

## Festive funerals

### Funeral *apparati* in early modern Italy, particularly in Rome

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This dissertation examines the art, patronage and ritual use of funeral *apparati* in sixteenth-century Italy, with a particular focus on the papal court in Rome.<sup>1</sup> It is based on printed festival books and unpublished archival sources, such as ceremonial diaries, diplomatic correspondence, and account books. Taken together, this vast material allows us, first, to understand the ritual, social, and artistic prerequisites posed to funeral *apparati*, and second, their formal development during the sixteenth century. The book also reveals the tough competition between European courts and institutions in terms of patronage of these ephemeral *apparati*, nowhere outplayed with more refinement than in the Theatre of the World, Rome.

During the sixteenth century, funeral *apparati* changed from the traditional late-medieval *chappelle ardente* to the baroque catafalque. As far as the papal court is concerned, the *apparati* of the beginning of the sixteenth century were no different from those built at other European courts, except perhaps for their name, *castrum doloris*. This *castrum* built for the Requiem masses for the deceased pope in St Peter's looked like a large wooden baldachin structure with hundreds of candles on top. Underneath stood a symbolic bier, where the absolution was given to the deceased pope. From diaries and treatises of the papal Masters of Ceremonies, we learn that the privilege of having a *castrum doloris*, at least in Rome, in this period was preserved for funerals of popes and cardinals. One can thus understand the unease when, around the turn of the sixteenth century, the obsequies of members of the Spanish monarchy in Rome were celebrated with ostentatious funeral *apparati* in the Spanish national church. Breaking the papal monopoly, these Spanish *chappelles ardentes* opened the way for lavish funeral *apparati* of other foreign rulers in Rome.

The lavish obsequies of Charles V (d. 1558), celebrated across his vast Empire, had a deep impact on the future development of funeral *apparati* in Europe. The *apparati* in Spain and Italy are generally considered to mark the transition from the late-medieval *chappelle ardente* to catafalques with a more sophisticated iconography. Elaborated in paintings and sculpture, their iconography celebrated the virtues and deeds of the deceased, presenting him as a worthy exemplum for

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posterity. Italy would soon take the lead in the industry of the festive funerals. After the elaborate obsequies of Charles V of 1559 celebrated in Rome, Milan and Naples, followed those of Michelangelo in Florence in 1564, those of the Medici in S. Lorenzo, and those of the Habsburg in Milan, all outfitted with huge *apparati*, designed by the leading artists of the day. In Rome, several foreign nations organized lavish obsequies for their deceased rulers with impressive funeral *apparati* as well. The ceremonies and ephemeral decorations contributed to a rhetoric of conspicuous commemoration, heralding the virtues of the deceased, presenting him or her as a worthy model of imitation.

In this respect, there is an intriguing link with the post-Tridentine reinvention of religious festival culture, especially the *translatio*-ceremonies of relics, as propagated by Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan. Starting during the Jubilee of Milan (immediately following the Roman Jubilee of 1575), Borromeo embarked on a policy of devotional reform, urging the Milanese to venerate local saints and local church history, presenting them as models of devotion and imitation. Having great appeal, the devotional model of these *translatio*-ceremonies was soon taken up in Bologna and in Rome.

While the more elaborate funeral *apparati* with their rich iconography were booming across Italy, the papal funeral ceremonies in St Peter's held on to the traditional *castrum doloris*. In case of the reburial of Pope Pius IV in 1583, the Apostolic Chamber ignored the demand for more pomp from his family members, saying that the pope twenty years earlier had been buried *de more*, and that had to be enough. Signs of dissatisfaction with the standard of decorum of papal funerals remained, while cardinals' funerals in Rome also started to adopt the new trend for lavish funeral *apparati*.

All these initiatives paved the way for the first papal catafalque, built in occasion of the reburial of Pope Sixtus V in 1591, one year after his death. Whereas the year before his funeral ceremonies in St Peter's had been celebrated with the traditional *castrum doloris*, the family commissioned for his reburial a lavish *tempietto*-catafalque. The catafalque celebrated the Good Works of the pope, a theme that had been exploited extensively during the papacy and that would have a considerable aftermath in future Peretti iconography. What's more, the festive obsequies of Pope Sixtus V adhered in detail to the *translatio*-ceremonies of relics, thus pushing similarities between the post-Tridentine cult of saints and the commemoration of popes.