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## A Funeral Procession from Venice to Milan: Death Rituals for a Late-Medieval Wealthy Merchant

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## **A Funeral Procession from Venice to Milan: Death Rituals for a Late-Medieval Wealthy Merchant<sup>1</sup>**

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to be published in *Dealing with The Dead: Mortality and Community in the Middle Ages*, Thea Cervone, ed. (Leiden: Brill). *Forthcoming, 2018*

Toward the end of September 1394, news arrived in Milan of the death of merchant Marco Carelli in Venice. Three years before, the brilliant businessman had named the *Fabbrica* - the administrative body of the Cathedral of Milan - as heir of his entire fortune, which was estimated at the astonishing sum of 35,000 ducats. When, in 1392, total Cathedral income failed to cover its building expenses, threatening the continuation of the work, the *Fabbrica* turned to Carelli and asked him to consider, given the urgent necessities, advancing at least a part of the promised inheritance. The wealthy merchant did more and agreed to donate immediately everything he owned, divesting himself entirely even while he lived.

At his death, in the almost three hundred lines of his will, the *Fabbrica* did not find any mention of the funeral rites or rituals he desired to be performed. The merchant had specified precisely the destinations of his assets and goods, and he made monetary

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<sup>1</sup> The essay is based upon the research on Marco Carelli undertaken for my doctoral dissertation in Economic and Social History ("Marco Carelli, Il Mercante di Milano," PhD diss., Bocconi University, 2011) and for my doctoral dissertation in Medieval History ("The Cathedral of Milan and its Fabulous Donor," PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2013), soon to be published as Saltamacchia, *Marco Carelli: The Merchant of Milan*, forthcoming. I wish to thank Rudolph M. Bell, Samantha Kelly, James Masschaele and Thomas F. Madden for their comments and feedbacks to this essay.

Archival sources are here indicated with AFD (Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo, Milan), ASV (Archivio di Stato, Venice) and MARIEGOLA (ASV, S. Maria Gloriosa ai Frari, b. 100-XIV-1: Mariegola della Scuola dei Milanesi 1361-1790, f. 63v).

provisions for perpetual masses to be celebrated for his soul, but he left neither an indication of a preferred burial site nor details about the funeral itself, with only the telling exception of his request that the cathedral councilors purchase modest brown dresses for his wife and his cousins, to be worn at the funeral.<sup>2</sup> Given Marco Carelli's attention to detail in everything of importance to him, we can only conclude that his will reflects a calculated decision about what was and what was not important, made in contempt for ambition and earthly glory.

Despite the stunning indifference toward the funerary celebration that Marco Carelli demonstrated in his written testament, a long, sumptuous and elaborate ritual marked his death. Regardless of whatever spiritual value was intended by these rites, it takes no stretch of the imagination to suggest that the *Fabbrica* chose to perform such lavish ceremonies as an act of gratitude towards its generous benefactor, in the hope of soliciting new donations from the Milanese by offering to the crowds the shining example of this devout merchant.

The first men to learn of Marco Carelli's death were his brothers in the Scuola dei Milanesi [confraternity of Milan and Monza merchants] that he founded in Venice thirty years before. As was customary, they inducted his passage to the next world by reciting five Hail Marys and five Our Fathers<sup>3</sup> - so that, as the confraternity *Mariegola* [constituent rule and statute] explained, "[...] che lo meta dio piu tosto a la gloria del santo paradiso" [God could destine him more hastily to the glory of the Holy Heaven].<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> AFD, Testamenti, c. 42, f. 13, Marco Carelli.

<sup>3</sup> ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 6v.

<sup>4</sup> ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 6v; ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 26.

As precisely described in the *Mariegola*, at the death of a brother two *nonzoli*<sup>5</sup> attended to the preparation of the corpse and the coffin, and they organized the funeral procession.<sup>6</sup> After the corpse was washed and dressed, it was transported to the confraternity's elected church, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, and displayed in order to receive homage from the confraternity brothers (Fig. 1). The confraternity chapel (Fig. 2) was decorated for the occasion with silk drapes depicting St. Ambrose and St. John the Baptist (its co-patrons). These rituals affirmed the deceased's continued membership in the association even after his death. They solicited the two saints' protection, "so that they could be advocates for his soul before God."<sup>7</sup>



<sup>5</sup> The word *nonzolo* is a lemma from the Venetian dialect, meaning "gravedigger." According to Boerio, the term derives from the gravedigger's task of announcing mass times to the people. Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del Dialecto Veneziano*, I (Firenze: Giunti, 2006), s.v. "nonzolo."

<sup>6</sup> ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 5-5v, 24-25. It was customary for confraternities to have paid officials appointed with executive tasks – while all the other appointments in the associations were pro bono. Giancarlo Angelozzi, *Le confraternite laicali. Un'esperienza cristiana tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1978), 56; Francesca Ortalli, «Per salute delle anime e delli corpi». *Scuole piccole a Venezia nel tardo Medioevo* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2001), 24.

<sup>7</sup> ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. iiiiv-iiiiviii, 26v.



Fig. 1. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice. Source: Photo by Apollonio Tottoli



Fig. 2. Chapel of the merchants' confraternity in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice. In the foreground, tomb of the composer Monteverdi. Source: Photo by Apollonio Tottoli.

The rituals staged by the Scuola dei Milanesi at a brother's death served as a forceful reminder of the communion between the living and the dead that they believed formed naturally at this stage of the ceremonial process, and that marked the eternal place of the deceased within the living body of the pious association.<sup>8</sup> Every member of the confraternity present in Venice was expected to take part in the commemoration ritual, first by visiting the chapel to pay homage to the corpse, then by attending the funeral, and lastly by accompanying the Scuola's priors and officials to the burial site.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, along with the feast days of patron saints, funeral ceremonies constituted the community's defining moments: all the brothers gathered together, forcefully united by their belief in the same destiny, as their dead companion silently reminded them.<sup>10</sup> There were theological as well as social reasons for these communal moments. As James Banker points out, the commemorations of these pious associations were modeled after the funeral rituals performed in monastic communities, where all the monks together prayed for each deceased brother. In the monastery as in the confraternity, contributions to the Treasury of Merit earned by the brothers, through asceticism in the former and charity in the latter, could never be deemed sufficient to assure a place in heaven for the

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<sup>8</sup> Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>9</sup> The attendance of at least six friars at the funeral ceremony of a defunct brother was one of the terms of mutual allowances and responsibilities stipulated between the friars of Santa Maria Gloriosa and the Scuola dei Milanesi. A pecuniary penalty equivalent to one *grosso* was inflicted upon the convent for each absent friar from the minimum number of six. ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 9, 11v, 36. In order to allow all the brothers to have time to pay homage to the corpse, the confraternity statute forbade precipitous burials. According to the confraternity's minutes, brothers sometimes went to the priors to ask permission for immediate burial of a companion but even in these instances a minimum interval of time was always observed between notification of the demise, reception of the coffin at the confraternity's chapel, and the burial rite. ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 37v-38v.

<sup>10</sup> James Banker, *Death in the Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: 1988), 9.

dead brother's soul. Piety demanded a collective final plea for God's mercy by as large a contingent of living persons as possible.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the funeral mass, a somber, long cortege of hundreds of brothers followed the bier, led by the confraternity's priors and *anziani* [elders], as the confraternity's board was called. A large processional cross in golden copper and four black torches led the way for the mourners, each carrying a lighted candle. The funeral procession then moved from the chapel to the designated place of burial - a small area within the church graveyard, near the bell tower.<sup>12</sup> And there Marco Carelli's body was initially put to rest, while awaiting clearance from Milan for the exhumation, transportation, and reinterment of the corpse at Carelli's city of birth - a wait initially expected to last only the few weeks necessary to transport the body from Venice to Milan but that, due to complications related to an outbreak of plague, was prolonged by several months.<sup>13</sup>

Carelli died on September 18 and by September 24 Albertino de Nigri, who was in charge of supervising Carelli's Milanese household accounts during his sojourn in Venice, ceased to record expenses – a sure indicator that Marco's death was known to de Nigri.<sup>14</sup> Under the terms of Carelli's testament, upon his death all of his household goods belonged to the Milan Cathedral, no matter that he had died and would be buried initially

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<sup>11</sup> Banker, *Death in the Community*, 51, 62.

<sup>12</sup> The concession to the Scuola dei Milanesi of an area within the church graveyard for the burial of its members and its poor, informally stipulated with the Franciscans since the inception of the Scuola, was officially ratified in 1422, with an act signed by twenty-two friars, transcribed in the Scuola's statute. ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 16-19v. For a description of the tasks of the *nonzoli*, see ASV, MARIEGOLA, f. 5-5v, 24v-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Annali della Fabbrica del Duomo dall'origine fino al presente, pubblicati a cura dell'Amministrazione della Fabbrica*. Milano: Brigola, 1877-1895 [from here on, ANNALI], 1: 131 (February 14, 1395).

<sup>14</sup> AFD, Eredità, c. 67, Marco Carelli, f. 60.

by his community in Venice. Anxious to assure that none of its new assets went missing, the *Fabbrica* immediately ordered an inventory of everything Carelli possessed in Milan.<sup>15</sup> On the following Sunday, September 27, the Council of the *Fabbrica* gathered to deliberate on rites and rituals to be performed in Milan to commemorate the merchant's demise in Milan, even though his body was interred in Venice. They decided to celebrate the *settimo*, the mass usually celebrated seven days after the death, two days late – a delay necessary to allow them enough time to prepare the funereal apparatus and spread news of the commemoration among the city's inhabitants.<sup>16</sup> On the morning of Tuesday, September 29, 1394 the clergy of the cathedral of Milan, joined by the clergy of nearby Santa Tecla, the city's second cathedral, and the *canonici decumani*, gathered to celebrate the Office of the Dead.<sup>17</sup> The assemblage of presbyters then processed to the Church of San Babila, the parish where the Carelli family lived, to celebrate twenty-five

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<sup>15</sup> ANNALI, 1: 118 (September 27, 1394).

<sup>16</sup> ANNALI, 1: 117 (September 27, 1394). Christians believed that celebration of masses for the dead seven and thirty days after death shortened the souls' torments. Gittings, "Urban Funerals," 171-173. The numerology, adopted from Jewish tradition, refers to the seventh day of the Genesis creation narrative and to the thirty day period of mourning for Moses, as narrated in Deuteronomy 34:8. The original Jewish commemoration ritual, consisting of a period of up to seven days of abstention from work, personal care and adornment, was explained as referring to the time of Joseph's mourning for Jacob – and it subsequently passed into Christian observance and transformed in the celebration of the *settimo*. Geoffrey Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial: An Introductory Survey of the Historical Development of Christian Burial Rites* (London: Alcuin Club-SPCK, 1977), 4, 12. The rich symbolism typical of the late medieval period here found expression in elements of funeral ritual meant to express beliefs and hopes about death that had their roots in two millennia and more of Judeo-Christian tradition. Those in attendance readily understood the profound meanings of such simple observances as the seven and thirty day masses.

<sup>17</sup> The Office of the Dead, a prayer cycle from the Book of Hours divided into vespers, matins and lauds, was enacted before the Mass. Paul Binski, "Ways of Dying and Rituals of Death," in *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, ed. Paul Binsky (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 53. The *canonici decumani* were a body of chaplains founded in Milan between the eight and the ninth century, who were called upon to celebrate masses, funeral ceremonies and offices of the dead, and who often also worked as church custodians. They were called *decumani* after the *decime* [tithes] they collected for their services. Gaetano Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni* (Venezia: Tipografia Emiliana, 1854), s.v. "stallo," 69: 180. Santa Tecla, or *Basilica Maior*, was an ancient paleochristian basilica which was used as summer cathedral.



masses. Everyone in attendance received a two-ounce candle, and in front of the altar were placed two nine-ounce candles and two large crosses, each surmounted by ten three-ounce candles, all lighted. A black drape was spread on the pavement, a rite stemming from ancient pagan beliefs that corpses veiled in black were invisible to the spirits who might otherwise molest them. The black or sable hue resulted from rolling burial sackcloth in dirt and ashes as a sign of penitence – a custom forbidden in Christian funerals, which allowed for expressions of grief, but were more centrally a triumphant reminder of the resurrection that awaited all the dead. The use of black drape had long lost its ancient pagan significance and so the obvious fact that Carelli's corpse was actually many miles away in Venice was of no consequence.<sup>18</sup> Rather, the hope for eternal salvation symbolized as light contrasted powerfully with the black tone as it expressed the deep grief of the mourners, while reminding the living with its absence of color about the realities of unconsciousness and decomposition.<sup>19</sup>

In the afternoon, the presbyters returned in procession to the main cathedral of the city of Milan to recite the Office of the Dead together with the cathedral priests, in the presence of a crowd of mourners who flocked from every corner of the city and the countryside. Funerals for important people attracted popular curiosity for their great scenic apparatus and for the promise of doles of food and drink customarily distributed to participants at the end of the ceremony.<sup>20</sup> On occasions of grand commemoration, such as

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<sup>18</sup> Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 23; Bertram S. Puckle, *Funeral Customs: Their Origin and Development* (London: T.W. Laurie, Ltd., 1926), 98.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 63; Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 89; Binski, "Ways of Dying," 54-55.

<sup>20</sup> Giuliana Vitale, "Pratiche funerarie nella Napoli aragonese," in *La morte e i suoi riti in Italia tra Medioevo e prima età moderna*, ed. Gian Maria Varanini, Anna Zangarini, and Francesco Salvestrini (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2007), 423; Clare Gittings, "Urban

the one celebrated for Marco Carelli, officials were sent everywhere in Milan and into the villages nearby to invite the people to participate. A large assemblage of mourners rendered great honor to the deceased, firm in their belief that the number of intercessory prayers multiplied to reduce the sufferings of his soul.<sup>21</sup>

Dozens of flames illuminated the scene, symbolizing that hell's darkness would not prevail over the death of a just man: four one-pound candles glowed in front of the draped altar, the cathedral *canonici ordinari* [resident priests] each held a six-ounce candle, while the presbyters, the cathedral officials and guardians carried smaller two-ounce candles. Such a magnificent visual display was yet another form of intercession for the deceased's soul, one that gave due recognition to the individual's former rank and position.<sup>22</sup> The number of candles and their size varied within strict limits, set according to the deceased's prestige. From the thirteenth century onward, Milan's sumptuary laws precisely regulated expenses for candles and torches, with the intent of curbing status pressures that compelled the governing classes to squander greater riches on wax and apparatuses for funerals, endangering their financial stability.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the fact that such restrictions were dependent upon the social status of the dead reveals the hesitation of the community to detach entirely the deceased from the place he or she had occupied in life.

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Funerals in Late Medieval and Reformation England," in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 171.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Dinn, "Death and rebirth in late medieval Bury St Edmunds," in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester University Press, 1992), 156; Gittings, "Urban Funerals," 171.

<sup>22</sup> Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 78; Gittings, "Urban Funerals," 171.

<sup>23</sup> Diane Owen Hughes, "Mourning rites, memory, and civilization in premodern Italy," in *Riti e rituali nelle società medievali*, ed. Jacques Chiffolleau, Lauro Martines, and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, (Spoleto: Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1994), 33, 36; Vitale, "Pratiche funerarie," 431.

While people crowded around the cathedral, gargantuan doles were given out: in the Chiesa Maggiore, three *moggia* of wheat bread were distributed to the poor, while five *moggia* of wheat bread and four *staia* of chickpeas with the *grassa* were brought to Marco Carelli's house to be distributed to the "poor of Christ," to the beggars houses in Milan, to the incarcerated debtors in Malastalla, San Satiro and other prisons in Milan, and to the houses of his family and neighbors.<sup>24</sup> The total was roughly equivalent to 2,475 pounds of bread and 154 pounds of chickpeas, enough to feed a throng of over six thousand mourners and prisoners.<sup>25</sup> The doling out of food to the poor after funerals derived from the pagan Roman custom of serving meals on the same day and the day following a death, essentially marking the incorporation of the deceased into the next world and the reestablishment of the social order among the survivors. Adopted by early Christians, this ritual was later replaced by Augustine with provisions for the poor, forcefully tying together care for the dead with care for the poor.<sup>26</sup>

However much these enormous doles may have been joyously welcomed by hundreds and even thousands of beneficiaries, they were not distributed with the intent of

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<sup>24</sup>The use of chickpeas as funerary dole may derive from a combination of ancient traditions. Among pagans, it was customary to offer male mourners food that was round in shape, such as lentils and eggs, to remind them of the revolving wheel of fortune. In ancient Greece, huge pots of chickpeas, beans and broad beans were cooked on the occasion of the Feast of the Dead to provide the deceased with a fulfilling meal before her or his return in the afterlife. Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 4; Ignazio Buttitta, *I morti e il grano: Tempi del lavoro e ritmi della festa* (Roma: Meltemi, 2006), 94-96; Alberto Capatti, Alberto De Bernardi and Angelo Varni, "L'alimentazione," in *Storia d'Italia*, 13 (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), 126; Ottavio Cavalcanti, *Cibo dei vivi, cibo dei morti, cibo di Dio* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1995), 81-82.

<sup>25</sup>In late medieval Milan, one *moggio da grano* was equivalent to 146.23 liters, one *staiio* was equivalent to 18.28 liters, and 1 liter = 0.96 kilograms. Hence, 8 *moggia* = 1169.84 liters = 1123.0464 kilograms = 2475.8935 pounds; 4 *staia* = 73.12 liters = 70.1952 kilograms = 154.7539 pounds. For the value of the *moggio da grano* and the *staiio*, see Angelo Martini, *Manuale di metrologia: Ossia, Misure, pesi e monete in uso attualmente e anticamente presso tutti i popoli* (Torino: Loescher, 1883), 350-51.

<sup>26</sup>Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 11; Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 24-27; Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 20-24, 164-65.

addressing the problem of poverty in the city. Had that been the primary concern of the donor, he or she could have stipulated a fund for daily distribution of bread to the city poor – as in fact other merchants did at the time.<sup>27</sup> Rather, such offerings had a symbolic meaning, as suggested by the numerology of the quantities distributed: three *moggia* for the Holy Trinity; another five *moggia* for the wounds of Christ; and four *staia* for the Evangelists. The beneficence was not indiscriminate, but targeted specific groups: the poor, debtors, prisoners, one's family, and one's neighbors.<sup>28</sup>

Food distribution constituted a final work of charity exercised on behalf of the merchant Marco Carelli; it was a literal response to the words Christians recite daily in the Pater Noster (“Give us this day our daily bread”) and satisfied the Gospel's injunctions to feed the hungry and visit the prisoners.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the

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<sup>27</sup> Historian Wilbur K. Jordan harshly criticizes the offering of such gifts to the poor at funerals, arguing that they encouraged mendicancy rather than solving the problem of poverty. I believe Jordan's argument does not get it right, as funerary doles, although sometimes quantitatively significant, as in Marco Carelli's case, were limited to the funeral day and sometimes to its anniversary every year, a scope too restricted to have a positive impact on the population. Wilbur K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 146-47; J. A. F. Thomson, “Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastic History* XVI, 2 (October 2012), 182.

For a telling example of a contemporary merchant who disposed of his wealth with the intent of providing a concrete and sustained help to the city poor, see the case of the fifteenth-century Milanese merchant Giovanni Rottole. He left several properties to the charitable institutions Consorzio della Misericordia and Scuola delle Quattro Marie, designating their revenues to the “poor of Christ, for the soul of the aforementioned donor and the dead of his family.” He prescribed for the two beneficiaries of his inheritance specific acts towards the needy. On St. Francis's feast, every year, they were to clothe twelve poor people from head to foot, and every weekday *in perpetuum* an official on horseback was to distribute baked bread and wine through the streets of the city. Gino Barbieri, *Origini del capitalismo Lombardo* (Milano: Credito Lombardo, 1961), 157-247; Patrizia Mainoni, “La seta a Milano nel XV secolo: aspetti economici e istituzionali,” *Studi Storici* 35, 4 (1994), 871-96.

<sup>28</sup> P.H. Cullum and P.J.P. Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: ‘to the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor’,” *Northern History: A Review of the History of the North of England* 29 (1993), 38.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Sherrer Ross Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages; Mortality, Judgment, and Remembrance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 122; Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision,” 28, 34; Banker, *Death in the Community*, 49.

beneficiaries of such generosity were expected to pray for the deceased. Their role as powerful intercessors for the soul of the dead was warranty of a safe passage to the hereafter, in a reciprocal “economy of redemption,” as Miri Rubin has defined it.<sup>30</sup>

Following the distribution of bread and chickpeas, at the fourteenth hour of the day, the merchant’s family took part together with local authorities in celebrating the *settimo* mass. As Richard Trexler elucidates, the sacredness of a ritual was mediated and heightened “by the combined authority of heaven and earth,” and the simultaneous presence of the spiritual and civil establishment reinforced this perception in the spectators.<sup>31</sup>

The Carelli family occupied the front position. Marco’s widow, Flora de Aliprandi, was most probably accompanied by the four cousins Marco mentioned in his will: Giovannola and Beltramola, the daughters of Marco’s uncle Franzio; Malgarola, the daughter of Marco’s uncle Albertolo; and Petrolla, also known as Muzia, the daughter of Marco’s cousin Simonolo. Carelli in his will had specified that the cathedral councilors provide his widow with a plain dress, expressly for the occasion of his funeral celebration: a dress of cloth thirteen arms long, of the value of 32-36 soldi per arm, in brown, the color the deceased’s female family members were required to wear in Milan at obsequies.<sup>32</sup> Instead, Flora de Aliprandi wore the new dress that the cathedral administrators had ordered for her. In defiance of the dead man’s instructions, the

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<sup>30</sup> Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision,” 37; Dinn, “Death and Rebirth,” 157; Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité d'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Age (vers 1320-vers 1480)*(Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1980), 314-16.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Trexler, “Ritual Behavior in Renaissance Florence: the Setting,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* (1973), 128.

<sup>32</sup> AFD, Testamenti, c. 42, f. 13, Marco Carelli; Rita Levi Pisetzky, “Come vestivano i Milanesi alla fine del Medioevo,” in *Storia di Milano*, IV (Milano: Treccani, 1955), 746.



*Fabbrica* chose to forgo the ascetic specifications in Marco Carelli's will. The councilors, "to give a good example to everyone," decided to buy Carelli's widow a longer and more expensive outfit, completing her sober mourning costume with two *siptulares*, three *velleti* (the small veils a widow put on her head), and two *lamponi vayrorum* (inserts of the fur of a vair, a sort of blue squirrel) to line her mantle as a sign of nobility.<sup>33</sup>

Standing immediately behind the family were Milan's civic authorities: the Vicar, the Twelve of Provision, the Board of the Judges, and dozens of deputies and councilors from the board of the cathedral. Each of them was given a *sesino*, a little coin worth six dinars, to be brought to the altar as a token offering for the *Fabbrica* – presumably with the intent of attracting offerings from the people in emulation of this long procession of noble officials. The same elaborate ritual was celebrated again on the thirtieth day after his death, on October 17.<sup>34</sup> All this was done without the presence of the dead man's body.

On the very next day, October 18, the Council of the *Fabbrica* met to organize the transportation of Marco Carelli's corpse from Venice to Milan. They decided to appoint this task to deputy Martino della Croce, who, in the immediate aftermath of the merchant's demise, had been sent to Venice together with his brother Giovannino della

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<sup>33</sup> The term *siptulares* derives from the medieval lemma *sitularius*, from the verb *serare*, to close. See *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, s.v. "serare," accessed December 31, 2012, <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/serare>. Presumably, it indicated the *benda* (band) the widow customarily put around her head to express humiliation, as a sign of her "rejection of the world and loss of identity." Owen Hughes, "Mourning Rites," 33.

During the fourteenth century, the use of veils for widows became widespread, with a similar symbolic value as the former custom of letting down the hair disheveled.

Vair fur inserts were a status symbol. The Sumptuary Laws redacted in Milan two years later, in 1396, allowed only officials and counselors of the Collegio di Milano to wear clothes lined with vair or ermine fur. Rita Levi Pisetzky, "Nuove mode della Milano viscontea nello scorcio dell'300", *Storia di Milano*, V (Milano: Treccani, 1955), 887, 905; Owen Hughes, "Mourning Rites," 34. Interestingly, the blue of vair pelts was incorporated into heraldry, which was also called "vair" because of the blue and white pattern that recalled the pelts sewn together.

<sup>34</sup> ANNALI, 1: 119 (October 11, 1394).

Croce on behalf of the *Fabbrica* to recover Carelli's credits, ensure the payment of his debts and supervise the retrieval of his remaining goods and merchandise.<sup>35</sup>

However, complications related to sanitation restrictions imposed during a 1394 outbreak of plague meant that for five months the councilors had no choice but to postpone the transfer.<sup>36</sup> Over several decades of recurrent epidemics and plagues, the Milanese had heeded well the practice of barricading themselves within the city's walls as soon as news of an outbreak reached them, greatly reducing the possibility of contagion. Thanks to such firm measures, while the Black Death rapidly spread and ravaged Europe during the infamous year 1348, Milan managed to isolate itself and remained untouched by the deadly disease – although the Lombard center did not always enjoy that same good fortune in the following years. Only in March 1395, did *Fabbrica* officials present to the Duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, a formal request for exemption from the norms regarding corpse transportation. A few days later, they received a special permit for carrying the merchant's coffin solemnly from Venice to Milan along the Po and the Adda Rivers, entering through Porta Orientale.<sup>37</sup>

Given the immediate circumstances and the experience gained from decades of taking measures to isolate the city from epidemics, the insistence of the *Fabbrica* in bringing Carelli's body back to his native place, even at the cost of a considerable sum of money and exposing their lives at the risk of disease and infection, which were often the fate of embalmers and gravediggers, is noteworthy.<sup>38</sup> Surely, the *Fabbrica*'s desire to

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<sup>35</sup> ANNALI, 1: 119 (October 18, 1394).

<sup>36</sup> AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 23, f. 116; ANNALI, 1: 131 (February 14, 1395).

<sup>37</sup> AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 119; ANNALI, 1: 133 (March 14, 1395).

<sup>38</sup> Just to give a notorious example, when King Henry I of England died in 1135 at Saint-Denis-en-Lyons in Normandy, his corpse was sent for burial at Reading, the abbey he had founded a few years before “for the salvation of [his] soul, and the souls of King William, [his]

provide the Milanese with the relic of their great benefactor's whole body played an important part, as the sumptuous ceremonies they organized at the corpse's arrival in Milan attest. Yet, even more, the councilors' insistence on obtaining the merchant's remains reveals the substantial importance corpses had for the councilors. And in this the *Fabbrica* officials were not alone.

By the end of the fourteenth century, the practice of secondary burial – the disinterment of the bones of kin who had died far from home, and their return for burial in the family tomb – was becoming common practice among the elite, as Sharon Strocchia has documented in the case of Florence.<sup>39</sup> Pagans, Jews, and Muslims deemed the corpse to be a source of pollution, and therefore any contact with it had to be avoided, but for medieval Christians the corpse was seen as the sacred temple of the Holy Spirit. For them, Jesus' resurrection in the flesh had transformed and dignified corporality; care for the deceased's corpse, as Augustine had affirmed centuries before, was not a mere aesthetic concern but a profession of faith in the resurrection of the body.<sup>40</sup> In the High Middle Ages, when the death of an important man occurred away from his native land, it was customary to bring home the bodily remains. The corpse was disemboweled, cut into pieces and boiled in water or wine to separate flesh from bones. Then, the flesh was interred at the place of death while the bones, considered the noblest part because they were more long lasting, were sent home to be solemnly buried in native soil.<sup>41</sup> Some

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father, and of King William, [his] brother, and Queen Maud, [his] wife, and all [his] ancestors and successors." Yet, such was the state of his body that the surgeon who carried out the embalming operation died of infection. Boase, *Death*, 113.

<sup>39</sup> Sharon Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 66-67.

<sup>40</sup> Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Boase, *Death*, 113; Ronald Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion: Social Ideals and Death Rituals in the Later Middle Ages," in *Mirrors of Mortality Studies in the Social History of*

theologians looked askance at this practice, which posed a number of challenges to belief in bodily resurrection. In 1299, Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed what he intended to be the definitive sentence on the matter, declaring “impious and abominable” such a custom, and allowing the transportation of the corpse’s remains only when, after being buried at the place of death, it had decomposed. However, as Elizabeth Brown observes, the papal bull, far from restraining the practice, had the opposite effect, rendering the practice yet more desirable, as only the rich could afford the price of the costly dispensation needed to perform the ritual.<sup>42</sup> Embalming represented a viable alternative that circumvented the papal prohibition. First the deceased’s body was disemboweled: entrails, heart, brain and eyes were removed - an operation that required some skill and at least some marginal anatomical expertise, and was therefore performed ideally by doctors, or in their absence monks, or even butchers or cooks. In this way, the putrefying and perishable parts of the body were discarded, in order to better preserve the skeleton, which truly represented the deceased’s identity.<sup>43</sup> Then, the corpse was treated to retard decomposition during transport: the dead’s remains were soaked in vinegar or wine, then covered with salt and aromatic herbs, and lastly sewn in animal hides.<sup>44</sup>

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*Death*, ed. Joachim Whaley (London: Routledge, 1980), 46; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse,” *Viator* 12 (1981), 221.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, “Death and the Human Body,” 221, 223, 265.

<sup>43</sup> Patrice Georges, “Mourir c’est pourrir un peu ... Intentions et techniques contre la corruption des cadavres à la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Micrologus: Nature Sciences and Medieval Societies VII, Il Cadavere (The Corpse). Actes du Congrès de Lyon, octobre 1996*, ed. Catherine Chene (Firenze: Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1999), 375-76. On embalming practices in the Middle Ages, see also Philippe Charlier and Patrice Georges, “Techniques de préparation du corps et d'embaumement à la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Inhumations de prestige ou prestige de l'inhumation?: Expressions du pouvoir dans l'au-delà (IVe-XVe siècle)*, ed. Armelle Alduc-Le Bagousse (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2009), 405-38.

<sup>44</sup> Boase, *Death*, 113; Finucane, “Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion,” 46.

For the transportation of Marco Carelli's remains Martino della Croce, the *Fabbrica* official in Venice, contracted with the brothers Maffiolo and Luchino Mariani to escort the funeral craft up to Lodi, approximately 20 miles southeast of Milan (Fig. 3).<sup>45</sup> The boatmen were paid 10 gold florins for their service - a considerable amount, even greater than the monthly salary that the *Fabbrica* paid to the *inziagnere generale*, the cathedral masterbuilder.<sup>46</sup> Yet, the compensation fit the risk of engaging in the weeks-long transportation of a corpse, and the related danger of disease and infection.



Fig. 3. Itinerary of Marco Carelli's corpse transport from Venice to Milan. Source: Elaboration based on ANNALI.

<sup>45</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v.

<sup>46</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v; AFD, Ordinazioni Capitolari, c. 24, f. 119; ANNALI, 1: 133 (March 14, 1395). The comparison between salaries has been calculated comparing the two ferrymen's salary, 10 florins, with the monthly amount of the annual salary (16 lire correspond to his annual salary divided by the months of actual work) paid in 1388 to Simone Orsenigo, *inziagnere generale e maestro della Fabbrica* [Fabbrica masterbuilder], as recorded in *Liber Dati e Receipti* (1388) and transcribed in ANNALI, Appendici, 1: 56 (1388). One florin in 1395 was worth 33 soldi: for the conversion florin/lira, see Tommaso Zerbi, *Le origini della partita doppia: mastri e bilanci dei secoli XIV e XV* (Milano: Marzorati, 1952).



In the first weeks of spring 1395, inhabitants along the Po and the Adda River valleys witnessed the passage of a somber boat, covered in rich black cloth from end to end, embellished with 24 crosses and lit night and day by 24 perpetual torches - a number that perhaps symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel added to the twelve Apostles.<sup>47</sup> Although their use was initially condemned by Christians as pagan ritual, torches came to be allusive symbols of life and faith; they were frequently employed in late medieval procession funerals for their evocative character and their festive atmosphere.<sup>48</sup> Providing a mysterious sense of transcendence to the scene, they transformed it into a powerful celebration of certainty in the resurrection.<sup>49</sup>

Requests for torches and torchbearers often appear in the wills of wealthy persons who desired to make of their funerals grandiose drama expressing their status and fame.<sup>50</sup> Medieval and Renaissance chronicles of public funerals frequently enumerate rather hyperbolic quantities of torches and the employment of other apparatus. The number of torches, the quality and dimensions of the pall, and the estimate of mourners were

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<sup>47</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v; AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 119; ANNALI, 1: 133 (March 14, 1395); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Corpo e sepoltura nei testamenti della nobiltà napoletana: XVI-XVII secolo," *Quaderni Storici L* (October 4, 2011), 591.

<sup>48</sup> In ancient rituals, it was customary to surround the deceased's body with torches, forming a circle of light as a form of protection for the dead against attacks by evil spirits. The practice was later adopted in the Christian funeral rite, although with a different meaning: at the arrival of the procession at the church, the torches were placed around the coffin in front of the altar, and there they were left until the burial, forceful reminders of the light brought into the world with Christ's Resurrection. Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 76-77; Dinn, "Death and Rebirth," 155.

<sup>49</sup> Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 25; Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 224-28; Visceglia, "Corpo e sepoltura," 591; Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 76-78. Bertram Puckle recalls the ancient custom of burying the dead at night by torchlight, and proposes that the practice is related to the origin of the word "funeral" (*funeralis*, in Latin), literally "procession by torchlight," from *funis*, torch - a suggestive etymological double entendre with the word *funus*, death.

<sup>50</sup> Dinn, "Death and Rebirth," 155.

considered indicators of the social status, rank and office of the deceased.<sup>51</sup> Yet, this was not the case with Marco Carelli. He asked for nothing, and despite the fact that the *Fabbrica* officials ordered lavish displays for his transport and funereal rites, which were meant to shower him with honor after his death, they did so judiciously. The source for the description of the merchant's rituals are the minutes of the Council of the *Fabbrica*, which include deliberations over the expenses the Council would have to cover, backed up by the *Fabbrica*'s registers of expenses. Therefore, differently from many contemporary accounts, often hyperbolic in their description of funeral apparatuses as a literary convention utilized to underline the prestige of the deceased, in this case the account of expenditures for torches and crosses to surround his coffin appears to be entirely reliable.

After a month of navigation the boat arrived in Lodi, where three clerics welcomed its arrival and from there transported the corpse with great pomp to Milan.<sup>52</sup> The Lodi-Milan road began in Pavia and by the end of the fourteenth century had become suitable for carts. For this reason, it represented one of the principal land routes to the Lombard capital, which before the completion of the network of artificial canals in the fifteenth century lacked natural access to the Po River.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Vitale, "Pratiche funerarie," 393, 431; Peter Heath, "Urban Piety in the later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Hull Wills," in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (Gloucester: Sutton, 1984), 217; Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants. York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144; Chiffolleau, *La comptabilite de l'au-dela*, 130, 133.

<sup>52</sup> The funeral craft left Venice on or around March 20, 1395 and reached Lodi a month later, on April 20. AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v.

<sup>53</sup> Luciana Frangioni, "Milano e le vie del commercio internazionale (secoli XII-XV)," in *Storia illustrata di Milano. Milano antica e medievale*, ed. Francesco Della Peruta, II (Milano: Elio Sellino Editore, 1993), 442, 450.

In preparation for the arrival of the merchant's body in Lodi, the *Fabbrica* appointed three men to provide an elaborate funeral wagon, richly covered with 32 *braccia* (over 62 feet) of *bogazam*, a black linen drape, and decorated with the Carelli family's emblems.<sup>54</sup> Four horses, also clothed in black, pulled the coffin along a path marked by torches and lamps. In advance of the procession, three *nuncios* visited every city district and parish along the route to bring news of the pending arrival of the generous merchant's body, and so, at its passage, townspeople hailed the coffin at every crossroad.

While officials waited to receive the final permit to enter the city of Milan, the bier, covered with a rich black silk pall, was left outside the city walls at Sant' Erasmo friars' Church. It was guarded in turns by two friars while the locals were charged with sprinkling the body with perfumes and herbs. The operation had a very practical function: the *Fabbrica* deliberations specify that the reason was "to abate the corpse's *fetorem*" [deadly smell].<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the act held a deeper symbolic meaning: it commemorated the precious spices – 100 *libbre* of myrrh and aloe – that, according to the Gospel, Nicodemus sprinkled on Jesus' corpse after Joseph of Arimathea had obtained it from Pontius Pilate.<sup>56</sup>

Treatment of the corpse with herbs was just one part of the lengthy and complex ritual in which the deceased was associated with Christ and made one with him. Such

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<sup>54</sup> In late medieval Milan, one *braccio* was equivalent to 0.5949 meters. Hence, 32 *braccia* = 19.0369 meters = 62' and 5.48." See Martini, *Manuale di metrologia*, 350.

AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v; AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 121; ANNALI, 1: 135 (April 14, 1395). The funeral cloth, or *pall*, was originally a cloak used to wrap the body for the procession to the burial; with the rise of the use of wooden coffins, the *pall* lost its functionality, but it was still used to drape the casket dramatically. Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 115.

<sup>55</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v; AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 121.

<sup>56</sup> Jn 19:39; Georges, "Mourir c'est pourrir un peu," 377; Patrice Georges, "Les aromates de l'embaumement médiéval: Entre efficacité et symbolism," in *Le monde végétal: Médecine, botanique, symbolique*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Firenze: Sismel, 2009), 257-68; Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 36.

identification began at the deathbed, when the Gospel accounts of the Passion were read to the faithful to nurture a sense of living Christ's part through one's present sufferings.<sup>57</sup> Afterwards, preparation of the deceased's body followed closely the same Jewish burial customs recounted in the Gospels: the corpse was washed, to symbolize the purification of the soul, then anointed, and finally wrapped in a linen cloth, which was knotted at head and feet.<sup>58</sup> Through this identification of the deceased with Christ, mourners were visually reminded of the bodily resurrection and life eternal that was promised to all believers. Buttressed by this hope, a note of joy and triumph entered into Christian funerals – as the massive use of torches and candles, symbols of the light of resurrection, powerfully demonstrated.<sup>59</sup>

The next day – April 21, 1395 – the funeral entourage entered Milan now that the ducal exemption was granted. It moved solemnly from Porta Romana (see Figure 4, A) to the Church of Santa Tecla (D). A vast crowd followed the procession, including citizens whom the *Fabbrica* messengers had called from the countryside the previous day, together with the city authorities, nobles and clergy.<sup>60</sup>

The funeral cortege was the pivotal rite in the obsequies, because this last journey marked the definitive incorporation of the deceased among the dead.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, as shown by the map (Fig. 4), the funeral cortege took neither the shortest nor the quickest route to the church where mass would be sung. On the contrary, *Fabbrica* officials chose to

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<sup>57</sup> Binski, "Ways of Dying," 53; Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Jn 19:38-42; Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 21, 44; Boase, *Death*, 110; Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 2-3; Puckle, *Funeral Customs*, 34; Binski, "Ways of Dying," 56.

<sup>59</sup> Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial*, 52.

<sup>60</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v; AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 121; ANNALI, 1: 135 (April 14, 1395).

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Chiffolleau, "Perché cambia la morte nella regione di Avignone alla fine del Medioevo," *Quaderni Storici* 50 (1982), 452. On the incorporation phase, see also Van Gennepe, *Rites of Passage*, 164; Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 10-12.

process with a noisome and potentially plague-ridden body through the streets of the city along a route intended to touch all the places that marked stations in the merchant's life: his house, his home district of Porta Orientale, and his parish, San Babila (B). From there the solemn funeral moved along the Corsia dei Servi (C) and Strada del Compito to arrive to the Church of Santa Tecla (D), where the coffin and its bier were placed in the side chapel of San Bassiano.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> AFD, *Ordinazioni Capitolari*, c. 24, f. 121; ANNALI, 1: 135 (April 14, 1395).





Fig. 4. Carelli's funeral procession. A. Porta Romana; B. Carelli's house near San Babila Church; C. Corsia dei Servi; D. Santa Tecla. Source: Elaboration on map by Antonio Lafreri. Milano, 1560. In Braun, Georg and Franz Hogenberg. *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, 1572.



The sumptuous cortege connected in this way the places of Marco Carelli's life to those of his death – the cathedral where the funeral mass was celebrated and his first burial place, and the Church of San Babila, where his body was put to rest alongside the corpses of his ancestors, who had been entombed there for generations. Visually and physically, the funeral procession sanctioned before the eyes of thousands of mourners and curious onlookers his passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead, from the merchant's house in Milan to his new home in heaven; all in all, it was a triumphal *adventus* into eternal life.<sup>63</sup> An astonishing quantity of wax (2 *quintali*, or over 144 pounds) was burned, and the renowned Carmelite preacher *magistro* Bardo de *Bononia* [Bologna] delivered the funeral sermon over the merchant's corpse.<sup>64</sup> The second funeral rite mirrored the acts and gestures of the first one that had been celebrated in the cathedral seven months before, thereby magnifying its flamboyance even further.<sup>65</sup>

As Augustine had remarked centuries earlier, funerals were more for the living than the dead, and the months-long honors paid to Marco Carelli at his demise were no exception.<sup>66</sup> Funeral rites assumed heightened importance in the late medieval period, when epidemics and wars threatened to subvert the social order. When Carelli died, the public rites staged through the streets of Milan in the presence of thousands of mourners

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<sup>63</sup> Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 42. On the symbolic importance of processional routes, see Trexler, "Ritual Behavior," 127-28; Edward Muir, *Civic ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 235.

<sup>64</sup> AFD, Registri, r. 35, fo. 102v. In late medieval Milan, one *quintale* was equivalent to 32.6793 kilograms. Hence, 2 *quintali* = 65.3586 kilograms = 144.1 pounds. See Martini, *Manuale di metrologia*, 351.

<sup>65</sup> By way of comparison, consider the development in Avignon and Florence during the late medieval period of the new funerary style characterized by conspicuous consumption, defined as "the triumph of flamboyance," Chiffolleau, *La Comptabilite de l'au-dela*, 101-4; Jacques Chiffolleau, "Pratiques funéraires et images de la mort à Marseille, en Avignon, et dans le comtat Venaissin, vers 1280-vers 1350," *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 11 (1976), 271-303; Strocchia, *Death and Ritual*, 55-67.

reinforced the devotees' faith in the destiny that awaited them all: their assimilation with Christ. While everything around them spoke of transience and death, the symbolic flamboyance of his obsequies gave renewed strength to their belief in their personal redemption and resurrection.<sup>67</sup>



The ceremony and interment of Marco Carelli's body at San Babila did not mark the conclusion of the funeral rite. Rather, the day's events continued a precise ritual of commemoration that began months before in the immediate aftermath of his death, and would continue long into the future, in fact until the nineteenth century.<sup>68</sup> Scrupulously attending to the benefactor's last wish, the *Fabbrica* would celebrate a daily and annual mass *in perpetuum* for the merchant and his kin, as a way of aiding his soul's incorporation into the other world. Marco Carelli had specified that the money to pay for these masses was to come from the emphyteutic lease on one of his many properties located in Arcagnago, just outside Milan.<sup>69</sup> The priest would be compensated with an annual remuneration of 64 lire: roughly 3 soldi and 6 denari per mass, obtained from the same property lease.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion," 40; Gittings, "Urban Funerals," 181.

<sup>67</sup> See Binski, "Ways of Dying," 50; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 219.

<sup>68</sup> Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 7.

<sup>69</sup> AFD, *Testamenti*, c. 42, f. 13; cfr. Appendix, XXVII. Arcagnago (today *frazione* of Carpiano, province of Milan) in the fourteenth century was included in the *Pieve di San Giuliano*, as it appears in the statutes of the waters and the roads of the *contado* of Milan (1346). Archivio Storico Civico di Milano, *Estimi del ducato di Milano del 1558, con aggiornamenti fino al XVII secolo*, Località foresi, c. 1-52.

<sup>70</sup> Institution of perpetual masses supported by an annuity destined to pay for a priest who celebrated a mass daily took the name of *cappellanie*, or chantries. Claudio Bonanno, Metello Bonanno and Luciana Pellegrini, "I legati pro anima ed il problema della salvezza nei testamenti fiorentini della seconda metà del Trecento," *Ricerche Storiche* 15 (1985), 213; Kathleen Louise Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965).

The *Fabbrica*'s deputies took very seriously the request and the temporal specification of celebrating forever the mass for Carelli's soul. Their commitment was not only before men, but also before God, and for this they must have felt morally obligated to fulfill their task even centuries after the merchant's death, when with all probability no descendent from his family could have been there to protest against a cessation. This practice was quite expensive for the *Fabbrica*, since a priest was paid daily for saying a special mass exclusively with this intention. Even into the nineteenth century, the cathedral still celebrated a mass for Marco Carelli's soul every day, continuing until the limitations on Church wealth that came with the unification of Italy rendered the cathedral unable to maintain the perpetual mass obligations it accumulated for Marco Carelli and many others over the centuries.<sup>71</sup>

Today, visitors of the Cathedral of Milan can find Carelli's marmoreal sarcophagus in the fourth bay wall along the right nave. Unlike his request for perpetual masses but consistent with the absence in his testament of any specifications about homage to his corpse, the sarcophagus represents another lavish tribute Carelli had not requested of the *Fabbrica*. Nonetheless, ten years after the sumptuous funeral rite celebrated in the Lombard capital on April 21, 1395 the *Fabbrica* decided to honor the memory of their great donor with the construction of a monumental marble sepulcher. Toward this end, the officials initiated a competition among Italy's most renowned artists for a commission to design Carelli's effigy on a sarcophagus. Filippo degli Organi da Modena won the

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<sup>71</sup> It was imperative for churches and parishes that daily, monthly and annual masses be maintained: the non observance of the testator's request would have resulted in the confiscation of the endowment, as often specified in the will itself. Clive Burgess, "A Service for the Dead: the Form and Function of the Anniversary in Late Medieval Bristol." *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 105 (1987), 205.

contest with a sketch realized by drawing directly from the desiccated corpse, exhumed from its tomb and deposited before him on a wooden table.<sup>72</sup>

In the white marble of Candoglia, the artist sculpted the effigy of a man richly clothed with a *capuzium*, gently posed on a rich tasseled pillow, wearing gloves buttoned to the elbow, with a long broadsword in his hands, and his feet veiled, as was a customary sign of deference to the dead. And there, centuries after the week-long funeral procession from Venice to Milan, the body of the wealthy merchant was finally put to rest.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> ANNALI, t. 1, p. 278, 3 Ottobre 1406.

<sup>73</sup> In 1406, the sepulcher was initially placed against the wall of the first chapel of the Camposanto, the graveyard built at the back of the cathedral with Carelli's inheritance. Centuries later, the graveyard and its chapels were torn down. The marmoreal arca was then moved to a storage and there forgotten until the nineteenth century, when was finally transferred inside the main floor of the cathedral.