# Objects of Embodiment: Crosses, Clothing, and Canvases in Cecilia Ferrazzi's Early Modern Venice

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**Abstract**

A Venetian woman named Cecilia Ferrazzi was tried by the Roman Inquisition in 1664 for purportedly pretending to be a saint. Drawing on the trial documentation–containing rich details about Ferrazzi's material world–this thesis focuses on the interplay between artifacts and her corporeal engagement with them in quotidian life. Employing methodologies of material culture and embodied histories, it argues that through her contact with crucifixes, garments of clothing, and paintings, Ferrazzi assumed embodied authority and influence in her domestic and sometimes ecclesiastical spheres. Such objects, taken up as individual case studies, served as "props" for subtle yet theatrical defiance, aids for disguising as or role-playing religious figures, and mediums through which to demand the deference of others. These possibilities unsettled a number of her religious and inquisitorial superiors because, the thesis posits, Ferrazzi struck on larger cultural and religious anxieties about the body and senses–concerns that had been brewing across Europe with particular force since the Reformation and Counter Reformation.

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## Introduction: Objects of Embodiment

In seventeenth-century Venice, a woman was reprimanded by a priest. Upon confessing to him that St Bernardino of Siena had appeared to her and gifted her a "little gold chain with thirty-three links" in the presence of the Virgin, the priest consequently "yanked it off" the woman's right arm with such force that she apparently fainted and felt a "great deal of pain" in her heart.[1] He took the chain and never returned it, and told her she was possessed by the devil.[2] This woman was Cecilia Ferrazzi, who in 1664 was tried by the Roman Inquisition for "pretense of holiness," that is, for purportedly feigning sanctity.[3] She not only responded to questioning over the course of at least fifteen court appearances, but, upon her own request, also dictated her life-story to a scribe provided by the court.[4] This inquisitorial autobiography (in which Ferrazzi recounted the scene of the "little gold chain") along with the rest of the trial record open up a window onto the life of a non-elite early modern woman and onto broader cultural and religious anxieties about properly protecting the body and senses from corruptive influences.

The chain was just one among many objects Ferrazzi–who regularly voiced an acute awareness of material objects–claimed to possess, and that were flagged in the inquisitorial documents.[5] In them, material culture, which takes the topical and methodological center stage in this thesis, recurrently shows up as tied to Ferrazzi's embodied experience and expression–embodiment constituting the second methodological thread of this inquiry. This



[1] Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. and trans. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 63-65.
[2] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 63.
[3] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, x, 5, 13-14.
[4] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 5; Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 166.
[5] The inquisitors kept lists and notes about what they deemed suspicious about the case, including a note to pursue the "historia della catenella d'oro," or the story of the little gold chain, perhaps in reference to this noted scene (Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter VeAS), Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112 (fourth folder, "various production materials").

investigation explores how Ferrazzi's cultivation of a highly embodied faith life, involving visual and tactile encounters with material objects, allowed her to exercise subtle forms of authority and autonomy that unsettled her numerous confessors and the inquisitor.[6] The opening scene is suggestive of not only the viscerality with which Ferrazzi experienced her material world (e.g., the physical pain she felt when the chain was taken off), but also the anxiety this purportedly divine gift seemed to generate in the priest (i.e., his subsequent accusation that Ferrazzi was demonically possessed).

The thesis, the first to systematically single out a material culture approach to these documents, asks: What did objects allow Ferrazzi to do, and why were they and their entanglement with her body so frequently provocative to figures of authority around her? I use the broad term *entanglement* as a kind of umbrella in order to capture the plurality of ways in which Ferrazzi's embodied encounters with materiality shaped the meaning and use of specific objects.[7] Specifically, this thesis outlines three groups, composed of things that come up with frequency in the documentation, and are organized by chapter as follows: first, crucifixes, both tangible and "immaterial" that accompany stories of Ferrazzi's ecstasies and visions, in which her body figures centrally;[8] second, attire with which she clothed her body; and third, two paintings entered into evidence for the trial, namely, portraits of Ferrazzi that recreated her physicality and were subsequently turned into paintings of Saint Teresa and the Madonna.[9] Dissecting the role of such objects in Ferrazzi's quotidian life opens up a new vantage point from which to unpack how a non-elite Venetian

[6] Ferrazi had at least 16 confessors (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 112).
[7] Pamela H. Smith uses the phrase "bodily entanglement" in an article, though in a distinct context and descriptively rather than as an overarching guiding formulation (Pamela H. Smith, "Making things: Techniques and books in early modern Europe," in *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories*, 1500-1800 (2nd ed.), ed. Paula Findlen (Routledge, 2021), 192).
[8] I follow Paula Findlen's assertion that "things need not be entirely concrete or material" (Paula Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500-1800* (Routledge & CRC Press), 5). This view is expanded in chapter two.
[9] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 31; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166.

woman navigated and embodied her own power and confronted that of others. In this sense, this investigation does not analytically center the trial per se, but rather uses the information that came out of it to reconstruct how objects were working in Ferrazzi's life, which, of course sometimes included how these were assessed by the inquisitor.

I argue that Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with her material world allowed her to assume concrete, embodied authority within the spaces she circulated, and sometimes to exercise what I call "embodied action." Specific objects, that is, were a medium through which Ferrazzi was emboldened to act or accomplish something–following the logic of scholars like Silvia Evangelisti, who argues in a similar vein that objects "can be considered as devotional tools for *shaping people's actions and behaviour* and ultimately determining their experience of religion."[10] This agentive implication of materiality informs the thesis title, "objects of embodiment." Here, I am to signal a double meaning: that the material things Ferrazzi possessed and used gained meaning through contact with her body, and that, secondly, she attempted to accomplish particular goals (referring to the other semantic use of "objects") through these things.

Overall, these object-based case studies, arguing for Ferrazzi's consistent expression of autonomy that troubled her superiors, points to a broader condition. I suggest that they illuminate larger anxieties about the body and sensoriality in the wake of Reformation and Counter Reformation contestations (discussed further in chapter one). Out of these latter tensions emerged a pronounced sensory culture across Europe and across confessions that placed increasing emphasis on the proper control of sensoriality,[11] a preoccupation shaped by "anxieties about the trustworthiness of the senses," which needed to be protected from

[10] Silvia Evangelisti, "Material Culture," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 395.
[11] Matthew Milner, "The Senses in Religion: Towards the Reformation of the Senses," in *The Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 87-88.

diabolical deceit.[12] The senses, under this paradigm, "rendered the body permeable, turning it into a diabolical battlefield," in Wietse de Boer's formulation.[13] It was this charged history, in which early modern individuals placed great value on sensorial discernment, that Ferrazzi's own context inherited.

This culture played out, I suggest, when Ferrazzi was "read" in different instances (involving artifacts) as both deluded and deluder. Her sensory capacities, or her ability to distinguish whether what she saw and felt was divine or satanic, was consistently questioned–most clearly evident in the accusation (not once but many times) of demonic possession.[14] Moreover, her supposed work of deceit, for instance, was invoked by her alleged self-disguising as a priest (discussed in chapter three). By considering the interpersonal and structural difficulties she faced as a result of this cultural paradigm, but also Ferrazzi's own expressions of autonomy that sometimes destabilized it, this study is informed by gender history, and implicitly indebted to the work of scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis, including her histories of "unruly" women.[15] We now turn to additional scholars that fundamentally shape this investigation.

*I. Charted Territory? Reviewing the Literature*

Cecilia Ferrazzi's trial has not been widely studied, but the attention it has received is impressively thorough. Her trial received substantial treatment by historian Anne



[12] Herman Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory Worlds of the Renaissance," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 4, 11-12.
[13] Wietse de Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses, in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 255.
[14] This was not limited to a "male" perspective: one Angela Maria Pasqualigo, herself tested for demonic possession by Giorgo Polacco (who would be one of Ferrazzi's confessors), was "virtually certain that Ferrazzi was deluded by the devil" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 87-88).
[15] Zemon Davis's phrase refers to men and women's practices and discourses around role-inversions in early modern France, and points to category of early modern women whose actions threatened the societal order so consistently that these behaviors were perhaps normalized or accepted in the daily life of a community (Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in ead., *Society and Culture in early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 129, 131, 145).

Jacobson Schutte, who discovered it in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia. She not only published a number of articles on the case, but also in the 1990s produced first a partial transcription and later its translation–volumes cited widely in this thesis–that include Ferrazzi's first four interrogations and her inquisitorial oral autobiography.[16] In a subsequent, larger publication, also employed frequently here, Jacobson Schutte wove Ferrazzi's story together with that of eleven other people who were investigated by the Venetian Inquisition on the same charge, the pretense of holiness.[17]

While the former projects, focused solely on Ferrazzi, "fed [Jacobson Schutte's] microhistorical temptation," the latter volume was designed to accommodate a broader examination of this early modern inquisitorial trend of condemning false projections of saintliness.[18] Corresponding not quite to a *longue durée* trend, but rather a "moyenne durée" one, this accusation was not an isolated kind of denunciation.[19] Rather it belonged to a collection of at least fifteen additional inquisitorial cases in the Venetian region centering individuals (seven men and nine women) charged with fraudulent sanctity between the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries.[20] A number of scholars have written on the inquisitorial charge of pretense of sanctity, but Jacobson Schutte has perhaps most richly unpacked how these kinds of trials played out within Venice.[21] Outside of this scholar, Ferrazzi has received limited attention,[22] perhaps because these records were

[16] Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Bergamo: Pierluigi Lubrina, 1990); The translation to English is cited above.
[17] This publication, *Aspiring Saints*, is cited above (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, xii-xiii).
[18] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, xiii.
[19] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 212.
[20] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, x, 5.
[21] Frans Ciappara, "Simulated Sanctity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Malta," in *Saints and Sanctity*, ed. P. Clarke, & T. Claydon (The Boydell Press, 2011), 284-294; Andrew Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, and the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Brill, 2005); Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991).
[22] Elizabeth Horodowich has insightfully discussed Ferrazzi in the context of teaching curriculum (Elizabeth Horodowich, "Cecilia Ferrazzi and the Pursuit of Sanctity in the Early Modern World," in *Teaching Other Voices: Women and Religion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret L. King, and Albert Rabil (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 176-182).

unknown until the last decade of the twentieth century.[23] The trial documentation abounds. Consisting of much more than four interrogations and the dictated autobiography, these records include additional interrogations of Ferrazzi as well as of witnesses, from which this project draws considerably.[24]

To a certain degree, this thesis continues the microhistorical bent of Jacobson Schutte's earlier edited contributions. In continuing to attend to the reduced historical scale of Ferrazzi's life, I take Ferrazzi–though certainly a unique character, as we will see–not as "exceptional," but rather integrated into a social reality that generated people (and trials based on the same charge) like her. As Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg have argued, what is perceived as anomalous can indeed fit into a larger pattern if properly contextualized.[25] I am also seeking to contend with, in Levi's words, "factors previously unobserved," which can shed new light on a larger context.[26] To grasp the undetected, the ignored, the hidden–accessible through scale modification–is the driving purpose and value Levi and Ginzburg have attributed to microhistorical inquiry, who suggest that beginning with the particular and the microscopic opens up an opportunity to elucidate the general.[27] But while this logic informs the project's proposition that Ferrazzi's story illuminates a broader condition surrounding sensory culture–a throughline woven into each of the chapters–the principal focus remains a pointed and textured exploration of Ferrazzi's objects and body in daily life. In this sense, what scholars have written on material culture and



[23] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 17.
[24] This access is based on an archival visit to the state archive in December 2023.
[25] Levi refers to the anomalous, for instance, by pointing to the flexibility of individual action within cultural systems: "Changes occur by means of the minute and endless strategies and choices operating within the interstices of contradictory normative systems" (Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107; Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 21, 33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343946).
[26] Levi, "On Microhistory," 97.
[27] Ginzburg, "Microhistory," 17; Levi, "On Microhistory," 106.

embodied history, rather than methods within micro-history, is somewhat more pressing and informs a completely new approach to Ferrazzi's story.

But before delving into this methodological discussion in the following sections, it is worth outlining more specifically what Jacobson Schutte has argued about Ferrazzi and the ways in which this project builds off as well as departs from some of her findings. Jacobson Schutte suggests that whereas most of the accused (within her comparative study) had not "consciously practiced to deceive," Ferrazzi stands out as particularly invested in self-fashioning as a saint: as having clearly "both talked the talk and walked the walk of pretense of holiness."[28] Her life-narrative, she argues, was modeled off of those by saints like Teresa de Ávila, whose *vite* (holy biographies) Ferrazzi would have been familiar with, having heard a number read aloud.[29] Jacobson Schutte makes productive room for a crucial nuance, arguing that despite Ferrazzi's work of saintly self-construction and "image enhancement," her anecdotes of experiences like miracles and "paranormal phenomena" need not be interpreted as a conscious part of this strategy, but rather as reflective of her mental and social worlds, in which there was room for integrating and imagining herself in those of a saint.[30] She posits that people like Ferrazzi ultimately were presupposed to be guilty of pretense since it was understood that God did not condescend to "little people," especially "little women," for gifts of revelation.[31] Ferrazzi's exclusion from sainthood was, at least partially, tied to her social condition.

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[28] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, xi, 222-223, 225-226.

[29] Ferrazzi recalled, for instance, formative experiences of hearing her mother read to her along with her siblings at home: "…[T]here came upon me a very great desire to love and enjoy Blessed God, acquired from the good example and teaching of my mother, whom I heard reading books of devotion, especially the lives of male and female saints, and saying the Rosary with her children, all of us little" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 12-13, 39; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 108-109; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 164-165).

[30] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 226; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 110-111; Anne Jacobson Schutte, "'Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io': Painters, the Inquisition and the Shape of Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Caroline Elam and Peter Denley (London: Westfield College, Committee for Medieval Studies, 1998), 421.

[31] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 15-16; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 223.

It is through this prism–considerations of saintly self-construction and its direct relation to the trial–that Jacobson Schutte has given some attention to materiality and embodiment in Ferrazzi's case.[32] One option for studying material culture as it appears in Ferrazzi's trial would be to continue this approach: to consider how objects aided in her saintly self-fashioning, of which there is certainly strong evidence.[33] But rather than follow this analytic direction, I take up materiality not only distinctly, but also more systematically by working within the scholarly frame of material culture.

I thus draw from work by historians who have compellingly established the "methodological insight," as Elizabeth Tingle posits, that employing a material culture lens can generate about faith experiences, since early modern Christians imbued devotional

[32] Jacobson Schutte wrote an article acknowledging Ferrazzi's body as a site of activity: fainting, supposed fights with the devil resulting in wounds, and potential stigmata, which all featured heavily in Ferrazzi's own accounts. The study focuses specifically on Ferrazzi's sustained physical suffering on account of passing bladder stones regularly. Such work serves as an important interpretive model, but rather than dwelling specifically on pain, this thesis focuses on other forms of bodily expression (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Suffering From the Stone: The Accounts of Michel De Montaigne and Cecilia Ferrazzi," Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance 64, no. 1 (2002): 31, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20680374; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 23). Jacobson Schutte also adopts a bodily-focused approach in another article by considering how Ferrazzi sought to project an image of a holy body in the context of her inquisitorial autobiography (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "*Per Speculum in Enigmate*: Failed Saints, Artists, and Self-Construction of the Female Body in Early Modern Italy," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. Ann E. Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 186-187, 193); With respect to material objects, Jacobson Schutte examines the "paraphernalia of holiness" in one chapter of her aforementioned volume, focusing broadly on how inquisitors considered objects of the accused–as one means of measuring "illegitimate" expressions of sanctity, and on objects like a diamond-encrusted ring Ferrazzi claimed to possess (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, xiv, 154, 165). She also explores the history behind Ferrazzi's paintings (the topic of chapter four) in an indispensable article, guided by the same driving focus, namely, the meanings these objects posed in relation to the accusation and trial (Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421). Jacobson Schutte's focus, regardless of the specific entryway, has thus tended to revolve around the accusation of sanctity and construction of sainthood.

[33] Many of the objects Ferrazzi referenced, particularly when discussing her youth, were of a devotional nature: figures of saints and other items she made "with my own hands" as a girl to decorate a home chapel, prints and medals of Christ that she crafted and gifted, and a Byzantine-style painting of the Virgin Mary hanging in her childhood home. In illustrating the importance of sacred things in her life beginning at a young age, Ferrazzi was perhaps attempting to construct a convincing piety that might counteract the accusations of "affected" sanctity. Perhaps she drew on saintly tropes of miraculous power manifested at a young age, for instance, by describing a scene in which, as an adolescent, she prayed before the aforementioned Madonna icon, reviving Ferrazzi's eight-month old sister, who was close to death: Ferrazzi's sister, Maria, had fallen off the bed, and "[w]hen she turned black and appeared almost lifeless, I carried her before a [painting of the] Virgin…and prayed on my knees that She bring my sister back to life, and I saw the Virgin spread Her arms and give her a benediction, after which the baby immediately recovered, unharmed" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 42, 55).

objects with the sacred.[34] Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven in their masterful *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* have demonstrated the significance of matter in early modern Italian devotion, arguing that evidence abounds that Italian homes were replete with spiritually significant things.[35] They crucially underline the link between material culture and embodied experiences:

> If we wish to get beyond a history of devotion that is based on learned ideas, prescriptions, and institutions, we must pay attention to the ways in which laypeople experienced and embodied religion through their relationship with the material environment of their own homes.[36]

This formulation along with analogous scholarship belong to an increasing historiographical interest in emphasizing domestic space as a significant locus of early modern European faith life.[37] Though this project echoes the stance that artifacts played a fundamental role in women's embodied religious experiences within the home, it does not solely center domestic space. Instead, it seeks to trace Ferrazzi's dynamic experience of objects in a variety of places, including churches. Of course, this does not fundamentally depart from how these scholars have formulated material culture in space: Brundin, Howard, and Laven recognize the porousness of the home.[38]

[34] Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Sacred Journeys in the Counter-Reformation: Long-Distance Pilgrimage in Northwest Europe* (Berlin, Boston: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020), 17, 19.
[35] Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018), 118.
[36] Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, 119.
[37] Brundin, Howard, and Laven's primary focus, like that of scholars like Irene Galandra Cooper and contributors to *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, are mainly sacred objects located in the home (Irene Galandra Cooper, "Unlocking 'Pious Homes': Revealing Devotional Exchanges and Religious Materiality in Early Modern Naples," *Renaissance Studies* 33, no. 5 (2019): 832–53, https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12557; Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, eds. *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* 59 (Brill, 2019)). For a broader geographical investigation, see also Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin, ed., *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World* (Brill, 2018); Salvador Ryan, ed., *Domestic Devotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (MDPI - Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2020), https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-03928-914-1; On Venice, Margaret A. Morse, "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian 'Casa,'" *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 151-184, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24417292.
[38] Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, 47.

In short, the inquiry is expressly situated within a growing body of scholarship reflecting a "material turn,"[39] which developed relatively recently, and has had particular success in studies of Renaissance Italy as well as England.[40] The study of material culture, though defined flexibly given its roots in cross-discipline inquiry, is concerned with what objects *do* in myriad contexts, and how they are "tools through which people shape their lives."[41] I particularly build off the work of scholars who have considered materiality in relation to the body: those who have found constructive entryways for exploring histories of bodily, embodied, and sensuous experience by turning to object worlds, a conceptual bridging that was theoretically expounded upon and encouraged in the *Handbook of Material Culture*.[42] A somewhat popular site of such inquiry has been the rosary.[43] Other studies are excellent examples of how to bridge investigations of material culture with those of the embodied, providing significant histories of lived experience.[44] Though employed in

[39] Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home* 3.

[40] Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David R. M. Gaimster, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, The Routledge History Handbooks (London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 391-392, 523; Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 2, 42.

[41] Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, "Introduction," in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2016), 17.

[42] See especially David Howes, "Scent, Sound and Synaesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture Theory," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Syper, ed. *Handbook of Material Culture* (SAGE Publications, 2006), 161-172.

[43] Rachel King, "'The Beads with Which We Pray Are Made from It': Devotional Ambers in Early Modern Italy," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed., De Boer and Göttler; Rachel King, "The Reformation of the Rosary Bead: Protestantism and the Perpetuation of the Amber Paternoster," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed., Ivanič, Laven, Morrall; Lisa Beaven, "The Early Modern Sensorium: The Rosary in Seventeenth-Century Rome," *Journal of Religious History* 44, no. 4 (December 2020): 443-464, doi: 10.1111/1467-9809.12699; Irene Galandra Cooper and Mary Laven, "The material culture of piety in the Italian Renaissance: Re-touching the rosary," in Richardson, Hamling, and Gaimster, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*; Erminia Ardissino, "Literary and Visual Forms of a Domestic Devotion: The Rosary in Renaissance Italy," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, eds., Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 342–72, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctvbqs499.21.

[44] One such recent volume is about the "ever-increasing object world" of early modern Europe, and argues that material things not only held value for people, but also shaped their affects and senses: "artefacts embodied and produced values, and they reflected and shaped emotional desires as well as bodily sensations" (Burghartz, Burkart, Göttler, and Rublack, ed., *Materialized Identities*, 29); Evelyn Welch has explored olfactory and bodily experiences of things like perfumed objects (Evelyn Welch, "Scented Buttons and Perfumed Gloves: Smelling Things in Renaissance Italy," in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, edited by Bella Mirabella, 13–39, University of Michigan Press, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.2056317.5); Alexandra Bamji combines historical inquiry of the body and material culture in early modern Venice by inquiring on how, among other topics, "[b]odies were

tandem, these methodological approaches are described, for clarity, separately in the following two brief sections.

*II. A Culture of Materiality: Methodological Considerations*

Ferrazzi's everyday life was played out in great material vibrancy (see chapter one), making up an early modern "cosmos," to borrow Suzanna Ivanič's phrase in her *Cosmos and Materiality in Early Modern Prague*. Ivanič uses *cosmos* to denote a "world of meanings" of "matter and objects," and to refer to the "possibilities to negotiate divine power in daily life through objects, rituals, words, and matter."[45] By evoking a harmonious universe, this term purposefully captures an early modern theological view of matter in which things were interconnected and "divinely created and ordered."[46] In this sense, though Ivanič deals with the religious materiality in the daily lives of burghers in Prague, her conceptualization transposes effectively onto early modern Venice.

In Ferrazzi's Venetian cosmos, the mundane and sacred were not always readily distinguishable.[47] In studying how Ferrazzi related to objects, I thus also follow the orientation of Ivanič, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall who, in their volume on cross-confessional early modern religious materialities, make room for an "extended material

surrounded by material things as they moved from place of death to place of burial (Alexandra Bamji, "The Materiality of Death in Early Modern Venice," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed., Ivanič, Laven, Morrall, 120); For other inquiries combining embodiment and material culture, see also: Katherine M. Tycz, "Material Prayers and Maternity in Early Modern Italy: Signed, Sealed, Delivered," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 244–71, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctvbqs499.17; Pamela H. Smith, "Making things: Techniques and books in early modern Europe," in *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500-1800*, ed. Paula Findlen, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 173-203, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351055741).

[45] Suzanna Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality in Early Modern Prague* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 1-2.

[46] Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality*, 2.

[47] Evangelisti rejects "[b]inary distinctions such as the sacred/profane," finding them reductionist (Evangelisti, "Material Culture," 403). Morse, in her contribution to the volume by Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, demonstrates a rejection of a dualistic logic by suggesting, for instance, that, as summarized by the editors, "art historical divisions of Renaissance paintings into 'secular' and 'religious' did not reflect the contemporary reality" within Venice (Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 12).

world…[including] items not specifically used for religious practice."[48] This flexible view, in which an array of objects could shape and inform daily faith life, accommodates this thesis' equal interest in crucifixes, clothes, and paintings. In so doing, I am ultimately seeking, like Ivanič, to tell a story about everyday "lived experience" and "lived religion" through all kinds of materiality.[49]

To speak in terms of an "extended material world," it is worth noting, is meant to blur readily imposed categories onto objects–not to reify dichotomous distinctions between the "religious" and "non-religious." Ivanič's flexible conception of early modern material culture in her volume on Prague mirrors the view that a wide range of objects were relevant to daily faith practices. She rejects the "neat classifications" some historians have imposed on early modern objects when attempting to delineate the sacred and the non-sacred, which ultimately can "deprive objects of their histories and meanings."[50] In short, to acknowledge the breadth of ways objects were used and experienced is to recognize the specificity and historicity of their meanings. Ivanič has thus underscored that "there was a particular fluidity of meaning around early modern things,"[51] a view echoed by other early modern scholars.[52] This resounding agreement that early modern people's meaning-making in response to objects was ever-shifting and contextually bound informs my own close reading of Ferrazzi's trial. I seek to be grounded in her particular interpretation and use of objects,



[48] Suzanna Ivanič, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall, *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 17.
[49] Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality*, 3, 12.
[50] Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality*, 2-3, 13.
[51] Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality*, 12.
[52] In her reflections on how to theorize early modern material culture histories, for instance, Paula Findlen has similarly stressed the mutability of early modern objects, suggesting that they are always framed by "a system of use and meaning in which value is constantly being renegotiated." In their edited volume, Ivanič, Laven, and Morral have similarly argued that religious materialities "do not hold fixed meaning" and were in each case "enlivened by human practices" (Findlen, *Early Modern Things*, 4-5; Ivanič, Laven, Morrall, *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, 27).

without necessarily presupposing and prescribing analogous experiences of matter among Ferrazzi's contemporaries.

*III. Embodiment as Method*

Compelling work has shown that premodern lived experiences of both religiosity and matter were often intimately tied to corporeality.[53] To gain a sense of Ferrazzi's lived religiosity, I thus consider the material in tandem with the bodily, especially in light of the view that early modern objects often "reflected and shaped…bodily sensations."[54] Embodied history is concerned with how bodies can tell and shape stories, particularly within cultural history.[55] The study of premodern bodily experiences is nothing new and this thesis draws inspiration from attention to the body in histories of medieval women's religiosity.[56] Without essentializing gendered spiritual practice, Caroline Walker Bynum, for instance, has drawn attention to the "tendency of women to somatize religious experience" in late medieval piety.[57]

To begin sketching out a definition of an embodied history methodology, it is important to first distinguish this approach from that of the somewhat distinct "history of the body," which gained popularity during the "bodily turn" of the 1980s-90s within feminist

[53] See for instance, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 191; Claire Walker, "'Hangd for the True Faith': Embodied Devotion in Early Modern English Carmelite Cloisters," *Journal of Religious History* 44, no. 4 (December 2020): 494-512, 10.1111/1467-9809.12701.
[54] Susanna Burghartz, Lucas Burkart, Christine Göttler, and Ulinka Rublack, ed., *Materialized Identities in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1750: Objects, Affects, Effects* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021): 29.
[55] An upcoming conference (September 2024, Potsdam, Germany) entitled "Embodied Histories: Cultural History of, in, and through the Human Body" defines embodied history as "the cultural history of the human body" (*Embodied Histories: Cultural History of, in, and through the Human Body*., In: H-Soz-Kult, 20.09.2023, www.hsozkult.de/event/id/event-138784).
[56] Medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum has argued, for instance, that the "intense bodily quality" of many medieval women's religiosity is useful for understanding why their mystical texts, according to her, tended to hold a more creative, "experimental" dimension than those of men (Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Three*, ed. Michel Feher, R. Nadaff, N. Tazi (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 162, 167).
[57] Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 190.

and sociological scholarship.[58] Body history has broadly centered queries about material phenomena, such that Roy Porter even deemed body history to be "one limb" of material culture studies.[59] Generally focused on historical representations of the body as well as its disciplining, histories of the body tended to be criticized for leaving little room for corporeal agency, and for dwelling excessively on discursive "readings" of the body rather than lived experience.[60] Though a number of fine studies of early modern bodies have pushed against "text and metaphor alone" and addressed the importance of experiential-based inquiry,[61] some scholars studying historical bodies have sought new directions.

Kathleen Canning is consistently cited as one of the dissenting voices against body history, having written a 1999 article arguing that this fashionable study was not only problematic for its tendency of relying on discourse, but also for being undertheorized within the historical discipline–particularly within the latter's efforts at reconstructing bodily experience.[62] Echoing another scholar who suggested that the notion of embodiment

[58] Iris Clever and Willemijn Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History? The Material Turn, Praxiography, and Body History," *Humanities* 3, no. 4 (December 2014): 546, https://doi.org/10.3390/h3040546.
[59] Roy Porter, "History of the Body," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 207.
[60] Clever and Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History?" 546-547, 548, 550.
[61] Though a collection by Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg methodologically centers early modern representations of the body, the book nonetheless seeks to "avoid… reductionism and to study early modern human bodies as living, acting and feeling subjects" (Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg, eds., *Bodily Extremities: Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 2, 5); Similarly, in a collection edited by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, the focus is on representations of the fragmented body, which were "increasingly marked and elaborated upon in a range of visual and textual spaces" in the early modern period, but the volume also indirectly takes into account the ways many early modern individuals thought about bodily experience and agency by pointing to how body parts were "frequently imagined to take on attributes of agency and subjectivity" (David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (Routledge, 2013), xii).
[62] Kathleen Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History," *Gender & History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 499, 502, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00159; Canning has influenced other scholars writing on the topic, who have quoted her in: Clever and Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History?" 548; and Willemijn Ruberg, "Embodiment and Experience: Digital Handbook of the History of Experience," *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*, August 24, 2023, https://doi.org/10.58077/av2d-wy37; In 1991, Roy Porter had already made similar critiques about the excessive focus on discourse within body history, arguing that "we remain remarkably ignorant about how individuals and social groups have experienced, controlled and projected their embodied selves" and that the history of the self has had "very little to say about how people have made sense of, and related themselves to, their own bodies" (Porter, "History of the Body," 211, 224).

is "crucial to any feminist enterprise,"[63] Canning argues that embodied history is instead more fruitful for the work of recovery than the often abstracted use and study of "the body." "A far less fixed and idealised concept than body," Canning suggests, "embodiment encompasses moments of encounter and interpretation, agency and resistance."[64]

More recently, this latter quote and stance has been referenced and extended by scholars like Willemijn Ruberg, who has claimed that tending to embodiment "is a very helpful approach for the historian of experience" since the body plays a critical role in "making sense of oneself and the world."[65] In short, thinking in terms of embodiment addresses a person acting in a particular contextual and social sphere: the process of "becoming a body in social space," which Canning quotes from sociologist Bryan Turner.[66] Within this process (that is, the "corporal practices" that make up everyday life), Turner emphasizes "social action" as central to embodiment,[67] a view which resonates with Canning's language of human agency and resistance.

It is in the vein articulated by Canning, Ruberg, and Turner that I employ an embodied lens and think specifically through the rubric of "embodied action." While the difference between body history and embodied history need not be overly stated or antagonized,[68] I employ the language and methodology of embodiment to foreground, as

[63] Canning, "The Body as Method?" 505.
[64] Canning, "The Body as Method?" 505.
[65] Ruberg, "Embodiment and Experience."
[66] Canning, "The Body as Method?" 505.
[67] Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (SAGE Publications, 2008), 244-245.
[68] Ruberg draws from both embodied and body history, and seems to see these as somewhat interchangeable categories. In a text by Ruberg co-authored with Irish Clever, she proposes that praxiographical analysis, or the study of practices–forged in the material turn–is the most promising development for body history because it centers encounters between people (Clever and Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History?" 547). For them, studying the "material, experiencing body" is most concretely available by attending to "material practices, to different kinds of actors… to encounters (between bodies, objects, experts, and techniques)" (550). Their relational and material emphasis in studying the body historically is somewhat analogous to my project's aim to combine "the bodily" with "the material" and to consider how these processes created encounters between Ferrazzi and her social world, including the inquisitor. In this sense, more recent iterations of body history are perhaps relevant. But ultimately Ruberg and Clever's heightened attention to bodily encounters and practices need not necessarily belong solely to "body history": they fit into the project of embodied histories, too.

previously discussed, Ferrazzi's action mediated through objects, the potential for transgression that this created, and crucially, in Canning's words, "moments of encounter" between Ferrazzi and her superiors.

*IV. The Inquisitor as Historian? A Note on Sources*

This project is rooted in the study of Inquisition materials based on my own archival visit to the Archivio di Stato di Venezia in December of 2023–from which I especially draw on unpublished witness testimony–and on sources made accessible through Jacobson Schutte's aforementioned volumes: edited versions of Ferrazzi's first four interrogations and her dictated inquisitorial autobiography. These sources require an approach that recuperates the informative potential of the documents while also recognizing their limitations. Inquisitorial scribal practices sometimes pose significant ambiguities about the extent to which we can hear subjects' own voices in the records.[69] Given the power imbalance of these exchanges, dictated by inquisitorial objectives, some historians completely discard such transcripts as sources for reconstructing subordinated or silent historical voices.[70]

Others, like Ginzburg, hold a more optimistic view.[71] Within micro-historical study, touched upon earlier, "problematic" material can be taken as an experimental opportunity: both Ginzburg and Levi posit that historians ought to be explicitly transparent about the limitations of the sources by intentionally bringing these to light through their very



[69] Inquisitors wielded significant power in shaping interrogation records. Individuals' answers were often transcribed in reductive formulas and, in general, the documents went through various mutations before reaching their final form. Many started off as notes written down in vernacular by scribes, then were sometimes re-written into Latin, then read out to confessors in the vernacular, which could lead to additional modifications, and then the transcript was written out on parchment, and potentially placed in a manuscript or in a coherent unit of sheets. There is no doubt that these kinds of procedures, which subjected the content to continuous changes and reformulations, modified original utterances (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 4; Jessie Sherwood, "The Inquisitor as Archivist, or Surprise, Fear, and Ruthless Efficiency in the Archives," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 57, 77-78, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23290580).
[70] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 4-5; Sherwood, "The Inquisitor as Archivist," 77.
[71] Sherwood, "The Inquisitor as Archivist," 78.

historical narratives.[72] This thesis follows the latter set of positions, suggesting that we can indeed cautiously locate an imprint of authenticity, or glimpses of the genuine voices of figures like Ferrazzi despite the complications of oral transmission and textual manipulation.

Documents generated by the Venetian Inquisition are particularly valuable because they adhered closely to the utterances of speakers. Jacobson Schutte has demonstrated that the Roman Inquisition–under which the Venetian tribunal operated–expected and "rigorously enforced" verbatim transcriptions of dialogue.[73] Elaborating a comprehensive analysis of their operations during the seventeenth century, she establishes that Venetian notaries were significantly faithful to original oral and bodily expression of those questioned.[74] What stands out in Ferrazzi's trial is the meticulous care with which the inquisitor asked the same questions to a variety of witnesses and tracked inconsistencies within one person's testimony. "Think well and tell the truth," he told one witness as a result of contradictions in her testimony, for if she spoke falsely, he noted, she would be convicted, imprisoned, and face other penalties,[75] a kind of admonition the inquisitor employed consistently throughout the trial.[76]



[72] For Ginzburg, micro-historians must self-consciously deconstruct the kind of narrative veneer we encounter in texts like those of Tolstoy, whom Ginzburg admires for his narrative pursuit of enumerating the totality of events and experiences. Historians can only offer the illusion of a polished narrative given the fragmentary nature of sources and limited access to human subjectivities. In dealing with limited sources like an inquisition trial in the case of *The Cheese and the Worms*, microhistorians must actively accept and incorporate the ambiguities and problematic limitations into its narrative (Ginzburg, "Microhistory," 23, 27-28); Levi, "On Microhistory," 105-106).

[73] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 6.

[74] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 35-37.

[75] "...dettoli che pensi bene à dir la verità si di questo, come de altre cose…y che se sarà poi convinta di haver detto il falso, il Santo Officio procederà contra di lei con prigionia, et altre pene" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 15v).

[76] The inquisitor did not always threaten with imprisonment, but often used a phrase along the lines of, as Jacobson Schutte has also noted, "think carefully and tell the truth" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 38).

Playing off of Ginzburg's "inquisitor as anthropologist" who draws attention to these offices' analogous endeavors to elicit oral accounts,[77] I suggest that the inquisitor might be thought of as having some of the same sensibilities as a historian (which Ginzburg also notes),[78] save for the propensity to threaten one's subjects. The inquisitor, like the historian, shows great attention to detail, the continual pursuit of varying perspectives from which to synthesize, and the tendency to press a matter with gradually more specific questions. The inquisitor, moreover, left traces of his thought process: the documents are filled with underlined sections flagging what he deemed important, as well as occasional notes in the margins, which are suggestive of his priorities and concerns, such that his underlining is occasionally noted throughout the thesis. Ferrazzi's trial record thus stands as a multi-layered rather than unilateral site of authorship. Even though the documents were produced by a scribe and the questioning was guided by the inquisitor's ultimate aim of evoking a confession of guilt,[79] then, Ferrazzi's answers and those of witnesses can be taken as representing a somewhat accurate register.[80]

Studying material culture through inquisitorial records also poses a productive alternative to inventories, which, according to Ivanič, "hold the key to the material register of societies."[81] But while the latter sources are in many contexts useful and can especially illuminate the materiality of the home, they can be "frustratingly vague," as Margaret Morse has noted in relation to Venetian inventories.[82] Inquisition sources, at least those of



[77] Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 156.
[78] Ginzburg, *Clues*, 158.
[79] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 38.
[80] The scribe who recorded Ferrazzi's inquisitorial autobiography was even less likely to have tampered with it as the "assignment gave him no opportunity to shape her account either before or after he set it down" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 13); Jacobson Schutte, "Suffering From the Stone," 30.
[81] Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality*, 12.
[82] Margaret A. Morse, "Domestic Portraiture in Early Modern Venice: Devotion to Family and Faith," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 123.

Ferrazzi's case, valuably provide promising storylines and contextual details that bring objects' use and meaning more immediately to life.

*V. Chapter Roadmap*

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first lays out critical background information, including details about Ferrazzi's biography, her 1664 trial, Venice's material world, and the broader sensory culture shaping it–context that is meant to illuminate the broader argument posed by the following chapters, the topics of which were previously noted. The second chapter focuses on crucifixes Ferrazzi encountered, and is comparatively longer, partly because it requires a methodological reflection on how this sometimes "immaterial" matter fits within the label of material culture. The third explores the consequences of Ferrazzi's rumored use of not only sumptuous, but also ecclesiastical-like clothes, and the fourth centers two portraits she arranged to be transformed into saint paintings. Each chapter demonstrates that Ferrazzi's embodied encounters with this materiality in quotidian life disturbed numerous superiors: each material group facilitated, in distinct ways, Ferrazzi's bodily assertion of authority within her community, which pushed against the norms of acceptable forms of female leadership and sensory expression.

## Chapter One: Introducing Cecilia Ferrazzi and Her World

In the Venetian State Archive lies a thick box containing the seventeenth-century inquisitorial papers of a trial against a woman named Cecilia Ferrazzi (1609-1684), accused of purporting to be a living saint.[1] Words like *silk, rings, breviary*,[2] *crucifix, gold, painting,* and *chain* litter the sheets, conjuring a vivid picture of Ferrazzi's material world–invoked not only by witnesses answering questions about her, but also by Ferrazzi herself. For some people called to testify, that Ferrazzi apparently owned items like luxurious clothes was sufficient to signal false holiness: "she went around in the following way: dressed in silk, a vanity that contradicts [her] professed sanctity."[3] The inquisitor, for his part, sought details about Ferrazzi's possessions, considering a defendant's objects to be important evidence that would support or bely legitimate holiness in his eyes.[4]

Yet, despite the suspicions generated by Ferrazzi's possessions (whether real or rumored), she, perhaps more than anyone else in the accounts, consistently brought up objects, or her material "cosmos," in the felicitous wording of Suzanna Ivanič.[5] Both throughout the interrogations and her orally dictated, self-volunteered life story, which formed part of the trial materials (discussed in this chapter), Ferrazzi demonstrated a

[1] Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter VeAS), Sant'Ufficio, busta 112, "Contra Ceciliam Ferrazzi de affectata sanctitate" (Against Cecilia Ferrazzi for Pretense of Sanctity). According to Anne Jacobson Schutte, this trial is the "fifth largest of the 2,910" Venetian Inquisition trials total (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "'Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io': Painters, the Inquisition and the Shape of Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Caroline Elam and Peter Denley (London: Westfield College, Committee for Medieval Studies, 1998), 419-420); Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. and trans. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9, 14.

[2] A breviary refers to a devotional book: "Breviaries, usually belonging to priests, were the most common devotional book printed across Europe in the early period, with books of hours lagging behind by some way" (Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018), 217).

[3] "[V]adi di sotto vestita di seda, et ero vanità contrarie alla pretesa Santità" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 17, 1664, 14r (second folder)).

[4] Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 154, 166.

[5] As noted in the introduction, Suzanna Ivanič utilizes the term "cosmos" in her study of early modern religious materialities in Prague, a conceptualization I borrow (Suzanna Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality in Early Modern Prague* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

particular attentiveness to the objects she encountered in everyday life. She took care to note them with remarkable specificity: a handkerchief "with lace edging" that belonged to her– and apparently stolen by one of her charges–crumpled in a courtyard, the jewels that "covered" a "foreign woman," or a half-scudo (silver coin) she found on the street with which she paid a gondolier.[6]

Ferrazzi referenced material things so extensively that they seem to merit a closer look. In this sense, this thesis' focus on the role of materiality in Ferrazzi's quotidian life is not solely or mostly a result of an inquisitorial scrutiny of Ferrazzi's world of objects, which though certainly part of the trial (e.g., the inquisitor asked one witness, for instance, if "Ms. Cecilia had anything extraordinary, or outside of the natural"),[7] formed just one dimension among myriad others in the pursuit of damning information.[8]

I instead take up this topic also because it seemed particularly important to Ferrazzi: she was attentive to objects and the power they wielded. I emphasize power because it constructively points to the kind of authority Ferrazzi assumed through objects, the driving claim of this thesis, but also because objects in themselves in premodern contexts carried power, as Caroline Walker Bynum has argued: things like relics as well as "ordinary domestic objects were…infused with religious power," the categories between sacred and mundane being "porous."[9] As outlined in the thesis introduction, the following chapters will demonstrate that Ferrazzi often assumed authority, or attempted to so, through her embodied appropriation and use of particular objects, and that, in what constitutes the broader



[6] Ferrazzi brought up these objects in her oral autobiography. For the comment on the "foreign woman" in Italian, Ferrazzi saw "una foresta vestita tutta di gioie" (Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata: 1609-1664*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1990), 80); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 50, 59-61.
[7] Asked if "dta Cecilia habbi dell'estra[ordinario], ò fuori delle cose naturali," the witness said to have seen things including a little statue of the B.V. (Beata Vergine) on an altar placed in a little chapel in Ferrazzi's home: "...a Casa sua mi condusse in una Capelletta ore era [sa] un'Altare una Statuetta della B.V…." (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 24, 1664, 101v).
[8] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 154, 166, 223.
[9] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes: Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe* (Zone Books, 2020), 17.

proposition of the thesis, these intensely bodily encounters with her material world often butted up against early modern anxieties carried over from the Reformations about the senses, including concerns about appropriately taming them and engaging in sensory discernment.[10]

In order to delve, in the next chapters, into how Ferrazzi used and sensorially encountered her material world as a means of assuming authority in her community–and what this meant in the context of broader Reformation(s)-inherited such worries about sensoriality–this chapter first lays out crucial contextual groundwork. In what follows, the chapter lays out elements of Ferrazzi's biography, followed by an overview of the accusation and trial. It then sketches out aspects of Venice's vibrant material culture not only to point to the larger material cosmos in which Ferrazzi lived, but also to introduce the sensory cultures shaping plural and sometimes contradictory ways objects were seen. This discussion of sensoriality in relation to matter is extended in the following section, which dwells on concerns about sensorial governance in the wake of the Reformations. The chapter closes with a reflection on the complex reception of Ferrazzi as a person in her community, and the methodological limits of studying her embodied experiences of objects on the basis of her own accounts.



[10] Matthew Milner, "The Senses in Religion: Towards the Reformation of the Senses," in *The Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 92; Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, "Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses in an Age of Reform," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (BRILL, 2012), 421-424. In Milner's contribution to this latter volume, *Religion and the Senses*, he writes mainly about sensory discernment in Mid-Tudor England, but his conclusions about the importance of "captivating" the senses, or "reining them in, bridling and governing them" is applicable to premodern Venice, particularly because he suggests that this culture reflected "principles integral not only to Tudor, but European, religiosity" (Matthew Milner, "To Captivate the Senses: Sensory Governance, Heresy, and Idolatry in Mid-Tudor England," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (BRILL, 2012), 307).

*1.1. Introducing a Character: Who Was Cecilia Ferrazzi?*

Ferrazzi, born in Venice's San Lio parish on April 20, 1609, came from a humble though relatively stable economic background.[11] Her father Alvise Ferrazzi, a native of the nearby Bassano, was a boxmaker (*casseler*), and her mother, Maddalena Polis, was in charge of the household with the help of a young adolescent Ferrazzi.[12] She grew up with a number of siblings,[13] but only Ferrazzi, aged twenty, and her younger sister Maria survived the great bubonic plague of 1630, which killed 46,000 residents (or thirty percent of the population) of Venice.[14] First staying under the custody of an uncle, Cecilia and Maria subsequently lived under the roofs of various caretakers, including Venetians of noble status, and in convents.[15] Maria managed to secure a future as a nun and established a series of Discalced Carmelite convents.[16] Though Ferrazzi's childhood wish had been to enter a convent, she faced a number of hurdles that ultimately blocked her from ever becoming a nun.[17] One of her confessors, Giorgio Polacco, barred her own attempts at opening a

[11] Though she came from a "modest social extraction," and was "below the patrician class" as well as that of *cittadino*, Ferrazzi nonetheless had a degree of economic security at least in her early life since her "father, an artisan who employed several assistants, was prosperous enough to support a large family and to contemplate furnishing a dowry" for Ferrazzi (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 9, 16, 21-22). Ferrazzi was baptized in the parish church of San Lio on November 7, 1610, and shortly after, the family moved to the nearby Santa Marina parish (Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 22); Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13).

[12] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 40, 42; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints,*13; Jacobson Schutte, "'Questo non è il ritratto,'" 420, 425.

[13] The couple had at least ten children, four of whom died as infants (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 42).

[14] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 9, 42-43.

[15] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 13-14.

[16] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109.

[17] Ferrazzi had, as a young girl, expressed the desire to enter a convent, which her parents initially resisted, hoping to insead arrange a marriage for her. But after they had another daughter, Maria, whom Ferrazzi saw as an answer to her prayers that they conceive, her parents were willing to consider Ferrazzi's proposition. But because of her parents' deaths, this potential plan never materialized. Later on, Ferrazzi would be "rejected for admission to at least two convents" by the Patriarch of Venice (Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112).

Discalced Carmelites convent in 1638,[18] which, though likely an expensive endeavor, she might have been able to accomplish with the support of patricians.

It was only when Ferrazzi reached forty years old, that she forged a new, comparatively more independent direction for her life, beyond the immediate strictures of her protectors' rules.[19] Unable to pursue cloistered life, Ferrazzi–a laywoman who never married (managing to slip out of an unwanted arrangement her uncle had attempted to make)[20] –"invented a profession" and "found herself a vocation," in Jacobson Schutte's words, by housing and caring for *putte pericolanti*,[21] or young women with unstable family situations who might engage in sex work to sustain themselves.[22] This work had germinated with Ferrazzi's role as a governess and caretaker of two young women, the numbers of which subsequently began to increase.[23]

Ferrazzi consecutively ran four of these refuges for "girls in danger," which afforded her a degree of social mobility as it opened new social circles to her, particularly because she received the support of affluent patricians in the city, who either rented or lent her the facilities.[24] A witness in the trial even noted that Ferrazzi played cards with noblewomen supporters in the mornings.[25] The houses located in Venice, which changed according to an

[18] There is no space here for the heated and long-term conflict Ferrazzi had with Polacco, who appeared committed to limiting Ferrazzi's influence. Jacobson Schutte has written considerably on this matter: see in particular, Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Tra Sicilia e Cariddi: Giorgio Polacco, Donne e Disciplina Nella Venezia del Seicento," in *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa*, ed. Gabriella Zarri, (Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), 215-236; Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 109; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 121-123; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 46).

[19] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420.

[20] Ferrazzi's uncle wanted to marry her to a patrician (Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112).

[21] This was a phrase of the time, used to denote "girls in danger" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 9).

[22] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13, 203; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106.

[23] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10. For more on her early career in caring for children, see Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 207-28.

[24] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 203-204; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420-421; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10, 31.

[25] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 191 207.

increasing need for more space, were, in order of operation: a house in San Lorenzo,[26] another in San Giovanni Evangelista,[27] one in Cannaregio,[28] and finally, a large *palazzo* called Sant'Antonio di Castello.[29] Since her houses responded to a social need, Ferrazzi's ventures gave her a somewhat respected position in Venice.[30] At the height of her success in the 1660s (the same decade she would be tried), as many as 300 young women aged approximately five to thirty were living in the Castello house.[31] Ferrazzi taught them needlework, a common craft among Venetian women, work which may have partly sustained her in years prior.[32]

Beyond sharing this skill, Ferrazzi assumed the role of a quasi spiritual director.[33] While the houses were not tied to a religious order, she created a home life steeped in liturgical and devotional practices and regularly arranged priests to confess the young women.[34] In 1661 Ferrazzi also managed to institute characteristics of a Carmelite convent

[26] This house was located in the San Severo parish next to Ca' Lion where her financial supporter Paolo Lion lived (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, Autobio, 86-87). It seems as though this house was technically two buildings (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208).

[27] From 1655-1657, she ran this house, which stood right next to the church of a Scuola Grande, or high-ranked religious confraternity, both buildings of which were located, in turn, across from the confraternity's building, San Giovanni Evangelista. Jacbscon Schutte clarifies that Ferrazzi and "her charges could see and hear the celebration of the Mass without being observed" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 86); Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208.

[28] It was located in the northwest of the city (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 85). It ran for a short time, approximately between 1657 and 1658 (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208).

[29] Bought by Francesco Vendramin in 1658, this southeastern house was located next to the monastery Sant'Antonio Abbate (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208).

[30] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106-107

[31] Around this time, Ferrazzi also apparently ran a house in Padua (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106.

[32] Typical crafts of women in Venice were those of embroidering, making lace, and sewing (Margaret Morse, "From *Chiesa* to *Casa* and Back: The Exchange of Public and Private in Domestic Devotional Art," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, ed. Blake De Maria and Mary E. Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2013),152); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10, 45.

[33] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10.

[34] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 33; The witness Florena Forni, discussed later on, noted she could scarcely keep track of the many priests who visited to confess the young women over the years: "Li Confessori de noi altri sempre si mutavano hor[a] uno hora l'altro, hora il Padre Carlo, il Padre Lautaro, Padre Daniel, tutti Gesuiti" ("Our confessors always changed: now one, now the other, now Father Carlo, Father Lautaro, Father Daniel, all them Jesuits") (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 23r).

in her Castello house by mirroring the home's rules to those of Carmelite constitutions.[35] It was this kind leadership taken on by Ferrazzi, evocative of a convent's Mother superior, that would constitute one among many troubling behaviors for the inquisitor. Ferrazzi would specifically come under fire for allegedly having confessed and absolved her charges, and thus taking up a role allowed only to men.[36]

While the houses were received quite favorably by civic authorities,[37] not all community members were content with Ferrazzi's extent of influence. Ferrazzi-as-trouble-maker, in the eyes of the civil and religious officials, already seemed to have a precedent. In 1661, three years before her denunciation, Ferrazzi generated attention by failing to discharge a young woman (for fear the girl would end up in prostitution), despite the latter's uncle having ordering the release, leading to the surveillance of Ferrazzi's refuge on the part of ecclesiastical and government figures.[38] Years before that incident, moreover, Ferrazzi brushed up against the Inquisition: while not officially tried, she was interrogated by Venice's principal inquisitor in 1637 because of her apparent manifestations of stigmata, which had raised suspicions from a number of powerful men: the priest (and Ferrazzi's confessor at the time) Bonaventura Pinzoni, the aforementioned Polacco, and the latter's senior Cardinal Patriarch Federico Corner.[39] Though she faced no major repercussions, Ferrazzi, suspected of being deluded by the devil, was temporarily held in a convent (see chapter two) and was later ordered to not be "tricked by the infernal enemy," and, in effect, to keep a low profile.[40] Although Ferrazzi had interacted with the Inquisition in this earlier



[35] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109.
[36] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 210.
[37] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10; ; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107.
[38] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420-421; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208-209.
[39] The inquisitor was "Clemente Ricetti da Iseo, inquisitor general of Venice from 1632 to 1639" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125-126, 268, 271); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 78.
[40] Quoted in Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126.

episode, what would follow, in 1664, would be much more dramatic than the kinds of discipline she had already experienced.

*1.2. The Trial: Accusations and Investigations*

In May 1664, two women named Chiara Perini Bacchis and Chiara Garzoni denounced the fifty-five year old Ferrazzi to the Inquisition.[41] Bacchis was a sex worker, and mother and aunt to some girls whom Ferrazzi declined to discharge, suspecting that Bacchis would prostitute the young women.[42] Garzoni, running a competing social service for young women, had previously stayed in one of Ferrazzi's houses.[43] In their written denunciation, Bacchis and Garzoni accused Ferrazzi of pretense of holiness, a prosecutable offense for the Roman Inquisition by the early seventeenth century,[44] referring to the alleged intentional fabrication of sanctified behavior in order to self-present as a "living saint."[45] Rather than believing that the accused acted this way as a result of satanic possession or trickery, practitioners of the legal system generally opined that the charged had acted of their own accord: falsely pretending, for instance, to live only off the Eucharist and receive stigmata and revelations, and displaying dissonant behavior like pridefulness and the use of "suspicious objects."[46]

These trials involved numerous participants, but perhaps the most important figure of the Venetian Inquisition–one of the many courts of the Roman Inquisition–was that of the



[41] The inquisitors met with Chiara Bacchis on May 7 of 1664 after she had submitted her denunciation in writing, which was the most frequent starting point from with which the Inquisition began an investigation (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106-107; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 31; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 37).
[42] Bacchis had already attempted to take action first by filing a civil magistracy suit, which appeared to have failed (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 31); Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13-14.
[43] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13-14; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106-107.
[44] For more on this process and its judicial origins, see the chapter "'Little Women' and Discernment of Spirits" in Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 42-59.
[45] As Jacobson Schutte clarifies, "the concept [of pretense of holiness] was variously termed *affettata, finta, pretesa*, or *simulata santità* ('assumed,' 'feigned,' 'claimed/pretended,' or 'simulated holiness')" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 14).
[46] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 14-15; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 223-224.

inquisitor general, who conducted trials and at the time of Ferrazzi's trial was Fra Agapito Ugoni da Brescia (c. 1602-1674).[47] Within about a month of interrogating the women who had denounced Ferrazzi and some witnesses noted by Bacchis, Ugoni chose to arrest Ferrazzi–beginning a trial process that lasted fifteen months and involved the interrogation of roughly 300 witnesses.[48] Ferrazzi was navigating Venice's Grand Canal on her gondola when she was captured and arrested.[49] She was held in the Inquisition's prison, located close to the San Teodoro chapel where the tribunal hearings were held and where the first interrogation began on June 19.[50]

Ferrazzi's interrogations stand out not only for her propensity to speak at length and volunteer information without being asked,[51] but also for a rare petition by Ferrazzi that was granted by the inquisitor. Namely, she sought to plead her case by asking if she could relay her life-story, or autobiography, in oral form–a type of narrative act Ferrazzi had certainly rehearsed before, having similarly relayed autobiographical accounts to confessors.[52] "Dear sirs," she stated at the close of the fourth interrogation:

> do me the favor of sending me either a confessor or anyone you want who'll write down everything I'll dictate to him, and I'll remember better and be less embarrassed, and then it can be taken to the Holy Office, and when the entire [manuscript] has been read in my presence, I'll confirm it."[53]

Such an appeal was rather exceptional within the Roman Inquisition: apparently no other "self generated" inquisitorial autobiographies in this context have been found, though a

[47] Like many of his colleagues, he received a degree in theology, and had been a Dominican friar, the latter being a commonly held post for those later appointed to the role of inquisitor general. For more on his story and professional responsibilities see, Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 14, 30-34; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 82-83.

[48] These witnesses included "former residents in her establishments, professional men, clerics, and patricians" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 14); Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 11, 21).

[49] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21.

[50] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21.

[51] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107.

[52] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 5, 11-12, 17; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166.

[53] "Cari signori, le me facci gratia di mandarmi o un confessore o alcuno che piacca a loro, il quale scrive tutte queste cose che io le dettarò, e haverò miglior memoria e deventerò meno rossa, e potranno poi portarsi al Sant'Officio, e letto il tutto alla mia presenza, il confermarò" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 42); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 37-38.

number existed in the Spanish Inquisition.[54] The very following day, July 9 of 1664, Antonio da Venezia, a friar who served the Inquisition on theological matters, was ushered in for the scribal task, resulting in seventy-one folios.[55] Ferrazzi, from her cell in prison, dictated her account in one day, during the span of approximately six hours.[56] Ultimately, this text did not sway the case in her favor,[57] but has left us with remarkable insight into Ferrazzi's life to analyze alongside the interrogations and witness testimony.

Ultimately "judged 'lightly suspect' of heresy" (*de levi*), Ferrazzi was deemed guilty of *affettata santità* and in November 1665 received a seven-year prison sentence and a number of penances.[58] She was also ordered to never again keep houses for *putte* nor to ever relay experiences of godly "favor."[59] There was never any danger that Ferrazzi would have faced execution, which was rare under the Venetian Inquisition.[60] Her high connections allowed her to negotiate better conditions–a transfer from prison to house arrest in Padua under supervision–and an earlier release as well as a return to Venice in 1669.[61] Though what Ferrazzi did in the following years remains unclear, her death on January 17, 1684 from lung complications and a fever is recorded.[62] Many of these details leave the impression of a woman whose life was crucially defined by brush-ups with the law, but

[54] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 5, 17; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Miriam Bodian and Ide François, "From the Files of the Portuguese Inquisition: Isaac de Castro Tartas's Latin Ego-Document, 1645," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 107, no. 2 (2017): 231-232, https://www.jstor.org/stable/90006287.
[55] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 11, 76; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107-108.
[56] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106-108.
[57] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 13.
[58] Regarding penances ordered by the Inquisition, Jacobson Schutte clarifies, "Spiritual penalties, known as 'salutary penances,' were always prescribed: a detailed regimen of set prayers, fasts, attendance at religious services, and penance (confession) at specified times to designated confessors (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 15, 39-40, 201; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 424, 427; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 16.
[59] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 16.
[60] Only two people were put to death between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth century (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 40).
[61] She managed to get transferred "from the Venetian Inquisition's prison to Padua, where she was held under house arrest in the custody of Cardinal Gregorio Barbarigo" after appealing to the Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome. She was released by Roman authorities as a result of the advocacy of Barbarigo and Venetian officials (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 15; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 16).
[62] Ferrazzi was buried in the church she had also been baptized in, San Lio (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 15; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 17).

tending to other dimensions like her material cosmos and its sensorial, embodied implications–themes discussed in the following sections–widens a multifaceted historical exploration of her quotidian life.

### *1.3. Ferrazzi's Material Venice: Sensing Matter*

Inhabited by the "proprietors of the sea," the cosmopolitan port city of Venice–marked by trade, wealth, and the flow of people and goods–was rich with material objects often coveted by non-residents who arranged for special purchases.[63] Patricia Allerston has highlighted the alluring variety of available things desired by outsiders by noting, for instance, that one of Albrecht Dürer's patrons urged him to locate, in Allerston's words, "pearls and gemstones, rugs, history paintings, enamels, paper, cranes' and swans' feathers, as well as newly published Greek texts."[64] Many Venetians themselves sought to acquire things that were at once familiar (i.e., abundantly accessible) yet attractive for their evocation of "otherness" such as Levantine-style goods.[65] The city's ornate civic spaces and architecture also contributed to the rich visual and material culture that marked inhabitants' embodied everyday urban experiences.[66]

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[63] "Proprietors of the sea" is a phrase by Julie Fox-Horton. One example among many regarding the city's commercial power was its leading role in the gem trade (Blake De Maria, "Multifaceted Endeavors: Jewelry and Gemstones in Renaissance Venice," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, ed. Blake De Maria and Mary E. Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2013), 119, 123, 125, 127); Patricia Allerston, "Consuming problems: worldly goods in Renaissance Venice," in *Material Renaissance*, ed. Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (Manchester University Press, 2007), 11-12; Julie Fox-Horton, "Urban Spatial Thinking: Imagining the Cityscape in Early Modern Venice," *Environment, Space, Place* 14, no. 2 (2022): 66, 10.1353/spc.2022.0018; Margaret A. Morse, "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian 'Casa,'" *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 177; For more on Venice as empire, see Benjamin Arbel, "Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period," in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 125-253.

[64] Allerston, "Consuming problems," 12.

[65] Elizabeth Rodini, "Mobile Things: On the Origins and the Meanings of Levantine Objects in Early Modern Venice," *Art History* 41, no. 2 (April 2018): 253-255, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12332.

[66] Julie Fox-Horton has written on Venice's urban landscape, arguing that it purposefully "created an unusually cohesive sense of civic identity linked to mythic historical memory" (61). Gallic and Trojan narrative and visual tropes were at the heart of Venice's mythical origin stories, which, though clearly not adhering to authentic historical developments, aided in Venetians' development of a "strong sense of autonomy," and emerged from a very real "desire to live and govern themselves without intervention" (64-65, 67). These stories and historical identities were evoked by the decorous, visual materiality of the city, particularly "ancient [Mediterranean] treasures" that adorned public spaces, and objects like relics pilfered during wars (Fox-Horton, "Urban Spatial Thinking," 65-66).

Ferrazzi's early modern Venice, in short, was "a world of fabulous artifacts" in Paula Findlen's words–a city replete with objects of artistic and devotional value not only crafted for elite consumers, but also for the laboring classes and artisans.[67] For these latter sectors, inexpensive goods became increasingly available beginning in the sixteenth century, facilitating a growing demand for "worldly" commodities like ceramics and garments as well as expressly pious objects, which filled domestic spaces of all wealth-levels.[68] In this sense, *il gusto delle cose*, or a taste and desire for things–which Renata Ago attributes to seventeenth-century Romans in her study of their practices of acquisition and inheritance[69]–is also applicable to seventeenth-century Venetians.

Venetians' appreciation of and desire for objects, often informed by Catholic sensibilities,[70] crucially shaped how many inhabitants decorated and used their urban and domestic landscapes, constituted by an "intermingling of the sacred and secular."[71] Individuals across the social sector curated spaces for prayer and contemplation within their homes, filling them with things like icons, rosaries, jewelry, crucifixes, wax pieces called *agnus dei* stamped with a depiction of the Lamb of God, and medals imprinted with holy images.[72] Upon stepping out of the home and into churches and other ecclesiastical spaces,

[67] Paula Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500-1800* (Routledge & CRC Press), 11; Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, ed., *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (Brill, 2018), 4-5, 122.

[68] This trend was reflected across Catholic societies (Silvia Evangelisti, "Material Culture," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 409-410); Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 4, 11; Margaret A. Morse, "Domestic Portraiture in Early Modern Venice: Devotion to Family and Faith," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 122; Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 156, 159; Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, 4.

[69] Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things: A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), xxi-xxii.

[70] As Corry, Faini, and Meneghin suggest, "the centrality of material and visual culture to early modern Catholicism is inescapable…Catholicism was undoubtedly a religion of things" (Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 13).

[71] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 158.

[72] Over 700 Venetian inventories (of people across the social sector) from the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries "indicate that over ninety percent of Venetian households contained articles of religious significance and function" (Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 158-159, 163); Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 4, 117.

inhabitants would have come across holy matter like relics, and hundreds of shrines boasting images of saints and the Virgin scattered across the city–placed in streets, on walls of buildings, and bridges.[73] A prominent producer and seller of books, Venice also shaped the material worlds of its inhabitants through codices and printed materials.[74] Though literacy rates were not particularly high in early modern Italy, Venice did contain an important reading public as well as residents across the social sector who sought to possess books.[75] Many people kept sacred texts, many of which non-readers could also enjoy for their visual beauty as in the case of widely circulating rosary books containing images.[76] Ferrazzi participated in these practices of acquisition and decoration as a means of establishing her own domestic space as a locus of piety (see chapter four).

This potent presence of things that activated visual, tactile, and other sensory pleasure, in short, seemed to be a defining feature not only of Venice's public urban space but also increasingly the home. Despite representing an increasingly "normal" feature of the daily lives of many early modern Italians, the proliferation of and access to charming objects did not cease to be a concern from the perspective of moralists. The "corporeal pleasures" that luxuries activated–like the sensorially pleasing qualities of decorative hangings or artifacts that emanated scents–could dangerously gratify the body.[77] But while

[73] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 157.

[74] Morse writes that "...the popularity of particular prayer books, like the Book of Hours and its derivative, the Office of the Virgin, meant…that numerous households throughout the Republic possessed the same spiritual texts" (Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 165, 181).

[75] By studying over four thousand sources like inventories and wills, Sarah Gwyneth Ross has shown that humanistic interests applied to people across early modern Venice's class sectors, and that artisans and merchants, among others, sought to establish "cultural legitimacy" by acquiring such texts. On literacy in Italy at large, Ross has clarified,"[s]ituating conservative and optimistic claims as a range, we may imagine full vernacular literacy in Italian urban centers between a pessimistic 23 percent combined literacy and a rate of 60 percent male literacy" (Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *Everyday Renaissances: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 2, 28, 30, 56).

[76] Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 14-16.

[77] Early modern conceptions of luxury (*luxuria*), as Patricia Allerston has highlighted, carried a libertarian meaning, one of sexual excess and immorality, such that there was there was a "close relationship," in some spheres "between sumptuous material effects and licentious behavior" (Allerston, "Consuming problems," 21-23).

the gratification of the senses could in some instances be interpreted theologically as a vice,[78] it simultaneously represented a means through which to deepen devotional practice.

In Counter Reformation Europe, the active employment of vision to take in decorous ecclesiastical spaces was considered to serve as a window into Godself and God's enormity,[79] an analogy (i.e., the window) that also stretched back to a commonly held medieval conceptualization of the sensorial.[80] Catholic instruction also framed engagement of the senses, especially when used to imagine the humanity of Christ, as a way of not only accessing salvation, but also improving one's morality.[81] The "renowned sensuousness of Renaissance piety," often shaped by engagement with objects, thus belonged to a rich medieval devotional tradition that the early modern period inherited.[82]

In an analogous way, material objects themselves–entwined with the act of sensing–assumed distinct significations according to the context. The very same objects, as Silvia Evangelisti has written, "could be sacred or profane according to how they were understood, and when they were used."[83] The rosary is one example of how a single object and its sensorial implications could take on radically different meanings. Rachel King's shows that amber–a popular rosary material whose properties activated the olfactory and tactile senses of its users–became "contested matter" in the wake of the Reformation. Amber rosaries could, on the one hand, be considered "confessional markers," King writes, and on the other hand, their "alternative profane uses could be seen as evidence of a decline in piety."[84] In this way, sensuality and materiality, broadly conceived, were double (or plural)-edged



[78] Allerston, "Consuming problems," 21-22.
[79] Evangelisti, "Material culture," 399.
[80] Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden; Boston. Brill, 2001), 112.
[81] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 99.
[82] De Boer and Göttler, "Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses in an Age of Reform," 2-3, 14; Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 87; Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, 14.
[83] Evangelisti, "Material Culture," 403.
[84] De Boer and Göttler, *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, 6.

questions, posing both opportunities and threats for devotional life.[85] The following section turns to sensorial anxieties that would shape Ferrazzi's faith and interpersonal encounters: the notion that the senses be properly governed through practices of discernment, particularly to guard the senses from satanic delusion.

### *1.4. Sense and Sensibilities: Reforming Contestations*

The plural and conflicting ways matter and the senses could be interpreted, as the last section has briefly suggested, formed a central dimension of Reformation-era contestations.[86] This thesis draws particular attention to the latter's impact on sensory culture because, I posit, its preoccupations about corporeality informed Ferrazzi and her community's judgments about her bodily and sensorial behavior. Though Ferrazzi's story was situated in the seventeenth century, outside the usual frame of Reformation and Counter Reformation Age studies, this exploration adopts the notion advanced by some scholars that the Counter Reformation extended into this period, or at least its legacy of cultural and religious anxieties about sensory culture did.[87]

"At the heart" of the Reformations era in Europe, as Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler have suggested, were contestations about bodily experience and its relation to the material world.[88] More specifically, this period was marked by worries about the capacity for sensorial control, the ability to resist the deception of one's senses–anxieties that were



[85] Walker Bynum has formulated religious materiality in a similar way: "Holy matter was… both [a] radical threat and radical opportunity in the later Middle Ages" (Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Zone Books, 2011), 20).
[86] Wietse De Boer has gone further than Milner, suggesting that the Reformation "provoked a revolution" regarding how people's senses responded to the "physical world" (Wietse de Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses, in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 255).
[87] Mary Laven, "Introduction," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 5.
[88] De Boer and Göttler, "Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses," 2-3; Suzanna Ivanič, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall, ed., *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 17-18.

not particularly new but that gained a new stage for vocalization within these debates.[89] Matthew Milner has argued that the confessional tensions of the Reformation Ages indeed "reconfigured" how distinct groups valued the senses and their role in particular faith traditions, but has stressed that dichotomous and stereotypical narratives of a sensuous Catholicism versus an ascetic Protestantism would be inaccurate, not least because both carried rich material and aesthetic practices.[90] Instead, there was perhaps a paradoxical convergence across traditions in their shared concern over employing the senses appropriately: "polemicists on all sides accused their opponents of sensuality."[91]

Overall, the "crux," as Milner has put it, of the question across all Christian confessions was the expectation that individuals demonstrate "proper control and governance of the senses."[92] Put differently, in the eyes of all reformers, individuals' potential mismanagement and deception of the senses represented a most pressing issue.[93] The faculty of sight, for instance, was dangerously susceptible to corruption, producing not clarity but delusion.[94] Unease about susceptibility to sensorial corruption went hand in hand with worries about figures who did the deliberate work of deceiving, particularly the increasingly feared "witch and the demoniac," who were seen as simultaneously deceivers and sensorially deluded.[95] The model of measuring people's "sensory use and misuse," a



[89] Herman Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory Worlds of the Renaissance," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 10.
[90] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 87-88, 90; Ivanič, Laven, Morrall, *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, 22.
[91] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 87-88.
[92] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 87, 91-92, 95; Matthew Milner, "To Captivate the Senses: Sensory Governance, Heresy, and Idolatry in Mid-Tudor England," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (BRILL, 2012), 307.
[93] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 96.
[94] Roodenburg, "Introduction," 11.
[95] Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory Worlds," 4; Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 90-92, 104-105.

long-standing formulation that predated these debates,[96] thus described the convoluted and simultaneous ways in which sensorial delusion could play out.

*1.5. Mixed Reviews: "She was beautiful like a flower"… "One time she tried to put me in an oven"*

Zooming from the macro back to the micro, we find that this sensory culture was embedded in Ferrazzi's encounters with religious authorities. In the years preceding the trial, Ferrazzi herself faced acute suspicions by members of her community, particularly religious superiors–among them the Patriarch of Venice–that she was possessed by satan and deluded.[97] These men seemed to be drawing on the sensory logic of use versus misuse when responding to Ferrazzi's purported visions (see chapter two), for instance, which they believed were indicative of satanic interference, a stance that reflected a broader tendency by the end of the seventeenth-century towards generalized doubt of women's divine encounters, seen instead as suggestive of demonic influence.[98] Attempts at dominating the senses–and protecting them against satanic delusion in particular–were rooted in deep-seated and highly valued practices of sensorial discernment within Christian spheres.[99] But the value and work of discernment put into practice by Ferrazzi's superiors was relevant to all early modern communities.[100]

[96] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 91.
[97] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 87-88; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420.
[98] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 208.
[99] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 94, 96.
[100] This culture of discernment was not just about successfully detecting satanic influence, but also about the practical sphere of the marketplace and the acquisition of goods, in which buyers needed to be wary of what they sensed. In Elizabeth Rodini's discussion of discernment, specifically as it related to early modern material consumption in Venice, the term describes the "visual skills that were vitally useful in Venetian society" (Rodini, "Mobile Things," 253-254); Evelyn Welch has explored the "multisensory experience" of the early modern marketplace, in which the five senses were intensely activated by the bustling activity of the space and its sellers (68). Global goods like coffee, tea, and tobacco were in high demand, but because these were still somewhat "unfamiliar commodities," sellers were often required to assuage customer anxiety about fraud and potentially falsified products (64). Because "bodily experiences could be fooled or distorted by fraudulent merchants and adulterated goods," Welch argues that "being able to separate out the true from the false was a constant marketplace dilemma" (64, 84) (Evelyn Kathleen Welch,"The Senses in the Marketplace: Sensory

It seems likely that such an emphasis on sensorial discernment likely meshed with and was shaped by an analogous though distinct concern in the premodern period, namely the false presentation of the self. The "practice of simulation and dissimulation" wherein people passed for something else represented a major a cultural topos, as Valentin Groebner notes, that generated considerable learned discussion in the seventeenth century.[101] Dissimulation, given its association with artifice (e.g., the purposeful use of appearance-changing paraphernalia),[102] likely butted up against the notion that the deluded self could solely be explained as an externally-caused possession. In the case of the Venetian Inquisition, the inquisitor judging cases of pretense of sanctity abided not by the assumption that the charged person was possessed by the devil, but instead had purposefully assumed a false identity.[103] But even the inquisitor who had interrogated Ferrazzi years before her principal encounter with the Inquisition in 1664, as noted above, ordered that she not be "tricked by the infernal enemy." In this way, anxieties both about disingenuous behavior and sensorial deceit bore heavily on how observers judged her.

It is thus indispensable to lay out Ferrazzi's standing among members of her community, whose opinions and accounts ultimately filled the majority of the trial documents and constitute a critical entryway into Ferrazzi's sensorial life and use of material objects. This section, not directly concerned with their comments about Ferrazzi's material possessions or embodied experiences, brings together conflicting visions of Ferrazzi's character in an attempt to flesh out a three-dimensional picture of her. These contradictory impressions, in which witnesses tended to invoke their own senses to establish the legitimacy and proof of their observations (e.g., "I sensed it with my own senses," "I



Knowledge in a Material World," in *The Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 61–86).

[101] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 15; Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Mark Kyburz and John Peck (Zone Books, 2007), 216-217.

[102] Groebner, *Who Are You?*, 186-187, 216-217.

[103] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 15; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 147.

saw with my own eyes," or "I heard it said"),[104] productively sets up the tensions present across this study between Ferrazzi's sense of reality and that of others.

Some who knew Ferrazzi appeared dazzled. Most of her financial supporters expressed admiration not only for her charitable work but also her devoutness.[105] Some witnesses had believed at some point that Ferrazzi was indeed a living saint,[106] one proclaiming that "She was beautiful like a flower and, God forgive me, she seemed to me a saint."[107] When asked what the general conception of Ferrazzi was, another witness who had lived in one of Ferrazzi's houses suggested that "Ms. Cecilia was considered good, and a saint," and cited other girls' comments that Ferrazzi had sometimes gone into ecstasies when praying.[108] A number also reported that it was widely believed in the house that Ferrazzi had received the stigmata.[109]

Others severely questioned Ferrazzi's possible sanctity and the kind of miracle-work Ferrazzi would describe in her autobiography,[110] particularly the *putte*, some of whom aired vehement grievances to which the inquisitor was particularly attentive.[111] "As for me," said one Faustina in contrast to some *putte* who appeared to see Ferrazzi in a positive light, "I

[104] For instance,, "e tutte le cose… hò viste, ò sentite co' proprÿ sensi" ; and "...tutte queste particolarità ho visto co' miei occhi" ("...and all things... I have seen or felt with my senses" and "...all these particularities I saw with my own eyes" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder)); and in another instance, "...ho visto con le miei occhi…" ("I saw it with my own eyes") (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 22r). Witnesses also consistently referred to what they had "sentito," or heard, from others. When asked whether Ferrazzi had confessed her charges (the topic of chapter three), for example, one witness said "non l'ho visto, nè inteso dire, e se lo sapessi lo direi. L'ho ben sentito in questi giorni mutegar…" ("I didn't see it or hear it, and if I knew I would say it. I have heard changing [versions] spoken of these days") (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 15r).
[105] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10.
[106] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 420.
[107] "...et era bella come un fior, e Dio mio perdoni mi pareva una Santa" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 3, 1664, 37r).
[108] "...essa Sra. Cecilia era tenuta y buona, e Santa" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 14v (second folder)).
[109] For instance, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v.
[110] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 111.
[111] At one point the inquisitor asked whether Ferrazzi treated some *putte* different from others, and generally whether she treated them badly (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 1664, 34r).

don't think she was that good, having little charity towards the *putte*."[112] Some indeed testified that Ferrazzi had not provided sufficient food, leading some of the young women to die of starvation, and asserted that Ferrazzi, in Jacobson Schutte's summary, also "cut off their hair, burned them with hot tongs, sentenced them to solitary confinement if they annoyed her in any way, and sold some of them to men who desired their sexual services."[113]

The nineteen-year old witness Florena di Antonio Forni,[114] who appears repeatedly in two of the following chapters because of her comments on Ferrazzi's attire and portraits, was particularly vocal about Ferrazzi's purported misconduct, claiming that almost 200 *putte* had died at the hands of their caretaker.[115] "One time she [Ferrazzi] tried to put me in an oven" (from which Forni narrowly escaped), Forni claimed, and yet another time Ferrazzi had supposedly tried to put Forni inside a hole in the ground, among other alleged heinous acts.[116]

But such accounts represented one extreme.[117] Other witnesses shed light on the contradictions that could coexist within one person, including one *putta* who drew attention to Ferrazzi's habit of self-chastisement. Ferrazzi blamed herself for the girls' purported misbehavior, the witness noted: "I've seen Ms. Cecilia kneeling before us…saying that

[112] "...quanto à me non la stimo così bona, havendo poca Carità verse le putte" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 1664, 33r).
[113] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 209.
[114] Forni will hereafter be referenced as Florena Forni as it is written in the trial record, though the spelling of her name has appeared in different ways, including "Fiorina Forni" in Jacobson Schutte's *Aspiring Saints*; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 27.
[115] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21v.
[116] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21v.
(VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 27v (second folder)).
[117] The documents capture the fact that the young women held varying stances on Ferrazzi. One witness, for instance, recalled that when Ferrazzi had apparently gone into ecstasy and fallen to the ground (the kind of scene discussed in chapter two), some of the young women wanted to rush over and help her up, but others–specifically the older ones–had stopped the former out of disdain: "Noi volevamo aiutarla y levare, mà le altre maggiori non volevano dicendo lascè star così, che levarà da sua posta" ("We wanted to help her and get her up, but the other older girls didn't want to, saying let her stay like that, she'll get up from that spot") (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 16v).

because of her sins we were bad," which she would apparently do after the young women had received confession.[118] If accounts like Forni's, which ought to be taken with a grain of salt, are placed within the context of the whole, a more complex image of Ferrazzi thus emerges: a person who cannot be reduced to either a tyrant or just a passive victim (particularly when our focus remains solely on the judiciary system she faced and the volatile treatment she was subjected to by some of her superiors). In all likeliness, Ferrazzi embodied competing impulses and traits, some of which led her to mistreat those under her roof, and others of which sometimes managed to charm and win the affections of those around her.

These varying testimonies act as a crucial balancing act to Ferrazzi's own accounts, the latter of which constitute a substantial source of information upon which the arguments of the thesis are built. To a certain degree, to delve into the everyday life of a figure by drawing heavily from her self-consciously produced set of answers and life-story poses significant limits. To what extent can we seriously take at face value what Ferrazzi revealed about her experiences of material objects, experiences which, in narrative form, were acts of creation that called upon distant memory? On what ground can this constitute reliable data from which to construct a credible story about the sensorial life and governance of an early modern Venetian woman? At one level, the thesis does take her words at face value, for it is many of her rich recollections and descriptions that valuably capture embodied encounters with and uses of material objects. On another, her words require consistent critical assessment, and placement within a context, which is productively illuminated upon by the contesting voices of witnesses.



[118] "Ho veduto la Sra. Cecilia ingenocchiarsi avanti noi altre, e questo faceva quando erimo confessate, dicendo che per li suoi peccati noi eravamo cattive" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, March 17, 1665).

*Conclusion*

This chapter has provided context on threads that crucially shaped Ferrazzi's lived experience, and which will inform an embodied and material culture-focused reading of her quotidian life. Beyond providing background details, the general stakes of the trial, and the material and sensory worlds in which Ferrazzi was enmeshed, the chapter has pointed to broader historical trends that partly conditioned these. The fears and possibilities that matter and sensing produced in early modern Europe meant that goods could both pose problematic gratifications of the body and represent socially valued aids to piety.

Deliberation about these issues were crucially shaped by reforming-era conversations about sensory conduct, in which sensorial control and discernment took center stage. I have argued that these anxieties–about sensorial delusion, the appropriate command of the senses, and its associated processes of discernment–were critical frames with which Ferrazzi's everyday life and devotion, mediated through materiality, was judged by superiors. The chapter has also brought attention to the tension of cacophonous voices in the trial to consider the question of whose perceptions to believe. The trial captures diverging realities, which the following chapter on Ferrazzi's ecstatic experiences and encounters with crucifixes particularly elucidates. What she saw, sometimes with her inner eye, was not always what others saw, and her capacity for sensorial governance was often cast into doubt.

## Chapter Two: Visions of the Cross: Ferrazzi's Corporeal Insights

It was about 1657, a few years shy of a decade before the trial, and Cecilia Ferrazzi, afflicted by a "very hot fire burning within," had been suffering from cruel bodily pain for forty days.[1] Convinced that Ferrazzi was to die, her confessor and two other priests arrived at her home in what they thought was her very last hour.[2] However, she was met by the Virgin, who, as Ferrazzi recalled in her inquisitorial autobiography, said, "'Get out of this bed and go to the Sovereign Physician,' showing me a large crucifix on the wall across from my bed."[3] Ferrazzi "jumped out of bed" to meet the crucified Christ on the cross in her room, and "put my mouth on His side, from which I sucked a water so precious that it spread throughout my body, cooling everything, and I was entirely free of illness."[4] Ferrazzi's abrupt restoration of health stunned, according to her, the "physicians and priests who saw me attached to the crucifix."[5]

In this episode, evocative of sixteenth-century images of St Catherine of Siena sucking Christ's side,[6] it was Ferrazzi's bodily contact with sacred materiality that brought her to healing. When Ferrazzi, in other words, touched the layered matter before her–Christ's own body, but also crucially the crucifix (to which others saw her physically attached)–she appeared to experience a somatic transformation. Rather than representing an isolated multisensorial encounter with a crucifix, this scene is one among many analogous

[1] Ferrazzi also said to have felt "all the bones in my midsection breaking" (Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. and trans. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 57-58; Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208.

[2] Ferrazzi's confessor (as well as that of the young women she cared for) at the time–when she was running the Cannaregio house–was Giovanni Andreis (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166). The other visiting priest was Antonio Grandi, who had previously been Ferrazzi's confessor in the early 1650s (see note 54). The final priest was Giovanni Conti, the chief priest of San Geremia (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 57).

[3] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 57.

[4] Ferrazzi clarified that it took three additional days to heal completely, for it was the Lord's will, as she understood from an internal voice, to suffer a little longer (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 58).

[5] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 58.

[6] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 206, 211.

ones in Ferrazzi's life accounts recorded in the trial.[7] What consequences did it pose in daily life for Ferrazzi's sensoriality to be activated consistently by crosses? What did her embodied encounters with the crucifix in these recorded episodes allow her to *do*?

This chapter aims to answer these questions by doing a close reading of a selection of Ferrazzi's encounters with the crucifix. I consider Ferrazzi's sensorial experience–the focus here being on sight and touch–of crosses, specifically in or after altered bodily states like visions and ecstasies. This emphasis on the body's contact with holy matter is situated within a growing area of scholarship similarly taking up these intersections.[8] Though some of this literature has creatively made room for senses like smell and sound,[9] the chapter mostly dwells, as noted, on the sensory registrations of the visual and the haptic,[10] which is the domain most directly articulated in the documents. I formulate this inquiry, as discussed in the thesis introduction, in terms of Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with her material world, referring to the ways in which her corporeality shaped the meaning and use of specific objects for her.

[7] I use the language of "encounters" with the material culture of the crucifix as Katherine L. Jansen has done in her study of late medieval Italian individuals' interactions with miraculous crucifixes as well as Geraldine A. Johnson in her study of a crucifix made by Donatello for a Florentine church. The term as it is used in this chapter highlights not only the animated, relational manner in which early modern people interacted with holy matter, but also how the latter itself could become animate or "living" and thus itself encounter the observer (Katherine L. Jansen, "Miraculous Crucifixes in Late Medieval Italy," in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church*, ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Boydell Press, 2005), 210; Geraldine A. Johnson, "Embodying Devotion: Multisensory Encounters with Donatello's *Crucifix* in S. Croce," *Renaissance Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2020): 1180, 1189, 1205, 1215, https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2020.217;).

[8] Johnson, "Embodying Devotion," 1179–1234; Kaja Merete Haug Hagen, "Crux Christi Sit Mecum: Devotion to the Apotropaic Cross," in *Domestic Devotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Salvador Ryan (MDPI - Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2020), 240; Claire Walker, "'Hangd for the True Faith': Embodied Devotion in Early Modern English Carmelite Cloisters," *Journal of Religious History* 44, no. 4 (December 2020): 494-512, 10.1111/1467-9809.12701.

[9] Johnson, "Embodying Devotion," 1179-1180, 1217-1218.

[10] These were often interconnected sensorialities, as Roodenburg has highlighted in the context of sensing, for instance, Christ's suffering: "...visuality was also highly haptic, grafted onto the believers' tactile empathy with all the bloody and cruel acts of violence done to Christ's innocent body" (Herman Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory Worlds of the Renaissance," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 9).

In this chapter, I argue that Ferrazzi's contact with crucifixes often generated concern among ecclesiastical authorities because these embodied encounters were beyond the latter's immediate control–an argument the chapter explicates in two distinct ways. Firstly, it posits–through close readings of two episodes–that when Ferrazzi encountered a cross in a state of ecstasy, her sensorial contact with the crucifix in this state constituted a threat because it gave Ferrazzi access to what I call embodied knowledge.[11] Borrowing the term "embodied knowledge" from Pamela H. Smith, who uses it differently and in a distinct context,[12] I employ it to similarly denote how the body could be a source of knowing and understanding (a formulation that corresponds with how many early modern thinkers conceived of the process of sensing, namely, as "*knowing* through the body").[13] More specifically, in these altered states, Ferrazzi appeared to gain divine insight through her corporeality–through sight and touch of the crucifix–to learn what God was telling her.[14] Some of her confessors questioned this spiritual knowledge by casting into doubt Ferrazzi's ability for sound sensory judgment. While the chapter does not go as far as characterizing her ecstasies as being among the kind of "visions that empowered women,"[15] given the

[11] In this sense, rather than stressing somatic transformation or healing, as in the opening episode, I would like to specifically bring attention in this chapter to Ferrazzi's access to spiritual insights through contact with the cross.

[12] Smith has used this term in her study of the bodily experience and expertise of early modern craftsmen. Inquiring on the "boom in technical writing" of the early modern period, in which many craftspeople recorded their processes of "making," Smith argues that studying their texts to understand how past objects were made requires serious consideration of artisans' intimate bodily connection to the craft, and the bodily learning they had developed (Pamela H. Smith, "Making things: Techniques and books in early modern Europe," in *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories*, 1500-1800 (2nd ed.), ed. Paula Findlen (Routledge, 2021), 173, 177-178, 184, 191-192).

[13] Roodenburg, "Introduction," 6.

[14] Tactile encounters, as Johnson has convincingly shown, could constitute an important dimension of devotion before the cross. Her observation that devotees' "sensory memories [of past encounters with the cross] could thus have served as prompts for future internalized forms of meditation" is suggestive of the kind of embodied understanding that the body could keep, specifically in relation to prayer. Sight in contexts of devotion–or "devotion's mental visualization"–has received particular scholarly attention as Roodenburg has pointed to, quoting Jeffrey Hamburger, who has highlighted how vision was a source of knowledge, writing that this faculty "complement[ed] contemplation as an accepted avenue of insight and access to the divine" (Roodenburg, "Introduction," 8; Johnson, "Embodying Devotion," 1217).

[15] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Zone Books, 2011), 121.

highly active role her confessors had in subsequently disciplining them, it nonetheless demonstrates that Ferrazzi gained spiritual-somatic insight that was unsettling to many of them.

The second vein, which also explores how Ferrazzi's encounters with the cross could generate ecclesiastical concern, the focus is on a conscious rather than ecstatic Ferrazzi. In this context, her corporeal contact with a crucifix could give way, I suggest, to a form of embodied defiance against the orders of a confessor. This exploration is a nod in the direction of the rest of the thesis, which demonstrates Ferrazzi's conscious engagement with objects as a means to *act*, or accomplish something. This second section is less substantial than the first, given its reliance on a single close reading. Shedding light on the overall proposition of the thesis (see introduction and chapter one), this chapter responds to the kind of open query Wietse de Boer has posited, inviting scholars to think about the extent to which reactions against "visions and other spiritual experiences…[can] be understood as a way to control sensory experiences" in the Counter Reformation.[16] Considering Ferrazzi's bodily contact with holy matter in altered states paired with the reactions of her confessors thus make for a productive exploration of the legacies of Reformation and Counter Reformation worries about sensorial self-control.[17]

The chapter proceeds with a reflection on the kind of objects primarily showcased here, namely "immaterial" materiality, and argues for their place within the category of material culture. The following section contextualizes Ferrazzi's ecstatic behavior according to what witnesses relayed in the trial record as well as how a number of her confessors



[16] De Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses," 255.
[17] Matthew Milner, "The Senses in Religion: Towards the Reformation of the Senses," in *The Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 87, 91-92; Matthew Milner, "To Captivate the Senses: Sensory Governance, Heresy, and Idolatry in Mid-Tudor England," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (BRILL, 2012), 307; Wietse de Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses, in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 244, 252.

responded to it. The final section delves into the two-part argument by introducing close readings of select vignettes.

Before turning to methodological considerations about "immaterial" materiality, a word is in order about the significance of the cross itself as a point of entry into Ferrazzi's material cosmos.[18] To a certain degree, it is perhaps self-evident within a study focused on material culture to consider the role of the cross in the life of an "aspiring saint," as Anne Jacobson Schutte has described Ferrazzi. This object may often be taken for granted as a symbol of Christian devotion and identity–though this assumption, of course, is certainly not true for scholars who have considered the religious and cultural specificity of early modern Venetian rites featuring the cross.[19]

The crucifix constitutes a rich case study not simply because it proliferated in Ferrazzi's early modern Venice,[20] but also, and most importantly here, because it opens a window onto the corporeal dimension of early modern encounters with matter. Individuals' use and devotion through the cross was animated by a long corporeally-concerned tradition.

[18] As mentioned in the previous chapter and the thesis introduction, I borrow the concept of "cosmos" from Suzanna Ivanič.

[19] Meryl Bailey, for instance, has shed light on the role of the crucifix in "Venetian execution ritual," which contributed to the strengthening of its Christian community ties (Meryl Bailey, "Carrying the Cross in Early Modern Venice," in *Space, Place, and Motion: Locating Confraternities in the Late Medieval and Early Modern City*, ed. Diana Bullen Presciutti (Brill, 2017), 247, 258, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004339521_012.); Iain Fenlon, writing on the Piazza San Marco as a stage filled with sensorially stimulating "theatre," has pointed to the collective devotion generated by processions that took place there, many of which were led by an ecclesiastical figure lifting a cross (Iain Fenlon, "Piazza San Marco: Theatre of the Senses, Market Place of the World," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed.Wietse De Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2012), 359); One particularly beloved cross, or rather a relic of it, that has received scholarly attention was that of the True Cross, valued in Venice for its role in numerous miracles, and held by one of the city's most important confraternities, the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista (Kiril Petkov, "Relics and Society in Late Medieval and Renaissance Venice," *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes. Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies*, no. 19 (June 30, 2010): 267–82, https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.12013; Kiril Petkov, *The Anxieties of a Citizen Class: The Miracles of the True Cross of San Giovanni Evangelista, Venice 1370-1480* (Brill, 2014); One connection to Ferrazzi, as footnoted in chapter one, is that her second refuge bordered this confraternity).

[20] The majority-Catholic city was far from being monolithic as other ethnic groups and faith traditions flourished: among the largest minority groups in Venice were Greek, German, and Jewish communities, and there was a significant presence of Ottoman Turks (Benjamin Ravid, "Venice and its Minorities," in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 456, 459, 466; Alexandra Bamji, "The Materiality of Death in Early Modern Venice," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed. Suzanna Ivanič, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 120.

Writing on the crucifix in late medieval Italy, Katherine L. Jansen has characterized this object as "perforce one of the most if not *the* most important devotional aids" in Catholic devotion since the latter was a "body-focused piety" (i.e., it paid particular attention to the crucified Christ and "corporeal images").[21] The cross is thus a suggestive starting point.

*2.1. Theorizing the "Immaterial" Material: What was Real?*

Many of the crucifixes Ferrazzi encountered were, like any cross placed in a sanctuary, tangibly present before her. A number of the crucifixes in Ferrazzi's material cosmos, however, seemed also to occupy a liminal space between "real," "actual, physical tangible artifacts," in Jansen's terms,[22] and that which the inner eye could see. The crucifix in the opening scene indeed reflected this ambiguity: on the one hand it was "shown" to Ferrazzi by the Virgin, perhaps suggesting the latter made it appear, and yet others in the room also saw it. In other cases, only Ferrazzi could confirm the existence of a crucifix she had seen in a vision or ecstasy. In short, the cross could be materially ambiguous as it belonged to religious materiality, or what Caroline Walker Bynum has called "stuff that is simultaneously stuff and not stuff."[23]

This sometimes immaterial materiality seen by the inner eye was nonetheless often experienced as tangible and, for this reason, also constituted something real in early modern material worlds.[24] The "real" quality of a crucifix, in other words, ought to not be solely reserved for the tangible artifacts Jansen has pointed to. Rather, it is also a descriptor for crosses envisioned, seen by, or appeared to someone in an altered bodily state. I thus



[21] Jansen, "Miraculous Crucifixes," 226-227.
[22] Jansen, "Miraculous Crucifixes," 206, 226.
[23] Caroline Walker Bynum, "Epilogue," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed. Ivanič, Laven, Morrall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 254.
[24] Employing the same language of "immaterial" and writing on the material cultures of the Counter Reformation, Silvia Evangelisti has argued that objects "received attention – in written and visual forms – whether they were material, immaterial or just imagined," which suggests these kinds of materiality operated on analogous planes (Silvia Evangelisti, "Material culture," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 400).

incorporate this kind of matter into the category of material culture, since it was real in Ferrazzi's eyes–literally through her sight, but also bodily contact.

To embrace this capacious definition of material culture is productive for a study situated in an early modern context because Catholic devotion made space for taking in one's world, or sensing, in a plurality of ways (see chapter one). Religious life, as Matthew Milner has cogently formulated, "drew heavily on the fluidity between external and internal sensing where imagination collated sensory experiences and spiritual themes."[25] Given the expansive perception of reality that such a sensory culture could give way to, what Ferrazzi claimed to see and feel can thus be considered to be believably part of her experience. What she sensed, envisioned, and imagined, moreover, defined an actual space in which she acted and related with others. In this sense, following Jansen's approach to reported crucifix miracles, in which she "accept[s] miracles as such because medieval audiences accepted them as such," this chapter similarly "suspends judgment on the historicity" of Ferrazzi's accounts and experiences of matter.[26]

To take Ferrazzi's reality seriously, as she experienced it, does not mean to disavow a critical interpretation of her narrative acts. Jacobson Schutte has compellingly shown that Ferrazzi sought to self-fashion herself in a saintly light in her daily life (see thesis introduction), an image many witnesses testifying in the trial saw through, that is, doubted.[27] Rather than taking Ferrazzi's words fully at face value, as discussed in chapter one, a critical reading accommodates the type of self-construction driving her accounts. Perhaps what best integrates conflicting visions (i.e., Ferrazzi's reality and what community members saw), is to return once again to the question of what was real: what was real for Ferrazzi was not

[25] Milner,"The Senses in Religion," 100.
[26] Jansen, "Miraculous Crucifixes," 207.
[27] Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 111.

always so for others. The following section explores how Ferrazzi's states of ecstasy were received by her community, including the view from some of her superiors that she was sensorially deluded.

*2.2. Setting the Stage: "She would go into ecstasy"*[28]

Ferrazzi seems to have had the habit of falling into ecstasies. She recounted numerous instances of entering this state, as did testifying witnesses–with the descriptive language ranging from *ecstasy* and *trance* to *rapture* and *vision*.[29] For the purposes of this chapter, I generally equate these altered states, not only because they functioned similarly (e.g., bringing Ferrazzi "outside" of her body), but also because she sometimes used the terms interchangeably in the course of narrating one incident.[30] Most importantly, her bodily behavior was at the heart of these narrative retellings. Ferrazzi described trances (or being "fuori di me stessa"), for instance, as "not knowing where I was with my body, which occurred frequently, both in church and at home," and discussed visions as experiences that often flourished in the context of acute bodily pain.[31]

It was also not only the centrality of somatic experience that made these altered states similar, but also the fact that during them, according to Ferrazzi, she often

[28] "...andava in estasi" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 14v (second folder)).
[29] These terms are generally translated, respectively, from "estasi," a state of being "fuori di me stessa," "ratto," and "visione" (see the following note for more detail).
[30] For an incident in which *ecstasy* and *trance* were used interchangeably see, in Italian, Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata: 1609-1664*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Bergamo: Pierluigi Lubrina, 1990), 67; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53. In this episode, Ferrazzi talked about being "fuori di me stessa" (meaning literally "outside myself," Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 44), *and* to having been in "estasi," the latter of which her confessor used, too. This scene forms the last example layed out in the latter part of the chapter. Other instances in which Ferrazzi referred to trances or being "fuori di me stessa" include: Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 71, in English, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 56; Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 94, in English, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 70; Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 54-55, in English, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 45-46. A similar phrasing, "venuta in me stessa," in one case denoted coming out of a rapture ( Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 95, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 71), though *rapture* has also been translated from Ferrazzi's use of "ratto" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 94, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 70). In what has been translated to *vision*, Ferrazzi used "visione" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 49; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 41). A number of scenes also imply the experience of a vision through the use of *appearance*, translated as "appariva" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 46; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 40), or "comparso" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 73; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 57)
[31] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 45.

encountered holy matter. Though these experiences seemed to often take Ferrazzi "beyond" the body, then, they paradoxically centered it and its facultative capacities like sight and touch. In fact, it was upon aural sensing, that of hearing devotional books read aloud to her, according to witnesses, that often first activated Ferrazzi's sensoriality and summoned her into ecstasy. While she probably could not read, Ferrazzi, like many others of middling or humble status in Venice, was enveloped in a textual culture that granted her a version of literacy: a capacity for textual consumption within a communal context.[32]

Witnesses highlighted the viscerality of Ferrazzi's altered states upon this orally-based textual consumption, often recounting that Ferrazzi quite literally fell into ecstasy: her body often fell onto the ground. "It was said that she went into ecstasy, but I didn't believe it," claimed one skeptical witness named Lucietta Brighenti, who nevertheless recounted two times in which Ferrazzi "fell on the ground as though dead."[33] She had apparently fallen–staying on the *terra* for about twenty five minutes–upon hearing the lives of saints (*vite*) read aloud by some young women (*putte pericolanti*) she housed.[34] The inquisitor pressed the witness for specific details, wanting to know what Ferrazzi said after getting herself up from the ground, and in what way she had fallen.[35] "She let herself fall on the side, without help," clarified Lucietta, who, though not having heard Ferrazzi say anything in particular, saw her continue to listen to the *vite* from that position as well as while

[32] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 11; Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *Everyday Renaissances: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 30-31; In their *Sacred Home*, Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven discuss reading practices that contextualize Ferrazzi's kind of textual consumption: their chapter on reading in the home (which touches on communal reading), and a chapter dedicated to devotional printed texts, account for the multiplicity of ways early modern women across the social sector read. Particularly valuable is the scholars' recognition of literacy as a polysemic category: echoing Paul Saenger, the authors distinguish "comprehension literacy" from "phonetic literacy," the latter of which involved a degree of familiarity with text but often was tied to memory. In reconstituting the ways unlettered people engaged with texts, this literature develops not only a more inclusive, but also more accurate, view of early modern reading in Italy that encompasses Ferrazzi's practices (Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018), 158).

[33] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 1664, 16r-16v (second folder).

[34] This was a phrase of the time, used to denote "girls in danger." Ferrazzi ran four subsequent houses as a protector of these young women (see chapter one) (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 9, 31); VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 1664, 16r-16v (second folder).

[35] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 1664, 16v (second folder).

"walking around."[36] Other witnesses similarly echoed stories of Ferrazzi body tumbling: "once I saw in the times of Carnival that… Ms. Cecilia, hearing the St Cecilia Hymn,[37] went into ecstasy, falling to the ground, for a fourth of an hour, and they said that's what saints do."[38] This same person, like Lucietta, shared accounts linking Ferrazzi's ecstasies to hearing texts about holy figures read to her,[39] a theme repeated yet again by one Francesco Querini who testified that while reading to Ferrazzi from Pietro Aretino's *Umanità di Cristo*,[40] she went into ecstasy.[41]

These accounts, though rather consistent in similarly attributing Ferrazzi's ecstatic falling to exposure to devotional material, are to be taken with critical distance–with the recognition that Ferrazzi, as previously mentioned, was invested in fashioning a holy persona for herself.[42] That Ferrazzi was moved to rapture, for instance, by hearing a hymn dedicated to her namesake (one which Ferrazzi had the young women regularly sing, particularly in the presence of guests)[43] is suggestive of the performative work Ferrazzi did to align herself with sanctified figures. Some of Ferrazzi's superiors indeed seemed to adopt

[36] The witness' phrasing leaves room for interpretation, but gives the impression that Ferrazzi both continued to listen from the ground as well as at some point listened to the *vite* while walking around: "...mà levatasi da sua posta, passeggiava, continuandosi à leggere intermettendosi la lettura nel mentre stava in terra" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 1664, 16v (second folder)).

[37] This hymn is probably a reference to the song the *putte* sang for Ferrazzi, including lines like "...Cecilia Verginella generosa" (for the full lyrics, see VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 22v); The hymn is also noted by another witness: VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 14v (second folder).

[38] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 14v (second folder).

[39] Some *putte* told this witness that Ferrazzi had fallen into ecstasies upon hearing the life of Saint Teresa, and another time when reciting "certain hymns of the breviary," and that some of the *putte* themselves also fell into ecstasy upon listening to Saint Getrude's life read aloud. The witness also mentioned other ecstasies–lasting twenty-five or thirty minutes, or up to an hour–which allegedly occurred after Ferrazzi prayed, and still another instance that allegedly lasted two hours (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 14v-15r (second folder); Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 295). The testimony of another witness similarly repeated gossip from others: allegedly one morning Ferrazzi had gone into ecstasy while at mass and had spread out on the ground, and that a priest had asked her to light the two candles at the altar (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 3, 1664, 36v-37r).

[40] Eleonora Carinci has studied the considerable circulation of texts by this well-known author in early modern Italy, including to shed light on the *Umanità di Cristo*'s "reception and use by women" (Eleonora Carinci, "The Imitation of Pietro Aretino's Vita Di Maria Vergine and Umanità Di Cristo in Italy after the Council of Trent," in *A Companion to Pietro Aretino*, ed. Marco Faini and Paola Ugolini (Brill, 2021), 409–32.

[41] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 116.

[42] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 226.

[43] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 191.

the view that ecstatic states were, to a certain degree, a choice: a state one could cultivate. One of her confessors, the Carmelite friar Bonaventura Pinzoni,[44] for example, "always spoke harshly and reprimanded me, especially when I lost consciousness or went into a trance, commanding that I make a great effort not to do so."[45] This language implied that trances involved a degree of agency, in which one's willingness to enter into such a state could serve as an aid to do so.

It was Ferrazzi's potential for making such a choice, and more specifically the possibility of intentional artifice, that generated suspicions for other superiors like Giorgio Polacco: her arch-antagonist, as Jacobson Schutte describes him, and a high-ranking priest who dedicated his life's work to providing guidance to and confessing both nuns and laywomen.[46] Polacco believed that Ferrazzi's ecstasies emerged from her sensorial delusion by, and teamwork with, the devil. Though generally distrustful of women and particularly wary of so-called ecstatic women (believing them to have a propensity to sin and to collaborate with the devil to falsely declare sanctity),[47] Polacco saw Ferrazzi as a particular source of transgression.

After having Ferrazzi examined, he and a number of male colleagues arrived at the conclusion that Ferrazzi was deceived by satan.[48] Polacco wrote a number of treatises in vernacular meant to serve as guides for priests dealing with ecstatic women, which included

[44] Pinzoni had spiritually guided Ferrazzi in the 1640s and 50s, and had also been her first supporter of the first refuge in San Lorenzo for "girls in danger" (Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 113).
[45] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 45-46; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125.
[46] Polacco held important positions throughout his career: "...in 1607 the nuns of Santa Lucia elected him confessor and secured his appointment as curate of the surrounding parish, a position he held for thirty-six years," and by 1631 he became the vicar of the nuns of the diocese. Polacco, like Pinzoni, served as Ferrazzi's confessor around the 1640s and 50s (Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 113; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 123). Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 46; As footnoted in chapter one, Jacobson Schutte has written substantially on the conflictive interchanges between Polacco and Ferrazzi.
[47] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 121-122, 124-126. Polacco wrote in one published vernacular text, his *Pratiche*–one of many on supposedly possessed women–that a "majority of them are not mere passive objects of the devil's attention but cunning subjects who actively and willingly collaborate with the Evil One. Seeking fame and fortune, they fabricate encounters with divine powers and persuade naive confessors and spiritual directors to endorse and publicize their feigned holiness" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 122, 126).
[48] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126.

stories about individuals, including Ferrazzi, whom Venetian readers would have recognized.[49] "Not long ago there was a woman," he wrote in relation to Ferrazzi, "known to almost everyone, who in the area of raptures, visions, and revelations appeared to be competing with Catherine of Alexandria, Catherine of Siena, and other ecstatic and illuminated female saints."[50] Though ironic, Polacco's tone nonetheless signaled deep-seated fears representative of the larger cultural moment about the potential misuse of the senses: not only that Ferrazzi's own senses were susceptible to satanic deceit, but also that she might be deceiving the senses of others through her ecstatic comportment. A critical glimpse into the disciplinary logic Ferrazzi would face as a result of this verdict was Polacco's arrangement (upon the orders of his own superior) to spatially confine her body, closing off her corporeality from the world, which was part of an earlier brush-up Ferrazzi had with the Inquisition, noted in the last chapter.[51] As she recounted, Ferrazzi was forcibly housed in the convent of Santa Maria Maggiore for a period of time in 1637, though she was eventually released.[52] The ecclesiastical response to her ecstatic behavior signified, in short, a concern about the limits of control over and ability to govern Ferrazzi's sensuality.

This section has shown that Ferrazzi's corporeality, whether through its falling, its potential for sensorial corruptibility, or its supposed need to be spatially confined, shaped how her community made sense of her ecstasies. The very etymology of *ecstasy* implies a

[49] One of these texts referenced Ferrazzi–as quoted above–was entitled *Antidote against the poisonous illusions of the infernal enemy in matters of ecstasy, raptures, and revelations* (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125, 129-130.

[50] Quoted in Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125, 129-130.

[51] In this sense, Polacco and his superiors, the Cardinal Patriarch Corner, put into practice a commonly expressed and culturally embedded spatial norm in Venice that women ought to be hidden from sight, evoked by the idea of *ritiratezza*, denoting the expected and proper behavior of retiring to, or moving into, the background (Alexander Cowan, "Seeing Is Believing: Urban Gossip and the Balcony in Early Modern Venice," *Gender & History* 23, no. 3 (2011): 727, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2011.01651.x); Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125-126.

[52] Polacco eventually went to the grate, crying, to supposedly apologize, but, upon giving her communion, said "[c]ome on, go into ecstasy because you're possessed!" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 27; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 128). While Ferrazzi was staying in the convent, in a surreal addition, yet another priest appeared and similarly accused Ferrazzi of being possessed, saying, according to Ferrazzi, "that I was playing the holy woman to fool the world and waste poor clerics' time with ecstasies and apparitions" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 62-63).

body breaking out of inaction: when broken down in greek, ecstasy (ἔκστασις) –"ek" (out of) and "stasis" (stillness)–can be read as the literal going out of a state of stillness. Ferrazzi's visceral lack of stillness potentially symbolized a form of bodily autonomy that challenged the disciplinary measures of her superiors. We now turn to the first part of the argument regarding how Ferrazzi's encounters with crucifixes could be a gateway to threatening embodied knowledge.

*2.3. Envisioning the Cross: A State Beyond Control*

Upon considering Ferrazzi's own narration of ecstatic experiences, we find that, not unlike others' observations, her corporeality was also at the center of how she experienced and made sense of these states. Ferrazzi appeared to experience trances not just in domestic spaces, but also in the context of her urban mobility.[53] In her autobiography, Ferrazzi described an ecstatic experience that began on her way to visit her confessor, Antonio Grandi, the *pievano* (chief priest) of San Giovanni di Rialto, her favored church, or the one she appeared to visit with the most frequency for a period.[54] As she was stepping out of a gondola, she recalled, "I met a large crucifix coming toward me,"[55] which was followed by a series of other visions and aural sensing:

> Entering the church… I heard an internal voice that told me, "Cecilia, that cross you just encountered, which then disappeared, is going to become much larger." And I was shown another one full of precious gems and still another big one full of spines and stumps, and I was asked, "Which of these two do you want?"... I said, "Lord, in this life, give me not the one with gems but the one with spines." The one with spines was presented to me internally and I embraced it, feeling the most ardent desire for suffering. I came out of the trance with great rejoicing and happiness and

[53] Ferrazzi's encounters with the divine cropped up in all the spheres in which she circulated, confirming the notion that "[t]he 'spatial turn'...has clarified how Catholics and Protestants both urban and rural negotiated their spirituality through spaces in churches, churchyards, towns and countryside" (Nicholas Terpstra, "Lay Spirituality," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 267).

[54] San Giovanni (Elemosinario) di Rialto was located south of the Rialto market and bridge, at a considerable distance from where Ferrazzi lived in those years, namely, the first two houses she ran. For more on her refuges, see chapter one (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 86; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 113). Grandi, its *pievano*, became Ferrazzi's confessor in the early 1650s (Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 113; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 79, 90).

[55] "Mentre smontai una volta di gondola per andarmene dal signor piovano di S. Giovanni di Rialto, mio confessore, m'incontrai in una croca grande, quale mi veniva addosso" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 89).

> revealed everything to my confessor, who yelled at me, saying that these were all temptations.[56]

What stands out in this scene is Ferrazzi's sensorial curiosity or attentiveness: her attention to the visual and physical properties of the myriad crosses, and their corporeal effect on her. This manner of connecting to the divine, through the "sensory mediation of holy matter," was deeply embedded in an earlier heritage of faith practices characteristic of late medieval devotion.[57] Ferrazzi reflected this form of mediation by noting the qualities of the three distinct crucifixes: a large one that went towards her, as though mobile, in the outdoors; a second one, "full of precious gems," that appeared to her in the church and was larger in size (according the "internal voice"); and thirdly, a large crucifix covered in "spines and stumps." This was a visually and aurally stimulating trance, in short, that involved an awareness of her inner body, which "embraced" the third cross, "presented to me internally,"[58] and which, in turn, led Ferrazzi to desire physical suffering.

In stressing the choice to endure bodily suffering through the crucifix of spines over the enjoyment of an implicitly sensorially gratifying gem-encrusted crucifix,[59] Ferrazzi sought to stress her aversion of worldly goods (a stance that witness testimony would challenge, as discussed in chapter three), and to point to the paradoxical pleasure of this sacrifice by stressing her "great rejoicing and happiness" after the trance. Her inclination towards suffering, and the fact that Ferrazzi drew attention to the "somatic quality of

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[56] "Et entrata in//chiesa… ho sentito una voce interna che mi disse: 'Cecilia, quella croce che tu hai incontrata et ti è sparita in quest'hora a dietro ti doverà esser più maggiore.' Et me ne fu mostrata un'altra piena di gemme preciose et un'altra grande piena di spini e tronchi, e mi fu detto: 'Qual vuoi di queste due?'...Et dissi 'Signore, in questo mondo non mi date quella di gemme, ma quella di spine.' Mi fu presentata internamente quella di spine et io l'ho abbracciata et son restata con un desiderio ardentissimo di patire. Ritornai in me stessa con giubilo et allegrezza grande et palesai il tutto al mio confessore, qual mi gridò, dicendomi che erano tutte tentationi (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 89; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 66).

[57] Haug Hagen, "Crux Christi Sit Mecum," 245.

[58] Premodern individuals often included "a kind of 'inner touch'" as part of the array of sensorial experiences of perceptions (Roodenburg, "Introduction," 5).

[59] Ferrazzi would have been familiar or at least seen crucifixes and other objects made of precious materials, as Venice a strong gem trade (Blake De Maria, "Multifaceted Endeavors: Jewelry and Gemstones in Renaissance Venice," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, ed. Blake De Maria and Mary E. Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2013), 119).

visionary experience" similarly fit into models of female religiosity stretching back to medieval mystical traditions in which women mystics tended to experience their religiosity in a manifestly bodily way.[60] By drawing on such tropes in her narrative retelling, Ferrazzi was once again contributing to the discursive self-fashioning of a holy body.[61]

Much like the ecstatic mystics Ferrazzi was potentially inspired by, Ferrazzi's sensorial experience of and openness to suffering supplied her with spiritual insight. In this case, her vision and the internal voice she heard helped her to discern that the best course of action "in this life" was to embrace the spiny cross. The faculty of hearing was, in fact, a central medium of knowledge in early modern Catholicism, since hearing more generally, as Simone Laqua-O'Donnell has argued, "was seen as an essential prerequisite of faith and salvation because it permitted access to religious instruction and divine truth."[62] St Catherine of Siena's *Life*, which Ferrazzi was likely familiar with,[63] strikingly evokes the kind of embodied knowledge Ferrazzi gained upon encountering the crosses: the hagiographer recorded that when St Catherine experienced visions, they "came into her imagination but…sometimes she could also perceive them with her physical senses, so that she actually heard our Lord's voice," and that "He would deign to appear to her and reveal things useful to her soul."[64] In the same way, Ferrazzi autonomously interpreted images and sensations of holy matter with the help of the divine's voice, all of which were forms of



[60] Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 194, 198.
[61] See Jacobson Schutte's discussion of Ferrazzi and other early modern Italian women and their work of fashioning holy bodies for themselves in Anne Jacobson Schutte, "*Per Speculum in Enigmate*: Failed Saints, Artists, and Self-Construction of the Female Body in Early Modern Italy," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. Ann E. Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).
[62] Simone Laqua-O'Donnell, "Catholic Piety and Community," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 294.
[63] Ferrazzi was certainly familiar with that of Saint Teresa's (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 12; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109), as well as with Saint Catherine of Alexandria (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166-167).
[64] Jansen, "Miraculous Crucifixes," 222, 223.

bodily understanding–of similarly receiving "things useful to her soul"–that had not been directly mediated by her superior.

It was Ferrazzi's ability to gain and then interpret what she encountered in this ecstasy that seemed to represent, for her superior, a problematic attitude of self-trust towards what she sensed. Despite Ferrazzi's rejection of the flashy cross, Grandi was convinced that what she had seen and felt signified temptations. In the *pievano*'s eyes, she may have appeared too inclined to take an agentive approach to her sensing: too confident in the embodied knowledge she seemed to have received. Sensing, Milner argues, posed "immense risks" precisely because it could ascribe "so much agency to things believers sensed."[65] Grandi may have believed that Ferrazzi lacked the ability to properly govern her senses if she was so readily inclined to engage in a self-assured interpretation about what she had felt and seen, instead of doubting it.

In this sense, Ferrazzi may have been crossing, for Grandi, the "invisible line" Moshe Sluhovsky has suggested shaped early modern women's "practices of discernment," which "were restricted by women's self-doubts, by their discretion, and by their careful avoidance of crossing an invisible line and stepping into the domain of male clerics."[66] Moreover, if, within the charged inheritance of the Reformations, "what kept the believer on the right path" as Milner has put it, was "[d]iscerning when to surrender the senses to godly experiences and how to avoid or shun sinful worldliness,"[67] then Ferrazzi's confessor, by reprimanding her, may have seen himself as participating in this discernment process,[68] which included rejecting her lack of a proper, cautious form of discernment.



[65] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 94.
[66] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 209.
[67] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 92.
[68] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 94; Simone Laqua-O'Donnell points to the kind of awareness of the senses that Grandi seemed to both notice and take seriously: "early modern Catholic authorities themselves understood the important role of the senses and the emotions in shaping religious experience and consequently took them very seriously indeed" (Laqua-O'Donnell, "Catholic Piety and Community," 315).

Guiding her in the path away from what Grandi perceived as delusion may have also been a form of protecting *himself* and his own ability for sensory control. This element of self-protection in Grandi was notable elsewhere in the inquisitorial autobiography: "when I called him [Grandi] for assistance or to commend my soul to him, he would come and speak to me brusquely, saying that the Devil was tempting me in order to tempt him, too."[69] Disciplining Ferrazzi to keep temptation at bay seemed important for Grandi not only to protect her, but also crucially him, from the devil's influence.

In an abrupt change of course, Grandi later conceded that the crucifixes Ferrazzi had seen were sent from God, suggesting that he had the flexibility to admit that Ferrazzi potentially possessed a degree of sensorial and spiritual acuity. The following morning, that is, he "made me go into the confessional and told me that I should not be ungrateful for the special favors done to me by His Divine Majesty, but that I should be faithful to the cross He had given me and to the promise I had made Him."[70] This new position suggests that the work of rooting out sensory deceit in ecclesiastical spheres was not always a rigid, dichotomous process that pitted confessor, for instance, against layperson, but rather potentially involved a collaborative negotiation. Writing on practices of sensory discipline within Counter Reformation Italy, De Boer has suggested that "it would be a mistake to detect moral concerns and disciplinary interventions only in the sphere of the repressive."[71] Grandi, albeit a rather difficult and unpredictable figure,[72] was, at least in this case, open to deliberation, and was thus among the many ecclesiastical figures who were attempting to respond to the pressing question of what constituted a suitable use of the senses and body.

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[69] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 51.
[70] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 66-67.
[71] De Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses," 244, 253.
[72] Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 113; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 51.

Continuing with the theme of embodied knowledge through Ferrazzi's encounters with the crucifix, we turn to another episode recounted by her in an interrogation. Compared to the last instance, this one involved an even more visceral interrelation between Ferrazzi's corporeality and the cross since the two, in a sense, became one. She recounted scenes earlier in life in which she had traveled west of Venice to Mirano with one of her protectors, Signora Andriana Cuccina, to visit the latter's villa.[73] She apparently fell ill during the journey and spilled considerable blood, "whether because of the Devil's beatings or because of natural defect or infirmity I don't know."[74] As a result of this poor physical state, she was sent to a room to rest upon arrival. There, she apparently saw and received bodily marks from a cross in a vision, an altered state that seemed to have flourished from observing a concretely tangible crucifix in a chapel. She remembered that:

> …while I was in that painful state, I noticed that opposite a window in the room there was a little chapel with a crucifix in it…I turned in anguish from the pain to implore that crucified Christ…allow me to feel some of His pain…And then I saw something like a fire, divided into five rays like lines from His wounds, detach itself from that crucifix. And standing with my arms extended in the form of a cross, I felt those rays strike my hands, feet, and ribs, and I felt very great pains…And I fell to the ground as if dead (since I was then on my knees in prayer, I fell over onto my right side), so that even though there was a knock at the door, as I learned later, I didn't hear a thing.[75]

This scene, like the previous one in San Giovanni di Rialto, crucially involved Ferrazzi's physical affliction and her sensorial openness to taking the crucifix in, both visually and literally, by receiving its physical impression on her skin. Ferrazzi's entire body, in short,



[73] Mirano need not be confused with the island of Murano; Mirano was a "[h]amlet 20 kilometers…west of Venice, near which the Cuccina family had a villa" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 29, 86; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 190).

[74] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 29.

[75] "...mentre ero in quel stato de dolori, osservai che dirimpetto d'una finestra della stanza vi era una capeletta, entrove un crocifisso…mi voltai per l'angoscia de' dolori a far oratione a quel crocifisso…mi facesse anco sentir qualche dolor della sua passione, cioè qualche parte. E così allhora io viddi che si spicò come un fuoco dal quel crocifisso, diviso in cinque raggi come linee delle sue piaghe. E stando io allhora con le braccia aperte in croce, mi sentii ad arrivar detti raggi nelle mani, piedi e costato, e sentii grandissimi dolori…Et io cadei per terra come morta, in maniera tale ch'essendo io allhora nel far oratione in genocchioni, cadei giù dalla parte destra che, sebene dopo fu picchiato alla porta, come seppi, non sentii cosa alcuna (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 30-31); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 29.

was the medium through which she experienced the crucifix, located presumably at some distance in what could have been a home chapel in the villa.[76]

It was, again, Ferrazzi's faculty of sight and her bodily contact with the object that characterized this experience, which stands in parallel to the kind of "intensely corporeal" engagement with materiality that seventeenth-century English Carmelite nuns, for instance, cultivated,[77] worth noting here because of the quasi "cloistered" context of Ferrazzi's vision, which took place in a locked room. Upon noticing the crucifix and then seeing five rays emitted from the wounds of the crucified Christ, Ferrazzi most obviously employed her visual sense to gaze upon the fiery crucifix. But her skin also received and made sense of what she encountered, too. The surface of her body–particularly in the corresponding areas of Christ's own wounds–not only subsequently experienced pain upon being struck by the rays, according to Ferrazzi, but also her very person took the form of the object as she stood "with my arms extended in the form of a cross." This image of rays shining from Christ's wounds and impressing themselves on Ferrazzi's own body was analogous to depicted scenes Ferrazzi might have been familiar with. She may have seen the increasingly popular depiction of Saint Francis, for instance, standing before Christ on a crucifix, which expelled lines that struck the saint and thus impressed upon him the stigmata and other wounds.[78]

What may have been perhaps less commonly depicted in sacred imagery was a believer's body taking the shape of a cross as Ferrazzi's did, according to her account. This literal identification with Christ's suffering certainly reflected an adherence to the Catholic teaching of identifying with and imitating him–an empathetic form of devotion that

[76] See Morse for home chapels in Venice (Margaret A. Morse, "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian 'Casa,'" Renaissance Studies 21, no. 2 (2007): 170, 172-175).
[77] Walker, "'Hangd for the True Faith,'" 494.
[78] Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 113-116.

involved "bodily practices" to feel Christly affliction.[79] Ferrazzi's encounter also similarly evoked medieval mystical tradition in which women sometimes "could fuse with Christ's body," and even be envisioned as crucified on the cross themselves.[80] Here, however, beyond becoming one with Christ by receiving his wounds, Ferrazzi was identifying directly with the holy matter of the cross.

What is particularly striking, in other words, was Ferrazzi's cultivation of *imitatio Christi* through assuming the shape of the object itself. Though body and matter–like that of Christ and cross, respectively–were not always readily distinguishable from each other,[81] Ferrazzi's words highlighted the primary importance of the crucifix-object in shaping, quite literally, her own corporeal response to the vision. The crucifix, moreover, just like in the previous ecstasy involving the spine-ridden cross, became intimately enmeshed with Ferrazzi's flesh. In this case, by becoming, in a sense, the crucifix she envisioned, Ferrazzi (like St Francis who sometimes became a kind of "living object" in the aforementioned analogous type of depiction)[82] also became a living piece of matter, if for a moment. These details demonstrate, in sum, that Ferrazzi's arrival at knowledge about, or understanding of the vision was processed corporeally.

The attention Ferrazzi placed on her embodied experiences during visions crucially permitted her to emphasize a privileged access to and enjoyment of knowledge about the divine, specifically holy suffering. In this encounter, in which she purportedly sought to understand or "feel some of His pain," that is, Ferrazzi's embodied insight constituted understanding something of Christ's suffering, like many past women religious.[83] Though



[79] Milner notes, for instance, that "Catholic devotion to the sacred heart and the passion, in which believers…engaged Christ's sufferings and pains in artwork and imaginative devotions, employed sensing as the vehicle for heartfelt transformation of believers" (Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 99; 100).
[80] Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 181, 205, 221-222.
[81] Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 117, 120.
[82] Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 116.
[83] The medieval mystic Julian of Norwich is a notable example, but Ferrazzi would have been exposed to *vite* like that of Saint Teresa (see note 39 and 63).

unlike the ecstasy Ferrazzi experienced in San Giovanni di Rialto in which an angered Grandi initially accused her of temptation, Ferrazzi faced no direct criticism from any superior about the contents of this vision. Instead, she was disciplined in a distinct way by another skeptical superior, who would appear shortly after the vision, and who expressed a wish for Ferrazzi's suffering body to be kept away from the sight of others.

Ferrazzi's former confessor, Bonaventura Pinzoni, had apparently arrived at the villa, opened the locked door of the room, and ordered her to get up from the ground, saying "Cecilia, obedience!"[84] His following words, though not quite a reprimand, suggested that he sought to keep Ferrazzi's pained (and as she would attest, wounded) body, for which she would later need medical attention, tucked away from others: "Daughter, hide yourself and have patience, don't suffer, for these are cold sores which come like this."[85] Perhaps Pinzoni, like Grandi, was similarly unsettled by Ferrazzi having apparently acquired knowledge, now literally marked onto her, of Christly suffering–something that was not "meant" for her, but rather reserved for true saints. Ferrazzi's "proper governance" of her senses was thus again potentially called into question, and the discerning measure was to keep Ferrazzi hidden, just as another superior, Polacco, had arranged.

It would be misleading, as noted in the last case, to characterize sensory deliberation as solely enforced "from above." Ferrazzi took an interest in discerning for herself the extent to which her sensing was legitimate, given that she, like her confessors, was steeped in a religious culture that valued this kind of deliberative capacity.[86] In relaying this story in an inquisitorial context, Ferrazzi emphasized her own ability to discern her sensing, that is,



[84] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 29.
[85] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 29-30.
[86] Writing on the discernment of spirits, for instance, Moshe Sluhovsky shows that despite this activity being theologically reserved for men, it "was always a social praxis and not merely an abstract theological enterprise" among early modern Catholics, such that women were not only shaped (and judged) by the work of others' discernment, but also engaged in it themselves ( Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 207-208); Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 94.

to detect the distortion of the truth, by claiming that she believed the vision of had actually been a "temptation of the Devil… for the Devil disguises himself as an angel of light."[87] Of course, in the context of an interrogation, Ferrazzi would have framed her spiritual experiences so as to be judged favorably. This potentially revisionary impulse nonetheless suggests that Ferrazzi sought to be an active participant in judging her bodily knowledge as either authentic or treacherous, an apprehension which responded to the increasing worry "over the devil and his deceits."[88]

This story thus implied two somewhat contradictory insights on Ferrazzi's part: corporeal knowledge of Christ's pain, and a later awareness of her supposed sensory delusion. Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with a crucifix could in this sense imply shifting forms of embodied knowledge, all of which played into the careful dance Ferrazzi assumed in the face of ecclesiastical and inquisitorial suspicion, wherein she sought to, on the one hand, legitimize her devotion, and on the other, avoid excessive scrutiny over her sensing.

### *2.4. Embodied Defiance: The Cross as Prop?*

The second part of the chapter's argument shifts away from Ferrazzi's ecstatic encounters with crosses and moves towards her interaction with this matter in a conscious state. The following episode is about Ferrazzi engaging with the crucifix *after* rather than during an ecstasy, meaning that she would have been more conscious of her behavior and its potential for what I suggest was a form of embodied defiance, aided by a material object. One November day, as Ferrazzi recounted in her autobiography, "I threw myself at the feet of a crucifix, begging it to help me" at San Giovanni di Rialto.[89] What caused Ferrazzi to not only fling her body towards this ecclesiastical crucifix, but also call on the object itself

[87] "...credo che la sia tentation del demonio, e Dio vi guardi, signore, che il demonio si vesta da angelo di luce…" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 32); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 30.
[88] Milner, "The Senses in Religion," 94.
[89] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53.

for assistance? Such a relational form of interacting with the cross was not necessarily outside of the norm as Kaja Merete Haug Hagen, in reference to the European late medieval period, has suggested: "there are many stories of people addressing their prayers to a cross or crucifix and that in response, the image spoke, moved, bled or in other ways interacted with the worshipper."[90] Addressing a cross, in other words, could be read as a kind of devotional impulse in which the speaker trusted in the agentive power of the holy object.[91]

What follows is the chain of events that led to this scene in which Ferrazzi fell at the foot of the crucifix, occurring after conflict with her confessor, the *pievano* Antonio Grandi, whom we met in the first episode. Three days prior, Ferrazzi had been visiting San Giovanni di Rialto, and, as she recalled, had gone into a trance, and thus had not heard Grandi calling her into the confessional box.[92] Since she had failed to hear him, Ferrazzi had been "ordered not to return": the *pievano*, "angry, started yelling at me in the presence of other people, saying 'Wretch, is this the place to go into ecstasy? Get out of this church!' And he threw me bodily out of the confessional."[93] Even though (for the sake of obedience, according to her) she had "begged" the Virgin to suppress such ecstasies within her "at least in public," Ferrazzi still "couldn't help going back there [to the church] three days later" for she felt "great sweetness and mental calm in my soul."[94] To no avail. The priest refused to pardon Ferrazzi and again spoke brusquely "to drive me away."[95] It was then, right "before I left," that Ferrazzi launched herself at the crucifix, calling on the sacred object for help since she



[90] Haug Hagen, "Crux Christi Sit Mecum," 261.
[91] Caroline Walker Bynum has written on objects as "animated materiality," noting, for instance that "a number of later medieval Christians experienced the figure on the cross as coming to life in order to comfort or accuse them," and generally argued for the power objects could have, crucially on account of being "physical objects" (Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 20-21, 113).
[92] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 52-53.
[93] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53.
[94] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53.
[95] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53.

had "been abandoned by my confessor."[96] Ferrazzi eventually reconciled with the priest who visited her home after two days.[97]

This moment, like the previous examples, showcases the consistent physicality with which Ferrazzi experienced her spiritual life, and the threat that her ecstasies seemed to imply for this confessor. Her animated lunging towards the crucifix stands out as a particularly theatrical and literal instance of bodily entanglement with an object. Early modern churches could cultivate a kind of dramatism as De Boer has pointed to, specifically in the context of Jesuits in the Counter Reformation, for instance, who designed their meeting houses to be "theatrical spaces, in which the senses served as the conduits of a multimedia experience."[98] Such a distinctly performative encounter is what distinguishes this section from the previous one.

Rather than suggesting a story of Ferrazzi gaining spiritual-somatic insight from a cross, which in some cases signified a potentially corrupted use of the senses, this encounter instead implied a distinct kind of embodied threat. Namely, that Ferrazzi could use her physicality in tandem with an object to dramatically defy Grandi's orders. The same behavior that could evoke a portrait of piety (i.e., laying one's body at the foot of a cross) not only contributed to the *pievano*'s anger in this scene, but also crucially suggested an embodied action that subtly resisted his authority. Embodied action, as employed in this thesis,[99] has to do with Ferrazzi's agentive behavior, often aided by the use of specific objects, in her daily life–particularly relevant in the following two chapters, but which is instructive in this example.

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[96] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53.

[97] She apologized, stating that she was "ungrateful and proud" and "admitt[ing] my fault: that the only thing I was sorry about was the scandal I'd caused in that church," while Grandi recognized he had been wrong in calling her a wretch (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 53).

[98] De Boer, "The Counter-Reformation of the Senses," 254.

[99] See thesis introduction. Willemijn Ruberg has listed the term "embodied action" among others like "bodily awareness" and "social activity" as all belonging generally to phenomenological inquiries that can be geared towards historical studies of experience (Willemijn Ruberg, *History of the Body* (Red Globe Press, 2020), 75).

A number of details in the cited encounter reflect Ferrazzi's use of her physicality as a means of exercising subtle autonomy. For one, she plainly disregarded the *pievano*'s orders by choosing to take herself back to the church, which underlined her desire to negotiate the constraints she faced, and the will to test their limits. Moreover, in a notable repetition of descriptions related to the "throwing" of the body, Ferrazzi described herself as first being "bodily" *thrown* out from the confessional, and–in what constituted a response to the priest at feeling abandoned–she, as noted, *threw* herself at the crucifix.[100] By not only physically returning to the church, but also subsequently using the crucifix as a kind of prop to signal her desperation, Ferrazzi used her body to regain the space: to mark an embodied presence that challenged its previous and somewhat violent removal. In this sense, her corporeality was not always merely the subject of sensory disciplining on the part of the confessor but also a site of surprising defiance.

Perhaps the trance itself, in which she failed to hear the instructions of her superior, could itself also be taken as a form of embodied (in)action. The *pievano* may have even interpreted it that way. But such an argument is slippery, for it would suggest that in an altered state of mind and body,[101] Ferrazzi could consciously employ her senses to ignore the *pievano*. Instead, this case of embodied action was limited to Ferrazzi's conscious comings and goings to the church and the choice to lay at the crucifix.

In contrast to the first encounter Ferrazzi had with Grandi (when he expressed openness to sensory deliberation), here he had no interest in making any particular assessments about what Ferrazzi saw and felt. Instead, according to her account, he simply



[100] In Italian, the language Ferrazzi used for "thrown" varied slightly but suggested a close similarity: she employed "mi cacciò" meaning he "kicked me out" to describe the priest's action ("a viva forza mi cacciò giù del confesso"), and, for her own embodied action, she utilized "mi gettai" meaning "I threw myself" ("mi gettai a piedi d'un crocifisso") (Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 67).

[101] Indicating that she was in a trance, Ferrazzi said that, to reiterate a clarification from note 30, she was "fuori di me stessa," meaning literally "outside myself" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 44; Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 67).

articulated rage about Ferrazzi entering an ecstatic state. Though Grandi would apologize, his reactions signaled the extent to which he was destabilized by Ferrazzi's bold negotiations of autonomy, the church space, and spiritual desires.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has explored Ferrazzi's corporeal responses to the visual and sensorial stimuli of the crucifix. I have argued that her entanglement with this holy matter was often a source of anxiety to Ferrazzi's superiors, who were moved by a larger cultural and religious agenda of encouraging sensorial discernment. In states of ecstasy, according to Ferrazzi's accounts, she acquired what I have conceptualized as embodied knowledge, or spiritual insights, which helped her understand what she should strive for "in this life" as well as the suffering of Christ. In these examples, Ferrazzi's superiors were unsettled not only by the possibility that these represented demonic sensory delusions, but also by Ferrazzi's too-confident sense of access to the divine. In another instance, Ferrazzi posed a slightly different embodied threat to her confessor, in which she employed her body–and the crucifix as a kind of theatrical prop–to act consciously against his orders, a nod to Ferrazzi's deliberate use of materiality to establish her own forms of authority, to which we turn at length in the following two chapters.

## Chapter Three: Dress to Confess? The Habit of Embodying Authority

"Ms. Cecilia dressed as a Capuchin and put on a false beard to hear her confession." These were the words of a witness, testifying in Cecilia Ferrazzi's trial, who–not speaking from her own experience–was echoing the allegations of one Lugretia, a young woman who had lived in one of Ferrazzi's houses designed, as noted in the previous chapters, to shelter *putte pericolanti,* young women vulnerable to prostitution.[1] While Lugretia's beard grievance was a stand-alone accusation, the notion that Ferrazzi had taken confession from the *putte* while dressed in some kind of garment disguised as a Capuchin priest proliferated in the testimonies.[2] Ferrazzi's alleged possession of specific forms of dress was, in general, a recurring theme in the documents: some referenced her owning luxurious clothes including items made of gold and silk,[3] others (like her confessor Giorgio Polacco whom we met in chapter two) drew attention to Ferrazzi's use of a Carmelite habit meant for nuns, and, most provocatively, a number of witnesses, as alluded, affirmed she wore the garb typical of a Capuchin priest.

This chapter addresses the threats that Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with specific garments generated in the eyes of her superiors: not only for some priests who featured in the last chapter, but also for the general inquisitor Agapito Ugoni.[4] Her entanglement with material culture, as discussed earlier in the thesis, concerns the ways in which her encounter with an item shaped the latter's meaning as well as what she could *do*, or how she could act, with the object. What did it mean for Ferrazzi's body to be clothed with certain materials in



[1] "...Lugretia dirà…che la Sra Cecilia si vestisse da Capuccina, e postasi una barba posticcia andasse à confessarla" (Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter VeAS), Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 27v (second folder)). For more on Ferrazzi's shelters, see chapter one.
[2] Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints,* 298.
[3] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 17, 1664, 14r (second folder); Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. and trans. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 28.
[4] For details on the general inquisitor, see chapter one.

the eyes of authorities? How did her embodiment of particular attire lead to the perception that these objects posed threats? In this chapter, I dwell on two categories of dress implicitly at play in the trial, which I roughly categorize as "religious" and "worldly" garb, though this is not meant to dichotomize goods as either sacred and non-sacred (a position this thesis as a whole methodologically avoids, as discussed in the introduction), but rather to draw attention to distinct sartorial threats.

I argue that Ferrazzi generated anxiety in her community and trial for allegedly assuming both kinds of attire. On the one hand, she was accused of having donned high-grade clothes and, in Ferrazzi's own accounts of gossip about her, luxurious items made of gold, and pearl necklaces. On the other, she went under fire for wearing a Carmelite habit and allegedly a Capuchin priest's garment–dramatic breaches of a laywoman's expected self-presentation. Based on the questioning and testimonies, these two categories of dress implied distinct connotations and community concerns. The attire coded as worldly potentially signaled moral corruption and Ferrazzi's contradictory and ultimately deceitful presentation of the self–assumptions she would attempt to counteract by not only rejecting rumors about wearing lavish attire, but also by emphasizing her unfulfilled vocation as a nun and desire to don the aforementioned Carmelite habit.

By far, the greatest concern for the inquisitor was Ferrazzi's use of another kind of religious garb, some kind of Capuchin dress,[5] which allegedly facilitated her ability to step into a role of ecclesiastical authority to which she had no official right. There was something powerful about the attire itself in shaping what the body could do: this garment was part of what allowed her to assume and embody a male's confessor role. The beard accusation, in this sense, metonomized the principal concern, namely, that a woman was

[5] The archival references to the garment describe it as a habit (*habito*), but because Ferrazzi was also reported to have worn a Carmelite habit, I avoid using "habit" to refer to the Capuchin garb in order to avoid confusion between these distinct garments.

assuming a man's job. The Capuchin garment similarly represented a stand-in for, or more accurately, a facilitator of a whole array of illicit behaviors. In this sense, it was not so much the attire unto itself that troubled the inquisitor as it was the concrete actions that came out of this persona emboldened by an outer transformation through clothes. Ferrazzi's use of the Capuchin garment was thus suggestive of embodied action through an object–a thread we pick up from the latter portion of chapter two, and referring to how an object could become a medium through which to assert autonomy and, more specifically here, achieve authority.

Before delving into these discussions, it is fitting as in the last chapter to point briefly to the ways these themes (i.e., how clothes shaped the moral image of Ferrazzi's body, and was perceived as giving way to transgressive actions) illuminate the thesis' larger arc of argumentation. Namely, that Ferrazzi's corporeal engagement with her material cosmos produced variegated threats to the broader standards of sensory culture upheld by her superiors. In this case, Ferrazzi may have been interpreted as failing to properly govern her sensuality by wearing attire that sensorially appealed to her and gave her pleasure, representing a kind of concupiscence of the eyes. Moreover, in potentially donning clothes that transformed her into someone new–an act of disguise Ferrazzi seemed committed to if Lugretia's beard accusation can again point to this larger picture–she entered the territory of deception. This alleged attempt at deluding others' senses, in other words, would have represented a rupture from proper comportment according to a paradigm in which trickery represented an acute, often demonic, danger to be discerned, as noted in chapter one.

Attire used as a tool for projecting a distinct identity was an integral topos within these anxieties about deception, and circulated across spheres of life into, for instance, the literary. As Herman Roodenburg has noted, the sixteenth-century picaresque anonymous Spanish novel *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, featuring a young poor boy who used his wits to survive, has been invoked by scholars as "classic[ly]" showcasing the increasing fear

of deceit in early modern urban contexts, useful to note here for the character's use of garments to delude others.[6] Roodenburg cites Ulinka Rublack's reflections on the question of attire in the novel: "The whole plot brought into question the relationship of dress to reality in a much larger and dynamic urban world where one could not trust appearances and yet had few means to gather secure knowledge about newcomers."[7] Unlike the young Lazarillo, Ferrazzi was not a newcomer as she was well known in her city,[8] but the ways she allegedly dressed seemed to activate analogous concerns, parodied in the novel, about the work of deluding others, and not being able to confide in people's self-presentation.

The kind of materiality that concerns this chapter has been the subject of considerable recent historical work, spanning from investigations into sumptuary laws to the styles and innovations of early modern artisan and middling classes.[9] But what historians have tended to dwell on less is the material culture of dress specifically through an *embodied* lens,[10] though some scholarship has hinted at the importance of considering bodily experiences of dress and adornment.[11] Perhaps the closest direct discussion about

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[6] Herman Roodenburg, "Introduction: Entering the Sensory Worlds of the Renaissance," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 13.

[7] Roodenburg, "Introduction," 13.

[8] Ferrazzi was relatively known in Venice in her time (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 107; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 129, 191-192). Ferrazzi herself noted her notoriety in the city (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 30, 36).

[9] An edited collection by Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack takes a global history approach to sumptuary laws, and seeks to break down why for the period listed in the book's title "the right to dress," or freedom of expression, was for many leaders less of a priority than its regulation. This tension surrounding materiality involved many conflicting voices expressing "how human life and societies should be visualised and materialised" (Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack, ed., *The Right to Dress: Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c.1200–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1-2, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108567541); See also, Evelyn Welch ed., *Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovation in Europe, 1500-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[10] The embodied approach proposed here (see thesis introduction) ought not to be confused with the "embodied methodology" written about by scholars like Hilary Davidson, who refers to "making and wearing reconstructed clothing" as a scholar in order to research dress and fashion (Hilary Davidson, "The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice," *Fashion Theory* 23, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 329–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2019.1603859).

[11] Evelyn Welch gives a nod to the sensorial dimension of clothing, affirming that "[b]y looking at the surviving garments from the early modern period, it is possible to get some sense of the physical pleasure that would have once come from wearing delicate linens and silks against the skin or from the feel of soft

interconnections between the sensorial-bodily and attire is a monograph by Rublack on the "rich symbolic world" of appearances in Renaissance Europe, which she suggests exhibited an increasing interest in and awareness of clothes, considered to be crucial signifiers of identity.[12] Her arguments that clothes in this context were "experienced in dialogue with the body" and even, to a certain degree, that attire "invented" the body are useful for not only creating an analytic link between dress and early modern bodies,[13] but also culturally accounting for the acute awareness of clothes that Ferrazzi's community displayed.

The chapter will continue by briefly describing what Ferrazzi wore to the trial on the day of her first interrogation to introduce her tendency towards practices of active self-fashioning, the kind of agentive work with garments that raised suspicions within her community. It then explores how the inquisitor sought confirmation from witnesses that Ferrazzi's dress and behavior indicated opposing territory to that of sanctity, namely, a lack of bodily propriety. This discussion is followed by an analysis of Ferrazzi's own discursive intervention in the trial, in which she attempted to affirm her integrity, most exemplified by bringing attention to her use of a nun's garment decades before the trial (even though this

woollens, light silks, and taffetas as one moved" (Welch ed., *Fashioning the Early Modern*, 30); Irene Galandra Cooper addresses one early modern devotional object called the *agnus dei* that was often worn as a pendant, and suggests that its contact with the wearer in everyday life was an essential part of its protective power in the eyes of its users (Irene Galandra Cooper, "Investigating the 'Case' of the Agnus Dei in Sixteenth-Century Italian Homes," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, eds., Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 220–43); Giorgio Riello has theorized these two elements through a triangle graphic composed of three points that he suggests ought to be considered in tandem: the category of "space" as informed by the work of historical geography, that of the "body," informed by fashion theory (which he notes has theorized significantly on the "relationship between body and clothing"), and that of "walking" as explored through histories of the everyday (55). According to him, material culture is to be integrated fluidly into this chart: "Conceptually, I see the artefact standing in the middle…shifting to one of the three corners when needed" (54) (Giorgio Riello, "The Material Culture of Walking: Spaces of Methodologies in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Ashgate Publishing, 2010). See also, Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Mark Kyburz and John Peck (Zone Books, 2007).

[12] Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xix-xx, 3.

[13] Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 17, 31.

had caused a significant stir among religious superiors). The concluding section delves into the noted accusation that Ferrazzi adopted garb reserved for Capuchin priests.

*3.1. "In what manner did Madam Cecilia dress?"*

Ferrazzi's first interrogation began with inquisitorial notes about her attire. She was "a certain woman about fifty years old of ordinary stature wearing a black woolen dress and a silk shawl, and on her forehead a white veil covered by a black veil."[14] While recording a defendant's appearance may have belonged to standard inquisitorial procedure, it denotes a crucial registering impulse–that of delineating in which manner Ferrazzi presented herself–which would inform some of the questioning. The inquisitor's deliberative process for determining fraudulent holiness indeed involved probing at the extent to which defendants used, according to Anne Jacobson Schutte, "inappropriate dress."[15] Ferrazzi's attire would have been treated as part of a larger architecture of evidence that, for the Inquisition, ultimately suggested deliberate attempts by Ferrazzi at the self-fashioning of sanctity.[16]

Ferrazzi's attire in the first interrogation subtly demonstrated a proactive curation of the self. Her dress made of wool, a kind of Venetian gabardine (*scotto*), was common, as Jacobson Schutte clarifies, among "mature Venetian women below the patrician class," as were silken head coverings.[17] But what was not typical was Ferrazzi's choice of the double head coverings, later described by her as "...little black and white veils I wear on my head now because I have no hair."[18] In covering up what seemed to be the consequences of ill



[14] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21.
[15] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 223.
[16] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 223-227.
[17] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21; Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata: 1609-1664*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1990), 20.
[18] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21, 35.

health,[19] Ferrazzi created her own stylistic innovation.[20] To a certain degree, the double veil was thus not only a utilitarian, but also a stylistic choice that suggests the endeavor of developing some form of satisfactory self-presentation, probably aimed at emphasizing modesty.[21] While these particular items worn during the day's interrogation would not trouble the inquisitor, Ferrazzi's larger practice of self-curation would.

According to a number of witnesses, Ferrazzi displayed herself in high-quality items, though when and where she did were not specified, perhaps suggesting that she did not limit this kind of dress to the home. Florena Forni, who fled the Castello refuge a month before the trial and was ready to share damning accounts,[22] claimed Ferrazzi wore shoes in the Roman style trimmed with gold decoration, which she apparently seized from girls under her care.[23] Another witness asserted that she "often went dressed of wool, but of fine robes as though of imperial *scotto* [gabardine], and underneath wore silk overskirts… colorful stockings, and stockings of high-grade wool… and also sometimes ones made of milky white silk."[24] Though silks were widespread in Venice–used across the social spectrum by the late sixteenth-century–the material tended to be of varying degrees of purity, which

[19] Ferrazzi ascribed her lack of hair to fights with the devil, but it was likely a product of numerous issues including "urinary calculus and hyperthyroidism" (Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Suffering from the Stone: The Accounts of Michel De Montaigne and Cecilia Ferrazzi," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 64, no. 1 (2002): 32); Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 26).

[20] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21.

[21] Such active work of self-curation was, as Paula Hohti shows, common below the elite class in early modern Italy. Hohti pushes against the traditional scholarly position that the laboring classes mainly self-fashioned according to sensibilities copied from elites, arguing instead that "ordinary men and women were engaged with much more creative practices than traditional assumptions about fashion dissemination suggest" (148). She finds that non-elites "used a wide range of methods to update ordinary dress to conform to current fashions" (like trimming clothes with fine fabrics) (161), thereby creating completely new styles (Paula Hohti, "Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation: Artisan Fashions in Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Italy," in *Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovation in Europe*, 1500-1800, ed., Evelyn S. Welch (Oxford University Press, 2017)).

[22] Anne Jacobson Schutte, "'Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io': Painters, the Inquisition and the Shape of Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Caroline Elam and Peter Denley (London: Westfield College, Committee for Medieval Studies, 1998), 421; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 27

[23] "...le scarpe alla Romana con Galloni d'oro muschiade" VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v (second folder).

[24] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 16v (second folder); "Glossary," Refashioning the Renaissance, December 22, 2022, https://refashioningrenaissance.eu/research/glossary/; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 21, 28.

allowed the artisan classes to use lighter, cheaper ones.[25] But rather than these cheap versions, Ferrazzi, the daughter of an artisan, may have worn high-quality silks since she was also dressed in "fine robes" and "high-grade wool," according to this witness, who may have been attempting to draw out the dissonance between Ferrazzi's original status and subsequent attempts at outwardly distinction. Colored garments, also increasingly available to the humble classes throughout early modern Italy, were historically associated with celebratory contexts, not day to day life,[26] such that Ferrazzi's plurality of colorful stockings might have also potentially stood out for a woman of her standing.

Even if such accounts were not entirely accurate, the claims are significant for parsing out what forms of attire in this social context would have been notable for someone like Ferrazzi to possess in terms of class, milieu, social belonging, and gender. In allegedly wearing high-grade materials, Ferrazzi may have been touching on a social nerve that community members were voicing indirectly. A non-elite woman appeared to be expressing and embodying upwardly mobile aspirations. But ultimately the inquisitor seemed less concerned with how attire signaled Ferrazzi's economic and social climbing, perhaps because her work–which gave her increased economic stability and social standing–was considered a "social service," legitimized by the considerable backing it received from the city's patricians, as discussed in chapter one.[27]

Instead, the inquisitor seemed more worried about what Ferrazzi's clothes potentially indicated about her character, namely, a vanity and bodily corruption that could confirm the substance of the allegation of false holiness. What had preceded his question about how Ferrazzi dressed, in fact, was, at least in one case, an inquiry into whether Ferrazzi was ever alone in the vicinity of men, the latter being a recurring question posed to

[25] Hohti, "Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation," 155-157.
[26] Hohti, "Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation," 154.
[27] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 203-204; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io," 420-421; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 31; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 107.

an array of witnesses. Had Ferrazzi had any familiarity and visitation with men? ("familiarità, e practica con homini"),[28] the inquisitor wanted to know, vigorously underlining with a quill witnesses' answers about a Mr. Bovego who apparently visited an ill Ferrazzi "while she was in bed,"[29] and would supposedly visit her household at ten or eleven at night.[30] In one case, immediately following this question about Ferrazzi's familiarity with men, the inquisitor asked, "in what manner did Madam Cecilia dress?"[31] This chain of questioning suggests that attire and female bodily propriety and morality were evidently bound together.

Ferrazzi revealed an awareness of the implicit connective associations between her attire and morality, and took the opportunity to cast doubt on claims that muddled her character. Both when asked in interrogations and when volunteering information in her life-narrative, Ferrazzi's own voice intervened across the trial to deny rumors.[32] These read as purposeful maneuvers to shift the story Ferrazzi knew community members had already been developing through gossip and, later, as testifiers in the trial. In the second interrogation, for instance, Ferrazzi brought up her own attire along with suspicions of her bodily corruption when the inquisitor asked why she thought she was being held by the Venetian Holy Office:

[28] In response to this question of "visitation" with men, one witness claimed there was a door connecting the house (presumably the San Lorenzo one) to her supporter's home Ca' Lion (which was indeed located nearby– see chapter one), and that Ferrazzi would pass between one house and the other. This door was then ordered to be closed, but then a small window was apparently set up through which one could speak between the houses, but which was "not big enough for a man to pass through." Ferrazzi, according to this witness, had placed an image, perhaps depicting the Ecce Homo scene, on the window so that no one could see it ("...Santo di Carta, credo un' ecco homo, acciò non si vedesse il fenestrino") (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 3, 1664, 37r-37v).

[29] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 15v, 16v (second folder); The inquisitor also underlined the substantial talk about a Mr. Bartolomio Ferlini, who was rumored to have had a physical relationship with Ferrazzi (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 217).

[30] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 27r, (second folder).

[31] "[I]n che maniera andasse vestita dta Cecilia" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 16v (second folder). The witness who answered this question was the one cited above, who specified Ferrazzi's use of items like "imperial" *scotto* and colorful stockings.

[32] Throughout the trial, one of the ways Ferrazzi continually sought to mark her integrity was by claiming virginity (see, for instance, Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 42, 68-69). On an analysis of Ferrazzi's relationship to sex, see Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 216-218).

> [I]t was being said of me that I had a relationship with someone…and that I gave birth to and killed a child…that I wore gold overskirts, and pearls around my neck, had myself adored and my feet kissed, dressed as a confessor and administered confession and communion…which are all completely false, for I'm as clear and pure as a crystal and a virgin, too… They were saying, too, that I turned three or four of those girls over to whores, who gave me purses of gold…which is false as well.[33]

By setting up others' claims about her self-adornment alongside rumored hooking and bodily activity, including intimacy with a man who was a steward of one of her houses,[34] Ferrazzi demonstrated that she, consciously or not, saw the body and attire as constitutive of the same anxiety. For Ferrazzi, in other words, these accusations belonged to interrelated immoral behaviors: for one to accept and wear gold overskirts, pearls, and gold purses shared an implicitly sordid connection to sinful bodily practices like physical intimacy out of wedlock, murdering a child, having oneself "adored and kissed," and assuming an ecclesiastical role restricted to men.

One's bodily behavior and the decorative items one put *on* the body, in sum, appeared to be on an analogous plane of judgment. In categorically denying these acts, Ferrazzi simultaneously sought to underline her proper female comportment according to hegemonic early modern Venetian sensibilities, and that, at least in principle, she rejected worldly goods. Ferrazzi would reinforce such a view later in her autobiography upon describing an encounter with a sex worker who was attempting to remove her daughter from Ferrazzi's house and had thus apparently offered her "gold…that is, bracelets, chains, and rings, along with quite a few doubloons," which Ferrazzi rejected, "not wanting anything."[35] She was again underlining that she was not only morally beyond coveting flashy objects, but morally averse to engaging in corrupt deals with sex workers.



[33] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 28.
[34] See also note 29. The name of this man was Bartolomio Ferlini, who, according to some witnesses, was rumored to have been married to Ferrazzi, and to have molested some of the young women in the house (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 28; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 208, 217, 300).
[35] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 48.

Ferrazzi was also perhaps aware that jewelry, which in premodern contexts tended to predominate among men more than women,[36] could be interpreted as out of place for a woman, especially of her status. Dominant views about attire, in which both wealth and gender dictated what kind of adornment was officially permitted, had traditionally been marked by sumptuary laws, which had a prominent history in Italy and stipulated what forms of outer display were (and were not) permitted and for whom.[37] By the time of Ferrazzi's life in the seventeenth century, these laws generally became less heavy handed than in centuries prior and in some cases had already been repealed.[38] Even so, in Venice, according to Blake de Maria, jewelry-focused rules, which "most certainly" had not worked given people's creative evasions (e.g., the use of pearls in the hair if not allowed on the neck), continued to be passed with considerable frequency well into the sixteenth century as a response to innovations.[39] In this way, the cultural and social heritage of sumptuary laws was not so distant. Both moral and social standing, each colored by gendered standards, were thus clearly enmeshed matters that informed the kinds of self-presentation Ferrazzi would have understood as socially authorized. Her purported denial of lavish goods, in other words, was perhaps just as much a rejection of objects unfit for a pious woman–being associated, in her framing, with immorality–as it was a manner of highlighting that she knew where she stood socially in Venetian society. In this sense, Ferrazzi was also addressing potential critiques about her lack of observance of status, which she may have guessed were being voiced by the aforementioned witnesses.



[36] Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things: A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 179-180.
[37] Riello and Rublack, *The Right to Dress*, 5.
[38] Riello and Rublack, *The Right to Dress*, 8-9.
[39] Blake De Maria, "Multifaceted Endeavors: Jewelry and Gemstones in Renaissance Venice," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, ed. Blake De Maria and Mary E. Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2013), 126-127; Hohti also draws attention to the actual rise in surveillance in the beginning of the seventeenth century in Florence of people ignoring laws regarding jewelry (Hohti, "Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation," 157).

*3.2. A Desire to Wall the Body: Donning the Habit*

Ferrazzi's interventions in the trial were not only based in denying rumors. She sought to paint an opposing image of herself by emphasizing her ardent desire to wear, and her actual use of, attire presumably antithetical to luxury: a Carmelite habit. She had long hoped to become a nun, a desire she traced back to her youth, and had also attempted to open a Carmelite convent in the late 1630s (see chapter one). Though she never reached these objectives, Ferrazzi nonetheless had considerable exposure to the cloistered world and nuns' dress, particularly through her sister Maria, who had herself become a Carmelite nun, and with whom Ferrazzi stayed at different points in the convent of Santa Teresa, founded by Maria in the early 1640s.[40]

Ferrazzi was also exposed to cloistered contexts when she visited a Capuchin convent located on the Burano island,[41] and, as noted in the last chapter, spent time in the convent of Santa Maria Maggiore in 1637 when, being suspected of demonic possession, she was put under investigation and surveillance on the orders of her confessor and other priests.[42] When Polacco, one of the priests involved in this episode of investigation, arrived at the convent, he found that Ferrazzi had apparently taken the opportunity to fit in among the nuns. He encountered her dressed in a Carmelite habit, which he commanded her to take off.[43] Polacco produced written statements in 1637 (material later copied into Ferrazzi's case as evidence) about having seen Ferrazzi going around in a Carmelite habit, reports which the inquisitor underlined heavily.[44] Ferrazzi was ordered, in the joint decision a few

[40] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 28, 47, 71, 88; Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109.
[41] Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112.
[42] See also chapter one on this earlier brush-up with the Inquisition, which was not an official trial. Cardinal Patriarch Federico Corner dictated the course of action, and Ferrazzi's confessor, who at this point was the Carmelite friar Bonaventura Pinzoni, was also involved (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126, 271). Before being kept at Santa Maria Maggiore, Ferrazzi had also been placed under surveillance in another convent: the Cappuccine convent of San Girolamo (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 125).
[43] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126.
[44] Though Polacco had died before Ferrazzi's trial, his investigation of Ferrazzi was incorporated into the trial materials (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 127; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 31). For two 1637 statements by

months later, to, among other things, never wear the Carmelite habit, and told that if she disobeyed she faced the penalty of imprisonment.[45] "I'll take it off if you wish," Ferrazzi had already said the day Polacco had ordered its removal at the convent, "but believe me, I must observe what I have promised God," according to Polacco's statements.[46]

This response by Ferrazzi likely referred to a spiritual experience she would later recount in her autobiography, in which she affirmed her long-standing spiritual vocation by noting an appearance of the Virgin, who supposedly made Ferrazzi promise to not only become a nun and found a convent, but also to "don immediately her [Saint Teresa's] habit."[47] Ferrazzi claimed to have been able to ratify this spiritual vow through a confessor who "blessed the habit," which she "put on (and always wore it under my clothes)."[48] This very habit may very well have been the same one she was wearing at the convent of Santa Maria Maggiore, especially because she noted that Polacco forced her to stop wearing it and ordered her "not to talk about it."[49] Taken together, the accounts suggest that Ferrazzi did not, in effect, always hide the habit under other garments and may have been seen somewhat publicly in it. For Polacco, this carried the potential for Ferrazzi to mark herself and be seen by others as pious–illegitimately, in his eyes. In this sense, he was well aware of the power sacred attire could ascribe to Ferrazzi.

Ultimately, despite the forceful instructions and discipline she received, Ferrazzi found it unproblematic to recount her past use of the habit and saintly instruction to do so. Most important, for her, was to be able to emphasize that she had sought to embody and

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Polacco copied in 1664, see VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112 (second folder). One is erroneously dated as 1638 (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126, 271).

[45] This inquisitor, Clemente Ricetti da Iseo was different from the inquisitor who would deal with Ferrazzi's official trial in 1664. Ricetti da Iseo worked with Cardinal Patriarch Federico Corner to determine the course of action Ferrazzi was to take (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126, 271).

[46] Quoted in Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 126.

[47] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 46.

[48] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 47.

[49] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 47.

legitimize, in the way most available to her, her religious vocation. Following through with the Virgin's orders to don the habit had more weight, in this case, than any risk of violating socially expected rules around attire–a stance that contrasted times in which she had displayed careful adherence to the social norm, such as in the last section, when Ferrazzi rejected "gold" offered to her. It is thus not difficult to imagine why Ferrazzi may have worn or wanted to wear something like a Capuchin hood, to which we turn next, which would similarly allow her to project an image of piety, and embody the religious leadership that she yearned for.

### *3.3. Confessing to a Capuchin? "When Ms. Cecilia took confession, the confession was secret"*

Ferrazzi's dress was not always merely a sign of worldly excess, as other witnesses had emphasized, but, in another case, had the potential to confer disingenuous power and authority to her, which could be (and according to some *was*) concretely acted out and embodied. The block quote cited earlier from Ferrazzi's autobiography, in which she denied a plethora of rumors including that she "dressed as a confessor and administered confession and communion," suggests that she was aware that inquisitorial attention to attire was not just about detecting immorality, but also about the illicit influence Ferrazzi had potentially wielded through a garment.

Ferrazzi was alluding, as mentioned, to allegations that she regularly disguised herself with a hooded Capuchin garment, playing the part of priest to confess the young women under her care, including by sneaking into a confessional box.[50] There had been cases of individuals in Venice, such as that of a storekeeper named Zuane, who had asked to be buried in Capuchin attire (a practice, albeit, "no longer standard" by his death in the late

[50] In some cases, witnesses claimed that Ferrazzi's helpers, or mistresses (*maestre*), conducted confessions, too (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 210); See for instance, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

sixteenth century),[51] but it was most unusual for a living laywoman to don such clothes in everyday life.

This prospect was a major concern for inquisitor Ugoni,[52] who alluded to these suspicions by asking Ferrazzi directly "whether any Capuchin had ever confessed the said girls [of the Castello household]," to which she said, "No, sir, never."[53] Ferrazzi's words nonetheless contradicted the more muddled story that emerged from many who testified to having had some form of contact with a Capuchin during their time under her roof. Ugoni repeatedly pressed witnesses to talk about whether Ferrazzi acted as their confessor or adopted Capuchin garb, even while many could not claim anything with certainty and often relied on what they had heard from others.[54] Despite their somewhat muted assertions, he continually pursued the possibility that the *putte* had been in contact with some form of a Capuchin figure, asking whether any Capuchin priest or "person dressed as a Capuchin" had ever been inside the confessional box or "in any other part of the house," which the respondent confirmed.[55] When asked if any Capuchin had ever visited, another witness asserted that there had indeed been a Capuchin priest that had sometimes gone to the house

[51] Patricia Allerston, "Consuming problems: worldly goods in Renaissance Venice," in *Material Renaissance*, ed. Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (Manchester University Press, 2007), 20, 39; Alexandra Bamji, "The Materiality of Death in Early Modern Venice," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed. Suzanna Ivanič, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 131.
[52] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 210.
[53] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 33.
[54] Asked if Ferrazzi "ever heard the confessions of the *putte* that were under her custody" ("...habbi mai sentito le Confessione delle putte ch'erano sotto la sua custodia"), the witness answered "That I do not know" ("...non so questo") (July 3, 1664, 36r, second folder); When the inquisitor asked one Lucrezia Volta whether Ferrazzi confessed those in the house, she answered "I don't know, nor have I heard that said" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30r (second folder)); Some witnesses spoke about what they had heard from others: "I heard [from someone] that…she sometimes confessed her *putte*" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 18, 1664, 17r (second folder)).
[55] The inquisitor asked if "in [dto] loco à confessare ò per altro vi Sia stato nel [dto] loco del Confessionario o in Altro loco di essa Casa, alcun [Padre] Capuccino, ò persona vestita da Capuccino." The witness seemed to imply that one of the young women saw Ferrazzi, or some figure, dressed with the Capuchin hood that covered the eyes, and had gone into the confessional (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 29v). Oddly enough, this same witness, Lucrezia had also denied knowing whether Ferrazzi had indeed administered confession (as cited in note 54), which makes this anecdote somewhat unclear about whether it was in reference to Ferrazzi.

and once preached.[56] In short, "the question of confession," as Jacobson Schutte has observed, "arises on virtually every page of the trial record,"[57] suggesting that Ferrazzi's embodiment of a confessor role was a significant if not *the* central concern during the trial.

Though most spoke in uncertain terms, witnesses like the aforementioned Florena Forni spoke assertively across two separate interrogations, claiming that Ferrazzi (not some vaguely defined priest) had heard the confession of the young women, who accepted it despite being fearful.[58] "When Ms. Cecilia took confession, the confession was secret," she claimed.[59] But, this irreverent former *putta* did not partake in the sacrament, according to her, because "being a woman like me, I wanted to receive confession from one who is actually a confessor," and, besides, she noted, there had been no "order either in print or written" commanding such a confession.[60] It seems as though Forni sought to use the space of her own interrogations to not only uphold her own integrity, but also implicitly highlight her capacity to use her senses to discern right from wrong: she had seen no documents on paper that reified Ferrazzi's authority to assume this right.

If Forni sought to establish her own sense of clarity and Christian deliberation, she seemed inclined to prove Ferrazzi's lack of these qualities and propensity towards delusion, specifically by pointing to the possibility that Ferrazzi, not only a non-priest but a woman,



[56] Asked if "...in questo loco sia capitato alcun Capuccino," the witness answered, "[He?] venne alle volte qualcheduno y visita, et y predica una volta" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 1664, 34v).
[57] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 298.
[58] Forni also claimed that Ferrazzi, after administering confession, absolved the young women, gave a benediction, and a penitence, and had the young women say a rosary prayer: "...e confessava le putte del luogo…Le putte si spaventavano però vi andavano à confessarsi, et le assolveva, e dava la beneditione, e penitenza, facendoli dir il Rosario" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21r (second folder)); In a later interrogation, she said "...le putte tenevano di confessarsi giusto come si fà dal Confessore" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).
[59] "Quando la Sra. Cecilia confessava, la confessione era segreta" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).
[60] "...essendo Donna come io, volevo confessarmi da uno che fosse confessore. Non vierano altrim [...] Ordini nè in stampa, nè in scritto che comandassero l'andar dir le sue confessione" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

dared to acquire authority that could never be her's according to Catholic doctrine.[61] She alleged that Ferrazzi told the young women before administering confession, "Don't worry about the fact that I am a woman, I am a confessor like God."[62] This rather provocative allegation seemed to point to Ferrazzi's most salient act of transgression (both for the inquisitor and community). A *woman*, fully aware of being so, was taking on the role of priest in a world in which this option was supposedly outside the realm of possibilities.[63]

Ferrazzi's alleged violation of male authority in the ecclesiastic context and hierarchy crucially shaped the inquisitor's questioning, which revolved around whether the elusive Capuchin figure was acting on authorized terms. Was this a false friar, or a real one with the official qualifications and, as was only right, a man? Ugoni's need for clarification signaled the extent to which the status quo was cast in doubt. He asked a witness, for instance, if the latter knew whether a "person who was not a priest, be it a man or a woman, heard the sins of others in confession?",[64] a version of the same question Ugoni posed at least two other times, for which he received negatives.[65] In plainer terms, he wanted to know whether any woman had assumed any form of ecclesiastical-like leadership, asking Ferrazzi in an interrogation if she "knew whether any female person had ever said mass, convening people to hear her."[66] These were worries, in short, about forbidden forms of



[61] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 207.
[62] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21r (second folder).
[63] Ferrazzi, it would seem, was not the only Venetian Inquisition female defendant accused of administering confession: two other women had come under suspicion for the same in previous cases (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 298).
[64] "...se sà che alcuna persona qual non sia sacerdote sia huomo, o donna, habbi sentiti li peccati altrui in confessione" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 3, 1664, 36r).
[65] Asked "...se sà che alcuna persona non Sacerdote habbi mai sentito le Confessioni sacramentali de penitenti" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30r); Asked "...se sà che alcun Confessore sacerdote habbi mai represa alcuna persona y haver sentito Confessioni non essendo sacerdote" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 1664, 34r).
[66] In the sixth interrogation, Ferrazzi was asked "se sappi che alcuna persona femina habbi mai detto la messa, facendo convenir le persone à sentirla" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 23, 1664, 101r).

female leadership, in which a woman wielded the threatening power to "convene" people, perhaps based in deception through disguise.

Ugoni clearly intuited the palpable power Ferrazzi carried in her domestic space. He would learn that Ferrazzi went by titles like "holy mother" (*Madre Santa*),[67] as noted in the next chapter, which not only evoked an air of sanctification, but also connoted her maternal presence in her houses as a kind of mother superior in a convent. In this sense, Ferrazzi not only violated a male hierarchy but also a female one by assuming something along the role of mother of nuns. Her sense of dominance in the space was also captured in anecdotes like that of a priest who had supposedly quit his job as the girls' confessor, having heard, according to Forni, that it was the house of a woman who "wanted to do everything her way."[68]

Though Ferrazzi denied ever having administered confession, she admitted to leading a consistent "chapter of faults," which was a common monthly practice among "professed religious [who] gathered before their superiors to admit their shortcomings in public."[69] What Forni herself had called confession in the aforementioned testimony, in fact, mirrored this kind of disciplinary measure much more than the private sacrament of confession. She had described Ferrazzi's "confession"–her asking "what sins did you commit today and what thoughts have you had?"–as communal and public occurrences ("era cosa pubblica") within the context of the house, including in a bedroom and the choir (*choro*).[70] In this sense, what some witnesses and even the inquisitor interpreted as

[67] One witness noted that they called Ferrazzi this title: "...la Sra. Cecilia, chiamata da noi la Madre Santa" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 28v); The inquisitor demonstrated an interest in the question of Ferrazzi's title, asking at one point whether she had herself called *Beata* or *Santa*: "...si Dice la Beata Cecilia; ò Santa Cecilia che così voleva esser chiamata" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21v).

[68] "...havendo sentito ch'era una Donna…e che voleva far tutto à suo modo, non [voltse] continuar" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 23r).

[69] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 210.

[70] "...che peccati haver fatto oggi, che pensieri haver havuti…" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

confession was probably a distinct practice that had similar resonances.[71] But while the evidence pointed to this nuance, the rumors and ambiguities were sufficient to generate the inquisitorial suspicion that Ferrazzi had consistently taken up some kind of ecclesiastical role she was not entitled to, aided sometimes by the materiality of sacred attire.[72]

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has explored Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with particular garments, most of which, rather than being entirely verifiable, were rumored to have belonged to her. What remains somewhat enigmatic is that Ferrazzi emerges from the documents as having donned two conflicting categories of dress: on the one hand, she was conjured as a lavishly adorned woman, and on the other, as dressing with an out-of-place ascetic style. Was she, according to her community, taken to multiple modes of deluding through dress? Had she engaged, according to them, in a kind of double deceit by wearing religious garb that projected a false image of piety and religious leadership, and, at other times, high-quality attire that suggested unwarranted social and moral distinction? These varied claims indicate the extent to which attire is constructive for gaining insight into social and religious anxieties about sensorial deception, not necessarily perfectly unified or coherent, in Ferrazzi's Venice.

The multiplicity of accusations captured in the chapter were as follows. It has traced claims about Ferrazzi's fine attire–considering how Ferrazzi's use of colorful stockings, silks, and jewelry may have flagged undue projections of upward mobility in the eyes of those around her, but was perhaps even more suggestive, for the inquisitor, of her



[71] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 210-211; Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 10.

[72] To create and support her role as religious leader, Ferrazzi used other paraphernalia, for which there is no space here but which is worth noting, including "chalices, silver vases, and a paten—which only priests should touch" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 267). For accounts of Ferrazzi's use of these objects, see VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 22r; and VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

worldliness as opposed to sanctity. The chapter has also unpacked how the monitoring of an early modern female body was reflected in inquisitorial questioning,[73] which tied her dress to propriety and morality, a logic Ferrazzi herself recognized and attempted to reject. To work against an image of worldliness that others had fashioned for her, Ferrazzi brought attention to her aspiration of religious distinction and dedication by donning a Carmelite habit, an integral manifestation of her calling.

The latter section explores Ferrazzi's alleged use of a Capuchin garb to administer confession to her charges. I have shown that the potential for Ferrazzi to embody this clandestine influence aided through attire was a point of major apprehension for both the inquisitor and witnesses like Forni, for it translated to a role women were not allowed to assume. To dress into the character of "Capuchin" and play out his responsibilities was, in practice, an act of transforming the body to gain access to specific spaces like the confessional, and to private information.

These acts may have tapped into long-standing worries about the illicit behavior that could take place in the confessional, the latter ideally meant to be "an enforcer of sensorial discipline" by obstructing contact, especially visual, between the two participants, as Wietse De Boer argues.[74] Such anxieties were flagged at the 16th-century Council of Trent, for instance, in dialogue about the possibility that clergy might be taking advantage of women



[73] Though not taken up in this chapter, one possible approach to inquisitorial suspicions about Ferrazzi's bodily behavior and attire would be to tend to what Ann Stoler calls the "archival grain," specifically by tracing the monitoring impulse of Ferrazzi's inquisitor regarding her corporeality as evident in the archival documents–through which we would gain a sense of the anxieties at the heart of his disciplining endeavors. The material marks of inquisitorial engagement (such as the visible and active underlining of her answers and those of witnesses), in other words, capture this kind of priority, and are traces which both literally and figuratively contributed to the "archive's granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mottles its hue and shapes its form." This formulation by Stoler refers to how in the case of imperial archives, following the archival grain means exploring the fragmented and ever-shifting registers of colonial "common sense," shaped by the "epistemic anxieties" of the state and its bureaucratic actors in a particular moment in time. While Ferrazzi's trial documents were not products of an imperial project, Stoler could provide a transferable lens and language with which to scrutinize inquisitorial anxieties "in action" in a future study (Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 53).

[74] Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 103-106.

they heard confession from.[75] Though not eliciting these particular worries, Ferrazzi seemed to be violating newly developing standards in early modern Europe regarding the proper placement and use of the body in sacred exchanges.

Ferrazzi seemed to know that dress shaped the possibilities of what she could do and what persona she could embody. The chapter thus provides a glimpse into a proactive Ferrazzi, who worked against and within strictures set up by male superiors in order to pursue some form of influence, at least within the domain she had carved out for herself. That her supposed use of such a garment generated so much talk demonstrates that within her community's social imaginary, attire and its disguising potential could have concrete implications and was to be taken very seriously. If the Capuchin garb only hinted at the concrete power Ferrazzi could acquire through a material object, two of Ferrazzi's paintings, the topic of the next and final chapter, provide an even more compelling link.



[75] De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*, 97-98.

## Chapter Four: Portraits Into Saints: Framing Bodily Deference to the "Madre Santa"

Cecilia Ferrazzi possessed two paintings that each bore her face–objects which would generate significant trouble in her trial.[1] Years before, Ferrazzi had her portrait painted twice by two different artists.[2] In the first case, she had been "ordered" to do so by a nobleman who supported Ferrazzi's first refuge in San Lorenzo in the 1640s or 50s.[3] In the second case, when she was running her third house in Cannaregio, her confessor at the time, "taking pleasure in paintings," similarly insisted Ferrazzi sit for one, which was "captured against my will" about eight years prior to the trial.[4] In both cases "weeping" at the imperatives, Ferrazzi nonetheless sat multiple times for their completion, and–with a few exceptions–kept them in her possession.[5]

That Ferrazzi was the subject of portraiture would not necessarily have been out of the ordinary as portraits were popular in Venetian homes.[6] What was curious was her subsequent decision to have these portraits reworked by another artist: tweaked into images

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[1] Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 13-14; Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 35.

[2] The first portrait was done by Nicolò Renieri and completed by two daughters of his who were also artists. Renieri, originally from Flanders, had moved to Venice eleven years before and was its "premier portraitist." The second portrait was done by Ermanno Stroiffi, originally from Padua but who had long lived in Venice (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Anne Jacobson Schutte, "'Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io': Painters, the Inquisition and the Shape of Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Caroline Elam and Peter Denley (London: Westfield College, Committee for Medieval Studies, 1998), 422-423).

[3] The nobleman was Sebastiano Barbarigo (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166).

[4] This confessor was Don Giovanni Andreis, who commissioned the work of Stroiffi (see note two). Upon testifying, Andreis explained that he had organized a second portrait to be made because he wanted, in Jacobson Schutte's words, "to memorialise her as the founder of the house of refuge; he considered the earlier portrait by Renieri, which showed her in secular dress, to be unsuitable for that purpose" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 35, 85; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 422-423).

[5] At one point, the first portrait was "taken by the *pievano* of San Giovanni di Rialto to his house" since Ferrazzi, having fallen ill, apparently did not want others to see the portrait (Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography*, 35).

[6] "Venice," Margaret Morse writes, "was a city well known for its domestic portraiture" (Margaret A. Morse, "Domestic Portraiture in Early Modern Venice: Devotion to Family and Faith," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 120; Margaret A. Morse, "The Venetian Portego: Family Piety and Public Prestige," in *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700*, ed. Erin J. Campbell, Stephanie R. Miller, and Elizabeth Carroll Consavari (Routledge, 2013), 95.

of saints, based on the imagery of printed *santini* provided by a priest.[7] That is, Ferrazzi–only six months before she was to be denounced to the Inquisition–arranged for the first portrait to be retouched as Saint Teresa, and the second as the Virgin Mary, specifically the Madonna of the Seven Sorrows.[8] The St Teresa was depicted in a Discalced Carmelite habit–and, according to one witness, wore a white veil and held a rose in her hand–while the Madonna wore a blue veil and was surrounded by seven arrows.[9] Both contained painted stigmata on the hands, the Madonna's with gushing blood.[10] Ferrazzi hung up these retouched works in her fourth and last refuge called San'Antonio di Castello, a large building next to a monastery: placing the St Teresa in her bedroom and the Madonna in the *choro* (choir).[11]

As many witnesses would attest to, the figures in the paintings still strikingly resembled Ferrazzi's likeness. Ferrazzi claimed in an interrogation that "He [the artist] didn't alter the face" in either painting, even as she had supposedly asked for them to be retouched "in such a way that no one would know it was I."[12] Anna Carrara, who had lived under Ferrazzi's roof for nine years, had seen the original portraits and their transformations: "I've seen those paintings changed to her own *effigie* [image, portrait], one

[7] Ferrazzi asked a priest named Giacinto Cornacchioli, "chaplain in the house at Sant'Antonio," to locate an artist and arrange for these changes based on *santini* he furnished. Cornacchioli, called for questioning, received particular heat from the inquisitors, partly because Cornacchioli's answers about whom he had commissioned for these jobs were contradictory, and because he denied knowing anything about the stigmata on the St Teresa. The Inquisition never interrogated the artists–those who had supposedly made the changes–named by Cornacchioli (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166-167; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 422).

[8] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166.

[9] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 423, 426; Lucrezia, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (cited hereafter as VeAS), busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30r.

[10] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421; Florena Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v.

[11] Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography*, 87-88; Many witnesses recounted the said location of the paintings: Anna Carrara, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, n.p. (first folder); Forni, VeAS, busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20r-20v; Lucrezia, VeAS, busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30r; Another witness, though less certain, was certainly aware of the gossip: this witness said not to know whether Ms. Cecilia had gotten portraits done of herself, but had indeed seen the Madonna in the choir, and had heard from others that this "effigie" looked like her, but was not sure whether the St Teresa looked like Cecilia (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, March 17, 1665, n.p.).

[12] Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography*, 35; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 423.

into the Madonna of the Seven Sorrows and the other into Saint Teresa."[13] What is somewhat paradoxical about this phrase is that the original portraits, by their very nature, had already captured Ferrazzi's likeness. But in pointing to the process of their reconfiguration–with saintly additions like a "white sign" on St Teresa's hands implying the stigmata, and the Madonna's dark blue veil rather than the original black–Carrara sought to underline that the paintings remained true to Ferrazzi's image: her face.[14] On account of a number of earlier, similar witness testimonies in June and July of 1664, the inquisitor physically went with a commissioner to the house, confiscated the paintings, and had them entered into evidence.[15] Tweaked portraits like these, as we will see, were not unprecedented, but Ferrazzi's set would stand out as a result of how she used them.

These objects in Ferrazzi's material cosmos, like the crucifixes and attire of the previous chapters, also suggest an embodied story, in which Ferrazzi's physicality shaped the objects' meanings and function. These paintings took on loaded meanings in the trial precisely because the mundane, portrait renderings of Ferrazzi's body, or its upper half,[16] remained plastered onto depictions of saintly bodies. In this chapter, I argue that her bodily entanglement with the paintings–functioning, on the one hand, on this representational, pictorial level, and on the other, in literal terms when Ferrazzi was in the rooms where the paintings were held and made specific demands of her charges–had concrete, embodied consequences in her domestic space that reinforced Ferrazzi's influence and authority. Put

[13] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, Anna Carrara n.p. (first folder).
[14] Carrara was among those who mentioned the stigmata on the St Teresa (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, Carrara n.p. (first folder); The artist of the painting that would later become the Madonna testified that the black veil he had painted had been changed to dark blue (Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 422).
[15] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421; Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20r-20v).
[16] Carrara made gesticulations that suggested the dimensions of the portraits included the head and upper body. She noted that "one [portrait] was large" and the other portrait, making signs noted by the inquisitor, captured the head and chest (Anna Carrara, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, n.p. (first folder)). Regarding the size of the paintings, the Madonna appeared to be larger and perhaps showing more of the body than the St Teresa: according to Forni, "the larger one was the Madonna of Seven Sorrows" (Florena Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder).

differently, this two-pronged argument suggests that, firstly, on what I will call the representational level, Ferrazzi-as-saint was largely conflated with the "real," corporeal Ferrazzi, partly because her likeness seemed to have been captured to a very convincing degree. The almost tangible, bodily presence of Ferrazzi through these paintings, I posit, served to mark and elevate her domestic authority. Secondly, Ferrazzi cultivated domestic power on a much more explicit plane when physically present before the *putte*, commanding that they use *their* bodies and embodied devotional practice (e.g., flagellation and genuflection) in front of these objects.

Just as in the previous chapters, this one potentially points to broader sensorial anxieties of the period. Whereas the last chapter emphasized worries about Ferrazzi doing the work of deceiving the senses of others (e.g., through disguise), this chapter, like that on the cross, more heavily highlights concerns about Ferrazzi's own supposed sensory delusion. Though sensorial delusion, as we have encountered it thus far, was typically understood through the prism of demonic possession–something Ferrazzi was not accused of in the context of the paintings–she may have nonetheless been acting in such a way that challenged the larger standards of sensory deliberation. This latter value, in which one worked consistently to discern what was and was not representative of the divine, may have indeed been placed under threat by Ferrazzi, who saw the paintings as legitimately sacred matter (and not tainted by any other ambitions), though many of the *putte*, as we shall see, saw it differently. The chapter begins with a brief contextualization of the broader function and use of paintings and portraits in the early modern Venetian interior, followed by a discussion of the early modern phenomenon of portraits repurposed as saint images, and concludes with a turn to the trial itself.

*4.1. Paintings in the Venetian Interior and Portraits-Turned-Saints*

A number of studies have sketched a rich picture of the devotional material culture that animated domestic devotion in early modern Italian homes.[17] Margaret Morse has provided a particularly detailed exploration of Venetian religiosity in domestic space, countering the traditional historiographical claim that Italian homes in the Renaissance were secular spheres.[18] She has demonstrated that Venetians "[claimed] ownership over aspects of the sacred experience that for centuries had been kept out of reach" by incorporating sacred things into their living spaces, thereby experiencing homes, not just ecclesiastical spheres, as holy places.[19] These were decorated, as echoed in chapter one, with prints, medals, rosaries, crucifixes, jewelry as aids to devotion, and paintings (placed across all rooms) typically containing iconographic imagery–Madonna icons being "the most popular of holy objects" within homes.[20]

By Ferrazzi's time, keeping paintings in the home was not reserved for the particularly privileged. Across early modern Italy throughout the sixteenth century, members of "ordinary homes" increasingly acquired paintings with sacred imagery, which were crafted in "enormous numbers" given the high demand.[21] Considered to be sources of inspiration for acting virtuously, and models "of sanctity to which [young household members]...should aspire,"[22] paintings featuring saints and other religious imagery were common aids in domestic devotional life. In this sense, Ferrazzi's desire to have painted

[17] Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018); Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*; Campbell, Miller, and Carroll Consavari, *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700*.
[18] Margaret A. Morse, "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian 'Casa,'" *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 153, 184.
[19] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 156.
[20] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 155, 159-161, 163; Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 90-91.
[21] Maya Corry, "Delight in Painted Companions: Shaping the Soul from Birth in Early Modern Italy," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, 310; For the values around and use of paintings in urban elite homes, see Elizabeth Carroll Consavari, "Il Mare Di Pittura: Domestic Pictures and Sociability in the Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Interior," in *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700* (Routledge, 2013).
[22] Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 102.

saints in her home fit into a larger trend of early modern Italians' acquisition of sacred goods.

Portraits, though not necessarily strictly counting as sacred objects, were not as distinct from devotional paintings as some scholars have traditionally tended to suggest.[23] Rather than occupying a rigid "opposite" from sacred works, they tended to carry a fluidity in meaning in the early modern period.[24] Many portraits shared formal qualities with sacred works, and donor portraits often explicitly incorporated religious themes.[25] In many instances the categories were intentionally blurred: some early modern elites in, though not limited to, Italy and Spain actively had their portraits made to visually evoke a saint, and in seventeenth-century Italy, a popular choice for aristocratic daughters was Saint Catherine.[26] Even a "regular" portrait of a family member in a Venetian interior could have religious resonances: it could become sacralized if considered within the "ensemble" of devotional paintings and objects that jointly adorned the space.[27] In other words, representations of kin, by being placed near sacred objects, were connected with the latter on a visual and affective plane, and could thus serve as aids to prayer. To a certain degree, Ferrazzi's paintings reflected this display practice of visual juxtaposition, but in its most exaggerated manifestation. Here, the portrait and the "religious" painting (if such a division could be conceived) were not distinct pieces on the wall implicitly put in dialogue with each other,



[23] Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 125, 132.

[24] Adam Jasienski has argued that "[t]he boundary between the categories of portraiture and religious imagery was permeable," and in considering specifically repainted portraits, has again stressed "the permeable, inchoate boundary between the sacred and secular in early modernity" (Adam Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits: Audience, Identity, and the Inquisition in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Penn State Press, 2023), 12, 20, 92).

[25] Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 119, 128-129, 132.

[26] Diane Owen Hughes, "Representing the Family: Portraits and Purposes in Early Modern Italy," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1986): 28.

[27] Portraits of generations of family members were widespread in Venetian homes (Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 120-121). Morse argues that these joint arrangements, beyond leading to devotion, were also often performative, meant to mark the family's values and even "enhance one's public standing," particularly when placed in spaces like the *portego*, which was a central, "long hall" of elite but also middling homes, and generally received guests as it was "the most public of interior spaces," (Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 89, 92-93, 100).

but rather became one and the same–not unlike the aforementioned portraits of aristocratic women.

To situate Ferrazzi's altered paintings, it is worth noting that the practice of retouching portraits with "saintly attributes" was not unheard of in the early modern period.[28] Once a portrait lost its immediate meaning (e.g., the subject was no longer familiar to viewers), it was an "anchorless portrait," as Adam Jasienski has suggested, and thus "became ripe for resignification."[29] With the passage of time, such works–which had not been envisaged as "holy" by the original artist–could be reworked by different hands, and in effect belonged to "an independent form of cultural production."[30] This kind of artistic production–portraits repainted with saintly qualities at a later moment–belong, for Jasienski, to a broad category. Namely, what he calls "sacred portraits," or "portraiture [that] came into conversation with the sphere of the sacred," and which, rather than existing as a single model, were works executed in a variety of contexts and for distinct reasons.[31]

The repurposing of portraits with religious subject matter generated conflicting responses.[32] Writing on this practice specifically within the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Hispanic world (but arguing for its relevance in Europe more broadly),[33] Jasienski posits that these kinds of adjustments often represented, on the one hand, a process of "repainting-as-improvement," or a means of raising the art to a "superior category."[34] What



[28] As Jasienski clarifies, "The amending of portraits of secular figures with saintly attributes at a later moment in the images' lives was a widespread cultural phenomenon" (Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 92); Adam Jasienski, "Converting Portraits: Repainting as Art Making in the Early Modern Hispanic World," *The Art Bulletin* 102, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 12-13.
[29] Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 8.
[30] Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 11.
[31] Jasienski draws our attention to the breadth of "sacred portraits," which include "donor portraits, portraits of sitters in the guise of saints, 'true portraits' of recently deceased but already canonized individuals, paintings of saints that merely drew on the conventions of portraiture without being actual likenesses, repainted portraits, and even royal portraits" (Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 4). Ferrazzi's repainted portraits thus belonged to a sliver of a larger body of works that played with these ambiguities.
[32] Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 93.
[33] Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 18.
[34] Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 12-13.

used to be a portrait, in other words, now held devotional value that hinged on its "universal" recognizability and could thus be palatable to any Catholic viewer as opposed to the limited sphere of individuals connected to the object in its original form.[35] On the other hand, ecclesiastical authorities sometimes condemned the practice, concerned that likening lay people to saints could problematically blur the supposed "ontological" differences between the two.[36] The stigmata on Ferrazzi's St Teresa indeed became a major source of concern for the Inquisition,[37] intent on gathering any details that revealed her fraudulent self-identification with holy figures.

What set Ferrazzi's case of repainting apart is the fact that she, crucially a non-elite, orchestrated the changes during her own lifetime and for her own use in her personal spaces. Her portraits were on the margins of, or perhaps directly outside of, the cultural grids in which sacred portraiture were generally produced. Perhaps the principle reason for this marginality was not mainly that the changes were made while Ferrazzi was still alive–which, though potentially less common, still occurred[38]–but rather that she sought to possess a saintly representation of herself without having the class legitimacy of aristocracy to do so, a point Anne Jacobson Schutte has similarly made.[39] Because Ferrazzi's actions do not easily map onto the cultural patterns of a specific circle like that of some elites, making sense of how she used the paintings crucially depends on interpretation through close readings of the trial record. Such an approach ultimately fits with Jasienski's view that portraits themselves were highly contextual and "labile" in meaning, echoed by Morse in



[35] Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 13.
[36] Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 9-10.
[37] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 422.
[38] Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 22-23.
[39] Jacobson Schutte suggests that Ferrazzi did not belong to the circles that would permit such a commission: "Even if the inquisitor knew that such elite women of the period as Vittoria della Rovere, grand duchess of Tuscany, were having themselves painted as Mary Magdalen, he may have reasoned that a 'little woman' like the defendant being depicted in the guise of two nonsinner saints amounted to presumption ill befitting her social condition" (Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 167).

relation specifically to Venetian portraits.[40] In short, considering the specific effects and uses of Ferrazzi's paintings rests on delving into the inquisitorial accounts of her domestic world, which open a significant, if limited, window.

*4.2. Painting an Accurate Picture: A Disembodied Bodily Presence?*

Many witnesses, speaking through the interrogations, remarked upon the continued uncanny resemblance of Ferrazzi's face on the transformed paintings. Florena Forni, who was the first to note the existence of the paintings in an interrogation, said "We called [the Madonna] Saint Cecilia, for looking at her and the painting was the same thing."[41] Another *putta* similarly, if less colorfully, asserted that both "the paintings resembled Ms. Cecilia."[42] Just like the facial likeness in the paintings evoked something of Ferrazzi's real bodily presence, other details noted by the *putte* also worked to conflate the bodies of the "real" Ferrazzi and the represented one.

This conflation between person and painting(s) crucially occurred through discussions about Ferrazzi's attire, the symbolic importance of which we have already observed earlier, in chapter three.[43] In short, the subject's clothing at different stages of the portraits' lives was often compared to or equated–not only by witnesses but also Ferrazzi herself–with clothes Ferrazzi supposedly wore in daily life, which further enforced the union between the artistic depiction and the person. To begin with the original portraits, a number of sartorially-related details suggest that the depicted Ferrazzi indeed aligned quite precisely with the living person. About the one that would later become St Teresa, Ferrazzi



[40] Morse similarly opines, "Portraits…are conditional expressions whose meanings are not intrinsic to the canvas or panel itself; they depend on context – the knowledge, values, spaces, and experiences of makers and viewers" (Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 119); Jasienski, "Converting Portraits," 10, 23; Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits,* 13.
[41] Quoted in Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*, 166; Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421, 423; Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder).
[42] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, n.p. (first folder).
[43] This is a reference to earlier discussion of Ferrazzi apparently dressing in various garments, including that of a Capuchin priest potentially to embody the role of confessor.

noted in an interrogation that this portrait visually overlapped with her own quotidian attire, including her black head covering and black garments.[44] The artists–a joint effort between a known painter and his two daughters–were clearly committed to rendering a faithful picture of Ferrazzi's garments, for they "had me take off what I was wearing and put on something else I had with me," so they could complete the work without her renewed visitation to the home.[45]

In the case of the second portrait (before it became the Madonna), Ferrazzi as the subject was, according to the aforementioned Carrara, also depicted in "how she went around outside of the house," namely, black garments, a mantle, and a veil crossed with cotton; Forni similarly noted black garments, but added that Ferrazzi was donned in *pavonazzo* (a historically elite "purple-red" color).[46] While it may be relatively unsurprising for the portraits to have been authentic to Ferrazzi's real-life presentation, these references are worth noting as they were enmeshed in larger claims about how Ferrazzi's image and self-fashioning was carried over in the transformed paintings. Comments about visual overlaps in the portraits, in other words, came up precisely because this theme continued to be relevant even past the portrait stage: the painted subject in the altered paintings continued to be conflated with Ferrazzi, particularly through references to attire.

Perhaps the most notable comments were Forni's, regarding the portrait-turned-Madonna, in which she enumerated a list of garments and items that confusingly blurred the Madonna's attire with the sumptuous clothes Ferrazzi herself also seemed to possess. The



[44] In an interrogation, she noted that the portrait later changed to St Teresa and currently "hung up in my room" had donned–still referring to the original portrait–Ferrazzi's typical attire: "the subject was dressed in the clothes I ordinarily wear," but, she noted, without her own typical choice of layered veils on her head (Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography*, 35).

[45] For information about the painters, see note two; Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiography*, 35.

[46] Carrara, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, n.p. (first folder); Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder); "Glossary," Refashioning the Renaissance, December 22, 2022, https://refashioningrenaissance.eu/research/glossary/; Paula Hohti, "Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation: Artisan Fashions in Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Italy," in *Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovation in Europe*, 1500-1800, ed., Evelyn S. Welch (Oxford University Press, 2017), 154.

list ambiguously transitioned at some point from the former's attire to the latter, thus leaving the painting behind and focusing on the flesh-and-blood Ferrazzi and her self-presentation in quotidian life, echoing similar descriptions we encountered in the last chapter:

> [the Madonna was dressed] with Madonna's clothes [presumably pink and blue robes], and under, had a red silk skirt, as well as a milky white skirt, and another in *pavonazza*, and one in black silk. She wore silk red stockings, milky white ones, and stockings of all kinds of colors, the kind worn by the girls [the *putte*], and she took those items from them along with [the previously mentioned][47] shoes in the Roman style trimmed with gold decoration.[48]

Clearly, not all of these items fit inside the frame: surely the subject of the painting could not have been wearing all of these variously colored stockings at once–if stockings, as it were, could even be seen within the constraints of the painting's dimensions.[49] The descriptive "bleeding" outside of the image signaled that Forni began reflecting on Ferrazzi's attire beyond the painting. Forni evidently recalled Ferrazzi's supposed possession of luxurious items like fine shoes and colorful garments that–implicitly unlike a saintly figure like the Madonna–were obtained from purportedly stealing from some *putte*. In this way, the "real" Ferrazzi and her everyday dress and behavior shaped how spectators like Forni "read" the paintings, just as much as, conversely, the paintings shaped how they might then see Ferrazzi. The latter's bodily practices of self-fashioning, in other words, became inseparable from the meaning of the paintings. Forni's rather traceable conflation between the Madonna and Ferrazzi also potentially highlights that the paintings invoked, at least in the imagination, a sense of Ferrazzi's everyday bodily presentation and corporeality.

Given this faithfulness to Ferrazzi's real flesh and the visual nods to how Ferrazzi actually dressed, the paintings may have been stylistically analogous to works evoking a sense of naturalism. That is, they may have visually reminded viewers of a kind of painting

[47] This description of Ferrazzi's shoes was cited in chapter two.
[48] Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v (second folder).
[49] See note sixteen.

increasingly circulating in Venice and the Veneto in the period, which depicted holy individuals portrayed in a naturalistic style.[50] This trend of "increased naturalism" had already begun by the late fifteenth century, in which both portraits and many sacred works were rendered in "bust or half-length" without a "narrative setting."[51] Taken on by artists like Bellini and Tiziano, this aesthetic sensibility led to the depiction of real-like subjects situated in believably conceived settings, a style which was also shared among Flemish artists–much admired by Venetians.[52] While there is no way of knowing whether the artists (either of the original portraits or of their repainted versions) intentionally worked within this naturalistic paradigm, we might imagine that on the reception end of Ferrazzi's paintings, viewers were already accustomed to iconic works that assumed such a realism, able to reflect back viewers' own corporeality. The paintings in the Castello house, like many of the said artworks in Venice, conjured a person that appeared believably real and even tangible.

This sense of palpability was perhaps particularly marked in early modern encounters with painted works. Morse has noted that for early modern individuals, "likenesses and effigies were believed to be the physical embodiments of the persons they depicted,"[53] suggesting that people may have related to portraits not as mere representations, but also as carrying an element of the "real" person. Such a belief may not have necessarily translated, for Forni and the other *putte*, into the conclusion that there was a quasi-incarnation of Ferrazzi held within the paintings. Forni's ironic tone when recalling that the household sometimes called the Madonna "Saint Cecilia," in fact, suggests a critical distance to the paintings, which mapped on more generally to many of the *putte*'s

[50] Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 96.
[51] Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 128-129.
[52] Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 96.
[53] Morse, "Domestic Portraiture," 21.

skepticism about the sacred quality of these particular painted saints.[54] As Forni recounted, "many [*putte*] said they did not have faith in that Madonna and did not want to say the prayers that she told us we had to say [to it] every day."[55] Rather, these objects may have served simply as acute reminders of Ferrazzi's physical presence and domestic power, precisely because of such demands as praying before the Madonna.

The paintings' accurate depiction of Ferrazzi's likeness along with the visual overlap (as well as conflation) of the fashioned body, I have suggested thus far, were capable of evoking Ferrazzi's embodied presence even in her absence. If Ferrazzi's bodily imposition came through in these objects, the paintings likely served, even if at one level a source of jocularity among the young women, as bolstering referents of Ferrazzi's authority and role as leader. If the "disembodied" Ferrazzi, or the one the *putte* recognized in the paintings and often conflated with the corporeal one, evoked her authority and household power, then, a second layer of bodily entanglement with these objects more explicitly and dramatically did the same. This time it was the bodies of the young women themselves which became "entangled" with the paintings, for Ferrazzi demanded particular forms of devotional interaction with these works–the focus of the next section–which served to heighten her domestic power.

### *4.3. "Pay it the same respect that is paid to the Lord": Deference Before Ferrazzi*

Before delving into the ways the paintings took on this unique function (i.e., a means for Ferrazzi to enforce authority), it is worth outlining how her use of the paintings were nonetheless embedded in larger cultural practices of domestic devotion. In introducing what she saw as sacred paintings into the home, Ferrazzi was participating in the widespread

[54] On skeptical stances more generally towards paintings and their use as devotional aids, Jasienski notes, "In practice…many early modern Catholics expressed skepticism that a religious image could spontaneously generate devotion in those who saw it" (Jasienski, *Praying to Portraits*, 105).
[55] Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder).

practice, as already mentioned, within Venetian homes of sacralizing "ordinary space," which could be transformed by displaying "charged images and object[s]."[56] In previous houses like the one in Cannaregio, as one witness would attest to, Ferrazzi had used the choir–the type of room the Madonna would later be placed in within the Castello house–as a location for collective devotion aided by books and a bell. The choir became a sacred place, in other words, through group devotional-sensorial experience of objects.[57] Ferrazzi gathered the girls to recite the rosary prayer ("la Corona del Signore") and "one [girl] also read the Gospel, the epistles, and the one who wanted to would read the missal out loud…[and Cecilia] had the little bell rung to have us congregate in the choir."[58] Bodily participation was thus integral to these devotional activities, which involved, for instance, the aural faculty through the communal reading, and the sounding of the bell to mark a liturgical transition.

These experiences of worship, moreover, most likely also included the activation of sight amidst decorated walls. We know the choir in the Castello house, in turn, did display paintings: beyond Ferrazzi's portrait-turned-Madonna, a Madonna di Concettione was placed next to it, and another painted work Ferrazzi also apparently possessed (depicting the Madonna, St Catherine, and St Rocco) may have been accompanying those.[59] As in many other Venetian homes, Ferrazzi had placed an oil lamp to light up a painting.[60] In this case, as Forni provocatively claimed, it was to illuminate the infamous Madonna, that is, the

[56] Morse, "The Venetian Portego," 103.
[57] This kind of collective religiosity is characteristic of early modern Italy laypeople's domestic devotion, since, in the words of Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, "for ordinary Catholics the home was a place for religious instruction and reading, prayer and meditation, communal worship, miracles, multi-sensory devotions, the contemplation of religious images and the performance of rituals" (Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, ed., *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (Brill, 2018), 20).
[58] These practices seem characteristic of "Early modern Catholicism [which] was full of sounds that were specific to this faith: preachers' voices, songs, *Te Deums*, bells, hymns" (Simone Laqua-O'Donnell, "Catholic Piety and Community," in "The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation - 1st Editio," 294); VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, 1665, n.p. (first folder).
[59] Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665 (first folder); Forni, VeAS, busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v.
[60] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 165-166.

former portrait: "she kept the lamp lit on the Madonna continually throughout the night."[61] All of these details about the collective space of the choir across different houses, when considered jointly, suggest that Ferrazzi made use of a number of objects and rites to create a richly sensorial atmosphere of devotion that was common practice.

We might even consider Ferrazzi's use and setup of various items as a kind of informal altar space, which was also not uncommon.[62] Indeed, Forni, right after noting the Madonna's gushing stigmata in the painting, asserted that "here next to it were the Passion nails and the Crown of Thorns on a little table."[63] This is a somewhat ambiguous phrase, for it could be interpreted, on the one hand, as referring to a depiction within the Madonna painting itself,[64] or, on the other, to an actual small table–perhaps displaying artisanal versions of the crown and nails–placed near the painting. Regardless of whether there was an actual physical table mirroring the work of an informal altar, all of the paintings and oil lamp within the choir along with the collective practices of worship that tended to take place in it cohesively created a sensorial experience–visual, tactile, sonic–that aligned, at least from a distance, with common scenes of domestic encounters with the divine.

But what distinguished this sacralized space and practice from other Venetian homes were Ferrazzi's former portraits and their particular use–to which we will now turn–which not only pushed against the norms of "licit" curations of sacred domestic space (since they bore a living inhabitant's face that Ferrazzi encouraged members to pray to), but also, according to various testimonies, led to more somber forms of using the body and sensoriality for devotion. Where Ferrazzi may have seen herself as instituting an early



[61] Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v.
[62] Morse, "Creating Sacred Space," 170, 174, 176; Ferrazzi, as footnoted in chapter one, in at least one of her houses also appeared to possess some kind of altar, placed within a small chapel (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 24, 1664, 101v).
[63] "[E]t cui vicino stanno le Chiodi e Corona di spine [sa] un tavolino" (Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v).
[64] This is how Jacobson Schutte interprets the phrasing, but its ambiguity opens up alternative meanings (Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421)

modern Italian educational ideal based in playful encouragements towards devotion and sensorial pleasure among the household's children–including by exposing them to sacred paintings and use of home altars[65]–she, in practice, created an atmosphere often experienced as oppressive.

Ferrazzi exercised considerable power by dictating how the *putte*'s own physicality was to be employed for devotional expression before the paintings, which included flagellation and genuflection as well as the kissing of the canvas. One day, Ferrazzi demanded, for instance, that the *putte* flagellate their bodies before the St Teresa in Ferrazzi's room. Anne Jacobson Schutte, quoted here, summed up some of these orders from Ferrazzi, who had returned from a procession in San Marco:

> [A] former inmate, Lucrezia Volta…testified about the use to which Ferrazzi put the portrait of herself as St Teresa. Returning from a flagellant procession on Good Friday, she had allegedly said, "Look, girls, you must beat yourselves in front of this picture." While she watched, the girls proceeded to beat themselves bloody, "and if anyone did not flagellate herself as the Holy Mother wished, she herself beat the girl very hard."[66]

As this account suggests, these particular young women's encounters with the painting were wrapped up in violent bodily expression. Characterized by self-flagellation and the enduring of beatings, their embodied devotion (whether authentic or not), stood in marked contrast to the previously discussed collective worship. Here, their bodies became a site for Ferrazzi, their "Holy Mother" (*Madre Santa*), to mark her dominion of the space. It was thus the bodies of the *putte*, not just that of Ferrazzi, that became entangled with the signification process of the paintings. This use of flagellation,[67] for Ferrazzi, may have flourished from a



[65] Maya Corry, "Delight in Painted Companions: Shaping the Soul from Birth in Early Modern Italy," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Corry, Faini, and Meneghin, vol. 59 (Brill, 2019), 319-321, 323.

[66] Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421; Lucrezia, VeAS, busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30r.

[67] In her oral autobiography, Ferrazzi described a number of instances in which she engaged in self-flagellation (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 25, 44, 65). The inquisitor followed up on the aforementioned account, asking whether Ferrazzi flagellated herself while the young women did, and the witness claimed Ferrazzi only watched and was ready to beat the girls if they did not do so hard enough: "...essa non si batteva mà stava à vedere, per batter quelle che non si battevano à forte (VeAS, busta 112, June 30, 1664, 30v).

place of genuine inspiration after participating in a vibrant procession, which was often a highly corporeal and unifying collective event in Venice.[68] But in practice, her domestic re-creation of the day's experience seemed to point to her use of the paintings, whether consciously or not, as a means of establishing discipline.

Such a scene from the day of the procession was not a one-off moment, but rather was suggestive of a constellation of embodied practices–supposedly to honor the divine, its manifestations, or more generally show respect–cultivated by Ferrazzi. One of these practices was that of genuflection. One witness, who claimed Ferrazzi was a false saint, for instance, relayed an interaction someone else, in turn, had recounted involving kneeling: Ferrazzi had allegedly shown her hands and "said they were the stigmata," and made the person kneel before her.[69] While this anecdote may not have been true, Ferrazzi's interest in this form of expressing respect (the physical lowering of the body) came up consistently in other accounts, with the term "ingenocchiarsi,"[70] meaning "to kneel," appearing considerably in the testimony of witnesses. Sometimes it was Ferrazzi herself who kneeled before some of the young women, as noted in chapter one. Kneeling thus constituted ritualized behavior that Ferrazzi not only encouraged in others but also performed herself.[71]

Much in the same way, kissing someone's garments or feet were critical forms, in Ferrazzi's eyes, of demonstrating deference. After having allegedly heard their confession (as discussed in the previous chapter), Ferrazzi apparently sometimes had the girls kiss each

[68] Aiming to provide a portrait of "the ways in which sight, smell, and above all sound…were experienced in this most theatrical of spaces [San Marco]," Ian Fenlon has written about the "theatre" of the *andata*, or procession, which was "the most common ritual event" that took place in the piazza (332, 338, 341). He posits that these were sensorially rich experiences, involving "a kaleidoscopic sequence of colours, sounds, and smells" (354). These sensorially-experienced objects like candles, for instance, were carried by locals and pilgrims in these rituals, and held meaningful cognitive and spiritual value as potent liturgical symbols that took on a local significance associated with the cult of Saint Mark (351-352) (Iain Fenlon, "Piazza San Marco: Theatre of the Senses, Market Place of the World," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed.Wietse De Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2012).

[69] VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 17, 1664, 14r (second folder).

[70] This is as it is typically spelled in the trial record.

[71] Another example features Ferrazzi's genuflection towards a superior after she had offended him (Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 23r (second folder)).

others' feet.[72] Though prostrating at or kissing someone's feet out of respect, particularly towards a figure of religious authority, has a long and global history,[73] this kind of act within Ferrazzi's context perhaps sticks out as somewhat unusual. She may have been generally informed by practices like kissing the feet of a Virgin Mary statue, which was done among some Venetians (at least in the middle ages) in response to Byzantine-style statues located in San Marco Square, which have "prominent feet that seem polished by devotion."[74] While Ferrazzi may not have kissed sacred feet of stone, she had also shown this form of deference–according to her autobiography–upon encountering a living female superior: when held at the convent of Santa Maria Maggiore, she "knelt on the ground and kissed the Mother Abbess's feet," upon entering the space.[75] Ferrazzi clearly found this expression fitting for the kind of culture of submission–not only towards Ferrazzi implicitly but also between the *putte*–that she desired to create in the space.[76]

The physical performances of kneeling and kissing she encouraged between members of the household, moreover, shaped how Ferrazzi wanted the *putte* to interact with the other painting, the Madonna, in the choir. "See that portrait there," Ferrazzi allegedly

[72] "...facendoli…andar à baciar i piedi à tutte le altre" (Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 21r (second folder)).
[73] Joanna Cannon, "Kissing the Virgin's Foot: Adoratio Before the Madonna and Child Enacted, Depicted, Imagined," *Studies in Iconography* 31 (2010): 1-2, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23924976; See also, Elliott S. Horowitz, "Between Submission and Intimacy: Hand and Foot Kissing among Jews and Christians in Early Modern Europe," *Interstizi* (2010): 333-56.
[74] Cannon, "Kissing the Virgin's Foot," 20.
[75] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 62.
[76] Some evidence suggests that Ferrazzi herself also received kisses of deference. One witness, for instance, mentioned having kissed Ferrazzi's hands, which appeared, according to the witness, to bear something like the stigmata (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 3, 1664, 36v). Ferrazzi, however, often denied this kind of encounter (as noted in the previous chapter when she denied having her feet kissed), and in some instances reported actively rejecting such advances. Ferrazzi shared in her second interrogation, for instance, that when a *dimessa*, an uncloistered pious woman, visited her and "she tried to kiss my hand, I hit her in the face" after Ferrazzi had shown the woman wounds that looked like those of Christ as a result of an ecstatic experience, recounted in chapter two (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 30, 89). In a similar vein, one witness claimed that Ferrazzi twice slapped a woman who had genuflected before her and tried to kiss Ferrazzi's garment, after which Ferrazzi allegedly forced the woman to stay kneeled in the choir (*choro*) the whole rest of the day (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

said, "and pay it the same respect that is paid to the Lord."[77] She apparently asked that the girls, anytime they passed in front of the Madonna, genuflect in front of it and "kiss the hem of the Madonna's garment."[78] This kind of order seemed to parallel how Ferrazzi herself expected to be treated. The kissing of the depicted hem, though framed by Ferrazzi as due devotion to the Virgin, seemed tied to the bodily treatment that Ferrazzi allegedly expected towards herself: the same witness, Forni, claimed that Ferrazzi sought for her *own* mantle to sometimes be kissed by her charges, who would go "two by two" to Ferrazzi, who was seated.[79] Perhaps these analogous scenes suggest yet again that the subjects in the paintings were inextricably tied to the living Ferrazzi, and that, consequently, for the *putte* to show respect to the depicted subjects ultimately implied performances of deference to Ferrazzi. Such attempted control of the *putte*'s embodied devotion ultimately functioned as a tactic for maintaining a decisive role within the house and to dictate the terms for what respect to Ferrazzi, either directly or indirectly, looked like. Both the Madonna and the St Teresa were thus part of Ferrazzi's architecture of control based in ritualized uses of the body.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have argued that Ferrazzi's physicality, enmeshed in the portraits as well as in their altered form, crucially evoked something of her tangible presence, and thus potentially served as a continual reminder of her imposing role as leader in the household. The striking accuracy of her features, paired with the discursive work of spectators

[77] "...e quando essa ci mostrava…suo Ritratto, ci diceva pubblicamente Vardè là quel Ritratto, e porteghe quel rispetto che si porta al Signore (Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v); Quoted in Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421.

[78] Forni, VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, June 23, 1664, 20v; Cited from Jacobson Schutte, "Questo non è il ritratto," 421.

[79] Though Ferrazzi denied this kind of encounter (see note 76), she also recounted a story in her autobiography that suggested she indeed sometimes allowed her garments to be kissed: the Virgin had purportedly warned her about "that rapacious wolf," or young nobleman who had been observing her praying near a window, according to Ferrazzi, and who had "intended to assault me" but then experienced a change of heart and "took my skirt and kissed it, crying for pardon and mercy" after Ferrazzi had "opened the door for him" (Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 68-69).

"...mi ricordo che stava sentata, e ci faceva andar à due, à due à bacciarli il manto" (VeAS, Savi all'eresia (Sant'Ufficio), busta 112, July 8, 1665).

themselves, who made connections between the corporeal Ferrazzi and the depicted one (particularly by discussing her attire) contributed to Ferrazzi "coming alive" in the domestic space through these paintings.

The chapter has also shown that although Ferrazzi hung up the paintings "to please the girls and have pictures in the house,"[80] many of the young women's stories about the objects suggested the opposite of pleasure. Their bodily experience of the paintings–though distantly analogous to those of domestic devotional practices which activated the senses through objects like books and instruments–were embedded in a sometimes violent, or in some way demanding, use of their bodies. It was not simply Ferrazzi's own bodily entanglement with the paintings that created a sense of her authoritative presence, then, but also that of the *putte*, which helped her cultivate and reinforce a powerful role.



[80] Ferrazzi, *Autobiography*, 35.

## Conclusion

This thesis has traced Cecilia Ferrazzi's bodily entanglement with three kinds of objects–crosses, clothing, and canvases–integral to her everyday life. Employing an embodied lens to this material culture, the chapters have shown that Ferrazzi's body fundamentally shaped how she encountered and used these objects–giving way in some cases to instances of embodied action that reinforced her authority. In the first analytical chapter, chapter two, I demonstrated that her contact with crucifixes not only generated embodied knowledge–removed from immediate theological interventions on the part of her superiors–but also posed a licit means of expressing theatrical protest, all of which were concrete ways in which Ferrazzi expressed subtle autonomy and even defiance.

Chapter three explored Ferrazzi's purported possession of specific garments, demonstrating that in each case, whether "worldly" or "religious," the clothes signaled immoral or transgressive presentations of the self. On the one hand, her reported high quality and even sumptuous items connoted immorality, and, on the other, her use of a Carmelite habit and Capuchin garb signaled Ferrazzi's daring decision to step into roles that were supposedly out of bounds for someone of her lay status or gender. Her alleged role as confessor, the primary concern of the inquisitor, most poignantly represented how the use of an object could facilitate concrete, embodied power in her domestic space.

Chapter four suggested that Ferrazzi assumed domestic authority by marking her "disembodied" yet palpable presence through transformed portraits displayed in the Castello house. She also asserted this dominance by demanding that her charges use their own bodies–by kissing one of the paintings as well as engaging in self-flagellation and kneeling–in response to the works. Throughout each of these chapters, male representatives of ecclesiastical and inquisitorial authority, including confessors, priests, and the inquisitor, often appeared to condemn Ferrazzi's engagement with material things, and, in tandem,

invoked both her supposed satanic delusion and purposeful deceit of others. I have argued that these reactions at least partially stemmed from a paradigm of sensory misuse, set by long-standing sensibilities that crescendoed during the Reformation and Counter Reformation, and left a cultural mark in Ferrazzi's context. Fitting into these larger sensory priorities across Europe, in other words, Ferrazzi's interactions with superiors in her "micro" world pointed to and were informed by broadly experienced anxieties of the time. This aspect of Ferrazzi's lived religiosity suggests that she was a representative laywoman of her period rather than an exceptional one.

The ultimate focus, however, in engaging with Ferrazzi's daily life, was not primarily that of illuminating a general picture through a study of the micro. While the project pointed in that direction by situating the inquiry within a pressing sensory culture, the more immediate concern was to gain a sense of how the categories of material culture and embodiment were working in one particular time and place: how they were central to the ways Ferrazzi related to power. The thesis has thus mainly attempted to showcase textured accounts of her material world and what her embodied encounters with it allowed her to do. Taking up this embodied approach has constructively opened space to examine registers of control, including scrutiny of Ferrazzi's corporeality, and Ferrazzi's own impulses to dictate her charges' bodily expression of devotion. The approach has simultaneously drawn our attention to Ferrazzi's expressions of "agency and resistance," to return to Kathleen Canning's phrasing noted in the introduction.

The sources and Ferrazzi's considerable narrative influence in them continually brought into question what was real and false. What do we make of the material world she and others described? To what extent can we ultimately ascribe power and authority, crucially facilitated through material things as I have argued, to a woman who not only faced continual surveillance by superiors, but also the latter's consistent claims that much of

what she experienced was false? Despite the structural strictures she faced, the project has indeed assumed a recuperative strategy: to retrieve palpable instances of Ferrazzi's autonomy and to take seriously her own understanding of what was real.

Perhaps a future study could take up Ferrazzi's world–whether material, bodily, or other–with a more pronounced gender history, and specifically feminist, lens. Ferrazzi displayed remarkable mobility through Venice, moving between her houses and churches, and, at least for festive occasions, to and from Piazza San Marco. To what extent did this considerable bodily movement capture a story of female independence, which was particularly available to women under the patrician class? Returning to the accusation itself, could "pretense" of holiness be read as self-empowerment?

Another direction ripe with possibilities, following the fashionable global turn within material culture studies, would be to consider Ferrazzi's possessions in relation to a larger culture and economy of circulating goods in a port city context. To what extent was her material world and that of her contemporaries directly shaped by "the global," by networks of moving goods and people? Perhaps ironically absent from this project, moreover, were "actual" artifacts one might find in a museum and incorporate into a scholarly study–a route not taken, given the focused emphasis on textual-oral references to objects; but what would it look like to study Ferrazzi's inquisitorial records by considering extant early modern Italian material culture, which might methodologically inform one's reading of the sources? The documents, in short, have the potential to illuminate many stories, and this thesis has sought to shed light on one.

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