Raphael’s altar-piece patrons in Città di Castello*

Raphael’s earliest documented activity as a painter was in Città di Castello, where he painted three altar-pieces and a confraternity banner. Investigation of the individuals who commissioned the altar-pieces sheds new light on Raphael’s work in the city and reveals that the artist’s private patrons there formed a close-knit coterie whose commissions should be seen as part of the extensive renovation of chapels in the city’s churches in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Città di Castello is a small city in the upper Tiber valley, fifteen miles south of Borgo Sansepolcro, with good access by road to Florence, Urbino and Perugia, thirty-five miles to the south (Fig 1). In this period it was part of the Papal States, but was effectively ruled by the Vitelli family and their associates. Documentation for the period c. 1485–1505 gives evidence of a high level of artistic patronage in the city with a concerted programme of altar renewal. For most of the 1490s the local artistic scene was dominated by the presence of Luca Signorelli (c.1450–1523), who painted altar-pieces for many of the same churches as Raphael and whose patrons were closely linked to his. Signorelli was first documented in Città di Castello in 1486, and was granted local citizenship in 1488 while painting a processional banner (now lost) for the most important local confraternity, S. Maria della Pietà. He subsequently painted portraits of three members of the ruling family, and an unpublished letter of 16th December 1498 demonstrates his intimacy with the Vitelli and with the political élite of Città di Castello. Signorelli also painted five altar-pieces for the city between 1493 and 1498: the high altar-pieces of S. Maria dei Servi and S. Agostino (the latter now in the Louvre) for which he was paid two hundred and fifteen florins in 1493 and 1494 respectively; and other altar-pieces in S. Agostino (for Luca Ferriani’s chapel, probably the Nativity now in Naples), and in S. Francesco (the Nativity now in the National Gallery, London, apparently for the Tiberi family, 1496). In 1497–98 immediately prior to his departure from the city – Signorelli painted the Martyrdom of St Sebastian for Tommaso Brozzi’s chapel in S. Domenico (Fig 7), further discussed below. This appears to have been Signorelli’s last commission in Città di Castello for twenty years, as he was lured away by prestigious fresco commissions at Montecolive to Maggiore and Orvieto. His departure left something of an artistic vacuum, soon to be filled by the young Raphael.

The account of Raphael’s activity in Città di Castello that appears in Vasari’s Lives, with its perceptive comments on the young artist’s stylistic development, has been the cornerstone for all subsequent discussions, but Vasari provides relatively little detailed information. He mentions the three altar-pieces painted for S. Agostino, S. Domenico and S. Francesco in such a way that two of the three can be securely identified, but does not identify their patrons or give their dates. He does not refer at all to the double-sided banner depicting the Trinity with Sts Sebastian and Roch and The Creation of Eve, nor does he offer any explanation of how the artist came to the attention of the citizens of Città di Castello (although he does add the interesting, and verifiable, information that the artist came to the city “con alcuni amici suoi”).

Vasari’s account has been supplemented by information from the pictures themselves and their frames, and by the researches of various scholars, especially Giovanni Magherini Graziani, who identified the patrons of Raphael’s three altar-pieces, and made a first attempt to reconstruct their biographies. The two documents he found for the altarpiece that Raphael painted for Andrea Baroni in S. Agostino (1500–01) have been republished on various occasions, but, with the exception of a small study of Baroni, there has been no attempt until now to investigate the links between Raphael’s various patrons.

The documents for the Baroni painting. Raphael’s first altar-piece commission in Città di Castello, remains the only direct archival evidence for his activity in the city. In December 1995 I was able to locate and read the first two of these documents, which are transcribed in Henry 1996, pp.422–29 and 437–39 (and see pp.145–62).

*For the great kindnesses afforded to me in Città di Castello, I would like to thank Anna Maria Traversini, Alba Ghelli, Corrado Rosini, Don Paolo Schivo, Oliva Franceschini, Donal Cooper and the late Joyce Plesters. For opportunities to discuss this material, I am grateful to Nicholas Penny, Carol Plazzotta, Maureen Banker and Lee Hendrix. I would also like to thank David Steel and José Luis Porfírio for information about Raphael’s panels in Raleigh and Lisbon. The Archivio Storico, Archivio Notarile and Archivio Vescovile in Città di Castello are hereafter referred to in these notes as CDCAS, CDCAC and CDCAV.

1 Città di Castello may well be represented in the background of the Mind Crucifixion, as first suggested in G. Magherini Graziani: L’Arte a Città di Castello, Città di Castello [1987], p.237.


3 The documents for this processional banner and Signorelli’s receipt of local citizenship may be found in T. Henry: The Career of Luca Signorelli in the 1490s, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1996 (hereafter referred to as Henry 1996), pp.396 and 400–04.

4 Luca Signorelli to Corrado Salimbeni, 16th December 1498 (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS MA 4261, gift of Mrs Landon K. Thorne, Jr, 1985). I will discuss this letter (the text of which can be found in HENRY 1996, pp.458–59) in a forthcoming article in Pagine Altotiberine.

5 The documents for the Baronci painting, Raphael’s first altar-piece commission in Città di Castello, remain unlocatable. In Decem-
1500 Andrea Baroni commissioned an altar-piece from Raphael and another painter, Evangelista di Pian di Meleto, for his chapel in the church of S. Agostino. The two artists were to receive thirty-three ducats, a small sum compared with the fees paid to Signorelli in the preceding years, but one commensurate with their reputation and experience. Raphael, who was not yet eighteen, is described as ‘magister’ and had therefore presumably matriculated into a painter’s guild. Evangelista, who had worked with Giovanni Santi, was considerably older but nonetheless plainly the junior partner.14 Baroni’s advance was guaranteed by Battista Floridi, a prominent silversmith in Città di Castello. Nine months later, in September 1501, the parties made a final quittance, confirming the fee.

The now dismembered and fragmentary Coronation of St Nicholas of Tolentino (Figs. 2 and 3) – described in S. Agostino from 1627 on – is usually associated with these documents.15 However, the contract does not specify the subject-matter of the painting (to be determined by Baroni), or the chapel’s dedication, and Enrico Mercati has recently argued that the Baroni altar-piece is lost and that the Coronation was painted in 1505 for an unidentified patron.16 This argument is based on seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century descriptions of the Coronation, which sometimes state that the picture was painted in 1505, together with some residual difficulties in connecting Baroni to the chapel of St Nicholas, which had been constructed by another patron, Berto Vanni, a few years earlier.17

Assessment of the Coronation is complicated by the severe damage it suffered in an earthquake in September 1789.18 S. Agostino was largely destroyed (the church of S. Francesco di Sales now occupies its site), and the then owners of the chapel agreed that the picture should be sold to pay for the church’s rebuilding.19 It was evidently acquired by Pope Pius VI, and subsequently dismembered and dispersed. Four fragments survive in Naples, Paris and Brescia (Figs. 2 and 3).20 Our knowledge of its original appearance is supplemented by a partial copy made in Rome in 1791 by Ermengildo Costantini (Fig. 4), by Luigi Lanzi’s sensitive description,21 and by a number of preparatory drawings (the most important of which is a double-sided sheet in Lille; Fig. 5).22 St Nicholas of Tolentino (flanked by four angels) was shown trampling on a

14On 16th October 1483 Evangelista was described as ‘famulus Ioannis Sanctis Sancti pictoris de Urbino’ (see E. SCATASSA: ‘Due opere sconosciute di Evangelista di Pian di Meleto’, Rassegna bibliografica dell’arte italiana, IV [1901], p. 197). See also the crucial, but largely overlooked, article of A. ALIPPI: ‘Di Maestro Evangelista da Pian di Meleto pittore’, Nuova Rivista Museo, IV [1891], pp. 51–53.

15The fullest discussion is S. BÉGUIN: ‘The St Nicholas of Tolentino Altarpiece’, in Raphael before Rome, Studies in the History of Art, XVII [1986], pp. 15–36. VASARI (loc. cit. at note 9 above), mentions a panel by Raphael in S. Agostino in Città di Castello in the ‘same manner’ as the Vatican Coronation, without giving its subject. The painting was probably painted in 1491 and 1496, see CDCAN, 29.10, Angelo di Battista di Angelo, fol. 198v–200v; and 46.2, Pietro Laurenzi, fol. 228r–v.

16For the 1505 dating, see S. BÉGUIN, loc. cit. at note 14 above. The owners were Giovanni Vincenzo and Niccolò Domenichini-Iovi.


devil with, above, God the Father, the Virgin Mary and St Augustine. Although the iconography is unusual, St Nicholas himself was a common Augustinian subject, with some potentially relevant plague associations. All the various reconstructions imply that Raphael’s altar-piece would have been very large indeed, measuring c.390 by 230 cm. Examination of the individual fragments and the preparatory drawings makes it impossible to accept Mercati’s conclusion that the Coronation could have been painted in 1505 (i.e. after the Sposalizio; Fig. 13), and the traditional association with the Baronci documents should be maintained.

Andrea di Tommaso Baronci, the oldest of Raphael’s patrons, is documented from 1466 and died between May 1503 and July 1505. He was a wool merchant (several documents were drawn up in his bottega), and was involved in numerous property transactions. He lived in the quarter of the Porta Santa Maria (in the south east of the city) and had a chapel in S. Domenico, as well as maintaining strong connections with the more northerly S. Agostino in Porta S. Giacomo. In addition to commissioning his own altar-piece from Raphael, Baronci had held sums earmarked for Signorelli’s high altar-piece in S. Agostino, and had performed a similar role in 1497 in S. Maria Nuova; it appears that he concerned himself with getting pictures painted. He was also active in city politics, serving as one of the rectors of the Fraternity, as a member of the Consiglio del XVI, Consiglio del XXXII and the Officiali della Mercanzia, and he was a Prior of Città di Castello on numerous occasions between 1466 and 1502. Although I have been unable to locate his will, it is clear from the testament of his widow, Clara Baronci, of 1512 that his estate passed to her (see the Appendix below, Document 1). This also establishes that Andrea was buried in S. Domenico – not S. Agostino as had been commonly supposed – and that the couple were childless. Domenico Gavari, patron of Raphael’s Crucifixion with Saints, was named as Clara’s universal heir, and numerous documents point to the intimacy between Baronci and Gavari.

Gavari’s Crucifixion, now in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 6), was the second of Raphael’s altar-pieces for Città di Castello. This large panel is signed ‘RAPHAEL / VRBIN/AS / P’ in a prominent and highly original way at the foot of the cross. Vasari mentioned the picture in S. Domenico – adding acutely that had Raphael’s name not been on it, no-one would have believed it was not by Perugino – and it was subsequently recorded in most of the published and manuscript florins, deposited with Andrea Baronci, to be spent on the high altar-piece of S. Agostino (CDCAN, 29.11, Angelo di Battista di Angelo, fol.53v–54v, 7th November 1492: ‘reliquissem et legasse ecclesie Sancti Augustini Civitatis Castelliflorenos Lta pro tabula majoris altaris ... de pecuniis depositis penes Andream Baronci de dicta civitate ...’).

CDCAN, Riformanze, 1466–72, fol.9r (26th February 1466); CDCAN, 52.1, Battista di Ser Battista, fol.11r–4v (24th May 1503); and 51.2, Lattanzio di Ser Biagio Lattanzii, fol.65v–67r (30th July 1505), published in Mercati, op. cit. at note 13 above, pp.77–81).

See, for example, CDCAN, 52.1, Battista di Ser Battista, fol.102v–03r (15th May 1498).

E.g. CDCAN, 29.13, Angelo di Battista di Angelo, fol.1r–q, 4r, 22v, 40r (1500–01).

In a codicil to his will of November 1492, Baldo di Mariotto Lucarini left fifty florins, deposited with Andrea Baronci, to be spent on the high altar-piece of S. Agostino (CDCAN, 29.20, Battista di Ser Battista, fol.102–103r (1475 May 1492).
4. Copy after Raphael’s Coronation of St Nicholas, by Ermenegildo Costantini, c.1500–01. Black chalk and stylus on paper, squared for transfer, 39.4 by 26.3 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille). 

5. Compositional study for the Coronation of St Nicholas, by Raphael. c.1500–01. Black chalk and stylus on paper, squared for transfer, 39.4 by 26.3 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille).

The inscription on the picture’s frame, which survives in situ, establishes that the patron was Domenico Gavari. The Gavari chapel was acquired sometime before 1726 by the Gualterotti family who sold Raphael’s Crucifixion to Cardinal Fesch in July 1808 for 2500 scudi. Lord Ward (later Earl of Dudley), acquired the picture soon after the Fesch sale in 1845; it was purchased by Ludwig Mond in 1892 and bequeathed by him to the National Gallery in 1924.

The Crucifixion was painted for a chapel at the top of the south aisle of S. Domenico, just to the right of the high altar and altar-wall chapels. The surviving pietra serena frame (Fig 8) still bears the Gavari stemma and the inscription: ‘hoc opvs fieri fecit D [OME] NICVS MDIII’. The present church of S. Domenico was built between 1400 and 1424, and some remnants of its fifteenth-century decoration survive, the most significant element for our purposes being the frame for Signorelli’s Martyrdom of St Sebastian (Fig 7), discussed below.

The patron of the Crucifixion, Domenico di Tommaso di Giovanni Gavari, lived, like Baronci, in the quarter of the Porta S. Maria, near S. Domenico (probably in the modern-day Via dei Gauri – a corruption of Gavari). Domenico Gavari can be traced from 1486, and died between 1521 and 1524. He too was a wool merchant and various documents refer to his shop, and to the bales of wool and woollen gloves that were part of his stock-in-trade. References to loans being repaid to Gavari may indicate that he was also a banker. He was certainly a significant land-owner, completing numerous property deals in the years 1500–02. Gavari married Angela di Christofano di Jacopo (Sellari?) before March 1497; they appear to have had no children. Angela can be traced until July 1505, but must have died before 1511, by which date Gavari was remarried, to Mariecta


Andreocci (see Appendix, Document 2). Gavari served regularly as a Prior of Città di Castello and was a Rector of the Confraternity, as well as serving on the Consiglio del XVI and del XXXII, and on four or five other governmental committees. In brief, his civic profile was very similar to that of Andrea Baronci. Confirmation of the close ties between the two families can, as we have seen, be found in Clara Baronci's will of September 1512 (drawn up in Gavari's chapel at the foot of Raphael's Crucifixion), which names Domenico Gavari as her universal heir (Appendix, Document 1). It seems reasonable to suggest that Baronci provided the link between Raphael and Domenico Gavari.

Domenico Gavari made at least six wills, and the changes in his circumstances reveal shed light upon his choices as a patron. In his first testament, of March 1497, he requested burial in S. Domenico, named his wife as his heir in first instance, and left fifty florins to each of the major churches of the city and twenty-five to the principal confraternity (S. Maria della Pietà). His two brothers were to receive one hundred florins each, but the bulk of his estate was promised — after his widow's death — to the friars and chapter of S. Domenico. His second will followed fourteen months later in May 1498. Again specifying burial in S. Domenico, he bequeathed the friars a specific, inalienable property, and left them a further ten florins for a new chalice and a black altar-cloth.

Most interesting for our purposes is Gavari's third will of May 1511 (Appendix, Document 2). Burial in S. Domenico is now specified as 'in sepulcro eius capelle sancti Hieronymi' to which the property first mentioned in 1498 is now attached. His bequests to other churches in the city are greatly reduced, but two new confraternities are added to the beneficiaries: the local Hieronymites, and the confraternity of S. Maria in the church of S. Domenico. His new wife, Mariecta, was to be the beneficiary for life of his estate and his only son by her, Girolamo, who cannot have been more than five years old, was instituted as his universal heir. By the time of the fourth will, in July 1514, Domenico and Mariecta now had a daughter, Angela, to be provided with a dowry of four hundred florins. The most significant change in his fifth will, made in 1519, is that his universal heir is now named as a previously unmentioned son, Bernardino, Girolamo having evidently died in the meantime; another daughter, Giovanna, is also provided for. By August 1521, Gavari is described as 'corporis languens', but the final will's provisions remain basically unchanged.

It comes as little surprise to learn that Gavari's chapel in S. Domenico was dedicated to St Jerome. Not only is that saint personally chosen its dedication. His later wills show that he

In 1503 alone he served on the XVI and as a Prior; see CDCAS, Riformane, 1491–1504, fols.232v and 247v. For some of these offices, see MERCATI, ibid., pp.32–34.

"CDCAN, 29.12, Angelo di Battista di Angelò, fol.114v–v (16th March 1497).

"Ibid., fols.178v–79v (11th May 1498): '... Item reliquit dicte ecclesiae florones decem pro una
castie de novo fundo pro dicta ecclesia et unum parimentum altara panni lane nigris.'

CDCAN, 51.4, Lattanzio di Ser Biagio Lattanzi, fols.299v–301v (19th August 1521).

"CDCAN, 46.11, Pietro Laurenzii, fol.219r–20r (20th July 1519).

"CDCAN, 51.6, Lattanzio di Ser Biagio Lattanzi, fols.90r–91r (19th August 1521).

"These predella panels were first associated with the Crucifixion in o. GONZACO, 'Zwei Predellenbilder von Raphael', Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft, I (1908), pp.1071–79, and although the provenance has not been firmly established, it has not been challenged since.

"There are two, apparently conflicting, versions of how the predella was separated from the main panel. Francesco Andreocci (1582–1646) recorded that the 'immemorato .. . con alcune figurette bellissime' was given by the chapel patrons to Cardinal Bonifazio Bevilacqua who was legate in Perugia from 1600 to 1627 (MAGHERINI GRAZIANI, op. cit. at note 1 above, p.241). Francesco Andreocci, on the other hand, recorded that the friars of S. Domenico gave 'un predelio che era sotto questo quadro e che era dipinto da Raffaello' to Cardinal Rasponi when he visited the city on 27th October 1668 (G. MANCINI: 'Istruzione storico-pittorica per visitare le Chiese e i Palazzi di Città di Castello, Perugia [1832], I, pp.236–37).


was a supporter of the local Hieronymites (see Appendix, Document 2) and when his second wife finally bore him a son, the boy was named Jerome. Such practices were encouraged by the writings and example of Giovanni d'Andrea and suggest a special relationship with the saint.53

St Jerome was, of course, famous for his meditations on the Passion and devotion to the crucifix. The choice of the Crucifixion may also reflect special family associations - the Gavari arms as seen in the altar-piece frame (Fig.8) show a hand clasping a cross - as well as a possible secondary dedication of the chapel, which is sometimes described as "altare Crucifix" in the documents (see Appendix, Document 1).54

The particularly eucharistic character of Gavari's Crucifixion, with angels catching the blood of Christ in chalices, is often noted, and its promise of resurrection is perfectly fitting for a funerary chapel where masses would have been said for Gavari's soul; his earlier wills included legacies to pay for new chalices for S. Domenico and other churches in the city.55

The pietra serena surround (Fig.8) is one of the few original frames to survive for an altar-piece by Raphael. It matches the one opposite in Tommaso Brozzi's chapel (Fig.9) which housed Signorelli's Martyrdom of St Sebastian. John Shearman has described the two frames as identical, and has suggested that they might both have been designed by Raphael, c.1502-04.56 He has also questioned the reliability of the date furnished by the inscription on Gavari's frame, and this scepticism plays into the hands of those scholars who have doubted the traditional date of c.1503 for the picture (usually preferring a date c.1500-01, although Shearman raised the possibility that it could postdate 1503).57 However, there were several experienced masons and sculptors in Città di Castello at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,58 and it seems most unlikely that the Brozzi frame, which once carried a date of 149859 - a year fully in accord with the stylistic character of Signorelli's Martyrdom60 - could have been constructed as late as 1502. Moreover, the changes that Tommaso Brozzi made to his will between 1491 and 1498 confirm that his chapel was constructed in these years,61 ruling out Raphael's participation. There is every reason for treating both the dates inscribed on these two frames as broadly reliable indicators of the dates of the paintings they contained.

The last of Raphael's altar-frames for Città di Castello was the Sposalizio or Marriage of the Virgin now in the Brera (Fig.13).62 The picture is signed and dated 1504 (RAPHAEL. VRBINAS. M DIII), and was first recorded in the church of S. Francesco by Vasari in 1550.63 It stood as an altar-piece on the left-hand side of the nave, almost opposite the side entrance to the church, and was recorded by most published tradition attributes the design of these capitals - along with numerousdoorways and lavabo - to Raphael; see F. SCHONE: "Raffaello e Francesco Tifernate: un documento e alcune precisazioni", Antichità Viva, XXII, 5-6 (1983), pp.27-34.

53See E.F. RICE: Saint Jerome in the Renaissance, Baltimore and London [1985], p.65; Laudato Ioannes Andreas, Basel [1514], fols.16ff. (reprinted in the Acta Sanctorum, especially in the Sposalizio or Marriage of the Virgin now in the Brera (Fig.13).62 The picture is signed and dated 1504 (RAPHAEL. VRBINAS. M DIII), and was first recorded in the church of S. Francesco by Vasari in 1550.63 It stood as an altar-piece on the left-hand side of the nave, almost opposite the side entrance to the church, and was recorded by most published tradition attributes the design of these capitals - along with numerousdoorways and lavabo - to Raphael; see F. SCHONE: "Raffaello e Francesco Tifernate: un documento e alcune precisazioni", Antichità Viva, XXII, 5-6 (1983), pp.27-34.

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and manuscript guides to the city until its removal in 1798.\textsuperscript{44}

While a Franciscan church existed in Città di Castello from 1267, the present building in the north-eastern part of the city in the quarter of the Porta S. Egidio dates from the early fifteenth century. The last fifteen years of the century witnessed a concerted programme of altar renewal in this conventual church, which may have been stimulated by Vitelli interest.\textsuperscript{65} Unfortunately, the interior of the church was remodelled between 1707 and 1727, and very few vestiges of its Quattrocento decoration remain.

Despite this restructuring, and the removal of Raphael's picture to Milan, a certain amount is known about the patronage of the Sposalizio, largely as a result of the interest in acquiring it expressed by Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, in 1571. Local enquiries on that occasion established that the painting had been commissioned by Filippo Albizzini, who was said to have died about thirty years earlier. The duke did not secure the picture, and a descendant of the original patron – Albizzino Albizzini – was able to renew his family's patronage of the chapel in 1633.\textsuperscript{66} At this time the chapel was said to be dedicated to St Joseph, and it has generally been assumed that Filippo di Lodovico Albizzini (whom Magherini Graziani identified as the probable patron of the altar-piece) commissioned Raphael's \textit{Marriage of the Virgin} to reflect this dedication. A newly discovered document (Appendix, Document 3) confirms this, and establishes that Filippo Albizzini acquired the chapel in S. Francesco in February 1501. The act was drawn up in the church in the presence of the community of friars and of the provincial vicar of the Order, Luca da Siena. Albizzini promised to redecorate the chapel, which he wished to dedicate to St Joseph and the Holy Name of Jesus, and to provide the necessary furnishings, while for their part the friars agreed to celebrate St Joseph's feast day (19th March) at this altar.

Filippo Albizzini was a notary (who on at least one occasion had a document drawn up in his chapel in S. Francesco).\textsuperscript{47} He lived in the quarter of the Porta S. Egidio (in the east of the city, near S. Francesco), where he gradually built up the site that was to become the Palazzo Albizzini.\textsuperscript{48} In one of the several property deals he transacted in the 1490s, he (like Baronci and Gavari) is described as a cloth merchant.\textsuperscript{49} Albizzini had married (Gelomia Ranuti Peri) by 1515,\textsuperscript{50} and was active in local politics. He was Captain of Scroccoli in 1490 and served regularly as a Prior between 1491 and 1527, as well as on the councils of the XVI and XXXII.\textsuperscript{71} His record of public service is almost identical to those of Andrea Baronci and Domenico Gavari, and it comes as no surprise to find that he and Gavari appear together in several notarial acts.\textsuperscript{72} Magherini Graziani stated that Albizzini died in 1541 (presumably working from the claim made in 1571 that he had died thirty years previously).\textsuperscript{73} I have found no mention of him after 1527. I have not located his will, but he is said in
1571 to have endowed his chapel with a piece of land, and to have asked that mass be celebrated on the anniversary of his death (as well as on St Joseph's day); these masses were renewed in 1633.  

The chapel Albizzini acquired in 1501 was described as 'suptus tabernaculum organorum in capite cori ipsius ecclesie versus altarem maiorem', and a copy of Raphael's altar-piece is still found today in that location, on the fourth altar on the left of the nave. Franciscan church interiors in Umbria were originally subdivided between the choir (for the friars), the upper nave (for the lay-men), and the lower nave (for female worshippers). Raphael's picture was in the upper nave, close to the screen dividing the upper and lower parts of the church, and the placement of the Virgin Mary and the group of women on the left of his composition (reversing the arrangement in Perugino's prototype in Perugia Cathedral; Fig 14, discussed below) can be seen to reflect the actual division of the congregation within the church.

Albizzini's dedication of his chapel to St Joseph explains the choice of subject for Raphael's altar-piece. Its probable model, Perugino's Marriage of the Virgin now in Caen (Fig 14), was painted for an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St Joseph on the retro-façade of Perugia Cathedral. The city had acquired the 'Santo Anello'— said to be the ring with which Joseph had married the Virgin Mary — in 1473, and pride in the ownership of this relic bolstered the cult of Joseph in Umbria. The chapel in Perugia Cathedral was sponsored by the Franciscan preacher, Bernardino da Feltre (1439–94), and communal funds were voted for it in 1486. It housed the Holy Ring and (in spite of its full dedication) it was subsequently referred to as the chapel of St Joseph. A lay confraternity dedicated to the saint grew up around the chapel, commissioning an altar-piece depicting 'istoriam et sponsalia Santi Joseph cum Beata Vergine Maria', first from Pintoricchio (1489) and subsequently from Perugino (1499). Fra Bernardino da Feltre's support for this new chapel was crucial, and
Joseph's cult was actively promoted in Umbria by the Franciscans. It seems clear that the dedications of the two chapels in Perugia and Città di Castello are related, and it is not without significance that the concession of the chapel in which Filippo Albizzini must have belonged. Moreover, as Jörg Traeger has recently pointed out, Joseph had a recognized role in the naming of Christ, and the two dedications were probably related.

The origins of Raphael's Umbrian altar-pieces in Perugino's repertoire have always been clear (the connexions may indeed have been requested by his patrons), and the very close similarities between the two artists' compositions have inevitably featured in the debate about the nature and date of Raphael's apprenticeship with Perugino, and who influenced whom. It is now generally accepted that Raphael's Sposalizio (Fig. 19), which Vasari already selected as the prime example of how the younger artist surpassed his master; was developed from Perugino's altar-piece for Perugia Cathedral (Fig. 14, although the opposite has sometimes been argued). Indeed, the comparison between the two paintings has become one of the most common exercises in the study of renaissance art: Raphael can be seen as adding physicality, convincing narrative and a greater sense of space to Perugino's original idea. Similar observations can be made of the relationship between Perugino's altar-piece for S. Francesco a Monteripido (Fig. 10) and Raphael's Mond Crucifixion (Fig. 6). Raphael borrowed the foreground setting, the basic compositional solution, the essential poses of the Virgin Mary, St John and the Magdalen (whose pose is reversed), as well as the golden sun and silver moon, and the fluttering banderoles of the two angels. In addition to these details, the mannered angling of the figures' heads, the cast of the faces and the expressive nature of the hands come straight out of Perugino's corpus. The greater spatial, pattern-making and figural sophistication of the Mond Crucifixion again appear to reflect Raphael's translation of a Perugino composition into his own idiom.

Perugino's Sposalizio was commissioned in April 1499. He had still not completed the painting by December 1503, but probably delivered it in the course of 1504. The Monteripido altar-piece was commissioned from Perugino in September 1502 (for delivery by Easter 1503), but completion is usually dated c. 1504–06 on the grounds that Perugino was extremely busy c. 1502–03 and was not in a position to deliver the picture on time. Nevertheless, if, as it has often been argued, the picture was executed in Perugia by one of Perugino's best assistants, this could have taken place within a year of the commission (with Perugino overseeing completion on the various occasions on which he returned to Perugia in 1503). At all events, it seems in the cases of both the Sposalizio and the Crucifixion that Raphael had knowledge of Perugino's compositions before they were unveiled (which suggests that he had access to the older artist's workshop in the Ospedale della Misericordia in Perugia). As it happens, Raphael was documented in Perugia in January and March 1503, when he was named as the local representative of an Urbinate merchant who needed to collect a debt there, strongly implying that he was based in Perugia at the time. This runs against the

prevailing view that Raphael took up residence in Città di Castello while painting his altar-pieces for the city.7 Crown and Cavalcaselle’s suggestion that ‘there is nothing to prevent us from assuming that the masterpieces which Raphael created [for Città di Castello] were executed at Perugia’ should therefore be considered afresh, and indeed Raphael’s base may have been in Perugia for much of the period c.1500–07.8 This would also explain why he did not leave much of a documentary trace in Città di Castello, and might suggest that it was his connexion with Perugino (then the most sought-after artist in Central Italy) that helped him secure his earliest altar-piece commissions in Umbria.

Oxford Brookes University

Appendix

1. Will of Clara Baroni, 17th September 1312
(Città di Castello, Archivio Notarile [hereafter CDACAN], 51.4, Lattanzio di Ser Biagio Lattanzii, fol.15r–v)

Die xvi Septembris

Documenta maioria Clara uxor olivem Andree Thomae de Baruntiis de Citi
den civitate etiam exequtorem sive prevaleat view that Raphael took up residence in Città di Castello, see ‘Signorelli and the Young Raphael’ in Raphael before Rome, cited at note 15 above, pp. 109-24, esp. p. 110. It should be noted that Evangelista di Pian di Meleto is usually assumed to be the one who painted the frescoes at Città di Castello, and might suggest that it was his connexion with Perugino (then the most sought-after artist in Central Italy) that helped him secure his earliest altar-piece commissions in Umbria. The earliest altar-piece commissions in Umbria.

3. Acquisition of the Chapel of St Joseph in S. Francesco, Città di Castello

2. Will of Domenico Gavaris, 13th May 1511

III

Città di Castello, de Città di Castello dummodo dictum potere sive dictam medietatem dic-

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