

Virtual Voyages to Loreto: How to Visit the Holy House in Spirit (Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries)*

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In Roman Catholic thought, the house of religious imagination has many mansions. Jean Gerson and Ignatius of Loyola recommended ‘composition of place’: employing the imagination to furnish all the details of a setting in which one observes and shares in the sufferings of Jesus or the Virgin Mary.¹ Matteo Ricci advocated the construction of a ‘memory palace’: locating images representing religious figures, events, and doctrines in specific places within a building, where at a later time they could easily be retrieved.² This paper, a tribute to Duane Osheim’s most recent interest, concerns a third way of using the religious imagination: thinking one’s way into a site of pilgrimage unfeasible to visit in person, the Holy House at Loreto.

Among pilgrimage destinations in the early modern era, Loreto was a relative newcomer. In late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the Holy Land, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela had attracted devout travellers. From the early fourteenth century on, Loreto – believed to be the house of Mary, transported by angels from Bethlehem to the Istrian peninsula and then to the March of Ancona – became a destination for

* *In honour of my colleague Duane J. Osheim on his impending retirement.*

1 On Gerson, see Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162. On Ignatius, see *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, trans. Thomas Corbishley (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1963).

2 Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984).

devout tourists. In increasing numbers (especially after the rebuilding of the shrine in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries), royal, elite, middling, and humble pilgrims from southern and northern Europe, individually and in groups, made their way to this site, often as a stop en route to the Holy Land or Rome.³

The great majority of visitors to Loreto, of course, were men, who had the economic, social, and psychological resources to travel that most lay as well as religious women lacked. A few pious women overcame these obstacles. Some royal, elite, and non-elite lay women and a few nun-founders who (like Teresa of Ávila before them) were not required to remain in their convents managed to visit the Holy House in the flesh. Here are three examples.

Passitea Crogi (Siena, 1564-1615) founded several Capuchin convents in Tuscany and France. Although she worked for the enclosure of her monastic daughters, she herself was peripatetic. In late 1609 or early 1610, returning from a second visit to Queen Marie de Médicis in Paris, she, her confessor, her brother and sister-in-law made a detour to Loreto. During the entire time she spent in the sanctuary, according to her biographer, she floated above the ground in ecstasy.⁴ Another Capuchin foundress, Paola Antonia Novelli della Volontà di Dio (Ravenna, 1667-Meldola, 1742), travelled, too – ‘esercitando una certa specie d’Appostolato’, as her biographers put it. When she was in her

3 Floriano Grimaldi, *La historia della chiesa di Santa Maria di Loreto* (Loreto: CARILO, 1993), 70, 143, 165. On group pilgrimages in 1578 and 1602 by members of a prestigious Roman confraternity, see Marta Pieroni Francini, *Itinerari della pietà negli anni della Controriforma: Pellegrini romani sulla strada di Loreto*. In ‘Studi romani’ 35 (1987-88), 296-320; also in Alberto Monticone, ed., *Povertà in cammino: Mobilità e assistenza tra Umbria e Roma in età moderna* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 295-321. For valuable quantitative information with an emphasis on Dalmatia and the Balkans (complete with charts, graphs, and maps), see Marco Moroni, ‘Rapporti culturali e forme devozionali tra le due sponde dell’Adriatico in età moderna’. In Floriano Grimaldi and Katy Sordi, eds., *Pellegrini verso Loreto. Atti del Convegno Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi a Loreto nei secoli XV-XVIII, Loreto, 8-10 settembre 2001* (Ancona: Deputazione di storia patria per le Marche, 2003), 181-216.

4 Lodovico Marracchi, *Vita della ven. madre Passitea Crogi senese, fondatrice del Monastero delle Cappuccine nella città di Siena*, 2nd ed. (Venice: Giovanni Giacomo Hertz, 1682), 79-81. See also Alfonso Casini, *Passitea Crogi donna senese* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 1991), 107-09.

late teens or early twenties, she and her sister made a pilgrimage to La Verna, Assisi, and Loreto.⁵ At the age of thirty, Maria Maddalena Turriani (Sarzana, 1679-Rome, 1723), along with her sister and other devout women, undertook a pilgrimage to Loreto and Rome. Later, she strove to establish an active order of women devoted to educating girls and serving in hospital but did not achieve her objective. Her failure resembled, and in fact was shaped by, that of Mary Ward, whose ambition to become a 'Jesuitess,' thwarted by the pope in 1631, had left a bad taste in the mouths of male ecclesiastics, Jesuits in particular.⁶

In the present context, a fourth example is more relevant and intriguing. Having successfully opposed her father's pressure to marry, Nicolina Rezzonica (Como, c. 1562-1625) founded an enclosed Ursuline house in her hometown. She and her convent sisters travelled to Loreto in spirit. This vicarious form of pilgrimage caught on among nuns and gentlewomen in Como and soon spread to Milan.⁷ Rezzonica's biographer, the prolific Jesuit writer Carlo Gregorio Rosignoli, does not say where she got the idea and how it spread, but it is not hard to guess: from printed books.

For undertaking a virtual voyage to Loreto, what books were available to Rezzonica, those inspired by her, and no doubt many other nuns, lay women, and men? Histories of and general guidebooks to the Marian shrine, produced in profusion beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, would have provided little help.⁸ For one thing, these tomes

5 Tommaso Belloni and Ferrante Orselli, *Vita della madre suor Paola Antonia della Volontà di Dio fondatrice delle Cappuccine di Meldola* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Recurti, 1755), 28-29.

6 Pietro Maria Puccetti, *Vita della serva di Dio Maria Maddalena Turriani* (Rome: Zenobi, 1731), 31-38. Puccetti does not mention Ward's name, but the allusion to her is transparent, 15-25.

7 Carlo Gregorio Rosignoli, S.J., *Vita e virtù della m. Nicolina Rezzonica, primogenita dell'insigne monistero di S. Leonardo in Como sotto il Titolo, e la Protezione di S. Orsola V. e M.* (Como: Paolo Antonio Caprani, 1682), 219-35; a different version in idem, *Opere*, 3 vols. (Venice: Paolo Baglioni, 1713), vol. 2, pp. 564-65.

8 For a virtually complete enumeration, see Floriano Grimaldi, *Il libro lauretano, secoli XV-XVIII* (Loreto: Tecnostampa for the diocese of Macerata-Tolentino-Recanati-Cingoli-Treia, 1994). For figures on and current locations of books, I rely on <http://www.sbn.it/opacsbn/opac/iccu/antico.jsp>, the online catalogue of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle Biblioteche Italiane e per le Informazioni Bibliografiche (abbreviated hereafter as ICCU); and to a lesser extent

were much too historically oriented to lend themselves to this particular purpose. For another, since most of them were issued and reissued by printers operating in or near Loreto they may not have been easily accessible to readers in other regions.⁹ A small sub-genre of guides emerged as well, designed for readers who for one reason or another had to remain at home but wished to undertake spiritual pilgrimages. To set them in context, a brief excursus is in order.

Early modernists seem to have neglected the topic of guides to spiritual pilgrimages.¹⁰ I draw inspiration from recent work by specialists in late medieval northern Europe, several of whom have studied vernacular manuscript works about virtual voyages to the Holy Land produced in the decades around 1500.¹¹ Take, for example, the *Sionpilger*, composed in the early 1490s by the Dominican friar Felix Fabri (Zürich, c. 1441-Ulm, 1502). A veteran of pilgrimages to the Holy Land in 1480 and 1483-84, Fabri had already produced three guides

on WorldCat, <http://uva.worldcat.org>.

- 9 I suspect that these bulky octavos, too thick to be accommodated easily in a pocket, served less for perusal in preparation for or during pilgrimages than as souvenirs available for purchase in situ.
- 10 They have focused instead on other pilgrimage-related subjects. Sculpted and painted replicas of the Holy Sepulchre and the Stations of the Cross, found in churches and 'Passion parks' (in Italian, *sacri monti*) throughout Europe, have attracted considerable attention. To my knowledge, the felicitous term 'Passion park' was coined by Kathryn M. Rudy, *Fragments of a Mental Journey to a Passion Park*. In Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne S. Korteweg, eds., *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance* (London: Harvey Miller, 2006), 405-29. During and shortly after 1998, the seven hundredth anniversary of the Holy House's supposed arrival in Loreto inspired at least two conferences, the proceedings of which have been published: Giuseppe Avarucci, ed., *La via lauretana*. (Loreto: Congregazione universale della Santa Casa, 1998) and Floriano Grimaldi and Katy Sordi, eds., *Pellegrini verso Loreto*. (Ancona: Deputazione di storia patria per le Marche, 2003), n. 3.
- 11 For example, Kathryn Beebe, *Reading Mental Pilgrimages in Context: The Imaginary Pilgrims and Real Travels of Felix Fabri's Die Sionpilger*. In 'Essays in Medieval Studies' 25 (2008), 39-70; Marie-Luise Ehrenscheidtner, *Virtual Pilgrimages? Enclosure and the Practice of Piety at St Katherine's Convent, Augsburg*. In 'Journal of Ecclesiastical History' 60 (2009), 45-73; Kathryn M. Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.) I have not yet seen this book; references below are to Rudy's earlier articles.

for different audiences: secular patrons, noble patrons of his second trip, and Dominican brethren. His female penitents in two Swabian convents of the Dominican reform pressed him for an account that would meet their particular needs: spiritual guidance on making virtual voyages, information on indulgences available to them for doing so, and fulfillment of curiosity about the details of his own real trips.¹²

Fabri begins by setting forth twenty general rules designed to integrate the virtual pilgrimage into the regular devotional life of the cloister. He proceeds to lay out the journey in daily installments. Every evening, readers are to look ahead in their 'little pilgrim book' to preview what will happen the following day.¹³ In conclusion, he instructs them on making imaginary voyages to Rome and Compostela.¹⁴ Virtual pilgrimages are not merely second-best alternatives, Fabri insists. They avoid several drawbacks of real devout excursions: the lengthy absence from home; the effort, expense, and danger of going on the road; the difficulty of interacting with fellow pilgrims and locals; and in Jerusalem, the inaccessibility of certain sites. Indeed, there are positive reasons for preferring virtual voyages. Easily integrated into the monastic routine, they can be repeated at will, each time garnering spiritual satisfaction and indulgences superior to ordinary ones because they were not procured from prelates but conferred directly by God.¹⁵

Recently, late medievalists have identified and studied several illustrated manuscript guides to virtual pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Dating from the decades around 1500, they originated in presumably observant convents in Germany and the Netherlands affiliated with several orders, including the Augustinian nuns under the direction of

12 Respectively, the *Gereimtes Pilgerbüchlein*, the *Pilgerbuch*, and the *Evagatorium*. Beebe, *Reading Mental Pilgrimage*, 39-40. The *Sionpilger* did not appear in print until 1869. There is a modern critical edition: Felix Fabri, *Die Sionpilger*, ed. Wieland Carls, *Texte der späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* 39 (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1999). For a different, less persuasive interpretation, see Albrecht Classen, 'Imaginary Experience of the Divine: Felix Fabri's *Sionspilger* [sic] 'Late-Medieval Pilgrimage Literature as a Window into Religious Mentality,' In *Studies in Spirituality* 15 (2005), 109-28.

13 *Sionpilger*, ed. Carls, 81; Beebe, *Reading Mental Pilgrimage*, 42.

14 *Ibid.*, 40.

15 *Sionpilger*, ed. Carls, 79-84; Beebe, *Reading Mental Pilgrimage*, 43.

the Windesheim Congregation and the Birgittines.¹⁶ In contrast, the unreformed inmates of St. Katherine, a Dominican convent in Augsburg, had long resisted enforcement of active and passive enclosure, as well as other rules. What interested them most about virtual pilgrimages to Rome was the opportunity, granted to them in 1487 by Innocent VIII, to earn the same indulgences available to those who actually visited the city. Beginning in 1499, to bolster the illusion of escaping temporarily from the convent, they commissioned fashionable artists to execute elaborate paintings of the seven principal pilgrim churches in the Holy City.

Now let us turn to books intended as guides for spiritual pilgrims to Loreto. Compared to the scores of volumes designed for actual pilgrims, some reissued many times over a long period,¹⁷ they are few in number (nine titles, fourteen imprints). They stand out both because of the word 'spirituale' in their titles and because for the most part they forego the apparatus to be found in guides for veritable pilgrims: lists of distances between stops on the route, currency conversion tables, illustrations and plans of the Holy House, descriptions of the treasures to be found within the shrine, enumeration of the many indulgences available to those who visited it.¹⁸ Not all are extant or accessible, but I

16 Kathryn M. Rudy, *Den aflaet der heiliger stat Jherusalem end des berchs van Calvarien: Indulgedced Prayers for Mental Holy Land Pilgrimage from the St. Agnes Convent in Maaseik*. In 'Ons geestelijk erf' 74 (2000), 211-54; eadem, *A Virtual Pilgrimage for Holy Week at a Netherlandish Birgittine Monastery around 1500*. In 'Birgittiana' 19 (2006), 156-80.

17 Best- and long-sellers (data from ICCU) include *Historia della traslatione della Santa Casa della Madonna di (or a) Loreto* by Girolamo Angelita, chancellor of the city of Recanati (eighteen editions between 1574 and 1613); and *Historia della Santa Casa di Loreto della B. Vergine Maria* by the Jesuit Orazio Torsellini (seven editions between 1600 and 1629). Printed mainly in the Marche, both were issued several times in Venice by successive printers of the Imberti family for three members of the Sabini family, booksellers in Loreto - one of them a woman, Isabella, on whom see Rosa Marisa Borraccini, *All'ombra degli eredi: L'invisibilità femminile nelle professioni del libro. La fattispecie marchigiana*. In Marco Santoro, ed., *La donna nel Rinascimento meridionale. Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 11-13 novembre 2009* (Pisa and Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2010), 413-28, at 424-25. Two guides discussed below refer readers to Torsellini's book for further details: *Quarantena* (Pavia), 5; (Ponga), *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale*, 2-8.

18 Kathryn M. Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal Ms. 212'. In *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 63 (2000): 499.

have been able to examine four of them.¹⁹

Three of these guides have much in common. The outlier, *Sacro viaggio lauretano*, merits only brief consideration. Despite two pro forma references to spiritual travellers,²⁰ this thirty-five-page pamphlet is directed exclusively toward those able to make the journey in the flesh. Its author, the Oratorian priest Giuseppe Antonio Fioravanti, was born, spent most of his career, and died in Sant’Elpidio a Mare on the Adriatic coast not far from Macerata, where the pamphlet came out in 1749. In intended audience as well as authorship and place of publication, this is a thoroughly regional product, written entirely in Italian. As its subtitle makes clear, the author aims to reach ‘devote compagnie, famiglie e persone massimamente della provincia della Marca’, all implicitly lay people. He begins with a set of nine Italian prayers to the Holy House to be said on the journey to Loreto – ideally on 9 December, the day preceding the anniversary of its arrival there.²¹ Then he offers two Italian hymns to be sung by groups of pilgrims on the short trip to and back from the shrine.²²

Longer and more ambitious in scope than Fioravanti’s pamphlet and different in conception of intended audience, the three other guidebooks take seriously the notion that visits to Loreto might be either corporeal or spiritual. Two of them are presented as a *quarantena* – an exercise to be conducted over forty days – that moves chronologically through events in the lives of Mary and Jesus, beginning with Mary’s Immaculate Conception and concluding with her Assumption. All contain many Latin prayers to be recited. Nuns who requested, and in two cases inspired, these books constitute all three authors’ primary intended audience.

Between 1642 and the mid-1670s, the *Quarantena per visitare spiritualmente la Santa Casa di Loreto* by an anonymous writer²³

19 For full publication details, see the Appendix.

20 Fioravanti, *Sacro viaggio lauretano*, title page, 4-5 (address to the reader).

21 Ibid., title page, 4-5, 6-21 (prayers).

22 Ibid., 23-31 (hymns). Alone among these authors, Fioravanti mentions indulgences made available by John XXII, Urban IV, and Pius V for intoning the liturgy of the Virgin at Loreto – compared to the enumerations found in histories of the shrine, a very short list.

23 Gaetano Melzi attributed the work to the Carthusian monk Anselmo Casabianca,

appeared twice in Pavia and once in Vienna.²⁴ In his dedication to nuns, monks in the Certosa di Pavia, and others, the Pavia printer Giovanni Andrea Magri begins by emphasising the ease of performing these exercises, in use among the Carthusians, which he is making available to a wider audience. The regimen is ‘si facile, e delizioso, che potrà finirsi senza stanchezza, da qual si sia più delicato Pellegrino,’ who need never leave his or her room. ‘E se col piede della contemplation s’inciampa tal volta in qualche spina di passion, a pena se sente la pontura, che si vedono a germogliare le più belle Rose di Paradiso’.²⁵

In two introductory sections, the author makes clear that the *Quarantena* is intended primarily for nuns, although other religious and lay people can use it with profit.²⁶ The pilgrimage lasts forty days, a number with resonance in the Old and New Testaments and the lives of saints.²⁷ Designed to prepare for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (15 August), it should begin on 7 July, the day after the octave of Saints

resident in the Certosa di Pavia: *Dizionario di opere anonime e pseudonime di scrittori italiani*, vol. 2 (Milan: Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1852), 390. His assertion, while impossible to verify, is not improbable, for the printer Magri dedicated the work to the prior and monks of the Certosa. *Quarantena* (Pavia), +4v. All that I have been able to learn about Casabianca is that he corresponded with Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, a well-known Capuchin nun in Pavia. E. Ann Matter, *The Canon of Religious Life: Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and the Rule of St. Clare of Assisi*. In Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham, eds., *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 81; personal communications.

- 24 For details, see n. 16. Melzi mentioned a fourth edition (Milan: Filippo Ghisolfi, 1650) - a probable conflation with another work he listed, Ponga's *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale*: Melzi, *Dizionario*, vol. 2, p. 326. The three extant editions are held in the Domus Pasotelli Romani, a rest home in Bozzolo (province of Mantua) run by the Piccole Suore della Sacra Famiglia. I am most grateful to Giuseppe Valentini, volunteer curator of the Pasotelli Romani collection, for facilitating my access to them.
- 25 *Quarantena* (Pavia), +3r+4r. In the 1642 imprint, the dedication is dated 16 August 1642; in the one issued in 1643, 19 September 1642. This is the sole difference between the two editions.
- 26 *Quarantena* (Pavia), (+5r), 1. Two references to Francis of Assisi (5, 125), the only saint other than members of the Holy Family whom he mentions, suggest that he has in mind female religious belonging to the Franciscan family - in particular, probably, Capuchin nuns, mentioned on (+6r).
- 27 *Quarantena* (Pavia), 5.

Peter and Paul.²⁸ Each day begins in the choir with group recitation of Latin prayers addressed to Christ and ends in the chapel of the Virgin or before her image with Latin prayers directed to her.²⁹ Meditations during the day, apparently to be performed by individuals, are couched in the vernacular. Moving sequentially from the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin to her Assumption, they cover events involving all members of the Holy Family, Jesus in particular.

The Pavia editions of the *Quarantena* (651 pages long) offer accommodations to less capable users. If one lacks the strength to recite the entire Ave Maria in Latin, the first sentence of it will suffice. A person too ill to carry out the full programme can at least make an 'act of desire'.³⁰ A quarter century later, adapting the instructions for use to his Viennese market (in which there were probably more lay than religious readers of Italian), the printer Giovanni Battista Hacque was even more flexible. He suggests alternative days for beginning the forty-day exercise: 14 February, leading up to the feast of the Incarnation on 25 March (not in fact a forty-day period); or 29 October, in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December.³¹ Although he reproduces the Italian text of the Pavia editions, he omits all the Latin prayers. His edition, printed in a larger typeface, runs to a massive 874 pages.

What does the *Quarantena* have to do with the shrine at Loreto? Very little. The Holy House is referred to only three times: in the title; in a small retrograde woodcut on the title page showing the Madonna of Loreto in a conical robe, as in the fourteenth-century wooden statue at the shrine; and in a four-page summary of the Holy House's peregrinations.³²

Del pellegrinaggio spirituale di quaranta giorni per visitare la

28 *Quarantena* (Pavia), [+5r].

29 *Quarantena* (Pavia), [+6r].

30 *Quarantena* (Pavia), [+5v], [+6v].

31 *Quarantena* (Vienna). 19. Celebrated throughout the Roman Church since at least 1476, the Immaculate Conception became official dogma only in 1852.

32 *Quarantena* (Pavia), title page, 1-4. The author advises readers wishing further information to consult Orazio Torsellini's *Historia* (n. 16). Either the last known edition (1629) was still available or there were later reissues no longer extant. The Vienna edition contains only typographical ornaments.

Santa Casa di Loreto (1,922 pages in two volumes) appeared in Milan around 1651. Its author, described on the title page as ‘un Religioso servo di Dio, che solamente desidera il suo Nome nel Libro dell’Eternità’, was almost certainly the Jesuit priest Francesco Ponga (1608-1652).³³ The kernel from which his book grew, he explains, was a text begun some years earlier by ‘una divota Serva di Dio’; at the instance of nuns, he has taken up his pen to complete it.³⁴ Besides utilising a ‘basso, e semplice stile,’ just as Jesus had spoken, he writes in the feminine voice. ‘E oltre a ciò si è descritta in persona di Donne, e non di Huomo, non solo per seguire lo stile di quella divota Religiosa, che la principiò, ma ancora perche fusse più facile da esser essercitato, tanto da gl’ Huomini, quanto dalle Donne, cioè da gl’ Huomini, facendo essi, che l’Anima per se stessa parli; e dalle Donne, parlando in persona loro propria’.³⁵

In forty chapters averaging fifty pages each, Ponga lays out the programme to be followed over forty days. The nuns are to begin each morning in the choir and conclude in the evening after compline in the Virgin’s chapel or at her image, as the Capuchin nuns do.³⁶ Latin is his default language for prayers and excerpts from liturgical texts, but he grants nuns discretion about whether to make some use of the vernacular. While Ponga’s approach closely resembles that of the author of the *Quarantena*, whose book was published in the same region, Lombardy, less than a decade before, no evidence suggests that he had seen the earlier publication. Much more likely, both writers expanded in print on a set of devotional practices already being employed by female as well as male religious.

Like the *Quarantena*, Ponga’s *magnum opus* bears no concrete relationship to the shrine at Loreto. Such is definitely not the case with the final book to be considered here. *Guida per condurre con*

33 Since the imprimatur is dated 20 December 1650, I surmise that the book came out early in the following year. (Ponga), *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale*, n.p., back of title page. This is a second edition; the first, in Latin, is no longer extant. Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 11 vols. (Brussels and Paris, 1890-1932), vol. 6, p. 994.

34 (Ponga), *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale*, 1: 1 (‘Instruttione all’anima peregrina per fare questo viaggio’), 1:28 (‘Invito spirituale’).

35 (Ponga), 1: 22-24 (‘Instruttione’).

36 (Ponga), *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale*, 1: 31 (‘Invito’).

frutto spirituale alla Santiss. Casa di Loreto, & ad altri luoghi santi, le persone di qualunque stato, et anco quelle, che corporalmente non vi possono andare by the Barnabite clerk regular Giovanni Bellarino (1552-1630) first came out in Pavia in 1608. A second printing in Venice in 1612 was followed by a revised edition issued in Milan in 1617 – the one I have examined, which at 225 pages strikes my modern eye as mercifully short. The *Guida* was not Bellarino's only work on the subject. Unfortunately, no exemplars of his *Breve istruzionne* on making pilgrimages to Loreto, Rome, and other holy sites, published in Milan in 1615 and 1625, appear to have survived.

Rather than offering a few pages of potted history of the shrine and then turning to an exhaustive enumeration of devotions designed to lead one there, Bellarino focuses directly on the Holy House. Though called a 'casa,' he argues, it is in fact 'la Chiesa principalissima di tutto il mondo'. Remember, reader (addressed throughout, oddly, as 'mio Figlio'), who lived there: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Mary's parents. Consider the many earthly and heavenly visitors over the centuries: the patriarchs whom Christ liberated from Limbo, the Apostles, ancient and modern ecclesiastics, pilgrims of all grades and conditions, angels, the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Then take into account the length of time Mary and Jesus lived there: thirty-five and twenty-five years, respectively. On temporal grounds, doesn't the Holy House outrank other sacred sites in the Gospel story, where they were present only briefly?³⁸

Following this exercise in spiritual arithmetic, Bellarino turns to other matters, which are brought to the attention of his addressee (the 'son') by the figures Faith, Hope, and Charity. Think about how different the Holy House is from our dwellings, devoted to 'fini bassissimi di mangiare, bere, dormire, a pompe vanità, a maggior commodità di peccare, & di vivere secondo la carne'.³⁹ Although he reiterates his conviction that a trip to Loreto in body and spirit ranks higher than one in spirit only,⁴⁰ he clearly prefers the latter. A physical visit to the shrine is difficult, expensive, and potentially disordered. 'Per questo',

37 Bellarino, *Guida per condurre*, 4-14.

38 Ibid., 14-27.

39 Ibid., 44.

40 Ibid., 72, 179-80.

(says Charity), ‘io scuso da esso gli infermi, le monache, gl’incarcerati, i fanciulli, & le donne in gran parte’, as well as people who lack the means to travel and subordinates (servants, for instance) without their superiors’ permission. Among the requirements for physical pilgrims are costly conveyances: ship and/or horse and/or carriage. Spiritual pilgrims, in contrast, can travel in ‘una carrozza spirituale’, the grace obtained by taking Holy Communion.⁴¹

Towards the end of his book, Bellarino outlines in detail ten essential steps to take in planning a spiritual voyage to Loreto. To begin with, individuals or members of a group should read his book, concentrating on the differences between the point of departure and the destination. They should accept the guidance of Faith (the mirror), Hope (the pilgrim’s staffs), and Charity (the cope, mantle, food, and other necessities). They should make sure that their intention is right and prepare by taking Holy Communion. If they have never been to Loreto, they should consult people who have made the trip. Even more important, they should calculate the mileage between their starting point and the shrine, the number of days the trip will take and the *poste* along the way there and back. They should decide which Latin prayer – the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, or another one – they will say for each mile. At 35 miles per day, travelling from Milan to Loreto takes a little more than seven days. In order to arrive on Saturday evening and be ready for the Sunday feast day, they will need to depart in the morning of the previous Saturday. Having arrived, they should spend at least one and preferably three days there, concentrating on the spiritual aspects of the shrine and not the precious objects inside it.⁴²

This, says Bellarino, is how some Milanese nuns – he does not specify the name of their house or the rule they followed – planned their spiritual voyage. They decided on the Ave Maria as the prayer for each mile. Worrying beforehand about whether, having reached Paradise, they would want to come home, they discovered that it was a false problem. Not only did their convent church represent Paradise; they all felt as if they had never left the Holy House.⁴³ Could these nuns have

41 Ibid., 42-44, 72-76, 192.

42 Ibid., 190-97.

43 Ibid., 200-08.

been among the ones inspired by Nicolina Rezzonica, the Ursuline of Como? It is impossible to know, but not improbable. Clearly Bellarino hoped to attract readers from beyond Milan, his base of operations. At the end, he lists the number of miles and stopping points on the road to Loreto from Milan, Rome, and Turin.⁴⁴

By way of conclusion, let me pose some probably unanswerable questions and offer an observation. First, how popular were these guides? I cannot say. The size of print runs and methods of distribution remain unknown to me. That the *Quarentena* and Bellarino's *Guida* were reissued tells us only that printers thought they would sell, not that their calculations were accurate. The small number of extant copies of some such books and the disappearance of other titles may suggest that they were read to death. It is equally possible that at some point, the original owners' descendants discarded them as passé. Only two of the copies I have examined contain owners' names or notes.⁴⁵ There are no marks suggesting how owners read and used them.

The prose in and the production of these books are strikingly non-visual. No doubt these authors knew about 'composition of place', but they chose not to advocate it. No doubt in order to economize, printers commissioned no new illustrations. Instead, they reproduced a very small number of crude woodcuts that to my inexpert eye appear to date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Did readers expect more and come away disappointed? That may well be an anachronistic question.⁴⁶

44 Ibid., 214-16.

45 On the title page of the 1643 *Quarantena* (Pavia), many successive owners, all from Mantua, inscribed their names. On 30 June 1693, one Giovanna Bo_____ made some notes, which I was unable to decipher, on the back of the title page of the Vienna edition.

46 Surprisingly, none of the authors mentions a physical aid to devotion absolutely central to the experience of actual pilgrims: the string of beads used to recite the rosary, called a *corona* or *rosario*. Elisabetta Gulli Grigioni, *Pietà e devozione*. In Grimaldi and Sordi, eds., *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi a Loreto*, 324-41.

Appendix: Books on Spiritual Pilgrimages to Loreto

- : books I have inspected and discuss in this essay
- #: books with no current known locations
- @: books I have not been able to see

@Barbugli, Demetrio, Jesuit (Forlì, 1682, Faenza, 1734). *Il pellegrino divoto, che viaggia a Roma, Loreto, a Sisi, o ad altro santuario de' più rinomati*. Venice: Antonio Eiser, 1731. (Gubbio, Biblioteca Vescovile Fonti)

#Bellarino, Giovanni, Barnabite (Castelnuovo [Brescia], 1552, Milan, 1630). *Guida per condurre con frutto spirituale alla santiss. casa di Loreto, & ad altri luoghi santi, le persone di qualunque stato, et anco quelle, che corporalmente non vi possono andare*. Milan: Pietro Martire Locarni, 1608.

@_____. _____. Venice: Domenico Imberti ad istanza di Isabella Sabina, lib. in Loreto, 1612. (Erfurt, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha).

●_____. _____. Pavia: Giovanni Battista Rossi, 1617. (Rome, Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina, C.a.67)

#Bellarino, Giovanni. *Breve istruzione pel viaggio alla SS.ma Casa di Loreto ed alla Santa città di Roma*. Milan: Giambattista Bidelli, 1615.⁴⁷

#_____. *Breve istruzione intorno al far viaggio corporale, e spirituale alla Santiss. Casa di Loreto, & alla S. Città di Roma. Nel presente Anno*

47 Listed by Giuseppe Boffito, *Scrittori barnabiti o della Congregazione dei chierici regolari di San Paolo 1533-1933: Biografia, bibliografia, iconografia* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1933-37), 2:161, no. 18. Whether this book concerns spiritual voyages is uncertain; the following title, characterized by Boffito as a reprint, does.

Santo. M.DC.XXV. Promulgato da N.S. Urbano VIII. Et ancora per altri tempi. Milan: Pandolfo Malatesta, 1625.⁴⁸

•Fioravanti, Giuseppe Antonio, Oratorian (Sant'Elpidio a Mare, 1705-1782). *Sacro viaggio lauretano ovvero Modo facile per visitare tanto in spirito, che in persona la S. Casa di Loreto diretto alle devote compagnie, famiglie, e persone massimamente della provincia della Marca.* Macerata: eredi dei Pannelli, 1749. (Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, 34.3.A.29.2)

@Gerunzi, Francesco Maria, Barnabite (Apiro, 1613, Macerata, 1688). *Sagro pellegrinaggio si corporale, come spirituale a Maria di Loreto diviso in due parti, nelle quali con breve methodo si mostra l'ordine ... Parte prima.* Macerata: Carlo Zenobi, 1671. (Macerata, Biblioteca Comunale Mozzi-Borgetti)

@Molo, Guglielmo, doctor of sacred theology (Pavia, fl. 1611-1626). *Viaggio spirituale per visitare la Santissima Casa di Loreto e i santi corpi di Pietro e Paolo.* Pavia: Giacomo Ardizzoni & Giovanni Battista Rossi, 1613. (Loreto, Santa Casa)

#*Pellegrinaggio spirituale alla Santa Casa di Loreto per le persone claustrali, o impediti, da cominciarsi il primo di settembre, e terminarsi l'ottavo giorno festivo e solenne di ditto Santuario.* Rome: Varese, 1672.⁴⁹

•[Ponga, Francesco, Jesuit (Como, 1608, Milan, 1652)]. *Del pellegrinaggio spirituale di quaranta giorni per visitare la Santa Casa di Loreto.* 2nd ed. Milan: Filippo Ghisolfi, [c. 1651]. (Vatican City,

48 Boffito, *Scrittori barnabiti*, 2: 161, no. 18, listed it as being held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, but the edition is no longer recorded there or anywhere else.

49 The often unreliable Melzi attributed this work to Cosimo Berlinzani, Chierico Regolare della Madre di Dio (Lucca, 1619 – Roma, 1694); characteristically, he mangled the supposed author's and publisher's names. Melzi, *Dizionario*, vol. 2, p. 326. I have found no evidence to support this attribution.

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Stamp.Barb.V.VIII.83-84)

• *Quarantena per visitare spiritualmente la santa casa di Loreto*. Pavia: Giovanni Andrea Magri, 1642. (Bozzolo, Domus Pasotelli Romani, DPAS.a.136)

• _____. _____. _____, 1643. (Bozzolo, Domus Pasotelli Romani, DPAS.a.188)

• _____. _____. Vienna: Giovanni Battista Hacque, n.d. [active 1669-1676]. (Bozzolo, Domus Pasotelli Romani, DPAS.a.406)