Lost in Translation: Portraits of Sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle in Baroque Rome

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The following case study asks whether transculturation is a transhistorical analytical concept. Transculturation, as coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 and still largely associated with Latin American Studies, examines various processes by which disparate individuals come into contact and are thereby transformed. While not ignoring violence and oppression in the contact zone, the transculturation narrative ultimately affirms resilience, mutual understanding, and integration. The term has not gotten much traction in art history to date. If art historians have gradually shifted away from politically engaged critiques of orientalism, colonialism, and hybridity, they now turn to the discourse of “globalism.” Contemporary awareness of the ceaseless flow across borders of people, goods, and information cannot help but inform our work on the connected histories of the early modern world.¹ Yet this very identification with an earlier global culture may distort the historical enterprise, resulting in a caricature rather than a portrait of the past.

Among other possessions collected by her husband, Pietro della Valle (1586–1652), Sitti Maani Gioerida (Arabic: Ma’ani Juwayri, ca.1600–1621) arrived in Rome in 1626 as a mummified corpse after years of travel in a lead-lined box. Nicknamed “il Pellegrino,” Pietro came from a Roman

noble family, and he was famed as a traveler, poet, musician/composer, linguist, and academician. Thus, a news report from Rome to Florence explained “Signore Pietro della Valle of Rome is back home after twelve years of pilgrimage, having visited the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and having seen almost all of the East, including the Turkish lands, Arabia and Persia, in which countries he traveled in the company of ... his wife, a [Syrian Christian] woman . . . whom he married in the course of his travels. Due to her death during their journey [della Valle] had her corpse transported [back to Rome for burial] as well as some other things of his.” The transfer of Sitti Maani’s physical remains was only the final act in a series of moves between cultures, between religious confessions, and between gender norms.

Upon Pietro’s return to Rome in 1626, Sitti Maani’s mummified remains were deposited in the della Valle family vault at the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill. But a lavish public funeral did not take place until March 27 of the following year. The 1627 funeral at the Araceoli organized by Pietro della Valle and the Accademia degli Umoristi shaped Sitti Maani into a spectacle of wifely virtue, both exotic and exemplary, alien yet utterly assimilated. The funeral commemorated Maani as a femme forte or Amazon and as a modern Zenobia but also as an Eastern Christian, specifically a Chaldean, eager to submit to the

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authority of the Roman Church. As Joan-Pau Rubiés explains, “Marrying an Oriental Christian opened the door to the prospect of a restored unity between East and West under Catholic patronage . . . a romantic as well as an aristocratic solution to the problem of cultural diversity. . . .”

Despite the emphasis on physical and social mobility throughout Pietro della Valle’s textual production — on “transvestments,” “transfigurations,” and “transmutations” — the ultimate stage for the performance of identity remained Counter-Reformation Rome.

The Umoristi Academy

The Umoristi were officially formed in 1603 by a group of men dedicated to literary studies with an uplifting, comic bent. Their name can be glossed as the “humorists,” cleverly referring both to the physical humors and to wit. On the more serious side, the Umoristi staged an impressive number of funerals for their past presidents, or principi, as well as other prominent members of the society. Each of these funerals featured portraits of the deceased, often by well-known artists including Orazio Borgianni, Francesco Crescenzi, Guido Reni, and Pietro da Cortona. We know that with a few notable exceptions, Italian academies like the Umoristi barred women from membership; on the other hand, it was customary to invite women to academic lectures during the Carnival season when lighter, entertaining subjects might be discussed. In contrast to the funerals produced

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5 Hester, “Baroque Travel,” 61.
for fellow members of the academy — men they knew intimately — the Umoristi could never have personally known Sitti Maani. Her funeral was created around a blank, an absence. Even her name was an empty signifier: “She was called Maani, after the Arabic, to denote significance, intelligence, concepts, eloquence, or rather proverbs, whether in prose or in verse. . . .”

If women who associated with academicians risked accusations of sexual impropriety, Pietro della Valle’s deceased wife posed no lasting threat to the homosocial bonds of the Umoristi. On the contrary, their corporate identity was strengthened through this public display of erudite consolation, rhetorical virtuosity, and esoteric knowledge.

The primary source of information about Sitti Maani would have been the grieving widower Pietro della Valle, who was also a prolific author. Pietro gave the Umoristi the fifty-four letters he had written to his Neapolitan friend and patron Mario Schipano during his travels. Some of these letters were eventually published as the Viaggi. In addition to his correspondence, della Valle kept a journal, wrote a sonnet cycle (the Corona Gioerida), and penned a lengthy funeral oration to commemorate his deceased wife. A pamphlet published by Umoristi member Girolamo

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9 Elisabetta Graziosi, “Arcadia femminile: presenze e modelle,” Filologia e critica 17 (1992): 321, quoting Pietro della Valle’s friend Traiano Boccalini: “. . . literary exercises involving women and academics resemble those tricks and games that dogs play, which after a short time end with each trying to mount the other.”


11 Hester, “Baroque Travel,” 82.


13 Pietro della Valle’s funeral oration for Sitti Maani was published in Les fameux voyages de Pietro della Valle, ed. Étienne Carneau and François Le Comte (Paris: Gervais
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Rocchi, ghost written for Pietro della Valle, offers a permanent record of the ephemeral funeral held for Sitti Maani in 1627 (Fig. 1). Rocchi’s pamphlet must have been a collectible souvenir not only for local nobles keeping up with the social scene but also for Roman orientalists interested in politics, religion, languages, and science. The Zanetti press in Rome was

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Clousier, 1662–1664), vol. 1, 279–362; the oration was also included in Melchisedec Thevenot, Relations de divers voyages curieux (Paris: Jacques Langlois, 1666), vol. 1, 15–26.

known for printing annual missionary reports from Ethiopia, China, and Japan, so it was the logical choice for the publication of such an ambitious multilingual work. Since the Zanetti shop specialized in foreign language texts, they must have had on hand a large number of non-European fonts capable of producing Rocchi’s text.

The pamphlet includes a title page with a large coat of arms quartering the della Valle family heraldry of lions and eagles with Maani’s personal motto in Syriac script which reads “servant of God, Maani.” This is followed on the first page recto by an engraved portrait bordered with the name Sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle (Fig. 2). Following page sixteen the reader encounters an unnumbered large foldout with an engraving of the temporary catafalque from the funeral held in S. Maria Aracoeli (Fig. 3). On the basis of a preparatory drawing, some scholars attribute the design for the catafalque to Giuseppe Cesari, the Cavaliere d’Arpino. Rocchi explains that the low wall encircling the catafalque was decorated with paintings of the hybrid seal, as seen on the title page, alternating with Maani’s own personal seal. Rocchi notes that in the East such seals are used either for commerce or to express piety; unlike Italian seals they only feature text without any visual images. Sitti Maani’s larger and more elaborate personal seal appears alone on the next numbered recto, page seventeen (Fig. 4). In the center of this large circular seal we find Maani’s motto in Syriac now surrounded by a border of Arabic text: “Most noble, elevated, exalted name of Lady Maani, daughter of Signore Habibigian of Mardin of the noble house of Gioerida, from the ancient land of Mesopotamia.” The bilingual device also appeared as a painting in the della Valle chapel during the funeral at the Aracoeli; it bore witness to just two of the many languages that Maani spoke and which made her indispensable to Pietro della Valle as he traveled in the Middle East.

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Figure 2. “Portrait of Sitti Maani” (after Jan van Hasselt); Fvnerale della signora sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle. Celebrato in Roma l’anno 1627. E descritto dal signor Girolamo Rocchi, Roma, Appresso l’erede di Bartolomeo Zannetti. 1627: page 1 recto. (*IC6 R5823 627f, Houghton Library, Harvard University).

Rocchi goes on to describe the décor in the chapel (dark draperies and candles), the participants (men and women seated separately), and the symbolism of the funeral catafalque (a crown held up by twelve personified Virtues standing on a low socle). The base was made of wood, painted white to look like marble; the personifications imitated bronze, and the crown seemed to be made of gold studded with fictive gems. Death’s heads appeared inside the catafalque on the low wall beneath the sculpted figures. The epitaphs found below the personifications on the exterior of the catafalque reappear in the pamphlet on pages 19–30, each printed in their original scripts, along with translations into Italian. The European languages include Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and vernacular Greek. From Maani’s region we find Chaldean (i.e., Syriac), Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, and literary or ancient Greek. In the center of the catafalque was a large urn flanked by seated personifications of Conjugal Benevolence, Marital Concord, Magnanimity, and Patience.

More than thirty poems written for the occasion by Umoristi academy members were deposited in the central funerary jar. Rocchi includes the texts of these poems in the pamphlet; they must have been read aloud in a meeting either prior to or after the funeral, according to standard academic practice.\textsuperscript{17} Lacking any real firsthand knowledge of Sitti Maani, the Umoristi produced reams of allegorical poetry. If Maani was doubly absent, having died in far off Persia without ever having set foot in Rome, the poetry generated by the members of the Umoristi academy was physically present and had a starring role in the funeral as well as in Rocchi’s printed pamphlet commemorating the event. The poems employ consistent themes and images that compare Sitti Maani’s origins in the East with her final resting place in the West: Orient/Occident, Tigris/Tiber, cradle/tomb, mortal death/everlasting life. The Umoristi poets present these transformations not in terms of transculturation but rather as the result of divine Providence overcoming heresy and schism on the distant frontiers of the Christian world.

About Face

In the engraved portrait of Sitti Maani from the 1627 pamphlet, acculturation turns out to be a one-sided dialogue between exoticism and exemplarity in Baroque Rome. Della Valle’s deceased wife cannot resist, accommodate, or participate in the fashioning of her commemorative portrait. Although the print lacks a signature or any other indication of the designer or the engraver, it has nonetheless been connected to Pietro della Valle’s description of a lost, full-length painted portrait of his young Syrian Christian wife.\textsuperscript{18} The anonymous engraved portrait would be

\textsuperscript{17} In addition to the poems included in Rocchi’s pamphlet, Girolamo Bartolomei published separately his \textit{Canzone nella morte della Signora Sitti Maani Gioerida con altri versi} (Roma: Zanetti, 1627). The Florentine musicologist Giovanni Battista Doni also wrote \textit{Ad C.V. Petrum de Valle in obitum uxoris}, 1627 (Vatican, Archivio della Valle-del Buffalo 86, carte varie fasc. 23, p. 294).

republished in later editions of della Valle’s Viaggi in order to illustrate the ethnographic authenticity of the text. Yet, Pietro’s own description of the unfinished original painting points to many flaws and inaccuracies in the costume, accessories, and physical likeness.

Writing from Isfahan in Persia, on October 21, 1619, Pietro della Valle explains that the painted portrait was intended to satisfy the curiosity of his family about the woman he had met three years earlier in Baghdad: “...I am sending to Rome a portrait of lady Maani my wife, much desired by my family. It is life size, in Syrian dress, even though she seldom wears that now” (vol. 2: 7, p. 61). Della Valle says that his wife is, in effect, dressing up or performing a “Syrian” identity in this painting destined for a Roman audience. The portrait can thus be understood as part of della Valle’s larger ethnographic project, as manifested in his intense interest in the fashions worn in various regions, in minute details of costume and accessories. In his letters, Pietro takes pride in adapting his own dress to different locales; he stresses his ability to blend in, to look like a local. Likewise, he says that Sitti Maani dresses according to whatever country in which they find themselves. “She will dress as I wish, and change it according to the custom of the various countries where we travel: up to now she has been wearing Syrian costume, from her country” (vol. 1: 17, p. 402).

In general, the engraved portrait of Sitti Maani resembles the woodcut of a married Syrian woman that can be found in the popular costume book of Cesare Vecellio (ca. 1590) (Fig. 5). Note the similar full garment, long veil, and conical cap with a flat top. If the painted portrait originally signified Sitti Maani’s ability to change costume and to alter her outward appearance, the engraved portrait from Rocchi’s 1627 funeral pamphlet stops that process and freezes her identity in time and space.

19 Quotations here and below are taken from the Gian Pietro Bellori edition of Pietro della Valle’s Viaggi (Rome: Biagio Deversin, 1662); republished by G. Gancia (Brighton, 1843). The translations are mine. The middle reference is the letter number.


Pietro della Valle continues to describe the lost prototype for the 1627 print: “I am sorry that it is not as perfect as I would like, since it is not by a talented man, but rather by that young Flemish painter who used to be in my house, and for the fact that it is unfinished. The Flemish painter left it incomplete when he departed. . .” (vol. 2: 7, p. 61). In the Viaggi Pietro mentions his painter several times, calling him Giovanni or the Fleming. They met in 1614 when della Valle was starting out from Venice on his pilgrimage. He hired the artist to accompany him and record the journey, specifically to do costume studies and perspective views. He describes the painter as having a quirky, impulsive personality, and he fears that Shah Abbas will recruit him; this apparently did happen in Isfahan circa 1617. Later German visitors to the court of the Shah noted a painter named Jan Lucaszoon van Hasselt in residence.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{22}\) Various spellings of his name include, Gio. Luycassen, Johannes Eucassin, and Johan Lucassen Hasselt. Until the publication by Antonio Invernizzi — *Abbas re di Persia. Un patrizio romano alla corte dello Scia nel primo ’600* (Torino: Silvio Zamorani Editore, 2004), 23–62 — Italian scholars had not identified Jan van Hasselt. But art historians
Returning to della Valle’s description of the lost painted portrait by Jan van Hasselt we read that, “The right side of Maani’s face, especially the upper part, from the eye to the brow, and upper part of the cheek, seem natural, even if they should look a little younger and more refined. The left side does not seem natural, either because it was unfinished or because the painter didn’t know how to do any better; it seems contorted to me, with the perspective badly done and lacking grace, unlike the original [i.e., Maani herself]. Many items are missing from the jewelry on . . . her head” (vol. 2: 7, p. 62). Pietro della Valle’s observations regarding the flawed representation of his wife’s face and ornaments help us to interpret some clumsy passages in the engraved image. From an earlier letter we know that Sitti Maani customarily wore a lot of jewelry, including a nose ring that Pietro had only just convinced her to remove:

The ornaments of gold and of jewels for the head, for the neck, for the arms, for the legs, and for the feet (for they wear rings even on their toes) are indeed, unlike those of the Turks, carried to great excess, but not of great value: for in Baghdad jewels of high price are either not to be had, or are not used; and they wear such only as are of little value, as turquoises, small rubies, emeralds, carbuncles, garnets, pearls, and the like. My spouse dresses herself with all of them according to their fashion; with exception, however, of certain ugly rings of very large size, set with jewels, which, in truth, very absurdly, it is the custom to wear fastened to one of their nostrils, like buffaloes: an ancient custom, however, in the East, which, as we find in the Holy Scriptures, prevailed among the Hebrew ladies even in the time of Solomon, Proverbs XI: 22. These nose-rings, in complaisance to me, she has left off, but I have not yet been able to prevail with her cousin and her sisters to do the same; so fond are they of an

working on northern Baroque art from the 1930s onward were already aware of his international career. See Herman Goetz, “Persians and Persian Costumes in Dutch Painting of the Seventeenth Century,” Art Bulletin 20:3 (1938): 282–83.
old custom, be it ever so absurd, who have been long habituated to it.\textsuperscript{23} (vol. 1: 17, pp. 402–3)

Like della Valle, Salomon Schweigger, who spent three years in the Levant from 1578–1581, was also struck by the appearance of women wearing nose rings; he included a woodcut illustration of the practice in his travel account published in Nuremberg in 1608\textsuperscript{24} (Fig. 6).

The engraved portrait of Sitti Maani based on van Hasselt’s lost painting fails to show her abundant jewelry; the print merely indicates a jeweled strap under her chin and a few loose strands on her cap. Pietro goes on to note that “Jewels are also missing from the golden handle of the \textit{khanjar} in her belt by her right hand; it is not easy to tell what it represents” (vol. 2: 7, p. 62). In Arabic, \textit{khanjar} refers to a man’s curved dagger. Pietro’s observation is once again helpful for interpreting the later engraving; in the print, the partial dagger appears to float rather than being grasped firmly in Maani’s hand. In fact, the \textit{khanjar} is not only visually ambiguous, but for contemporaries this male weapon would have seemed out of place as part of a woman’s costume. By providing Sitti Maani with a man’s dagger, the portrait invokes the quintessential woman warrior, an Amazon. Della Valle had earlier noted the connection between weapons and phallically empowered women when he claimed that Ottoman Sultanas carried jeweled daggers as a sign of domination over their husbands.\textsuperscript{25}

Pietro continues to complain about van Hasselt’s abilities as a portrait painter: “Likewise indicated poorly, are the big round golden bracelets that should be on [Maani’s] left arm. But the veil around her face, that falls in


\textsuperscript{24} Salomon Schweigger, \textit{Ein Newe Reyssbeschreibung auss Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem} (Nuremberg: Johann Lantzenberger, 1619), Book 1, 43.

front to the belt, and behind all the way down to the ground, is completely finished, and looks natural, with all its colors, and likewise the large sleeves of the colored silk blouse” (vol. 2: 7, p. 62). Pietro della Valle then shifts from the representation of Sitti Maani herself to the setting of the portrait. Although the architecture and landscape he describes do not appear in the engraved version, Pietro says that the original painting showed an awning worked in many colors. . . . The floor inside the balcony should be covered by a beautiful Persian carpet, like they use here, and in the background of the panel, representing the countryside around Isfahan from the direction of Baghdad, you should be able to see a busy caravan in the distance either going or coming with many camels and other pack animals and with many people in diverse costumes, but this was not carried out. The
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lady Maani holds in her hand a folded letter in the custom of this country [i.e., with Persian writing], showing that she is either about to receive the caravan or about to send for it . . . as many people do when the caravans pass by big cities. (vol. 2: 7, p. 62).

Once more, Pietro’s description of the lost painting helps us to understand an odd feature of the engraved portrait: Sitti Maani’s missing left hand. Apparently when the half-length figure was cropped from the full-length painting, the hand holding a letter was also omitted leaving this area of the print unresolved. If the original painting emphasized Maani’s ability to communicate in a number of languages and to employ writing in the public marketplace, the print eliminates her control over the written word. While Pietro’s voluminous correspondence would eventually be published as the Viaggi, Maani’s letter disappears from the historical record.

Pietro concludes his description of Jan van Hasselt’s portrait by exclaiming “Enough, this portrait is as good as it can be having been made here [i.e., Isfahan]. In Rome, when please God the original [Maani herself] arrives, along with the clothing that we will bring with us, we can have another better one made” (vol. 2: 7, p. 63). Writing in 1619, in hopes of returning to the Eternal City with Sitti Maani, della Valle imagines that they will have access to more talented portrait painters as well as to superior spiritual resources. Maani was supposed to arrive in Rome with an expanded wardrobe of Syrian, Persian, and European clothing; at the same time, she would adopt a new identity as a Catholic.

The 1627 print exoticizes Sitti Maani by including her bilingual name, her Syrian costume, and her possession of an unladylike weapon. Yet, her facial features remain youthful, generic, and European, much like the faces of the personifications found on the catafalque. Moreover, the print fails to denote skin color despite della Valle’s explicit reference to Maani’s ethnicity: “Her beauty is typical for this country: that is, she has vivid color; to Italians it would seem closer to brown than white. Her hair tends to black, likewise her gracefully arched brows, and the lashes that she extends with kohl in the Oriental fashion . . . her lively shining eyes are the same color [i.e., black]. . .” (vol. 1: 17, p. 398). We know that della Valle
was attentive to skin color from an earlier letter from Cairo in which he remarked on an Ethiopian woman who was “black as coal” and an Indian woman who was “yellow like grain”; he found them both very beautiful (vol. 1: 6, pp. 233–34). And when Pietro della Valle later visits Goa, he remarks that the locals there are struck by his own whiteness. Yet, for all of his attention to physical characteristics, for della Valle faith trumps color as the ultimate marker of difference.

Postscript

As we know Sitti Maani never made it to Rome, but Jan van Hasselt’s unfinished portrait of her did. It was listed in a 1652 postmortem inventory of Pietro della Valle’s belongings. And the portrait was still to be found at the Palazzo della Valle in 1709, although it is untraced today. The engraved portrait based on van Hasselt’s painting enjoyed a long

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26 Hester, “Baroque Travel,” 63.


28 Barbieri, “Pietro Della Valle,” 112, cites ASR, Notai dell’A.C., vol. 5120, c. 903, [Aug. 23, 1709]: “Inventario dei beni del qm Nicolò Francesco della Valle. Elencati: moltissimi quadri, tra cui ritratti di Pietro Della Valle, di Sitti Maani, e di Maria Tinatin di Ziba; molti manoscritti dell’archivio di casa . . . diversi libri e dizionari a stampa in lingue orientali.” [Inventory of goods belonging to Nicolò Francesco della Valle. Listed: many paintings, including portraits of Pietro Della Valle, Sitti Maani, and Maria Tinatin di Ziba; many manuscripts from the family archive . . . various printed books and dictionaries in oriental languages.] But according to Bellori’s edition of the Viaggi (Rome, 1662), xxvi, Pietro della Valle’s widow had given three paintings to a French diplomat, named Saint Laurent de Parisot, circa 1660; these included the portrait of Sitti Maani, Pietro della Valle, and Maria de Ziba Tinatin, the Georgian-born widow herself. We must con-
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afterlife through pirated images and later print adaptations. In the account of the 1627 funeral republished by Melchisedec Thevenot, for example, the image of Sitti Maani was simply taken from Rocchi’s pamphlet, with the figure reversed and her features somewhat coarsened (Fig. 7).²⁹ Les fameux voyages de Pietro della Valle, edited by Étienne Carneau, likewise appropriates the image but does away with the octagonal frame, replacing it with an oval; an inscription in French now appears below the figure: “The soul of this portrait, the honor of Babylon, she lived as a femme forte, and was without fault; Possessing all the virtues in the highest degree, her supreme merit was worthy of a throne” (Fig. 8).³⁰ The Carneau edition pairs Sitti Maani with a new matching engraved portrait of her husband, Pietro della Valle (Fig. 9). We can identify the source for this print in the Mascardi edition of the Viaggi where the portrait of Pietro della Valle contains a Latin inscription: “This pilgrim wanders throughout the world; to me pilgrimage is both home and fatherland” (Fig. 10). This portrait can now be attributed to a French artist named Simon Vaubert, who appears in the della Valle account books as a creditor in 1653.³¹ The Carneau version of the Pietro della Valle portrait draws on Vaubert but adds an oval frame like the one surrounding Maani’s likeness. In the border around Pietro’s portrait we find block letters in Italian spelling out his name and the epithet “Il Pellegrino.” A French translation of the Latin inscription has been added: “I travel the earth and among all these places, I make my home where I feel most at ease.” Although both the Italian and French prints show della Valle wearing European clothing, including a large collar and cloak, his appearance is rendered exotic by a large pearl earring and a luxuriant Portuguese mustache. The bust length portrait of Pietro della Valle

²⁹ Paris: Jacques Langlois, 1666.
³⁰ Paris: Gervais Clousier, 1662–64.
³¹ Barbieri, “Pietro Della Valle,” 110, cites ADV 148. [Dec. 20,1653]: “A monsieur Simone Vauberti pittore Francese per resto, saldo, e finale pagamento delli ritratti che ha fatto del sig.r Pietro padre di detti signori Della Valle bona memoria [. . .], scudi 6.00”. [To Simone Vaubert, French painter, the final payment for the portraits he made of Pietro of blessed memory, father of the said Della Valle heirs . . . 6 scudos.]

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also features the hybrid device from the title page of Rocchi’s 1627 funeral pamphlet. At the bottom of the image we find the della Valle family arms once again quartered — literally entangled — with Sitti Maani’s personal seal in Syriac script. Whereas the hybrid arms initially appeared during Sitti Maani’s funeral in the church of the Aracoeli, in this new context the device comments on Pietro’s posthumous identity as an orientalist scholar, traveler, and widower. Pietro della Valle’s polyglot portrait — merging Italian, French, and Syriac texts — shows us how early modern identity could be negotiated through the multi-national, multi-confessional community of print.

While the various portraits considered here all represent Sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle according to European conventions, the challenge remains to recapture some sense of her individual agency. To a large extent our conclusions depend on the archives we can consult. In contrast to modern transculturation in British India or Latin America, for example, in this case we only have access to European cultural production: portraits, pamphlets, and poems. From the Gioerida family in Baghdad or Isfahan little remains. We do not know how Ferdinando Gioerida, Maani’s nephew, studying at the College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, might have responded to the funeral at the Aracoeli or to the portrait that appeared in Rocchi’s pamphlet. But despite the gaps and losses in the historical record, we must assume that for Sitti Maani and the extended Gioerida family, minority Christians living in exile, survival depended on cultural mobility.

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