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The singular tomb of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome

Lotte van ter Toolen

When visiting Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, it might strike the attentive observer that this church contains three fifteenth-century tomb monuments that look very much alike. The first is located in the Cappella di San Girolamo, the second one in the Cappella di Santa Caterina, and the third one in the sacristy of the church: each contains an effigy of the deceased, a relief depicting a religious scene beneath a classicizing arch, and an elaborate inscription.¹ But although these monuments are almost identical in appearance, there is one important characteristic that makes the tomb of the Cappella di San Girolamo unique: namely the fact that it commemorates not one, but *two* persons. This is the tomb of the brothers Cristoforo (†1478) and Domenico della Rovere (†1501) (Fig. 1).

Interestingly, this monument contains only one sarcophagus and one effigy, while other double tomb monuments of the same period often include the effigies of both of the deceased, either in full-length or in the form of portrait busts.² As it might easily be overlooked that the tomb in Santa Maria del Popolo commemorates two individuals, the choice to represent only one of the deceased seems quite surprising. Indeed, not all art historians who studied either this monument or the chapel in which it is located seem to be aware of the fact that this is a double tomb monument and that it commemorates two members of the Della Rovere family, although this is mentioned in the inscriptions (appendix 1).³ In order to determine how the confusing presence of

¹ Andrea Bregno and Mino da Fiesole, *Tomb monument of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere*, ca. 1478-1481, Cappella di San Girolamo; School of Andrea Bregno, *Tomb monument of Cardinal Giorgio de Costa*, ca. 1480, Cappella di Santa Caterina; School of Andrea Bregno, *Tomb monument of Pietro Guglielmo Rocca*, ca. 1483, sacristy. For more information on Andrea Bregno and this type of tomb monument, see M. Kühnlenthal, 'Andrea Bregno in Rom', in: *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, Band 32 (1997/1998), pp. 179-272.

² Double tomb monuments (i.e. tombs commemorating two individuals) in Renaissance Rome were the subject of my research master's thesis (2014, University of Groningen, the Netherlands). During my research, I found and studied twelve double tomb monuments in total. An example with two portrait busts is the tomb of Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo in San Pietro in Vincoli, which was possibly made by Luigi Capponi in 1498. An example of a double tomb monument with effigies in full length is that of Philippe and Eustache de Levis in Santa Maria Maggiore, which was made by Andrea Bregno and his workshop in 1475.

³ See for example L.P. Bauman, 'Piety and public consumption: Domenico, Girolamo, and Julius II della Rovere at Santa Maria del Popolo', in: I.F. Verstegen (ed.), *Patronage and dynasty: the rise of the della Rovere in Renaissance Italy*, Kirksville, MO, Truman State University Press, 2007, pp. 39-62; and C. La Malfa, 'The Chapel of San Girolamo in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. New evidence for the discovery of the Domus Aurea', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 63 (2000), pp. 259-270. Both Bauman and La Malfa discuss the Cappella di S. Girolamo in depth, but mention Domenico della Rovere merely as the commissioner of both the chapel and the tomb monument.

only one effigy should be interpreted, it is therefore necessary to take a closer look at this tomb and its inscriptions.



Fig. 1: Andrea Bregno and Mino da Fiesole, *Tomb monument of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere*, circa 1478-1481, Rome, Santa Maria del Popolo, Cappella di San Girolamo (Photo: Lotte van ter Toolen).

It was Domenico della Rovere who gave the commission for this tomb monument after his older brother Cristoforo had died in 1478. The tomb was to be placed in the Cappella di San Girolamo in Santa Maria del Popolo, a chapel which Domenico already owned and had dedicated to Saint Jerome and the Virgin. The chapel's decorations were made by Pinturicchio, who painted scenes of the life of Saint Jerome in the five lunettes and the altarpiece showing *The Adoration of the Christ Child*.⁴ Although the frescoes and the altarpiece are generally dated ca. 1490, this date is not entirely certain. The tomb overlaps the painted decoration of the chapel in such a way that it seems probable that these decorations had been finished before the commission for the tomb was given, which would mean that the frescoes were made before 1479.⁵

⁴ The five lunettes depict *St. Jerome's Disputation*, *St. Jerome in the Desert*, *St. Jerome Extracting a Thorn from a Lion's Paw*, *St. Jerome in his Study*, and *St. Jerome's Death*. The right wall of the chapel is covered by the tomb monument of Cardinal Giovanni de Castro (†1506), which is the only element in this chapel that is not connected to Domenico della Rovere.

⁵ This has been argued by La Malfa, 'The Chapel of San Girolamo', cit., p. 269. Moreover, she points to the inscriptions that are present in this chapel, which provide further clues as to the dating of the decorations and the tomb. In the lower inscription of the Della Rovere monument Domenico is referred to as cardinal of San Vitale, a title which he acquired only after Cristoforo's death in 1478, when he succeeded him in this position. However, on 13 August 1479 Domenico was assigned another titular church: San Clemente. Given that Cristoforo died in 1478 and the inscription mentions Domenico as cardinal of

As Domenico was the one who had acquired the rights for this chapel and had paid for its decorations, it is not surprising that he wanted to be commemorated there as well. Interestingly, the church of Santa Maria del Popolo was already quite strongly associated with the Della Rovere name. Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere, 1471-1484), had paid for the reconstruction of the church, which was completed in 1477; Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere had commissioned a new high altar in 1473; and Domenico had acquired the rights of the Cappella di Santa Caterina and that of the Cappella di San Girolamo.⁶ The Della Rovere coat of arms, an oak tree, can therefore be found multiple times inside the church. It should be noted, however, that although they have the same last name, Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere were not close relatives of Pope Sixtus IV. The two brothers stemmed from another branch of the Della Rovere family, but the misconception that they belonged to the same family was not something they actively tried to rectify.⁷

The Della Rovere monument is attributed to Andrea Bregno and Mino da Fiesole.⁸ It consists of an architectural framework reminiscent of triumphal arches from classical Antiquity, with at the center of the monument an effigy of one of the deceased lying in state on a sarcophagus. The area below the arch contains a relief of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child, flanked by two adoring angels. This religious scene is probably the only part of this tomb which was executed by Mino da Fiesole. The relief on the wall behind the sarcophagus, depicting two candelabra and a crozier, can be understood as a reference to an altar, as traditionally these objects were displayed on the altar table during Mass. The association with this ceremony gives an extra significance to the presence of the Virgin and Child in the upper zone: not only is there an eternal Mass for the deceased being represented here, but also a reference to the heavenly intercession.

The pillars and arch of the framework are covered with *grotesche* decorations containing acorns as a reference to the last name of the deceased. This same reference can be recognized in the decoration of the sarcophagus, which besides garlands, medals and ribbons also contains acorns, sprouting up at the base where the paws support the casket. This allusion to the name 'della Rovere' stands out even more as their armorial bearings, placed on either side of the lower inscription, contain acorns as well. In addition to the oak tree the escutcheon displays the letters 'S.D.', an abbreviation of Domenico's motto *Soli Deo*, and is topped by a cardinal's hat to refer to his being a cardinal.

The inscriptions

The monument holds two inscriptions: the first takes up the lower part of the monument together with the Della Rovere coat of arms and the second one can be found on the sarcophagus in the form of a *tabula ansata*. Without reading these inscriptions, it is impossible to understand that this tomb commemorates two

San Vitale, the commission for the tomb monument must have been given shortly after Cristoforo's death and before Domenico received his new title. Interestingly, the inscription on the altar *does* refer to Domenico as cardinal of San Clemente, which means that the altarpiece and its frame were made once he had received his new title.

⁶ Bauman, 'Piety and public consumption', cit., pp. 39-42 and S.E. Zuraw, *The sculpture of Mino da Fiesole (1429-1484)*, Ann Arbor, MI, UMI, 1993, p. 980. Domenico sold the Cappella di Santa Caterina to Cardinal Giorgio Costa in 1488. It is also conceivable that Cristoforo and Domenico each owned one of these chapels in Santa Maria del Popolo. Possibly, the Cappella di Santa Caterina used to belong to Cristoforo and came into Domenico's possession after his death, but this remains uncertain (C. Tenivelli, *Biografia Piemontese. Decade IV, parte I*, Turin, Giammichele Briolo, 1789, p. 107).

⁷ See Zuraw, *The sculpture of Mino da Fiesole*, cit., pp. 982-983.

⁸ This attribution has been generally accepted, see Zuraw, *The sculpture of Mino da Fiesole*, cit., p. 977, and Kühenthal, 'Andrea Bregno in Rom', cit., pp. 225-226.

individuals. Even the beholder who casts a quick glance at the lower inscription might still fail to notice that this is a double tomb monument, seeing that there is just one date of death mentioned.⁹ Only the more careful reader will discover that Domenico made this monument ‘for his brother, who deserved it, and for himself’:

To Cristoforo della Rovere, cardinal priest of San Vitale,
outstanding because of his learning, morality and his piety.
Domenico, successor of the title and office due to the benevolence of Pope Sixtus IV,
has placed this tomb for his brother, who deserved it, and for himself.
He lived 43 years, 7 months and 19 days,
he died in the 8th year of Sixtus's pontificate, 1 February.¹⁰

This chapel used to contain a slab indicating Domenico's burial more clearly, but unfortunately this inscription does not exist anymore. It has, however, been recorded by the historian Pietro Luigi Galletti in his collection of Roman inscriptions, which was first published in 1760.¹¹ According to Galletti, it was placed in the floor and stated that Domenico della Rovere had founded the chapel and rested here *pro tempore*, i.e. ‘for the time being’.¹² This statement of temporariness is not surprising as in his last will Domenico expressed the wish to eventually be buried in Turin. And indeed, two years after he had been buried in Santa Maria del Popolo his remains were transferred to his native city, while his heart remained with his brother in Rome.¹³ But even though this monument cannot justly be called Domenico's final resting-place, it is important to note that the transfer of his remains does not alter the fact that the tomb monument is meant to commemorate two persons. Not only is this supported by the still existing lower inscription, as mentioned above, but also by the upper one on the sarcophagus, the translation of which runs as follows:

Just as you might say that our harmonious souls
and godly minds were one, so shall our mingled ashes
follow suit, and it will please [us] that they be thought
those of a single body.¹⁴

Thus this inscription puts the appearance of the tomb monument in a whole new perspective, suggesting that the presence of only one effigy should be seen as a symbol of brotherly love.¹⁵

⁹ The date of death mentioned in the inscription (1 February 1478) is Cristoforo's.

¹⁰ See appendix 1 for the Latin inscription.

¹¹ P.L. Galletti, *Inscriptiones Pedemontae infimi aevi Romae exstantes*, Rome, Generosi Salomoni, 1766, p. 17, no. 6.

¹² ‘DOMINICVS RVVERE CARD | TIT S CLEMENTIS QVI AEDEM | HANC A FVNDAMENTIS PER | FECIT HIC PRO TEMPORE | QUIESCIT’. Before citing the inscription, Galletti mentions its location: *ibidem*, which in this case is the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, and *humi*, meaning ‘ground’.

¹³ Zuraw, *The sculpture of Mino da Fiesole*, cit., pp. 985-987. Domenico's testament was printed in the eighteenth century, see Tenivelli, *Biografia Piemontese*, cit., pp. 170-193, and has partially been reprinted by Zuraw, cit., pp. 986-987. The separation of the body after death was not uncommon, see M.J. Gill, ‘Death and the Cardinal: The Two Bodies of Guillaume d'Estouteville’, in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), pp. 347-388, especially pp. 350-351. The burial plans discussed in this article are similar to those of Domenico della Rovere: Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville (†1483) wished to be buried in Rome in the church of Sant'Agostino, while his heart was to be interred in the cathedral of Rouen in France.

¹⁴ This is an adapted version of the translation by Tyler Lansford (*The Latin inscriptions of Rome. A walking guide*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 339). His translation of the word *animos* (‘hearts’) has been replaced with ‘souls’ and the brackets are mine. See appendix 1 for the Latin inscription.

¹⁵ Curiously enough, art historian Lisa P. Bauman writes that ‘the upper inscription on the sarcophagus sings Cristoforo's praises’ (Bauman, ‘Piety and public consumption’, cit., p. 48).

Just like the vast majority of the inscriptions on tomb monuments of this period, this message was written in Latin, which means that it was only to be understood in its entirety by those who mastered that language. What makes the inscription of the Della Rovere monument so different and in fact unique, is that the content of it complements in a playful way what one sees.

When studying the inscription, it is important to pay special attention to the choice of words, bearing in mind that they could only be grasped by an educated beholder. Thus one may wonder if the fact that these four lines are hendecasyllables (meaning that each phrase consists of eleven syllables) do not point to an origin in classical literature. In fact, the classical source of this inscription was found in 2011 by the Latinist J.A.R. Kemper, who pointed out the striking similarities between these lines and Ovid's description of Narcissus in his *Metamorphoses*.¹⁶ Indeed, the first two words of the Della Rovere inscription, *concordes animos* ('harmonious souls'), in the context of being united in death, might remind the reader of what Narcissus says in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – even though the choice of words is not literally the same. When Narcissus realizes that he will never be able to join his lover because he is in love with his own reflection, Narcissus decides to commit suicide and says that death does not worry him, as now 'two united in a single soul would die as one', *nunc duo concordēs anima moriemur in una*.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that in many stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the unity of two lovers is described in similar ways, often being in some way connected to death. Pyramus and Thisbe, for example, were 'one until their last hour' and after their death they shared the same urn; Philemon and Baucis expressed the wish to die together and Alcyone begs her husband Ceyx not to participate in battle as it would endanger 'their life, which counted as one'.¹⁸ Although these are examples that at least to some extent intrinsically correspond to the inscription of the Della Rovere monument, the exact wording differs. Furthermore, these are all examples concerning the unity of two lovers, whereas Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere were brothers.

The utterance of Narcissus remains the most valid comparison because of the similar choice of words, and even more so because on the Della Rovere tomb it is remarked that *it will please that they be thought those of a single body*, while Ovid's protagonist seems to have made the same 'mistake', but in reverse: after all, when falling in love with his own reflection Narcissus first thought that there were two bodies, where in fact there was only his own.

Still, describing the unity of two lovers in terms of 'sharing one soul' is not simply an expression which should be attributed to Ovid alone. It was also used by other writers, and in other cases as well, for instance to describe a close friendship. In his commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* William Anderson refers to Horace who called his closest friends 'half of my soul'.¹⁹ When Virgil departed for Greece, for instance,

¹⁶ The resemblance of these lines to Ovid's Narcissus episode was pointed out to me by Dr Kemper (University of Groningen) during a masterclass on tomb monuments in Rome, autumn 2012. He published his discovery in an article which he wrote together with Dr J.L. de Jong, 'La visione di Roma dell'olandese Arnoldus Buchellius (dicembre 1587)', in: *Studi Umanistici Piceni*, XXXI (2011), Sassoferrato, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Piceni, pp. 187-198.

¹⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.473, translated by Brookes More, Boston, Cornhill Publishing Company, 1922. See De Jong & Kemper, 'La visione di Roma dell'Olandese Buchellius', cit., p. 195. In *Metamorphoses* 2.609, in an entirely different context (i.e., not meant as an indication of the harmony of two souls but simply as a statement of two people dying at the same time) almost exactly the same words can be read: *duo nunc moriemur in una*.

¹⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.156 and 4.166 (Pyramus and Thisbe), 8.708 (Philemon and Baucis) and 11.388 (Alcyone and Ceyx).

¹⁹ W.S. Anderson (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses, books 1-5: Edited, with introduction and commentary by William S. Anderson*, Norman/London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, pp. 385-386. Anderson writes that Ovid lets Narcissus 'trivialize' the language of lovers and close friends, because he makes him say

Horace wrote to him urging to take care of himself, so that ‘half of my soul’ (*animae dimidium meae*) would remain unharmed. Another example is when he thinks of his friend Maecenas dying prematurely: this would mean he loses a part of his soul (*meae partem animae*) and he can think of no reason to prolong his own life.²⁰

Thus, the specific phrasing of the Della Rovere epitaph certainly fits into a classical tradition.²¹ Even more so as this inscription mentions ‘ashes’ (*cineres*), while in this period it was not common to be cremated. Instead, cremating the deceased was a tradition in classical antiquity. There are more examples of Renaissance inscriptions on tomb monuments mentioning ashes and urns, two of which concern double tomb monuments. The first example is that of the brothers Ludovico and Daniel Maffei. After the death of his twin brother Ludovico in 1480, Daniel Maffei commissioned a tomb to commemorate him. Moreover, just like Domenico della Rovere, Daniel planned to be buried in this tomb himself as well:

One day has made these twins, equal in spirit and appearance,
one day, with your death, has made those two unequal.
But because the vicissitudes of our younger years were comparable,
one urn will contain both your and my ashes.²²

A second example is the inscription of a double tomb monument that used to be in San Nicola de Calcario, a church in Rome of which nowadays only a ruin is left:

Here lay I to who Grace has given a holy name,
my wife is buried together with my bones.
One life held us together in harmony,
now it is also one urn that conceals the two of us deceased.²³

the two of them will end up united in death *anima in una*, but why he calls this trivializing remains unclear to me.

²⁰ Horace about Virgil: *Odes* 1.3.8, about Maecenas: *Odes* 2.17.5. For more on the expression of friendship in this period, see C.A. Williams, *Reading Roman friendship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012; describing friends as sharing one soul is mentioned on p. 15.

²¹ Kemper mentions two other classical examples of brothers or close friends being united in death, which can be found in Statius’ *Thebaid* and in Homer’s *Iliad*. However, Ovid’s *Narcissus* remains the most convincing source of the Della Rovere tomb, or as Kemper aptly put it: ‘*la chiave per la vera decodificazione*’ (De Jong & Kemper, ‘La visione di Roma dell’Olandese Buchellius’, cit., p. 195).

²² ‘VNA DIES ANIMO SIMILES VVLTVQ GEMELLOS | VNA TVO FECIT FVNERE DISSIMILES | AEMVLA SED NOSTRAE FVERINT CV̄FATA IVVĒTAE | VNA MEOS CINERES CONDET ET VRNA TVOS’. This inscription was placed on the tomb of the brothers Ludovico Sebastiano and Daniel Maffei. The inscription can be found in the collections of Roman inscriptions by L. Schrader, *Monumentorum Italiae, quae hoc nostro saeculo & à Christianis posita sunt, libri quator*, Helmstedt, Jakob Lucius, 1592, p. 156r; N. Chytraeus, *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae; seu, ex variis manu-scriptis selectiora tantum inscriptionum maxime recentium monumenta. Editio secunda*, Herborn, Apud Christophorum Corvinum, 1599, p. 17; and V. Forcella, *Iscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma dal secolo XI fino ai giorni nostri*, Volume I, Rome/Florence/Turin, E. Loescher & C., 1869, p. 422, no. 1612. Both Schrader and Forcella mention also the second part of the inscription, from which it can be deduced that Daniel commissioned this tomb for his twin brother and himself: ‘LVDOVICO SEBASTIANO VERONENSI CAN MAGISTRO DOMVS | R CAR AGRIEN DANIEL GEMELLVS GEMELLO FRATRI | POSVIT AP MAFFEOS DVLCISS AMITINOS VIX ANN | XXXIII OBIIT XII CAL OCTO MCCCCLXXX XYSTO IIII PONT MAX’. None of them mentions the location of the monument. Possibly it used to be in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, as Schrader and Forcella mention this inscription in a section that contains inscriptions that were located in this church.

²³ ‘HIC JACEO SANCTVM DEDERAT CVI GRATIA NOMEN, | OSSIBVS EST VXOR CONTVMVLATA MEIS. | VITA DVOS OLIM TENVIT CONCORDITER VNA, | VNA QVOQ EXSTINCTOS OCCVLIT VRNA DVOS’. Only the inscription of this tomb monument remains and has been recorded by Schrader, *Monumentorum Italiae*, cit., p. 163v and Chytraeus, *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae*, cit., p. 32. Neither of these two writers mentions a specific name or date.

In both of these inscriptions a poetic way of phrasing is combined with the use of 'classical' words: *urna* (urn) and, in the case of the Maffei twins, *cineres* (ashes).²⁴ It seems that the mingling of ashes appealed more to the imagination than the statement that two people were simply buried together. In these instances the double nature of a tomb appears to have inspired a poetical approach, for which the ancients served as a source. In the fifteenth century funeral orations were more and more based on those of classical antiquity as well.²⁵ Therefore, the combination of this specific kind of poetical approach to describe either friendship or love and the mentioning of ashes leads one to think that the Della Rovere inscription should be seen as a literary reference to antiquity. In this context it is interesting to note that in the lower inscription the name of Pope Sixtus IV is written as 'Xysti', which is the classical way of spelling his name.

The final element that should be taken into account when investigating the image presented by this tomb monument, is its context: the monument is situated in a chapel that belonged to the deceased and therefore deserves some attention. Here it is interesting to note that the frescoes of the chapel depict Saint Jerome, who, as Church Father and translator of the Bible, not only evokes an image of piety, but also of erudition. By associating himself with this saint, Domenico della Rovere could present himself as being just as pious and learned, or at least as aspiring to be. The tomb monument of the two Della Rovere brothers fits neatly into this context of piety and classical learning. There are religious elements, such as the relief of the Madonna and Child, but also classical ones. Not only do the triumphal arch and decorations refer to classical traditions, but, as I demonstrated, so do the inscriptions. The allusion to classical antiquity is underlined by the poetical sentences on the sarcophagus, which are reminiscent of Ovid and contain a reference to funerary rites of a bygone era.

As it is only clear that this tomb monument is in fact a *double* tomb monument once one has deciphered the Latin inscription, it fits in perfectly with the sophisticated image Domenico had already created for himself and his family by commissioning the decoration of the chapel. This added layer of complexity makes the presented image even more valuable.²⁶

Other examples

Naturally, the singularity of the Della Rovere monument can only be fully grasped once it has been compared to other tomb monuments of the time. There are four other examples of double tomb monuments of this period in Rome that contain only one effigy and therefore appear to commemorate just one person. As such, they are just as 'misleading' as the Della Rovere tomb. First of all, the question should be posed how in each of these cases the presence of only one effigy can be explained, if indeed the line of reasoning can be traced at all.

The first example of another double tomb monument with one effigy, is that of Domenico (†1458) and Angelo Capranica (†1478), in the Cappella Capranica in Santa

²⁴ In contrast to *cineres* and *urna*, an example of a word with strong Biblical associations which was used in inscriptions is *pulvis*, 'dust'. See I. Kajanto, *Classical and Christian: Studies in the Latin epigraphs of medieval and renaissance Rome*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, volume CCIII, Helsinki, 1980, p. 66.

²⁵ S.T. Strocchia, *Death and ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore/London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1992, pp. 143-148.

²⁶ Although Bauman is of the same opinion, she does not seem to be aware of the fact that the tomb monument is meant for Domenico himself as well as for his brother. She writes: 'in subtle ways, the tomb marks the dedicant, not the deceased, as an enlightened and classically attuned Renaissance man' (Bauman, 'Piety and public consumption', cit., pp. 48-50), whereas in fact Domenico is not only the dedicant, but also the deceased.

Maria sopra Minerva (Fig. 2).²⁷ It is quite similar to the Della Rovere tomb, both in appearance and in ‘content’: it was also made for two brothers and had been commissioned by one of them. According to the inscription (appendix 2), Cardinal Angelo Capranica ordered the double tomb for his brother Domenico and for himself during the pontificate of Paul II (1464-1471).²⁸ As Domenico had already died in 1458 and Angelo was still alive when the monument was finished, it is probable that the effigy represents the first brother. It should be noted, however, that this assumption is based on information that cannot be deduced from the inscription, as no dates of death are mentioned.



Fig. 2: Andrea Bregno, *Tomb of Domenico and Angelo Capranica*, circa 1464-1471, Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Cappella Capranica (Photo: Lotte van ter Toolen).

Most of the inscription on the monument is dedicated to Domenico, whose religious functions and greatest achievements are widely stated. Angelo is mentioned in the last phrase, where it is said that he was titular of the same church as his brother and that he commissioned this joint monument for his ‘unanimous’ brother (indicating that they were of one mind) and for himself.²⁹ By connecting the joint burial place of the two deceased to their unity of mind and soul, this tomb monument seems to fit into a tradition: although less poetical in character, the choice of words is reminiscent

²⁷ The monument was made by Andrea Bregno and is dated 1464-1471.

²⁸ There is no date mentioned in the inscription. Instead, the inscription starts by stating the incumbent pope: ‘SEDATE PAOLO II’.

²⁹ ‘ANGELVS EIVSDEM TT CARDINALIS | VNANIMI FRATRI AC SIBI COMMVNE MONIMENTVM HOC FECIT’. See appendix 2 for the complete inscription and its translation.

of the inscription on the tomb of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere, and of the epitaph of the Maffei twins discussed above. However, in the Capranica tomb there is no reference to ashes or urns, nor is what the beholder sees complemented by what he reads, as is the case in the tomb of the Della Rovere brothers. The presence of only one effigy therefore remains difficult to explain.

In 1476, a few years after having taken care of the commemoration of his brother and himself, Angelo Capranica took care of yet another tomb, in the left side aisle of the church of San Marco in Rome, to commemorate one of his other brothers, Paolo (†1428), and his nephew Nicolò (†1473).³⁰ Just like the Della Rovere and Capranica monuments, this double tomb has only one effigy, although this is only visible when looking at the monument from a higher standpoint (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Unknown artist, *Tomb of Paolo and Nicolò Capranica*, 1476, Rome, San Marco, left side aisle (Photo: Jan L. de Jong).

Nicolò Capranica had died relatively recently, in 1473, but by the time Angelo commissioned this monument, Paolo had already been dead for almost fifty years. As is stated in the inscription (appendix 3), it was Paolo who had founded the adjacent chapel in the church of San Marco.³¹ However, there was not yet a tomb monument to commemorate him. When Nicolò died in 1473, Angelo seems to have seized the opportunity to dedicate a tomb not only to his recently deceased nephew, but also to his brother. In this way, Angelo took care of the religious memory of both men. Indeed,

³⁰ The artist who made the tomb in 1476 is unknown.

³¹ Nowadays only the tomb's inscription and the decorations on the floor, which contain the Capranica coat of arms, remain as visible proof of Paolo's founding of this chapel. See also W. Buchowiecki, *Handbuch der Kirchen Roms: der Römische Sakralbau in Geschichte und Kunst von der Altchristlichen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart. 2. Band: Gesù Crocifisso bis S. Maria in Monticelli*, Vienna, Hollinek, 1970, p. 380.

in the inscription it is stated that he placed this tomb from a sense of familial duty (*pietas*).³²

The first part of the inscription is dedicated to Paolo, whose virtues are praised and whose founding of the chapel, which he had left to his family, is mentioned. Moreover, the inscription states that he was much beloved by Pope Martin V, who entrusted him with his secrets and bestowed the highest honorary posts on him. The second part of the inscription is dedicated to Nicolò and contains similar laudatory remarks. Thus it can be read that he was rewarded with honorary posts as well, although it is not specified by which pope.³³

Strangely, no explanation is given as to why these two men are buried together, which is especially striking as the one died almost fifty years before the other. There is no indication of a special bond between them, although this is not very surprising as Paolo died when Nicolò was only eight years old. Of course, it should be taken into account that they both belonged to the Capranica family. Therefore, it seems that Angelo combined the commemoration of two family members based on the fact that they were related and that he did not choose this pair to be buried together because they had a special relationship. Consequently, the presence of only one effigy cannot be interpreted as an indication of a close bond between the two deceased and remains unexplained.³⁴

The last two examples of double tomb monuments that contain only one effigy are located in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and were both commissioned by and for members of the Rustico family (Figs. 4-5). The first one is the tomb of the brothers Agapito (†1464) and Paolo Rustico († before 1482), which was commissioned by Paolo's seven sons, the second tomb was made for Cincio (†1445) and Marcello Rustico († before 1488), who were father and son, and was placed by their grandson and son, Antonio.³⁵ The tombs are located in the vestibule that gives access to the rear entrance of the church and are placed on either side of the door. The monument of Agapito and Paolo is placed against the left wall, that of Cincio and Marcello against the right.³⁶ The two tombs were made shortly after each other, in 1482 and 1488 respectively, and are attributed to the school of Andrea Bregno. At first glance they look identical: both contain one effigy on a bier supported by lion paws and are framed by an architectural structure reminiscent of classical antiquity, with two decorated pillars and a tympanum. The lower part of both tombs consists of an inscription flanked by the Rustico coat of arms. On closer scrutiny, however, some small differences can be observed. The frieze on the tomb of Agapito and Paolo contains cherubs, for example, and the effigies differ in features and attire. The question who is represented

³² 'ANGELVS [...] FRATRI ET NEPOTI B MEREN OB PIETATEM POS'. See appendix 3 for the complete inscription and its translation.

³³ According to the inscription, Nicolò was bestowed with distinguished honorary posts by 'the popes': 'NICOLAO EPIS FIRMANO ANTONII FRATRIS FILIO INSI | GNIB VIRTVTIB CONSPICVO HONORIB Q AMPLISS A SVM | MIS PONT ORNATO'.

³⁴ Sometimes the fact that the Capranica tombs in Santa Maria sopra Minerva and in San Marco commemorate two persons is not noticed at all, see for example Buchowiecki, *Handbuch der Kirchen Roms*, cit., p. 380, 721. Buchowiecki mentions both tomb monuments in his handbook on the churches of Rome, but in both cases he only mentions the deceased who is named first in the inscription, giving the impression that each of these tombs was made for one person.

³⁵ See appendix 4 and 5 for the inscriptions of the tombs. Although in the inscription their last name is written as 'Rustico', sometimes their name is written as 'Rustici' (J.J. Berthier, *L'église de la Minerve a Rome*, Rome, Cooperativa tipografica Manuzio, 1910, p. 260).

³⁶ There is no record of the tombs ever having been moved. Since the vestibule was formerly known as the Cappella Rustici, and since the monuments are identical and mirror each other, it seems reasonable to assume that this is their original location. However, it should be taken into account that this chapel underwent many changes over the centuries, see Berthier, *L'église de la Minerve a Rome*, cit., pp. 253-272.

by the effigy can be answered for the tomb of Agapito and Paolo, as the effigy wears a bishop's hat and this was a position that only Agapito held. The effigy of the other tomb wears a less distinctive hat, which makes it difficult to decide whether it represents Cincio or Marcello – if indeed the effigy represents only one of the two and should not be seen as a more general reference to 'the deceased'.³⁷



Fig. 4: School of Andrea Bregno, *Tomb monument of Agapito and Paolo Rustico*, 1482, Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, vestibule (Photo: Lotte van ter Toolen).



Fig. 5: School of Andrea Bregno, *Tomb monument of Cincio and Marcello Rustico*, 1488, Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, vestibule (Photo: Lotte van ter Toolen).

The two inscriptions (appendix 4 and 5) are structured in the same way: they inform the beholder of the positions these members of the Rustico family held, the virtues they possessed, who commissioned the monument and when it was placed. There is no indication of a special bond between the deceased besides their being closely related, as the first tomb contains two brothers and the second one a father and son.³⁸

Before becoming a vestibule in 1600, the space where these two tombs are situated used to be a chapel, which was dedicated to Saint Thomas Aquinas and belonged to the Rustico family.³⁹ Although the two tombs were commissioned by

³⁷ That Agapito was a bishop is mentioned in the inscription. According to the historian J.J. Berthier the effigy of the second tomb represents Cincio, but he does not explain why (Berthier, *L'église de la Minerve a Rome*, cit., p. 265).

³⁸ The inscription of the first tomb (appendix 4) mentions that Agapito and Paolo are brothers ('AGAPITO RVSTICO [...] ET FRĪ PAVLO RVSTICO') and that Paolo's sons placed this for their uncle and father ('PATRVO ET PATRI'). In the inscription of the second tomb (appendix 5) the relationship between Cincio and Marcello can be deduced from the fact that Antonio placed this 'for his grandfather and father' ('AVO ET PĪRI'). Gerald S. Davies, in his book on renaissance tomb monuments in Rome, writes that Antonio erected the tomb for his father and uncle, even though the inscription states otherwise (G.S. Davies, *Renaissance: The sculptured tombs of the 15th century in Rome*, London, John Murray, 1910, p. 272).

³⁹ Berthier, *L'église de la Minerve a Rome*, cit., pp. 253-254.

different patrons, they are both placed by and for members of the Rustico family in their family chapel. Furthermore, the tombs mirror each other and are almost identical. This intentional uniformity causes these tombs to be seen as a whole, instead of as two individual tombs. Therefore, the double character of each tomb fades into the background, and although the deceased are individually praised, it is not a specific image of two persons that is conceived by the beholder of these tombs, but rather a shared commemoration of members of the Rustico family.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the tomb of the Della Rovere brothers is not the only double tomb monument of the Renaissance that contains one single effigy. There are other examples where the inattentive passer-by may think that they commemorate only one individual. However, in none of the other cases has this characteristic been used to influence the way in which the two deceased are being commemorated. As a result, the beholder of those monuments is either unaware of the fact that the tomb holds two persons, or uncertain as to whose effigy is being presented. Apart from questions regarding the choice for only one effigy, the study of these tombs also raises an important larger question with respect to a correct understanding of tomb monuments in general, as they show how often inscriptions are still overlooked or misinterpreted. The importance of paying close attention to the inscriptions of tomb monuments is especially underlined by the tomb of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere. Those who carefully read the inscriptions on this monument will discern a very powerful image, as the bond between the two brothers is not only described, but also visualized. Therefore, the Della Rovere monument is quite a singular tomb, in every sense of the word.

Appendix: inscriptions and translations⁴⁰

1. Inscriptions of the tomb of Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere⁴¹

Upper inscription

CONCORDES ANIMOS PIASQ MENTES | VT DICAS LICET VNICAM FVISSE | COMMISTI
CINERES SEQVENTVR ET SE | CREDI CORPORIS VNIVS IUVVABIT

(‘Just as you might say that our harmonious souls and godly minds were one, so shall our mingled ashes follow suit, and it will please [us] that they be thought those of a single body’.)⁴²

Lower inscription

CRISTOPHORO RVVEREO TT S VITA | LIS PRESBYTERO CAR | DOCTRINA MORIBVS AC
PIETATE INSIGNI | DOMINICVS XYSTI IIII PONT MAXIMI | BENIFICIO MOX TITVLI |
SVCCESOR AC MVNERIS FRATRI | B M ET SIBI POSVIT | V A XLIII M VII D XIX | OB AN VIII
PONT XYSTI | KL FBR

⁴⁰ I am very grateful to Dr. J.L. de Jong for all his helpful corrections and suggestions with regard to my Latin translations, and to Leo Nellissen, without whose insights I would not have been able to grasp the content of the inscription on the tomb of Paolo and Nicolò Capranica.

⁴¹ Both inscriptions can be found in Forcella, ‘Iscrizioni delle chiese e d’altri edifici di Roma’, cit., Volume I, p. 232, no. 1209.

⁴² This is an adapted version of the translation by Tyler Lansford (*The Latin inscriptions of Rome*, cit., p. 339). His translation of the word *animos* (‘hearts’) has been replaced with ‘souls’, and the brackets are mine as well.

(‘To Cristoforo della Rovere, cardinal priest of San Vitale, outstanding because of his learning, morality and his piety. Domenico, successor of the title and office due to the benevolence of Pope Sixtus IV, has placed this tomb for his brother, who deserved it, and for himself. He lived 43 years, 7 months and 19 days, he died in the 8th year of Sixtus’s pontificate, 1 February’.)

2. Inscription of the tomb of Domenico and Angelo Capranica⁴³

SEDATE PAVLO II | DOMINICO CAPRANICENSI TT SANCTAE + IN HIERUSALEM |
PRESBYTERO CARDINALI ANTISTITI FIRMANO MAIORI | POENITENTIARIO XII APOSTOLICIS
LEGATIONIBVS CLARO | PACIS ITALICAE IN ANNOS XXV CONSTITVTORI DOCTRINA |
RELIGIONE ET SANCTIS SEMPER OPERIBVS ADMIRABILI | ANGELVS EIVSDEM TT
CARDINALIS | VNANIMI FRATRI AC SIBI COMMVNE MONIMENTVM HOC FECIT | VIXIT IDEM
DO⁴⁴ AN LVIII

(‘During the pontificate of Paul II. To Domenico Capranica, titular of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, cardinal priest, bishop of Fermo, Major Penitentiary, famous arranger of peace in Italy with twelve apostolic missions in twenty-five years, always admirable for his doctrine, religion and sacred works. Angelo, cardinal of the same titular church, made this joint monument for his unanimous brother and for himself. He, Domenico, lived 58 years’.)

3. Inscription of the tomb of Paolo and Nicolò Capranica⁴⁵

DEO OMNIPOT SACRVM | PAVLO ARCHIEPIS BENEVEN E CAPRANICA ORIVNDO QVI OB
MOR | CLAEMENTIAM ET PRAECLARAS ANIMI DOTES MARTINO V | PONT MAX INPRIMIS
CARVS DIGNVSQ CVIVS FIDEI SECRETA SVA | ET CARDINALIS ET PONT CREDERET AC AD
SVMOS HONO | RES EVEHERET MAIORIB SVIS EXIMIA VIRTUTE PRAELVXIT ET |
SACELLVM HOC MORIENS E SVO DOTATVM FAMILIAE SVAE | CAPRANICEN RELIQVIT | ET
NICOLAO EPIS FIRMANO ANTONII FRATRIS FILIO INSI | GNIB VIRTVTIB CONSPICVO
HONORIB Q AMPLISS A SVM | MIS PONT ORNATO ANGELVS EPIS PRAENESTIN CARDIN S |
+ IN HIERUSALEM FRATRI ET NEPOTI B MEREN OB PIETATEM POS | ANNO CHRISTI M CCCC
LXXVI XYSTO IIII PONT MAX

(‘Sacred to God Almighty. To Paolo, archbishop of Benevento, originating from Capranica, who, because of his gentleness of character and because of the very brilliant gifts of his mind, was foremost dear and trustworthy to Pope Martin V, who as a cardinal as well as pope commended his secrets to him and exalted him to the highest honorary posts. He surpassed his ancestors with his extraordinary virtue and on his deathbed he has left this chapel from his own wealth to his family in Capranica; and to Nicolò, bishop of Fermo, the son of his brother Antonio, remarkable for his extraordinary virtues and bestowed with very distinguished honorary posts by the popes, Angelo, bishop of Palestrina and cardinal of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, placed this [monument] from a sense of familial duty for his brother and for his nephew, who well deserved it, in the year of Christ 1476, during the pontificate of Sixtus IV’.)

⁴³ *Ivi*, p. 418, no. 1592.

⁴⁴ It is uncertain how ‘DO’ should be translated. Possibly, this is an abbreviation of ‘Domenico’, as this phrase is about him: Domenico was the one that had reached the age of 58.

⁴⁵ Forcella, ‘Iscrizioni delle chiese e d’altri edifici di Roma’, cit., Volume IV, p. 348, no. 822.

4. Inscription of the tomb of Agapito and Paolo Rustico⁴⁶

AGAPITO RVSTICO EP̄O CAMERTINO IVRIS V CON | SVLTO LATINAE LINGVAE PERITISSIMO
INTEGRITATE | PRVDENTIA QVE INSIGNI ET FR̄I PAVLO RVSTICO PRO | BITATE COMITATE
QVE CLARO FR̄ES VII PAVLI FILII | MOESTI PATRVO ET PATRI BNM̄ER POSVERVNT | ANO
DNI M CCCCLXXXII K ŁIS IVLIIS

(‘To Agapito Rustico, bishop of Camerino, counselor of law and expert of the Latin language, who was distinguished for his integrity and prudence, and to his brother Paolo Rustico, who was renowned for his respectability and kindness. The seven brothers, Paolo’s mournful sons, placed this [monument] for their uncle and their father, who well deserved it, in the year of the Lord 1482, 1 July’.)

5. Inscription of the tomb of Cincio and Marcello Rustico⁴⁷

CINCIO RVSTICO SECRETARIO APOSTOLICO GRECAE | LATINAEQ̄ LINGVAE PERITO QVAVIS
VIRTUTE DECORATO ET | MARCELLO RVSTICO VRBIS CANCELLARIO SECRETARIO | ET
SCRIPTORI APOSTOLICO AC BREVIATORI FRVGI LR̄ATOQ̄ | ANTONIVS RVSTICVS AVO ET
P̄RI BENEMER POSVIT | ANNO A NAT CHRI M CCCC LXXXVIII IDIBVS MARTIIS

(‘To Cincio Rustico, apostolic secretary, expert of the Greek and Latin language, adorned with any virtue, and to Marcello Rustico, who was chancellor secretary of the city, and apostolic scriptor as well as a worthy and learned abbreviator. Antonio Rustico placed this [monument] for his grandfather and father, who well deserved it, in the year after the birth of Christ 1488, 15 March’.)

Keywords

Della Rovere, tomb monuments, Rome, inscriptions, Ovid

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⁴⁶ *Ivi*, Volume I, p. 422, no. 1616.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 424, no. 1623.

RIASSUNTO

Una tomba singolare: il monumento funebre di Cristoforo e Domenico della Rovere in Santa Maria del Popolo, Roma

Questo articolo tratta dei monumenti funebri romani che pur concepiti per due defunti contengono una sola effigie. Il punto di partenza è il monumento funebre dei fratelli cardinali Cristoforo (†1478) e Domenico della Rovere (†1501) in Santa Maria del Popolo (Roma), attribuito ad Andrea Bregno e Mino da Fiesole (circa 1478-1481). Poiché questo monumento contiene l'effigie di un solo defunto, è passato spesso inosservato negli studi che in realtà è stato fatto per *due* individui. Dalla lettura attenta delle iscrizioni contenute nel monumento si capisce che si tratta di una doppia tomba. Inoltre, l'iscrizione sulla parte superiore indica la presenza di una sola effigie, suggerendo che in questo modo i due fratelli, che nella vita erano stati molto uniti, sarebbero uniti anche nella morte. Infine risulta evidente che questo epitaffio ha un'origine classica, e precisamente nelle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio. Rispetto ad altri monumenti funebri contemporanei che comprendono una sola effigie pur commemorando due defunti, il monumento dei fratelli Della Rovere è l'unico esempio in cui quel che si vede e quel che si legge siano intimamente legati. Per tutti gli altri monumenti rimane difficile da spiegare la presenza di una singola effigie per due defunti.