "costumes" and "props" of this parrocchia are discussed, pp. 33 and 34 above.

⁸This was a fairly common occurrence when processions used to go from one town to another as a matter of course. 10/27/70, conversation with Father Antonino Alberino, parroco of SS. Trinita in Piano.

⁹Gaetano Amalfi, Tradizioni ed usi nella Penisola Sorrentina, Vol. VIII of Curiosità popolari tradizioni, ed., by Giuseppe Pitre (Palermo: Carlo Clausen, 1890), p. 51.

attended to. The sadness of the occasion is evident now as it was not yesterday. The implacability of death is submitted to again--ritualistically. There is sadness because death, rather than the sainthood of immortal Christians, is being remembered. Perhaps there is also sadness because official communion with the dead is nearly over: tomorrow is not another feast day, and tomorrow the dead will be alone again, with their drooping flowers and dying candles.

For by 1:00 p.m. the sons of the master electrician of Piano, and their friends, can be seen swinging perilously and gaily from ladder to ladder. In a few hours they unstring the special candle wiring of the wall graves which took more than a week to set up.

Meta di Sorrento

Meta, that close neighbor of Piano and of S. Agnello, is most famous for the Basilica of SS. Maria del Lauro and for the legendary history which surrounds it. "Around the Basilica . . . flutter two different myths: one pagan, according to which the goddess Minerva had one of her temples here; and one Christian, which tells of the miraculous apparition of the Virgin under the laurel tree which was already sacred to Apollo."¹⁰ According to the second legend, an old

¹⁰Aniello Grifeo, Penisola Sorrentina e Capri Salerno - Pesto (Roma: Novara, 1929), p. 21. See also P. Bonaventura da Sorrento, Sorrento sacra e Sorrento illustre (S. Agnello: S. Francesco d'Assisi, 1877), p. 44, and Wladimiro Frenkel, Guida di Sorrento e dintorni (Torre del Greco: H. Bernard-Frenkel, 1929), p. 135.

peasant woman who was looking for her lost cow, saw a laurel tree aflame and beneath it found a statue of Mary with Jesus in her arms. Beside the statue she also found a gold hen and ten gold chicks. This pious woman told her story, and the bishop had the beautiful statue removed to the Cathedral of Sorrento. The statue is said to have returned miraculously to the place of its discovery three times before the hierarchy understood the divine message: a church dedicated to this Madonna was to be built upon this site.¹¹

The present church of S. Maria del Lauro is presumably the original, and its locale is dramatic. It is set back slightly from the steep incline which overlooks many of the town's seaside dwellings. A winding narrow road climbs this hill, seeming to aim directly for the church, which is silhouetted against the even higher hills of the town. Pius IX named the clergy of S. Maria del Lauro to the insignia of Collegiata in 1849, and Pius X bestowed the title of Basilica upon it in 1917.¹² Perhaps a more local index of the vast importance assigned to this church at one time was the fact that, in 1783 when the Sorrentine Peninsula was being shaken by earthquake vibrations and many processions of intercession were organized, "the Archbishop of Sorrento followed that of the Madonna del Lauro in Meta, barefoot,

¹¹Callea, Folklore di Sorrento e dintorni, p. 109.

¹²Libretto di Preghiere con cenno storico (Napoli: M. Gallo & Figli, 1955), p. 20.

crowned with thorns, girdled in rope, and scourging himself with a whip."¹³

The famous statue was officially crowned in 1748,¹⁴ and is held in such high esteem to this day that it is only permitted to be carried in procession every twenty-five years. Since it represents the Madonna who is patroness of the town, the people of Meta do not organize annual processions honoring a saint as do most of their neighbors.

Meta is one of the numerous towns which struggled for centuries to receive official autonomy from the city of Sorrento. Such autonomy was not granted until 1819.¹⁵

Minori and Maiori

Minori and Maiori are a pair of seaside cities of the Costiera, located east of Amalfi. Their historic and ever-present rivalry is reflected in their names: Reghina Minor and Reghina Major were colonies of the Republic of Amalfi whose primary contributions were to serve as arsenals and shipping yards.¹⁶ Although Maiori has twice the population of its companion city, it is fascinating to observe that

¹³Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 71.

¹⁴See pp. 149-153 below for a discussion of coronations of Madonnas.

¹⁵Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 192.

¹⁶Matteo Camera, Istoria della città e costiera di Amalfi (Napoli: Fibreno, 1836), pp. 363, 381.

what Minori lacks in size is made up for in zeal. It is the people of Minori who have organized an annual Carnival in which many of the costal towns participate, and to which most of their citizens come; it is Minori's artists who are famous along the Costiera, and the peninsula as well, for their celebrated tappetti of colored sawdust. For centuries both cities have cultivated huge lemon crops.¹⁷

November 5--S. TROFIMENA

S. Trofimena, Virgin Martyr, is patroness of Minori. Trofimena was an early Christian of the city of Patti in Sicily during the third century when the Empire was ruled by Diocletian (Emperor during S. Agata's martyrdom as well). Trofimena was martyred, so the story goes, by her own father. Bones thought to be her sacred relics were brought to the city of Minori in 1793; in 1968, on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of this transferral, special celebrations were conducted at the Basilica which bears her name.¹⁸

¹⁷Nowhere in the entire area is it more obvious to the naked eye that agrarian man fought a tremendous battle with unrelenting natural forces--and won it. The lemon orchards of Minori and Maiori literally hang upon the sides of mountains. Skilled terracing and pruning, as well as the back-breaking labor of carrying huge lemon-filled baskets up and down the mountains at harvest time, won the battle. But it may soon be lost again, for the Minoresi and Maioresi young men of the 1960s and 1970s have no desire to continue in the steps of their hard-working peasant fathers.

¹⁸S. Trofimena V. e M., ed. by the Comitato Festeggiamenti (Amalfi: De Luca, 1968), p. 4.

Minori's November celebration for its protectress is simple but effective, and untouched by touristic motives.¹⁹ High Mass is sung at 10:30 a.m., and through the doors of the cathedral what appear to be hundreds of candle flames are visible against a black background. Upon entering, it becomes clear that the "candles" are electric lamps and the "black background" is the church interior filled with a large, vocal congregation. The church is filled to overflowing; men outnumber women. The organ is to the left of the central aisle and the veiled choir to the right. At the main altar young girls in white gowns receive communion; far in the back the sacristan in navy turtleneck pulls the drawstrings of the huge canopy above the exit. He closes the doors against someone's vigorous protest only to open them in their entirety thirty seconds later. The normal doors have been latched unto their gigantic whole selves--huge panels which are literally the height of the church's nave.

The procession begins to exit as groups of observers of all ages stir gently to attention from their piazza vantage points (the bells had tolled their message of the Mass's end and the procession's beginning some time before, but the exit from the church had not, after all, been

¹⁹The pamphlet about Minori offered by its tourist office suggests only the summer festa of its patroness on July 13th as an attraction. Directives concerning the curtailment of feste esterne in the Archdiocese of Amalfi of which Minori is a part are more general and less specific in their implications than are those which effect the Archdiocese of Sorrento (see pp. 46-47 above). It is interesting that two feste esterne honoring the same patroness continue to be permitted.

prompt). The marchers seem to be organized into three groups: specific lay organizations, religious persons and objects, the general populace. The first group consists of three braces of school children, divided at one point by an auxiliary organization--old ladies dressed in rather amazing black and gold uniforms. The second group validates the sacristan's speedy opening of the large porticos of the church. An oversized maypole whose black and gold streamers are manned by little boys in black and white costumes leads this part of the procession. A priest follows carrying a crucifix on a staff from which hangs a tapestry of the Madonna. Then comes a modest-sized bell mounted within an enormous circular staff and nearly immobilized by its red-costumed attendants. The fourth piece of moving scenery to appear is a huge, silken, red and gold umbrella, borne on high but sheltering no one and no things. Then a large crucifix, followed by the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese, who is in turn followed by the venerated statue of S. Trofimenia. She is borne carefully upon her chair by solemn carriers, who are followed by a luxurious canopy supported by six poles and six more carriers. The large uniformed band (who minutes before had been lounging and smoking on the church steps) and the mass of the faithful comprise the third sector of Trofimenia's November procession.

The journey lasts forty-five minutes. The marchers proceed up through the little rural roads of Minori and then down to the beach.

Fireworks have been rigged and are waiting to be ignited. And after the sea has been sprayed with artificial fire, the processing laity and religious return, directly through the piazza this time, to the church-- to lay down their costumes and their props in order to go home to a holiday dinner.

The facade of the Collegiata S. Trofimena is lit for the six o'clock Mass in the evening and the effect is dramatic. But what remains predominant are images of the daytime: the throngs of children who had a holiday from school, the sense of the divided duties of Minori's population--half providing the spectacle, half providing its audience, each equally important. The dominant impression, however, is not visual but oral. It is the reverberation of sound which enveloped the day's proceedings and which spelled out the dramatic formula of these rites: the church bells tolling majestically and continuously as the heavy brass of the uniformed band rose to the challenge forcefully and continuously. The rivalry of the sacred and the profane goes on, and no one in the sunny mountain-sea city of Minori seems conscious that any rivalry exists at all.

Amalfi

The Coast of Amalfi, or, as the Italians call it fondly, the Divina Costiera, winds and unwinds itself on mountainous cliffs for twenty miles from Positano to Vietri sul Mare. To the English-speaking it is the Amalfi Drive; it "will have the same effect upon you as if

gazing directly into the sun; you will find yourself blinking and for some time you will be unable to see anything else."²⁰ The Coast of Amalfi was probably not inhabited during ancient times: Strabo wrote that no other city existed between the Sirenuse and Pestum except Marcinna (later to become Vietri sul Mare).²¹ Grifeo suggests that the Greeks were looking for safer, and the Romans for more comfortable, locales.²² At any rate, it was not until the Middle Ages that this area began to have a name in history.

Located at the midpoint of this famous twenty-mile stretch of coast is the city of Amalfi. There are several legends concerning its founding: the city was named after a lost love of Hercules--the beautiful nymph Amalphi who was buried there;²³ Amalphi, a Roman lady of royal birth founded the city and gave it her name.²⁴ There is a fairly acceptable historical theory of the city's founding by a lost Roman colony headed by Constantinople. Stranded at, and then enchanted by, the Gulf of Salerno, these ancient settlers were thought to have built a town beside the river Malpe or Malfa or Malfero, and thus came in later times to be known as Malfitani or Amalfitani.²⁵

²⁰Renato Fucini, as quoted in Giuseppe Imperato, Amalfi nella natura, nella storia e nell'arte (Amalfi-Salerno: Arti Grafiche de Luca, 1969), p. 11.

²¹Matteo Camera, Istoria della città e costiera di Amalfi (Napoli: Fibreno, 1836), p. 16.

²²Grifeo, Penisola Sorrentina, p. 62.

²³Camera, Istoria d'Amalfi, p. 17. ²⁴Ibid., p. 18

²⁵Grifeo, Penisola Sorrentina, p. 64.

With the accession in 1193 of Frederick II as King of Sicily, the history of Amalfi follows that of Naples fairly closely. Before that time, however, two outstanding historical accomplishments were attained: a period of autonomous rule and the establishment of great maritime power. By swearing nominal allegiance to the Byzantine Empire during the late eighth century as did Naples, the city acquired what was virtually political autonomy.²⁶ A prefect was elected as head of the state in 840, and in 897 the leading office of doge was instituted,²⁷ to be continued until the overthrow of this first of the Italian maritime republics by the Normans in 1137.²⁸ During this period, Amalfi's territorial power in the surrounding area was substantial.

The duchy of Amalfi matched in miniature the larger cities of Europe. The constituent communities--Ravello, Scala, Positano, Tramonti, Lettere, Maiori, and Minori--resisted continually a central dominion. . . . Atrani alone remained closely and loyally linked with Amalfi.²⁹

Atrani is, incidentally, Amalfi's companion even today; which is to say that they exist side by side on the coast with amicable interplay of family ties and of festa processions, and without the rivalry which

²⁶Imperato, Amalfi, p. 28. See also Grifeo, Penisola sorrentina, p. 64.

²⁷Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 181.

²⁹Robert Gathorne-Hardy, Amalfi (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 269.

so often characterizes adjacent cities. This friendship, as well as the short distance (three quarters of a mile) between the two locales, makes Atrani, which fits neatly between an overhanging mountain and a small but beautiful beach, seem to be almost an extension of Amalfi.

Amalfi's rise to power began during the ninth century:

She had warehouses, shops, bands, churches, establishments in all the ports and merchant cities of the Orient. Constantinople, Accon, Laedicea, Berirut, Gaffa, Alexandria, Tripoli di Soria, Durazzo, Cairo were the centers of her commerce.³⁰

During this era of sea power, which was military as well as commercial, and reached its height during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the city drew up a system of maritime law known as the Tavola Amalfitana, the last edition of which is dated 1276.³¹

The city was continually battling both Longobards and Saracens, either for the protection of allies or for its own. One of its earliest recorded successes was the defeat of a Saracen fleet threatening Rome in a battle won together with the fleets of Naples and Gaeta in 849.³² Amalfi's most celebrated struggle is related both in histories and by contemporary citizens as evidence of its patron's miraculous powers. On June 27, 1554, the city was being overrun by Saracens led by their

³⁰XIV regata delle antiche repubbliche marinare, sotto l'alto patronato del presidente della repubblica (Pisa: V. Lischi e Figli, giugno 1969), p. 17.

³¹Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 181.

³²Imperato, Amalfi, p. 31.

famous leader, Kairedin, also known as Barbarossa. The people of Amalfi prayed to S. Andrea for protection, and according to tradition, a mad sea arose, smashing the enemy boats and forcing the invaders to relinquish their attack.³³ To this day, at the home of the Proto family on Via Ferdinando Babordella, there is preserved a piece of a Saracen boat which had been reputedly tossed upon the shore by that great storm.³⁴

Amalfatine pride in this historic sea power continues: the majority of the city's young men still make the sea their career, and the regata contested among the four ancient marine republics--Amalfi, Genova, Pisa and Venezia, is celebrated annually. The great thirteenth century arsenal of Amalfi, which once sheltered the powerful Orient-bound trading ships still faces out toward the sea and houses the single racing galley used for this occasion. An even stronger pride exists perhaps around the cult of S. Andrea. The first apostle and a fisherman, his bones were reportedly stolen from the Church of S. Andrea in Constantinople in 1208 and brought back to Amalfi during the fourth crusade.³⁵ The sentiment is expressed in Amalfi that the city is among the most fortunate in the world--for only eleven others possess the relics of an apostle.

³³Camera, Istoria della città e costiera di Amalfi, p. 50.

³⁴12/7/71, conversation with Sig. Andrea Colvolpe of the Azienda del Turismo of Amalfi.

³⁵Ibid.

The Cathedral of S. Andrea in Amalfi is perhaps the most beautiful church of the entire area. Its famous steps (there are sixty-three) carry it above the city, making it its own mountainous sanctuary. Its architecture combines Sicilian and Arabic styles: the building was begun in 800 and completed in 1891.³⁶ The impressive, inlaid marble facade displays a triumphant Christ surrounded by prophets and saints upon its pediment, and underscores the scene with two rows of window arches, and again with its superb arcade and bronze doors. Within, the church is baroque, and its altar doubles as the tomb of its famous patron. Outside the bell tower is completed by a group of cupolas which resemble a miniature castle, and the cloisters boast double rows of ancient columns. Altogether it is, very simply, magnificent, and it is not difficult to understand why the Amalfitani wish to have their own bishop at their own Curia within the cloisters of their own cathedral.

November 30--S. ANDREA³⁷

On the topmost ten or fifteen of the sixty-three steps leading to the portals of Amalfi's Cathedral, pages and attendants are putting on their costumes. Firecrackers--large ones, are being set off on the far left of these same steps by older boys, and between the two groups appears a Monsignor, in flaming pink, leading his band of school

³⁶Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 181.

³⁷The festa of S. Andrea is also celebrated in the small town of Marciano, above Massa Lubrense.

children. He counts heads and pairs off these singers of the day on the twenty or so steps below those being utilized by the boys, and is joined by a nun and two cassocked priests who help him pass out sheet music. The church bells begin to peal, announcing the finish of the sung Mass which has been offered within by the Apostolic Administrator of Amalfi, aided by four priests and a superb choir. A huge umbrella appears on the topmost step, and its many attendants arrange themselves around it. The golden processional bell is carried into the line-up, and the procession honoring S. Andrea is officially begun. First the school children descend, singing, from their sheet music, "Kumbayah" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in Italian. (The new liturgy of the Church has obviously reached Amalfi, for this is the sort of music utilized in the folk and jazz masses so popular among the young Catholics in the United States today.) The pages and attendants, costumed in robes and cassocks of black and white, green and white, or red and white, follow. The umbrella begins the steep descent followed by the bell and by lighted candles. The hierarchy starts down, and one sees nearly all of the parish priests of the hill towns as well as those of Amalfi's Curia, surrounding their bishop.

All that has transpired is merely a preface for the first dramatic moment of the day--the carrying of the statue of S. Andrea down the steps of the cathedral bearing his name. It is necessary to understand the steep angle of descent, to contrast it to the size and weight of the

statue (a bust of solid silver, measuring four-and-one-half feet from head to waist), and to add to these the swaying, life-giving motion purchased at the price of back and shoulder pains for the six hefty carriers dressed in red. For many of the people watching, S. Andrea seems to come alive (see Figure 3, p. 90); and all who watch him are silent and seem to believe--for the moment at least. The firecrackers sound throughout the descent, huge explosions which are penetrated by the sound of the bells, tolling, tolling, tolling. But the people are silent, as they watch their saint come down from his church to meet them in the piazza. Another, almost identical, statue of the saint forms the hub of this same crowded piazza: the still carving seems to await the arrival of what appears to be his living counterpart. The contrast between the two statues is astounding: the descending S. Andrea seems to possess a million light years of life, while poor S. Andrea in the piazza is merely metal.

The dramatic momentum is not permitted to lapse. The statue is followed by a tapestry of the Madonna, and by a throng--a bevvv almost, of praying women, dressed in black, each carrying a candle. These women run down the stairs, as if they did not wish the statue to escape them. The dramatic level is sustained finally by the band--thirty-eight members of the Maiori-Minori group today, who offer counterpoint to the explosions and tolling bells. For just as the statue, which has been engulfed by the people while being borne through the



Fig. 3.--The statue of S. Andrea being borne
down the steps of the Cathedral in Amalfi.

piazza, disappears into a narrow street to begin a circuitous walk through Amalfi, the band completes its descent down the sixty-three steps, and it too is engulfed by the people in the piazza.

The second dramatic moment occurs on the shore of Amalfi. The statue of S. Andrea has been carried through the town for an hour and has arrived on the beach of the water's edge. Here S. Andrea blesses the sea: that is to say, the six carriers swing the statue gently toward the sea, away from the sea, to the right, to the left, and back to its original position. The crowd watches from the road above the small beach, for today the sand belongs to the statue and its priests. It is a strange and touching scene: the strong metal saint on the red costumed shoulders, the mitred hierarchy with their long vestments sweeping the sand, the huge umbrella and the musicians in attitudes of repose. Suddenly, even this life-like statue seems small and fragile as it faces the endless blue which always faces Amalfi.

The last dramatic moment is triumphant. S. Andrea blesses the sea again, but this time from the secure vantage point of the harbor which is located above sea level, at the edge of Amalfi's central piazza. And as he is swung gently in the accustomed gesture of benediction, the explosions, which until this point have remained at a dull roar level, become tremendous, and spray the air above the sea with fire for three minutes. The statue seems at this moment to have dominated the sea.

The journey is over. The statue is returned to the church (see Figure 4, p. 93); the people return to the open market which has been doing a thriving business all along the main street for the entire morning. The bargain hunting and holiday atmosphere will continue all day, and in the evening the patron's statue will be crowned in the church, as it is every year, and another mass will be celebrated. S. Andrea dominating the cathedral steps, S. Andrea dominating the packed piazza, S. Andrea being dwarfed by the sea, and then miraculously, seeming to dominate it too--this is a drama of the ancient seafaring race of Amalfitani, and this is the drama their heirs refuse to give up.

Sorrento

When British author Norman Douglas called the Sorrento-Massa Lubrense part of the world "Siren-Land," he was joining a most renowned group of writers whose interest in drawing the Sorrento-Siren analogy he shared:

The most ancient writers were of the opinion that Sorrento had been founded by one of the Sirens, and that the name of Sorrento was derived from Sirentium; and Pliny says: Surrentium cum Promontorio Minervae Syrenum quondam sede [Sorrento once sat as Siren on the Promontory of Minerva]. Strabo then was the first who attributed to Ulysses the foundation of that City. . . .

Strabo in his description of Campania calls all that tract from the river Sarno as far as the Promontory of Minerva, now the Cape of Campanella, including Castellammare, Vico, Sorrento, and Massa, with the single name Sireo, or Sireno, and these small islands looking out toward the Gulf of Salerno, also Sirenusse.³⁸

³⁸Cesare Molegnano, Descrittione di Sorrento (Chieti: Gobetti, 1607; Napoli, 1846), p. 2.



Fig. 4.--The statue of S. Andrea is returned to the Cathedral.

A scholar of the area insists that not only Strabo, but Ptolemy and Aristotle as well, linked these three tiny islands, presently known as I Galli, with the Sirens.³⁹

No doubt a large part of the motivation behind seeing Sorrento as the land of the Sirens is its breath-taking effect upon the observer:

It is a beautiful place. Perhaps in all the orange-scented south there is none more perfect, more sweet with gardens and soft sea-breath, more rich in ancient olive-groves, or more tenderly nestled in the breast of a bountiful nature. A little place it is, backed and flanked by the volcanic hills, but having before it the glory of the fairest water in the world. Straight down from the orange gardens the cliffs fall to the sea, and every villa and village has a descent, winding through caves and by stairways, to its own small sandy cove, where the boats lie in the sun through the summer's noontide heat, to shoot out at morning and evening into the coolness of the breezy bay. Among the warm green fruit trees the songbirds have their nests, and about the eaves of the scattered houses the swallows wheel and race in quick smooth circles. Far along through the groves echoes the ancient song of the southern peasant, older than the trees, older than the soil, older than poor old Pompei lying off there in the eternal ashes of her gorgeous sins. And ever the sapphire sea kisses the feet of the cliffs as though wooing the rocks to come down, and plunge in, and taste how good a thing it is to be cool and wet all over.⁴⁰

Sorrentine history is impressive in the variety of chapters it presents. Most probably a Greek colony,⁴¹ Sorrento became a Roman city under Augustus, and an independent dukedom from 836 to 1117. Battles

³⁹Mollo, Antichi culti e tradizioni religiose in Penisola Sorrentina, p. 1.

⁴⁰F. Marion Crawford, "Sorrento," in A Few Words about Sorrento and Torquato Tasso, by Silvio Salvatore Gargiulo (Sorrento: 'Useful Things', 1923), p. 3.

⁴¹Callea, Folklore di Sorrento e dintorni, p. 10.

were common: the city was continually invaded from the sea by Saracen pirates and by the Turks. The city was also involved at one time or another in civil wars with Amalfi, Massa Lubrense, and Piano. Modern history brought French and Spanish domination, as well as, in 1799, a brief moment of republichood.⁴² Maldacea speaks of the tremendous wealth of philosophers, mathematicians, orators and illustrious poets among the ancient Sorrentini,⁴³ and mentions their most celebrated visitors; Augustus, Marcus Aurelius, Tiberius,⁴⁴ and, as some would have it, St. Peter.⁴⁵

There is a carefully annotated history of a fairly recent miracle in Sorrento. On June 15, 1738 a venerated painting of Christ crowned with thorns, located in the Church of the Monastery of S. Paolo, was said to have shed tears of blood.⁴⁶ There is a carefully recorded history of the coronation of one of the celebrated madonnas of the city⁴⁷ --

⁴²Gargiulo, A Few Words About Sorrento and Torquato Tasso, p. 30.

⁴³Maldacea, Storia di Sorrento, I, p. 91.

⁴⁴Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 33.

⁴⁵Ibid. See also Maldacea, Storia di Sorrento, I, p. 107.

⁴⁶Umberto Fasulo, Il Miracolo dell'ECCE HOMO (Sorrento: "Petagna," 1938), p. 6.

⁴⁷Frederico De Martino, Memorie storiche delle solenne incoronazione di Maria SS. del Carmine nella città di Sorrento (Napoli: Accademia Reale delle Scienze, 1886).

a custom shared by many of the locales of both the Peninsula and the Coast.

The Italian immediately identifies Sorrento as the birthplace of the celebrated sixteenth-century poet, Torquato Tasso. Tasso mentions Sorrento in Gerusalemme liberata (Jerusalem Delivered), his great epic poem of 1595 which rivalled Ariosto's Orlando Furioso in popularity. Although born of noble Sorrentine parents, his departures and returns to the city of his birth were more often than not occasions of sadness. His father was secretary to the Prince of Salerno, and when that sovereign fell from power, the family was banished from Sorrento.⁴⁸ Later, as a young man and then an older man and renowned poet, Tasso would return infrequently to visit his sister Cornelia; these visits were occasioned by the rejections of powerful princes of northern cities whom Tasso would offend or otherwise displease.⁴⁹ His last years were spent in mental institutions. The people of Sorrento only belatedly appreciated the greatness of this prodigal son. Although the central piazza of the city today bears his name and displays a large statue in his honor, the house which is referred to as his birthplace is probably not authentic,⁵⁰ nor is perhaps the latter-day interest in his life and work.

⁴⁸Bartolommeo Capasso, Il Tasso e la sua famiglia a Sorrento (Napoli: G. Nobile, 1866), p. 123.

⁴⁹Gargiulo, A Few Words About Sorrento and Torquato Tasso, p. 42.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 37.

Perhaps Sorrento's most interesting and continuing inheritance is the institution of confraternities, founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Maldacea infers that the usage is much older--that it was inherited from the city's ancient inhabitants:

The Sorrentine nobles had the same custom as the Attican Greeks, according to which they too had ancient fraternities. In all of Greek antiquity there was no city in which these fraternities were spoken of so much as in Athens, and so it was again for Naples and Sorrento. . . . They were gatherings of the best citizens, who registered themselves under the protection of a deity. . . . They observed the rite and the particular ceremonies expected by that deity, they celebrated feasts and sacrifices in his honor, and they also held solemn games, always beginning all of this with a sacred procession. Often such feasts were also held to perpetuate the memory of their illustrious dead.⁵¹

A contemporary scholar of Sorrento suggests that today's confraternities are the direct successors of the fraternities which existed "immediately following the fall of Imperial Rome."⁵² Specific documentation begins in 1566 when the Confraternita dei Battenti, ancestor of the existing Arciconfraternita della Morte was organized.⁵³ Like the Greeks and Romans before them, the twentieth-century Sorrentini continue the aristocratic practice of reserving membership in this most famous of their confraternities for the privileged few. Membership is passed from

⁵¹Maldacea, Storia di Sorrento, p. 131.

⁵²3/23/71, conversation with Giorgio Iaccarino of Piano and S. Agnello.

⁵³Umberto Fasulo, La Congregazione di San Catello a L'Arciconfraternita della Morte della Città di Sorrento (Sorrento: "Petagna," 1942), p. 9.

father to oldest son, and, except for military heroes,⁵⁴ new members must possess, if not royal blood, at least strong professional standing.⁵⁵

Today Sorrento's commerce, during spring and summer, is devoted to tourism, and the streets of the city are constantly filled with the travellers of all nations. The confraternities, however, continue to function, as they have in earlier centuries, as both religious and social organizations.

December 12--VIGILE DI S. LUCIA

Mass is celebrated at 6 p.m. in the Church of S. Lucia in Sorrento, and when it is finished, the parroco, attended by four other priests, a number of altar boys and a large crowd of the faithful, comes out to the street. There all is in readiness for them: a huge pile of wood stacked in the center of the tiny piazza, and its attendants awaiting the ritualistic lighting. The parroco lights the underlying kindling, and as the orange flames begin to spread up and outward, another participant enters the scene. The venerated bust of S. Lucia is carried from the church as the crowd clears a path to the edge of the now-blazing fire. Acting as her emissary, the officiating priest blesses the flames with holy water, and the saint's followers cross themselves.

⁵⁴3/21/71, conversation with Maestro Ambrosini, organist and choir master of Sorrento's Cathedral.

⁵⁵4/6/71, conversation with Pasquale Ferraiuolo, secretary of the Arciconfraternità della Morte, Congregazione dei Servi di Maria.

Wood for the fire has been collected, in the name of S. Lucia, all during the preceding week, given by the farmers of the surrounding hills in much the same manner as monetary donations are contributed to the support of other feste. We see it, upon returning at ten in the evening, stacked high against the church wall which earlier had been hidden by the large afternoon crowd. The fire is much larger now, and is guarded by both official and unofficial fire-watchers. All, as might be expected, are men--both old and young. Shifts have been organized through-out the night and into the following day, and each watcher considers his time a sacred trust and an offering to his powerful patroness. "S. Lucia is a good saint--the protector of the eyes!" The speaker gives me a serious look, and then turns to look approvingly at the huge fire.

At ten on the evening of the 13th of December, the actual feast day of S. Lucia, the fire is still going. Its contours, however, have changed. Now a small blaze sits high upon a mountain of ashes, and the huge woodpile of the night before has dwindled down to nothing. A group of watchers, smaller, this time, is still there, and several are dragging branches from nearby woods to feed the fire as long as possible. The saint whose name means light, whose dominion is the faculty of sight, is honored by the fire of her supplicants in Sorrento until 3 a.m. of the second morning--thirty-two hours following its lighting before the tiny church which bears her name.

December 14--S. AGNELLO

One cannot, if living in the town of S. Agnello, ignore the occurrence of the twelve-day period of preparation for the feast its patron. December 3rd, the feast of S. Francesco Saverio, is for some reason considered the first of the special days pertaining to S. Agnello. December 5th sees the initiation of the solemn novena of preparation. December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and one celebrated throughout the Roman Catholic world, is chosen to initiate the social year of the local chapter of the youth organization, Azione Cattolica. December 13th is the vigil of the feast day, but because it falls on a Sunday, it is chosen as the day of solemn street procession in honor of the saint. December 14th, the actual feast day of S. Agnello, witnesses continuous masses within the church, as well as the address of His Excellency, Mons. Pellecchia. And outside the church, taking up all of the main street of the town and attracting thousands of people, la fiera di S. Agnello rages. This is the annual fair held in honor of the saint, and is the largest of its kind in the entire Sorrento-Amalfi area. From December 3rd until December 15th, therefore, the bells of the Church of S. Agnello work overtime, beginning at the accustomed 6:30 a.m. not with the usual announcement of the day's start, but with a medley which signifies a special day of celebration, and which is repeated periodically throughout the day. After the 15th, the bells will have little rest, for soon Christmas celebrations will begin.

The manifesto of the December 14th festa begins in this way:

Faithful, in the dear return of his feast, S. Agnello seems to present himself to us, this year, as the master and the example of the life of faith in the parish community--which is the theme of the Catechism and the Pastoral letter established by CEI for the new social year 1970-71. In fact the faith of our Saint was so alive, ardent, and working to embrace the greatest vertical and horizontal dimensions: God and Neighbor; God in prayer, in solitude, in contemplation, and in neighbor in the foundation of the first hospital of Naples. In such a way, a true dominator of history, He embraces in His great heart both His and our centuries: the High Middle Ages and our time.

. . . ⁵⁶

It is strange that these two epochs should be mentioned in so public a manner, for the entire week's proceedings seem to constitute a medieval revival.

The procession of S. Agnello, unlike those of the majority of the area's saints, takes place in the morning. At 9:30 the gold, man-sized statue, carrying a hospital banner in the right hand and a bible in the left, is glittering in the sunlight. Through Piazza S. Agnello, Via Nuova, Via Migliore, Via Mons. Bonaventure Gargiulo, Largo San Rocco, Via Naiano Nuovo, Via S. Giuseppe, Iommella Piccola, Via Aniello Balsamo, Piazza Municipio, Via Don Mineoni, Rione Angri a Crocevia, Via Cappuccini--accompanied throughout by school children, priests and altar boys, the mayor and followers, a large crowd, and the band of Bonea (Vico Equense). Better than an hour and a half of

⁵⁶Festa del Santo Protettore, S. Agnello Abate (Sorrento: "La Sorrentina," December 1970). This manifesto was signed by the parroco of the church of S. Agnello, and displayed upon the walls of the town.

walking takes place, with strong fireworks to announce the saint's departure from the church as well as his return, and with much cheery band music to keep what is, after all, a winter procession on the road. And all through the town, both participating in the procession and observing it, are pregnant women! Ordinarily these southern Italian women are extremely modest and cover their burdens with large, heavy coats all during the chilly months. But today they honor and appeal to their protector, and despite the chill coats remain unbuttoned.

The list of booths which have been registered with the local police so that their owners may sell wares during the fiera of S. Agnello reads as follows:

Candy (9), shoes (6), material and clothing (2), stockings and socks (3), toys (6), dried fruit (14), baskets (3), shirts and related merchandise (7), cheeses (3), household utensils (2), pig muzzles and hocks (13), knick-knacks (2), hardware and iron tools (8), purses (2), ceramics (1), objects of hammered copper (1), umbrellas (3), assorted packages (4), plastic flowers and other plastic objects (2), radios, phonographs and records (2), frozen pizza (1), wool for mattresses (2), flowers and plants (16), farming machines (1), cattle (2), rug beaters (6).

A grand total of 121 booths. As in the case of the pregnant women, both vendors and shoppers have come from all of the Peninsula and much of the Costiera. It is difficult to describe the sense of multiple celebrations which dominates the streets: the intoxicating combination of religion, ritual, commerce and local pride offer a theatrical climax to the preceding twelve days of activity.

Vico Equense

"Vico was my next stage: a little city, in a delightful portion, on the brow of a hill, backed by an amphitheatre of mountains."⁵⁷ Vico Equense lies sixteen miles south of Naples. At one time there were two separate cities--Equa and Vico. It is not certain which existed first; however, traces of Greek and Roman temples were found at the site of the original Vico,⁵⁸ and catacombs at that of the original Equa.⁵⁹ The latter was completely destroyed by 860 A.D., partially by the 79 A.D. eruption of Vesuvius and partially by continuous Turkish invasions. There are records in the 1200's of a bishop of Vico, indicating its importance. A well-known historian of the area, De Gennaro, conjectures that the making of Vico and Equa into a single city was the result of a local ruler's interest in extending his villa.⁶⁰ In any case, the first historical mention of the cathedral concerns its completion in 1300, and it is referred to as the cathedral of Vico Equense.⁶¹

The city is surrounded by eleven villages, among the most beautiful of the entire Peninsula. Bonea, S. Salvatore, Massaquano,

⁵⁷Henry Swineburne, Travels in the Two Sicilies, Vol. II (London: P. Elmsly, 1783), p. 85.

⁵⁸Luigi De Gennaro, Vico Equense id i suoi villagi (Napoli: Librai Editore della Societa Storica Napoletana, 1929), p. 26.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 28. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 103. ⁶¹Ibid., p. 120.

Moiano, Ticciano, Preazzano, Arola, Pacognano, Fomacella, Montechiaro and Seiano were all joined, until the 1880's by a dirt mule road.

After this the Raffaele Bosco, a road suitable for wheeled traffic, was constructed and put them [the towns] in communication with the city. The present road runs through the mountainous silence, between the acqua-marine and the green, which make one forget all the baronial countesses of the city.⁶²

Those of Vico Equense who are enamored of its history never tire of tracing the local dialect names of mountains and chapels and customs back to the Greek language.⁶³ The city today, with feudal castle and fourteenth-century cathedral, is rich with feste esterne, both of the past and of the present.

January 31--S. CIRO

The fiera of S. Ciro of Vico serves to point up what a fine fair that of S. Agnello was in December. Perhaps the essential difference is that of volume--volume of trade and volume of space used in the activity. In Vico, two streets, Viale della Remembranza and Via Domenica Cariofoli, are used by the vendors to show and sell their wares; there is no sense of the fair having taken over the entire length of the town as happened in S. Agnello. The S. Ciro fair has closed up at 2:00 p.m.; that of S. Agnello raged from dawn to dusk, and when it finally closed there was the feeling that there had not been enough

⁶²Ibid., p. 179.

⁶³De Gennaro, Vico Equense ed i suoi villaggi, p. 179. See also below, pp. 167 and 180, for a contemporary scholar's discussion of this linguistic inheritance.

daylight to satisfy either vendors or buyers. Also, perhaps, the fact that S. Ciro's procession takes place in August and is a thing totally separate from the fair seems to explain the lack of the exhilarating spirit of celebration which surrounded these events in S. Agnello.

The cults of S. Ciro, doctor and S. Giovanni, soldier are admittedly derivative of a pagan cult of previous centuries:

The Greeks came into Campania, and in our lands also they adored the Sun with the divinity of Hercules of Samothraces, who according to Macrobius, was that power who bore similarity to the gods who give force to mankind. And in Naples he was called Mitra, a Persian name, which means sun.

For these ancient Greeks, then, Hercules of the Samothraces represented the divine protector of health and of energy, like the sun. . . . And thus Hercules was not only the god of health but also protector of the energy of the body, which symbolizes warlike virtue.⁶⁴

Christian veneration of S. Ciro and S. Giovanni, the twin embodiment of this Hercules, began in Naples toward the end of the ninth century as the result of a translation of their "Passion" into Latin from the Greek. By 930 two Neapolitan churches offered particular worship to these saints.⁶⁵ Sometime during the middle of the thirteenth century this cult was carried from Naples to Vico, and a new Church of S. Ciro and S. Giovanni was established there.

⁶⁴Baldassarre Ferraro, Il Culto, la Chiesa parrocchiale, e le reliquie dei Santi Mariti Ciro e Giovanni (Sorrento: G. D'Onofrio, 1931), p. 11.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

In 1686 bones thought to be relics of these martyrs were presented as a gift from Jesuits of Naples to the bishop of Vico Equense. *Ciro* was born in Alexandria in the middle of the third century, was raised from childhood as a Christian, studied and practiced medicine. His cures often involved religious belief and led to numerous conversions. The Roman soldier *Giovanni* was one of *Ciro's* converts, and they, together with a family of four women, were tortured and decapitated in 303 A.D. under the ninth consulate of Dioclezian.⁶⁶

Agerola

"One understands why a man, who has passed an agitated and exciting existence, chooses this locale as the place of rest and of harvest."⁶⁷ The choice of the famous nineteenth-century Italian military hero, General Avitabile, is simple to understand if one has visited Agerola. The name refers to a group of six mountain towns located high above Amalfi. S. Lazzaro, S. Maria, Campora, Ponte, Pianillo and Bomerano are simple towns where vineyards are tended and agriculture flourishes to the extent that no basic foods need be trucked up from the coastlands below. Here, 1,950 feet above sea level, snow is not the rarity that it is along the coast, and clouds frequently envelop any or all parts of the area during the winter months. And yet, from

⁶⁶Giuseppe Prevett, S. J., S. *Ciro* medico e S. *Giovanni* soldato (Roma: Angelo Signorelli, 1948), p. 23.

⁶⁷Grifeo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 78.

April to October, Agerola is a mountain paradise of terraced, green land and tile-roofed farm houses beneath perfect blue skies.

The zoning of Agerola is unusual in that it belongs to the Province of Naples, and yet is a part of the Costiera Amalfitana (and the Archdiocese of Amalfi), the rest of which belongs to the Province of Salerno. To the west of Agerola spreads Tramonti, also enclosed among the highlands of mountains. Like Agerola, it is a mountain community made up of a group of hamlets. Tramonti's most famous historical moment occurred when, in 1260, "it was given by King Manfred to the celebrated Giovanna di Procida with the title of Marchese di Tramonti."⁶⁸

January 17--S. ANTONIO ABATE

S. Antonio Abate, unlike S. Agnello and S. Antonino Abate who were from the nearby cities of Naples and Campagna respectively,⁶⁹ was born in Egypt, in 251 A.D.⁷⁰ He is variously known as the protector of bakers, of kitchens, or of domestic animals, and there could be no more appropriate a setting in which to view his festa, therefore, than the countryside of Agerola.

Here feste are serious undertakings. On this occasion there are not one, but two processions. The morning begins with bells and cannon shots at 4:00 a.m.; then the festa liturgica; prayers, the life of the

⁶⁸Camera, Istoria della città e costiera di Amalfi, p. 373.

⁶⁹Don Pinuzzo, Cavalocata di Santi (Edizioni Azzurre, 1949), pp. 18, 35.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 37.

saint recounted by young lay readers, Mass and a formal sermon. The first procession departs from the Church of S. Pietro Apostolo in Pianillo with the statue of the saint at 10:00 a.m. and arrives in Bomerano at 11:30 a.m. for a number of hours. For at 4:00 p.m. the return procession is formed and the circuitous journey home again begins.

The first twenty minutes of this second procession is spent walking in the country, on a stone and dirt road which is today mostly mud, to the site of a private chapel of the family Mascola, built in 1909. Several peasant women, as well as a gentleman of aristocratic looks and dress are eager to speak of the chapel's altar, built evidently by a fifteenth-century sculptor of the Da Rosio school. While this information is being offered outside, a small part of the procession proper, including the statue of S. Antonio Abate, has entered, and the chapel has been blessed. The modest chapel bells send off this procession of about eighty persons, not one of whom wears rubbers or boots, back unto the mud road, which continues past vineyards and small farm dwellings. Among the final walkers, there is some joking. They have been joined by a farmer who is bringing his pig home, and before he turns off to his own doorway, he has the time and energy (all the while pulling and pushing and kicking his grunting animal on its way), to ask one of the girls whether she is signora or signorina, to ask whom the procession is for, and to jest about S. Antonio when he receives an answer.

The atmosphere is alive and happy and charged with general good feeling. There are bits of singing and praying, considerable small talk, ample band music of the perky, spirited variety. The women sing again and again a chant to their saint, the gist of which is, "S. Antonio, you were so close to God and he gave you so much love--ask for His help on our behalf." The members of the confraternity who are standard-bearers present a happy incongruity between formal ecclesiastic dress and healthy faces and hands which have lived out-of-doors and near the soil all of their lives. And the procession is constantly greeted by smiling adults and children who wave from doorways, as well as many curious animals. Meanwhile the road has turned into a treacherous stone path, and walkers must watch each step they take.

After an hour in the countryside, the procession comes out onto the main road connecting the towns of Bomerano and Pianillo, and there is joined by other marchers who have not braved the first part of the journey--smaller school children, and another contingent of standard-bearers. And when S. Antonio's statue is returned to its home church after another thirty minutes of walking, it is honored with an immense and fiery display of fireworks. A huge cement wall, which forms one of three sides of courtyard facing the piazza of the church of Bomerano, is strung, woven almost with its makings. When statue and attendants are safely above the courtyard on the church steps, and the huge,

attending crowd has jostled itself into a semi-circle around the wall, the show begins. A single match is lit, and the incredible barage begins. The two engineers of the display race back and forth, accompanying the successive explosions, and frequently covering their heads and leaping backwards quickly. Fear of the falling sparks and fear of becoming permanently deaf seem to effect no one but me, and when fifteen minutes of earthquaking tribute is over, there are expressions of satisfaction from all sides. The general feeling seems to be that S. Antonio is home and has been handsomely welcomed, as is, after all, only his due.

S. Agata sui due Golfi

The town of S. Agata has become so well-known in its own right that it is generally thought of separately from Massa Lubrense, of which it is really a township. As the name indicates, the town, located high in the hills above Massa, overlooks both the Gulf of Naples and that of Salerno. It is reached by a famous road called the Nastro Azzurro--blue ribbon, and has become a favorite vacationing site, particularly among Italian tourists.

The altar of the Church of S. Agata is a particularly beautiful piece of Florentine artistry of the sixteenth century. Better known is the famous old monastery called Deserto--the desert. It was suppressed by the Neapolitan Ordinance of 1810, which closed many of

the monasteries and convents of the area.⁷¹ This large complex of buildings overlooking the sea became a boys' orphanage in 1867. This new institution came about as the result of the arduous struggle of a single priest, Father Ludovico, to gain permission for this project from an unsympathetic hierarchy.⁷² It has become, over the years, a reformatory for boys. The name Deserto is often used by parents of the area to threaten unruly sons--"behave, or you'll be sent to Deserto."

February 2--S. AGATA

S. Agata, patroness of children and of newly married couples, was another third-century martyr during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. The story of her death relates the details of decapitation at fourteen, after her breasts had been cut off.⁷³ The local festa honoring her in the town bearing her name is somewhat uneventful. It is celebrated on February 2nd which is a Sunday, and is a minature of the country procession celebrated in Agerola for S. Antonio Abate. There are, however, two unique features of this celebration. First, groups of families set up small altars to the saint along the path of the procession, a custom usually seen during the feste of Corpus Domini. Second, in the procession itself the school girls and the

⁷¹Raffaele Cirillo, Ricordi del Deserto di Massa Lubrense (Napoli: Tipografia Artistica, 1884), p. 13.

⁷²Ibid., p. 26. See also Mauro Morrone, "Viaggio al Deserto di S. Agata," Poliorama Pittoresca, Anno III (1838-39), pp. 195, 203.

⁷³Don Pinuzzo, Cavalcata di Santi, p. 17.

women's organizations precede the priests and altar boys--perhaps in deference to this girl-saint?⁷⁴

A talk with the parroco of the town reveals that the people of S. Agata have chosen to celebrate the feast of their young patroness with a festa esterna rather than that of the Assumption on August 15th since they were limited to a single procession for a patroness by the 1969 decree of their bishop.⁷⁵ On August 15th, 1970 all of the elements of the traditional celebration for the Madonna were present, without the actual procession being held (within the Church, the presence of the bishop and the conferral of the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation; without, the band, the fireworks, the large crowd in the piazza).⁷⁶

February 14--S. ANTONINO ABATE

This patron of the city of Sorrento is permitted two processions a year. The reason given is an ancient tradition whereby the May celebration is offered for the sake of the farmers--in order that they may obtain a good harvest of oranges, and the February celebration is offered as the general honoring of the saint on the occasion of his feast day.

⁷⁴In May and June, groups of girls and boys in First Communion dresses and suits become a part of every procession. It is interesting that in some locales the girls precede the boys, and in others they follow them.

⁷⁵11/7/72, conversation with Don Francesco Cacace, parroco of the Church of S. Agata in S. Agata.

⁷⁶Ibid.

At any rate, February 14th sees Sorrentine streets, both large and small, bedecked with evidence of general festivity. A good-sized fair is taking place in the central square, Piazza Tasso, and on the side streets rugs and beautiful woven cloths are hung from almost every balcony. When the statue of the saint passes in procession, thousands of colored slips of paper on which numerous prayers addressed to him are printed, rain down from these same balconies.

There is a sense of possession which the citizens of Sorrento can justifiably feel about this saint. His biography⁷⁷ is well-known and comfortable, in that it is filled with local names and places: Montecassino where the young Antonino first sought and accepted the frock of a Benedictine priest; S. Catello, bishop of Castellammare during the sixth century whom Antonino served; Monte Aureo, now known as Monte Faio and the favorite site of Sorrentini out for a Sunday's drive, where both Catello and Antonino retreated numerous times for solitude and prayer; the ancient Benedictine monastery in Sorrento where Antonino served as abbot for many years before his peaceful death. Thus, although there is a beautiful Cathedral in Sorrento, the Church of S. Antonino, which was named a Basilicata in 1924 under Pius XI,⁷⁸ is probably the favorite church among the people of Sorrento.

⁷⁷The most recent local publication which treats the life of this saint is Don Pinuzzo's Santo a Sorrento (Napoli: Aldo Fiory Editore, 1966).

⁷⁸Pinuzzo, Santo a Sorrento, p. 96.

So too, the feſta of S. Antonino ſeems to be important to all the Sorren-
tini, although for different reaſons. There are the exquiſitely dressed
and groomed ſophiſticates who comment with enthuſiaſm about the
quality of the proceſſion. There is the nice lady who explains the
philofophy behind the repetition of fireworks which greet the ſtatue at
every ſtreet comer of the proceſſional route: "Signora, the greater
the noiſe the greater the honor to S. Antonino. He is our Patron!" The
tone of voice with which the words "our patron" are pronounced tells
all: it indicates that no higher or more valuable ſtatus exists. Then
there is the elderly lady of the country who has walked for an hour
down from the hills to honor this ſaint; ſhe attends early Maſs at the
Basilica which bears his name, ſhe follows the vigorous two-hour
proceſſion, and ſhe plans to walk to the next town to join her ſon and
his family for a holiday dinner. her ſon is named Antonino, as his
father had been before him.

May 16

One might expect the May feſta of S. Antonino, ſince it is dedi-
cated to the productivity of orange trees, to be an authentic happening.
Perhaps it is, but at leaſt half of the crowd which attends is compoſed
of photograph-minded touriſts. Alſo the amount of honor offered the
ſaint by means of fireworks has become overwhelming and oppreſſive.
The ſtatue is engulfed by ſmoke at every turn, and although the ſunſet
upon the ſea offers a ſuperb ſetting, the authenticity of Sorrento's
other celebrations ſeems ſtrangely lacking.

Massa Lubrense

"Massa" is derived from the Longobard "mansa" meaning "place suitable for cultivation." The adjective "Lubrensis" does not appear before 1306, and arrived with the first bishop of the city who took the title "Lobrano" or "Lubrense" from the old venerable church of S. Maria della Lobra.⁷⁹ The present city of Massa Lubrense is the last link in chain of locales forming the Sorrentine Peninsula, and is adjacent to the beginning of the Coast of Amalfi. Historical record concerning Massa is excellent: Riccardo Filangieri di Candida's Storia di Massa Lubrense is the most competent of the histories which treat the area. Filangieri's speculative consideration of Massese history suggests that an ancient cult of the Sirens was developed into the worship of Athena, and that Athena's temple was transformed, under the Romans, into a temple for Minerva. This temple was reputedly transformed once again in Christian times: it is thought to have been the site of the medieval church, S. Maria della Lobra.⁸⁰

Such reasoning is close to Norman Douglas' interpretation of the Neapolitan scene:

The "chaste Parthenope" found a resting-place and an honored tomb on the spot where now stands Naples. For a thousand years she dominated its social and religious institutions. She dominates them still. Who, then, is Santa Lucia: The madonnas

⁷⁹ Filangieri, Storia di Massa Lubrense, pp. 125-127.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 76-89.

of Naples are all re-incarnations of antique shapes, of the Sirens, of Leucothea, Euploia, and the Nereides, and their cult to this day is pagan rather than Christian. You will not find such saints in Tuscany.⁸¹

According to the early Neapolitan historian, Persico, pagan sailors from Massa Lubrense followed a custom later adopted by their Christian successors:

Persico describes the custom, which the sailors still followed in his times, of, when they returned from a voyage, shooting three shots to render thanks for the Madonna who had saved them from the dangers of the sea, and of giving bread and wine to the monks borrowed from their provisions; and such a custom, by just criterion, was derived from that pagan usage of salute and libation which the same sailors made beneath the temple of their old patroness, Minerva.⁸²

The present Church of S. Maria della Lobra was built in 1528 to replace the original; it was restored in 1653, and consecrated in 1778. On August 12, 1804, the coronation of the statues of the Virgin and Jesus, which the church houses, took place during festivities lasting three days.⁸³

The work of one of the more famous natives of Massa Lubrense offers an interesting biographical detour within the context of local history. Father Rocco (1700-82) was a Dominican priest and a scholar of philosophy and theology. His active works of charity, for which he was much loved among the Neapolitans, included the founding of the

⁸¹Douglas, Siren-Land, p. 9.

⁸²Convento e Santuario di Santa Maria della Lobra (Napoli: A. De Frede, n.d.), p. 8.

⁸³Ibid., p. 5

Hotel for the Poor in that city, and his indefatigable care of the dying during the terrible plague of 1764. He was equally involved in the more spiritual aspects of his calling.

He, always concerned about saving souls, and having one time in Rome obtained an audience with Pope Benedict XIV, asked indulgences for all those who had been beaten with his crucifix and his rosary; and His Holiness benignly conceded these to him.⁸⁴

Father Rocco's most remembered service to the city of Naples, however, was the invention of an effective system of street lighting. In high favor with King Ferdinand IV, as he had been with his father, Carlo III, he suggested a plan of action after government attempts at using oil lamps on street corners to combat nocturnal attacks and robberies had failed. Armed with three hundred copies of a sacred picture of the Madonna, and one hundred large wooden crosses bearing the painted figure of Christ, he instituted the indirect lighting supplied by tiny street altars. Under his auspices, two thousand street lamps were eventually lit for the sake of Christ or the Madonna, and kept burning.⁸⁵

The most imposing building to be seen in Massa Lubrense today is the ex-Cathedral, built in 1512. It is famous for its pavement of majorica--a very unusual and beautiful type of Italian tile.

May 10--S. CATALDO

The procession in honor of this patron of Massa Lubrense was probably the most dramatic of the year, in that its occurrence was the

⁸⁴Ludovico de la Ville sur-Yllon, "Padre Rocco e l'illuminazione della città di Napoli," Napoli nobilissima, Vol. VI (giugno 1897). p. 82.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 86.

subject of a long debate which epitomizes the struggle taking place within the Church to reduce processional activity, and which, therefore, deserves description. There have been, traditionally, two principal patrons of Massa Lubrense, S. Cataldo and the Madonna delle Grazie. A third patron saint, whose cult is more folkloristic than religious,⁸⁶ is S. Liberatore. During the past ten years, two of the feste of the city have been eliminated because of the conviction shared by both past and present pastors that "the feste esterne had become larger and larger, always more important to the people--and at the same time, almost meaningless in spiritual terms."⁸⁷ The two celebrations no longer undertaken were the festa esterna of S. Liberatore, and the March festa esterna of S. Cataldo which had been reduced to a simple festa liturgica. There remained the May festa of S. Cataldo, the festa of Corpus Domini, the festa of the Madonna delle Grazie in July, and the festa of the Madonna della Lobra, celebrated on August 15th, the feast of the Assumption.

Because of the bishop's decree of 1969,⁸⁸ the festa of the Madonna della Lobra was eliminated in 1970. Then the manifesto announcing a May 1971 festa liturgica of S. Cataldo offered the following explanation:

⁸⁶11/16/70, conversation with Father Esposito of Massa Lubrense.

⁸⁷Ibid. ⁸⁸See above, pp. 46-47.

Dear Ones, in conformity with the teaching of the Vatican Council and with the pastoral directions of our bishop regarding the cult of the saints and the processions in their honor, and after ample, serene and fruitful meetings between the parroco and a numerous representation of laity of our parrocchial community, it has been decided to hold the festa esterna with procession of the Madonna delle Grazie only, and to hold that of S. Cataldo next year.⁸⁹

The program announced opened with three days of preparation: discussion groups, Masses, recitation of the rosary, and sermons. The final part of the manifesto announced the festa liturgica proper on May 10th: Masses, including a sung Mass celebrated by the bishop attended by all the clergy of the ex-Cathedral, the administration of the sacrament of baptism, singing by a visiting boys' choir, a eulogy of S. Cataldo, and the kissing of his relics.

The manifesto was indirectly announcing the elimination of another traditional procession; the parroco was presenting a policy of bi-annual feste esterne since there were two patrons to be honored, and since the bishop's restrictions permitted one of these celebrations per year. On May 9th, however, a small yellow manifesto was found glued on top of the large green original. It bore this announcement: "Tomorrow May 10th at 6 p.m. the procession of S. Cataldo."

The procession took place; the statue of S. Cataldo was borne through the streets of Massa Lubrense for two hours. The usual feature of this procession was that many people did not know why it

⁸⁹Il Parroco, Festa di S. Cataldo, 7-10 maggio 1971. Avviso sacro.

had taken place at all, after having been advised of its elimination. There was a group of informed citizens, however, and before long the news of what had happened reached nearly everyone. The explanation I received from the parroco was the following: On the first day of preparation for what was to be simply a festa liturgica, a visiting preacher created some agitation. He let it be known that in Vico Equense, where the pastoral visit of the bishop was taking place, strong feeling had been voiced against the limitation of processions, and there was hope that permission might be granted for an annual festa esterna in honor of the Madonna, apart from that honoring the patron of the locale. Thus a group of determined Massese laymen confronted their parroco with this "information," demanding that S. Cataldo's procession need not be eliminated to make way for the honoring of the Madonna delle Grazie. The parroco consulted the bishop, and was advised to permit the procession of S. Cataldo to take place after all. In Massa Lubrense, at least, the precedent has therefore been established for three annual feste esterne: that of the patron, that of the Madonna, and that of Corpus Domini.⁹⁰

The origins of this well-defended patron are somewhat remote. S. Cataldo was born in the second century A.D. in Iberia, became a priest whose special area of study was the sciences, and was transferred to Taranto where he was eventually appointed bishop. The

⁹⁰5/15/72, conversation with Father Esposito of Massa Lubrense.

local cult in his honor was originally begun in Termini, a town in the mountains above Massa Lubrense. During the fifteenth century a traveler brought a relic, reputedly of the saint, from Taranto to Termini, where it remained for a century. But in 1609 the presiding bishop ordered the relic placed in the Cathedral of Massa Lubrense, and twenty years later S. Cataldo was proclaimed principal patron of that city. Despite strong protests by the people of Termini, the relic has remained in the cathedral (now ex-Cathedral) ever since.⁹¹

June 13--S. ANTONIO DI PADOVA

The fešta of S. Antonio di Padova in S. Agnello provides an excellent example of how the bishop of Sorrento's decree of 1969 effected certain celebrations. This saint is not a patron of the city, and the institution which offers him special devotion is not a parrocchia, but a monastery. The decree governing the Archdiocese of Sorrento forbids the organization of processions by monasteries.

The monks' reaction has been to continue to produce all the elements of their former celebration without undertaking the act of procession itself. Thus the morning begins with the distribution of the bread of S. Antonio following each of the numerous masses celebrated in the chapel of the monastery. It is small, and the crowds which enter it each hour are large. During the afternoon another Mass which includes an occasional sermon and a special benediction is celebrated.

⁹¹Filangieri, Storia di Massa Lubrense, pp. 494-5.

In the evening, a band plays music in a well-known piazza which overlooks the sea and is near the monastery. The evening is concluded with fireworks exploded from the piazza into the water below. Each of these activities is well-attended and the day seems to have been a success; yet many of the Capuchins of the monastery of S. Antonio express the opinion they would prefer to return to the procession.⁹²

Positano

According to legend, the name "Positano" was derived from the cry "Posa, posa!"--"Put it down, put it down!", heard by the captain of a ship coming from the Orient and bearing a sacred image of the Madonna stolen from the infidels.⁹³ According to historical speculation the name might be derived from that of the Greek sea God, Poseiden.⁹⁴ The history of Positano follows that of Amalfi closely, since the city was a part of that Republic. Positano's most famous historical moment was shared by the rest of the Coast of Amalfi, and by much of the Sorrentine Peninsula as well--the Saracen invasion of 1558. The play enacting its celebration, however, has always belonged to the people of Positano. Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni--"The Invasion of the Saracens,"

⁹²The small town of Conca dei Marini, located near Positano on the Coast of Amalfi, celebrates the day with a traditional procession: here S. Antonio is patron saint.

⁹³Errico Talamo, Monografia della città di Positano (Napoli: L. De Bonis, 1890), pp. 18, 105, 106.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

used to be performed annually on the feast of the Assumption, and will be discussed in the following chapter.⁹⁵ The Positanesi claim as native son Flavio Gioia, the inventor of the bussola. This nautical instrument from which the compass was eventually developed, and which Columbus used on his voyage to the New World, was thought to have been invented in 1302.⁹⁶ Amalfi also claims responsibility for Gioia's achievement, since at the time Positano was part of its dominion.⁹⁷

Contemporary Positano and its inhabitants have been well described by novelist John Steinbeck:

Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone. Its houses climb a hill so steep it would be a cliff except that stairs are cut in it. . . . The small curving bay of unbelievable blue and green laps gently on a beach of small pebbles. There is only one narrow street and it does not come down to the water. . . .

Nearly always when you find a place as beautiful as Positano, your impulse is to conceal it. You think, "If I tell, it will be crowded with tourists and they will ruin it, turn it into a honky-tonk and then the local people will get touristy and there's your lovely place gone to hell." There isn't the slightest chance of this in Positano. In the first place there is no room. . . . The cliffs are all taken. . . . And the Positanese invariably refuse to sell. . . . They have been living here since before recorded

⁹⁵Chapter III treats the feste of the Madonna; a discussion of this play appears below, pp. 159-161.

⁹⁶Talamo, Monografia della città di Positano, p. 62. See also Imperato, Amalfi, pp. 38-40.

⁹⁷Robert Cito, Ricordi e Impressioni (Napoli: Officina Cromo Tip. Aldina, 1924), p. 7.

history and they don't intend to change now. They don't have much, but they like what they have and will not move over for a buck.⁹⁸

On the coast east of Positano lies the town of Praiano, whose patron is S. Luca. Vettica Maggiore is another tiny town under the jurisdiction of Praiano. Its Church of S. Gennaro offers a splendid example of Byzantine architecture, and another impressive display of the maioric tiles mentioned in connection with the ex-Cathedral of Massa Lubrense.

June 15--S. VITO

The most interesting feature of the festa of S. Vito is the activity which precedes the procession proper. The church is S. Maria Assunta, the parrocchia of Positano, which is situated on the piazza overhanging the beach and ocean. The interior is half-filled with women singing a litany to the saints before the Mass. It is presumptuous perhaps to attempt to define the character of these women by their manner of praying. Certainly, however, facial expressions and vocal singing quality suggest characteristics of strength, endurance, and alertness.

The litany is a tranquil activity in comparison to what is taking place simultaneously in the sacristy of the church. Here clerics and altar boys alike are preparing for both High Mass and the procession which is to follow. One young boy has yanked out six drawers of a

⁹⁸John Steinbeck, Positano (Rome: Edizioni Saturnia, 1959; from Harper's Bazaar, May 1953), pp. 9-11.

huge bureau of vestments in an effort to find a cassock which will fit him. After much frustration and a scolding for the mess he has created, he settles for one which is at least two sizes too large. Priests are donning vestments while giving directions to acolytes. These in turn are attempting to organize a frenetic line-up of altar boys with the correct properties: incense, incensers, candles, a crucifix, bells. In every way the scene suggests the backstage of a community play-house two minutes before curtain time.

The eulogy of S. Vito offered during the course of the Mass, which has finally gotten under way, is a shining example of fire-and-brimstone oratory. The priest in the pulpit is from Piano di Sorrento, and he enjoys the reputation of a good preacher, both on the Sorrentine Peninsula and along the Coast of Amalfi. The life of the saint is described. Vito was a young boy of Apulia, the province northeast of Campania, who lived during the second century A.D. He was born of a wealthy, politically powerful, pagan family, but his nurses were secretly Christian, and he was instructed in that faith. Eventually he and these guardians fled from his parents to Salerno, where he reputedly demonstrated a miraculous ability to cure the sick and the insane. His reputation reached Rome, where he was called by the Emperor Diocletian. After curing a sick child at the ruler's request, he and his guardians were said to have been martyred for having given such strong evidence

of Christian faith.⁹⁹ During the sermon, this narrative of the saint's life was interrupted repeatedly so that rhetorical sides concerning faith, temptation, and the people of Positano might be made.

The exit of the procession from the church following the Mass is well-executed. The band plays from the piazza, and bells ring from the bell tower above it, while a girls' youth association, carrying banners and candles, comes down the steps. The girls are followed by the altar boys, well organized at this point, and by five or six priests. The band music pauses as the large silver bust of S. Vito appears in the doorway of the church; it then continues again as the statue is borne down the steps. The band and a large crowd of people fall in line behind the statue, and within a minute or two all of the procession except for its musicians has disappeared from the Piazza Flavio Gioia. The processional route--Via Muline, Piazza Mulini, Via Toglia, Via Spiaggia brings the statue to the edge of the sea before returning it to the Church.

The watching tourists add another dimension to the walk through the streets. While tourists demonstrate fascination for the spectacle appearing before them, the people of Positano appear totally unaffected by the presence of outsiders. They seem to know what they are doing, and why. Among themselves the range of motivation for joining a

⁹⁹Sermon delivered by Father Alberino of Piano at S. Maria Assunta in Positano, June 15, 1971. See also Pinuzzo, *Cavalcata dei Santi*, pp. 285-86.

procession must be understood: a special vow made, an aftermath of the Mass attended, an enjoyment of the celebration. All of the people I speak with say they have participated in the procession in order to honor their patron. The fashionably dressed, twenty-year-old girl who is carrying a baby (she mentions that it is one of her sister's identical twins) says, "We walk for S. Vito. He is our saint. He protects our city and does many good things for us." And when the statue passes (its direction has been reversed in the piazza ahead), she, like everyone about her, stretches out her hand and tries to touch it. Those who have succeeded, kiss their hands. Others genuflect in the street and cross themselves. The Positanesi are honoring their patron.¹⁰⁰

Cetara

Cetara is the last link in the long chain of towns and little cities which stretch from the most northern point of the Peninsula to the most northern point of the Coast; of all it seems the most untouched by the passage of time. A tiny village of white stucco houses which appear somewhat overcrowded, it is, as it has always been, a simple fishing town. The menfolk, fishermen and sailors alike, return home from the sea for the most important event of the year--the fešta of S. Pietro.

June 29--S. PIETRO

There is a strange tradition observed in Cetara. Sometime during the nine days of preparation the fešta of S. Pietro the statue of the

¹⁰⁰S. Vito is also patron of Acquara, one of the small mountain towns above Massa Lubrense.

saint is taken to the sea and blessed by the children of the village. This custom is so much a part of local thought that mothers tell their children such things as, "When you get big, you'll be able to bless S. Pietro." On that occasion the statue is put in a boat, and the children enter the water and proceed to splash it. In other years this splashing was known to have been encouraged by the clergy. In recent times, however, the statue has become somewhat defaced by its annual salt water bath. So now the priests caution the children to splash "just a little," or "not too much," evidently to no avail.

It is summer, and the procession on June 29 begins about 7:00 p.m. One of its unique features is that the women in the procession, about one hundred and fifty, all walk barefoot, and with their hair down--as acts of penance. When the procession has taken the usual walk through the town and come down to the sea, it is greeted by the crowded occupants of sixty-two fishing boats, six of these large vessels, and all anchored just off shore. Whole families wave and the horns of the boats sound in deafening unison as the marchers slowly begin to cross the sand. The sky is dark now, and light is provided in a number of ways. There are lights on each of the fishing vessels, there is a large outdoor altar which has been erected at the eastern end of the beach and which seems to be lit by a combination of spotlights and candles, there are the lights of the town facing those of the boats, and there are the lights borne in procession.

First many children come carrying candles, then several children carrying baskets of flowers. A third group of children follow in First Communion suits and dresses.¹⁰¹ Then come a large flag representing the Church of S. Pietro Apostolo, altar boys, the clergy, the statue protected by a huge canopy, the band and the crowd.

The manner in which the statue is carried deserves particular discussion. Fifteen fishermen in mariner costumes carry a small boat of light wood (about the size of a dinghy) on their shoulders. The men are barefoot and bare-legged, sailor pants rolled up to the knee. The full-length statue of S. Pietro is standing upright within the center of the boat, no doubt firmly rigged and attached in such a way as to prevent its moving. Surrounding it is a huge ring of flowers, surrounded in turn by a ring of strong electric lights of some kind.

The most unusual element in the presentation of this statue is that its carriers walk only in a particular step rhythm, which they execute only when accompanied by the band. Thus there are numerous interruptions throughout the march.

The children have deposited candles and flowers at the altar, and they, together with the altar boys and priests have formed two lines at right angles with the sea. Two human walls are thus formed

¹⁰¹Most churches in the area offer the sacrament of First Holy Communion to groups of children instructed in its meaning sometimes during the month of May. Summer processions, therefore, nearly always include groups of children so initiated.

through which the fifteen fishermen bearing the boat of S. Pietro pass. They are backed up by the band playing the music most suitable for their strange rhythm step. Bearers enter the water to the level of the first three men's waists, so that the boat seems to rest upon the water. They back up onto the sand again, always moving in an almost dance-like fashion. They pause, and enter the water again, again to the same level. The entire sequence is repeated a third time. When it is concluded, huge spontaneous applause breaks out among both audience groups: the lines of people on the shore (which have become more haphazard and congested), and the occupants of sixty-two anchored boats which roll gently with the waves. The boat horns break into their own deafening form of applause, and the band strikes up what seems to be the ultimate of victory marches. What is being applauded is the statue's benediction of the waters of Cetera.

These various rounds of applause appear to be the signal for the beginning of an incomparable display of fireworks. Their source is somewhere off shore, in the darkness behind the lighted fishing boats. Light from the colored eruptions in the sky above the water reveals other vessels from which the fireworks are being ignited. The next half-hour is filled with explosions and glorious designs of multi-colored light which plays illusionary tricks upon sea and sand and village alike. Among other things, other audience groups are revealed: there seem to be niches into which balconies and railings have been fit or stairs have

been built all up and down the two cliffs which back up the beach and seem to protect the tiny town of Cetara nestled between them. Well before the fireworks are finished the procession has dispersed: statue and religious back to the church, children to their parents on the crowded beach, the band to their instruments. Waves of strong and final applause occur when the last geyser of artificial fire has died out. Then the communal celebration begins to break up and the people of Cetara begin to go home.

The parroco of the village explains that during his time of service at the Church of S. Pietro Apostolo he has suggested, on several occasions, possible variations in the form of this festa esterna. He has suggested, for example, a procession in boats upon the sea itself, but to no avail. The citizens of Cetara are happy with their patron's festa as it stands. He mentions, with some amusement and some regret, that since close to forty percent of the fishermen go to sea for four- or five-month voyages (another forty percent fish locally), he once attempted to institute a formal benediction on the occasion of their departure--also to no avail. And yet, continues Father Bertella, these same fishermen nearly all manage, somehow or other, to return to Cetara for June 29th. When they are in town they send their women to Sunday Mass, "but for S. Pietro--anything!"¹⁰²

¹⁰²11/11/70, conversation with Father Giovanni Bertella, parroco of S. Pietro Apostolo in Cetara.

It seems clear that for the people of Cetara, the festa of their patron is a many-faceted occasion: one of belief and supplication, one of enjoyment and entertainment, one of rejoicing and celebration. For the outsider it presents the opportunity to witness a sea spectacle of beauty and strength, one not easily forgotten.

Other local feste of this saint deserve mention. In Piano di Sorrento, at the Church of SS. Trinità, the feste of S. Pietro and of the Madonna del Rosario are combined on June 29th. This tradition has come about in order to accommodate the farmers of the town. The festa of the Madonna del Rosario normally falls in October, a month of tremendous harvest work in the hills; a time also when good weather for processions cannot be taken for granted as it is during the summer. The procession of June 29th in Piano seems impressive enough to accomplish a dual honoring. S. Pietro receives somewhat less attention than the Madonna, in that it is her statue which is borne into the hills and back. In 1971 one could recognize an overture to S. Pietro by the fact that the dozen young men carrying and/or escorting the banner of the Confraternità delle Pellegrini di Trinità were costumed as fishermen. In recent years, tribute to S. Pietro has been fashioned in a variety of ways: The carrying of a boat and net in procession, the carrying of an actor impersonating the saint within a canopied-throne-like affair, the carrying of a state. "Every year there is something different," says the parroco of SS. Trinità.¹⁰³

¹⁰³Conversations with Father Alberino on 10/27/70 and 11/9/70.

A conversation with the parroco of Pastena, one of the towns in the hills above Massa Lubrense, reveals that the local procession honoring patrons S. Pietro and S. Paolo was eliminated in 1964. This change came about, not as the result of Church decrees, but because the parroco himself was not an advocate of processions. The traditional procession honoring the Madonna was phased out in Pastena in 1969 for the same reason, and now only that of Corpus Domini remains.¹⁰⁴ Thus the parrocchia of Pastena offers an interesting exception to the rule in the records of the controversy regarding the limitation of processions: elimination on the local level came well before more general decrees had been formulated.¹⁰⁵

In Monticchio, also above Massa, the processional route is changed each year in order that as many people as possible may have the familiar wooden statue of S. Pietro pass before their houses. Here a game involving the penata (pinata) is played in the main piazza after the procession.

July 18--S. COSTANZO

S. Costanzo was patriarch of Constantinople, and a cult in his honor was instituted on Capri when what were thought to be his relics

¹⁰⁴7/3/71, conversation with Father Aniello Castellano, parroco of the Church of S. Paolo and S. Pietro in Pastena.

¹⁰⁵Father Castellano is heir to a beautiful estate and has spent private capital on renovating the parrocchia. These facts suggest that the availability of money eliminates the need for processions as a source of income, which may account in part for his decision to curtail processions in Pastena.

were brought there during the ninth century.¹⁰⁶ One historian suggests that these relics were eventually transferred to Benevento; another that they were buried beneath the mountain above Massa Lubrense which bears his name.¹⁰⁷

Termini is another of the mountain towns situated above Massa Lubrense. It nestles in the foothills of Mount S. Costanzo, and usually celebrates the festa esterna of its patron within the town on May 14th. In 1971, however, perhaps in order to hold the mountain festa esterna of S. Costanzo which is also traditional, the May 14th celebration was simply a festa liturgica. On July 18th, two processions were organized: a morning procession in the mountains beginning at the mountain chapel dedicated to the saint, and an afternoon procession in the town proper. The first provides an excellent example of the typical mountain procession of the area.

The mountain chapel of S. Costanzo is almost igloo-shaped, and built of white stucco. Its interior is simple and cool. It is open during the summer months only. The easiest way to reach it is to drive up Mount S. Costanzo for about ten minutes after passing through Termini proper, park, and walk uphill for another ten minutes.

When the crowded chapel Mass is over, the thirty band members from Massa Lubrense tune up briefly, and then begin to play. The confraternity from the neighboring town of Nerano begins the procession

¹⁰⁶Filangieri, Storia di Massa Lubrense, p. 494.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

from the chapel and down the side of the mountain. The band takes second place, followed by girls in communion dresses which often become tangled on the prickly mountain brush. Altar boys come next, followed by priests and the statue of S. Costanzo which is to be carried all the way down to the town below. The men responsible for the fireworks are hard at work and the mountain echoes and re-echoes the already thunderous explosions.

The uniqueness of this procession is provided by its setting. Since Massa Lubrense and its villages are situated at the tip of the Sorrentino Peninsula, and since the elevation of Mount S. Costanza is 1491 feet above sea level, the marchers seem to be heading down to Capri (which seems from this distance to be an extension of the Peninsula) before they undertake the circuitous turn of the mountain paths. There is a strong comic element to this procession. A number of the First Communion girls, despite their long dresses and the briars, take shortcuts and wait for their companions to reach them at various levels further down the mountain. When the band come to the first road where there are many parked cars, two of its members split from the group-- they pack their instruments and themselves into a tiny motorcycle-truck affair, and speed down the mountain in a cloud of dust. All the while the gay band music continues, and so do the sporadic volleys of fireworks. These create a certain dramatic tension, since every time a new volley explodes, both marchers and audience on the mountain side

have to watch out for flying sparks and discarded cartridges. The spirit of the celebration is happy and carefree--it is a beautiful summer morning to be wiled away on Mount S. Constanzo.

July 27--S. ANNA

Research concerning S. Anna began in November one day during a chance conversation with a fisherman's wife on the beach of the Marina Grande of Sorrento.¹⁰⁷ The Signora has lived in this small, closed community of fishermen and boat makers all of her life, as have most of its inhabitants. The women of the Marina Grande climb the steep curving hill road to the center of Sorrento daily in order to sell the fish which their men have caught during the early morning hours. Almost all of their lives are passed within the community of the Marina--small houses built just above one of the Sorrento beaches, and backed by the rugged cliffs which separate the rest of the city's inhabitants from the sea. During the winter months the beach is covered with the boats of the fishermen, and children, chickens and cats, most of them pregnant, seem to play a never-ending game of tag among them. The single narrow street which separates houses from beach accommodates the few local stores as well as the Church of S. Anna and its piazza. A fruit and vegetable man trucks his wares down to this street daily. Lining the first quarter mile of the single narrow road which leads to and from

¹⁰⁸11/28/70, conversation on the beach of Marina Grande, Sorrento.

the Marina's street are the large, cavernous shops of the boat builders. Except for the selling of its wares, the fishing community of Marina Grande seems to lead an existence apart from the rest of Sorrento.

The Signora's most interesting remarks concern community feeling about S. Anna. "She is our protectress. She has never lost any of our men to the sea." A description follows of what happens when the sea becomes dangerous and there are men out in boats. "The women go to church. We pray to S. Anna. She has never let us down." There have been times, she says, when the women have sustained a two- or three-day vigil for men who had not returned. The Signora assures me that her sentiments about S. Anna are shared by all of her community, men and women alike. Just then the bells of the church begin to ring--a wedding is about to be performed. We arrive at the piazza in time to see the bride, in traditional long white dress, being led down the street and toward the church. She is escorted by her father and they are being followed by all of their relatives. The parroco, dressed in his vestments, awaits their arrival at the church door. The Signora explains that nearly everyone marries within the community itself. In this instance the families of a boat maker and a fisherman are being joined by the marriage.

The Church of S. Anna is a parrocchia--developed from what had been a congrega, the chapel of a confraternity, founded in the seventeenth century. According to Father Esposito who served as parroco of

S. Anna for ten years before becoming parroco of the ex-Cathedral of Massa Lubrense, the original confraternity, made up exclusively of fishermen, had made it their business over the years to collect three percent of all earnings of their members. When the congrega became a parrocchia, this practice was retained. Those who contributed their annual three percent received very specific benefits: when a contributor was sick, or his son confirmed, or his daughter married, the parrocchia played the part of generous benefactor. Father Esposito eliminated this tariff method of benefits during his tenure as parroco. Now everyone who wishes may contribute to the church, but benefits are accorded all members of the community, and contributors do not receive special consideration. Three-fourths of the people of Marina Grande still donate three percent annual income to the Church of S. Anna.

The fešta esterna of S. Anna is the single large celebration offered by the Marina Grande. It is an all day affair. Morning Masses are attended by overflowing crowds: not only the fishing community observes a special devotion to this saint, but many people from Sorrento proper and neighboring towns as well. Fireworks are already beginning, and booths are being set up all along the Marina's single street in preparation for the fair of the afternoon and evening.

The procession follows the afternoon Mass, and it includes the usual of First Communion children, the confraternity, the statue of S. Anna carried by a group of real fishermen costumed as fishermen,

the clergy, and the crowd of the faithful. Fireworks are exploded from boats anchored offshore. Posted on the wall adjacent to the piazza of the church is the manifesto publishing the day's activities. The program is preceded, however, by a warning note:

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, echoing the teaching of the Church, exhorts the shepherds of souls to teach the faithful that the true cult of the saints does not consist so much of external acts as of the intensity of our actual love with which, for our own good and that of the Church, we search for example from the lives of the saints, from communion and participation with them, and from their interceding help.¹⁰⁹

In the evening the Marina is spectacularly lit--houses and Church are silhouetted against the sky by strings of tiny electric lights which spell out their shapes. The fair is going strong, each booth effecting its own bright lighting. And in the piazza, directly across from the Church, a stage has been set up. Here three singers, accompanied by several musical instruments, take turns serenading the crowds of the street over a powerful microphone. The barrage of fireworks which officially ends the evening is heard for miles up and down the Peninsula. And people who have already gone to bed turn over sleepily to say, "Oh yes, it's S. Anna's."

Ravello

"Two testimonies of the greatness of Amalfi . . . are Ravello and Scala."¹¹⁰ Grifeo refers to the remarkable cultural development which

¹⁰⁹Manifesto of the festa of S. Anna at the Marina Grande, July 27, 1972.

¹¹⁰Grifeo, Penisola Sorrentina, p. 84.

took place in these two locales under the reign of that Republic. Still today these two tiny cities continue to profit from huge natural and historical endowments. Honeymooners come to Ravello; the stupendous gardens of the Villas Ruffolo and Cimbrone seem to rival only each other, and the breath-taking, one hundred and seventy-nine degree angle view from the height of 1050 feet of the Mediterranean is altogether magical in the early morning.

Rebellum is said to have been Ravello's original name, since its founders were thought to have been Romans fleeing Rome and the dominion of the Republic of Amalfi as well.¹¹¹ Besides excelling as navigators, merchants, and dyers, the Ravellesi became noted for their illustrious and royal families. It is striking to read of Ravello's population in the thirteenth century and to compare it to the present population of its wealth of churches at that time.

Fortified by three lines of walls and several towers, the city boasted over 30,000 inhabitants, thirteen parishes and about sixty other churches, four monasteries--two of the Benedictine order . . . and a large hospital, whose imposing remains are still to be seen.¹¹²

Ravello's decline began with the coming of the Normans, and continued during the angiovinian-Aragonese conflict of loyalties among the citizens of the city. Finally the plague of 1659 decimated the population.¹¹³

¹¹¹Giuseppe Imperato; Ravello, trans. by Augusto De Maria (Amalfi-Salemo: De Luca, n.d.), p. 11.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹³Imperato, Ravello, pp. 15-16.

July 27--S. PANTALEONE

S. Pantaleone is known as the protector of doctors. He was born in Nicomedia sometime during the second century A.D.; he was a young doctor attached to the court of Calerio Messimiano and was subsequently martyred for his Christianity. His blood, upon decapitation was, according to accounts concerning the saint, not absorbed by the earth, and some of it was able to be preserved.¹¹⁴ In Ravello, an ampulla of what is believed to be this blood is the focal point of S. Pantaleone's cult and veneration. Brought to Ravello in 1112,¹¹⁵ the first record of its liquefaction, which was thought to be miraculous, occurred on the saint's day in 1577. Subsequent records of liquefaction have been discovered to have been written in the years 1643, 1686 and 1898. The 1898 writer reported that the liquefaction of this blood had been occurring for about forty years.¹¹⁶ Twentieth-century data is recorded in 1913, 1914, 1918, and 1924. There are both seventeenth and twentieth-century accounts of liquefaction which took place at extraordinary times of the year; that is to say, apart from the advent of the festa of the saint, when liquefaction normally occurs.

This part of Ravello tradition deserves mention since it is unique in the Sorrento-Amalfi area, and since it parallels closely the better-known

¹¹⁴Giuseppe Imperato, Un Testimone--S. Pantaleone (Altrani: Tip. Jovane, 1970), pp. 18-48. See also Pinuzzo, Cavalcata dei Santi, pp. 217-218.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 63. ¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 78

phenomenon which takes place in Naples in September--the liquefaction of what is thought to be the blood of S. Gennaro. Because Ravello's population is small, one is able to see what there is to be seen, whereas in Naples accurate observation is difficult during the festa of S. Gennaro. Personal observation in Ravello revealed a dark-brown hardened mass of material in the well-protected glass ampulla on May 6, 1971, and clear red liquid surrounding a small hard mass in the same ampulla on July 27, 1971. The ampulla is thirteenth-century in design. It was cracked in 1579, but the annual liquid neither came out nor evaporated. In 1781 there was an ecclesiastic proposal to replace the cracked receptacle, but action was never taken, and the original remains. This is secured upon a base of gold and silver, and crowned with a small statue of the saint. Altogether it is twenty inches in height, and is kept behind bars and lit in a small private chapel where no more than three or four people may observe it at the same time.

The dates of liquefaction are never exact. By the time of the festa, the mass has become liquid, a process usually taking about two weeks. By early September solidification has taken place again.

The revered liquid is not carried in procession. It remains untouchable behind its bars, and after its veneration and the appropriate High Mass, the outdoor procession begins. On the evening of July 26th and all during the 27th Ravello is in festa. The central piazza is decorated with lights and banners; a band stand has been set up from which

continuous music ranging from classical to popular is heard. People who would ordinarily be working sit at outdoor cafes and sip drinks while listening to the music and chatting. The streets and piazza are crowded, for people from other towns have come to observe the phenomenon of liquefaction and join the Ravellesi in celebration. Even without visitors coming especially to honor S. Pantaleone, Ravello at this time of year is filled with both Italian and foreign travellers.

The most interesting aspect of the fešta in 1971 is the parroco's concern about the quality of the miracle. "It has not been a total miracle this year."¹¹⁷ He is referring to the fact that the total content of the ampulla has not become liquefied. He is not yet certain why this is the case, but I am reminded of the quotation from a nineteenth century historian which appears in his book about S. Pantaleone: "If in some year the miracle did not occur, some grave and public calamity always did."¹¹⁸

Scala

Scala's patron is S. Lorenzo, whose feast date occurs August 10th. The Church of S. Lorenzo is imposing, and was at one time a cathedral. Scala, too, was the home of the most noble families--at first Roman, and then subsequently Norman, German and French. It

¹¹⁷7/27/71, conversation with Father Giuseppe Imperato, parroco of the ex-Cathedral of Ravello.

¹¹⁸Imperato, S. Pantaleone, p. 78.

was also at one time the site of a famous theatre, Il Campidoglio.¹¹⁹

Like Ravello, Scala's size has shrunk tremendously since its era of social and historical brilliance during the Middle Ages.

Scala had about 40,000 inhabitants, one hundred thirty churches.

. . . There were also thirty parishes, four Benedictine convents.

. . . In addition there was the Convent of the Augustan friars.¹²⁰

The present population of Scala is 1,600.

¹¹⁹Camera, Istoria d'Amalfi, p. 302.

¹²⁰Imperato, Ravello, p. 61.

CHAPTER III

FESTE OF THE MADONNA AND CORPUS DOMINI

The Madonna

The Madonna maintains a curious position as the subject of feste in that she is both a patron saint and something more than a patron saint. As the Mother of Christ her veneration is general among the faithful, regardless of what local patron saints may be honored. For these saints, one day of the year, occasionally rearranged for the sake of good weather, is the traditional opportunity for formal honoring afforded by the liturgical calendar. In the case of the Madonna, however, there are numerous occasions which can be devoted to her honor. These vary from major feste such as L'Assunta--the Assumption on August 15th which is widely celebrated, to small, relatively unknown occasions such as the festa of the Madonna delle Neve--the Madonna of the Snow, celebrated on September 5th in a mountain village above Massa Lubrense. What seems clear from a listing of these feste in the Sorrento-Amalfi area (see Table 6, p. 146), is that few occur during the winter months. The important festa of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th, for example, is celebrated throughout the area as

TABLE 7

FESTE ESTERNE OF THE MADONNA IN THE
SORRENTO-AMALFI AREA, 1970-71*

<u>November</u>	22	S. Maria a Mare--Maiori
<u>February</u>	11	Madonna di Lourdes--Alberi (above Vico)
<u>April</u>	12	Madonna della Libera--Maiori
<u>May</u>	31	Madonna SS. Dell'Avvocata--Monte Falizio (above Maiori)
<u>June</u>	29	Madonna del Rosario--Piano
<u>July</u>	4	Madonna delle Grazie--Montepertusso (above Positano), Massa Lubrense, Cassano (of Piano), Seiano (of Vico), Trasa- ella (above S. Agnello), Ravello, Tramonti, Maiori
	16	Madonna del Carmine--Positano, Scala
<u>August</u>	5	Madonna del Principio--Pontettriano (above Maiori)
	15	L'Assunta--Positano, Bonea (above Vico), Pastena (above Amalfi), Maiori
<u>September</u>	5	Madonna della Neve--Monticchio (above Massa Lubrense)
	8	Madonna del Castello--Moiano (above Vico)
	12	Madonna del Torro--Priora (of Sorrento) Madonna dei Tutti Santi--Agerola
<u>October</u>	3	Madonna del Rosario--Priora (of Sorrento)
	10	Madonna del Rosario--Capo di Sorrento

*Includes the feste esterne of all cities and most towns in the area.

a festa liturgica rather than a festa esterna. Other occasions in warmer months make it unnecessary to organize outdoor winter feste for the Madonna.

Besides the comparison of large, well-known feste and small, obscure feste, the present-day celebrations of the Madonna in the area

suggest a second method of categorization. There is a predominance of feste which clearly personify her as protectress against either the dangers of the sea or of the mountains, depending upon the particular town's or city's location (as is the case with many of the saints' feste discussed in the previous chapter). The same July festa of the Madonna delle Grazie, for example, occasions different celebrations. In Casarlano of Piano di Sorrento a sea festa, which ends with the statue of the Madonna "blessing" all of the ports of the Peninsula takes place. In Montepertuso above Positano, however, July 4th is the occasion of a celebration distinctly dependent upon its mountainous setting, both in its enactment and in the tenor of the supplication involved. The present study, therefore, utilizes the sea/mountain categorization as a means of presenting the feste being examined.

Her Processions

Most processions honoring the Madonna share the major characteristics of the saints' processions: they follow the celebration of the Mass, bear a revered statue about the locale, are accompanied by band music, and are both followed and observed by large crowds. The same groups which participate in saints'-day processions participate in those honoring the Madonna: the clergy, religious lay organizations, school children, confraternities, and musicians. The essential difference between the procession honoring a patron saint and one honoring the Madonna is an intangible one. It is to be found in the further exploration

of the opening statement of this chapter, i.e., that the Madonna is both a patron saint and something more than a patron saint. The veneration she receives imbues her personality with a goddess-like quality of seeming to observe, objectively and from afar, struggles on her behalf. Her fame as protectress, like that of the patron saints, comes principally from belief in her ability to shield people from the natural dangers inherent in mountain or seaside life. The protection offered by the typical patron saint appears to be of a more dominant nature implying his active role as intercessor. The Madonna's guardianship, on the other hand, seems to be derived from the voluntary submission of the forces of nature to her will. Thus, although the most interesting Madonna celebration in the area may be the long exchange of red and white fireworks which symbolizes combat between the Madonna and the devil, a celebration which seems more typical of the local cult of the Madonna is that in which images of the angel Gabriel and the Madonna meet peacefully.

This queenly, but passive, role which seems to have been built about the personality of Mary is supported in an interesting fashion by the results of the debate over the curtailment of feste esterne discussed in Chapter I.¹ A compromise between those citizens demanding that processions continue as before and those representatives of the Church hierarchy advocating the reduction of processional activity was achieved,

¹See above, pp. 46-54.

at least temporarily, by the decision to permit locales with strong cults of the Madonna to organize processions in her honor in addition to those honoring their patron saints. In this instance a sense of struggle in behalf of a somewhat distant goddess figure is again evoked. In contrast to the personalities projected by many of the local patron saints that of the Madonna's may seem pale, but its latent power is never underestimated by believers in the Sorrento-Amalfi area.

Her Coronations

In the Sorrento-Amalfi area there is a history in many towns of a special fiesta, often several days in duration, whose focal point was the crowning of a favorite statue of the Madonna. The elaborate details recorded concerning these ceremonies call to mind Gaster's references to "the coronation type" of ancient Egyptian drama in which the new king is instated and honored.² In Meta di Sorrento, for example, the Madonna della Laura, the statue reputedly found miraculously under a laurel tree,³ was coronated with a gold crown on June 2, 1748 as was the babe in her arms.⁴ Forty-eight years later the people of Piano di Sorrento witnessed the coronation of their Madonna and Child, Madonna del Rosario at the Church of SS. Trinità.⁵ In 1783 the Positanesi crowned

²Gaster, Thespis, pp. 377-405. ³See above, p. 76.

⁴Libretto di Preghiere con cenno storico (Napoli: Gallo & Figlio, 1955), p. 8

⁵Alfredo Ammendola, Cuore di Madre (Napoli: Cenacolo, 1963), p. 224.

their famous painting of the Virgin,⁶ thought to have been brought miraculously from the Orient.⁷ In that same year the statue of Maria SS. della Grazie was crowned in Seiano of Vico Equense.⁸ The statue of S. Maria della Lobra was crowned in Massa Lubrense in 1804.⁹ Sorrento's coronation of Maria SS. del Carmine occurred in July 1880.¹⁰ The Madonna del Carmine, in the Church of SS. Filippo and Giacomo in Amalfi was crowned on July 17, 1910.¹¹ In 1916 the coronation of the Madonna state in the Santuario della SS. Annunziata of S. Agnello took place.¹²

For the most part these coronations were late eighteenth and nineteenth-century phenomena. Their local importance is attested to in several ways. Long struggles were often undergone to obtain permission from Rome for the event--in the case of S. Agnello the process took ten

⁶Talamo, Monografia sulla città di Positano, p. 110.

⁷See above, p. 122.

⁸Raffaele Imperato, Storia di S. Maria delle Grazie Incoronata (Napoli: Stabilimento Tipografico del Tasso, 1866), p. 21.

⁹Convento e santuario di S. Maria della Lobra in Massa Lubrense (Napoli: A. De Fredde, n.d.), p. 8. See p. 115 above.

¹⁰Federico De Martino, Memorie storiche della solenne incoronazione di Maria SS. del Carmine nella città di Sorrento (Napoli: Accademia Reale delle Scienze, 1886), p. 79.

¹¹Imperato, Amalfi, p. 120.

¹²Raffaele Castellano, Storia del Santuario della SS. Annunziata (Castellammare di Stabia: De Martino, 1916), p. 13.

years.¹³ Long tracts devoted solely to these events were published,¹⁴ and their descriptions included in numerous general histories as well. The accounts thus afforded document long festivities in which the entire populations of these locales appear totally immersed. Three such descriptions are of particular interest. Church records from the Archives of SS. Trinità in Piano describe the decoration of the Church inside and out. A machine which set off fireworks but appeared to be a huge tower was erected in the church piazza. Photographs of King Ferdinand IV and his queen were hung on either side of the representation of the Madonna, which was placed upon the central altar, and was to be crowned. Two large orchestras from Naples were set up within the Church proper. A special pulpit was erected for the many orators who addressed the gathering. The ceremony itself was preceded by the reading of two official decrees authorizing the coronation. The archbishop of Sorrento performed the actual crowning--accompanied by hymns and, according to the writer, the great emotion of the assembled people.¹⁵

The coronation which took place in Sorrento resulted in the city's continuous celebrating from July 2nd through the 20th. Two bands played almost continuous music in the streets during this period. The

¹³Castellano, Storia del Santuario della SS. Annunziata, p. 13.

¹⁴See sources listed in n. 10, n. 11, and n. 12 on the preceding page.

¹⁵Ammendola, Cuore di Madre, pp. 224-227.

coronation occurred on the 18th, and the procession which followed the newly crowned statue included forty organizations, among them ten confraternities. Two days later the celebrations were concluded with a music and poetry festival during which sixteen selections were offered. The author includes in his account a detailed description of the artistry and value of the crowns themselves.¹⁶

Talamo's history compares the original coronation in Positano with its centennial celebration in 1883. During the former, cannon shots announced the beginning of each day of celebration: by August 15th, the day of the actual crowning, these had reached twenty-one.¹⁷ A description of the emotions felt at the moment of coronation is offered:

One cannot sufficiently explain the emotion, the tenderness which was a part of this act, the cry from the huge mass of people gathered in the church, the voices of blessings, of praise, of joy raised toward the crowned Queen.¹⁸

These ceremonies seem to have provided memorable experiences for those who witnessed them: they were considered major events in the lives of both towns and citizens. The literal crowning of a beloved statue or painting of the Madonna by the faithful presents a highly theatrical spectacle, in that characterization of a very concrete nature is being imposed upon inanimate representations of a venerated personality.

¹⁶De Martino, Memorie storiche, pp. 79-124.

¹⁷Talamo, Monografia della città di Positano, p. 111.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 114.

It might be said that such representations have become idols: such an interpretation, however, appears to be an oversimplification. The act of coronation becomes spectacular because of the theatricality of the ritual surrounding it: decoration of the church, lighting of the town, constant music, constant fireworks, a program which stretches into more than a week of time. The act of coronation without the accompanying activities might not have been a major concern of local historians. The relevance of these ceremonies to the present study is this: contemporary processions honoring the Madonna seem to represent in miniature the tremendous sense of occasion¹⁹ which must have pervaded these rituals of other centuries.

Madonnas of the Sea

In 1956 Professor Calogero Tagliareni of the University of Naples published a study of the "Ex-Voto" of mariners from the Sorrentine Peninsula. His one hundred and nine catalog entries from the churches of S. Antonino in Sorrento, S. Agnello in S. Agnello, and S. Maria Vecchia in Seiano of Vico Equense represent paintings displayed therein. The study points generally to the importance of strong religious faith to the seamen of this area, and specifically to the ancient custom of offering a gift to a deity in return for protection rendered. "From it [faith] is derived the popular religiosity which finds immediate response and

¹⁹In the sense that Richard Southern uses the term the "One Occasion." See above, p. 26.

application in the promise of a material vow, and in its fulfillment.²⁰ The fact that thirty-four of the paintings discussed are dedicated to the Madonna would suggest that the ancient concept of a sea-goddess continues to endure.

July 4--MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE at Cassano in Piano

Madonna delle Grazie is a popular festa in the area. Many churches bear this name, and the time of the liturgical year is ideal for the preparation of an outdoor celebration.

Cassano is the name of the fishing community of Piano, comparable to the Marina Grande community of Sorrento. The important difference between the two is that the Church of S. Anna at Marina Grande is a parrocchia, whereas the Church of Madonna delle Grazie at Cassano is simply a chapel. When the 1969 decree curtailed feste esterne, the people of Cassano were directly effected. Their church was not a parrocchia and was no longer permitted to organize feste esterne; also, the principle patron of Piano was S. Michele Arcangelo and not Madonna delle Grazie. Their response, however, was hardly passive. By virtue of an "understood misunderstanding"²¹ of the new limitations concerning feste esterne, the traditional marine festa of the Madonna delle Grazie

²⁰Calogero Tagliareni, Ex Voto Religiosi Marinari della Penisola Sorrentina (Napoli: Gennaro D'Agostino, 1956), p. 5.

²¹10/26/70, conversation with Father Nicola De Mario, parroco of the Church of S. Anna of the Marina Grande in Sorrento concerning the July 4th festa of Cassano of Piano.

of Cassano was celebrated in 1970. In 1971 a different approach was used. The festa occurred after the bishop's incontro pastorale at Vico Equense which had brought about the possibility that another festa esterna, apart from that of the patron saint, might be held if a strong cult to the Madonna existed in a particular locale. This loophole permitted by the bishop had directly affected processional policy in Massa Lubrense in May.²² The parroco of Cassano, therefore, organized his 1971 festa esterna in this way: since his church was not a parrocchia, but a procession honoring the Madonna might be permitted to exit from the parrocchia of Piano, he arranged to have the statue of the Madonna from his chapel in Cassano carried, during procession, through the parrocchia of S. Michele Arcangelo in Piano. Thus it could be argued that the procession had, in fact, exited from the parrocchia. Also, the people of Cassano could claim happily, as they had done the year before, that, decree or no decree, Cassano's Madonna delle Grazie had had her procession.²³

The procession of 1971, therefore, takes a bit longer than is customary. A long, steep, twisting road separates Cassano which is

²²See above, pp. 117-120, which concern the festa of S. Cataldo held May 10 in Massa Lubrense at the last minute, because it was understood that the festa of the Madonna delle Grazie would also be permitted.

²³10/24/70, conversation with Signora Mastellone of Piano, who predicted correctly that the people of Cassano would have their July procession despite any rulings which the bishop might make.

located at the edge of the sea, from Piano proper where the parrocchia is situated. Following the 8:00 a.m. Mass in the Chapel, the bearers take up the statue of the Madonna, the base of which is immersed in red and white flowers, the chapel bells ring, and the procession begins. The traditional specialty of this procession is a large row boat carried on the shoulders of six young men in white and blue, in which a smaller statue of the Madonna is secured. A standard, banners, a crucifix, the parroco and altar boys, girls in white and blue, the band, and the crowd complete the group of marchers. They start up the steep road which, without carrying anything, takes at least twenty minutes to climb. When the banners are seen returning down this same road, having led the statue to the parrocchia and through Piano, it is nearly noon.

When the procession returns home to Cassano (see Figure 5, p. 157), and the heavy burdens are carried down the single street separating houses from beach, the most important part of the journey is about to begin. One of the large, three-deck boats which go to and from Capri daily is in port, filled to overflowing with people who, for the most part, are from Cassano and the rest of Piano. The large statue of the Madonna, amidst deafening cannon shots and fireworks, is carried aboard and secured on the fore deck in such a way that it is clearly visible to those on shore. A good number of people from the procession, including clergy and some band members, go aboard with the statue. Meanwhile, the small boat and Madonna, which have been carried on



Fig. 5.--The Madonna delle Grazie being carried
in procession along the shore of Cassano.

land for four hours, are put to sea. Several fishermen join the statue within the boat, which is tied by a rope behind the large boat and Madonna, so that it may be towed. More cannon shots, the wailing of boat horns, waves of good-by from the land-bound--those sun-bathing on the beach as well as those from the procession, and both Madonnas sail slowly out from the port of Piano.

The mission undertaken is the blessing by the Madonna of all the ports of the Sorrentine Peninsula. Cannon shots are heard all during the afternoon as the party is welcomed up and down the coast; at 6:00 p.m. when boats and statues return home, the volley continues for nearly half an hour. It is not difficult to understand the loyalty the fishermen of Cassano feel toward this tradition. Nor is it difficult to understand the derivation of a local proverb which says that it is better not to go swimming "fin quando passa la Madon"--"until the Madonna passes."

August 15--L'ASSUNTA in Positano

The festa esterna of August 15, 1971 is typical of what has happened in Positano during the last ten years. The procession is large, and exits from the parrocchia at dusk. A large group of women and children, reciting prayers and all carrying candles, lead the way. Girls in communion dresses and school uniforms follow. The crucifix is carried next, lit on either side by lantern bearers, and followed by thirty altar boys. Five priests follow, the parroco walking in the center and chanting

prayers whose responses are taken up by his colleagues. The statue of the Madonna, carried by men who are comfortably and not uniformly dressed, is greeted by showers of rose petals. Two lights are attached to the front handles of the carrier, and as evening descends the statue remains well-lighted. Twelve men bearing candles walk directly behind the Madonna, and are followed by a large band of fifty members.

A large crowd of about seven hundred follows the band, and is itself the most distinctive feature of this procession. These people jostle against each other, for they are contained by the narrow streets of Positano which accommodate only pedestrians. From steps which lead onto the street where the procession is passing, the closely spaced faces appear concentrated, involved, purposeful. The importance to the people of Positano of what is happening is clearly evident.

Until 1960, the play, Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni ("The Landing of the Saracens"), was enacted annually on August 15th. According to the last of the directors of this extravaganza, Signor Vespoli of the Tourist Office of Positano, the reasons for its being discontinued were many. (1) Six weeks of preparation were needed for rehearsal, and, whereas in the past the citizens of Positano had had the time to offer, they were now more deeply involved in their own businesses during the high, summer season of tourism. (2) In recent years the annual budget for the production had risen to 25,000,000 lire (U.S. \$40,000). This sort of spending was an exaggeration, and resulted in part from the desire of the local

people to be paid for making the necessary sets, costumes, and properties--work which had previously been done free of charge. (3) During the play, Positano had always been in darkness, until the moment of the simulation of the city's burning. In recent years, thieves had taken advantage both of this theatrical blackout and of the absence of the townspeople, all of whom were either down on the shore watching the play, or on boats in the sea acting in it. (4) The traffic problem caused by the two-and-one-half hour blockade of Amalfi Drive which the production necessitated had become impossible to cope with.²⁴

In addition to the discontinuation of the play's production after 1960, all local records of previous productions were lost in a severe landslide which occurred in Positano in 1963. Thus an authentic copy of the script followed each year is unavailable. Signor Vespoli offered, however, a verbal scenario of Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni.

Twenty "Saracen" boats appear on the horizon, having departed from the islands I Galli, about ten miles off the shore of Positano. Each boat is a large rowboat with six oars. It carries six oarsmen, a commander, two gunners and eleven fighters--twenty men altogether. These boats are met in the harbor by twenty "Christian" boats, of identical size and manned in the same manner. A battle ensues, and there is much yelling and shouting and dueling between enemy fighters as the boats draw close to one another. The Saracen forces prove the stronger, they pass between the defenders of Positano, ground their boats, and come ashore. Here they are met by another group of new Christians, who begin to drive them back to the sea. As they retreat to their boats, however,

²⁴11/4/70, conversation with Signor Vespoli, who is a journalist and on the staff of the Azienda Soggiorno per il Turismo in Positano. He acted in Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni when young, and was its director for a number of years prior to its discontinuation in 1960.

the city of Positano seems to go up in flames, an act obviously perpetrated by the enemy. As the Saracens begin to leave shore, an image of the Madonna seems to appear miraculously above the sea, before them. The Saracens show fear and wonder, and fall to their knees in their boats. After they have sufficiently demonstrated their conversion, they depart.²⁵

There are two production notes of particular interest: (1) the miraculous appearance of the Madonna was effected by the sudden lighting of a painting rigged from an off-shore boat. (2) In recent years the director, using a megaphone, had supervised the action from the harbor, in a motor boat which was designed to resemble a whale. It is perhaps to be expected, but interesting nonetheless, that this historical-religious play utilized the two most legendary inheritances of Positano: the islands of I Galli, and a miraculous painting of the Madonna.

A seventeenth-century document from the extinct Curia of Vico Equense describes a staged sea battle produced off that town's shore on May 1, 1662, in honor of the Madonna. This production might well have been an antecedent of Positano's Lo Sbarco dei Saraceni. After a description of floats and scenes staged in town on carts, the document reads as follows:

To all this one must add that in order to have this festa completed successfully, the assault of the rock of S. Margherita, occupied by the Turks, had to be witnessed. [The Turks] had fortified it in such a way that the slope where embarkation usually occurred was a trench in the form of a half moon. A bit above [there was] a fortification in the form of a cube, from which a direct line jutted out and connected with the army piazza of that island, fortified

²⁵Ibid.

completely by four bulwarks, and in the middle was a tower of medium height on top of which was a short commander and a garrison dressed in dark red. These little soldiers were made of wood dressed in paper, and [the impression they gave] adjusted by fireworks: there were others on the side of the Vico beach, and when the naval armada of 40 and more sailboats and small ships had taken the island fortified by the Turks, these seeing themselves lost, set fire to the island. And then we saw the machine burn up and equal the best achievements of the master of fireworks in the intermingling and brightness of colors.²⁶

This lavish enactment was part of a celebration honoring a Madonna carried down from the mountain village of Massaquano. The bishop of the time had ordered a special celebration because (1) Pope Alexander VII had decreed May 1st as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and (2) the statue of the Madonna located in Massaquano was noted for a recent miracle.²⁷

November 15--S. MARIA A MARE in Maiori

The program for November 15th is prepared in the routine manner. At 10:00 a.m. Mass is to be followed by a procession including the usual combination of clergy, confraternity, school children and general lay followers. The rear pews of the Church of S. Maria a Mare support standards and a crucifix, the statue of the Madonna has been decorated with flowers and secured to the carrier--each is in readiness for the

²⁶Dalle carte della sopprese Curia di Vico Equense, ignoto autore, 1662. These papers were consulted on 12/2/70 at the personal library of the late Father Francesco Cannevale, who was at that time parroco of the Church of S. Giovanni Battista in Massaquano. The "little soldiers" referred to were figurines.

²⁷Ibid.

exit of the procession. The route to be followed leads around the city and to the sea, where the statue is to bless the waters. Maiori, like Minori and Amalfi, and unlike Sorrento and S. Agnello, for example, is built directly at sea level: beach, then the main road, and then the city.

The Church seems precariously situated--halfway up a perpendicular hill which is crowded with houses and terraces. Along the large boulevard directly below its many winding steps, crowds of people are waiting for the procession. Then it begins to rain. The morning has been sunny and cloudy by turns, and now the hope for more sun fades as little drops become large. What is striking at this point is the attitude of the townspeople. "It's obvious that the procession won't begin--it's bad weather," states a passer-by. Groups begin to disperse without hurry despite the growing downpour, as people start toward their homes. There is no sense of frustration demonstrated, no disappointment voiced; these people act as if the most common of daily occurrences is to prepare for a large festa and then to have it rained out. No announcement of postponement is made from the church steps; everyone seems to know that the decision not to hold the procession in the rain has been made.

The proprietress of a restaurant located on the central piazza explains that, if the clergy so decides, the procession will be held on the following Sunday. She speaks glowingly of how beautiful the S. Maria a Mare festa is, but she, too, shows no concern about the fact

that it is not being celebrated on schedule. The prevailing attitude seems to be that the Madonna must bless the sea, and will, and the particular date of the blessing is not of major concern.

A festa honoring another statue of the Madonna is celebrated in Minori on the Monday after Easter of each year. This is the seaside festa of the Madonna della Libera, held on April 12, 1971.

Madonnas of the Mountains

The feste which are discussed below, particularly that of Montepertuso, indicate strongly that the concept of mountain-goddess is as much a reality in the Sorrentine-Amalfi region as is that of a sea-goddess.

May 31--MADONNA SS. DELL'AVVOCATA on Monte Falizio above Maiori

Monte Falizio rises 3000 feet above sea level and the city of Maiori. The Feast of Pentecost occurs on the seventh Sunday after Easter and celebrates belief in the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles following Christ's death. The days immediately following Pentecost, therefore, are considered appropriate occasions for feste. On the Monday following Pentecost the Benedictine fathers, whose monastery is situated on the mountain side and houses the Sanctuary of the Madonna SS. dell'Avvocata (Protectress), celebrate the festa of this Madonna. Maiori forms part of the Archdiocese of Amalfi, where rulings against feste organized by monasteries have not been as stringent as those in the Archdiocese of Sorrento.

Those from Maiori who plan to attend begin to leave at 4:30 a.m., for there is no automobile route up this mountain, and the walk takes three hours. Participation in this festa really involves a pilgrimage, and the motives for undertaking six hours of mountain walking and another six hours of celebration upon the mountain vary. For many, the veneration of this Madonna is a vow which is renewed annually. There is an eighty year old man, for example, a favorite among the employees of Maiori's most popular beach establishment, who has climbed Monte Palizio on the Monday following Pentecost all of his life.²⁸ For others, the undertaking represents a beautiful day of springtime in the mountains. For young couples, the pilgrimage, according to a group of local young men, provides a day to be spent together with a legitimate excuse far from the intruding glances of relatives and friends.²⁹

Traditionally the goal is to dance continuously up the mountain side, through the procession, and down the mountain again. The dance step utilized by those who undertake this part of the ritual is a form of Tarantella, which, the older people declare, honors the Madonna. Some even say that ideally one must dance while eating and drinking the picnic lunches and wine which have been brought along. Many

²⁸_{5/31/71}, conversation with four young men in Maiori's central square. This and other information which they offered concerning this festa was later verified by the parroco of the city, Mons. Nicolo Milo of the Church of S. Maria a Mare.

²⁹Ibid.

people carry tambourines, and accompany themselves as they dance. When all participants have arrived at the mountain sanctuary, they number nearly a thousand.

The day's schedule, begun so early in the morning, progresses to Masses celebrated at the Sanctuary from 6:30 to 10:30 a.m. The statue of the Madonna dell'Avvocata is then carried in procession about the meadows, and unlike town and city processions, there is no one simply observing. Everyone who has come either walks or dances in procession. The participants become one another's audience. Music is provided by the singing and praying of these participants. At 12 noon, after the statue has been returned to the Sanctuary, fireworks are set off from its grotto, and the people of Maiori below understand by this that once again the pilgrims have succeeded in arriving at the mountain sanctuary and in honoring the Madonna. A huge, mass picnic follows the fireworks. A great deal of wine is drunk, and the final dancing down the mountain side is more spirited than that of the early morning ascent. The pilgrims arrive in the central piazza of Maiori at about 4:00 p.m. They perform a final group dance together, observed this time by non-pilgrims who have been awaiting their return.

At 7:00 p.m. another procession takes place--in Maiori proper this time, and the Madonna di Costantinopoli is now being honored. The participants of this procession are generally not those who honored the Madonna dell'Avvocata, for most of the pilgrims of the morning are already asleep.

June 1--S. MARIA A CHIEIA in Massaquano above Vico Equense

On the Tuesday after Pentecost there is a festa in the mountain town of Massaquano which enacts a ritual of possession. The object in question is a statue of the Madonna made of tufo--tufa (a porous limestone), which was supposedly discovered in the area of Massaquano about 1000 A.D.³⁰ The historian of Vico and environs, De Gennaro, asserts that the primitive village of Chieia existed there at the time, deriving its name from the Greek keo, meaning burned or heated by the sun.³¹ A small church was built here and housed this Madonna. It is thought that during the thirteenth century the people who worshipped it organized themselves into the Congrega di S. Maria a Chieia, since, at the time, many cults of the Madonna were being formed. The Church became a monastery in 1564, and several years later another church was built in the then existing town of Massaquano. The statue, however, remained in the monastery. When, in 1751, later devotees of the Congrega of S. Maria a Chieia established a new place of worship within the sacristy of this new church, S. Giovanni Battista, they wished to bring their statue with them. But the Franciscans objected.

³⁰12/2/70, conversation with the late Father Cannevale, parroco of Massaquano.

³¹Luigi De Gennaro, Vico Equense ed i suoi Villaggi (Napoli: Luigi Lubrano: 1929), p. 129. Another theory concerning the etymology of chieia was suggested by the parroco of Bonea above Vico during a conversation on 11/23/70: the tufa rock was referred to as piega meaning wrinkle or crease, and piega adapted into the dialectic vema-
cular became chieia.

Law suits followed, but the statue has always remained with the Franciscans. The Congrega, therefore, annually asserts possession of the statue by organizing the festa of S. Maria a Chieia every spring.³² A small procession leaves Massaquano and winds through the hills to the monastery, where it honors the statue of tufa. Then it returns.

It is not possible to observe the spirit of possession and merry-making which is said to accompany this procession. The parroco of Massaquano died several days prior to the date of the festa, and the jubilant occasion has been transformed into a procession of penance. Music and fireworks have been eliminated, and many villagers wear black. Old women with tears streaming down their faces recount the good works of their dead priest. But the children still wear their First Communion white, and the life-size statue of the Madonna delle Grazie, which is being carried from Massaquano in order to honor that other, more historic statue in the monastery, is dressed in lavish cloth robes and wears a life-like wig of long, blond tresses. The church bells provide uninterrupted accompaniment, and continue to sound long after the small group has disappeared into the hills.

July 2--MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE in Montepertuso above
Positano

There are two feste held on July 2nd in and around Positano. The first takes place at 5:00 p.m. in town. The second, and by far

³² 12/2/70, conversation with Father Cannevale.

the more interesting, takes place on Montepertusso, the mountain above, at midnight. Here the popular legendary struggle between the Madonna and the devil is enacted with fireworks playing the parts of the two adversaries.

The parking problem halfway up the mountain is intense, for at a certain point cars must be abandoned and the rest of the climb to the tiny village of Montepertusso accomplished on foot. Fiats of every size are crammed against the mountain side, leaving little space between themselves and the edge of the cliff for pedestrians and other Fiats attempting U-turns. After fifteen minutes of walking gingerly up the dark mountain path, the light of the village becomes apparent. We follow a narrow road with high walls on either side to the first piazza where street stalls are set up, and vendors are doing a huge business among the milling crowds. Walking through another street and more stalls brings us to the end of the village and to the large church piazza where the band is offering a concert, not totally audible because of the festive crowd engaging this piazza as well.

Someone occasionally gestures toward the blackness in whose direction the bulk of the mountain rises, where flickers of light can occasionally be seen. It is explained that these are torches of the men preparing the "battle" between the Madonna and the devil in the bucco--the huge hole, probably at one time a volcanic crater, in the side of the mountain. Suddenly there is a scuffling for viewing places

as the crowd in the piazza jostles around a bit, for the first sound of fireworks comes down from the darkness above. For the next thirty minutes the entire mountain reverberates with explosions as the two adversaries, the Madonna symbolized by white fireworks, the devil by red, battle it out. With each burst of light the huge crevices of the mountain are revealed, and the famous bucco from which these emanate appears gaping and dangerous. The white explosions begin to outnumber and overwhelm the red, and in a last huge volley an image of the Madonna, clad in white, is revealed, seeming to float at the center of the bucco, and backed up by a tremendous explosion of white, blue and yellow. The significance of this appearance--the figure is made of cotton and suspended in position at the proper moment--is that the Madonna has been victorious and plunged the devil into the side of the mountain. The legend re-enacted, which is thought to be pagan as well as Christian in derivation,³³ thus offers a folkloristic explanation of the existence of the huge crater in the side of Montepertusso.

The crowd in the piazza applauds the colorful finale vigorously. The band strikes up again, and people regroup, some returning to the stalls to shop, others looking from railings at the panoramic view of Positano below, outlined by its lights against the sea. Fifteen minutes later, lights can be seen flickering against the blackness of the mountain again. This time, however, they are not sporadic, but take the

³³11/4/70, conversation with Signor Vespoli of Positano.

shape of a moving line which seems, at various times, to be cut off from view by the winding nature of its route. People standing nearby explain that a procession of people carrying torches is coming down the mountain from the level of the bucco to the piazza where the crowd is gathered. The lights of the torches disappear for long intervals and then reappear at lower levels, until finally the figures carrying them can be seen coming around a bend which seems to lead to the town road with the walls on either side.

Besides torchbearers, the procession consists of three other groups. About twenty singing and praying women are in the lead, and several carry a large tapestry depicting the head of the Madonna before them. A few older children and teen-agers follow, as well as a tiny group of musicians, not big enough to be called a band. There is an air of victory about the tiny procession. Their mission has been accomplished: the torchbearers have created the legendary battle with fireworks, and the women have made their pilgrimage to the Madonna. The waiting crowd willingly applauds the already dispersing procession, the large, comfortably seated band of the piazza strikes up once again, and the festa of the Madonna delle Grazie of Montepertusso draws to a close.

July 11--MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE in Trasaella above S. Agnello

The name "Trasaella" is thought to be derived from trans agnellum, i.e., "beyond S. Agnello."³⁴ In 1971 the July 2nd festa is celebrated

³⁴Raffaele M. Castellano, Foglie sparse (Castellammare di Stabia: De Martino, 1912), p. 5.

there on the second Sunday following the feast date for reasons of convenience. It is the single annual outdoor celebration in this tiny town located above S. Agnello, and is anticipated with enjoyment all during the year. The fešta boasts an unusual and theatrical feature to which the townspeople often refer, and of which they are inordinately proud. On the day of the fešta a representation of the angel Gabriel, made of cotton and handsomely costumed, is suspended from the window of the church's bell tower. It remains there throughout the day, awaiting the dramatic moment which creates the finale of the procession for the Madonna.

The procession exits at 7:00 p.m., rather than the scheduled hour of 6:00 p.m. One of the policemen of S. Agnello leads, bearing a standard of the community. A small confraternity follows, followed in turn by a small band. A crucifix, altar boys and three priests precede the flower-laden statue of the Madonna delle Grazie. Both incoming and outgoing mayors of S. Agnello walk directly behind the statue (but the one who is soon to leave office quietly drops out of line as soon as the procession turns the first corner). A small group of followers bring up the rear, followed by another police officer carrying a second standard. The journey undertaken is somewhat laborious, for the route utilizes the many footpaths of Trasaella which are unpaved and precarious in the dusk. It winds among orchards and olive groves and country dwellings for two-and-one-half hours, and finally returns

to the lower end of Trasaella's main street. There, before a large well located in a semi-circular angle of the road, it pauses. The statue of the Madonna is lowered from the carriers' shoulders and placed near the well.

The nylon line from which the angel Gabriel is suspended runs from the bell tower of the church to this well located down the hill from it. The angel begins to descend slowly while the band plays and everyone, both those in the procession and those observing, watch the descent intently. It takes about six or seven minutes. When the figure reaches the Madonna, an exchange takes place. The angel has carried a large candle in its outstretched arms; the statue holds a bouquet of flowers between its clasped hands. With the help of a human intermediary, Gabriel "gives" the Madonna the candle, and she "gives" him the flowers. During this transaction the band has begun to play the "Ave Maria." The meeting between these two inanimate actors is understood as a reenactment of the Annunciation. The figure of the angel returns, via the nylon pulley, to the bell tower, and the procession walks slowly up the hill to the Church, to return the statue of the Madonna to its niche. The band plays a final selection, and the last part of the festa, the fireworks, begins.

August 15--L'ASSUNTA in Casarano above Sorrento

The feast of the Assumption, as well as the vigil which proceeds it, is celebrated throughout the Roman Catholic world. It is the

occasion, in many parts of Italy, for the organization of feste esterne. In the Sorrento-Amalfi area there are feste to be seen in Maiori, Positano, Bonea--a small town above Vico Equense, S. Agata--above Massa Lubrense, and Casarlano--above Sorrento. The festa of Positano is discussed above. The other festa which we were able to attend, given conflicts of geography and of schedule, was that of Casarlano.

This tiny town of three hundred farmers and workers is reached by driving to the hills above Sorrento and then walking along a very rocky path for thirty minutes. It is common knowledge that an automobile route to Casarlano will be completed during the next year. Reactions to the anticipated road are mixed. Some people, both from Sorrento proper and Casarlano, believe that the loss of isolation from most of the modern world will outweigh the gains in time and convenience. Casarlano will simply become an extension of the city below, they reason, and they prefer it the way it is.

Casarlano prepared two feste esterne each year: one for L'Assunta and one for Corpus Domini. Today there are two stalls set up on the widening of the road opposite the small church piazza--one selling small toys, another soft drinks. It is somewhat early, and the soft-drink vendor is not completely organized. He sends a boy running to find a bottle opener. A rude platform has been set up between the two stalls which will accommodate the band when they offer an evening concert. There is nothing unusual about this procession honoring the

Madonna, except for the fact that the community is so tiny that everyone participates actively. What is significant is the sense of excitement which emanates from everyone: the Signora who offers directions from her window overlooking the long climbing path to town, the boy who points the way to the church looking uncomfortably dressed up all the while despite his bare feet, the groups of old men on the church steps whose conversation is more animated than usual, the parroco who glowingly explains the history of the statue. To the outsider a routine procession is taking place; to the people of this countryside of grapes and olives, the occasion is one of the most exciting of the year.

September 5--MADONNA DELIA NEVE in Monticchio above Massa
Lubrense

On the first Sunday of September the statue of the Madonna of the Snow is honored in the mountain town of Monticchio. The spectacular element of the procession organized is the view it affords of torches being borne through the dark hills, accompanied by frequent fireworks. The route is long, and the parroco is traditionally offered a cup of coffee at the halfway point.

There is also a Madonna della Neve in the Archdiocese of Amalfi. In the mountain village of Pontettriano above Maiori another statue of the same name is honored on August 5th. Although the procession is small, with neither band or confraternity, it is popular among adjacent villages and frequented by other people besides the three hundred living in Pontettriano.

September 8--MADONNA DEL CASTELLO in Moiano above Vico Equense

This festa has become another entry in the history of the struggle between hierarchy and congregation concerning feste esterne in this area. S. Maria del Castello is a chapel under the parrocchia of Moiano, a mountain town above Vico Equense. This name is derived from that time in history when the ruling French nobility built castles along the countryside as protection against Turkish invaders. During the fifteenth century, a statue of the Madonna was found among the ruins of such a castle which housed chapels. A church was built on this site about two hundred years later, and dedicated to the Madonna.³⁵ In 1656, when the plague ran rampant in Naples and was carried to Vico Equense, tradition records miraculous cures attributed to this Madonna. It is said that someone carried a sick relative up the mountain side to seek her help, and that upon arriving at the meadow facing the chapel, that person was cured. Word spread, everyone who was struck with the plague was brought to the church, and, according to the account recorded, all of Vico was free of the plague within three days.³⁶

In 1958, the new parroco of Moiano, Father Raffaele Trombeta, organized a festa esterna from S. Maria del Castello which continued,

³⁵12/2/70, conversation with the late Father Cannevale, the parroco of Massaquano.

³⁶Ibid.

becoming more and more well-known in the vicinity, until 1970 when the bishop of Sorrento decreed against feste not organized within a parrocchia. The area above the mountain towns of Moiano and Preazano and Ticciano is inhabited by sheep farmers. The procession of September 8th would begin at 6:00 p.m., and the statue of the Madonna would be carried down the mountain for two and one half hours to the church in Moiano. The next morning, beginning at 7:00 a.m., the return procession would set out, arriving back at the mountain chapel at 9:30 a.m. These processions involved all of the sheep farmers and herdsmen of the area, as well as their families. The beauty of the mountains in the early September, the contrast between the evening procession and that of the early morning, the dual sense of pilgrimage and celebration which surrounded the two days, the frequent presence of the sheep themselves, made the festa of S. Maria del Castello highly regarded not only among the people but among the clergy of the area as well.³⁷

There was a definite philosophical motivation behind Father Trombeta's organization of this celebration. He states that the parishioners of this countryside are simple people whose faith often borders upon superstition. The festa, he explains, was created with the intent of joining them together in a communal activity which would articulate

³⁷11/23/70, conversation with Father Pinuzzo, parroco of Bonea above Vico Equense.

the more positive aspects of their faith, as well as giving them a sense of their own ability to create something artistic within their own surroundings.³⁸ The clergy of the area evidently thought these goals had been successfully accomplished, for when the festa was not permitted in 1970, they organized a week's retreat at the chapel involving all of those of the countryside who wished to attend in prayer and discussion groups, in order that these people might not feel that they had been "forgotten" despite the cancellation of their processions. This same group of priests was most active during the Spring 1971 visita pastorale to Vico Equense and environs in attempting to convince their bishop to permit processions such as these to continue. Despite their efforts, and those of Father Trombeta himself, the festa was not sanctioned for 1971, and was, therefore, not organized. Were Father Trombeta interested in having the procession exit from the parrocchia of Moiano or of Moiano or of Preazzano rather than the chapel of S. Maria del Castello, then considered as a special devotion to the Madonna it might have met with the bishop's approval. But such reasoning is not a part of Father Trombeta's nature, and has little to do with his efforts to organize a special festa which pertains specifically to the people of the mountains. The statue of the Madonna del Castello, therefore, may stay within its chapel walls for some time to come.

³⁸12/23/70, conversation with Father Trombeta.

Other Madonnas

Given the geography of the area, most towns and cities are located either near the sea or in the mountains. There are numerous feste of the Madonna, however, which do not utilize setting as do those discussed above. Although perhaps less interesting, these feste also serve the functions of religion and diversion for the locales involved. Names, dates and locations of these feste are listed below.

February 11--Madonna di Lourdes in Alberi above Meta

July 2--Madonna delle Grazie in Massa Lubrense, Seiano and Agerola

July 16--Madonna del Carmine in Positano and Scala

2nd Sunday in September--Madonna dei Tutti Santi in Agerola, and every 25 years, S. Maria del Lauro in Meta

2nd Sunday in October--Madonna del Rosario in Capo di Sorrento, in Priora above Sorrento, and in Piano celebrated in conjunction with the festa of S. Pietro on June 29 (see p. 132 above).

A unique festa which might have been in this group but was discontinued six years ago was that of S. Maria del Tore in Vico Equense. Information about the origin of this Madonna and its name appears more legendary than historical. One version states that a rich patron of much land once had a mural painted of the Madonna delle Grazie which was discovered much later in time by a farm girl looking for a lost

bull.³⁹ The other states that the same girl found the same mural in a place called "allo Toro."⁴⁰

This festa took place either the first Sunday in September or the third Sunday of October.⁴¹ To the ordinary elements of the procession was added a beautifully decorated cart which carried a statue of the Madonna and which was drawn by a white bull. Also on the cart were models of the grotto where the statue was thought to have been found, of horses, of shepherds, as well as a statue of a bull.⁴² Father Buonocore, parroco of the ex-Cathedral of Vico, tells of the time when there was no white bull to be found for the occasion, and so a white cow was substituted. The community was scandalized, and many expressed the sentiment that sacrilege had been committed.⁴³

A specific reason for the suspension of this festa was not offered. Several members of the clergy from the environs of Vico thought it was still in existence.

³⁹12/2/70, conversation with the late Father Cannevale. Although one might assume that the word tore would refer to the bull in the story, Father Cannevale pointed out that bull in Italian is spelled torre, and that many local dialectic names such as Toro, Tuoro, and Torriello might well have been derived from the Greek taus meaning "sun god."

⁴⁰De Gennaro, Vico Equense ed i suoi villaggi, p. 332.

⁴¹Gaetano Parascandolo, Monografia del comune di Vico-Equense (Napoli: Vincenzo Priggriobba, 1858), p. 279. October date cited. Father Buonocore of Vico's Ex-Cattedrale cited the September date (10/28/70 conversation). It is entirely possible that the nineteenth century date of celebration was changed sometime during the twentieth century.

⁴²10/28/70, conversation with Father Mario Buonocore, parroco of the Ex-Cattedrale of Vico Equense.

⁴³Ibid.

Corpus Domini⁴⁴

As is made clear by the directives of the bishops of both Sorrento and Amalfi, Corpus Domini is the single occasion for a festa esterna which is strongly encouraged by the Church hierarchy today.⁴⁵ The reason behind the strong support is that this liturgical feast day represents a veneration of Jesus Christ rather than of a saint.⁴⁶ This policy reflects a desire to lead the faithful away from what is presently considered an excessive worship of saints, and toward a more direct appreciation of Christ. Although the directive to celebrate this festa is strong, there is ample latitude permitted about exactly when a festa shall be held. Corpus Domini falls during the liturgical year fifty days after Easter. In 1971 the date was June 10th. Nearly every town and city of the areas of both Sorrento and Amalfi organized processions for the occasion. We witnessed feste of Corpus Domini from June 10th through June 29th. These dates were chosen according to the discretion of the individual parrocchie. The feste described below are those personally observed.

⁴⁴The term used for this feast in English-speaking countries is another Latin designation, Corpus Christi.

⁴⁵See above, pp. 46 - 50, for the local directives involved.

⁴⁶Paolo Toschi, Il Folklore, Conosci Italia, Vol. XI (Milano: Touring Club Italiano, 1967), p. 12. The original festa was created in 1264 by Urban IV in order to celebrate the miracolo del corporale of Bolsena.

The fascinating difference between Corpus Domini celebrations and those of the saints and of the Madonna is their dependence upon symbolic, rather than realistic, properties. Such a difference is, of course, in accord with the meaning of the celebration. Corpus Domini means "body of Christ," and it is this "body of Christ" in Eucharistic form which is borne through the streets in procession. Thus believers and observers alike are made to concentrate, not upon the sculpted image of a human being as in the case of the many processions described above, but rather upon the receptacle enclosing consecrated hosts which is hidden among the robes of its priestly bearer and often protected by a portable canopy as well. Thus a theoretical, hidden, and mysterious presence is being publicly honored, and the general effect of this honoring is more reverential and less boisterous behavior on the part of the spectators than is usually the case during saints' processions. Whereas, for example, many people attempt to touch a passing statue and will speak or pray aloud at that time, the same people usually kneel and become silent when the Eucharist passes in procession. Generally, Corpus Domini processions are solemn and reverential occasions; generally, the processions of the saints are familial and festive in atmosphere. Clearly, the veneration of a human personality, no matter how saintly, brings about a more jocular variety of processional theatre, while the veneration of the body of Christ occasions a traditional sense of solemnity.

This contrast between solemnity and familiarity may be further supported by examining those properties or characteristics which support the central properties of the Eucharist and the saint's image respectively. The flowers, outdoor altars, tapestries, scene paintings, and tappetti di seccatura of Corpus Domini celebrations seem to be properties employed for the purpose of lending concrete expression to the mystery of the enclosed and protected Eucharist, as well as for the purpose of honoring it. These manifestations appear vulnerably theological and pale, however, when contrasted to the more vital, life-giving manifestations which are utilized during many of the saints'-day and Madonna celebrations (for example: the blazing fire which manifests S. Lucia's protection of her followers' sense of sight, the reverberating explosions which symbolize the Madonna's struggle with the devil, the many boats filled with entire families which offer living proof of their belief in S. Pietro's protection).

June 10--Massa Lubrense, Sorrento, Piano

The procession in Massa Lubrense exits from the parrocchia of S. Maria delle Grazie at 7:30 p.m. Its organization, which resembles closely those of both Sorrento and Piano, proceeds in the following way:

- 1) Groups of boys and girls in white monks' robes accompanied by lay women.
- 2) School girls with no costumes.
- 3) School boys in uniform, accompanied by nuns.
- 4) School girls in uniform.
- 5) Tiny girls dressed as angels.
- 6) Standard of the Arch-confraternity.
- 7) Crucifix of the Arch-confraternity.

- 8) The band of Massa Lubrense, 30 members.
- 9) Altar boys dressed in black and white, carrying candles.
- 10) A second crucifix.
- 11) Small altar boys in red and white, with pages in red.
- 12) A group of priests.
- 13) Other little girls dressed as angels, strewing yellow rose petals.
- 14) The parroco carrying the sacrament of the Eucharist, covered by a canopy carried by six men.
- 15) The dignitaries of the city.
- 16) The crowd, about five hundred.

The route of the procession is organized on this occasion with two special rituals in mind: the blessing of the churches, and the blessing of the altars set up in the street. The parroco makes the sign of the cross with the chalice containing consecrated hosts within three churches on route: S. Andrea, S. Antonio, S. Giovanni. In each case the rest of the procession remains silently outside of the church until the parroco and his party return. Three other stops are made. On Via Roma there is an altar erected, which is covered with flowers, in front of which is a tappetto di seccatura (a rug of sawdust). This is a beautifully constructed design of colored sawdust depicting a sacred picture, on which the priest walks as he goes to bless the altar. By walking on it, he intentionally destroys the representation. In Piazza Marcone there is a similar altar, also flower-laden, only the rug before it is of Persian wool. Another blessing is offered. The last stop occurs before the railing of the main piazza which overlooks the sea far below. Here the sacrament is used to bless the sea. The entire procession takes an hour.

Several occurrences produce striking effects. At the passing of the sacrament, onlookers invariably kneel down in the street. All along the processional route beautiful tapestries are hung from almost every balcony. These are meant to honor the sacrament. The yellow rose petals all about the streets create a sense of locale which is no longer of the street, but seems reminiscent of palaces and royal courts.

The procession in Sorrento on June 10th exits at 6:30 p.m. and closely resembles that of Massa Lubrense. Its unique feature is the inclusion of open truck. The vehicle is so completely decorated with flowers that it does not seem to be a truck at all, but rather resembles some sort of horse- or donkey-drawn cart. The bishop of Sorrento, the consecrated sacrament, and several attendants are carried through the streets at a walking pace upon it. The reason for its presence in the procession is to enable the bishop, who has not been well, to participate.

Until twelve years ago, Corpus Domini was celebrated in a far more elaborate way in Sorrento. Rather than one procession, there were two. One such as that of 1971 took place in the morning. In the evening a huge procession, organized jointly with the communities of S. Agnello and Piano would journey from one town to another. It would encounter many altars along the way. Such large processions going from one town to another were abolished when the resulting traffic congestion became impossible to handle.⁴⁷

⁴⁷6/20/71, conversation with Father Antonio Davide of the Cattedrale of Sorrento.

The Corpus Domini procession of June 10th in Piano returns from a three-hour walk through the hill country of grapes and olives at 9:30 p.m. It is nearly dark, and the confraternity members, dressed in red robes and each carrying lanterns upon high standards, present a spectacular sight. They seem to appear from nowhere, joining themselves to a long line which seems endless. The bells of the Church of SS. Trinità to which they are returning sound jubilantly in continuous bursts of music. A crescendo is reached as the leaders of the procession arrive at the church steps and enter. This sound of the bells is all the more effective since there are no competing sounds; there is only the silence of the countryside which is now completely dark and the nearly silent footsteps of the last members of the procession.

June 19--COLLI DI FONTELLA above S. Agnello

According to the parroco, Father De Ponte, the tradition of building impressive outdoor altars for Corpus Domini began in Colli di Fontanella in 1920. At that time three altars were built each year. Before World War II one of these was eliminated. During the war two small altars were erected because of the lack of money. Five years ago the tradition was reduced to the building of a single altar--but it, at any rate, is large. The reason for this last reduction was a lobby formed on the part of the wives of the village. They went to the parroco as a body demanding that their husbands no longer spend either as much time or as much money on this communal project as they had in the past.⁴⁸

⁴⁸6/10/72, conversation with Father De Ponte, parroco of Colli di Fontanella.

This particular altar has been created by an artist of Torre del Greco,⁴⁹ and imported for the occasion. Even so, four days have been spent in simply rigging and securing the structure (see Figure 6, p. 188). The 20' by 30' stretch of painted canvas depicts a triumphal arch, seemingly Italian gothic, built upon a large pavillion, through which a church can be seen. A gold carpet which begins at the center of the lower perimeter of the canvas seems to lead directly through the arch and into the door of the church. The painting is an exercise in Renaissance perspective.

George Kemodle, in his memorable study From Art to Theatre, discusses at length the historical development of the stage facade. The altar of Colli di Fontanella clearly displays two of the elements which Kemodle identifies as typical of the medieval development of the stage facade: the arcade screen and the center pavillion.⁵⁰ The more varied altars seen in Torre del Greco in honor of Corpus Domini, which will be discussed below, include a third medieval element: the side house. Kemodle's treatment of altars and tombs as show pieces includes a discussion of tableaux vivants. These were used in numerous countries of Western Europe, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for street celebrations of honor and welcome, often with a thematic

⁴⁹Torre del Greco is a city located south of Naples and north of Vico Equense. It is a part of the Archdiocese of Castellammare di Stabia. Its fešta of Corpus Domini is discussed below, pp. 193-198.

⁵⁰George R. Kemodle, From Art to Theatre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 19.



Fig. 6.—The altare of Corpus Domini in
Colli di Fontanelia above S. Agnello.

reminder. Thus foreign dignitaries might be greeted by an altar in the Sorrentine festa sense of the word, in front of which living figures would depict Roman scenes of triumph or biblical scenes--often with contemporary figures included.⁵¹

Iolanda Callea, in her 1956 study, Folklore di Sorrento e dintorni, includes the following passage:

In Torca and Colli di Fontanella on the day of Corpus Domini, there is a festa which revolves around important procession on the main street, along which well-decorated altars are erected where various scenes from the New and Old Testaments are represented mimetically by the people. Among these: the Samaritan at the well of Sicar, Adam and Eve in earthly Paradise, the Last Supper of Jesus, S. Michele driving out the devil, the sacrifice of Isaac. This last scene is one of the most beautiful: an image of the Madonna is situated in the altar to which a young man with a package who represents Isaac about to be sacrificed addresses himself. [He is] followed by a big man dressed like a Turk, Abraham, who is about to kill his son with a long knife which he brandishes threateningly. Finally a young man with great wings represents the Angel who interrupts Abraham's killing; these two conclude the scene as the knife is sheathed. During the passing of the procession a little girl accompanied by a harp sings, "The prophet David sings on a harp of gold of you," and a chorus of angels sing other religious hymns.⁵²

Here is evidence of tableaux vivants set up in the streets before altars resembling some of the facades described by Kernodle: a medieval welcoming rite used to welcome the passing of the Eucharist in procession in the middle of the twentieth century.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁵²Callea, Folklore di Sorrento, p. 105.

A strange tradition concerning the altars of Colli di Fontanella is described on June 10th by a farmer who heads the altar committee, and its occurrence is verified by the parroco on June 19th. According to Signor Mastrangelo who has witnessed this fešta for about forty years, there is always, on the day of celebration, a white pigeon seen flying around and around the altar or altars.⁵³ Such a pigeon is present on June 19, 1971. The believers of Colli di Fontanella consider the presence of the bird as a heaven-sent symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The fešta of Colli di Fontanella includes special Masses, a small procession--far less elaborate than those of Corpus Domini described above, and fireworks, as well as the presence of the much-discussed altar. This, however, remains the central attraction. People gather before it all during the day, bringing flowers with which they decorate a series of benches placed at its base. The procession stops here and a blessing is offered.

June 20--S. Agnello

The S. Agnello procession of Corpus Domini is celebrated on the 20th because its principal organizer among the clergy has been out of town during the previous week. The procession itself includes a large number of participants, is long in duration, and has been well organized. The route chosen is impressive in its combination of central locales and

⁵³6/10/71, conversation with Signor Mastrangelo and Father De Ponte; 6/19/71, conversation with Father De Ponte.

scenic views, such as those afforded from the long road running parallel to the cliffs above the sea which the procession follows at length. The elements of sound are diverse: at several points, it is possible to hear band music, prayers of the clergy, prayers of the crowd, and the singing of school girls simultaneously.

The outstanding feature of this celebration, however, is the variety of ways in which the procession in general, and the Eucharistic sacrament in particular, is greeted. In nearly every doorway or gateway which the procession passes, there is some sort of decoration, adornment or offering designed to honor the passing of Christ as represented by the chalice of consecrated hosts carried carefully beneath a canopy. There are simple potted plants set upon tables in many doorways. There are several courtyards opening upon the street in which elaborate tappetti, in principle like those of sawdust, have been created out of the petals and leaves of flowers. On the tables beside other doorways are bundles of candles or envelopes (obviously containing monetary contributions), which are handed to the appropriate altar boy. And all along the route, from the windows of houses and the walls of vineyards, come showers of rose petals, in such quantities that the normal sounds of these many people walking on concrete are considerably softened. The procession's final and most elaborate reception occurs in the garden of the local hospital, where an altar of the Massa Lubrense variety has been erected, complete not only with

flowers but with little girls playing the parts of angels as well. Here the final blessing is offered by the priest bearing the chalice, and the procession begins its return to the parrocchia. When it arrives, a half-hour of fireworks ensues, celebrating the safe return of the sacrament to the church.

June 27--Montecchiario above Meta

The date of the fešta of Corpus Domini is put off until the 27th at Montecchiario because the renovation of the Church of SS. Pietro and Paolo has just been completed. Like that of Colli di Fontanella, the procession is modest in size and the route followed is entirely rural. The single stop occurs at the Capella del Monte--the Chapel of the Mountain, where a blessing is offered. The line-up is typical of a small-town procession in the hills:

- 1) Two girls costumed as angels.
- 2) A group of boys and girls in First Communion outfits.
- 3) A Ladies' Auxiliary group.
- 4) The Confraternity del SS. Rosario: banner, crucifix and eleven men.
- 5) The band, twenty muscians from Naples.
- 6) Altar boys: one carrying a crucifix, four carrying lanterns, four assistants.
- 7) The clergy: four members, the parroco beneath a canopy carried by six men.
- 8) A small crowd.

There are no fireworks this year because of the many expenses necessitated by the renovation. Next year, however, the people of Montecchiario plan to resume their explosions of celebration in greater volume than before.

June 29--Torre del Greco

Torre del Greco is a city of 100,000 located halfway between Naples and Castellammare di Stabia. It is nearly as close to Vesuvius as Pompei, and was destroyed several times during its history. The motto on the city's coat-of-arms reads, Post Fatta Resurgo ("After the Fact I Arise"). The city is famous both for its large fishing industry and for the coral and pearl found off its shores. Although not a part of the Sorrentine Peninsula, Torre del Greco is a close neighbor, and its Corpus Domini festa seems to have influenced that of Colli di Fontanella. The festa goes back to the seventeenth century, when it was initiated to celebrate the end of a political feud between two powerful families over the ruling of the city.⁵⁴ It is one of the most impressive celebrations of the entire Neapolitan region, and for this reason as well as for its influence, it is described here.⁵⁵

"Once again Torre del Greco renews its pledge of faith and of civil deportment in its ancient festa of the four altars, religious and civil program the 26-27-28-29 June." So reads the opening sentence of the manifesto which goes on to list the four days' activities. These include special street illumination, the formal unveiling of the altars,

⁵⁴Torre del Greco: Festa dei Quattro Altari, by the Comitato feste turismo e sport (Torre del Greco: 1971), p. 23. See also Gino Doria, Napoli e dintorni, p. 148.

⁵⁵See Appendix I for a description of the famous festa of Nola, a city to the East of Naples, held at this time of year.

three concerts, special masses, the display within various churches of six tappetti of flowers, the Solemn Eucharistic procession in which the Archbishop of Naples will participate, and "in the mirror of the sea . . . the spectacle of fireworks with electric ignition." Not mentioned in this announcement are three art exhibits, a children's show, and a deep-sea fishing contest.

Although only four sketches of altars appear in the program which is available throughout Torre del Greco and although the celebration is traditionally known as La festa dei quattro altari ("The Feast of the Four Altars"), there are five altars erected, each in a different part of the city. It is significant that the program, in listing these works, refers to them as scenografie--scene paintings or scenography. It seems likely that the altar or scene painting used in Colli di Fontanella may have been one used in the past at Torre del Greco, for those of Torre are approximately the same size, and are similarly painted in sections and then mounted together by means of elaborate rigging, like gigantic puzzles.

"Fonte di Grazie" on Corso Garibaldi depicts a large fountain set before three open arches. The location of the altar permits a view of the Mediterranean through the arches. Those at left and right rise above lateral stairways of large proportions, while the central arch forms a backdrop for the fountain. "La Fede" ("Faith") on Piazza L. Palomba presents an open-arched temple enclosed by a balcony on

three sides. With the structure, set against an open arch, is an allegorical figure symbolizing faith, and on the elaborate stone wall of the balcony are four angels, each in closed niches. "L'Eucaresta" ("The Eucharist") on Via S. Noto presents a fairly realistic small city or town in the background. In the foreground are rather abstract studies of a chapel with a stained-glass window, and a monstrance set upon stairs leading from the chapel. The entire scene-painting "La Preghiera" ("The Prayer") on Via A. Luisi suggests a chapel in which stain-glass window and altar are clearly defined. On Via Fontana "Il Buon Samaritano" ("The Good Samaritan") represents, in realistic detail, a medieval castle, a ruined temple, and in the foreground, small, man-size figures of the Good Samaritan and the rich man (see Figure 7, p. 196).

These scene paintings seem, judging from two publications, to have been produced, at least in 1971, in a climate of socio-religious dispute. An article by Mons. Capano, the parroco of the city's cathedral, appears on the inside cover of the festa program. Entitled "A Responsible Participation," it strikes out, in what is apologetically referred to as a digression, against the attitudes of groups who criticize such feste as a waste of money which ought rightfully to be used for the poor. Mons. Capano would remind such critics that thousands of people in Torre del Greco make much-needed money from the Festa



Fig. 7.--"Il Buon Samaritano," one of the altari of La Festa dei
Quattro Altari in Torre del Greco.

dei Quattro Altari. He reminds them, as well, of the spiritual values to be gained.⁵⁶

L'Infinito, on the other hand, a monthly publication of the city which calls itself the "Periodical of the Youth" and sells on every news-stand for fifty lire, expresses another point of view. The first-page article of the issue available during the fešta is entitled, "The Festa of the Four Altars" with the sub-caption, "a fešta, take note, which, more than being artistic and religious, is not only home-made, but edible."⁵⁷ "Edible" refers to the author's contention that the people of Torre del Greco are more concerned about what they will eat during the fešta than about its religious and artistic implications. The author criticizes other aspects of the fešta: the desire on the part of each person involved to make a profit, and the artists who, for all their great talent, present the same sort of work every year.⁵⁸

Despite the seeming extravagance of the fešta from the viewpoint of the outsider, and despite the published views of what is perhaps a large segment of the young population in the city, a young man encountered on the street--Domenico, who has returned home from his

⁵⁶Mons. Michele Capano, "Una responsabile partecipazione," Torre del Greco: Festa dei 4 Altari, p. 1.

⁵⁷Luigi Mari, "La festa dei quattro altari," L'Infinito (Torre del Greco: Anno 6, N. 1) luglio 1971, p. 1.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 1 and 2.

position in Rome for the occasion, is of another mind. "This festa is nothing like it was five or six years ago. It becomes smaller and smaller every year." Why was the old, larger festa preferable? "One is accustomed to it, remembers it from childhood, and doesn't like to see it changed."⁵⁹

⁵⁹6/29/71, conversation with Domenico (last name unknown) of Torre del Greco and Rome.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

For the sake of organization Christmas celebrations are divided into three sections: processions, presepi, and La cantata dei pastori. The intermingling of elements in these sections, however, is constant. The pipers who form their own minute processions as twosomes, for example, also play in larger processions and are represented in presepi. Some Christmas processions exist simply to place the image of the Christ Child in the otherwise-completed presepio. The culminating scene of La cantata dei pastori is, very simply, a living presepio. What becomes obvious is that each of these forms--procession, crèche and drama, is used for the single purpose of celebrating the Nativity, and that this singleness of purpose has promoted interchangeable form. The multiple manner of this celebration in the Sorrentine-Amalfi area today upholds Fasulo's commentary regarding Christmas in Sorrento in 1906:

Religious sentiment in the Sorrentine Peninsula is innate in the spirit of the citizenry, but religion without display would not be worthy of the Madonna, the Nazarethan, and the saints. The inhabitants know how to couple religious ritual with aesthetics in adorning churches and piazzas, in asking for music, spectacles

and fireworks, so that every religious solemnity becomes perhaps too much of a popular festa.¹

Processions

ZAMPOGNARI

One of the most interesting traditions of a processional nature in the area is the arrival of the zampognari (pipers) from the mountains outside of Rome. Zampogno means reed pipe, or bagpipe, and the zampognari travel in pairs, one playing a reed pipe, the other a bagpipe. These bagpipes were once made of reeds and the innards of animals, and are currently made of reeds and the inner tubes of automobile tires. "A pleasing bit of local color, and one rarely missing in the diaries of travelers and writers of the early nineteenth century is the scene of the pipers' bagpipes sounding the first announcement of the approaching feasts."² Toschi, writing in 1963, adds that this practice by shepherds who live in the mountains of Lazio and Abruzzo, so common in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, is fast becoming extinct.³ In Sorrento 1970-71 the tradition is still alive. Rumor has it, however, that it becomes increasingly more difficult to engage the zampognari since fewer come down to Sorrento each year.

The zampognari first play in Sorrento and environs on the occasion of L'Immacolata, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception which is

¹Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 386.

²Toschi, Invito al folklore italiano, p. 214.

³Ibid.

celebrated on December 8th. They play again beginning December 16th, when the Christmas novena begins. This nine-day period of special worship concludes on Christmas Eve. On each of these nine days, at the homes of those people who have engaged them, these pairs of musicians play to the image of the Christ Child present in that home. This strange sort of serenade is referred to as "playing a Novena." The zampognari also play in stores and in piazzas, and by the end of the Christmas season the sound of their music is almost as familiar as the most popular Italian Christmas carol, Tu scendi dalle stelle ("You Descend from the Stars").

The zampognari with whom I spoke were father and son from the mountain province of Frosinone, outside of Rome. They had come down to Sorrento for one month of this work in a car which carried two other pairs of zampognari. While they covered S. Agnello, the second pair worked in Sorrento and the third in Meta. Other cars filled with zampognari went to Naples. When asked why they undertook this annual journey and labor, three answers were offered: tradition, faith, the opportunity to work.⁴ The tradition is one handed down from generation to generation, the faith usually involves vows made to the Madonna or to the Christ Child, and the work refers to the income gleaned from the offerings made by those in whose homes and places of business

⁴12/24/70, conversation with father and son Sarocinesco from S. Biaggio, outside of Rome.

the Christmas season has been ritualistically greeted by their music. The people of S. Agnello say that whenever they pay the zampognari some small sum, they receive from them a beautifully hand-carved, wooden spoon. These shepherds from the hills above Rome possess skills in abundance.

December 24--LA VIGILIA in S. Agnello

The early morning event on December 24th, Christmas Eve, exemplifies procession in its most simple form. After Father Ercolano has finished celebrating the 6:00 a.m. Mass in the Church of S. Agnello, he approaches the congregation with an armful of candles and gives one to each child in the group. The children, accompanied by adults, go to the altar where their candles are lighted, and led by the priest, begin to circle through the church singing Tu scendi dalle stelle ("You Descend from the Stars"). With all the candles lit and with everyone singing, the little procession leaves the church and circles the churchyard. It concludes, when returning indoors, with the children bringing the candles back to the altar where they blow them out.

There is also a nocturnal procession in the parrocchia. A group of adults assemble at midnight to carry the small figure of the Infant Jesus from the church to the congrega around the corner where the presepio has been built. A tremendous storm has blown up on this Christmas Eve in the Sorrento area. The small procession battles

valiantly against heavy rain and cold winds, which nearly drown out the day's second rendition of Tu scendi dalle stelle.

January 6--L'EPIFANIA in Vico Equense

The novelty about the 1971 production of the traditional fiesta of the Pacchianelle ("Little Peasants") is its sponsorship. This Epiphany procession has, until this year, been sponsored by the Monastery of San Vito dei Francescani (although prohibited some years ago from going along the main road of the city). The bishop's ban against processions which exit from monasteries, however, led most people of Vico to believe that this annual tradition was doomed to discontinuation. Instead, conversations among local authorities interested in its preservation has led to a new method of evading ecclesiastic bans, over which the Church has no control. Vico's Azienda Autonoma di Soggiorno e Turismo (The Autonomous Agency of Residence and Tourism) has undertaken the sponsorship of the event. Such sponsorship is unprecedented in the area and in most cases might not be a feasible solution, since most traditional processions involve a statue or crucifix belonging to the church sponsoring the procession. Vico's Epiphany celebration, however, does not involve such an artifact, but depends rather, upon the costuming of townspeople and the use of farm animals. Thus the producer can change while the tradition remains the same. The present arrangement between the monastery and the tourist agency is that the monastery will provide the instructions

necessary to facilitate the procession's operation, while the agency will return any offerings which might be received for this operation back to the monastery. What is noteworthy about this transfer of production responsibility is that a monastery and a tourist office have independently made their own arrangements for the continuation of a tradition, without feeling an obligation to seek further ecclesiastic approval for such arrangements.

Epiphany celebrates the journey of the three Wise Men to worship the Infant Messaiah, and this journey is the cornerstone of the procession's organization. It occurs on January 6th. The three kings are splendidly represented, both by the choice of physically striking men to play their roles, as well as by their lavish costumes and sturdy mounts and squires. The kings do not dominate the procession, however, for it includes representative of other groups which travelled to Bethlehem, as well as more apochryphal worshippers. Thus, for example, eleven- and twelve-year-old boys, with marvelous mustachios penciled in upon their upper lips, sport sheepskins upon their shoulders while they lead stubborn sheep on leashes and grapple with man-sized shepherds' staffs. They are followed, on the other hand, by a donkey pulling a cart in which there is a funny young man who appears to be the town comic.

Perhaps the strangest element of this procession is that it includes the Holy Family, for whom all its other participants are

symbolically searching. The man who impersonates Joseph and who has done so for as long as anyone can remember, seems ancient, has long white hair, and may usually be seen anywhere between Vico and Naples riding a donkey, strangely costumed, and offering to take photographs of tourists.

Two types of Italian Christmas characters are included in the procession. There is a donkey-drawn cart carrying a tiny, old white-haired lady attended by a little girl. The ancient lady represents La Befana, the good witch who for Italian children is the gift-giver, as Santa Claus is for American children. Her representation on January 6th is perfectly appropriate, since in Italy children receive gifts, not on Christmas day but on the Feast of Epiphany, when the Infant Jesus received his gifts from the Wise Men. The presence of the two zampognari is also an integral part of this celebration. Their eerie pipe music is heard continuously throughout the two-hour procession, reminiscent in its endurance, as well as in its quality, of imagined performances of those first shepherds.

The traditional name of the procession, "The Little Peasants" is explained in part by the boys impersonating shepherds, and in part by the large groups of girls of every age in the procession who sport festive costumes. They walk carrying gifts: apples, oranges, wine, candy, bread, and pastries. In this way the original significance of the occasion is evoked again, for they are symbolically bringing food

to the Christ Child. The marching order of the gaily costumed participants is as follows:

- 1) The Angel Gabriel, on a horse.
- 2) The first wise man, his horse led by an attendant.
- 3) The second wise man on horseback, made up as a black man, whose squire is similarly made up.
- 4) The third wise man, his horse led by an attendant.
- 5) A little boy from the East riding a pony.
- 6) The large group of girl children bearing special foods.
- 7) The twenty-five shepherd boys leading sheep.
- 8) The town comic in a donkey-drawn cart.
- 9) La Befana and little attendant, also in donkey-drawn cart.
- 10) A third donkey and cart bearing a traditionally costumed little girl and the hugest of pizzas.
- 11) Five young men as shepherds, each carrying strings of cheeses.
- 12) Tiny girls dressed as angels, each carrying bouquets of flowers.⁵
- 13) Mary, on a donkey, carrying a statue of the Christ Child, accompanied by the aged Joseph, and preceded by a bouquet of flowers so large that it is carried by two men.
- 14) The two zampognari.
- 15) A donkey, led by his owner.
- 16) A bull, led by his owner.⁶

At 2:15 p.m. groups are stationed along the roadside opposite the monastery which used to organize the procession. It is sunny and cold, knots of onlookers have gathered along the road for as far as one can see, and a loudspeaker is dispensing Christmas music to one and all. A half hour later the procession begins. Taped music gives away to the clear tones of the zampognari's pipes and the spectators become

⁵Many "stage" mothers are present, accompany their tiny daughters at a discreet distance.

⁶Both donkey and bull symbolize the animals thought to have been present in the manger in Bethlehem.

silent. The potential traffic problem is immediately evident when a bus returning from Amalfi and the first group of the procession encounter each other almost head on around the first bend of the road from the monastery, but calm is restored and a strong sense of ritual or of performance seems to govern both marchers and onlookers. The procession first passes through some of the hill country above Vico proper, and it is this first half of the journey which is impressive in its serenity and in the effect of its brilliant costumes. Intent faces and dumbly plodding animals are silhouetted against the gorgeous natural setting of the countryside, which at this time of year very much resembles an American autumn in its foliage. An hour later, this phenomenon of silent masses of people passing through beautiful country changes completely. The procession descends to the central piazza of Vico where other masses of people, who are not silent at all, await their arrival with delighted and somewhat impatient expectation. The air of the procession is now one of a festa, with audience applauding each contingent as it arrives from the narrow road which leads into the piazza, and proceeds around its central fountain. Friends are recognized beneath the costumes, and are greeted by name and with laughter and more applause. Each animal is greeted, sometimes with applause, more often with guffaws. The two zampognari, who still have not taken a breather, receive a grand ovation. Both audience and marchers express a general feeling of triumph and of celebration, and as the

procession concludes its last bit of journey, from the piazza to a side street where it will disperse, there is the strong sense that fun, and not tedious tradition, has won the day.

LA VIGILIA and L'EPIFANIA in Amalfi

While small Christmas Eve processions such as that of S. Agnello are commonplace in the Sorrento-Amalfi area, the only other locales besides Vico which announced Epiphany processions on January 6th in 1971 were Amalfi and Ravello. The special feature of both the Christmas Eve and the Epiphany processions in Amalfi is the presence of a mechanical star, of which the citizens of Amalfi are justly proud. The storm which shortened the Christmas Eve procession of S. Agnello this season completely cancelled the projected procession in Amalfi, but both weather and mechanical star were in excellent form for January 6th. Ravello's procession on this occasion resembles the Amalfi procession, but does not involve the use of a mechanical star.

The much-discussed mechanism is built in the form of a shooting star. Its head is two yards wide and its tail six yards long. It is made of aluminum, and numerous holes have been drilled along its edges. Bengali, a variety of impressive but noiseless sparkler which burns for a long time, are inserted into each of the two hundred and thirty-nine holes. The line on which the star travels is approximately three hundred yards long. It begins from Torre di Tabor, which is an

ancient bell tower located well up the mountain adjacent to the city on the west, and, after traversing most of the city at a sharp downward angle which seems to promise some sort of crash, it finishes its journey at the Cathedral of S. Andrea. The time span from when the bengali are lit at the tower to when they arrive at the Cathedral is approximately five minutes.

The star is the creation of an ingenious and civic-minded group of young men who are also involved in the execution of Amalfi's Easter traditions. It is stored, along with Amalfi's famous racing galley in the old Arsenal overlooking the port. One can imagine this huge aluminum star of Bethlehem still being available for inspection some centuries from now along with the well-preserved boat, in the same famous structure which once housed arms for the Republic of Amalfi.

Presepi

One dramatic, or more precisely, theatrical, aspect of the ceremonies of Christmas still remains to be explained: the prevalence during the later Middle Ages and into modern times of plastic representations of the Holy Manger.⁷

After four pages of examining possible explanations, however, Young concludes:

Roman tradition, dramatic custom, and early ecclesiastical art, however, all fail to account for the astonishing European popularity of the Christmas crib in both public and private devotion during the later Middle Ages and in modern times.⁸

⁷Young, Drama in the Medieval Church, Vol. II, p. 24.

⁸Ibid., p. 27.

Allardice Nicoll stresses the influence of Christmas crèches in the development of medieval drama.

The service of the Mass contains within itself a certain dramatic element, and this may be said to be the ultimate starting point. Impetus, however, was given to the development of religious drama proper by a number liturgical features, the exact origins of which it is difficult to trace. First of all comes the practice of preparing, at Christmas, a mimic doll group representing the Nativity. The influence of the praesepe, or crib, has been stressed by more than one historian of the early drama.⁹

Theories stressing this influence continue to be forthcoming. An Italian theatre historian, Giuseppe Pardieri, writes in 1967 that presepi, together with dumb shows performed for triumphal processions, were two forms of spectacle which strongly effected the development of the sacra rappresentazione.¹⁰ Certainly in the Sorrento-Amalfi area today, the preparation of presepi takes on many of the outward signs of theatrical production, while the people of each locale discuss the relative merits of presepi viewed in much the same manner that theatre-goers chat about the most recent plays they have attended.

The origins of the presepio are indeed difficult to trace. The idea that St. Francis created the first presepio is considered more than popular legend by Neapolitan expert Franco Mancini.¹¹ Some

⁹Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1931), p. 176.

¹⁰Giuseppe Pardieri, Il teatro italiano e la sua tradizione (Matera: Basilicata editrice, 1967), p. 21.

¹¹Franco Mancini, Il presepe napoletano (Firenze: Sadea Editore, 1969), p. 1.

writers suggest that Francis' production in Greccio in 1223 was sacra rappresentazione rather than presepio since perhaps living figures rather than dolls, were grouped around a representation of the Bethlehem manger.¹² Other dates and places, however, are often suggested as marking the beginning of this popular practice: 1272 in Rome, 1343 in Naples, 1562 in Prague.¹³ It is clear, at any rate, that the custom of building crèches spread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, and that it developed regional characteristics. Although Oriental crèches were to become fashionable in various parts of Europe,¹⁴ the major stylistic development of presepi was the representation of that locale in which the particular crèche was being built.

The noted art historian, Gennaro Borrelli, perceives the four following phases in the general historical and artistic development of presepio-making: (1) From its beginning to ca. 1520 presepe meant the modelled representation of three figures--a babe in the manger plus the two beasts which kept him warm. These were generally set up at the level of the altar where Mass was to be celebrated. A graphic parallel was thus drawn between the sacrifice of Christ the Child lying in an animal food receptacle and Christ the Man as the bread of mankind

¹²Franco Patini, "Attorno al bambino sceso dalle stelle," Domenica del Corriere, n. 5, 29.dic. 1970, p. 34.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 35. "It is the end of 1800 when a pilgrim returns from a journey to the Holy Land with a suitcase full of authentic outlines and sketches."

in the liturgy of the Mass. At the end of this period the figures of Mary and Joseph were introduced.¹⁵ (2) During the next century the adoration of shepherds became an integral part of the presepio.¹⁶ (3) 1620-1734 saw the establishment of a moveable presepio--that is, one in which the positions of the figures could be moved.¹⁷ Also established was the tavern episode,¹⁸ as well as presepio celebrations of a musical nature.¹⁹ (4) During the final period of development from 1734-1860, the emphases were upon scenery,²⁰ upon creating different architectural viewpoints within the scenery,²¹ and upon creating realistic animals and accessories to accompany the already astonishingly realistic figures.²²

In Naples, the explosion of what had been popular tradition into an art form, in which nobility and the great artists engaged, occurred during the eighteenth century. With the advent of Carlo Borbone III in 1734 the arts received support and impetus. It is generally thought that the presepio enjoyed the monarch's strong interest, although Borrelli asserts that the source of this thesis was the monarch's funeral eulogy, and that in fact the writings of the day do not record a single

¹⁵Gennaro Borrelli, Il presepe napoletano (Roma: De Luca--D'Agostino, 1970), pp. 21 and 22.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 48.

²⁰Ibid., p. 81.

²¹Ibid., p. 87.

²²Ibid., p. 101.

instance of a royal visit to a presepio.²³ Sources do agree that the king's friend and adviser, Father Rocco of Massa Lubrense,²⁴ was appassionato of the art, and imagined the strong religious sentiment which might be channeled by its new popularity. Instead, presepio-making was embraced as a novel form in elegant and refined entertainment,²⁵ and the list of artists involved became a "who's who" of the century. Some of the sculptors who modelled the heads of shepherds and holy families included Matteo and Felice Bottiglieri, Domenico Antonio Vaccaro, Nicola Somma, Francesco Celebrano, Giuseppe and Bennaro Sanmartino.²⁶ Christmas oratorios prepared especially as musical commentaries of presepi were composed by Cristoforo Carezana, Francesco Feo, Giovan Battista Pergolesi and Alessandro Scarlatti.²⁷ This "collective madness of eighteenth-century Naples"²⁸ also demanded the talents of well-known painters, architects, modelers of porcelain and tailors.²⁹ The presepi of the period became realistic representations of Neapolitan life in their incorporation of street scenes, shops, costumes and landscapes.

²³Ibid., pp. 77-78. ²⁴See Chapter II, pp. 116-117, above.

²⁵Mancini, Il presepe napoletano, p. 1. ²⁶Ibid., p. 2.

²⁷Franco Mancini, "Un pretesto e qualche idea," Il presepe Cuciniello (Napoli: Museo di S. Martino, 1966), p. 24.

²⁸Mancini, Il presepe napoletano, p. 1.

²⁹Mancini, "Un pretesto e qualche idea," p. 2.

Along with the recognition of local surroundings, colored counters of fish and baskets of fruit, melons and clusters of tomatoes hung in the kitchens, and well-furnished tables, a microcosm of people from the most diverse occupations add a sense of extraordinary realism, which is completed by ingenious contrivances such as sprinkling wine about the shop of the inn so that spectators will smell its aroma.³⁰

While some theorists speculate upon the possible effect of the presepio upon the development of medieval drama, others consider what elements the presepio might have adopted from other theatrical forms. Mancini observes that although the presepio seems to take from the sacra rappresentazione the exterior aspect of the medieval luoghi deputati (appointed places)--the Italian equivalent of the French man-sions, the more fundamental aspect of re-creating the local scene seems, in the case of the Neapolitan presepio, to have been derived from the Neapolitan comic opera.³¹

In the comic opera as in the presepio "the spectator is no longer transported to strange lands in remote times; but here the scene is always a suburb of Naples, with our sea-shore in the background and our hills in flower. Here one feels the living voice of the people, the indigenous witticism and the popular song, and one no longer attends strange and extravagant scenes so much as many models gathered from the truth."³²

As Mancini has pointed out, the New Testament themes of the Nativity from the gospels of Matthew and Luke are used to present an original

³⁰Patini, "Attorno al bambino sceso dalle stelle," p. 35.

³¹Mancini, "Un preteso e qualche idea," p. 24.

³²Ibid., reference to M. Schillero's L'opera buffa napoletana, ed. Sandron, n.d., p. 56.

and anti-traditional vision, for although the scene of the Annunciation in the Neapolitan presepio remains peaceful and bucolic, the actual Nativity scene becomes the epitome of a local fiesta.³³

Along with questionable royal patronage and a contemporary interest in the local scene, a third factor was operative in the call to presepio-making which so many eighteenth-century artists answered. The techniques developed during the seventeenth century offered new dynamic possibilities. The heads of the figures, once carved of wood, were now made of terra cotta, which permitted greater precision of facial expression.³⁴ Where once all figures were single pieces of wood, now moveable joints were adopted for wooden figures, and the bodies of others were made of cloth wrapped around and around skeletons of wire.³⁵ Both techniques assured moveable figures which could be arranged in a variety of positions. The ultimate step in this dinamizzazione ("making dynamic") of presepio figures occurred at the very end of the eighteenth century when, despite all clerical prohibitions to the contrary, puppet theatres in Naples would present their version of the Bethlehem scene with narrator and moving puppets.³⁶

³³Mancini, "Un'idea e qualche pretesto," p. 22.

³⁴Mancini, Il presepe napoletano, p. 1.

³⁵Mancini, "Un'idea e qualche pretesto," p. 25.

³⁶Ibid., p. 22.

Fasulo, in his history of the Peninsula, quotes the writings of an English noblewoman, Lady Julia Kavanagh, who recorded her impressions of Sorrento in 1857. Her description of Christmas Eve confirms the existence in the area of a custom which combined some elements of the Christmas presepio with others of the coronation of Madonnas discussed in the preceding chapter.³⁷

At six o'clock we went to the Church of the Congregation of the Servi di Maria,³⁸ who are all nobles and very jealous of their ancient prerogatives which go back to feudal times. A very attentive young aristocrat offered us the better seats up front as soon as he understood we were foreigners: one constantly receives these signs of courteous hospitality from the Italians.

The church is very charming, decorated for the occasion and brilliantly illuminated. To the left of the vermilion altar there was a gold chair covered with red velvet reserved for the Christ Child. The Babe was to sit there and be honored that evening; this is an ancient custom whose origin is forgotten but which nevertheless is religiously observed today in Sorrento. It is established that on the eve of Christ's birth a real baby be chosen from among the most beautiful of the people to symbolize the Divine Child, and to receive the gifts and the homage paid by all, as was done in ancient times by the shepherds and the Oriental kings.

We had not been seated for long when the two side-doors opened: from one entered the priests, from the other a beautiful brunette woman, carrying a child of about three years old in her arms. He was a beautiful boy with dark eyes, dressed regally in a mantle of scarlet wool.³⁹

Having set the scene, Lady Kavanagh describes the benediction of this

³⁷See pp. 149-153, above.

³⁸One of the two famous confraternities of Sorrento. See below, pp. 292-293.

³⁹Lady Julia Kavanagh, as quoted in Fasulo, La penisola sorrentina, pp. 63-64.

child, the washing of his feet by a priest, his costuming in blue silk, and his coronation. Finally she supplies the criteria by which the child to impersonate Jesus is chosen annually: (1) he must be beautiful, and (2) he must be poor.⁴⁰

During the Christmas season of 1970, impressive presepi may be seen in many public places in Naples: piazzas, the central railroad station, a special exhibit at the Palazzo Reale. By far the most impressive, however, is one which may be seen at any time during the year--the Presepio Cuciniello, often referred to as the Presepe San Martino because of its location in the Museum of San Martino in Naples. It was given to the Museum in 1877, with many provisos regarding setting and the arrangement of figures, by Michele Cuciniello (1823-89). This gentleman was successful both as architect and playwright, yet he is remembered today as the donor of a presepio.

This "translation of the Bible into Neapolitan dialect," as the Cuciniello has been called,⁴¹ offers an amazing sight. The huge window of the Museum's Room XXVII discloses 171 shepherds, 108 animals, and 100 different objects. The vast scene includes mountains and valleys and grottos. Its buildings include a Roman temple and a rustic tavern. Its angels fly over seemingly endless human activity. When one has become accustomed to the wealth of spectacle

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 65.

⁴¹Mancini, "Un'idea e qualche pretesto," p. 22.

offered, what remain: most impressive in the theatrical sense are the figures. The overwhelming majority of the 171 shepherds possess such animation of body and such individuality of face that they seem tiny actors who have been told to "freeze" momentarily for photographs.

There is, in the Church of S. Antonino in Sorrento, another presepio which may be seen all during the year, and one which has been named indirectly after the Presepe Cuciniello. It is known as the Piccolo Sammartino ("Little San Martino"), and was the gift of the Sorrentine poet, Saltovar, to the church. The figures include the work of the celebrated sculptors mentioned above, and the scenery was effected by the Neapolitan artist, Ciro Pinto. This presepio follows the typical eighteenth-century Neapolitan style in terrain, buildings and activity, as well as in its inclusion of both local and Oriental scenery. While rock and shore formations are recognizably those of Sorrento, there is also a rustic Oriental scene on the right. The many shepherds are making their way from all directions toward the manger, and the general air of the figures is one of marvel and delight.

Annual presepio-making in Italy in general and in the Sorrento-Amalfi area in particular has received strong stimulation through the recent efforts of the Amici del Presepio, an international organization with both national and local associations.⁴² Founded in 1952, the

⁴²The organization displayed a Neapolitan presepio in the White House in 1967.

organization became particularly active in the Neapolitan area in the late fifties when the presepio seemed to be disappearing in favor of the Christmas tree. At that time Professor Tagliareni of Piano and the University of Naples organized concorsi ("contests") under its auspices for the presepio-makers of the Sorrentine Peninsula. These are flourishing mightily in 1970, and according to individual reports have caused a resurgence of both competitive and uncompetitive presepio-building.⁴³ During this particular season the Naples branch of the organization has as its central activity the sponsorship of the excellent exhibit at the Palazzo Reale mentioned above: presepio figures of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries are displayed. The VII International Congress of the organization takes place during the first three days of the exhibit which was initially planned for the month of October, but is so much in demand that it was extended through the end of January. The exhibit is prepared by architect Gennaro Borrelli and scholar Franco Mancini whose works have been cited numerous times above.

The presepi of the Sorrento-Amalfi area are of various types, both public and private. Their locations include homes, churches, the congreghe ("chapels") of churches, and hotels. They are built by people from all walks of life. Those which I saw during the 1970-71 season are listed below by category:

⁴³5/2/71, conversation with Antonio Terminiello, presepio-maker par excellence of Sorrento; 12/16/70 conversation with Professor Calagero Tagliareni of Piano.

1) Small presepi built in homes for the family

a. Bruno Balsamo is an executive of the Italian Line in Naples.

At his home in S. Agnello he has built a presepio upon a game table.

The area measures 6 ft. by 3 ft. and is 2 1/2 ft. above the floor. The scenery is constructed of papier-mâché with much living greenery added. The holy grotto, a flock of sheep grazing upon a mountain side, and a small lake are its major focal points. It makes use of the mirror technique, traditional since the eighteenth century: reflections are so arranged that figures which are really hidden within the crevices of mountains appear to be coming from a great distance away. A musical accompaniment is switched on when the crèche is displayed.

b. Antonio D'Aponte is one of the three policemen employed by the municipality of S. Agnello. His presepio, erected upon saw-horses, is 5 1/2 ft. above the floor, and measures 6 ft. square. It has many points of view, since one can walk around it. On one mountain, a young shepherd is driving his flock across a bridge which spans a precarious-looking gully. Its most unusual scene, however, suggests both Neapolitan humor and the desire, so obviously present in the presepi of the eighteenth-century artists, to utilize contemporary situations in a naturalistic manner. One papier-mâché mountain side is strewn with the bodies of broken figures: This, says D'Aponte, represents the Six Days' War between Israel and the U.A.R. On the other side of the same mountain is the manger of Bethlehem.

Both of these presepi were built during the two or three weeks immediately preceding Christmas. Such a time schedule typifies those creches built for private enjoyment, often as a family activity.

2) Large "public" presepi built in homes

a. Luigi Palumbo is a mechanic who lives in S. Agnello. He is very involved in presepio-making, and has attended meetings of the Amici del Presepio all over Europe as well as having built his own presepi for the past fifteen years. He always devotes an entire 9 ft. by 13 1/2 ft. room of his home to his annual creation. His presepio is entered as usual in the contest sponsored by the Amici del Presepio, but Palumbo is dissatisfied with his work this year since he has been able to work on it for only three weeks. His collection of figures includes some sixty persons and sixty sheep. Some of these were handed down from his father, some bought in Spain during one of the presepio meetings he attended. The houses of the collection, which are particularly effective, are all hand-made.

b. Antonino Terminiello is a mason who lives in Sorrento. He has been a contestant in the local presepio competition since it began. He won first prize in the category of "presepi in private homes" for ten straight years, as trophies and clippings attest, and so he was disqualified in 1969. In both 1969 and this year he has received another prize fuori del concorso ("outside the contest"). Terminiello's presepio is built in a room which is 15 by 16 1/2 ft., and on the two occasions

I saw it, an audience was in constant attendance--new viewers entering the Terminiello home as others left.

The Terminiello presepio of 1970 is created in eighteenth-century Neopolitan style (that of 1969 was Oriental, that of 1968, Greek, etc.). Both its base and its ruins have been built in cement, and its houses in terra cotta. After January 6th, the entire structure will be dismantled, as always. The four hundred figures will remain, to be re-costumed next year. This year's setting, costumes and houses have taken three months' work--approximately six hours a day after the regular work day has been concluded.

Terminiello's devotion and artistry are immediately apparent to the visitor. Apart from the impeccably naturalistic scenery with splashing waterfalls and running brooks, and the houses whose details are impressive in their refinement, the work of a superb director is everywhere evidence. The figures seem to possess life-like attitudes; the arrangement of poses suggest realistic situations. The "basketweaver" has dozed off while a conversation goes on in his shop between two "customers." Two "fishmongers" seem to be arguing; one can imagine the one who has a stall saying to the one who is carrying his wares, "I sell so many big fish, while you sell such small ones." A "lady" bargains with a "vendor" for cloth. A "man" who has just brought a gift to the Infant Jesus is telling a "man" who is carrying wood all about manger scene. The "women of the market place" are gossiping.

Whole fictional dialogues spring immediately to mind as one observes these figures in their vital attitudes and with their intensely realistic faces. The actual sounds heard are: a quiet rendition of the "Ave Maria," the rustling of the waterfalls and stream, and the quiet footsteps and voices of admirers who have come to see what Terminiello has created this year.

Some insight about what it means to be appassionato ("impassioned") as a presepio-maker is revealed in an anecdote related by Terminiello. During World War II he was held prisoner in Tunisia for three years, first by the Americans and then by the French. He and his fellow captives would leave the prison camp in the morning, do jobs to which they were assigned, and return to the camp at night. At one point he improvised a presepio for a Spanish family in Algeria, using pieces of bread to make the figures. From this came the idea of writing a diary, a history really, of all the presepi he had ever built from the time he first began at eight years old. For the remainder of his imprisonment he applied himself to remembering in the greatest detail each presepio--its appearance, its materials, and the persons for whom it was built.⁴⁴

c. Nemessio Buono was a seventy-year old cabinetmaker and carpenter of S. Agnello. He died very suddenly in January 1969, shortly after having completed his annual presepio for that season. In

⁴⁴5/2/71, conversation with Antonino Terminiello of Sorrento.

honor of his memory and of his artistry as presepio-maker, the family has kept the 1968-69 presepio in tact. It was built in an attic room of the family home, and can therefore be kept closed and dust free, an essential step if this last Buono creation is to be preserved for a number of years. The room is opened, however, each Christmas season, and many townspeople come to enjoy its beauty and to remember its author.

In the eighteenth century Buono would have been called an animalisto ("animal maker"). While the scenery and figure arrangements of this presepio are excellent, it is the animals which draw particular interest. All are hand carved, and the goats, cows, sheep and camels are living sculpture. A striking example of such sculpture is the musculature of the camel bearing the first king (see Figure 8, p. 225). A study of the animal's legs suggests that it was quite capable of the long journey which has been so often related in various art forms. To the far right of the presepio there is a mountain path on which two goats are frisking and rearing up at each other. The scene is so full of movement and life that the observer's reaction is to blink and look again, to assure himself that in fact these two vigorous animals are still maintaining a set position.

3) Presepi built in congreghe ("chapels") by youth organizations

Presepi built within churches were absent from the Amici del Presepio contests of the Sorrento area in the 1970-71 season for the



Fig. 8.--A view of the last presepio built by
Nemessio Buono of S. Agnello.

first time. The absence was brought about by their exclusion--presumably because of strong rivalry which had begun to flourish among some of the clergy concerning the relative merits of their church's presepi.⁴⁵ Many of the creches once built in churches, therefore, are now built in the congreghe of these same churches. The presepio-makers are not the priests directly, but rather the youth organizations which are generally sponsored by the churches and advised by priests.

a. The presepio built within the congrega of the Church of S. Agnello is notable for two reasons. First, its dimensions are unusual; it is at least twice as deep as its 12 ft. width. All of the large presepi thus far described have offered large areas from which the whole unit might be viewed at once. In this case one views the deep perspective created from a comparatively narrow viewing area. Second, this presepio boasts hidden dimmers. Thus its town of Bethlehem and environs change from dawn to sunlight to twilight to heavy darkness (except for the lights of tavern and houses), causing unabashed delight among the viewers.

b. The presepio in the congrega of the Church of S. Michele Arcangelo in Meta occupies the entire 20 ft. square area within the altar rails. In viewing it on the day after Christmas one is aware of the tremendous audience attendance which these presepi command. An hour of listening to the constantly changing viewers reveals conversations

⁴⁵12/16/70, conversation with Professor Tagliareni.

which deal consistently with the art of presepio-making. The special effects utilized in this presepio are identified either as having been seen before or as being new this year. Critical opinions are offered concerning the comparative excellence of this effort with regard to those of other congreghe. Particular delight is expressed over the mobile devises included--woodcutters sawing, palm trees waving, water cascading over rocks, a man drawing water from a well, fires flickering--for this is a presepio mobile ("moveable" presepio). The lighting, like that of the presepio in S. Agnello, registers dawn-to-dusk changes and is enjoyed by everyone. It is clear that these visitors are sophisticated critics of presepio-making and that their standards are high. It is customary in the area to visit presepi during the Christmas season as a devotional gesture, yet eavesdropping reveals a theatrical audience--one which has come to see and to be shown new versions of an art form which they appreciate and know a good deal about.

c. Rumor suggests that the figures in the presepio of Pacognano, a tiny mountain community above Vico Equense, are life-sized. I found, however, that those arranged in the congrega, which received second prize in the 1970 competition for youth organizations, were in fact one foot high. This measurement is more than double the average height of presepio figures. The most unusual feature of this work, however, is not the figures, which are beautiful antiques, but the use

of fences. These are fashioned out of large twigs and branches, and in a subtle way serve to separate one scene from the other within the whole (the Annunciation from the Nativity, for example, and the tavern from both of these). Such fences are effective and seem to be unique to this presepio.

d. The presepio built in the congrega of the Church of S. Maria Vecchia in Seiano won first prize in 1970 in the youth organization category. Although sponsored by the group, the teen-agers in attendance confess proudly that the work is basically the creation of a single individual--a nineteen-year-old student of the Maritime Institute of Vico Equense who spent three months on the project. The area utilized is an actual grotto beneath the church proper. The organization of the presepio is unusual, for rather than having a single large scene in which different activities or episodes occur in various adjacent areas, eight scenes are set within eight separated areas of the grotto. Thus one enters and of necessity views the scenes in a particular order: (1) the Annunciation, (2) Joseph's shop, (3) the Flight into Egypt, (4) the Slaughter of the Innocents, (5) the Magi, (6) the Manger, (7) the local bridge and the shore of Vico Equense, (8) the tavern. Each has been set either within a curve or gulley of the natural grotto itself, or within a sort of proscenium arch which has been fashioned naturalistically so as to blend into the actual rock formation.

The three final scenes are the largest in size and the most impressive in design and detail. The setting of the manger is understated with its rustic lean-to backed by a facsimile of a Roman temple. Directly above it, however, hover a group of ornate angels. In the tavern scene, the tables are set out-of-doors, before a cascading waterfall. The Vico scene utilizes a painted backdrop depicting the Mediterranean at sunset, with fishing boats and the islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida visible. The bridge of Seiano appears before it, spanning as it does in actuality, the deep gulley between the hills of Seiano and Vico. On the Seiano side ("stage right") are the stalls of the butcher, the baker and the fruit vendor. Each in turn is so realistic that one is reminded of wine-sprinkling practice of the eighteenth century mentioned above.⁴⁶ The presepio of Seiano is deserving of its prize.

4) Presepi built in churches

a) The range of artistry demonstrated in three church presepi of different towns within the community of Agerola is surprising. Bomerano, Camfora and S. Lazzaro are similar mountain towns. In the church of the first the presepio scenery is constructed of brown paper. In that of the second a long room paralleling the Church proper and opening into its altar area is utilized: it is filled with effectively constructed mountains which teem with representation of human and animal life. In

⁴⁶See above, p. 214.

that of the third figures of strangely unequal sizes are arranged in an area to the left of the church's main altar. They seem to spill over this area and are related directly to the altar itself. Such contrasting quality and size among these presepi suggest that the differences are perpetuated not by the size or type of town, but very simply, by the different standards of those individuals directly responsible for the presepio-making in a particular church.

b. The Church of SS. Trinita`in Piano di Sorrento is well-known for its annual rendition of a moving presepio. Parroco Father Alverino is as involved with this Christmas manifestation as he is with Saint's Day and Easter processions. Although Joseph and Mary and the Christ Child do not move, since they are the sacred figures, many of the shepherds do, and much time and energy is consumed in staging the movements and in executing them. According to Father Alverino, the best mechanics of Piano are involved in setting up this presepio: they work "day and night" from December 1st until Christmas, and are aided by the youth group.⁴⁷ In 1970 there are about twenty-five moving pieces. These are different from those of previous years, thus "giving pleasure to the faithful."⁴⁸ It is fascinating to observe this work in progress, for it resembles nothing so much as a stage whose lighting is being rigged. When the presepio is completed, the moving figures include woodcutter,

⁴⁷ 11/9/70, conversation with Father Alberino of Piano.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

woodchopper, water-drawer, carpenter, weaver, wine-maker, wine-drinker and seamstress. Each is busy doing his "thing" while water wheel, windmill and roast turn.

c. The emphasis in the building of the presepio in Mortora, another section of Piano, is upon the social message offered by the Nativity. This presepio is striking in its modernity, and in its demand for present-day commitment by those who view it. As might be expected, it has been executed by the local youth organization, and advised in turn by a priest committed to social action.⁴⁹ The "stage right" side chapel of the Church of S. Maria di Galatea provides a 6 ft. wide, 10 ft. deep area. At least half this depth is devoted to life-sized, realistically painted cutouts of two soldiers--one having shot the other who is about to fall. In back of these figures, behind a screen of barbed wire and in a window setting are three presepio figures. The Mother and Child are in traditional postures, and behind them on a slightly higher level is a male figure who seems to represent God the Father, but might be St. Joseph. A rainbow arches over the trio and behind them hangs a beautiful purple sky filled with moon and many stars. Instead of hearing the comfortable tones of familiar Christmas music while viewing the presepio, one is confronted by a recorded dialogue between two young female voices. Its substance is this: There is a problem with our presepio. Christ brought the message of peace to

⁴⁹Father Mattia Maresca of Mortora.

the world. But man, because of pride, arrogance and desire for power, continues to make war.

It is clear that the producers of this creche are not concerned about prizes for scenery or figure arrangements or moveable devices. They wish the viewer to understand that between himself and the Bethlehem scene stand, not two cutout soldiers and a piece of barbed wire, but what these props represent: the general state of the world.

It seems, after viewing these numerous presepi, that five specific parallels may be drawn between presepio-making and theatre.

(1) Plot: The Nativity story, with its trio of major characters and its numerous peripheral characters, has found in the presepio a vehicle which has been able to project its dramatic impact for seven centuries. The presepio is an event which communicates this story. Through the arrangement of scenery and characters, the spectators who visit this event see details of a plot which contains exposition (the Annunciation), complication (Slaughter of the Innocents), climax (the Manger scene), and aftermath (Journey of the Magi). (2) Production: A presepio is prepared in a painstaking manner (the Terminiello presepi demand six months, that of the congrega in Seiano took four months). Immediately following "performance" it is totally dismantled, only to be re-created before the next "performance" a year later. (3) Director: If created by a group, the presepio's production bears resemblance to a typical American college theatre production. For just as a college

theatre director is usually obliged to produce certain plays according to the traditions of the institution by which he is employed, so the parroco is usually obliged to honor certain traditions by production, one of which is the making of a presepio at Christmas time. The recent decision of the local Amici del Presepio to encourage the building of presepi by youth organizations in congreghe rather than in churches makes the presepio a more theatrical and less religious activity. To complete the analogy, the parroco (director) conducts his religious activity (teaching) within the church (classroom) and directs his extra-curricular activity (presepio-making) in the congrega (Little Theatre).

(4) Audience: Three production elements--musical accompaniment, changeable lighting effects, and moving figures performing tasks--combine to command audience attention for a particular length of time as when viewing a theatrical event rather than at will as when viewing a visual art form. On January 17, 1971, the Sorrentine presepio competition of the Amici del Presepio was formally concluded. The announcement of winners and the presentation of their prizes were made in the beautiful old palace which is the City Hall of Sorrento. The presepio audience is multi-leveled in this area. It is comprised of the people who visit presepi initially, of those who attend this public acknowledgement of those excelling in the art, and of those who, hearing about the prize winners, in retrospect either defend or disagree with the decisions of the judges. (5) Celebration: The presepio is an open celebration

of the Nativity in which everyone may participate, either by his own creation or by his viewing of the creations of others. Within the home as within the church or congrega, there is the additional tradition of placing the figure of the Christ Child in the Manger at midnight on Christmas Eve, an activity which almost always takes the form of a procession. In essence theatre is celebration. The celebration of Christ's birth continues to be a central life celebration in the Western World. Its celebration in presepio form is a theatrical life celebration.

Often a single image or personality expresses a phenomenon more eloquently than any number of words. The entire presepio experience, in both its religious and artistic aspects, is clarified for me on the occasion of a meeting with Father Trombeta on Christmas Eve, 1970. This young priest runs the parrocchia of Preazzano and teaches in Moiano.⁵⁰ He calmly gives me information about his past productions of La cantata dei pastori while preparing to make some sick calls. After they are completed he expects to help the teen-agers of the neighboring town of Ticciano finish their presepio. It seems that I have come upon essential theatre in these tiny mountain towns. For here the simplest presepio and the most amateur theatrical production generates celebration which overrides the pervading dampness, the lack of central heating, and the electricity which has been out of commission for three

⁵⁰Preazzano, Moiano and Ticciano are all mountain towns located above Vico Equense. See above, Table 4, p. 63.

days. Whatever forms of performance exist here have a function beyond that of entertainment: as rallying points of the individual spirit as well as of the community spirit against the very elemental threats of climate, monotony, and physical weakness.

La cantata de pastori

In 1906 Fasulo wrote of Christmas Eve in Sorrento:

The population divides into two parts; one goes to the Cathedral to hear midnight Mass, and the other goes to see, in various improvised theatres, "The Birth of the Incarnate Word, or really, the True Light Among the Shadows,"⁵¹ a curious, but for many a welcome mixture of sacred and profane, of costumes, of languages, of angels and devils, which offers all amateur actors something to boast about.⁵²

In 1966 Mancini wrote that a presepio of marionettes which existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, "together with La cantata dei pastori, still performed today in some little provincial theatres, provide an obvious link between the presepio and the theatre."⁵³ The varied forms of Christmas ritual theatre in the Sorrento-Amalfi area come together in the production of La cantata dei pastori ("Song of the Shepherds").⁵⁴ Written in 1698 and performed continually at Christmas

⁵¹Original title of La cantata dei pastori. See n. 54.

⁵²Fasulo, La penisola sorrentina, p. 386.

⁵³Mancini, "Un'idea e qualche pretesto," p. 26.

⁵⁴Dott. Casimiro Ruggiero Ugone, La cantata dei pastori (Napoli: Bideri, 1950). The play was first published in 1698 under the title, Il vero lume tra le ombre ovvero La spelonca arricchita per la nascita del Verbo Incarnato (Napoli, Paci). Croce cites the 1887 edition (Napoli, Alberino) in I teatri di Napoli, p. 113.

time in the environs of Naples, this nativity play offers an entertaining vision of motley characters "processing" in various ways and through numerous difficulties toward the first presepio in Bethlehem.

My experience in viewing La cantata occurred on the eve of January 1, 1971 in Massaquano, another mountain town above Vico. Weather conditions added to the drama of the occasion. We drove for an hour from Sorrento into the mountains, on a night when storms had wiped out electricity and telephones, to view the play by candlelight. The numerous candles set up around the stage gave the frequently-changed scenery eerie, mysterious qualities, and the thunder, which accompanied devil appearances, came as often from without the school auditorium where the play was being performed as from within.

The behavior of the audience of approximately two hundred people, many of them young, agreed with an audience description offered by Italian critic Renato Simoni in 1951:

The public, in great part popular, comments on them [the performers], approves and disapproves of them with humor and comic genius. It interrupts the dialogue, often covers the plot with witticism. . . . only quieting down when the holy characters appear.⁵⁵

Benedetto Croce's description of a performance in 1888 suggests similar audience reactions:

It seemed as if I had the Neapolitan crowd of the 1600's about me, who now followed the action with tears and devotion in

⁵⁵Renato Simoni, "La cantata dei pastori," Il dramma (Torino), No. 123-124 (Jan. 1951), p. 58.

their eyes, and now abandoned themselves to open laughing.⁵⁶ On element which neither critic mentions is the Spartan vocal capacities of the actors who refuse ever to be quelled by their opposite numbers among the audience.

Simoni describes the interpreters of this "sacred-pastoral-action" as "artisans and merchants"⁵⁷ who rehearse for five or six months preceding the Christmas season. In Massaquano the play was produced by the town's Circolo sportivo, a youth sports club sponsored by the Church. The costumes were excellent as was the scenery, much of which was effected by beautifully painted backdrops utilizing one-point perspective. Gulleys, caves and mountains were particularly effective. The waves of the river were purely medieval, both in appearance and in simulating motion while hiding the leg movements of the boat's "passengers." The acting was most uneven, but followed a pattern: the more comic the character the better the acting. The sacred characters were played by the weakest actors. Background music was utilized for the sacred scenes, sometimes appropriately, other times not. The play ran approximately three hours.

In 1970-71, a variety of occurrences obstructed the usually numerous performances of La cantata in the Sorrento area. In one town

⁵⁶Benedetto Croce, I teatri di Napoli (Bari: Gius. Laterza Figli, 1926), p. 118.

⁵⁷Simoni, La cantata dei pastori, " p. 58.

the clergy decided, because of the previous year's deficit, that it would be would be unable to raise money for the production. In another the man who always played the leading part of Razzullo became ill at the last minute and could not be replaced, in a third the youth group voted to perform Eduardo De Filippo's Natale in casa Cupiello ("Christmas in the Cupiello House") instead of the usual La cantata. Such a rash of happenings seems symptomatic of a change in the annual tradition; just as the dramatic religious processions of the area have in recent years diminished to some degree, so too, perhaps has the production of this occasional play.

La cantata was written by Andrea Perrucci under the pseudonym of "Dott. Casimiro Ruggiero Ugone." Sicilian born, but Neapolitan bred, Perrucci was well-known as a dramatic poet. Poetry in Latin, Italian, Sicilian, and Neapolitan emanated from this man who had been educated by the Jesuits, and had received a doctorate in letters.⁵⁸ So too did dramatic works, for he wrote dramas, operas, and satires, as well as a theoretical work which has become nearly as well-known in Neapolitan theatre as La cantata. Dell'arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all'improvviso (Concerning the Art of Representation, Premeditated and Improvised), written in 1696,⁵⁹ is the essay of both literary

⁵⁸Lorenzo Gigli, "Andrea Perrucci," Il dramma (Torino) No. 123-124 (Jan. 1951), p. 62.

⁵⁹Vittorio Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1969), p. 191.

expert and director, for Perrucci spent several years working with the San Bartolomeo in Naples, a theatre which was established in 1620 and burned down in 1681.⁶⁰ His argument points out the weaknesses of both the theatrical methods of his title, and analyses in detail the means of evoking laughter utilized in commedia,⁶¹ several of which he incorporated in La cantata.

The play is written in three acts and contains fifty-seven scenes. Its plot exposes the lives of four groups of people and includes three converging lines of action. Pluto, in order to frustrate the birth of the Savior, sends out four demons from Hell with Belfegor in command. These in turn attempt in various ways to ensnare the holy couple who are journeying toward the town of their birth to be registered, and who enjoy the divine protection of the Archangel Gabriel. Razzullo, who although by his manner and speech is clearly from Naples, is supposed to be a Roman scribe also bound for Bethlehem, but is far more concerned about his state of near starvation than about his future duties. Mary and Joseph, the Archangel, the demons, and the hungry Razzullo, move about in an Arcadia peopled by the old shepherd Armenzio, his hunter son Cidonio and boy son Benino, and the fisherman Ruscello--all of whom become involved, in one way or another, with the travelers. Although the story lines become almost immediately intertwined, the

⁶⁰Gigli, "Andrea Perrucci," p. 62.

⁶¹Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano, pp. 191-194.

structure of the play remains linear. Thus the audience witnesses each delay in the couple's journey toward Bethlehem and shelter, every frustrated attempt on the part of the commedia dell'arte character to assuage his devouring appetite, and all episodes in the interrupted lives of the pastoral folk.

The length of time in which these actions occur remains undefined. The audience is made aware of the pressure of time, however, by the sense of urgency created by two situations. Mary's pregnancy is mentioned frequently, both by Joseph in conversation with his spouse, and by other characters as a means of her identification in the forest. Razzullo refers to his hunger pangs following every one of his eighteen entrances on stage, thereby creating the comic version of a perpetually hungry child in need of immediate care. Pregnancy and hunger, therefore, create acute time-consciousness.

Pluto's demons are completely defeated. And the play ends with a tableau of the other characters, their various journeys completed, in attitudes of adoration about the manger. The hell of the Prologue gives way to various locations in an earthly forest: general greenery scenes, the shepherd's hut, the tree where Razzullo is bound by the devils, the river, the shore, the tavern set up as a trap for the holy couple by Belfegor, and the mountains. These scenes finally give way to the holy grotto in Bethlehem.

The basic human needs of shelter and food are most pertinent to the structure of the play, and are made so obvious that they become dominant themes, cutting across plot lines. Five of the ten Mary and Joseph scenes contain references to their desperate need for shelter. When they are befriended by the old shepherd Armenzio, he states his desire to help them. But he is unable to offer them hospitality in his tiny hut which is already overpopulated--the shepherd, too, needs better shelter. Razzullo's overwhelming concern about food is underlined by the running argument between hunter and fisherman about which of their livelihoods is more gratifying. The comparative attributes of meat and fish, therefore, are constantly being called to mind. The shepherd's young son, Benino, is moved to revenge when Razzullo steals and ravenously gulps down some morsels of food which were his. The revenge employed is to tell this near-starving man that the food had been poisoned. The question of food, then, effects not only Razzullo, but three of the local forest folk as well.

That third basic necessity, clothing, becomes the method by which another theme, the discrepancy between truth and falsehood, is examined. Clothing in the form of costume assumes a prominent position in La cantata. Razzullo dons hunter's clothes when he is attempting to work for the hunter, fisherman's clothes when he attempts fishing and shepherd's clothes when he attempts to tend sheep; he also dons a waiter's garb when he is working for the tavern keeper, alias devil.

His inability to retain any of these costumes offers symbolic proof of his need to be true to his own, wandering Arlecchino self. This self may never receive official approval from the world, but it is well received by those in the holy grotto where he finally worships. Belfegor changes costumes four times during the play. He appears as his own devil self; as a ruffian who, with his demon companions, frightens the pastoral folk of the forest; as a tavern keeper who tries to lure Mary and Joseph into his "inn"; and as a Satyr. It is in this last guise that he becomes the personification of falsehood, for he tempts fisherman Ruscello with the hope of a great treasure--in exchange for the small "favor" of killing the holy couple. Belfegor's supernatural opponent, Gabriel, who interestingly is portrayed as a female angel, appears as herself and as one of the Sibyls of the Ancients--presumably because the prophecies of these immortal women included the coming of a Messiah.

The theme of prophecy is in itself present throughout the play's structure--prophecy as revealed by the dreams of the characters or by their declarations. Pluto's prophecy in the Prologue challenges the idea of man's redemption, and defies the new light which is about to enter the world to outdo him in appealing to mankind. In Act I scene 1, Armenzio and Benino, in the first of the pastoral scenes, awake from sleep, each having dreamed of a marvelous event to come--Armenzio of monsters dispelled by a Messiah, and Benino of an Infant resplendent

in an earth of silver and gold. Mary and Joseph also have prophetic dreams in Act I. In scene 6, Mary sees an earthly paradise of beautiful fruits and flowers, and Joseph a slaughter of lambs from which one escapes, only to lead him, Joseph, out of danger. Immediately preceding this scene Gabriel and Belfegor have argued, contradicting each other's predictions about the couple, while Mary and Joseph sleep beneath their covetous glances. In Act II scene 15 Gabriel is again prophesying safety for Mary and Joseph, and Act III begins with still another argumentation about the future between the two supernatural beings, disguised in this instance as Satyr and Sibyl respectively. Finally, in Act III scene 6, the hunter Cidonio exhibits more than usual perspicacity in his prediction to fisherman Ruscello that the Satyr's offer of huge treasure will somehow depend upon a demonic plot.

La cantata's structure resembles that of many sacre rappresentazioni in several ways. The journey is a basic component of this genre, whether a journey toward Christ's birth or toward his crucifixion. So too is the disputation in dialogue form between supernatural adversaries. A prologue set in the depths of Hell, and a final scene in a Holy Place, whether it be the manger in Bethlehem or Heaven itself is also traditional in medieval drama. Themes of prophecy, of the conflict between truth and falsehood, and of personal suffering, such as that which might be brought about by the lack of food and shelter, are easily

found in Italian sacre rappresentazioni as well as in the better-known passion plays of France and Germany.⁶²

Some of these same elements, on the other hand, may be cited as commedia dell'arte devices.⁶³ Certain major commedia characters such as Arlecchino and the Capitano almost always undertook journeys. Argumentative dialogue between two characters was possibly the most popular commedia method of beating one's opponent; in its most obvious form it became the frequently obscene lazzi of the zanni. The demonstration of physical discomfort (hunger, thirst, pain) was a commonly used method of invoking laughter in commedia. Finally, truth versus falsehood, both as theme and as a theatrical device to cause surprise, was an integral part of these performances. The strong accent in La cantata on clothing as costume through which this theme is suggested, is familiar, often as a method of contrasting youth and age (old man masquerading as young woman to the horror of young man). The importance of costume is also found in medieval drama--devils passing for human beings or animals, or animals passing for people.⁶⁴

⁶²La Passione di Gesu Cristo (Revello, 1490), Storia di Sant'Uliva (Tuscany, 1570), the Valenciennes Passion (1547), the Oberammergau Passion (1634), for example.

⁶³Interesting commedia bibliography in English includes Allardyce Nicoll's The World of Harlequin (London, 1963); Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte: Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative translated by Henry F. Salerno (New York, 1967); Leon Katz' reconstruction of the anonymous The Three Cuckolds which appears in Eric Bentley's anthology The Classic Theatre, Vol. I (New York, 1958).

⁶⁴In the English Second Shepherd's Play, for example, a lamb is dressed up as a baby.

Character relationships in La cantata are an important part of the structure of the play. With the exception of Razzullo, all characters perform their actions in pairs. Gabriel and Belfegor undertake contrasting supernatural positions; Mary and Joseph grope, with special heavenly grace, toward Bethlehem; Cidonio and Ruscello follow differing, yet parallel forms of the chase as means of both livelihood and proof of manhood; Armenzio and Benino present a pastoral, if somewhat whimsical, portrait of shepherd family life. And among these balanced pairs of characters with their single dimensions and their mutual dependence, wanders the hungry and lonely Razzullo.⁶⁵ His ideal opposite number, one could imagine fancifully, might be a huge gingerbread man which he would munch upon sporadically whenever his hunger pangs reoccur. In actuality, his opposite number was supplied by later producers of the play. An appendix listing five additional scenes which concern another character is included in the 1950 addition,⁶⁶ and Croce also refers to him.⁶⁷ Sarchiapone, a commedia character with hunchback, hook nose and spindly legs, is an eccentric inclined to wit and obscenity. These characteristics seem clearly intended to represent Pulcinella, just as Razzullo's characteristics clearly resemble those

⁶⁵This balanced pairing of characters occurs in many of Ben Jonson's plays--Volpone and The Alchemist, for example.

⁶⁶Ugone, La cantata dei pastori, p. 94.

⁶⁷Croce, I teatri di Napoli, p. 118.

of Arlecchino.⁶⁸ The inclusion of this second comic in the world of La cantata indicates that their pairing is desirable in production in order to accentuate the comedy of Razzullo's plight. Certainly such an effect was achieved in the Massaquano production mentioned above. Sarchiapone himself, however, never becomes the equal partner of Razzullo in the way that the other four partnerships operate. Razzullo was designated originally as the play's rooster, if you will, and he is too large a character to share his spotlight.

Aesthetically, it is the loneliness of Razzullo which makes him unique in the original play. During his journey he must relate to the audience, for they are his only confidant. And so also, although he has no gift of his own to present, he must finally relate alone to the Christ child. With the audience as his only companion, Razzullo is able to break through the artificial bonds of the repartee dialogue which dominate the other characters' utterances. And he offers, at the same time, a means through which the audience may participate vicariously in the erratic journey which all are taking through the woods and toward the manger.

The language of La cantata is the most obvious measure of its genre available. All characters, with the exception of Razzullo and

⁶⁸As Vincent Luciani indicates in his A Concise History of the Italian Theatre (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1961), p. 12, Pulcinella was probably created from the fusing of Arlecchino's and Brighella's characteristics. As types, however, Arlecchino and Pulcinella remain clearly distinguishable, one from the other.

Sarchiapone, speak formal Italian. The delineation between this speech and the comics' use of the Neapolitan dialect becomes indicative of commedia scenes versus sacre rappresentazione scenes, between comedy and fairly high seriousness.⁶⁹ From the moment of Razzullo's first appearance when Benino asks him wonderingly whether or not he is of this world, and he answers that in fact he is from another world once called Palepole and now known as Napoli, his Neapolitanism provides the play with much of its abundant comedy. The dialect itself offers a peculiar blend of blunt, yet poetic spiciness which seems to clear the air each time it is introduced and lend life to the characters to whom it is addressed.

The imagery of the play reflects both sacre rappresentazione and commedia. Gabriel and Belfegor, Mary and Joseph, and Armenzio and Benino employ a metaphysical vocabulary when speaking of their prophetic dreams. Words such as universe, eternity, empires, sun, stars, light, jewels, gold, silver, spirit, and angel pour forth in great gushes in what are usually rhymed couplets. Razzullo's vocabulary, on the other hand, is as earth-bound as their is other-worldly. Words concerning food and the process of eating employ the greatest percentage of his speaking time, and these are followed closely by words describing animal imagery. Next in order of frequency are words of peril: dying, fear, luck, fortune, affliction, flight, beating.

⁶⁹This delineation is similar to that found in Shakespearean comedy: dialect usually indicates comedy, and formal language, business.

Razzullo's Neapolitan dialect is also forged into rhymed couplets which are skillfully executed in that they can be easily and naturally spoken. The forest folk, when not relating dreams, use a vocabulary characterized by its consistent involvement with the world of that forest.

La cantata surely shows the influence of Italian pastoral drama, of which Tasso's Aminta is the epitome, in its pastoral settings and in the characterizations of its rustics.⁷⁰ There is also evidence, cited both by Croce and Viviani,⁷¹ that the Spanish autos sacramentales effected the work of those Italians writing devotional dramas during Perrucci's time. For the most part, however, it seems clear that the late medieval sacra rappresentazione and the seventeenth century com-media are the genres whose characteristics dominate this Christmas play.

What exactly is the quality of comedy created by La cantata? Obviously it is Razzullo who laces the play with laughs. The comedy stems primarily from two sources: his physical and verbal performances. Both lack the obscenities which are generally associated with commedia. But apart from this aspect, they are representative of the form. Some examples of physical comedy included in Act I are (1) Razzullo's being

⁷⁰Torquato Tasso, Aminta, The Genius of the Italian Theater, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. 143.

⁷¹Croce, I teatri di Napoli, pp. 109, 110. Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano, p. 205.

forcibly pulled in two different directions by hunter Cidonio and fisherman Ruscello, (2) his being tied to a tree by the devil brigade, (3) his rowing feverishly amidst high cardboard waves to bring Mary and Joseph across the river, and (4) his and Ruscello's seeming drowning by the enraged Belfegor who has just missed snaring the holy couple. During this same act verbal comedy is evoked by (1) Razzullo's description of his identity as a Neapolitan, (2) his description to Mary and Joseph of the gang who tied him to the tree, and (3) his manner of agreeing to work for fisherman Ruscello (when and what do we eat?). Such situations continue in Acts II and III. Perhaps the height of the play's verbal comedy is reached when, in Act II, Razzullo and Ruscello discover each other's "ghost" on shore after both assuming that they have drowned and are in an after-life of some kind. Certainly one of the most hilarious physical scenes occurs in Act III when Cidonio, Razzullo and Benino stalk the dragon planted in the holy grotto by Belfegor, and then flee for their lives.

The devil scenes are also traditionally comic, due more to production interpretation than to intrinsic comedy within the script. Belfegor, who is in some editions of the play known as Asmodeo,⁷² is portrayed as bombastic, angry and frustrated--whatever he happens to be saying. Also, Pluto's emissaries, whether appearing singly like Belfegor or in a group as in much of Act I, are made to stand on their heads whenever

⁷²Simoni, "La cantata dei pastori," p. 60.

they are bested by Gabriel or whenever they come into the presence of Mary and Joseph.⁷³ Bombast is thus routed by headstands, and the contrast almost always brings on laughter. Also comic in country-bumpkin fasion is the constant rivalry between hunter and fisherman.

The comedy of La cantata, then, is a mixed affair. It tends, on the one hand, toward the physically-oriented word-play of slapstick which is the mainstay of commedia, and toward the elementary, somewhat rustic comedy which has a place in European medieval drama on the other. It draws laughter from the exaggerated antics of devils and dragons and simple folk. This mixture, however, seems to fuse into farce when placed against the serious backdrop of the Christmas story, thereby causing that story to resemble nothing so much as melodrama. When the audience laughs during a Razzullo scene, it laughs with him and at him, since he is, more often than not, mocking himself. And having laughed at Razzullo, it seems difficult to interpret in a purely religious way the travels of Mary and Joseph, since they appear nearly as bewildered by the forest as Razzullo himself. Simoni is somewhat acerbic in his conclusions regarding the genre of Perrucci's play.

The author . . . mixing elements derived from sacra rappresentazione, from dramas of holy Spaniards, from pastoral eclogue, composes a huge baroque muddle in which religious sentiment, when it is not rarified into the swelling of expression, is replaced by an effected action, and the material is dressed up; so that

⁷³Massaquano production, December 31, 1970. Discussion with people in the Sorrento area indicated that this staging is common usage in the play's devil scene³.

shepherds and hunters almost anticipate the idiom of the last and coldest Arcadia, and being, more in respect to faith than to poetry, profane, they are made to move around comic rather than sacred characters.⁷⁴

There is, however, a weird and almost mystic parallel created between Razzullo and Christ. Razzullo appears as a clown visible on stage; Christ is represented symbolically, by constant reference to the advent of a Savior and by the final manger scene, as a fool for the love of mankind. Comedy in its fullest sense--the celebration of unity and fertility and new social order, comes about only in the final scene of the play: when journeys are over and fulfillment through the presence of an Infant God is achieved. Belfegor and his master, Pluto, have been outdone, and the other characters rejoice. Razzullo is as happy at this moment as he has been miserable up to this time. His happiness becomes adoration:

I have nothing of my own to give you,
This lamb that I present to you
Is sent to you by my patron,
Little One, My God.
Accept my arm and my heart,
Little One, my sweet love.
An arm isn't enough [in exchange]
For always seeing you,
I would like to suffer new disgraces [for you],
I am not poor any more,
Already this heart breaks with so much treasure.
When I see you, God, what other riches are there!⁷⁵

⁷⁴Simoni, "La cantata dei pastori," p. 60.

⁷⁵Ugone, "La cantata dei pastori," p. 93.

La cantata suggests three emblems: a grimacing devil, an emaciated, doleful Arlecchino, and a Babe in a manger. If these are put together in a single portrait, devil and Arlecchino might be seen in postures of movement toward the stationary Infant. Such a picture offers an explanation for both the popularity and the longevity of Perrucci's nativity play. For these three figures have remained popular in the Neapolitan area and in Italy generally: the devil in operatic works particularly, Arlecchino in the ever-generated variations of the original commedia, and the Infant in the annual fashioning of the Christmas crèche. Also, perhaps, Perrucci captured fully in La cantata that napoletanità (neapolitanism) which, concludes Viviani, was his "constant poetic."⁷⁶

⁷⁶Viviani, Storia del teatro napoletano, p. 192.

CHAPTER V

EASTER CELEBRATIONS

The major portion of Hardison's Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages is devoted to a study of Easter liturgy and related dramatic forms. He sees the Easter liturgy as a transitional phase between the sacred drama of the Mass and liturgical drama.

It [the Mass] is a presentation of the central events of Christian history--the Crucifixion, entombment, and Resurrection. The Easter liturgy has the same structure, emotional pattern, and historical associations. Its descending action begins with Lent. The point of crisis is reached on Good Friday, and Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday are devoted to the entombment and Resurrection respectively. The reversal recognition occurs on Easter morning and is followed by a week of ceremonial rejoicing.¹

Hardison observes further that this emotional change from sadness to joy is closely related to the cycle of the seasons.²

The formal liturgical season of Easter opens on Easter Sunday and is concluded with the Feast of Pentecost. It is prepared for by the liturgical period known as Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday. In 1971 Ash Wednesday occurred on February 24th, Easter Sunday on April 11th,

¹Hardison, Christian Rite, p. 83.

²Ibid., p. 139.

and Pentecost on May 30th. Thus better than one third of the liturgical year is devoted to the Resurrection, a period of time marked by preparation, the happening itself, and its aftermath. In Theodore Gaster's study of the seasonal pattern of ritual, such divisions would correspond to what he refers to as rites of mortification and purgation, rites of invigoration, and rites of jubilation.³ Whatever the terminology employed to describe the Easter season, it is important to stress that the Resurrection is the central event of Christian dogma and Christian tradition. Although many of the feasts discussed up to this point hold important places in the calendar of the Church, none compare to the crucial importance of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is, in effect, the prove of the belief suggested by every other Christian feast, including that of the birth of a savior.

The period of Lent, which recalls the forty days which Christ spent in the desert, provides a period of self-examination and penance for the Christian. Part of this penance was traditionally undergone through fasting and abstinence. The Tuesday which precedes Ash Wednesday, therefore, is traditionally a feast day, a "last chance" for frolic and indulgence for some time to come. Known as Maudy Tuesday in the liturgy, it is more widely referred to as Carnival (carne levere--to remove meat). In medieval times Carnival often occasioned

³Gaster, Thespis, p. 26.

the performance of dramatic dialogues which would present battles between personifications of life and death or Lent and Carnival.⁴

The strong reliance upon the use of masks which such performances demanded is reflected in twentieth-century carnival parades and processions. A single "procession" for this occasion occurs in the Sorrentine-Amalfi area--in the small city of Minori. Its masks and personae are numerous: for ninety minutes three bands accompany fifteen floats about the city and down to the seashore where a large group of judges study their comparative merits. There are displays of Primitive Man, of Don Quixote, of fishermen, of the 1930s and the Charleston, of Mexicans, and of French twirlers. But the floats which offer the most interesting masks are those addressed to contemporary concerns: hospitals, divorce, drugs, politics. The "hospital" float dramatizes the lack of a hospital which has been promised to the Amalfi area for ten years. Limping, bandaged "patients" swarm before an ambulance. This is followed by the "hospital"--a float divided into open "rooms" in which a group of directors argue, a group of doctors operate upon a single, writhing patient, and a huge group of obviously sick people mill about. This last area is labelled: "the room of long

⁴Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre, Vols. I, II, III (Firenze: Felice le monnier, 1943). Volume II includes a thirteenth-century dialogue from Perugia--Ufficio dei defuncti, and a fourteenth-century dialogue from Orvieto--Detto dell'Inferno. Volume III includes the fifteenth-century Florentine play, La guerra fra Carnevale e Quaresimo ("The War between Carnival and Lent").

and heavy waiting." The "divorce" float sports a huge banner proclaiming an appropriate play on words--Il Divorcio a Coma - vale ("The Horned Divorce").⁵ By the use of actors costumed as judge, brides and grooms, and fighting couples of all ages, it parodies the tremendous social impact which the 1970 legalization of divorce has had upon Italians. The "drug" float is very impressive. Huge dummies of three popular Italian singers, each of whom has succumbed to drug addiction, sit atop the float which sports a psychedelic band, a group of bizarre characters who are all "high," and a doctor experimenting in a strange lab. The political float, however, wins first prize for the day. It features a huge head of President Colombo which is threatened by sea monsters from his mare dei guai (sea of troubles), and behind which the goddess-like figure who traditionally symbolizes Italy sways precariously.

This sort of carnival celebration has been undertaken in Minori for the last four years. Interestingly, it is sponsored, not by the Church, but by the local Pro Loco Office--the tourist organization of Minori. Such sponsorship does not, as in the case of the Epiphany procession of Vico Equense,⁶ indicate that a lay organization is continuing a tradition which the Church has abandoned. Rather it suggests

⁵This is the closest translation possible; literally the banner would be Divorce at Horned-vale in English.

⁶See above, pp. 203-208.

the completion of a pagan-Christian-pagan production cycle with reference to the carnival feast. Although its Latin name refers to the beginning of lenten fasting,⁷ this Christian celebration, like many others,⁸ was designed to replace an already-existing pagan celebration, in this case the elimination of evil at the year's beginning and the plea for fertility and abundance during its course.⁹ The dramatic use of the occasion by the Church during medieval times has been suggested above. In some parts of Italy a dummy who personifies Carnival continues to be burned, and in others a turkey (another substitute for a human victim perhaps) is slaughtered.¹⁰ Now it is curious to note that in the Amalfi area the twentieth-century "pagan" interests of tourism and commerce are being courted by this same feast. Production interest in Carnival has returned full circle.

The observances following the actual commemoration of the Resurrection include liturgical celebration, feste esteme, and folkloristic traditions. In the first case the Catholic's "Easter duty"--the receiving of Communion, may be performed until the concluding Feast of Pentecost. In the second case Easter Monday, the day after Easter Sunday, is occasionally chosen for special worship of the

⁷Il Folklore, Conosci L'Italia, p. 32.

⁸See above, pp. 20-22.

⁹Il Folklore, Conosci L'Italia, p. 32. ¹⁰Ibid.

Madonna.¹¹ In the third case virtually all of the people of the Sorrento-Amalfi area who are strong enough to walk pack up some sort of huge picnic and take to the hills on Easter Monday.

It is Holy Week, that climactic period of the Easter season, however, which offers the greatest variety of ritualistic experience and upon which this chapter must focus. Holy Week refers specifically to the period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. On Palm Sunday Christ's entrance into Jerusalem with palm branches is celebrated in the area by all of the children appearing at Mass. They carry special, handmade, miniature trees fashioned out of confetti (almon-covered candy), or olive branches, or flowering, fruit-tree branches. On Wednesday sepolcri (literally tombs, but in this context displays) are set up in most churches of the area, near the altars where the consecrated hosts are to be placed. On Holy Thursday there is a special early evening procession organized in many locales, and townspeople turn out to visit the completed sepolcri and to observe the procession. On Good Friday two processions are traditional--the first in the very early morning, and the second in the evening. During each of these days special liturgical observances take place which are completed on Holy Saturday--all in preparation for the Masses of rejoicing on Easter Sunday. The various sepolcri, the Holy Thursday and Good

¹¹See Table 6, p. 146. Maiori's festa in honor of the Madonna della Libera occurs on Easter Monday.

Friday processions, and the unique processional drama, La passione di Gesu Cristo, will be discussed in detail.

Sepolcri

According to Karl Young in his interesting study of the Easter sepulchre, the "locus, known as the Easter sepulchrum was the center of three separate dramatic observances: the Depositio, the Elevatio, and the Visitatio Sepulchri."¹² These observances sprang originally from the fact that the Consecration did not (and still does not) take place on Good Friday. Therefore, those hosts which had been consecrated on Holy Thursday were put in a special place. The act of putting them in that special place became known as the Depositio, and developed, in the eleventh or twelfth century, into a processional celebration of large proportions.¹³ The Elevatio was the taking up of these hosts and the returning of them to their normal place in the tabernacle of the main altar of the church. Young believes that this act also became the occasion of special processions.¹⁴ During the interval in which the consecrated hosts remained in the special place, worshippers came to visit the presence of God which they believed was invested

¹²Karl Young, The Dramatic Associations of the Easter Sepulchre, University of Wisconsin Studies in Literature and Language, No. 10 (Madison, 1920), p. 5. See also Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, Vol. I, pp. 239-370, for a detailed study of plays which concern the Visitatio Sepulchri.

¹³Ibid., pp. 11-12. ¹⁴Ibid., p. 29.

there, and the dramatic possibilities of going to this place for the purpose of worship were also developed.

The question of the "special place" brings up the etymology of the word sepulcro. Father Arpino, Chancellor of the Curia of Amalfi, explains that the word meant "urn" or "vase" of one time, and that the consecrated hosts were placed in such a receptacle during the Holy Thursday period. The word also, however, meant "tomb," and popular belief soon accepted this meaning of the word as applicable to the situation in which this symbol of Christ was placed during Holy Week.¹⁵ This dichotomy of meaning is substantiated in the Italian Dizionario dei Sinonimi.¹⁶

Young emphasizes two points concerning the rites of Depositio, Elevatio and Visitatio Sepulchri which are of particular interest to this study. First,

A notable fact concerning all three observances is that they are extra-liturgical; that is to say, they are not authorized and essential parts of the traditional liturgy of the Roman Church, but pious additions.¹⁷

Second,

I infer that the Depositio, along with the complementary Elevatio, was the original development, and that the Visitatio attached itself to the sepulchrum later, as a sequel. . . . The former

¹⁵ 11/11/70, conversation with Father Arpino.

¹⁶ Niccolo Tommaseo, Dizionario dei Sinonimi (Milano: Casa Editrice Bietti, 1922), p. 1063.

¹⁷ Young, Dramatic Associations of the Easter Sepulchre, p. 8.

dramatic sequence is completely liturgical in content, devoid of original composition and of dialogue. The Visitatio, on the other hand, is essentially a free composition.¹⁸

These observations--the awareness of the extra-liturgical nature of the visiting of the sepolcro, and the conclusion that it does not redramatize elements already included in the liturgy as do the Depositio and the Elevatio, serve to introduce the subject of the rather freewheeling treatment which this medieval tradition receives at the hands of twentieth-century churches of the Sorrento-Amalfi area. The time during Holy Week at which the visiting of the sepolcro occurs was most important historically, and continues to be a primary consideration in the present practice of this custom. Manfredo Fasulo, writing in 1906, includes a list of celebrations as an appendix to his history of the Peninsula. His entry for Holy Thursday reads, "On Holy Thursday one visits the sepulchres, made of rugs, of flowers and vases with wheat."¹⁹ Umberto Fasulo, writes in 1942, "During the afternoon of Holy Thursday the crowd of faithful visits the various sepulchres artistically created in every church. . . . The procession of the Giuseppini [the confraternity] comes from nearby S. Agnello, every member sacked in white with hood over eyes . . . passing at the different sepulchres."²⁰ In

¹⁸Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁹Fasulo, La Penisola Sorrentina, p. 378.

²⁰Fasulo, La Congregazione di San Catello e L'Arciconfraternità della Morte, p. 6.

1971 the sepolcri of the area were visited for the most part on Holy Thursday afternoon and evening, and in a few cases in the early morning hours of Good Friday.

As the tradition exists today, a great variety of displays serves as sepolcro, and the only traits which seem mandatory are that the display be set up in a church in the vicinity of an altar where the consecrated hosts are placed, that it be something of artistic attraction, and that, if pictorial, it bear some relation to the gospels of the Easter season.

"On Holy Thursday the popular cult calls for the adornment of the sepulchres."²¹ The most common type of adornment in the Sorrento-Amalfi area is some sort of floral arrangement. In its simplest form such an arrangement is a combination of potted plants and professionally arranged fresh flowers. A more dramatic variation of this form is that in which the most important flower is especially grown for the occasion by women belonging to the particular church in question. Such was the case in the Church of S. Agnello in 1971.

In ancient Roman times it was the custom to adorn the statue of Dionysus [Bacchus], the god who was reborn every spring, with bowls of wheat cultivated in the dark so that the plant grew white and colorless.

And don't we still sometimes find white wheat, grown in the cellar around sepulchral images of Christ who was also God who died and rose again?²²

²¹Il Folklore, Conosci L'Italia, p. 35.

²²See p. 21 above, n. 16.

The floral display before the "stage right" side altar of S. Agnello boasts just such white, colorless flowers proudly arranged among the oranges, reds and pinks, all of which are interlaced with tall, white, burning candles. This white grain is, in fact, grown in some of the local cellars. In Minori white wheat is used for the sepolcro in conjunction with "rugs of sawdust" (to be discussed below).²³ Before the reform of the liturgy the people of Ravello also made their sepolcro out of wheat grown in cellars, so that it would be white.²⁴ Flowers may also be used, as Fasulo suggests, in a more complex fashion to form tappetti (rugs), with specific designs depicted by the arrangement of flowers.²⁵ One of these floral rugs has been created in the Church S. Antonino of Sorrento.²⁶

Another method of "adoming" the sepolcro which is fairly common in the area is to set up a sort of stage set of the Last Supper in front of the altar where the consecrated hosts have been preserved. In the parrocchia of SS. Trinità in Piano a long table is set up with twelve dishes and a chair at every place.²⁷ In the parrocchia of Mortora in Piano a

²³5/20/71, conversation with Mons. Andrea Di Nardo, parroco of the Church of S. Trofimenia in Minori.

²⁴5/6/71, conversation with Father Imperato of Ravello.

²⁵See preceding page. ²⁶See following page.

²⁷4/23/71, conversation with Father Alberino of Piano.

similar table is set up on which the twelve places are indicated by twelve loaves of bread.²⁸ In Maiori not only are twelve places set up with cakes, oranges, and lemons (the special product of that city), but twelve men who have been chosen for their poverty come to the table after their feet have been washed ritualistically during the liturgical services on Holy Thursday afternoon. Each takes one portion and brings it home with him.²⁹ The scenic representation of the Last Supper as a form of adorning sepolcri which are visited on Holy Thursday procession symbolizes Christ's passion up to the point of his betrayal.³⁰

An exceptional form of sepolcro was displayed at the Church of S. Antonino in Sorrento in 1971. The parroco, Mons. Persico, happened upon some beautifully-designed flats³¹ in the basement of the church.³² These, it seems, were the work of Vito D'Esposito, one-time scenic designer at the San Carlo Opera House in Naples.³³ Mons. Persico

²⁸6/20/71, conversation with Father Mattea Maresca, parroco of S. Maria Galatea in Piano.

²⁹5/20/71, conversation with Mons. Milo of Maiori, and Father Taiani of that city.

³⁰See below, p. 273.

³¹Large, rectangular, wooden frames covered with canvas on which scenes are painted.

³²5/6/71, conversation with Mons. Persico of Sorrento.

³³5/17/71, conversation with Vito D'Esposito, presently proprietor of the Villa di Sorrento, a large hotel in Sorrento. During this conversation I learned that D'Esposito had spent thirteen years (1929-40) as scenic designer at the San Carlo. He began his career as a young man by designing sepolcri in the Franciscan church in Sorrento. This introduction led to an introduction at the San Carlo.

consulted with D'Esposito, and the result was the use of stage scenery for the sepolcro. For all of Holy Thursday and part of Good Friday the true apse of the church is covered by the scenic representation of a false one. Three large, one-dimensional flats create the illusion of ceiling, side walls, and central arch so effectively that one expects to be able to walk into the area until obstructed by the actual canvas. The main altar of the church has been hidden by the flats, and before them a large and lavishly decorated tabernacle houses the consecrated hosts. The floor area in front of the flats and around the tabernacle is densely covered with flowers whose placement has been the work of two other local artists. This sepolcro is of particular interest since it indicates that the occasion offers an opportunity for decorative variation and experimentation, despite the recent curtailments of feste esteme activities mentioned in the preceding chapters. The latest liturgical reforms discouraged not only the growing of white wheat, but also prohibited Holy Week representations of Calvary which had been common usage in many churches. "Until recently, there were models of Calvary in the churches at Easter time just as there are still models of Bethlehem [presepi] at Christmas time."³⁴ In 1968, for example, the sepolcro adornment in the Church of S. Antonino consisted of three parts: a tappetto di seccatura (rug of sawdust) on the marble floor in front of the altar area, numerous individual pots of white grain lining

³⁴10/16/71, conversation with Father Esposito of Massa Lubrense.

the steps behind this design which led to the altar area, and in lieu of an altar, a papier-mâché hill upon which a life-sized statue of the Madonna and three crucifixes bearing life-sized figures were placed. Perhaps Mons. Persico's use of theatrical scenery in 1971 is his method of continuing the importance of the sepolcro tradition in his church despite the ecclesiastical discouragement with which the more common forms of adornment have met.

The most beautiful and most intricate form of sepolcro is the tappetto di seccatura (rug of sawdust). In 1971 there were three rugs of this kind created in the area: one in Minori, another in Meta, and a third in Sorrento. Interestingly, each of the three is in some way connected with tappetto-maker Luca Morvile of Meta. Morvile grew up in Minori where he learned this art from a certain Abicella, and where he created many tappetti. Since he has become a resident of Meta, he has made tappetti in Sorrento (1968) and Meta (1970, 1971).³⁵ This information along with the fact that only three tappetti di seccatura could be found in the entire area in 1971 leads to the conclusion that although this form of sepolcro is highly regarded by the people, its use is limited since few are able to practice it. Proof of this conclusion is shown by the 1971 tappetto displayed in the Santuario del Carmine, a church in Sorrento. Although its design is beautiful--a

³⁵5/5/71, conversation with Luca Morvile, addobatore and tappetto-maker of Meta.

scene of Christ in the garden, and the artist is a well-known painter of Vico Equense, its execution is poor. According to one of the priests of the church, the artist was a novice at this technique and used semo-lino (grain) rather than seccatura (sawdust) since it is supposed to be an easier material for a beginner to work with.³⁶ Nevertheless, the lines of the beautiful design are blurred, unlike the clear delineation seen in the work of Morvile.

The process of tappetto-making, as described by Morvile, follows this pattern: (1) The subject is decided upon by artist and parroco. (2) The design is created in small size. (3) It is scaled to the proportions of the area of marble church on which it will be made. (4) The design is sketched out on the floor with chalk. (5) Dry paints are mixed with sawdust to create the colors needed. (6) This paint-sawdust mixture, which is like fine sand, is then filled into the sketch on the floor. A sieve is used to apply it to large blocks of color; fingers are used to spread it into intricate areas of color and design. This process creates a fine layer of material, like dust, which seen up very close still looks like paint.³⁷

Tappetto-making takes place between Monday and Thursday of Holy week, and, according to Morvile, gives its practitioner back

³⁶5/8/71, conversation with Father Battista Pio of the Santuario del Carmine in Sorrento.

³⁷5/5/71, conversation with Luca Morvile.

pains for a week. Morvile explains that the motives for undertaking this difficult work annually are primarily religious. To create a tappetto is for him an offering, an act of faith. He describes the sense of miracle he experiences when he paints the head of Christ. He feels that he is guided, that the hesitation which he always expects to seize him at this point in his work never occurs, and that the outcome always seems to have been something beyond his reach. Morvile adds that each year he promises himself that he will never make another tappetto: the time and pain involved are nothing to look forward to, the money earned from the church totals no more than about 18,000 lire (\$30.00) when he subtracts his expenditures for the special paints which he must travel to Naples to purchase. Yet, when the lenten season comes around again, this skilled addobatore (floral decorator) finds himself plotting the design of one more tappetto di seccatura.³⁸

A study of photos of Morvile's 1968 tappetto, created in the the Church of S. Antonino in Sorrento and his 1970 tappetto, created in the parrocchia of Meta (see Figure 9, p. 269), reveal two portrayals of Christ's Supper of Emmaus, an event described in the gospel of St. Luke.³⁹ The

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Luke, 24-13. In this version of the Resurrection, Christ meets two of his disciples on the road toward the town of Emmaus, and not recognizing him, they relate details concerning his resurrection that same morning. When they continue to Emmaus and sit and sup together, Christ breaks bread and blesses it and gives it to them. As they recognize him, he vanishes from their sight. Young discusses a medieval play which dramatizes the journey to Emmaus in The Drama of the Medieval Church, p. 451.



Fig. 9.--Luca Mordani's tappeto di seccatura in Meta.

two tappetti are entirely different in their representations of Christ, Cleopas and the second disciple, the table, and the house in the background. They agree completely, on the other hand, in their style which is first, realistic and focused in both outline and detail, and second uses bold colors strongly emphasized by light and shadow.

After becoming cognizant of the effort necessary to create such work, it is all the more extraordinary to understand the manner in which tappetti di seccatura are traditionally erased. According to Chancellor Arpino of the Curia of Amalfi, "the only person to walk on this work of art is the parroco as he approaches the altar to place the consecrated hosts in the repository for the one day of the year when the Eucharistic sacrifice may not be offered."⁴⁰ The destruction of the tappetto, then, occurs at a specific time in a specific manner, and is itself considered part of the ritual which surround sepolcri.⁴¹

The visiting of these different sorts of sepolcri seems to be undertaken primarily out of annual habit, but includes motives of devotion

⁴⁰11/11/70, conversation with Father Riccardo Arpino at the Curia of Amalfi.

⁴¹Such a tradition suggests comparison with the colored sand paintings of the American Navajo Indians (see Gladys A. Reichard, Spider Woman (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939); Navajo Shepherd and Weaver (Glorieta, New Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1968). Their magical paintings must be destroyed by being walked on by their "priest" or singer, immediately upon completion in order to avoid their becoming too powerful. The Navajo paintings are used as magic for a rain dance--but also used by the medicine man to cure the illness of patients. The Easter celebration is intended to bring the grace of salvation and make Christians well.

and of desire to see what the artist has constructed as well. From the viewpoint of the outsider it appears that the average citizen of the area visits sepulcri at Easter in the same fashion that he visits presepi at Christmas. In this regard it is interesting to note contemporary theatre historian Vera Roberts' comparison of the "Quem quaeritis" plays of both seasons.

One of the most popular of the tropes was that sung at the Easter Mass, the so-called Quem Quaeritis trope, the earliest manuscript of which comes from Limoges and dates back to about 923. This is essentially a drama having three parts: the question by the angels, the answer of the three Marys, and the reply to the Marys' answer. . . . Imitation of the Easter play for other occasions led to the adoption of a Christmas trope dealing with the visit of the shepherds to the manger. The action of the play was almost identical with the earlier one. It began, in song, "Quem quaeritis in praesepe, pastores, dicite," ("Whom seek ye in the manger, shepherds, tell us") and used a manger instead of a sepulchre. The Easter play was known technically as the Sepulchrum, the Christmas play as the Praesepe. The Christmas play was also expanded by three scenes.⁴²

The relationship between the Quem quaeritis trope and the visiting of sepulcri is the major concern of the Young study of sepulchres cited above. Young analyses in detail the medieval and post-medieval texts of liturgical offices in which the host is buried. His description of an Italian office from the city of Parma in 1417 is of particular interest:

This version of the Visitatio is noteworthy in that those approaching the sepulchrum (representing, but not necessarily impersonating, the Maries) actually enter the sepulchrum in search of the

⁴²Vera Mowry Roberts, On Stage: a History of Theatre (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 84-85. See also Young, Drama of Medieval Church, Vol. II, p. 3.

Corpus Cristi, and touch the linreamina (linen cloth) before they are challenged by the familiar interrogation Quem quaeritis.⁴³

His conclusion concerning the Quem quaeritis/sepulcro relationship is this:

During the early years of the tenth century was produced the trope Quem quaeritis in sepulchro as an independent literary composition in the form of dialogue. During the course of the tenth century this trope was very appropriately brought into association with the sepulchrum, and its dialogue became the basis of the dramatic Visitatio Sepulchri. This office formed a fitting, but not inevitable, sequel for the Depositio-Elevatio.⁴⁴

A study of this scholarship together with the observation of the building and visiting of sepulcri in the Sorrento-Amalfi area suggests the conclusion that in a derivative way the members of the Holy Thursday and Good Friday morning processions of this area have come to represent the Marys in this tradition, and that their paying of respect at the local sepulcro is a latter-day form of a medieval Quem quaeritis play.

Interestingly, as in the case of the processions of the saints and the celebrations in honor of the Madonna, the Church presently opposes the well-developed tradition of sepulcro-building which is prevalent in the area, and strongly suggests a return to simplicity in the preparations for Holy Thursday. Pius XII's 1955 decree concerning the reform of Holy Week mentions, as its first stipulation, that "The

⁴³Young, The Dramatic Associations of the Easter Sepulchre, 1. 129.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Holy Thursday adoration of the Blessed Sacrament must end at midnight."⁴⁵ The new liturgy, according to Father Ercolano of S. Agnello, calls for the "reduction of sepolcri".⁴⁶ It is almost as though this sepolcro tradition, probably a distant descendent of the Quem quaeritis tradition, is presently undergoing the same banishment by the Church which its more immediate descendents experienced. Nevertheless, the very fact that a Quem quaeritis tradition of sorts does continue to exist is significant.

It [the Resurrection] is the moment when humanity, represented by the holy women visiting the tomb of Christ, first recognizes the full significance of the Incarnation. The Quem quaeritis dramatizes this moment.⁴⁷

Processions

The Holy Thursday procession symbolizes the Passion up to the point of Christ's betrayal, the kiss of Judas. The morning procession of Good Friday symbolizes the search by Mary and the apostles for Christ who has been arrested. They do not know where he is, and they do not know that he has been condemned. The evening procession of Good Friday symbolizes the funeral of Christ, that is, from the moment of being taken down from the cross to the moment of burial.⁴⁸

This contemporary analysis by a local scholar of the significance of

⁴⁵Pius XII, "Decreto generale della Settimana Santa -- Reforma," Sacra Congregazione dei Sacri Riti.

⁴⁶7/24/71, conversation with Father Ercolano.

⁴⁷Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages, p. 219.

⁴⁸3/23/71, conversation with Giorgio Iacono of Piano.

the three popular processions explains the ease with which the various events of Holy Week co-exist. If, taken together, the three processions are understood to represent the whole of the Passion, then other manifestations of the Passion may be blended into the extra-liturgical enactment without concern about contradiction. Such manifestations include the symbolic washing of the feet of the apostles during the services within the Church on Holy Thursday afternoon, the visiting of the sepolcri described above, and the priest's verbal dramatization within the Church of Christ's three hours of agony on the Cross on Good Friday afternoon.⁴⁹ Hardison suggests that the quem quaeritis structure is composed of pathos--when the Marys show sorrow for Christ's death, peripeteia--at the moment of Resurrection, and theophany--following that Resurrection.⁵⁰ In these Aristotelean terms, the traditional Holy Week processions of the Sorrentine-Amalfi area present the pathos of the Easter drama.

It is necessary to stress the importance of the confraternities in this processional enactment of the Passion. The local confraternity of each city or town is for all practical purposes the acting company upon which this enactment depends. And certainly, for the confraternities,

⁴⁹This custom used to take place in every Catholic Church from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday afternoon, and has in recent years, become a good deal shorter and less physically descriptive.

⁵⁰Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages, p. 260.

the Holy Week processions offer the greatest "production" opportunities of the liturgical year.

It is most typical in the area to organize both Holy Thursday and Good Friday processions. Some locales, however, produce a single procession on Good Friday; others organize two on Good Friday as well as that of Holy Thursday. The following listing of processions encompasses all of those organized in the major towns and cities of the area in spring, 1971.

Giovedì santo, April 8

Piano di Sorrento

There are two Holy Thursday processions in Piano, the first organized by the Confraternità di SS. Annunciata of the Church of S. Michele Arcangelo. About two hundred people walk in this procession, whose musical rehearsals begin a month before Holy Week, and involve the training of both boy and adult choirs. This last is a four-part chorus which sings the Miserere for both the Holy Thursday and Good Friday processions. The white and blue confraternity robes include hoods for this occasion--tent-shaped white bags of cloth which completely cover the head except for the two holes through which the marcher can see. The chorus wear their hoods back so that their faces are revealed and their singing unhindered. The boys' robes are all white with identically-shaped hoods attached. All of these robes have been stored away in used condition and are brought home

individually by the marchers to be washed and pressed. The props of the procession, which are numerous, are given out just before it begins. There are four masters of ceremony, confraternity members well-acquainted with the tradition, who concern themselves both with placing the two hundred-odd men and boys in the required positions and with maintaining that order for the duration of the march.

Although the projected route of this procession includes a journey to S. Agnello and back, this foray out of the town proper is at the last minute prohibited by the Curia in Sorrento for fear it would put too much strain on Peninsular traffic. The procession, scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m., exits at 6:30. It proceeds from the Church of S. Michele Arcangelo, which is located between the town's central square and the sea, to visit the sepolcro of the Church of S. Maria di Rosella closely by. It then passes through the main piazza on the way towards the steep incline in the direction of the mountains to visit the sepolcro of the Church of S. Teresa. After a third stop at the sepolcro of S. Giuseppe, the procession passes through the center of town again, and using different streets, returns to S. Michele Arcangelo.

The first section of the procession includes four lead lantern-bearers (carrying lanterns set upon high standards), two drummers who set on ominous beat for all to follow, the banner of the confraternity attended by six or seven men, and fifteen young boys carrying small crosses on their shoulders. The second section presents, for the

observer acquainted with the narrative of Christ's journey to Golgotha, a visual description of the Passion through the numerous props and symbols carried by the hooded confraternity brothers. These men walk two by two, and carry: the purse of thirty silver coins and a lantern; a hand and a knife; olive branches; rocks and blood; a rooster and a white garment; whip and chain; cat-o-nine-tails and a column; a tablet reading, "JNRI"; a crown of thorns and a blade; a scepter bearing the insignia of Rome--"SPQR"; the handkerchief of Veronica; a pitcher and towel; a hammer and nails; a red garment and dice; a ladder and pincers. The final element in this display of the instruments of the Passion is a huge crucifix accompanied by three members carrying lances and a fourth who carries a sponge. The last section of the procession is comprised of the chorus, the clergy, and four lantern-bearers who close off the procession.

Despite funereal drums, dirge-like singing, realistic props and the somewhat clerical garb of all participants, the sense engendered by this procession is that of celebration rather than sorrow. The contradictory element is brought about perhaps by the atmosphere of the town itself. Every citizen of Piano seems to have brought his wife and children to Piano's main street, where the shops are decked out and the narrow sidewalks crowded with eager shoppers. Particularly impressive in a somewhat brutal fashion are the butcher shops which sport whole lambs and steers as yet unskinned and decorated with tiny

Italian flags, outside their doors. It is difficult to avoid head-on contact with these dangling carcasses because of the huge crowd.

I witness the procession after it passes through the center of town and experiences this festive activity. Perhaps its original solemnity has been impaired on route. Nevertheless, what comes to mind by way of contrast is a nineteenth-century description of Holy Thursday by a well-known Neapolitan writer of the day: "The railroads are closed. All is silent and melancholy in the heart of the faithful; no anger, no threat, no curse. It is Holy Thursday."⁵¹

Piano's second procession on Holy Thursday begins later, at 9:00 p.m. It is organized by the Confraternità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti of the Church of SS. Trinità. Since the church's location is rural and the hour fairly late for a procession, this manifestation is more solemn than that of S. Michele Arcangelo, although it too is routed through the center of town. The exceptional feature of this procession is the participation of men costumed as Roman soldiers. It is exceptional only in that the Curia has denied permission to include "soldiers" on this occasion; and yet, according to the church's parroco, "there has been silent permission given."⁵² As dramatically costumed as the soldiers are the holy women--the most beautiful girls of the parrocchia

⁵¹Emmanuele Bidera, Passeggiata per Napoli e contorni (Napoli: Aldo Manuzio, 1844), p. 151.

⁵²4/23/71, conversation with Father Alberino of Piano.

representing Veronica, Magdelene, and the Marys. The huge, hollow crucifix described in Chapter I above⁵³ is carried, as are the instruments of the Passion. The confraternity's famous red robes are all put to use on this occasion, for one hundred ninety members march. The chorus of one hundred is not, however, in costumes of any kind. The band "della Penisola Sorrentina" accompanies the marchers who are followed by a crowd of fifty. Like all the events of this particular parrocchia the Holy Thursday procession is organized in the most dramatic way possible within the limits of the local tradition.

S. Agnello

The order of marchers of the Holy Thursday procession organized by the Confraternità dei Giuseppini of the Church of S. Giuseppe is similar to the first procession of Piano described above, although smaller in size. Lead lantern-bearers, incense carriers, and crucifix precede those confraternity members who carry the instruments of the Passion. These alternate in line both with other lantern-bearers and with boys carrying small crosses. The chorus walks behind this group and is followed by the statue of the Madonna. There is a great deal of difference between the Piano and S. Agnello processions, however, in terms of the solemnity suggested. That of S. Agnello is so quiet in tenor that when the chorus is not singing the only sounds to be heard are the footsteps of the marchers. There is less of a crowd watching

⁵³See above, p. 34.

this procession, and they are silently attentive. Perhaps the fact that S. Agnello is less of a shopping center than Piano accounts for this difference. At any rate this rather small procession does suggest some of the sense of mystery and awe which can be evoked by these Holy Week proceedings.

Atrani-Amalfi

The complementary relationship of these two towns of the Coast of Amalfi is well-expressed in their Holy Week celebrations. The small Holy Thursday procession of Atrani travels to Amalfi, and the impressively large Good Friday procession of Amalfi includes the citizens of Amalfi, both among the marchers and the observers. The Holy Thursday procession which exits at 9:30 p.m. from the Church of S. Magdalene in Atrani is comprised of the chorus, the white-robed confraternity, a crucifix accompanied on either side of women representing Mary Magdalene and the Madonna. These marchers are followed by a fairly large crowd of about three hundred people.

Minori

The Holy Thursday procession of Minori is large. It is a fascinating example of ritual theatre since it includes not only costumes, singing, props and walking, but the reading of the Via Crucis (Stations of the Cross) as well. Following the Holy Thursday ritual within the Church of S. Trofimenia, during which the chalice containing the consecrated hosts is placed on the altar decorated with white wheat flowers

and before which is the tappetto di seccatura,⁵⁴ the procession prepared by the Arciconfraternità del S. Sacramento exits from the church. The people of Minori refer to their white-robed and hooded confraternity members as battenti (flagellants or those who beat themselves), and each of these forty men wears a knotted robe about his waist. The battenti are led by a large, hollow cross which measures 6 by 4 1/2 ft. upon which hangs the figure of Christ. They are accompanied by the traditional lanterns on standards, and are followed by a chorus of thirty. The procession pauses before the parrocchia before beginning its winding journey through the town, and there listens to the first of fourteen young lay men and women who relates the first station of the cross, Christ's condemnation to death by crucifixion. There are twelve more stops throughout Minori, and at each another reader relates another episode of the via crucis. The fourteenth and final reading takes place in front of the parrocchia of S. Trofimenia once again.⁵⁵ At this time

⁵⁴See above, p. 266.

⁵⁵Traditionally, the fourteen "Stations of the Cross" refer to those principal episodes of the Passion which have been marked in Palestine as Christ's stopping places on the day of his crucifixion. It has been common practice in Roman Catholic churches to have sculpted or pictorial images of these episodes hung in order along the walls in order that the faithful might, even if unable to visit Palestine, follow Christ's passion symbolically, stop by stop. The fourteen stations are as follows: (1) Christ is condemned to death, (2) He takes up the cross, (3) He falls beneath the cross, (4) Christ meets his mother Mary on the road to Calvary, (5) Simon of Cyrene carries the cross for Christ, (6) Veronica offers him her handkerchief and Christ wipes his face leaving its outline on the cloth, (7) Jesus falls for the second time beneath the cross, (8) He comforts others along the way, (9) He falls for the third time, (10) He is stripped of his robes, (11) He is nailed to the cross, (12) Christ dies, (13) He is taken down from the cross, (14) He is buried.

the man who has been bearing the cross during the procession falls on the ground, manifesting symbolically the fall of Christ. The entire proceeding runs from 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and is followed throughout by a crowd of nearly three hundred, as well as being witnessed by other waiting citizens at every stop.

Ravello

The Holy Thursday procession of Ravello is quite similar to that of Minori. There are only twenty white-clad battenti of the Confraternità di Gesù in this case and their faces are uncovered. They walk behind a large crucifix accompanied on either side by tall lanterns, and followed by a chorus of ten. This procession also celebrates the Stations of the Cross, but with choral renditions rather than oral readings. Songs are sung at each of fourteen stops along the processional route. Sepolcri are visited at six of these stops--made before the six churches of Ravello. The other eight stops occur at appointed places along the road, as in the Minori procession. The hymns which are sung are carefully chosen and rehearsed, and their artistic rendition is a source of local pride. The chant Coro dei Battenti ("Chorus of the Flagellants"), for example, is thought to be medieval in origin, and the songs Sento l'amaro pianto ("I Hear the Bitter Crying") and Veder l'orrenda morte ("Seeing the Horrible Death") are nineteenth-century compositions of Girolamo Tirabassi of Amalfi.⁵⁶

⁵⁶"Canti religiosi popolari della Passione in Costiera," Incontro--Bolletino parrocchiale, S. Maria Assunta, Ravello (Anno IV, n. 3), marzo 1971, pp. 2-3.

There was an interesting omission in the 1970 rendition of this traditional procession. It has been the custom in Ravello for many years to have the man carrying the cross, thereby personifying Jesus, accompanied by four soldiers who pretend to whip him with knotted whips when he becomes weary and stumbles. The group of men and boys who prepared this year's procession decided to omit this symbolic scourging of Christ, since they felt that it had not been received with proper seriousness the previous year.⁵⁷ Another interesting detail about this procession is that a statue of the Madonna joins the procession at the fifth church visited, the Church of S. Giovanni. Father Imperatore, Ravello's parroco, points out that this procession, unlike that of Good Friday, is a popular manifestation in that the clergy do not participate.⁵⁸

Mattina di Venerdì santo, April 9

Sorrento

Normally this procession begins at 2:30 a.m. of Good Friday. It was decided in 1970 to schedule the early morning procession on Holy Thursday evening in 1971 for the sake of greater convenience, and to see whether such a schedule would be approved by the citizens of Sorrento on a regular basis. Thus this procession begins at 9:00 p.m. on

⁵⁷5/6/71, conversation with Father Imperatore of Ravello.

⁵⁸Ibid.

Holy Thursday. It exits from the Church of the Annunziata di S. Monica and is sponsored by the confraternity of the same name. More than three hundred marchers participate. Of these, one hundred and fifty are chorus members of which forty or fifty are boys. The organization of the procession is as follows: the chorus; the band; the instruments of the Passion; confraternity members bearing lanterns, some on full-length standards, some electric, and some candle-lit alternating in line of four abreast with boys carrying small black crosses on their shoulders; a section of clergy; a statue of the Madonna.

The streets of Sorrento are packed with onlookers, yet the huge crowd is attentive and completely silent as it opens up space for the passage of the marchers through the city's central piazza. There are distractions, however. The sounds of automobiles passing on other streets is constant, and all of the shops are open for business with lights blazing--lights which jar glaringly with the lantern-light of the procession. Nevertheless, the marchers are never out of character. There is an aristocratic dignity generated through the white hoods and robes simply by the solemn and unhurried manner of walking which all seem to achieve, and the occasional hoodless profile which passes (the masters of ceremony, maestro of the chorus, and the priests are bareheaded) seems, in this setting and lighting at any rate, to be that of a Greek or Roman sovereign. The music for this celebration, and that of the chorus particularly, is exceptional, as it is for the Good

Friday procession as well. The organist of the parrocchia, Maestro Ambrosini, has trained several generations of choruses for the Holy Week proceedings in Sorrento. His bi-weekly rehearsals throughout Lent create a superlative a cappella chorus of men's and boys' voices.

S. Agnello

This procession, organized by the Confraternità del SS. Sacramento of the Church of S. Agnello, begins at 2:30 a.m. Before that time, however, people living close to the church can hear boys calling to one another and joking as they wait to take their places in line. The procession's order is nearly identical to that of the Holy Thursday procession in S. Agnello. On this Good Friday morning in 1971 the white-clad figures return home to their congrega two hours after their departure because of a cold, driving rain. The procession traditionally continues to journey about the city until well after sunup.

What seems to make this procession special is the hour itself. Perhaps this is the reason why the average citizen of Sorrento resents the attempt to move the Sorrentine Good Friday morning procession to Holy Thursday evening. There is something magical, not to mention theatrical, about being awakened in the middle of the night by a lamenting band and chorus, and about going out on the balcony (which is the spectator area of every house along the street for this procession) in hastily found raincoats to watch and listen. In becoming a part of this balcony-bound, suddenly-awakened audience, a special sort of theatre

is experienced. One comes to this theatre fresh from sleep and clear of daytime preoccupations. The significance of this organized, nocturnal wandering--the search of Mary and the apostles for the arrested Christ, who unknown to them has already been condemned to death, changes from an intellectual concept to an experienced action. Perhaps the unkind weather of 1971 adds to the impression of woebegone search. Clearly, when the chorus passes, intoning their hymn of lament and closely packed together, perhaps to comfort each other from the insistent rain which has long ago soaked through their white hoods and gowns, they seem to be a band of lost apostles in search of their missing leader.

Is this street theatre, or house theatre, or bedroom theatre? It comes to its audience. One need not even go to the window to feel its impact, for one cannot avoid hearing it and at least participating to this degree. This procession is like the church bells--with or without so choosing, one is made a part of its perpetual action.

Positano

Many people of Positano participate in the local Good Friday morning procession. The confraternity of the Church of S. Maria Assunta numbers about forty-five members, but they are followed by a crowd of at least five hundred. This strong support is especially interesting in view of the fact that the procession undertakes the three-thousand stair climb to Montepertusso (the same mountain where the symbolic

battle between the Madonna and the devil is waged in July.⁵⁹ The confraternity brothers visit two sepolcri during the course of the procession, those of the Chiesa Nuova and the church in the town of Montepertuso. Also interesting is the fact that prayers are chanted throughout the long climb--short, simple invocations such as, "Forgive me my sins." This particular Good Friday morning celebration seems clearly an act of atonement, by reason both of the difficult destination undertaken by so many and by the chants which the marchers repeat unceasingly.⁶⁰

Maiori

This Good Friday morning procession in the city of Maiori is noteworthy for its length. The one hundred-member Confraternità di S. Mⁱ delle Grazie exits at 2:00 a.m., is joined by a large crowd of citizens about 6:00 a.m., and does not return to its congrega until 9:00 a.m. The order of the procession is this: a bearded Christ carrying a cross, three confraternity members carrying lanterns, a large crucifix, six more lanterns, about one hundred battenti (half of them chorus). The cross-bearing Christ falls before each of the four churches whose sepolcri are visited by the battenti.⁶¹ Clearly this procession resembles the Holy Thursday procession of Minori in this regard.

⁵⁹See above, pp. 168-171.

⁶⁰4/20/71, conversation with Father Raffaele Talamo, parroco of the Church of S. M. Assunta in Positano.

⁶¹5/20/71, conversation with Mons. Milo and Father Taiano of Maiori.

Minori

The people of Minori participate in a shorter, and more comfortably scheduled procession on this occasion. Forty hooded members of the Arciconfraternità del Rosano begin their four-to-five-hour route in and around Minori at 6:00 a.m. There is also a Christ figure in the procession, as well as a lay chorus of thirty.⁶²

Venerdi santo sera--April 9

Much living testimony [of the reenactment of Christ's death] remains in the popular tradition with a rich variety of manifestations, which go from the acting of true sacred dramas to simple rites symbolically represented. The most diffuse form is constructed from the so-called "Procession of the Dead Christ," which assumes an extraordinary multiplicity of aspects according to the ambience in which it takes place and the diversity of the local customs. The spectacle is generally large, if this factor is of interest; but since it preserves its full ritual character, the populace participates both as spectator and actor, with a spiritual disposition very different from that entertained in usual spectacles.⁶³

As the individual descriptions of the Holy Thursday and Good Friday morning processions of the area suggest, many of their characteristics seem virtually interchangeable. Sepolcri are visited, for example, by the Holy Thursday processions of Piano, S. Agnello and Ravello, and then by Good Friday morning processions of Sorrento and Positano. Christ's bearing of the cross is enacted on Holy Thursday in Minori and Ravello and on Good Friday in Maiori. The time and length of these

⁶²5/20/71, conversation with Mons. Di Nardo of Minori.

⁶³Toschi, Invito al folklore, p. 290.

processions are local decisions which must be approved by the Curia to which the particular locale is subject, but clearly the Curia of Sorrento has no objections if in S. Agnello the Holy Thursday procession begins at 6:00 p.m. while in Piano there is a procession which begins at 9:00 p.m. By the same token, the Curia of Amalfi permits the Good Friday morning procession of Maiori to continue for seven hours, while in Minori it returns after four hours. Such diversity in the customs of individual towns and cities is precisely what Paolo Toschi considers characteristic of that most important of Holy Week processions, and the one which those of Holy Thursday and Good Friday morning anticipate--the procession of Cristo morto (the Dead Christ). An analysis of this procession in the area demonstrates that it, too, utilizes many of the elements employed on Holy Thursday or Good Friday morning.

Piano

The Church of SS. Trinità produces the identical procession on Good Friday evening as on Holy Thursday, according to parroco Father Alberino, with the additions of the statues of the Dead Christ and the Madonna. The Church of S. M. Galatea in Mortora produces only the procession of Cristo morto. Members of the Confraternità della Purificazione, chorus, band, costumed Roman soldiers and the traditional statues comprise a fairly representational example of this genre of popular manifestation produced on a small scale. Two details of the Mortora procession, however, are atypical. First, most confraternity

robes for Good Friday evening proceedings are black, and in this procession they are white. Second, there is again, as on Holy Thursday, a festive rather than funereal air about the center of Piano as the procession passes which does not correspond with its intended reenactment of the bearing of Christ's bier.

S. Agnello

The procession of the Dead Christ is best viewed in S. Agnello on the narrow, back road, Via Cappuccini. Here the marchers pass before ancient stone walls enclosing grape arbors on the one hand, and ancient private home on the other. There is little street lighting and any motorists who might brave this narrow, one-way thoroughfare do not risk the chance of being entrapped by a long procession on Good Friday evening. The setting, therefore, is old and natural and perfectly attuned to the medieval sights and sounds of this spectacle. The beginning of the procession establishes a sense of mystery and eeriness: out of the darkness of the road four lights begin to take shape and beneath them four moving vertical scarlet stripes. As these forms and colors advance and become clear, the lights are recognizable as lanterns and the scarlet stripes as red sashes worn by the black-clad lantern-bearers. As the marchers come closer and begin to pass, the only sound is that of footsteps, and even these seem strangely quiet against the road's old stone paving. The members of the Confraternita del Pio Morte, all black-hooded and black-robed, file by carrying their

symbolic props: two small crosses, a black banner, two more small crosses, four more lanterns, a huge black cross, two small crosses, purse and lantern, glove and knife, crow and column, whip and cat-o-nine-tails, cane and red garment, crown of thorns and stick, white garment and dice, pitcher and towel, a winding sheet, nails and hammer, ladder and pincers, another large cross draped with a cloth, lance and sponge, two lances, four more lanterns. The boys' chorus passes next, faces bare and heads covered with the same black, singing with lustiness too healthy in sound for the funereal occasion. The adult chorus follows them, faces also uncovered; both child and adult faces provide an almost startling contrast to the mass of hooded figures who have just passed. Then come three tiny flower boys struggling under the weight of an impressive floral display, then a solo flower boy, the tiniest of all. And now the ornate bier of a man-sized, most realistic, Dead Christ is borne by many men, all somberly dressed in dark suits. The face appears in repose, lit effectively by numerous globe lights attached to the bier proper. The body is in the often-created posture of recent deposition from the cross, with wounded side and extremities softened by the huge quantity of fresh flowers which surround the entire statue on the bier. The clergy walk directly behind the bier, and behind them is carried the statue of the Madonna known as the Addolorata (Sorrowful One). She, too, is surrounded by masses of flowers. The band walks behind the Madonna and, when it plays, renders a funeral dirge well-known in the area.

The Masters of Ceremony, like the chorus, band and clergy, are permitted to leave their faces uncovered. They stride back and forth among their confraternity brothers maintaining correct order and proper distances between the ranks. They seem, by virtue of this task, to knit lanterns, anonymous black robes and hoods, symbolic props, open-mouthed singers, uniformed musicians, and flower-decked statues into a synchronized organism of power and mysterious, if somewhat strange, beauty.

Sorrento

The processione di Cristo morto of Sorrento is famous in the area among its kind for its solemnity and tradition. There are three elements which seem to bring on this fame: the historical and continuing strength of the Arciconfraternità della Morte (of the congrega of the Servi di Maria), the beauty of the wooden Christ carried in procession and the legend surrounding it, and the superior quality of the chorus' a cappella rendition of the Miserere.

As mentioned in Chapter II,⁶⁴ membership in the Arciconfraternità delle Morte is a prestigious affair, depending traditionally upon aristocratic birth, occasionally upon military service, and of late upon professional excellence. The honor of participating in the procession of Good Friday evening belongs only to bone fide members of the Archconfraternity, and the specific functions within the procession are carefully

⁶⁴See above, pp. 97-98.

handed down from father to son, with the replacement of rarely vacated places considered carefully.

Each year the congrega distributes invitations, respecting as much as possible the assignment of places to those who are attached to them; because, for example, the lance-bearer would feel belittled if the following year he is asked to carry a lantern, and so forth.⁶⁵

A look at the warnings included in this invitation is revealing.

Printed on the back of a hard, glossy, artistic photograph of a black-robed confraternity member being observed by three boys, and opposite the actual words of invitation appear the following:

- 1) This invitation is strictly personal and not transferable.
- 2) It is obligatory to attend with black gloves, black shoes, black socks, dark pants.
- 3) After the hour of 5:30 p.m. no one will be admitted to the Church.
- 4) Anyone who during the Procession does not maintain a serious demeanor will not receive invitations to future processions.
- 5) It is obligatory that everyone maintain in a disciplined fashion the place assigned him by the brothers who are the Masters of Ceremony.⁶⁶

Such a list suggests the seriousness with which this procession is undertaken, and the sense of individual honor which participation confers upon about four hundred and fifty citizens of Sorrento.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁵Fasulo, La Congregazione di San Catello e L'Arciconfraternità della Morte della Città di Sorrento, p. 62.

⁶⁶The invitation is sent in the name of the Archconfraternity's Prior, Gaetano Mascolo, and printed by G. Petagna of Sorrento.

⁶⁷Official listing of the order of the procession is supplied by the Archconfraternity's secretary, Pasquale Ferraiuolo.

secretary of the Arciconfraternità della Morte, Pasquale Ferraiuolo, informs me that the procession's Master of Ceremony this year is the Honorable Giovanni Casola, a representative in the Italian Congress in Rome.⁶⁸

The wooden sculpture of the Dead Christ which belongs to the congrega of the Archconfraternity is a work of the sixteenth century. According to local tradition, it was made by a prisoner who had been condemned to death and who sought refuge in a Sorrentine church. In exchange for this protection he offered a work of sculpture.⁶⁹

During the procession the superior quality of the cappella chorus, directed by choir master and organist Ambrosini, is taken for granted by the populace at large. Its principal offering is the "Miserere," a musical rendering of the penitential Psalm 51 which begins, Miserere mei, Deus ("Have mercy upon me, O God"). Umberto Fasulo's description of this singing in 1937 seems perfectly accurate in 1971: "In the deep silence of the crowd, the sad singing assumes a highly emotional tone."⁷⁰

There is something overwhelming about this procession. Its organization amounts to what can be accurately described as the

⁶⁸4/6/71, conversation with Pasquale Ferraiuolo.

⁶⁹It is also said that the sculpture is made of an unidentifiable species of wood: at different times both hand and arm have been taken off and analyzed with no success.

⁷⁰Fasulo, La Congregazione . . ., p. 63.

human choreography of 106 lanterns, 46 symbols of the Passion, 40 crosses, and 2 statues which are attended by many members of the clergy, a chorus of 200, and a band of 50. Under its three-hour spell the city of Sorrento seems to return to another time, that time perhaps when street processions were organized to avert natural calamity.⁷¹

Positano

Good Friday in Positano reveals another type of theatrical manifestation concerning the Passion known as the schiodazione (unnailling). This version of the schiodazione represents the actual unnailling of a life-sized, papier-mache Christ from a nine-foot cross hung above the central altar of the Church of S. Maria Assunta. It takes place on Good Friday afternoon following liturgical functions. During these functions the altar, the cross, and a painted backdrop depicting the Calvary scene are hidden by a simple, blue curtain so that they will not distract the attention of the congregation. When the time of the schiodazione arrives, the curtain is drawn, and the parroco climbs, via the backstage steps, onto the altar. With a hammer, he bangs the nails out of the Christ's hands and feet. He moves each hand down as he releases it. He then hands the body down to two men who are standing near the altar, and they in turn pass it to the crowd of men surrounding the bara (bier) which is waiting at the foot of the altar steps. The chorus of the parrocchia (young men and women in this case) sing a hymn continuously during these actions. Many people

⁷¹See above, pp. 77-78.

in the congregation weep. The bier is taken up and the procession of Cristo morto begins in this way. The bier is accompanied by the statue of the Madonna, the confraternity dressed in white robes, and a huge crowd consisting of everyone inside the church and many others who have waited outside. The procession is only thirty minutes long.

Father Talamo says that the painted backdrop of the Descent from the Cross is a work of the late seventeen hundreds, but that he thinks the rite of the schiodazione must have originated in medieval times.⁷² Such an opinion is supported by a statement in Karl Young's work on the Easter sepulchre extensively referred to above.

Since the Adoratio itself is a vivid commemoration of the Crucifixion, nothing could be more natural than that a vivid commemoration of the burial should be invented as a sequel to the Adoratio. Any taking down of the Cross after the ceremony of the Adoratio must inevitably suggest a representation of the burial of the crucified Christ Himself. Moreover the carrying back of the Cross from the Adoratio in Santa Croce in Jerusalem to the chest under the altar of the Sancta Sanctorum may fairly be regarded as a conscious ceremonial of burial. In view of the wide-spread symbolizing of the altar as a tomb, this procession inevitably suggests a cortege to a grave. Whatever may have been the early practice elsewhere, the conspicuous ceremonial of Rome alone was quite adequate for suggesting the invention of a commemoration of Christ's burial in the dramatic form of a Depositio.⁷³

Minori

The manifestation of the schiodazione is not limited to Positano. Although they refer to it as the deposizione plastica (the plastic

⁷²4/20/71, conversation with Father Talamo of Positano.

⁷³Young, The Dramatic Associations of the Easter Sepulchre, p. 26.

descent), the people of Minori participate in the same drama as do the citizens of Positano. The Christ of papier mâché is unnailed from the cross, handed down from the altar and put unto a bier which is then carried in procession through the town. This theatrical ritual in Minori is preceded by a liturgical function as it is in Positano. The differences are minimal: the two thieves in the Church of S. Trofimenà are painted upon wooden crosses rather than being a part of the backdrop, the practice of hiding the Calvary scene behind a curtain until the appropriate moment has been eliminated in Minori in 1971, and the procession which follows the deposizione lasts for an hour. Like the same manifestation in Positano, it is one which is very popular among the people and one which they are not likely to give up for a long time to come.

Maiori

Maiori's Good Friday evening procession is organized about the via crucis (Stations of the Cross) as are the Holy Thursday processions of Minori and Ravello. Objectively speaking, the scheduling of such a procession on Good Friday makes greater sense in that it commemorates the actual happenings of the Passion on the day commemorating that Passion. What is sacrificed, on the other hand, is the opportunity to enact a funeral procession of the Dead Christ. This second rite is by far the most popular type of Holy Week procession in the area, and indicates the local preference among both citizens and clergy for that

sort of manifestation which provides the greater emotional experience. The faithful may, after all, recall the Stations of the Cross in any church at any time, but it is only on Good Friday that there is the opportunity of mourning the crucified Christ in an open, theatrical fashion.

The fourteen readings of the Passion are presented by young men and women, members of Maiori's Circolo Azione Cattolico. These twenty-five or so readers are the last group of a processional order which does not include Maiori's confraternity which marched in the Holy Thursday procession. First comes a large, seven-foot cross of papier-mache borne by a Christ figure, then six lanterns carried by boys in everyday clothes, then the priests of the town in their simplest garb, followed by the readers. This procession is the simplest of its kind in the area, and celebrates the poverty of Christ's life and death by avoiding the sort of ceremonial pomp which is usually taken for granted on this occasion. The procession takes place from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m. It is dark and the store and street lights are burning. It proceeds from the city's parrocchia of S. Maria a Mare down to the shore, and there is routed both up and down Maiori's splendid seaside boulevard, returning via a different route to the parrocchia once again. There is something marvelously straight-forward about this procession in that effects are neither sought nor desired.

Ravello

The Good Friday evening procession here seems to be a miniature of those of the Sorrentine Peninsula.

- 1) The crucifix and two lanterns.
- 2) 15-20 confraternity members.
- 3) Children dressed as angels who carry instruments of the Passion: hammer, spade, crow, whip, cross, nails, crown of thorns.
- 4) Ten altar boys.
- 5) 5 priests.
- 6) The statue of the Madonna.
- 7) The bara with the Dead Christ statue of the Cathedral.
- 8) A chorus of 10.
- 9) A small band.

Amalfi

Amalfi's Good Friday evening procession is the most theatrical of its kind along the Coast, as is that of Sorrento along the Peninsula. This procession in Amalfi is in the very capable hands of the comitato, comprised for the most part of young men. Its chairman, Andrea Ammendola, is particularly concerned about its aesthetic quality and is continually striving for improvement in this direction.⁷⁴ This attitude seems to be beneficial, since it welcomes change for artistic ends and is sensitive to customs which are detrimental to the spirit of the occasion (the manner of collecting money and the method of carrying the bara, for example, will be discussed below).

⁷⁴4/27/71, conversation with Andrea Ammendola, Chairman of the Good Friday procession committee in Amalfi.

The procession exits from the Duomo of the city when it is dark (7:15 p.m. in 1971). Its components are impressive, both in size and detail. One hundred twenty members of the Confraternità della Addolorata of the congrega of the Duomo, for example, are joined both by members of the Confraternità di S. Biaggio, also of Amalfi, and by the confraternity of the nearby town of Atrani as well. All are battenti in white robes belted with rope and hooded, with brambles of thorns encircling their hoods. The masters of ceremony have their faces uncovered but bearded (a recent innovation of the youthful commitato), and with a rope whip over their shoulders as a symbol of authority. A chorus of 40 is dressed in blue robes, faces uncovered, and its offerings are very carefully selected: Inno a Gesu Morto ("Hymn to the Dead Christ") of the fellow amalifitano, Tirabasso,⁷⁵ Vexilla Regis ("Standards of the King") of Paesiello, and Capo insanguinato ("Bloody Head") of J. S. Bach. Unlike the Sorrentine custom of separate vocal and instrumental music, this chorus and the thirty-member band of Amalfi "attack together" as chairman Ammednola describes it.⁷⁶ The bara is an immensely ornate and heavy structure which is seemingly carried by six white-gloved dignitaries of the confraternity. In reality, however, its weight is supported by six ungloved workers walking

⁷⁵This hymn is also sung in Ravello during the Holy Thursday procession. See above, p. 282.

⁷⁶4/27/71, conversation with Ammendola.

undereath its structure who are being paid for their pains. Ammendola is most concerned to eliminate this custom, but has been unable to do so in 1971.⁷⁷ Tiny battery-run lights have been placed within the rim of the bier, affording the statue subtle lighting. There are two large crucifixes carried in this procession. The first is twice the size of a man and leads the procession (see Figure 10, p. 302). It is basically a frame constructed in the shape of a cross upon which canvas has been stretched. A crucified Christ against a black background has been painted upon the canvas, and it is lit by concealed battery lights from within. The effect of this lighting is mystical, as if the glow were created by the man depicted on the cross. The second cross is three times the height of a man and looks like two tree trunks lashed together with rope. Actually it is hollow, and its rough surface is artificial rather than natural. It is carried by a confraternity brother in white robe, with uncovered but bearded face who has played this Christ role in the procession for a number of years. Ammendola wonders whether the role ought to be eliminated since a statue of the Dead Christ appears on the bier.⁷⁸ In 1971, at any rate, representations of both living and dead Christs appear in the Amalfi Good Friday procession.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

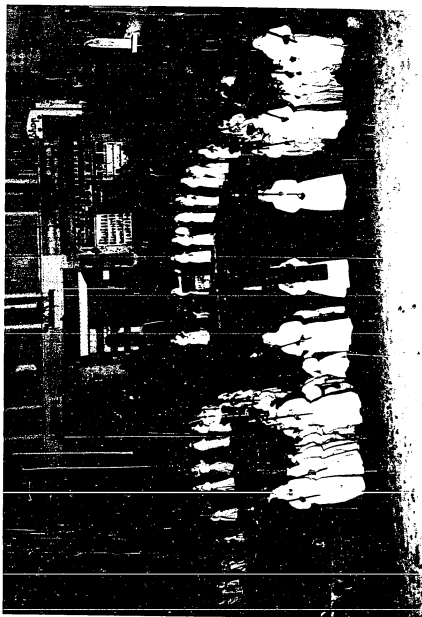


Fig. 10.--Crucifix, lanterns, and battenti
in the Good Friday procession of Amalfi.

The procession begins at the moment when the cross depicting the crucified Christ is carried down the sixty-three steps of Amalfi's cathedral by a hooded battento.⁷⁹ He is accompanied on either side by three battenti carrying lanterns of various colored glass which burn candles for light. Thus there are seven abreast as the formation begins, and this wide design is maintained throughout in every part of the procession. This is done by virtue of the fact that the outermost lantern-bearers are the beginning of two long lines of fellow lantern-bearers who literally rope in the elements of the procession both with their bodily presence and with their ring of candlelight. After some distance the second crucifix, carried by "Christ," follows the first. The two principal masters of ceremony walk near this cross, one slightly ahead and to the right, the other slightly behind and to the left. About six more pairs of lantern-bearers descend the Cathedral steps before the third enclosed component of the procession--a group of fifteen ecclesiastical dignitaries including the Archbishop of Amalfi, appears. The places of the peripheral lantern-bearers at this point are taken by altar boys, twenty on either side of the clergy. When this group has descended about half of the steps to the piazza, the most dramatic moment of the procession occurs, in chairman (director, really) Ammendola's opinion. The bier upon which the statue of the Dead Christ lies is carried out of

⁷⁹For an earlier description of these steps see the festa of S. Andrea above, p. 87.

the Cathedral doors unto the first large step. The carriers halt for a moment, and at this moment three things take place: two spotlights rigged from the pensione across the piazza from the Cathedral pick up the bier; the street lights of the city are turned off; and the chorus and band begin their first rendition of "Hymn to the Dead Christ." All of stores of Amalfi are closed for the duration of the procession and torches have been set up along the entire processional route, and now the illumination of both marchers and observers depends upon candlelit lanterns, real torches, and the hidden battery lights of the bier and the lead crucifix. Lighting, it seems clear, is very important to Ammendola and his committee. Their efforts are rewarded by the stunning effect created, for what appears is a medieval village in the midst of a medieval procession.

There are two stops along the processional route. The first is at the top of Via Capuano, the northern-most point of the city, for the purpose of setting down the bier and permitting its carriers a few minutes rest. The second is at the small Church of the Suore della Carità (the Sisters of Charity) where Christ is symbolically buried. The statues of Christ and the Madonna are borne into the church, accompanied by the clergy. Here the sisters have two tables prepared. The bara is set down upon the first, and the statue of Christ is then lifted from it and placed upon the second. This is in effect Christ's sepulcro, beautifully decorated with flowers by the nuns. The carriers

then pick up the empty bara and leave the church, followed by the statue of the Madonna, always symbolic of the bereft mother who has lost her son, and the priests. The procession has followed the two largest avenues of Amalfi up to this point, and now retraces its steps along the Marina Grande and returns to the Piazza Duomo through the ancient archway which separates it from Piazza Flavio Gioia (another change designed by the 1971 commitato). By approximately 8:45 p.m. all of the procession has mounted the Cathedral's steps once again and disappeared through its huge doors.

At 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. the following morning, the Sisters of Charity return the statue of the Dead Christ to the Cathedral of S. Andrea, utilizing the small back streets of the city rather than the large thoroughfares which permit the confraternity members to walk six abreast. The only part of this usage which Ammendola and his committee wish to change is that of giving money to the sisters via a small basket which is placed at the feet of the Christ statue during the time that it remains with them. First, they feel, such a basket ought not to be used at all, and second, if money is to be collected, it ought to help defray the expenses incurred by the processional committee which must collect on its own.

The Good Friday evening procession in Amalfi seems to provide the clearest example in the area of an ancient tradition which is pulsing with twentieth-century life precisely because young people of that

city are personally committed to both its continuation and its improvement. It is exciting to discover that the procession which offers, visually speaking, the medieval spectacle least disturbed by evidence of twentieth-century life is produced by the young.⁸⁰

As suggested above,⁸¹ the processional traditions of Holy Thursday and Good Friday morning and evening in the Sorrento-Amalfi area, if interpreted in conjunction with one another, become a symbolic reenactment of Christ's passion. The final Easter manifestation of the study, to be described below, seems to provide the generic link between symbolic and actual reenactment.

La Passione di Gesù Cristo⁸²

The Easter celebration in Agerola, above Amalfi, is unique in the area. It is both a procession and a passion play. La Passione di Gesù Cristo ("The Passion of Jesus Christ") consists of seven scenes enacted in six different locations, whose actors move in procession from one setting to the next. As discussed in Chapter II,⁸³ the community of

⁸⁰A final Good Friday procession which takes place every two or three years is that of Seiano. Organized by the Arciconfraternità della Morte ed Orazione, its participants appear in costume: centurians on horseback, soldiers, Herod, Pilate, Caifas, Annas. In this procession Christ is already dead, a statue on a bara once again. This representation of the journey from Calvary travels from Seiano to Vico Equense and back again. It was organized during Easter 1970.

⁸¹See above, pp. 273-274.

⁸²See Appendix III for translation of the text, pp. 357-375.

⁸³See above, pp. 106-107.

Agerola is comprised of tiny mountain towns set within a radius of 11.8 miles. The play is produced by the Church of SS. Annunciata in the town of S. Lazzaro. Its first and last scenes are enacted upon a platform stage erected against the church proper of this town and projecting into its piazza (see Figure 11, p. 308). The intermediary scenes take place in or near the church piazzas in the neighboring towns of Ponte, Bomerano, Pianillo, S. Maria and Campora.

The text of the play is twenty pages in length. It was written by Father Domenico Scala after he became parroco of SS. Annunciata in 1958, and was first produced in 1960. Father Scala wrote it to replace the traditional Holy Thursday procession of S. Lazzaro. He inherited a number of theatrical elements from this procession: costumed actors representing the major figures in the Passion of Christ, the borrowed use of a precious mantle as part of Pontius Pilate's costume, Pilate's verbal condemnation of Christ, his symbolic washing of his hands, and the three falls of Christ. The few lines of dialogue included during these enactments were spoken in dialect. The parroco returned to the four gospels for his material, adding the apocryphal characters of Veronica and a six-man council. The unpublished script is written in Italian rather than in dialect.

The event is directed by its author. Rehearsals begin during the lenten season and involve sixty or seventy persons. In 1971 the part of Christ is played by a baker; in other years he has been played by



Fig. 13. Theatrical performance of the play "The Cross and the Crescent" in the Theatre of the City of Constantinople.

first one manual laborer and then another. Pontius Pilate is played by a hospital attendant, and Herod by a bricklayer. Generally speaking, the actors are farmers and bricklayers, with a sprinkling of university students interspersed. Besides Christ, Pontius Pilate and Herod, the cast consists of Mary Magdalene, Veronica and two other holy women, the council, Hebrew elders, foot soldiers, soldiers on horseback, heralds, and the guards of Christ. The Cronista (chronicler or narrator), who is dressed in a simple suit, is a central figure in the production.

Procession and performance last for more than five hours, beginning at 2:30 p.m. on Good Friday afternoon and continuing until about 8:30, well after it has become dark. A manifesto announcing the event and written by the comitato which produces it is entitled Venerdi Santo Agerolese ("Agerolese Good Friday"). It offers in ample detail both the attitudes of this comitato (and, indirectly, those of the parroco/director) toward this manifestation, and the scenes which it dramatizes. The manifesto is actually a scenario for the play, indicating the specific action which is to occur in each town.

Agerola will again see unfolded along its panoramic streets the moving traditional procession, representing in life the journey of Christ to Calvary. Year by year it acquires a more imposing appearance and arouses an ever-growing devotion, since the manifestation is carefully observed down to its smallest particulars.

S. Lazzaro--Jesus betrayed by Judas, falls into the hands of the Jews who bring him, first before their council which condemns him to death, and then before Pilate so that he may confirm this condemnation.

Ponte--Pilate proposes the choice between Judas and Barabbas, but the people ask for the release of the latter.

Bomerano--Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, who interrogates him and then makes him dress in white,⁸⁴ treating him like a madman. Finally he sends him back to Pilate who condemns him to death.

Pianillo--Jesus falls for the first time under the Cross and the soldiers force Cireneo to carry it in his place.

Campora--the holy Veronica wipes the face of Christ, where he is nailed to the Cross between two thieves. Scene of love and hate around the Cross: he leaves a mother there, the Jews mock him, he pardons his crucifiers and these deride him, he pardons the good thief while the other insults him, he dies on the Cross, the soldiers pierce his side.

Finally after the solemn religious functions in the Church, the procession of the Dead Christ will follow, framed in a realistic yet historical setting offered by the streets of S. Lazzaro and the light of numerous torches. In this manner the moving manifestation will close.

The Commission, aware of the value of the manifestation, invites all people of Agerola and friends of Agerola to participate with faith and devotion.⁸⁵

This last function, the procession of the Dead Christ, corresponds to those processions of Piano, S. Agnello, Sorrento, Positano, Minori, Maiori, Ravello and Amalfi. It becomes almost a postscript to the passion play proper, following a short liturgical service within the church which has in turn followed the final scene enacted on the platform stage without. The tradition of the procession of the Dead Christ is continued, Father Scala believes, because of the people's continued devotion to an established custom. In a similar vein, until four years ago the statue of the Madonna was carried during the play in lieu of the woman

⁸⁴See below, p. 314 for an explanation of the production change to a red garment.

⁸⁵Il Comitato (the Committee), Venerdi Santo Agerolese (Agerola, Cotticelli).

who now enacts the part of Mary. Father Scala was able to bring about this change on the grounds that the part demands few words and these occur late in the play when it has already become dark. The implication in this argument is that some sort of disrespect is implied by the substitution of actress for statue, and that the less notice taken of it the better.⁸⁶

There are, nevertheless, statues indirectly involved during La Passione di Gesù Cristo. On the small bridge between the towns of Ponte and Bomerano, the actors of Christ and Mary meet their sculptured counterparts from the Church of Tutti Santi in Bomerano: that is to say that the two processions meet and pass one another at this point, first passage over the bridge being given to the larger group from S. Lazzaro. It is noteworthy that what probably began by chance--the dramatic meeting of two processions across a bridge from one another, has become a firm part of Good Friday tradition in Agerola.

Both in witnessing this play performed and in examining its text, it is clear that although Christ is its visual star, the Cronista (narrator) is his verbal counterpart. Although a crowd of about 200 people follows the actors throughout the entire performance, the better part of the total audience is comprised of those who await the coming of the actors at each new setting. The Cronista, therefore, offers an initial introduction about Christ as the savior of mankind which precedes

⁸⁶1/17/71, conversation with Father Domenico Scala, parroco of the Church of SS. Annunciata in S. Lazzaro of Agerola.

Christ's first appearance in scene 1 on the platform stage in S. Lazzaro's piazza; he also offers a number of explanatory comments during the acting of the scene. And preceding each of the following six scenes he offers a similar introduction, followed by a brief narration of those events which have thus far been enacted. In Ponte, for example, the town after S. Lazzaro, the somewhat condensed introduction is followed by a short description of Christ's betrayal by Judas--the scene just staged in S. Lazzaro. The Cronista's part is particularly long in the seventh and final scene of the crucifixion, since he explains each piece of dialogue before it takes place. In both the town of S. Maria where Christ meets Mary and in the town of Campora where his encounter with Veronica is enacted, all of the text belongs to the Cronista, for there is no dialogue among the actors.

The text is approximately half narrative and half dialogue.⁸⁷ The narrative is somewhat flowery in its imagery; the dialogue is simple and straightforward. Christ's lines epitomize this economy of style. As suggested above all of it is written to be spoken in formal Italian.

There are a number of production elements about this modest passion play of the mountains which stand out in sharp relief. First there

⁸⁷It is interesting that narrators of some kind almost always figure prominently in plays about Christ's Passion. To note two diverse examples; (1) La Passione di Gesù Cristo (Revello, 1492) often utilizes the narrative/sermonizing voice of its supposed author Fra Simone; (2) The Crucifixion of Jesus (1972), a documentary-drama produced in Jerusalem for CBS-TV in the U.S.A. utilizes a single voice--that of the narrator.

is the generally friendly and informal atmosphere suggested by players and audience alike. A comfortable mingling of actors, producers and directors takes place in the acting area of each town. Thus, for example, both the parroco and a gentleman described as the head of the comitato were often seen close by, if not actually in the middle of the flow of dialogue. Such presences are not, as might be imagined, distracting. Rather, they appear to set the tone for the close physical proximity which occurs between members of the cast/procession and audience, both on the road between towns and in each of the six acting areas. This tone has also been set, it appears, by the manner in which the first audience of the day collects in the piazza of S. Lazzaro to await the beginning of the play. Here a relaxed growing of numbers takes place, and this coming together for the sake of a Good Friday manifestation seems to be a happy social occasion for old and young alike. No one seems upset that the curtain of the platform stage has been blown down by the stiff wind; no one seems to mind an extra hour of that wind when the first scene begins at 3:00 p.m. rather than 2:00 p.m.

Second, there is the candid delight which many of the performers seem to take, both in their costuming and in their acting. The costumes themselves are occasionally good and, in terms of their overall effect, generally successful. Those of the soldiers who carry shields and ride horses simulate appropriate Roman garb: helmets,

sandals, white tunics and gold-embroidered red capes. Pilate and Herod are similarly, but more regally, costumed. The soldiers who guard Christ, on the other hand, wear what Father Scala describes as the "old" costumes: outfits of brown tunics and orange trousers worn with helmets whose place in either time or tradition seem unidentifiable.⁸⁸ The six-man council is effectively costumed in white, belted robes and colorful turbans. The holy women receive short shrift, however, for they seem merely to be draped in pastel-tinted sheets. Christ appears somewhat bulky in his white robe, but this impression may be caused more by the build of the actor than by his costume. In scene 3, played in Bomerano, he is ordered by Herod to don a red garment as a symbol of his madness.⁸⁹ The costuming of Judas seems intended to fulfill the spectator's dream of an undated villain's costume: it includes long black cape, severe black beard, and slosh hat.

The actors most obvious in their enjoyment of acting are those who play the parts of the soldiers and rival one another with their imperious stares and militaristic stances. Pilate and Herod are well-developed characters in the script; their parts demand a good command

⁸⁸6/22/71, conversation with Father Scala of S. Lazzaro.

⁸⁹According to my 6/22/71 conversation with Father Scala, his script originally called for the putting on of a white garment as a symbol of madness (see the Bomerano section of the manifesto, p. 310 above). Father Scala has recently substituted red for white since he feels the dramatic effect created by this color is stronger in this instance (see below, p. 320).

of rhetorical technique smoothly rendered in the 1971 production. Judas' role calls for a melodramatic actor who enjoys projecting as villainous an image possible, and to this end the same actor has played Judas for several years. The council speaks in properly righteous and bombastic tones, and often in unison--a directorial touch which adds little to its power. The actresses' principal function seems to be to walk demurely and look downcast. The manner in which the part of Christ is played is strongly effected by the director. Father Scala wishes to emphasize the physically exhausted state of the man who had been condemned and then reviled and beaten and made to carry a heavy cross. His principal concern in this regard is to make the spectator aware of Christ's intense suffering before his death. The actor, therefore, appears consistently downcast and offers no hint of resentment or defiance at any time. Although such demeanor may be historically speaking, the most accurate possible, it offers little variety from a dramatic point of view, nor is this demeanor made mandatory by the dialogue of the script.

The sounds generated by La Passione di Gesù Cristo, do, however, offer dramatic variety. Three vocal qualities stand out: the objective, informative style of the narrator, the anger of the accusers and judges of Christ, the monosyllabic, almost monotonal delivery of the suffering Christ. A weird dirge, atonal and almost animalistic in quality, is sung by a number of the actors at the conclusion of each

scene except for the last. This is reportedly the traditional Good Friday hymn of Agerola. Apart from voices and songs, one other sound stands out continually and seems, by the end of these proceedings, to have characterized their nomadic nature: the calm, rhythmical sound of the horses' hooves on the country roads and the accompanying sounds of footsteps, both crystalized clearly by the quiet of the mountain countryside which is broken every so often by a particularly noisy gust of wind.

Without question the most impressive of all the production elements of La Passione di Gesù Cristo in Agerola is its variety of simple, yet extremely effective, acting areas. The following is a description of the settings for the separate episodes in each town.

Episode One--S. Lazzaro: The platform stage set against the side of the church in S. Lazzaro has already been mentioned. Not yet mentioned is the wealth of huge trees and impressive arches which loom behind this primitive stage. The arches belong to the Campeggio (sports area or ball field) whose outer wall directly adjoins the church at right angles. Besides arches, this wall boasts a beautiful ancient balcony, and it is from this balcony that Pontius Pilate considers the question of Christ's condemnation for the first time. Folding chairs are set up in front of the platform stage and offer the only formal audience area within the entire production.

Episode Two--Ponte: In this town the choice between Christ and Barrabas which Pilate offers the "crowd" of actors is played against the backdrop of a small but beautiful old church which resembles a tiny castle. The acting area is simply a circle-in-the-street which leads up to the church, marked off by the spear-bearing soldiers of the cast. The audience "crowd" encircles and thus becomes part of the acting "crowd" which demands that Pilate release Barrabas. At the same time other audience members are seen both peering out from the bell tower and windows of the small Church of S. Nicola di Bari and watching from the balconies of an old house which stands adjacent to the church structure. When the scene is over and the actors begin to depart for the next town, the soldiers on horseback made their way through actors and audience alike, and the effect is what one imagines medieval street theatre to have been.

Between Ponte and Bomerano: The walk from Ponte to Bomerano is particularly beautiful in early April. There is a second dramatic effect achieved between these two towns, in addition to the meeting of the two processions on a bridge.⁹⁰ As they march through the young spring green of these gentle hills, with their shields and spears and helmets and boots, both on horseback and on foot, the soldiers appear to be the conquering heroes bent upon their next enterprise; the white-clad, cross-bearing Christ appears to be their most recent captive. The strength of

⁹⁰See above, p. 311.

Rome, which must have been very much a part of the original Calvary experience, is theatrically experienced in a most realistic manner as one watches this procession draw near Bomerano. The organization of the processional aspect of La passione is easily visible as it enters the town:

- 1) Three little boys, in altar boy costume.
- 2) The lead horseman, costumed as a soldier.
- 3) A pair of foot soldiers carrying an ornate banner reading SPQR.
- 4) Six pair of foot soldiers carrying large shields.
- 5) Two soldiers on horseback as heralds with long trumpets.
- 6) Four pair of soldiers on horseback carrying lances.
- 7) Pontius Pilate and Herod, both on horseback.
- 8) The six men of the Council.
- 9) Christ, barefoot, carrying an eight-foot, wooden cross.
- 10) The six men guarding Christ.
- 11) The holy women.
- 12) A group of elderly men representing the Jewish people.
- 13) The crowd of about two hundred followers of the procession.

Episode Three--Bomerano: Bomerano proper offers an altogether different setting from those of S. Lazzaro and Ponte. An Esso gas station is clearly visible from the street area before the Church of S. Matteo Apostolo where the scene of Christ's audience before King Herod and his final condemnation by Pilate are enacted. Between the acting area and the large Esso sign are several tall, sprawling trees (still bare of leaves in April). Local youths have climbed them and calmly survey the entrance of the actors, their scene, and their departure from these most perfect vantage points (see Figure 12, p. 319). Two balconies are utilized as part of the setting. The first, which becomes the balcony of Herod's palace, is located "stage right" of the actors' circle-in-the-street--it is stately in design and projects directly over the main



Fig. 12.--The third scene of La Passione di
Gesu' Cristo is enacted in Bomerano.

coffee-bar of Bomerano. The second balcony, which serves as Pilate's residence and as the place where he washes the guilt from his hands in this dramatization, is situated directly opposite the actors. It is constructed of simple wrought iron and its twin (a third balcony which is not part of the setting, but an audience area) boasts a large Ristorante e Pensione sign while supporting another large group of audience members who are crowded onto it. The Bomerano setting brings together, in a strangely harmonious fashion, the disparate elements of church, bar, restaurant, gas station, beautiful landscape and passion play without seeming to cause a sense of contradiction.

Episode Four--Pianillo: In the town of Pianillo where Christ falls for the first time under the weight of the cross, there are again spectators in the trees, in the bell tower of the local church (S. Pietro Apostolo), and in a circle around the actors who are performing in the street. There is a fourth and different audience area as well. This is provided by the fenced wall of the churchyard which rises directly above the acting area on one side of the street. Thus members of the audience both sit on the wall and peer through the wire fence above it, and in this way obtain "balcony" viewing. Christ is now wearing the red garment which he was forced to put on during the Bomerano episode, and he stands out brilliantly among both actors and spectators as he is relieved briefly of the burden of the cross by Cireneo.

Episode Five--S. Maria: In S. Maria where only the narrator speaks, three new audience areas are created. The small Church of S. Maria a Mare is modern in design; it has a balcony from which a long stairway sweeps down into the churchyard. The yard, in turn, is bounded along its inner side by a grass-terraced wall above which many grape vines grow. The scene of Christ's second fall beneath the cross is viewed from balcony, staircase, and terraced wall, as well as from the street level of the actors and from a fence enclosing the yard on the side opposite the wall.

Episode Six--Campora: The Church of S. Martino, the next town where the procession's circuitous route leads, is large and imposing. So too is the churchyard before it where the scene of Veronica's meeting with Christ is played. Although familiar spectator areas are created--circle-in-the-street, walls and fences--surroundings and composition are unique, being more austere and formal than any of the previous settings.

Episode Seven--S. Lazzaro: The return to S. Lazzaro for the scene of the crucifixion creates a sense of unity and completion for this exercise in theatre "on the road." The actors and original crowd alike are returning home after a strenuous four hours. The fact that the platform stage is used again after five scenes enacted on the pavements of streets or courtyards serves to emphasize the sense of culmination that this final scene evokes. Lit by spotlights and standing before the

curtain (which has been successfully rigged against the wind this time), the narrator offers his final summary of previous scenes enacted. Behind the curtain, three actors mount crosses secured to the stage. When the curtain is raised and one is confronted by the sight of that same Christ with whom one has been walking for hours on the central cross, the effect, although anticipated, is overwhelming. The now nearly-naked Christ is ingeniously tied to the cross of which he has just been relieved. The spectators are clearly weary and in that slightly numbed state which comes of physical exertion and exposure to the wind. They are acutely aware that this Christ must be infinitely more exhausted than themselves, not only because of the long journey beneath the burden of the cross and in bare feet, but also because it is common knowledge in Agerola that the actor prepares himself for the spiritual demands of his role by rigorous fast and abstinence before and on Good Friday. The experience of physical strain on the part of the audience, therefore, as a result of the long afternoon's procession, seems to be a major factor in the sense of sympathy and sorrow with which the crucifixion scene is viewed.

A viewing of private films belonging to the director which record the 1968 and 1970 productions indicate that La passione di Gesù Cristo does not change from year to year. Father Scala states that costumes and stage properties have been immensely improved since the inception

of the manifestation in 1960.⁹¹ The script has, he reports, remained unchanged since 1960 except for minor cuts in the narrator's part for the sake of shortening the time-span of the overall production. The Naples branch of the Italian Ministry of Tourism agree, in the spring of 1971, to support further productions of the play with a sum of 200,000 lire (\$322.00 U.S.)--money for which Father Scala applied two years earlier and which he envisions using in order to further improve costumes and props. Aside from these minor changes, however, the formula of this manifestation--play and procession, theatre and belief--appears to be highly successful with the people of Agerola and with its many visitors. It seems likely, therefore, that La passione di Gesù Cristo will continue to be enacted in its present form for many years to come.

⁹¹4/6/71, conversation with Father Scala.

CONCLUSION

The ritual theatre of the Sorrentine Peninsula and the Coast of Amalfi has been examined in its diverse genres of procession, occasional drama, and scenic representation. The processional form is the most common of the three, and is the means of special celebration employed on saints' days, on occasions honoring the Madonna, on the feast of Corpus Domini, at Christmas time, and on Holy Thursday and Good Friday of the Easter Holy Week. The most dominant characteristic of processions venerating the saints and the Madonna is their emphasis, both through popular belief and tradition and through the manifestations and properties employed within the processional structure, upon the role of these figures as protectors. The general emphasis of Corpus Domini processions is upon the public veneration of the Eucharist and upon the attempt, while maintaining an atmosphere of solemnity, to make vivid and as concrete as possible the belief in Christ's presence through the sacrament. Christmas Eve processions are organized to place the Infant Jesus in the manger, and Epiphany processions to reenact the coming of the Magi. The purpose of the numerous processions of Holy Thursday and Good Friday is both to commemorate and to represent the passion of Christ.

La cantata dei pastori, the Neapolitan nativity play, combines commedia dell'arte and sacra rappresentazione characteristics in so engaging a fashion that it has continued to be performed at Christmas time in the environs of Naples for nearly three hundred years. The production of La passione di Gesù Cristo, an original processional drama opening with Christ's condemnation and ending with his crucifixion, is a ten-year-old innovation in the mountain community of Agerola, above Amalfi. Both plays serve to illustrate the phenomenon of the generation of theatrical art for the sake of a specific liturgical occasion.

Scenic representation, in the varied forms of presepi, sepolcri, and altari, are also occasioned by specific celebrations. The diverse presepi (crèches) discussed offer the staging of sculptured figures in versions of the nativity which, although non-verbal, are invariably theatrical and often eloquent. The sepolcri, or displays created within churches in order to adorn the Holy Thursday repository of the Eucharist, vary from ornate floral decorations to stage sets of the Last Supper to tappeti di seccatura (rugs of sawdust) depicting scenes from the gospels of the Easter season. Because of their celebration of the place where the consecrated hosts are conserved during the only time of the liturgical year when the act of consecration may not be performed, it is clear that these sepolcri are living derivatives of the medieval Visitation Sepulchri office and, probably, of the medieval Quem Queritis

plays as well. Altari, usually associated with the feast of Corpus Domini, often refer to altars erected along processional routes as places of benediction; they refer as frequently to huge painted canvases, also erected along the streets, which depict impressive, seemingly-three-dimensional representations of churches and shrine arches.

The curtailment of ecclesiastic support both for processions and for scenic representations has come about gradually but steadily since the Second Vatican Council. This curtailment results from two present-day intentions of the Church hierarchy--first, to de-emphasize the veneration of the saints and the Madonna among the faithful in order to return to a more direct appreciation of Christ and his teachings, and second, to eliminate the image of an archaic Church in a modern world. Efforts to effect curtailment, in the form of bishops' directives to the priests of the Sorrento-Amalfi area, however, often meet resistance, both from clergy and from laity who, for a variety of reasons, do not wish traditions to be destroyed. Since it is the Church itself which, having fostered these forms of ritual theatre, now wishes to reduce them (and perhaps, do away with them altogether), another comparison with the medieval Church has been suggested. Just as the cathedrals of medieval Europe gradually eliminated the dramatic interpolations which had developed within the structure of the Mass, so,

now, churches throughout Southern Italy are being asked to curtail these traditional manifestations which at one time they encouraged.

It has been suggested that the recording of these forms of ritual theatre has historical value in view of strong indications that they are on the wane. An additional reason for compiling this record is the fact that no publication, either in Italian or in English, treats these celebrations as a body.

After studying the ritual theatre of the Sorrento-Amalfi area, some conclusions may be drawn about the religious-theatrical relationship upon which it is based. One of the definitions of religion offered by Peter L. Berger in his sociological study of religion, The Sacred Canopy, is the following: "Religion is a human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established."¹ (The Latin root of "religion" is religare, meaning "to bind back" or "to bind together.") A recent article in the New York Times Book Review enumerated expressions of anger and sorrow voiced by diverse contemporary personalities as the result of the vast reforms brought about within the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. Besides the concern expressed for the stability of the institution and for the exoticism of the Vatican was the concern for certain traditions:

¹Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 25.

Other men did not ask for stability from Rome, but for some richness of tradition, continuity. Their regret was not political but esthetic. The dramaturgy of the sung High Mass, the seasonal Latin prayers accumulated over centuries, the complex divine office chanted in monasteries--all these were things as tangible, for cherishing, as cathedrals or basilicas. Thus a cultured group in England, made up of people like Robert Graves and Nancy Mitford, wrote the Pope charging him with his cultural responsibility for this heritage, holding him responsible for its retention.²

These two concepts--(1) that religion is a human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established, and (2) that a sense of cultural responsibility dictates the preservation of the traditions of the Church--have bearing upon the religious-theatrical relationship underlying this study. The "sacred cosmos" of the Sorrento-Amalfi area has been built upon the teachings of the Church and upon its liturgical traditions; this "sacred cosmos" has been further supported by the extra-liturgical celebrations which comprise the ritual theatre of the area. If this ritual theatre dies out because the Church no longer feels that its sense of cultural responsibility applies to such activity, then it is probable that despite teachings and liturgy, belief in the "sacred cosmos" itself will die as well.

Put differently, the essential ingredient which both the "sacred cosmos" and the ritual theatre of the Sorrento-Amalfi area share is their mutual dependence upon the human "suspension of disbelief." Both religion and theatre, as institutions, attempt to persuade men to

²Garry Wills, "Catholic Faith and Fiction," The New York Times Book Review (Jan. 16, 1972), p. 1.

believe certain concepts--the first for the duration of a lifetime; the second for the duration of performance. In all probability, therefore, when the suspension of disbelief no longer takes place during celebrations of a theatrical nature which support the "sacred cosmos" of a given area, then this cosmos itself will start to lose the belief essential to its continued existence as a reality within that community.

It is ironic to note that, as forces within the Church move toward the elimination of local ritual theatre pertaining to its "sacred cosmos," voices of the modern western theatre call for movement toward ritual in theatre. One of the most prophetic and least understood of these voices was that of Antonin Artaud. Writing in 1933 he stated:

The Theatre of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle; to seek in the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds when, all too rarely nowadays, the people pour out into the streets.³

Jean-Paul Sartre, in analyzing his first experience in the theatre, wrote in 1946, "I realized what theatre ought to be--a great collective, religious experience."⁴ That admirer of Artaud, Peter Brook, wrote in 1969 of the emptiness of theatre without ritual.

The actor searches vainly for the sound of a vanished tradition, critic and audience follow suit. We have lost all sense of ritual

³Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double, trans. by Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958). p. 85.

⁴Jean-Paul Sartre, "Forgers of Myths," European Theories of the Drama, ed. by Barrett H. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 402.

and ceremony--whether it be connected with Christmas, birth-days or funerals--but the words remain with us and old impulses stir in the marrow. We feel we should have rituals, we should do "something" about getting them and we blame the artists for not "finding" them for us. So the artist sometimes attempts to find new rituals with only his imagination as his source . . . the result is rarely convincing.⁵

More than ever, we crave for an experience that is beyond the humdrum. Some look for it in jazz, classical music, in marijuana and in LSD. In the theatre we shy away from the holy because we don't know what this could be--we only know that what is called the holy has let us down.⁶

But we are discovering that a holy theatre is still what we need.⁷

An explanation for this need was offered by Clive Barnes when, in writing about the Living Theatre, he stated in 1968:

What I think may well be happening is the creation of a basically new theatrical form which will cater to man's need for ritual and involvement, a need previously met by organized religion.⁸

When asked his opinion regarding the future longevity of the forms of ritual theatre treated by this study, the well-known Neapolitan playwright, Eduardo De Filippo, responded: "They won't die out. They have to be re-done, re-worked, re-styled--for the sake of tradition."⁹ It is my hope that De Filippo's prediction is correct, for the sake of that sense of cultural responsibility mentioned above. If it is not, then sometime in the near future, the people of the Sorrento-Amalfi area may begin casting about for new forms of ritual theatre.

⁵Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 45-46.

⁶Ibid., p. 48. ⁷Ibid., p. 64.

⁸Clive Barnes, "Clive Barnes versus Eric Bentley," New York Times, Section 2 (October 27, 1968).

⁹3/16/71, conversation with Eduardo De Filippo, in Naples.

APPENDIX I

The city of Nola, population 24,000, is located east of Vesuvius, thirty miles from Naples. Its famous June celebration, the Festa dei Gigli (Feast of the Lilies) provides an interesting footnote to the feste of Corpus Domini in the Sorrento-Amalfi area discussed in Chapter III, since it occurs at the time of Corpus Domini and since many from the area go to see it. (As explained on p. 181 above, although Corpus Domini occurs fifty days after Easter Sunday--in 1971 the date was June 10th--there were Corpus Domini feste organized from June 10th through June 29th, at the discretion of the individual parrocchie. It is sometimes assumed in the Sorrento-Amalfi area, therefore, that Nola's Festa dei Gigli, celebrated from the Friday to the Sunday following S. Paolino's day on June 22nd, is another Corpus Domini celebration.)

The Festa dei Gigli pertains to the veneration of Nola's patron, and not to the sacrament of the Eucharist. S. Paolino was born in Bordeaux about 350 A.D. and came to Nola as a priest in 396. He became bishop of the city in 421, and died ten years later.¹ His

¹Ch. Pietri, Saint Paulin de Nole (Namur, Belgique: Les Editions du Soleil Levant, 1963), pp. 7-15.

writings--poems, letters and sermons--have remained in tact. The festa in his honor commemorates his return from Africa after having been held there as a prisoner by invaders of his city.² It is said that he was greeted on the shore by his people, all of whom were bearing lilies.³

Giglio means lily, only the gigli borne in the saint's honor today are thirty-three yards high. Over the centuries, the tradition of representing those first welcoming lilies grew in physical proportions until a local ruling established a maximum height for reasons of safety.⁴ These phenomenal structures are shaped like obelisks or bell towers or elongated pyramids. Each giglio demands the strength of a hundred men beneath its weight in order to be carried about the city, as is the custom. Each is constructed about a central wooden spine, and six feet from its base there is a platform built around this spine which seats a band of musicians. The successors of the eight ancient guilds of the city all produce gigli, and each one is carried on the shoulders of men who move rhythmically together, accompanied by the band seated about six feet above their heads. The designs of the gigli vary from year to year, and like presepi, reflect different architectural styles--renaissance, baroque, oriental, and modern, for example. These styles are reflected,

²Pinuzzo, Cavalcata dei santi, pp. 218-219.

³6/28/71, interview with Father Vincenzo Trapanese, teacher of languages in Nola.

⁴Ibid.

in turn, in the ornamentation, section by section (in almost totem pole fashion), of these immense structures. The sections diminish in width as they ascend in height, and at the top of every towering giglio is a statue of S. Paolino.

The festa lasts at least three days. The procession includes the eight gigli, the silver bust of the saint belonging to the local cathedral bearing his name, and a boat commemorating his sea voyage home from Africa. The last event of the festa is the judging of the gigli by a jury comprised of a member of each of the eight guilds and the mayor of the city.

It is the opinion of the festa's local critics that the festa has gotten out of hand financially speaking.⁵ Although the basic giglio costs about sixteen hundred dollars to construct, each guild usually spends about ten thousand dollars annually on this project. Better than half of these sums are spent outside the city itself, usually in Naples.

⁵Antonio Profeta, "La Festa dei Giglie e in Crisi?", Sagra dei Gigli (Nola: Edizioni "Giugno Artistico Nolano," 1971), p. 8.

APPENDIX II

The last part of Chapter IV (pp. 235-254) is devoted both to a description of a production of La cantata dei pastori and to an analysis of the script. Therefore, part of the play is translated and included here in order to provide the reader with a sense of the mixed genres it presents. Although the original play is written in poetry (rhymed couplets for the most part), the translation is in prose, since it seemed that a rhymed English translation would hinder both the meaning of the lines and the enjoyment of the humor.

There are at least four editions of the play: the original 1698 edition; the 1887 edition cited by Benedetto Croce in I teatri di Napoli (1926); the Naples edition of 1950 published by Bideri and cited in Chapter IV; and the text used for this translation which was published in Il dramma, 27th year, N. 123-124, Torino, January 1951. This last seemed the more appropriate of the two recent editions for translation since it has been edited and provides better reading than the slightly longer 1950 edition.

The third act of the play has been chosen for translation since it offers a comprehensive view of the characters as well as both the play's climax and its resolution.

Preceding the first exchange, Belfegor disguised as Satyr and Gabriel as Sybil have unfolded and contrasted their respective programs for subjugating evil and redeeming the world. The parenthetical passages of the Il dramma translation describe other sections of dialogue which have been omitted in that text.

La cantata dei pastori
("The Song of the Shepherds")

Dott. Casimiro Ruggiero Ugone

ACT THREE

BEL. Who is that who comes reading sheaves of paper and dressed like an Egyptian? I will frighten her in order to find out who she is. Hello, woman, who are you? What are you looking for? Speak.

GAB. Whoever has ever been good can see [who I am]. The question is, who are you? The heart will believe you if you are a worm or a ghost.

BEL. My form combines man and savage. Although my face is horrible and my hair shaggy, I hide and conceal a rustic god.

GAB. A god? You amaze me. And who do you think worships you? The king of the Poles possesses these attributes, and he alone.

BEL. What? Are you saying that different powers don't rule the world?

GAB. There is only one power behind all law and order and organization.

BEL. If the eternal gods are in the air and mortal man is on the earth, then between man and god there is a mixed nature with both eternal and mortal gifts, and this am I.

GAB: What lies have you dreamed? From what I have studied, the only mixture which exists between man and God is myself.

BEL: And who has revealed this to you, insane woman?

GAB: I do not know who told me this; I know only that the knowledge comes from above.

BEL: You speak blindly, and you are blind in your work.

GAB: The prophetic light (that is, to be able to see the truth without veil of shadow) would be a gift of nature and not of heaven.

BEL: And where do you find this evidence?

GAB: From the greatest prophets.

BEL: You have made a thousand errors.

GAB: If you knew me you would say it is not possible to deceive the Sybil Eritrea.

BEL: The Sybil Eritrea is long since dead, and it is clear from what she wrote that she did not speak the truth.

GAB: You lie, for I speak the truth. And the truth will be revealed for I arise to damn you.

BEL: Oh, this is a new subject! And how? And when has it become usual for retrogression to be won from privation?

GAB: You want to know too much; and if what I have told you is not enough, ask more of the ghosts, the mirrors and you will wrest the truth from the echoes.

BEL: What must I establish upon a false sound? The truth? From your words it seems an experiment will be a trick of the wind.

GAB: Listen how heaven answers me: speak, courteous voices, if a god becomes man, who will take false thinking from the world?

(ECHO: light)¹

¹In the Italian, the "echo" seems in fact to echo by rhyme the last word of the line which precedes it. For example, GAB: "Che veste dalla colpa a vendicame? (ECO: Carne)." The play on words derived from each rhymed "echo" depends upon the potential of many Italian words to be broken down into components which are complete words in themselves.

BEL: Who gives this light? Why do I feel afraid? Why is my suspicion swept away?

(ECHO: shadow)

GAB: Dear light, what will you give to man?

(ECHO: a ray)

BEL: And who has made the abyss disappear for you?

(ECHO: pain)

GAB: And what is brought to the spirit if one has hope of life?

(ECHO: life)

BEL: And what about Pluto, who has weakened his powers?

(ECHO: death)

GAB: Who takes the blame so that we may get revenge?

(ECHO: the flesh)

BEL: Who does this to have his spirit healed?

(ECHO: the lamb)

GAB: Nor will he any longer be a severe judge of the world.

(ECHO: it is true)

BEL: I hope that his cult and worship will grow.

(ECHO: you lie)

GAB: Who has conquered the forces of the Stix and of man?

(ECHO: man)

BEL: I have never seen a man capable of this.

(ECHO: God)

GAB: I am certain that a man-GOD is close at hand.

(ECHO: certainly)

BEL: I would that in his coming he conquers the earth.

(ECHO: you err)

GAB: Who is able to conquer an obstinate monster?

(ECHO: born)

BEL: This one, when born, will cause great mortal sorrow.

(ECHO: so much)

GAB: Then I must quickly go to adore him.

(ECHO: quickly)

BEL: I will weep if I lose every power.

(ECHO: pagan gods)

GAB: Where will I go if sorrow overcomes me?

(ECHO: fly)

BEL: And where can I find refuge?

(ECHO: flee)

GAB: You flee, I fly, and see, atrocious monster, what power a single voice has to frighten you.

BEL: Now I recognize you, my old secret enemy; but you oppose and frighten me in vain, for I do not fear a cave and I am not afraid of an echo.

(GABRIEL and BELFEGOR disappear, and RAZZULLO enters still tormented by hunger. After him enter BENINO who offers the hospitality of his cabin.)

BENINO: If you want to watch sheep with me, I'll beg my father and he will accept you.

RAZ: If you do this, you'll make me so happy that in order to eat I'll butcher the animals.

BENINO: Here is my father.

RAZ: Please go ahead with it so that my stomach gets rid of this hunger.

BENINO: I'll beg him so much that he will take you.

(ARMENZIO enters at this moment looking for BENINO)

ARM: I don't know where Benino is. That boy as if he were a flame of silver disappears from before my eyes every minute.

BENINO: Father.

RAZ: Oh, father.

BENINO: This man whom you see is a poor foreigner, and he has the intention of staying to guard our flock. I beg you to accept him.

RAZ: Have pity.

BEN: Poor fellow! He has no way to live.

RAZ: Now I'm dressed like a beggar.

ARM: Who have you served before this?

RAZ: I don't know his name. But he was a bad type who was showing off and saying he could kill bears and lions.

BEN: And this is my brother.

RAZ: I have tried several times to be a hunter, but I always miss.

ARM: No, no I'll teach you to watch the sheep, but you must be faithful to me.

RAZ: You can be sure that my hands are clean. I have been a scribe.

ARM: You will see that our work is easy to do. In the morning you must take the flock to the country so that they may graze, be sure everything goes well, and return them to the fold in the evening; at night you must stay alert and not sleep, so that wolves won't come and snatch a lamb.

RAZ: The day sounds fine, but I don't know about the night. What if my eyes can't take it and I am dying of sleep?

BEN: All you have to do is get used to it.

ARM: This is the whole job: it is necessary for a good shepherd to be watchful at any hour.

RAZ: All right, I'll do it. But tell me something. You want me to be a good man, but you haven't mentioned when I am going to eat.

ARM: There is never lack of food. At the cabin there is bread and wine and cheese.

RAZ: You're talking, but I really have to eat!

ARM: The person who works is never denied food.

BEN: Come, we'll enjoy ourselves. I'll kill a lamb so that you can eat and if you make me laugh, you'll have what you want.

RAZ: Feed me, and I'll be a clown for you.

(In the succeeding scene RUSCIELLO meets BELFEGOR still dressed as a SATYR who promises him a treasure)

BEL: A mine of gold, silver and precious jewels is hidden in a cave in Bethlehem, where a kingdom of Judas is buried. I am its keeper for he told me to give it to whomever I wished. Now you must find a companion or else a follower of the mosaic law or of nature so that I may miraculously give my treasures there, so that some deity will bend down and adore me.

RUSC: Gentle fawn, you know that I am of the gentiles and have always adored idols, and if I am happy today because of you, I will recognize you as my only idol.

BEL: Then come to this wood with your friend, where invoking the forest god three times I will come flying and will tell you what to do to get rich.

RUSC: And what obligation I will have to you if this is true?
Goodby, misery, now I can be happy.

BEL: If you are a fisherman now and you become my servant you
will catch gold and silver for fish.

(BELFEGOR disappears. CIDONIO enters and RUSCIELLO
explains the promise of the disguised SATYR to him. CIDONIO
attempts to convince him that it is the plot of a demon)

CID: I don't believe him, Rusciello.

RUSC: Come with me and you'll be the witness yourself.

CID: Either he's false or else he wants to betray you with the
form of a demon satyr.

RUSC: I am only interested in what makes me happy.

CID: Evil disguises itself with a mask of goodness.

RUSC: Do you want to be poor when you can be rich?

CID: So then all of the treasure can be yours.

RUSC: That means you are too scrupulous. I'll find others who
want to have riches and don't think of anything else.

CIDONIO: You're going over the precipice, poor blind man.
What riches can an angel have who has fallen and lost the treasure of
grace?

(In the following scene RAZZULLO is seen dressed as a shepherd
and finally loaded with food)

RAZ: Oh food that I've waited for! Oh finally, dreamed of food!
I've become a shepherd and that old man counted the sheep and the
goats for me and he put this big skin on my shoulders. I've taken
possession of the cabin, and have found bread and wine, a ham, half
a cheese and four apples. My belly, my belly, be happy that finally
a little peace has come.

BEN (from inside): I hid some little things in a hole and I can't
find them. I had hidden them from my father, and someone else took
them from me as soon as he entered--the Neapolitan I think, who has
light hands.

RAZ (eating): These little apples are something for gentlemen, tender and tasty: my stomach, you have the right to them too.

BEN: Didn't I say it, this fool makes me a clown and I suffer? I want revenge without his discovering me. I'll pull out a performance. I want to see if he can resist the shock. You can't rob a thief.
(calling) Hey hick, hick!

RAZ: Is he calling me? I wish I knew where to hide this stuff. Oh well, leave it to me, I'll mash it into this ditch.

BEN: Oh hick! (he comes out)

RAZ: Again, that name! Brother, don't call me that. I was born a gentleman.

BEN: This name has never offended a shepherd.

RAZ: Hick is a bad name in my home town.

BEN: Let's forget this argument, because it's not the time to fool around. My father has sent for you.

RAZ: To do what?

BEN: Now I'll tell you. Did you know that those bandits infested this wood?

RAZ: Those horned monkeys? I wish I had never met them.

BEN: Those men forced my father to give them food, to feed them. And so he put poison in some ham, cheese and bread, and hid all of it in a hole so that, unwarned, someone might find this food and eating it, poison himself.

RAZ: What? What? What are you saying? You mean there was poison hidden in the food?

BEN: The poison is there. Now father wants us to bring that food to the robbers in order to get them out of the way. Oh what fun it will be to see those angry wolves eating without knowing they are being poisoned. Come on, let's get the stuff.

RAZ: What do you want to get? The omelette's already fried.

BEN: Can I ask what's happened to you? Are you drunk?

RAZ: I'm not drunk. It's my bad luck, I'm poisoned.

BEN: You're poisoned? Who gave you the poison?

RAZ: I took it myself.

BEN: Out of despair?

RAZ: I don't know. I was a moron.

BEN: Oh come on, let's get the stuff. They're waiting for us.

RAZ: I ate the food. It was poisoned. And I've paid with my life.

BEN: You ate the food?

RAZ: Hurry up, go call the doctor.

BEN: Now, repent for what you've done.

RAZ: Die body, you didn't have patience.

BEN: I'll go find somebody to help you.

RAZ: Go and come back quickly. Because my nose is already cold and my sight is foggy. I can't breath and I'm falling.

BEN: When you get good advice, listen to it (and learn not to rob a robber).

RAZ: What cursed fortune. The more I dig, the more disgrace I find. I finally eat and I find death.

(ARMENZIO enters and finds RAZZULLO who has thrown himself on ground, wailing).

RAZ: I'm dead, I'm dying, and I'm about to die.

ARM: What do I see? He is lying on the ground. I don't know if he is dead or asleep. Hey Razzullo!

RAZ: I don't know anything else.

ARM: What are you doing?

RAZ: What am I doing? I'm dead.

ARM: You dead and you're talking to me?

RAZ: And so I died of talking too much.

ARM: No more jokes. Get up and talk to me.

RAZ: If I'm dead how do you expect me to answer you?

ARM: Have you been hurt?

RAZ: No, poisoned.

ARM: By snakes?

RAZ: From the food.

ARM: What food?

RAZ: The food that was hidden.

ARM: Oh, you stole those leftovers that were in the basket.

RAZ: What basket? The food that you wanted to poison the robbers with. And it was hidden.

ARM: What, are you crazy? Who made you believe that?

RAZ: There's no sense pretending any more; you put the poison in the food.

ARM: Why would I do that?

RAZ: To poison those bandits.

ARM: Who told you that?

RAZ: Your son.

ARM: That boy is so sneaky. He had the leftovers, and because you took them, he made up this story and told it to you to get revenge.

RAZ: Then it's not true that you poisoned the food?

ARM: What poison? Are you crazy? The boy was joking and wanted to frighten you to death.

RAZ: Goat, coward, scoundrel!

ARM: But you, you deserted the whole flock?

RAZ: To have a little breakfast.

ARM: Now go on, go back to the sheepfold. And for this time I forgive you. But don't abandon the sheep again.

RAZ: Don't worry, I'm going now. See what a fool that little kid made of me. I think that I turned very yellow, like a poor little dead man.

(ARMENZIO exits, and RUSCIELLO enters and persuades RAZZULLO to divide the treasure hidden in the grotto with him if he will come adore the god who guards it. Summoned by RUSCIELLO, BELFEGOR appears in the form of a SATYR)

BEL: Is this the companion who will get the treasure with you?

RUSC: I have convinced this man to do it with me.

BEL: And will he be faithful to me?

RAZ: I don't want to know anything else, not even the salt.

BEL: Who are you frightening?

RAZ: I am afraid of being stabbed.

RUSC: Don't be afraid. He is that gentlest fawn that we have in these woods.

RAZ: I never saw a god with horns.

BEL: What? Isn't the moon in the heavens homed, and doesn't Cynthia adore it?

RAZ: But you are bad luck.

RUSC: Go make obeisance to him.

RAZ: Brother, we agree: I have horns too--it must be the style. But what are we going to do about this tail?

BEL: It must seem strange to you in these woods and mountains to see a god having this shape.

RUSC: This is the way one sees goat forms, and human forms too who take their origin from the great Pan.

RAZ: What bread?² What biscuit? This is either a demon or a goat.

BEL: Stop these words, fool!

RUSC: Be quiet or you'll lose the fortune and you'll be ruined.

BEL: Don't you want the treasure: I want to give it to you. This way neither of you will be beggars any longer. But only if you do as I say.

RUSC: We will.

RAZ: If it's something we can do.

BEL: Do you promise?

RUSC: I swear.

RAZ: And I promise too.

BEL: The treasure is hidden in a cave in Bethlehem.

RAZ: Which one? At the grotto where the snakes are? I don't want to hear anything else.

BEL: A dragon guards this mine, and at my signal he will give you everything. But with gifts there is work to be done.

RAZ: The only thing I can do is give him some bread.

BEL: No, he only eats dead bodies.

RUSC: What do you mean, dead bodies?

RAZ: And are you healthy?

²Pane means "bread" in Italian--thus the play on words of Pane (Pan) and pane (bread).

BEL: You know that the god of riches is Pluto, and he gives them out in the form of snakes which can only be pacified with blood.

RAZ: I'll kill a pig and give him all the blood he wants.

BEL: Listen carefully. An old man and a pregnant woman have taken refuge from the weather in that cave without paying respect to the great god who lives there. You must kill them and bathe the ground with their blood--then it will open and give you the treasure.

RUSC: Bring death to two innocent people?

RAZ: Go to hell! Is that the way you want to get the treasure?

RUSC: You are so barbarous--now I understand that you are a god from hell, not from the sky.

BEL: You are unworthy and don't deserve to be rich. Go hang yourselves!

RAZ: And now, my stupid friend, what do you say: Are we rich or are we happy? And he wanted us to kill those two saints, the stupid thief.

RUSC: You are evil and the only richness you have is this--go throw yourself over the abyss. I detest you.

RAZ: Oh god, how dark it is. And the sheep are scattered all over the place and you've made me waste so much time with you.

(JOSEPH enters looking for wood to make a fire in the grotto with. GABRIEL disguised as a shepherd appears to him with a bundle in his hand)

GAB: Good old man, at this time in these woods? And where do you have your room?

JOS: A humble cave protects us from the inclement sky. And since my wife is about to give birth, I'd like to fight off the cold with a bit of fire.

GAB: Don't worry, I gathered a few pieces when the weather was good and I am going to get them; here is the bundle; I give them to you. Do what you have to do; the compassionate heavens never desert you when you are in need.

JOS: I don't have enough strength. I am old and cannot lift the weight.

GAB: I will carry the bundle to your place on my shoulders. Follow my light.

JOS: It is no one other than God who leads me.

(In the following scene, after a short monlog by RAZZULLO who laments the loss of a sheep, ARM ENZIO and BENINO enter and are angry with him)

ARM: Is this the way you guard sheep?

RAZ: Yes sir.

ARM: What did you say?

RAZ: No sir.

ARM: I want to hear how that lamb was lost.

RAZ: The more I explain the more trouble I'll get into,

BEN: Where's the sheep, joker?

RAZ: It must have run away. How should I know?

BEN: Scoundrel.

ARM: Lazy.

BEN: So this is the way you serve?

ARM: Now you're going to feel the strength of my staff.

RAZ: Not that, you can't do that!

BEN: Have you come to bring about our ruin?

RAZ: What, do you want to make noise?

ARM: How did it happen?

RAZ: And you're against me too? He's not content that he's already poisoned my food?

ARM: You are making me very angry.

BEN: My bile is rising too.

RAZ: This one torments me more than the old man.

ARM: Now you're going to get it, wretch! (he beats him)

BEN: You deserve it, insolent.

ARM: You're going to die under this stick.

RAZ: Damn, and there's nothing that can help me.

RUSC (entering with CIDONIO): Stop beating him, Armenzio!

CID: Control yourself, father.

RUSC: Have pity on this miserable fellow.

ARM: He deserted my flock.

RAZ: He put me in this mess. Tell him what happened. I wish you were dead.

RUSC: I am the only one who deserves the punishment.

RAZ: Ah, here we are.

RUSC: I took him from the flock to take a treasure from a disguised satyr.

CID: You let him trick you? And for what?

RUSC: I almost made such a terrible mistake that I could have killed myself.

ARM: You saw a satyr: and don't you know that these are demons?

RAZ: I was telling him.

ARM: They deceive mortals with an evil cult, and they bring disrespect to the real gods.

RUSC: I have worshipped so many gods by this time, that I can't even list them.

ARM: Ah son, so many gods are in danger, and the world and the heavens are upside down.

RUSC: I know, reflecting on their customs, that they are furies from Avemo, and not really gods.

CID: So, father, I beg you to forgive the poor hick, who was tempted and let himself be carried away.

ARM: What will we do if the wolves, attracted by the lamb, return tonight to do greater damage?

RUSC: We will keep watch, and I will keep watch with you.

CID: We must all keep awake in order to pass a long and tedious night in this annoying place.

ARM: Then we must all stay alert and with songs and jokes we will watch around the fire tonight.

RAZ: And let's not talk about what happened any more.

ARM: For this time. If you keep watch, no other sheep will be stolen.

BEN: Get up, come on, we forgive you.

CID: Now come on, no more words. Hick, carry the wood and light the fire.

RAZ: I'll take the bundle and I'll light it; but be patient if there is smoke.

ARM: And so, Rusciello, you let yourself be tricked?

RUSC: That unworthy beast wanted me to kill two innocent people for gold and silver.

BEN: The wood is wet.

RAZ: And now it's getting aired, and I'll show you how it lights up.

ARM: Alright, now to keep our eyes from sleeping, sing something Razullo, and you Benino, bring the flask and pass around the wine.

RAZ: You put me to sing and you keep the beat. Let's stir the fire, it's going out.

CID: Come on, don't make us beg you. Let's have a song.

RUSC: Come on, do yourself honor.

RAZ: You can't think of terrible things when you die.

(sings):

Bad luck, how ungrateful,
It's against me,
It is so cruel it makes me scream.
It's looking for refreshment,
It kills me and I die.
Beautiful woman, ball of gold,
Little pigeon, little spirit,
You mustn't contradict me . . .

ARM: Hurrah.

CID: Hurrah.

RUSC: He deserves applause.

RAZ: Everyone says hurrah and no one drinks.

BELFEGOR (invisible): I see a great sign, a great light in the sky; and why am I afraid? It can't be they. Now that they are awake and admirers of good news, I am going to give all of them a sleeping potion.

BEN: Here's the wine.

(BELFEGOR puts potion into it)

ARM: To you, sons.

RUSC & CID: Here's to your good health.

ARM: Now you drink, Rusciello.

RUSC: No, no, let Cidonio drink.

RAZ: Listen to all this good humor. These shepherds are so polite.

(everyone drinks)

ARM: I'm so sleepy.

CID: What a good taste.

RUSC: My head is so heavy.

BEN: Oh, what laziness.

RAZ: It seems that I'm going away.

ARM: Don't fall asleep.

CID: I'm not.

RUSC: I'm awake.

BEN: And I'm watching.

RAZ: But here everyone is falling asleep.

ARM: I can't make it any more.

CID: I give up.

RUSC: My eyes are shutting.

BEN: Mine too.

RAZ: Hey everybody! They're all asleep. I want to sleep too. . .

(everyone sleeps)

BEL: They already closed their eyes. Ah, what do I see? The earth is open and the most beautiful confusion descends from winged warriors while the air glistens. Miserable me, that I was ever born! Perhaps the Messiah who is destined to descend to the Phlegethon³ has been born.

CHORUS OF ANGELS: Glory to God, peace to man, war to the abyss.

³The Flegetonte (Phlegethon) is a river of blood referred to in the first ring of the seventh circle of Dante's Inferno.

BEL: What new light is this: What shadow descends to melt in the earth?

CHORUS OF ANGELS: Joy to heaven, joy to earth, war to Pluto.

BEL: How good that I buried those who would be witnesses to the world of such wonder and astonishment in lethargy.

GAB: No, because heaven has aroused them into very wide-awake persons. Flee, infernal monster, flee dragon, flee horror of hell to your Pluto.

BEL: I flee, and why?

GAB: Because the shadow has been dispersed by the light.

BEL: Then the Messiah has already been born?

GAB: You knew he would be born when God wished.

BEL: You really mean to tell me that a child is born?

GAB: The truth bursts forth, the false flees, the sun is born.

BEL: Shall I clarify the suspects by whom the unjust heaven has condemned me?

CHORUS: No, no, no.

BEL: And will I always remain in darkness like this?

CHORUS: Yes, yes, yes.

GAB: So depart, disappear, vanish, and if you are in darkness shadow will follow you.

BEL: I become more entangled in darkness; I will always be the enemy of light.

GAB: And you, oh simple shepherds, who have been buried by the force of Lethe, awake, arise, renew the earth, every man rejoice; here the flowers blossom, the stars shine, get up and hear the joyous sound of heavenly voices echo: he is the world.

ARM: Who's waking me up?

CID: Where am I?

RUSC: What harmony wakes me?

BEN: Who is calling me?

RAZ: What do I see: The sun is already out: Am I half asleep and half awake, or am I still drunk?

GAB: There is no time for sleep; I tell you the good news; awake, shepherd, now that heavenly trees are blooming for you.

ARM: Who are you, strange servant?

GAB: I am one who serves near the throne of God.

BEN: Do you bring news of restored souls?

GAB: An age of gold opens to your innocence.

RAZ: And for me, love, isn't there some happiness?

GAB: Every misery is made richness. Go to Bethlehem and there you will see a sun infant in swaddling clothes, nursed by a woman who has the semblance of sunrise. He will give peace to the world and will take away sin; he is open Paradise. God, the Son of God, the word made flesh comes dressed in mortal clothing, and you will hear celestial hymns sung by winged crowds as a sign of this joy. Just as I open my wings, so I reveal the truth to you.

CHORUS OF ANGELS: Glory to God, peace to man, happy the heavens.

(The shepherds exit, BELFEGOR appears and confesses the defeat of the infernal forces. He tries to let a huge rock loose upon the cave in order to kill those who are inside, but the mountain falls in on him revealing the holy manger. BELFEGOR is crushed among the ruins. Now the scene is occupied by MARY and JOSEPH before the Manger where the Babe lies. They are joined by the group of shepherds who cry out for joy.)

JOSEPH: Here is your King, your God, my sons; the awaited Messiah of your fathers whom the prophets foresaw. Adore that God who has redeemed you and perceive eternal and divine light in this Babe; you were slaves and you are freed by him.

ARM: The new-born God comes to console the last days of my failing age; now I will die happy, my Savior, my Redeemer, I adore you.

RAZ: Now I will go in the grotto; we have found the treasure. It is you, my child of gold. To you I want to pray, it is you I want to adore, and for you I can even go without eating.

ARM: Now that I gaze on you, dear Babe, I have nothing else to gaze at; these eyes feel as if they have seen Paradise on earth. I wish to offer you this soul; in the meantime accept this small vase as a sign of affection, and forgive too much ardor.

CID: Sovereign invited hunter, who has conquered the infernal dragon on earth, I take the courage to give you a trophy of my hand. The fear is dead in this rabbit which I offer you.

RUSC: I know that the fish who is mute is rejected from sacred altars. I, who am a fisherman, am ready with soul and tongue, and I offer you instead of fish, fruit as a gift to celebrate your greatness.

BEN: And I am ready at your feet to show you an open heart, my dear Infant; I offer you a garland from the flowers of the meadows.

RAZ: And I who am afflicted and unlucky, and who have undergone disgrace and danger and hardship, bless them all, because I see the truth--that through every difficulty I find God.

GAB: Forest courtiers, adore your King and your God. Tell the Jews, tell the world that at midnight the divine Light, the Godhead has been born in Bethlehem, and darkness flees.

CHORUS OF ANGELS: Glory to God, glory to heaven, peace to man.

GAB: With your spirits and your hearts, speak to the Babe, to Mary and Joseph.

ALL THE SHEPHERDS: We offer our hearts and souls with all affection to the husband, to the Mother, to the Babe.

JOSEPH: And the husband . . .

MARY: And the mother . . .

JOSEPH AND MARY: Our souls are kindled with fervent desire. . .

JOSEPH: To affection . . .

MARY: And to love . . .

MARY AND JOSEPH: We bless you.

RAZ: And I, going back to my home town, want to say: don't adore statues of terracotta any more. The shadow has vanished, the sun is born, the light is born, and the world is not silent any more.

- End -

APPENDIX III

The production of La passione di Gesù Cristo is treated in Chapter V, pp. 306-323. This is the text of the original passion play written in 1958 by Father Domenico Scala, parroco of the Church of Annunciata in S. Lazzaro, one of the six towns which comprises the community of Agerola. This script has been performed annually since 1960.

The parenthetical directions are those which appear in the original script. Textual repetition of the narration occurs because each succeeding scene is presented in a new location before a new audience (those who follow the entire procession form a continuing nucleus audience).

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Domenico Scala

S. LAZZARO

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known took place.

Jesus, the Son of God, having become man for our salvation, was judged and condemned to death. Actually, everyone liked him; the common people were enraptured by him whenever he passed through the streets of Palestine blessing everyone.

It was the Scribes and the Pharisees and the leaders of the people who hated him, and they hated him because they saw that the people went after him and listened to his voice and followed his teachings. They also hated him because he, who was just, had many times reprimanded their often dishonest conduct.

It was their decision, therefore, that Jesus had to die, and soon.

That evening, as usual after dinner, Christ went with his apostles to the olive grove for prayer. At the entrance he stopped the group, and taking only Peter, James and John he proceeded further. But at a certain point he stopped even these three, telling them to keep watch and to pray. And he said, "My spirit is saddened unto death; stay here and keep watch. Pray to avoid temptation." And he moved a short distance away from them and knelt on the ground and began to pray: "Father," he said, "If it is your will, let this cup pass from me. But your will, and not mine, be done."

(At this point JESUS with the three apostles appears at the door of the church; he motions the three to stop and he goes to the middle of the piazza,¹ and kneels and prays.)

And now Judas and his companions arrive; Judas, the traitor, one of the twelve. For thirty coins he decided to give Jesus into the hands of his enemies; in fact he had said, "The one whom I kiss is he; arrest him and lead him and tie him well." And so the most intense sign of love had to serve the most horrendous crime.

(At the point JUDAS and his party appear and draw near JESUS.)

JUDAS: I greet you, Master (he kisses him).

JESUS: Friend what do you mean by this: Judas with a kiss betrays the Son of God: (to the others) And you, whom do you seek?

THE JEWS:² Jesus of Nazareth.

JESUS: I am he.

(The JEWS back up, and then fall to the ground)

But whom do you seek?

¹This direction would indicate that when the play was first performed, this S. Lazzaro scene was enacted in the piazza rather than on a platform stage.

²Art. 4 of the Second Vatican Council document, The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Oct. 28,

THE JEWS: Jesus of Nazareth.

JESUS: I have said I am he. If, therefore, you seek me, let these men go.

NARRATOR: And the Jews surround him and take and bind him.

(All remain in their places)

And they lead him to Annas and Caiphas, who that evening had urgently convoked all of the Council. This was the major Tribunal of the nation; it was empowered to make laws but was unable to pass the death sentence. About 2:00 a.m. Jesus, bound like the most dangerous of malefactors, arrived and was welcomed by all with satanic joy. Thus the trial began. The high priests and all of the Council searched for testimony against Jesus so that he might die. But they did not find any. Many, in fact, offered false witness against him, but their testimonies did not agree.

TRIAL

ANNAS: What shall we do? The man performs miracles and if we permit him to continue, all will believe in him . . . and then the Romans will come and destroy our Temple and our Nation.

COUNCIL 1: It is necessary to take steps to avoid such a danger.

ANNAS: And what steps shall we take?

COUNCIL 1: We must prohibit this performance of miracles.

COUNCIL 2: We must discourage those who follow him.

COUNCIL 3: We must make him disappear from the face of the earth.

COUNCIL 4: But . . . look . . . be careful. . . . He is innocent.

ALL: To death! . . . To death! What innocence!

CAIPHAS: To death! . . . It is just! It is worthwhile that one man die rather than lose an entire nation.

1965) denies the old accusation that the Jewish people were responsible for Christ's passion. In this respect, Father Scala's play is very much a pre-Second Vatican Council document.

ALL: Yes! To death . . . It is worthwhile that only one man die for the people.

COUNCIL 4: But he is innocent. . . . He goes through our streets doing good for everyone.

ANNAS (controlling his anger): It is just! If he is innocent . . . one cannot condemn an innocent man. (Changes his tone) Jesus, answer with sincerity: is it true that you have established a new religion?

CHRIST: Yes. I have established the Church.

ANNAS: You have disciples? And where are they now?

CHRIST: They are those who testified for me before the world. Now they are like a flock without a shepherd. But I will pray for them and their number will not diminish.

ANNAS: And why do so many people follow you?

CHRIST: Because they see my works.

ANNAS: And what are your works?

CHRIST: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are healed, the deaf hear, the dead rise up, the poor receive the good news.

ANNAS: And what is the good news?

CHRIST: (pause) I have always spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet, and I have said nothing in secret. Why do you question me? Question those who have heard what I have said to them--here, these men have heard what I have said.

SERVANT (strikes JESUS in the face): Is this the way you answer the High Priest?

CHRIST: If I have spoken badly, tell me; if, rather, I have spoken well, why do you persecute me?

ANNAS: But . . . I don't know what to say! Let us listen to what Caiaphas thinks of this Christ, who is putting our nation in jeopardy.

CAIPHAS: I have already spoken. It is worthwhile to put a single man to death and not to lose an entire nation.

ANNAS: And if Jesus were innocent?

CAIPHAS (shouts): But what innocence? All these people are ready to testify against him. Speak, say what you have seen and heard.

COUNCIL 1: He has offended us in his sermons many times.

COUNCIL 2: He has called us a race of vipers and white tombs.

COUNCIL 3: He threw us out of the Temple a few days ago, ruining our interest.

COUNCIL 4: Certainly, he had reasons for doing all of these things.

CAIPHAS: We don't want to hear this; we wish to know only if he has committed crimes.

COUNCIL 1: This man does not heed the laws of our fathers.

COUNCIL 2: He cures the sick and the paralyzed on Saturday.

COUNCIL 3: He does not wash his hands before eating.

COUNCIL 4: But in these things there is nothing wrong.

CAIPHAS: Speak! . . . Speak again, but speak more wisely.

COUNCIL 1: He wishes to be King.

COUNCIL 2: No. . . . The people wished to make him King.

COUNCIL 3: He has said that he would give us his body to eat and his blood to drink.

COUNCIL 4: But why shouldn't he be able to say all this?

COUNCIL 1: He has said he is able to forgive sinners.

COUNCIL 2: No . . . he really forgives them.

COUNCIL 3: He has said that he has the capacity to repeat the miracle of Cana.

COUNCIL 4: But why should all this interest us? Why do we wish to judge things which we do not understand?

COUNCIL 1: This man has spoken of destroying the Temple of Jerusalem and of re-building it in three days.

COUNCIL 2: No . . . he really wished to destroy it.

COUNCIL 3: This man believes himself to be stronger than our fathers who built it.

COUNCIL 4: Yes He is the Son of God.

ALL: He's mad! He's mad! . . . To death!

CAIPHAS: No, no! . . . This doesn't work. . . . Let us question Jesus himself. He should be able to say a clear and decisive word about this business.

JESUS: (does not answer)

CAIPHAS (softly, strongly, solemnly): Jesus, I abjure you by the living God to tell us if you are Christ, the Son of God?

CHRIST (to Caiphas): You have said it. (to all) I tell you this; soon you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and borne on the clouds of the heavens.

ALL: You, then, are the Son of God?

CHRIST: Yes, I am he.

CAIPHAS (shouting): He has blasphemed! . . . What further need have we of witnesses? Here, now, you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?

ALL: He must die. He must die!

NARRATOR: And all condemned him, feeling that he merited death. And then some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to give him blows, saying, "Guess!", and the servants reigned him furiously with blows. Jesus was silent. Silent and suffering. And he remained in the midst of these desperate men for all the rest of the night, until

six in the morning. Then, early in the morning, they led Jesus from the house of Caiphass to the magistrate, Pilate, shouting.

THE JEWS: He must die . . . he must be condemned to death.

PILATE (comes out): What is happening?

THE JEWS: We have brought this man and we wish and exhort you to condemn him to death: he must die.

PILATE: But what evil thing has he done?

THE JEWS: According to our law he must be condemned and we have already condemned him and now you must condemn him.

PILATE: Yes! . . . But what accusations do you bring against him?

THE JEWS: We have found that he brings our nation to disorder.

PILATE (thoughtfully) He does not seem to be an instigator among the people; in what sense has he brought disorder to the nation?

THE JEWS: He hindered the paying of Caesar's tribute . . .

PILATE: And only because of this?

THE JEWS: He has also spoken of being King.

PILATE: And nothing else?

THE JEWS: That is why he must die. He must be condemned to death.

PILATE: Bring him here. I wish to question him myself. (they bring him) Are you the King of the Jews?

CHRIST: You have said it.

PILATE: If you are King, how is it that these people wish to condemn you to death?

CHRIST: My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would have fought so that I would not be delivered into the power of the Jews. Now my kingdom is not down here.

PILATE: But I wish to know; are you truly King?

CHRIST: You have said it, I am truly King. I was born for this reason, and for this reason I came into the world.

THE JEWS: To death. Let him be condemned to death.

NARRATOR: And Pilate, convinced of Jesus's innocence brought him aside. "I questioned him again, but I do not find him guilty."

PILATE: I do not find this man guilty.

THE JEWS: To death. He incited the people, beginning in Galilee.

PILATE: But I have said I do not find him guilty.

THE JEWS: If you let him go free, you are not the friend of Caesar, since he makes himself King and whoever would be King is against Caesar--we will accuse you before Caesar.

PILATE: And what must I do with Jesus?

THE JEWS: Crucify him, crucify him.

PILATE: But be careful; he is your King.

THE JEWS: Come, come, crucify him.

PILATE: Must I crucify your King?

THE JEWS: We have no King other than Caesar.

PILATE: I am innocent of the blood of this just man; you take him and you crucify him.

THE JEWS: Let his blood be upon us and upon our children.

(Here the [appropriate] stations of the cross are read and [the scene] ends with the song³)

³The song referred to is discussed above, p. 315.

PONTE

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death.

He had come on the earth to teach men the road to salvation, and he traveled all the roads of Palestine, preaching and doing good works for all. The people were with him and followed wherever he went. The leaders of the people, however, were against him: the Scribes and the Pharisees tried on every occasion to get their hands on him in order to condemn him to death. And the occasion was given them, indeed, by one of Jesus' disciples, Judas the traitor. And Jesus was taken and brought to the house of Annas and Caiphas, where he passed an atrocious night. For he was spit upon, kicked, beaten and persecuted in every way. Early in the morning they led him to Pilate to have him condemned to death, but Pilate recognized Jesus' innocence instead, and, therefore, wished to free him. And since the people insisted upon calling for the condemnation of Jesus, Pilate tried in several indirect ways to free him. Here is an example-- Pilate set up a confrontation of Jesus and Barabbas.

(Here Barabbas appears accompanied by two Roman soldiers)

Barabbas was a thief and an assassin hardened in crime. Pilate had thus chosen the worst offender who was in prison at that time, in order that the choice might fall more easily to Jesus. In fact there was the custom of freeing a prisoner, almost as a gift, during the Hebrew solemnities, according to the wishes of the people themselves. Pilate thinks of using this custom as a means of liberating Jesus, and proposes the choice.

PILATE: Whom do you want me to free to you: Barabbas or Jesus known as the Christ?

THE JEWS: Barabbas; give Barabbas to us.

PILATE: But what ill has the man called Jesus done?

THE JEWS: If he were not a malefactor we would not have brought him to you.

PILATE: What then must I do with Jesus, known as the Christ?

THE JEWS: Let him be crucified, let him be crucified.

PILATE: But I do not find him guilty of anything.

THE JEWS: If you let him go then you are not the friend of Caesar, since he makes himself King, and whoever would be King is against Caesar--and we will accuse you before Caesar.

PILATE: I am innocent of the blood of this just man. You take him and you crucify him.

(JESUS comes [onto the acting area] burdened by the cross on his shoulders and remains there. The station of the cross is read and the song sung)

BOMERANO

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known, took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death. All of the city of Jerusalem was in great movement from early that morning: Pilate, the people, the leaders of the people. These, in fact, were successful in that Jesus was in their hands--with the help of Judas the traitor who had betrayed him to them for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus was led into the palaces of the High Priests, Annas and Caiphas, and passed a horrible and cruel night. He was treated like the worst of criminals and thus became the target of spit, blows, beatings, insults and curses. Jesus had to suffer everything that night. . . . As soon as it was morning, they brought Jesus to Pilate so that he might be condemned to death, but Pilate recognized Jesus's innocence and therefore wished to free him. And since the people insisted in calling for the condemnation of Jesus, Pilate tried in several indirect ways to free him, even attempting to avoid the issue by sending Jesus to Herod. "Jesus is of Galilee, and the governor of Galilee is Herod--let him condemn him if he wishes to do so." As soon as Herod learned that Pilate was sending Jesus to him, he quickly thought to organize a unique and alluring spectacle. But Jesus did not deign either to speak or to look at him. Herod possessed an evil, malicious spirit, he lived scandalously and he had had St. John the Baptist killed. He was, in few words, a firebrand from hell.

HEROD: Pilate has sent me Jesus of Nazareth and I am grateful to him for this; from today on Pilate will be my dearest friend. I have wanted so much to see this man, for his name goes from mouth to mouth

in my Nation: everyone speaks of him, of his miracles, of his secrets, of his magic. (to the JEWS) And you, why have you imprisoned him?

THE JEWS: If he were not a criminal we would not have imprisoned him.

HEROD: They have told me that he might be John the Baptist brought back to life.

THE JEWS: That is false: the dead do not come back to life.

HEROD: Who is he, then?

THE JEWS: He is an evil-doer.

HEROD: And what evil has he done?

THE JEWS: We have found out that he excites our Nation to disorder.

HEROD: He does not appear to me to be an instigator of the people: in what sense has he excited the Nation to disorder?

THE JEWS: He hindered the paying of Caesar's tribute.

HEROD: And only because of this?

THE JEWS: He has also spoken of being King.

HEROD: And nothing else?

THE JEWS: That is why he must die. He must be condemned to death.

HEROD: And you, Jesus, don't you respond to any of these accusations? (to the JEWS) But how is it, they tell me that he cures the sick, that he raises the dead, that he exorcises demons . . . (laughs)

THE JEWS: All lies: he does these things with the help of the leader of demons.

HEROD (to JESUS): And you don't answer. All right, give a spectacle in the presence of everyone: cure the sick, raise the dead, and we'll set you free. (laughs) And you still do not answer. He seems more like a madman to me. Yes, he is really a madman. Dress him in

red and bring him back to Pilate again so that he will know he is a madman and nothing else.⁴

NARRATOR: But Jesus, without lifting his gaze from the ground, listened and was silent. Then Herod dressed him in a red garment and sent him back again to Pilate, with his military escort, after having treated him with scorn and having played games with him. And the Jews returned him to Pilate, asking again for his death sentence. But Pilate is convinced that Jesus is innocent.

THE JEWS: Let him be crucified, let him be crucified.

PILATE: I do not find this man guilty.

THE JEWS: To death! He has stirred up the people beginning in Galilee.

PILATE: But I tell you I do not find him guilty.

THE JEWS: If you let him free you are not the friend of Caesar, since he makes himself King and whoever would be King is against Caesar, and we will denounce you before Caesar.

PILATE: And what must I do with Jesus?

THE JEWS: Crucify him. Crucify him!

PILATE: But be careful. He is your King!

THE JEWS: Come, come, crucify him.

PILATE: Must I crucify your King?

THE JEWS: We have no King other than Caesar.

PILATE: Then I wash my hands (he washes them). I am innocent of the blood of this just man. You take him and you crucify him.

THE JEWS: Let his blood be on us and on our children.

CENTURIAN: The Governor Pontius Pilate reads the sentence of death brought against Jesus the Nazarethan.

⁴This change to a red garment is discussed on p. 314 above.

SENTENCE OF PONTIUS PILATE

We Pontius Pilate, Procurator, condemn Christ to the pain of death. Since he has been accused by the pontiffs of Jerusalem, we, according to their will, establish that he be crucified outside the city on the mountain of Calvary. And we also condemn two thieves who must be crucified with him, one on the right side, the other on the left. Let these words be written on the cross of Christ: "Jesus the Nazarethan, King of the Jews."

Signed: Pontius Pilate, year of Rome 786.

NARRATOR: And Jesus was burdened with the wood of the cross . . . except that Judas was struck with remorse for what he had done.

JUDAS: He is innocent . . . I have betrayed one who is innocent. (JUDAS throws the money to the ground and flees desperately, while the walk to Calvary begins).

(The Station of the Cross is read and the song sung)

PIANILLO

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime that the world has ever known, took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death. Betrayed by Judas who was one of his own apostles, he was handed over to his enemies who treated him cruelly, causing him to pass a truly terrible night. Finally, early in the morning of the following day, they brought him before Pilate so that he might be condemned to death. But Pilate said, "I question Jesus and I do not find him guilty of anything for which I can condemn him to death." And since the people insisted in demanding this condemnation, Pilate attempted to placate them and to free Jesus by subjecting him to flagellation. But neither the executioners nor the Jews felt pity. In fact, as soon as Pilate led him out, they shouted even more loudly than before, "Crucify him." And he was condemned to death. He was burdened by the weight of the cross upon his shoulders and they set out on the road for Calvary. The way was not long but it was difficult. And Jesus is no longer a healthy person. And he falls for the first time under his heavy cross.

(Here CHRIST falls on the ground and remains there)

And the soldiers perceive he can do no more; his breathing becomes increasingly more laborious, they fear it may cease from one moment

to the next, and so they hasten for remedies. A man by the name of Simon the Cirenean was returning from the country; they stop him and force him to carry Jesus's cross as far as Calvary.

THE JEWS: Good man, from where do you come?

CIRENEAN: I come from the country.

THE JEWS: And what are you called?

CIRENEAN: Simon.

THE JEWS: And where are you from?

CIRENEAN: From Cirena.

THE JEWS: And where are you going?

CIRENEAN: I return home where my children are waiting for me.

THE JEWS: And how many children do you have?

CIRENEAN: I have two: one is called Alexander and the other Rufus.

THE JEWS: Would you like to carry the cross as far as Calvary in the place of this man?

CIRENEAN: No, that will never happen.

THE JEWS: Either you carry it, or else you will follow his destiny.

CIRENEAN (looks at JESUS . . . then says) I will carry it . . . however, not for fear of you, but for him. I see that he is good, that he is innocent and deserves to be helped.

(Here the cross is taken from the shoulders of JESUS and placed on the shoulders of the CIRENEAN. Then everyone remains in position. The Station of the Cross is read [and the song sung])

S. MARIA

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known, took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death. In fact, betrayed by Judas who was his own apostle, he was delivered into the hands of his enemies who brought him before Pilate in order that he might be condemned to death. And Pilate, weak and cowardly, condemned him to death on the cross on the mountain of Calvary. Jesus was weighted down with the cross and began his sorrowful way. Jesus welcomes the cross with love, for it is the instrument of his martyrdom. And this cross is heavy, for it possesses the weight of all the guilt of mankind. But Jesus carries it with joy, for it will be the instrument of our salvation. And his enemies persist in their efforts against him. With their brutal methods, they repeat all the pains which he has suffered through flagellation and the crown of thorns. And even greater in number are the verbal injuries and abuses which afflict Jesus, who had benefited all these people who now follow him to glut themselves on his suffering. But here is another fact which comes to double, or rather, to multiply the sufferings of Jesus; that is, the presence of his holy mother. She, learning of the death sentence of her divine son, leaves everything and, followed by other women, runs to join her Jesus on the road to Calvary. They stop her, she cannot get near him. She would have wanted to embrace her son . . . she would have wanted to dry that face covered with sweat and blood She would have wanted to help him carry the cross. But she cannot. They are there, Jesus and his mother, looking at one another. All the sufferings of the son are reflected with their weight of anguish and of torment in the heart of the Mother: the sufferings of the body and the pains of the spirit. Her presence here increases the suffering of Jesus even further, to the point that he cannot resist so much sorrow, and falls, for the second time, upon the ground.

(JESUS falls and remains there, while the reader reads the Station [and the song is sung].)

CAMPORA

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known, took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death. In fact, betrayed by Judas,

who was his own apostle, he was delivered into the hands of his enemies who treated him cruelly, causing him to pass a truly terrible night of spitting, blows, kicks and persecution of every kind. Finally, early in the morning of the following day, they brought him before Pilate in order that he might be condemned to death. And Pilate, weak and cowardly, condemned him to death on the cross on the mountain of Calvary. Jesus was weighted with the cross and began his sorrowful road. But his enemies persisted in their efforts against him, repeating with their brutal methods and sufferings undergone up until that moment. In spite of all this, however, acts of gentleness and of pity toward the Master were not lacking. It was the women on this occasion who were stronger than the men, stronger even than the apostles, who showed Jesus great love and compassion, and Jesus returned their love and compassion. Here is a woman, in fact, the pious Veronica, who separates herself from the crowd and draws near to Jesus in order to accomplish a pitying act: she wishes to dry that face which until today was so beautiful and which is now so unrecognizable, she wishes to dry that face covered with dust and sweat and tears and blood . . . and Jesus gives her his own face, miraculously imprinted upon that linen handkerchief used by the woman to accomplish her compassionate deed.

(pause)

Here is another kind act of compassion and of love; it is a group of women whom Jesus meets along the road, and these women beat their breasts and weep for him. But all of this kindness shown the Master does not help to give new energy to his body, so terribly tested in so short a time. Jesus is completely exhausted and thus falls for a third time beneath his very heavy cross.

(JESUS falls on the ground and remains there, while the reader reads the Station [and the song is sung].)

RETURN TO S. LAZZARO

NARRATOR: About 1938 years ago, on a day like today, which later became known as Good Friday, the greatest drama and the greatest crime the world has ever known took place. Jesus, the Son of God, was judged and condemned to death. And Jesus was burdened by the cross and began his sorrowful journey. His enemies followed him and continued to torment him, but some good people followed him as well, sharing his pain. He was followed by his mother with his favorite apostle, St. John; he received comfort from the pious Veronica who passed among the soldiers and ran to dry his face; he received a

glance of recognition from the good Cirenean who carried the cross for him. Jesus has words filled with love for the women who weep for him. And all of these things are small comfort in the face of the anguish of the Master. What compassion he makes us feel! What compassion his three falls stir in our hearts! Jesus is exhausted. Without food, without strength because of the most painful agony in the garden, because of the persecution of the night, because of the wounds and the blood lost through the flagellation and through the crown of thorns and the very heavy cross on his shoulders: Jesus cannot stand so much stress and he falls to the ground. Three times he falls to the ground and his falls increase the pains of his wounds. But for him there is no help, there is no pity. They get him up again with blows, they push him onward in haste born out of the fear that he cannot hold up and that he may die before they can see him on the throne of the cross. It is a bit past midday. . . . And finally Jesus, carrying the cross arrives . . . arrives at the place of his crucifixion . . . to the place known as Calvary, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

(Here CHRIST goes behind the scenes for the crucifixion while the reader reads the Station which is followed by the song. When the song is finished and CHRIST is stretched out on the cross, the curtain is raised and CHRIST appears on the cross with the two thieves.)

And Jesus was crucified on the mountain and the two thieves were crucified with him, one on his right hand, the other on his left. The pains of crucifixion were unbelievably atrocious. Jesus was stretched out on the scaffold, with nails run through his hands and feet. His flesh became lacerated, his nerves cut to pulp by a few blows of the hammer, and the extremities of the Savior fixed to the wood of the cross. After this macabre operation, the cross was hoisted up, and a terrifying scene, both moving and painful, appears before everyone. Christ is visible to all who have followed him here, both friends and enemies. Christ is suspended there between heaven and earth. Christ and the blood streaming from his numerous wounds. At the foot of the cross among the few who have followed him to Calvary, there are the people closest to Jesus's heart: his holy mother is there. There is also his favorite disciple, the apostle John, and thus the Mother unites her sorrows with those of her son and cooperates in our Salvation. Even the stones would be moved by this scene, but his enemies are not moved for they rejoice, and they add blasphemous and insulting words to their shouts of joy. But Jesus prays: he prays for that ungrateful people and he prays for all of us.

THE JEWS: Watch out, watch out! The son of God is on the cross. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and I will believe in you!

JESUS: Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

THE JEWS: You who save other people, save yourself and we will believe in you.

JESUS: Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

NARRATOR: So Jesus forgives them and prays for them, prays for the sinners of all time, prays for us as well. . . . And for them and for us he wished to complete a final act of love because he wished to save everyone. He wished to give us a Mother--a good and loving Mother. Thus, to the men consumed with hate for him, he gives the most beautiful gift possible, the gift closest to his heart. He gives his Mother, so that from now on she is no longer his Mother only but the Mother of all men without exception, represented there by the Apostle John. And in fact the words which he directs to his friend the Apostle sound like this: "Oh men, oh sinners, here is your mother! Love her, have faith in her and let yourselves be guided by her along the journey of your life. . . . She will lead you to me in glory, in Paradise."

CHRIST: WOMAN! . . . HERE IS YOUR SON!

SON! . . . HERE IS YOUR MOTHER!

And from then on men have had a Mother, an affable, loving Mother, a Mother capable of everything--even of moving the heart of God in order to see her children happy, not only in this life, but above all in the other life. But such an act of love was understood neither by the Jews nor by one of the thieves who was crucified with him. In fact one of the two thieves joined the others in insulting the Master. And Jesus did not answer these insults but his companion who had repented of his sins, answered him severely. To this man Jesus promised Paradise.

FIRST THIEF: If you are the Son of God, why don't you save us?

THE JEWS: If you are the Son of God, why don't you save them?

FIRST THIEF: If you are the Christ, save yourself and save us with you!

THE JEWS: If you are the Christ, save yourself and save them with you!

FIRST THIEF: If you have really saved others, save us too!

THE JEWS: Yes! . . . If you have really saved others then save them too!

SECOND THIEF: And you have no fear of God . . . you who suffer the same torment? We have received just recompense for our sins, but he . . . he did nothing wrong. . . . Ah Master, . . . remember me, when you go to your kingdom.

CHRIST: I tell you the truth: today you will be with me in Paradise.

NARRATOR: And then he is silent. He will not speak again to men. He has nothing else to say. He bows his head and gives up his spirit. He had preached for the salvation of men, and his last words were words of love. He had given everything he possessed for the salvation of man. Only a few drops of blood remained hidden in his heart, and one of the soldiers drew near him with lance in hand and opened his side with a blow, and quickly blood and water flowed from it.

(here the soldier pierces him)

Jesus is dead and does not speak again. But within the crucified one everything is speaking, palpitating, inviting. The open arms, the pierced feet, the lacerated heart, the half-open mouth, the hanging head all speak, and from all the parts of the Savior's body comes a single request. . . . Love, love . . . , And we, who have devotedly followed him through the streets of our town, at the conclusion of this sorrowful journey, answer him with all the effusion of our hearts:

My Jesus, I love you with my whole heart, I repent for having so many times in the past defied your infinite goodness. I propose with your grace to never offend you again in the future, and at the present time, miserable as I am, I consecrate myself completely to you. I renounce and give you all of my will, my desires, my affections and all that is mine. From today on make what you will of me and of all that is mine. I wish and ask only for your holy love, for final perseverance, and for the final completion of your holy will. And to you, oh Virgin, who have followed Jesus on his sorrowful journey with us, we say with all the effusion of our heart: "I ask of you the true love of Jesus Christ. I hope to have a good and holy death with your help. My mother, I beg you to help me always, especially at the last moment of my life, because of the love you have for God. Don't leave me until you see me safely in heaven blessing you and singing of your compassion for all of eternity. So I hope, and so it is . . .

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