



From Venice to Monasterevin: the altar rails in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul

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THE CHURCH OF STS PETER AND PAUL IN MONASTEREVIN, COUNTY KILDARE, invites curiosity for many reasons. Built during the Famine, when work at many other parish churches in the country was interrupted, and containing some noteworthy nineteenth-century ceiling paintings, the church has much to offer the art or architectural historian. But perhaps the most interesting feature of the church is the set of eighteenth-century Italian altar rails, which survived Vatican II renovations and have a complex and detailed history of their own.

Though practically no parish records pertaining to the Church of Sts Peter and Paul survive, the history of the church can be pieced together from newspaper and other accounts of building progress. The laying of the foundation stone on 26 August 1840, and the first Mass held in the church on 29 August 1847 are noted in the baptism records of the parish.¹ On 31 October 1840 a chancery advertisement relating to the land that the church was built on is recorded in the *Leinster Express*. In 1849 the architect of the church, William Deane Butler (1794-1858), exhibited a drawing entitled *A new R.C. Church now being erected at Monasterevin* at the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts.² In 1855-6, on his tour of Ireland, Thomas Lacy of Wexford visited Monasterevin and devoted an entire page to the Church of Sts Peter and Paul in his account of his travels.³ Lacy found the church to be 'one of the finest buildings to be seen in any town of this class in Ireland'. Lacy's description of the church is a detailed and reliable one, which becomes very important in the absence of other primary documents relating to the church. Lacy's account gives the only reference to the lofty altar screen once inside the church, which not one of the surviving photographs of the interior shows. This altar screen may have remained in the church until the arrival of the marble altar rails in 1880, which all the old photographs of the interior reveal. The year 1879-80 saw the church undergo a period of decoration, which included the painting of the interior walls and sanctuary vault,

1 – *The last cherub on the right altar rail in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Monasterevin*

the addition of new marble main and side altars, and the commissioning of new stained glass windows for the entire church. It was at this time that the church received the set of altar rails which investigation reveals came from the Church of S. Stefano in Venice.

The altar rails in the church consist of two railings on either side of the steps leading to the main altar (Plates 2, 3). They are both 455cm (14ft 11in) in length and 86cm (2ft 10in) in height. Four types of stone are used in their construction. The base and top consist of Giallo di Siena marble; between these are balusters of Rosso Antico. There are twenty-four full balusters in all, twelve on each rail, and eight half balusters, four on each rail. Separating the complete balusters into groups of six are cherubs carved in Carrara marble in various poses, and holding corn, grapes and a type of flower, which has the appearance of a rose (Plates 1, 6, 7). The cherubs, which are in high relief, are set against rectangular blocks of stone composed of the same beige stone as the base and top. A black marble veneer, contrasting with the white Carrara of the cherubs, serves as a background to them.

The altar rails carry a Latin inscription, and close examination suggests that it survives in its complete and original form. The inscription reads: *MAGISTER . FR . AVGVSTINVS . CORNEAVS . V . EXPROV . POS . A . 1712 .*

Prof Damien Nelis and Prof Andrew Smith of the Classics departments in

2 – The left altar rail in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul



Trinity College and University College Dublin examined the inscription and came to similar conclusions. Prof Smith advised me that the inscription probably read as follows: ‘Magister Fr[ater] Augustinus Corneaus V[icarius] Exprov[incialis] pos[uit] a[nno] 1712’ (i.e. ‘Master Brother Augustinus Corneaus Vicar Exprovincial set up [these altar rails] in the year 1712’).

Stylistically we may assume that the date of manufacture is close to 1712. Prof Smith also suggests that ‘magister’ may indicate the academic rank of the person who set up the altar rails, and that ‘frater’ (brother) is a term used for friars even if they are ordained priests, and therefore that this man may well have been an Augustinian friar. It is most likely that the inscription gives the name and titles of the friar who set up the altar rails in 1712.

Apart from the inscription there are no other markings on the rails. For further information other contemporary sources are vital, such as the publication *Some Notable Conversions in the county of Wexford by the Revd Francis J. Kirk*.⁴ This book provides an account of how notable people in Wexford converted to the Catholic faith in the mid and later nineteenth century. Much of the book concerns the conversion of a leading family of Gorey, the Ram family, with whom Kirk was well acquainted. It is in the course of his description of the family’s estate of Ramsfort in Gorey that Kirk mentions the altar rails. He wrote:

3 – *The right altar rail in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul*



The old family mansion had been burned during the rebellion of 1798, and in consequence of the disturbed state of the country no effort was made by the family to rebuild it. Stephen's father was the first of his family to attempt rebuilding but died before the house was finished. His son was well qualified to carry on the work: his tastes were refined and artistic. Large sums of money were required to carry out his plans; objects of ancient and modern art were collected from all parts of the Continent; rare manuscripts and antique jewellery formed a unique private collection.

Notable among these treasures was an altar rail of Siena and other precious marbles bought by him in Italy, which for more than a century had been the ornament of an Italian church. This beautiful work of art was placed by him on a terrace leading to the pleasure grounds. After remaining there for several years it was purchased by a Protestant gentleman, who intended to place it in a church built in his own grounds; but happily, finding it much too large for the position, he sold it at a moderate price to the parish priest of Monasterevin, Co Kildare, so that it now fulfils the purpose for which it was originally intended.⁵

Kirk's account is supported by two photographs of the 'pleasure grounds' of Ramsfort (Plates 4, 5).⁶ One photograph (Plate 4) shows the altar rails (from a distance) in front of the house, just above the flight of steps. The other shows the gardens, with a cherub of the rails seen on either side of the photograph (Plate 5). The positions of at least two of the cherubs on the altar rails have changed since they were at Ramsfort. This can be seen by comparing the cherubs shown on the Ramsfort photograph (Plate 5) with the cherubs in Monasterevin (Plate 6). The difference is clear, as each of the cherubs is distinctive. By comparing photographs we can see that the first cherub on the right rail was not moved and still holds that position. The last cherub on the left rail (Plate 6), however, did not have that position at Ramsfort. There the last cherub on the left rail was the cherub which is now the last cherub on the right rail (Plates 1, 5). This changing of positions possibly occurred when the rails were being installed in the church at Monasterevin, and may have been done deliberately, resulting in a more symmetrical arrangement. The cherubs now look and turn inwards and face each other across the opening in the rails (Plate 6). The many cracks in the rails and the visible mortar imply that the rails were simply taken apart upon their removal from Ramsfort and then reassembled when they reached their destination.

From newspaper reports we know that the rails had been bought for the church in Monasterevin by 1879, but the question remains as to how long they had been absent from Ramsfort at this date, and where they had been in the intervening



4 – View of Ramsfort House and gardens, Gorey, county Wexford (c.1871-72)

5 – View of Ramsfort gardens: the cherubs on the altar rails can be seen to the left and right
(courtesy Michael Fitzpatrick)





6 – The altar rails in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul



7 – The first cherub on the left altar rail in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul

period. The two photographs which show the rails at Ramsfort (Plates 4, 5) seem to be a pair of the same date, but this date is disputed. Dan Walsh has dated them to 1886.⁷ The three stages of building at Ramsfort House are very evident from changes in its style of architecture (Plate 4). It is the third wing, with its ground-floor arcade and circular turret, that is important to the dating of the photograph. Walsh's date for the third wing of 1871-72 would suit the appearance of the rails in the photograph. If the rails were still at Ramsfort in 1872, then they were still there when Stephen Ram sold the property in 1870.⁸ Ramsfort was bought by William Kirk, brother of Francis J. Kirk.⁹ It was probably William Kirk who sold the rails to the 'Protestant gentleman' who, according to Francis Kirk, sold them to the parish priest of Monasterevin. William Kirk no doubt told his brother what happened to the rails; thus we can trust the authenticity of Francis Kirk's account.

It is not clear for how long the rails were in the possession of the 'Protestant gentleman'. A local Monasterevin historian, Eileen Ryan, wrote an account of the church, informing us of the altar rails that 'this artistic masterpiece was brought to Wexford by the Ram family. Some years later it was purchased from the Adaire family of Rathdare by the Rev Michael Comerford, parish priest of Monasterevin (1878-1895)'.¹⁰ The vendors were John George Adaire (1823-1885) and his wife Cornelia, who called their estate in county Laois, Rathdare. John George Adaire was a Protestant landlord who owned land in counties Donegal, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Kildare and Laois.¹¹ Was he the same 'Protestant gentleman' of Kirk's account? There is indeed a church at Rathdare, though the rails would not have suited it stylistically, and it was built by Cornelia in 1887 after John George Adaire had died. Perhaps John George Adaire had hoped to build this in his own lifetime and had bought the rails for that reason, but not having succeeded, sold the rails to the parish of Monasterevin which was then decorating the interior of the church. The only connection between the Adaire family and Monasterevin is that John George Adaire's father is listed among the nobility of Monasterevin in *Pigot's Directory* of 1824. Rathdare is relatively close to Monasterevin, and John George Adaire could easily have heard that the church at Monasterevin was undergoing decoration and needed new altar rails. The contemporary newspaper reports that record the placement of the rails in the church do not mention from whom they were bought.

The first mention of the altar rails in connection with Monasterevin is the report on the church in the *Leinster Express* on 25 October 1879, which says that 'a splendid set of Sienna marble communion rails will complete this portion of the sacred edifice'. So, by October 1879, the rails had been acquired but had not yet been placed in the church. A report on the church in the *Leinster Express* of 4 September 1880, repeated in the *Irish Builder* on 15 September, comments on the newly installed rails, saying:

The principal features in the new church are the communion railings, which have a history all their own. Hundreds of years ago they occupied a similar position in one of the Roman churches, and have since undergone numberless changes. The upper and lower pieces are Giallo di Siena, while the balusters are Rosso antico. Enscenced in these are angels of Carrara marble, some bearing wheat and others flowers. This ancient marble has a most venerable appearance, and bears the imprint of its rare value on its face.

A similar report in the *Leinster Leader* on the same day is more accurate than the *Express*, and rightly acknowledges that they came from the church of S. Stefano in Venice.¹² This brings us to the question of the ultimate origin of the altar rails, and the question of when they were taken from there to be bought by Stephen Ram. Ram travelled extensively and was an avid art collector. One gains a true sense of this from the Rev Kirk's book in which he writes about a journey that he made around Europe in 1854 with Stephen Ram and his wife. Kirk repeatedly recalls how Stephen Ram knew well all the places they visited, especially when it came to buying art treasures. When they visited Genoa, for example, Kirk recalls how

the time was chiefly spent by Mr. Ram in hunting out curios. He seemed to know every corner of the town. Passing down a narrow slummy street, he knew where to find some old fellow, probably a Jew, who he was sure had something worth looking at ... the visit ended by his purchasing a small illuminated manuscript Office Book, for which he gave £10 ... his refined taste for every kind of art was a misfortune to himself, as he could not refrain from buying what he admired.¹³

Could it have been in some similar circumstance that Stephen Ram purchased the altar rails for his new house at Gorey? Stephen Ram returned from France in 1846 to continue his father's rebuilding of Ramsfort. We can therefore assume that the altar rails were bought by Stephen Ram around or close to 1846, or perhaps on the trip he made around Europe in 1854.

The same Thomas Lacy who visited Monasterevin in 1856, later providing an invaluable account of the church, also visited Ramsfort on his travels. It is not clear when exactly he visited Wexford, though it was soon after the rebuilding there. Lacy was a native of Wexford, and Stephen Ram was a subscriber to his book. As we saw in his account of the church, Lacy was more than a casual visitor, and it is possible that he could have spoken with Ram when he visited Ramsfort. Lacy gives a detailed description in which he too notices the altar rails that were to catch Kirk's eye:

Fine terraces, sloping downwards to the beautiful expanse of water formed by the river Bann, extend for the distance of a furlong on both sides of the

valley, which stretches north and south before the front of the mansion, with various flights of stairs leading to the splendid gardens and elegant parterres that are formed on each side of the intersecting stream.

These terraces, flights of stairs and stream can be seen on the 1872 photograph of Ramsfort's gardens (Plate 4). Lacy then goes on to mention the altar rails:

The balustrades of the flight immediately in front of the centre of the mansion [in Monsaterevin] are of finely veined marble, and up to a comparatively recent period, formed some of the ornamental portions of the church of St. Stephano at Venice, where, upon their removal from their original destination, they were purchased by Mr. Ram. Above the summit of the range on each side of the entrance to this flight, stands an elegant allegorical bronze statue, of the most exquisite symmetry.

Lacy's description of the grounds with the railings matches the image on the 1872 photographs, even down to the bronzes on either side of the altar rails (Plate 4). Lacy's claim that the rails came from S. Stefano is confirmed by the report in the *Leinster Leader* on 4 September 1880, and is further confirmed when we delve into the history of S. Stefano.

The church of S. Stefano, built by the Hermits of St Augustine in the thirteenth century, was rebuilt in the fourteenth century, and in the fifteenth century received 'new additions and alterations and new sculptural and decorative ornamentation'.¹⁴ The Gothic interior which resulted consists of nave and side aisles divided by columns of alternating red and white marble. The church has no transepts, and a polygonal apse encloses the church at the east end.¹⁵ Lorenzetti informs us that in the nave, towards the chancel, there was originally a choir, which was demolished in 1613. Its wooden stalls were placed behind the high altar and the marble screen divided and placed around the walls of the chancel. Then the building of a great new altar began, its parapet and the plinths of its columns being decorated with 'inlaid coloured marble' and dating to 1656.¹⁶

Initially this seems too early for the erection of the altar rails, which, due to their inscription, are firmly dated to 1712. However, a monograph on the Church of S. Stefano written by a Ferdinando Apollonio in 1911, reveals that the erection of the altar rails in 1712 was the completion of the work on the new altar which had begun in 1613: 'The idea of the construction of the new presbytery was born around 1610 ... the choir and the old altar were demolished ... and the altar was brought to the majestic grandeur which we see to-day'.¹⁷ Apollonio goes on to describe in detail the construction of the altar area, and finally concludes,

Enclosing the presbytery is a balustrade of fine marble. Two gates of worked

iron open in the middle and around the balustrade is the name of Fr. Agostino Corniani who commissioned it: Mag.Fr. Angustinus Cornianus. V. ex Prov. Ann. MDCCXII.¹⁸

Apollonio transcribes the inscription somewhat inaccurately, and spells the friar's name 'Cornianus' instead of 'Corneaus', as it actually appears on the rails in Monasterevin. Writing in 1911 Apollonio could no longer see the altar rails. For his information Apollonio was relying on a manuscript account of the church written by Agostino Nicolai between about 1752 and 1762, entitled *Memoria Manoscritta Sopra la Chiesa e Monistero di S. Stefano in Venezia*, now in the Correr Library in Venice.¹⁹ Apollonio's version of the inscription on the rails replicates that given by Nicolai. The manuscript account, too, starts by discussing the beginning of the erection of the new altar in 1610, and in relation to the altar rails says:

The last religious of this monastery who with money of their own use added decoration to the altar were M(agister) F(ra) Giovanni Ferra and M(agister) F(ra) Agostino Corniani, both Venetian and sons of the convent ... the second (of the two) M(agister) Corniani, had the presbytery enclosed with the most beautiful balustrade of fine marble and gates of worked iron, on the top cornice of the said balustrade, one can see written: Mag. Augustinus Cornianus V. ex Prov. An. MDCCX.

This confirms that the rails were commissioned and paid for by an Agostino Corniani, who was an Augustinian friar at the convent of S. Stefano. It does seem that the friar's first name was Agostino, and so when the inscription on the rails uses the word 'Augustinus', it means it in this sense and not as an adjective to mean that he is an Augustinian friar, though Agostino may well have taken this name on entering the order. As for his second name, the written sources spell it 'Corniani', while the inscription on the actual rail spells it 'Corneaus'. I would propose that this may simply be the Latinised spelling of his name. Jennifer Montagu has advised me that the name Corniani would be much more plausible than Corneaus.²⁰ The Corniani were a successful Venetian family. The entry on Giovanni Giacomo Corniani (1631-1707) in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* shows the Corniani to have been a prominent legal family whose original name was Rocco. In 1649 the family received recognition of citizenship, which was necessary for entry into the Council of Two Hundred. Giovanni himself had a career in the Venetian senate, while his brother Bernardino undertook an ecclesiastical career, becoming Bishop of Pola.²¹ Could Agostino Corniani have been a brother or nephew of these men?

The commissioning of the altar rails around 1712 was one of many new projects carried out for the church of S. Stefano in the early eighteenth century.²² The

Altar of Sta Monica, the second altar in the right aisle, which was renewed in 1734, provides us with a direct comparison for the altar rails and a possibility of artistic attribution (Plates 8, 9). On the front of the altar table are two putti, carved in high relief from Carrara marble and set against slabs of a greyish-black marble, surrounded by a brownish-beige stone frame, materials noticeably similar to those of the altar rails (Plates 1, 7). Dr Victoria Avery has commented:

stylistically and formally, these two putti appear similar to those on the altar rails – their physiognomies, their rather ‘rubber-like limbs’, their poses and the way they clasp their attributes and stand on a small bed of puffy clouds [make it] quite possible that they may be by the same sculptor.²³

To Dr Avery’s comparisons I would add that the facial types of the two putti on the Sta Monica altar table are very similar to the facial types of the altar rail putti, and I would conclude that the artist who sculpted the altar rails in 1712, twenty years later, sculpted the Altar of Sta Monica for the same church.

Merkel has tentatively assigned the putti on the Altar of Sta Monica to the circle of Giovanni Comin (c.1645-1708).²⁴ Comin was an artist from Treviso, who spent his career as a sculptor there and in Venice. His first documented work is the Altar of the Innocenti (1679) in Sta Giustina, Padua, which exhibits the Baroque influence of sculptors like Jossé de Corte (1627-79), whose works were to be seen in Venice, and Enrigo Meregno (1628-1723), a follower of de Corte. Comin actually worked with Meregno in Venice to execute the statue of *St Luke and a Bishop Saint* for the church of S Nicolo.²⁵ Comin is closely associated with Meregno, and Dr Montagu has pointed out a similarity between the putti in Meregno’s Pietà group in the chapel of the Monte di Pietà in Udine, and the putti of the altar rails.²⁶ Though the putti of Comin’s Altar of the Innocenti and those of Meregno’s Pietà group are somewhat similar to the putti on the altar rails, the resemblance is not strong enough to propose that a pupil of either Comin or Meregno was responsible for the altar rails.

Another possible candidate for the putti of the altar rail is the sculptor Orazio Marinalli (1634-1720), who trained in Venice with de Corte and carried out numerous religious works throughout the Veneto,²⁷ but as his monument to Alexander VIII in the Duomovecchio in Brescia shows, his putti, while similar to those on the altar rails, do not bear a significant stylistic resemblance to them. What Comin, Meregno and Marinalli all have in common is that they each trained under, or were influenced by de Corte, and, in fact, de Corte’s putti bear the strongest stylistic resemblance to those on the altar rails and on the Altar of Sta Monica. This can especially be seen in his most celebrated work – the high altar in the church of Sta Maria della Salute in Venice (1670).²⁸ On the base of the altar are putti sculpted in high relief, which have much in common with the putti of the altar rails and the Altar of Sta Monica

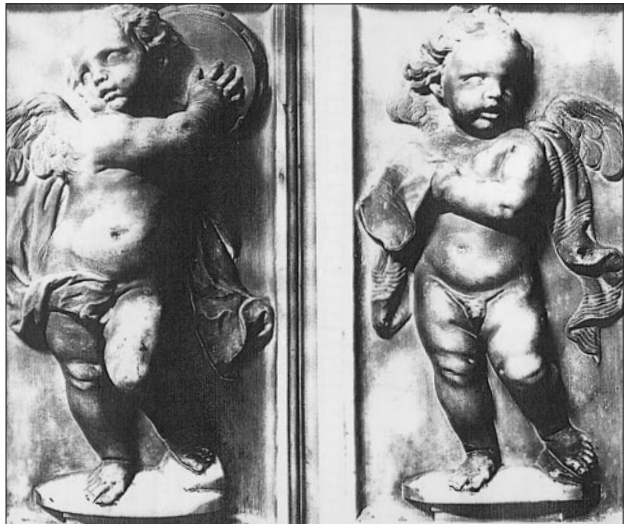


8 – *The Altar of Sta Monica, the second altar in the right nave of S. Stefano, Venice*

(photo V Avery)

(bottom left) 9 – Cherub on the Altar of Sta Monica (photo V Avery)

(bottom right) 10 – Jossé de Corte, putti on the base of the high altar of Sta Maria della Salute, Venice (courtesy Conway Library, Courtauld Institute)



(Plate 8), though there are considerable differences. It could even be suggested that the Altar of Sta Monica is somewhat modelled on the lower section of de Corte's high altar in Sta Maria della Salute. I would therefore conclude that it was a young pupil of de Corte who sculpted the putti of the altar rails and those of the Altar of Sta Monica, or at least a sculptor who was looking to Jossé de Corte. This pupil did not rigidly conform to de Corte's formula for putti: whereas de Corte's putti stand on rigid oval bases, the putti of the S. Stefano master, as we shall call him, gracefully pose on puffy clouds and so do not need wings, as De Corte's putti do (Plate 10). It is possible that this artist was also influenced by the work of Giovanni Comin, as Merkel has suggested. Certainly Comin's arrangement of his putti on sculpted clouds would suggest a possible influence, but that is the only similarity between the two which I can see. Without a signature on the altar rails or on the Altar of Sta Monica, and with no mention of the artist in the written sources which mention the two pieces, no further artistic attribution can be made. We seem to be dealing with a sculptor who perhaps specialised in carving putti, and so maybe was not considered important enough for a mention in the sources, and who perhaps did not think himself significant enough to sign his pieces.

The altar rails remained in their position in S. Stefano until the mid-nineteenth century when the baroque decoration of the church was no longer in taste. Apollonio, writing in 1911, describes how

from 1847-1852, the parish priest M.r can. Luigi Piccini, began to restore the church. For this restoration a lot of money was needed which he got from generous parishioners ... he took away the balustrade of the choir and sold them, substituting them for a railing of wood.²⁹

The rails were probably sold onto a dealer, from whom Stephen Ram bought them for his new house at Gorey. It seems a lucky paradox that the altar rails ended up in a Gothic revival church which was finished in 1847, the same year in which the priest of S. Stefano began his restorations of the church and removed the rails, as he felt they did not suit the original Gothic interior of the church.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Registry of Baptism, 29 August 1847, ‘The first stone of the C. Church of Monasterevin was laid by the V. Revd. Doctor Haly August 26 1840, and the first mass celebrated therein on the 29 August 1847 – deo Gratis’. See NLI microfilm no. 4203 for a copy of the registry.
- ² A.M. Stewart and C. de Courcy, *Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts: Index of Exhibitors and Their Works 1826-1979* (London 1985) 106.
- ³ T. Lacy, *Sights and Scenes in our Fatherland* (Wexford 1863) 184.
- ⁴ Published in 1901 by Burns & Oates Ltd, 28 Orchard Street, London. Thanks to Fr Denis O’Sullivan for drawing my attention to this book.
- ⁵ F.J. Kirk, *Some Notable Conversions in the county of Wexford* (London 1901) 15-16.
- ⁶ These photographs are now in the possession of Michael Fitzpatrick, who has kindly given me permission to reproduce them here.
- ⁷ D. Walsh, *100 Wexford Country Houses* (Wexford 1996) 83.
- ⁸ The Auction Report in *The Watchman* of 26 November 1870 lists all 45 lots.
- ⁹ A. Kavanagh and R. Murphy, *The Wexford Gentry* (Wexford 1994) 193.
- ¹⁰ E. Ryan, *Monasterevin Parish: Some Historical Notes* (Naas 1958).
- ¹¹ W.E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen: John George Adair and the Derryveagh evictions 1861* (Belfast 1983) 51-2.
- ¹² *Leinster Leader*, 4 Sept 1880, 2, available in diocesan archives, Carlow, manuscript number MCD/1880/02.
- ¹³ F.J. Kirk, *Some Notable Conversions in the County of Wexford* (London 1901) 25.
- ¹⁴ G. Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon: Historical and Artistic Guide*, translated by J. Guthrie (Trieste (1926) 1975) 508-9. Similar information on the architecture of S. Stefano is found in D. Howard, *Architectural History of Venice* (London 1980) 76, and in E. Concina, *A History of Venetian Architecture*, translated by J. Landry (Cambridge 1998) 109.
- ¹⁵ I. Hogate, ‘The Early History of Antonio Vivaries’ “St. Jerome Altar Piece” and the beginning of the Renaissance Style in Venice’, *The Burlington Magazine*, cxliii, 1174, January 2001, 21.
- ¹⁶ Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, 509-11.
- ¹⁷ F. Apollonio, *La Chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia* (Venice 1911) 24. I am indebted to Dr Jennifer Montagu and Dr Victoria Avery for drawing my attention to this book.
- ¹⁸ F. Apollonio, *La Chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia* (Venice 1911) 27.

- ¹⁹ Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, Venice, MS Cicogna no. 1877. Dr Avery kindly photocopied the relevant sections of the manuscript.
- ²⁰ I would argue that the name given in the written sources and on the inscription, Corniani, is the correct one, though it has been suggested that the name might be Cornelius, the Latin form of the Venetian Cornaro. There is no evidence to support such an assumption and no reason to assume that the Cornaro family were involved. Cornaro and Corniani were two different families, and it was a member of the Corniani who commissioned the altar rails.
- ²¹ Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, xxix (Rome 1983) 271-3.
- ²² The Corbelli family renewed the altar of St Nicholas of Tolento (the third altar in the left nave) from 1704 to 1709. The altar of the Annunciate (the second altar in the left nave) was renewed 'with marbles' from 1708, and from 1709 the Congregation of St Anne renewed 'with rich marbles' the first altar in the left nave. M.A. Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico' in *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e le Chiesa di S. Stefano* (Venice 1995) 275-7. Much of the information in Chiari's article comes from Agostino Nicolai's manuscript account on the church. My thanks to Prof Peter Humfrey for sending me the relevant sections from Chiari's chapter.
- ²³ Private correspondence with Dr Avery. I am indebted to Dr Avery for visiting the church of S. Stefano, and noticing the stylistic link between the altar rails and the Altar of Sta Monica, and for sending me the photographs of the altar. The Altar of Sta Monica was commissioned by Fr Giovanni Stefano Facchinelli, and is discussed in both the manuscript account of the church and in Apollonio, *La Chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia* (Venice 1911) 12-13.
- ²⁴ M.A. Chiari Moretto Weil, A. Gallo and E. Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione* (Venice 1996) 48-9.
- ²⁵ C. Semenzato, *La Scultura Veneta del Seicento e del Settecento* (Venice 1966) 26-7; C. Semenzato, 'Giovanni Comin' in J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art* (London 1996) 650.
- ²⁶ Private correspondence with Dr Montagu.
- ²⁷ The possibility of Orazio Marinalli was suggested to me by Dr Avery in correspondence.
- ²⁸ A.E.P. Sanchez, 'Jossé de Corte' in Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 900.
- ²⁹ Apollonio, *La Chiesa di S. Stefano*, 52.