

The Legend of Blessed Angelina of Montegiove:

Genesis of a Biography

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"Leggenda della Beata Angelina da Montegiove:
Genesi di una Biografia"

Annalecta TOR 17 (1984): 33-46

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As far as we know at present, the authorship of the first biography of Blessed Angelina of Montegiove is without doubt to be attributed to Ludovico Jacobilli, who returned to write about her no less than four times between 1627 and 1661, giving us a methodical account of her life, death and miracles.¹ Before him, there was no real biography of the Blessed, as was already noted by Brother Mark of Lisbon, who complained in the third part of his *Chronicles* that "there is no legend of her life."² Later, everyone went back to Jacobilli's biography, and the human and spiritual picture he drew of Angelina remained substantially intact.

The Portrait of Angelina

In Jacobilli's biography, Angelina is presented as noble, in love with virginity, zealous in the works of mercy, guided by God with frequent revelations, a penitent, a founder of monasteries, and a miracle-worker during her life and after her death.

Virginity is the *Leitmotiv*, the guiding thread of the whole biography. Jacobilli presents an Angelina who is fiercely in love with it.³ She

¹ He did this with the following publications: Ludovico Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina Corbara contessa di Civitellanel'Abruzzo, Istitutrice della Monache Claustrali del Terz'Ordine di San Francesco, e Fondatrice in Foligno del Monastero di S. Anna, primo delli sedici, che ella eresse in diverse Pruinice*, (Foligno 1628) pp. 188-208. *Vite de'santi e beati dell'Umbria, e di quelli, i corpi de'quali riposano in essa provincia, con le vite di molti Servi di Dio Dell'istessa*, Tomo secondo, (Foligno 1656) pp. 33-35. Tomo terzo. . . , (Foligno 1661) pp. 498f.

² Mark of Lisbon, *Delle Croniche de frati minori del serafico P. S. Francesco*. Parte terza, (Venetia 1591) f. 27v.

³ In regard to the love of women for virginity, or at any rate, for chastity, André Vauchez speaks of the "exalted state of feeling which often confers on female sanctity a paroxysmic

makes a vow of virginity when she is scarcely twelve years old,⁴ and in order to preserve it, she opposes her father, who has promised her in marriage and threatens to allow her to die of hunger.⁵ An angel comes to console her and dry her tears.⁶ She induces her husband to vow virginity himself.⁷ After his death, as "the most beloved and victorious one of virginity," she visits a great many places in the Abruzzo, deploring "the wretchedness of the married state" and exalting "the virginal state." In answer to her appeal, many young women choose to remain virgins, to the annoyance of the magnates of the kingdom. These denounce Angelina to King Ladislaus as a heretic, who, by her hatred of the married state, would end up sending the kingdom to its ruin for lack of subjects.⁸ In spite of the tremendous miracle of the fire which does not burn her mantle, Ladislaus finally banishes her from the kingdom of Naples. Accompanied by other virgins, Angelina goes to Assisi and then to Foligno, where she begins with them the foundation of monasteries of virgins.⁹ Even after her death, Angelina's face "shone, in an unusually-splendid way, with the innocence of Virginity fought for and preserved,"¹⁰ and her "virginal body" during the three days which it remained unburied, "gave off a most pleasing and refreshing odor."¹¹

Another point of great importance in Angelina's biography is the inspirations and revelations by which God guides her at the crucial moments of her life. Thus, God encourages her to obey her father who wants to give her in marriage, since, in spite of everything, her vow of virginity will remain intact.¹² Through a special divine disposition, the news of the vow of virginity made by her groom is immediately divulged.¹³ While Angelina was traveling towards Naples, "God revealed

aspect." André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, (Rome, 1981) p. 407. Elsewhere: "These female saints in fact appear to be fiercely attached to the preservation of their virginity" (Vauchez, 247f).

⁴ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 11.

⁵ Jacobilli, 13-15.

⁶ Jacobilli, 20.

⁷ Jacobilli, 23f.

⁸ Jacobilli, 32f.

⁹ Jacobilli, 34-64.

¹⁰ Jacobilli, 82.

¹¹ Jacobilli, 86.

¹² Jacobilli, 17.

¹³ Jacobilli, 24.

to her the impious design which the king held secretly in the depths of his heart," suggesting to her at the same time the way to foil the plot hatched against her.¹⁴ "A voice from Heaven" orders her to go "with her companions to the Pardon" of Assisi.¹⁵ In the church of St. Mary of the Angels, "she heard a voice from heaven, which said to her: 'Angelina, go to Foligno with your companions, because God wants you to build there a monastery of the Third Order of St. Francis.'" ¹⁶ Still another example: "they had been sent to Foligno by the almighty power of God."¹⁷

Alongside these two fundamental characteristics of Angelina's life and mission, Jacobilli adds others which complete his human and spiritual portrait of her. We see her engaged in pilgrimages, in the exercise of the works of mercy (alms, visits to the sick, exhortations to sinners), of penitence (fasting, flagellation, humble dress, vigils), and of piety (visits to churches and the bodies of the saints, reception of the sacraments, prayer). She has the gift of tears, works miracles, is very humble, and after her death, her body gives off sweet odors.

Clearly, if we make an exception for the role assigned to virginity and divine revelations, we find ourselves in the presence of a very common typology of sanctity, as it was conceived both in the late Middle Ages¹⁸ and in the first half of the 17th century, the time when Jacobilli was writing. Perhaps principally for this reason, and also for lack of other versions, the account of our hagiographer was accepted without reserve and, except for some corrections which do not affect the spiritual picture of the Blessed, it was repeated in exactly the same way up until our day. Most people were even unaware of the clarifications that Jacobilli himself had made with regard to the chronology for Angelina, whose date of birth he originally established as 1377,¹⁹ then as 1367²⁰ and finally as 1357.²¹ Jacobilli's biographical construction was accepted without reservations of any kind by the very learned Luke Wadding,²² who gives an extensive summary of the whole account and translates

¹⁴ Jacobilli, 34.

¹⁵ Jacobilli, 48.

¹⁶ Jacobilli, 52.

¹⁷ Jacobilli, 54.

¹⁸ Andre Vauchez, *La saintete en Occident*, pp. 223-343.

¹⁹ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, cit. 9.

²⁰ Jacobilli, *Vita de' santi e beati dell'Umbria* cit., II, 33.

²¹ Jacobilli, *Vita de' santi e beati dell'Umbria*, cit, III, 498.

²² Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum* IX (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi 1932) 7f, 129-133; X, 297f.

part of it literally in his *Annales*. All the hagiographers who wrote about Angelina did the same.²³

Jacobilli's Account and its Sources

Since this is how matters stand, it is necessary to determine on what foundation Jacobilli's construction rests. Fortunately, he himself has come to our aid, because on page seven of the *Vita*, on the back of an engraving depicting Blessed Angelina, he took care to indicate to us the sources from which he drew. Naturally, I have checked them, and more than one clarification is necessary.

The only work by Mariano of Florence explicitly cited is the *Compendium Chronicarum Fratrum Minorum*,²⁴ where there is this brief mention of Angelina:

At this time, too, the Third Order [came] to the city of Foligno, where it began to be reformed for women by the most Blessed Angelina, countess of Civitella, who, inspired by God, built the monasteries listed below, namely. . . .²⁵

On the other hand, it does not appear that Jacobilli was acquainted with the much more extensive notice about Angelina and her foundations which can be read in Brother Mariano's *Trattato sul terz'Ordine*, written between 1519 and 1523.²⁶ He says instead that he used the

²³ For an almost complete bibliography see Felice Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina dei Conti di Montegiove* (Siena, 1976) 5-14. Of notable interest is the entry "Angelina da Montegiove," edited by A. Alessandrini, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* III (Rome, 1961) 207-209. It is certainly so for the biographies I have been able to examine, and these are: Fabio Siri, *Sommario della Vita della B. Angelina Monte Marte de Conti di Corbara*. (Foligno, 1663). Giocondo Pettinari, *Memoria intorno alla vita della beata Angelina de conti di Marsciano* (Rome, 1842) [Francesco Pietro Massimi], *Memorie intorno alla vita della Beata Angelina de Conti di Marsciano e contessa di Civitella del Tronto* (Viterbo, 1865); Nicolò da Prato, *Leggenda della beata Angelina de Conti di Marsciano*, scritta da . . . dell'Ordine di Frati Minori ed ora pubblicata la prima volta per cura del P. M. Antonio Cavigli, Parroco di S. Francesco, (Foligno, 1882); Gabriella Ciravegna, *Una gloria francescana. Cenni biografici della beata Angelina di Marsciano*, (Foligno, 1926); Maria Luisa Fiumi, *Le mistiche ombre*, (Firenze, 1928) 1-29. On p. 4 she explains: "But since her life, which was at first scattered through the ancient chronicles, was later gathered into a single work. . . we will draw especially from one source—Jacobilli—to repaint her portrait in a simple way." Felice da Porretta, *La beata Angelina di Marsciano. Storia e leggenda*, (Firenze, 1973). It is the wordiest and most fictionalized biography of Angelina; Felice Rossetti, *La beata Angelina*.

²⁴ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 7: "Brother Mariano of Florence in his general Chronicles of the Order of St. Francis in the first manuscript Volume, preserved in the Friary of S. Isidore in Rome, by Father Wadding."

²⁵ "Compendium Chronicarum Fratrum Minorum scriptum a patre Mariano de Florentia," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 3 (1910) 708.

²⁶ Anastasius Van den Wyngaert, "De sanctis et beatis Tertii Ordinis iuxta codicem Mariani Florentini," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 14 (1921): 29-31. He writes: "At this time, still in the city of Foligno, came sister Angelina, the countess of Civitella in Abruzzo with several of her maternal cousins, who had been driven out by the King and

Chronicles of Brother Mark of Lisbon,²⁷ which at least in part depends on Brother Mariano. Mark, however, is less polemical against the sisters and says something more about Blessed Angelina:

There came to Foligno a Lady called Angelina, Countess of Civitella in the Abruzzo, accompanied by some of her kinswomen, who, moved by the Holy Spirit, began to live a strict and holy life with the habit and Rule of the Sisters of Penance. . . . But returning to Blessed Angelina, the first Mother of these Religious, it should be known that her body is buried in Foligno in the church of the Friars Minor. Although there is no legend of her life, nevertheless, according to what can be seen from her picture in the chapel, where she is buried, which sometimes takes the place of a written narrative, and according to the account of persons worthy of belief, this Blessed Servant of the Lord, before she took the habit of the Third Order, was accused before the King of Naples, and in order to prove her innocence, she carried live coals before his majesty in the skirt of her garment, without burning her clothes at all. After receiving the habit, she was not only persecuted again, but beaten for being completely devoted to works of piety. While visiting the sick, she cured many of them; she raised a little boy from the dead by her prayers. After her death, she was honored by God with many miracles, because many years later, the wall of her tomb sweated drops of blood. She also once appeared to a man who was devoted to her, telling him to inform the Brothers that they should remove her body from that place, and keep it with reverence, which they immediately did. They placed it, still almost intact, in a coffin wrapped in silk cloths, and the people still hold it in great veneration.²⁸

Brother Mark's page is interesting especially for the reference to the oral tradition and to the paintings still existing in the chapel of the church of St. Francis, in which the Blessed was buried. I will return to this.

Those who continued Brother Mark's *Chronicles*²⁹ also speak about her with sobriety and realism; however, they erroneously say that Angelina's body was buried in the monastery of St. Anne.³⁰

who were dressed in the habit of the Third Order. And receiving several others into their company, they began a new congregation under the name of Saint Anne. . . . All these monasteries were joined together, and the sisters who lived in them lived under certain constitutions and privileges which Blessed Angelina begged from Pope Martin V and Pope Eugene IV."

²⁷ Jacobilli, *Vita della Beata Angelina* 7: "Msgr. Brother Mark of Lisbon, Bishop of Porto, in the *Chronicles of the Friars Minor*, in the third part."

²⁸ Mark of Lisbon, *Delle Croniche de Frati Minori del serafico P. S. Francesco*. Parte terza (Venetia, 1591) f. 27rv.

²⁹ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina* 7: "Fr. Br. Bartolomeo da Corinaldo, and Barezzo Barezzi in the fourth part of the *Chronicles of the Friars Minor*."

³⁰ *Croniche degli Ordini Instituiti dal P. S. Francesco*. Part quarta. Torno primo. . . (Napoli, 1680) p. 130: "In the province of St. Francis in the Monastery of Sant'Anna in Foligno lies the body of the Blessed Sister Angelina, formerly Countess of Corbaria, who, after her husband's death, renouncing the World, and distributing her goods to the poor, enclosed herself in this sacred place, putting on the habit of the Third Order of St. Clare, where by fasting, by prayer, and by afflicting her body, she reached such great perfection that she deserved to have Our Lord perform many miracles for her, both during her life

Contrary to what Jacobilli says, Pietro Ridolfi³¹ does not mention Angelina in his *Historie*.³² Francisco Gonzaga,³³ however, mentions her in two separate places, even though he limits himself to saying that the "most illustrious and pious countess of Civitella" founded the monastery of St. Anne, where she lived "in a very holy way" until her death.³⁴

Clearly, there is not much which Jacobilli could have drawn from the five works cited, even though Brother Mark in a way authenticates oral tradition and paintings, which — according to what he says — can sometimes take the place of "a written narrative." He had almost certainly observed these during the tour which he made of Italy in the middle of the sixteenth century in search of information for his *Chronicles*.³⁵

On the other hand, it is not possible to establish a comparison between Jacobilli's account and the other three sources from which he says he drew, first of all, the manuscript by Sister Cecca di Burgaro³⁶ and the other by Sister Onofria.³⁷ No trace has been found of the fate of the two manuscripts, which Jacobilli says were kept, respectively, in the Vatican Library and in the monastery of St. Onofrio in Florence,³⁸ but we cannot conclude from this that they never existed. Jacobilli explicitly cites the first of them, even though vaguely, with reference to the vow of virginity, the wedding, and Angelina's expulsion from the kingdom of Naples.³⁹ On the other hand, there is no citation of the

and after her death, and she is held in great veneration by all the people."

³¹ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina* 7: "Msgr. Fr. Pietro Ridolfi da Tossignano, Bishop of Sinigaglia in his *Histories of the Seraphic Order*, in several places."

³² Pietro Ridolfi da Tossignano, *Historiarum Seraphicae Religionis libri tres* (Venetiis, 1586).

³³ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 7: "Msgr. Fr. Francesco Gonzaga, Bishop of Mantua in his *Seraphic History*, at the beginning, and in other places."

³⁴ Francisco Gonzaga, *De origine Seraphica Religionis Franciscanae eiusque progressibus, de Regularis Observantiae institutione, forma administrationis ac legibus, admirabilique propagatione*, (Rome, 1587) 3f., 174.

³⁵ F. Felix Lopes, "Marc de Lisbonne" in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* X (Paris, 1980) 172-74.

³⁶ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 7: "A manuscript by Sister Cecca di Burgaro da Marciano, Companion of Blessed Angelina, and Nun of the Monastery of Sant'Anna in Foligno, preserved in the Vatican Library."

³⁷ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, "A manuscript by Sister Onofria, Countess, Companion of the same Blessed, and one of the Founders of the Monastery of S. Onofrio in Florence, preserved in that monastery."

³⁸ Felice Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 5.

³⁹ Jacobilli, *Vite de' santi e beati dell'Umbria*, II, 34: he notes in the margin "Cod. Ms. sor. Francis. de Marsiano in Bibliot. Vatic."

Florence manuscript. From this we can deduce either that in reality Jacobilli did not see them, or else that they did not contain the kind of information that one might have expected from two companions of the Blessed. Otherwise, the hagiographer from Foligno would have drawn from them more abundantly and he would have declared so explicitly, to give credibility to accounts which are fantastic, to say the least. If the two manuscripts had been of any importance, and if Jacobilli had in reality been able to examine them, it would have been easy for him to have established the chronology of the Blessed less awkwardly.

The Real Sources: The Paintings and the Tradition

Finally, Jacobilli says that he drew information from "Various Bulls of the Supreme Pontiffs, Public Documents, Writings, Paintings, and other ancient Memorials of Foligno, Florence, Corbara, Marciano, Naples, Rome and other places, and common traditions."⁴⁰ Even admitting the use, though very modest, of diplomatic documents and literary sources, it is absolutely necessary to keep in mind the stated recourse to "paintings" and "common traditions." Brother Mark of Lisbon had already made reference to this type of information immediately after complaining about the lack of a legend. In fact, after establishing the meagerness of all the data emerging from the written "sources" indicated by Jacobilli, one cannot help concluding that, in order to narrate events and reconstruct the portrait of Angelina, he drew especially on the paintings and the oral tradition.

In regard to the ancient paintings, only a very small part of which have come down to us, we must ask ourselves what they really represented,⁴¹ what connection there was between pictures and historical reality, and last, what faith we should put in the interpretation of the paintings given by the hagiographer.⁴² Clearly, we are walking on

⁴⁰ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 7.

⁴¹ For example, the famous episode of the fire had already been presented in another way even before Jacobilli wrote his biography, where the picture is reproduced. In it, Angelina has a monastery with a church (very probably St. Anna in Foligno) in her right hand, while in the palm of her left hand a flame is burning her. No reference, then, to the live coals kept in her mantle, while the flame might signify the Blessed's love for her neighbor.

⁴² The ancient portrait in the monastery of St. Anna represents a woman, not a young girl of only fifteen. Angelina (if the traditional identification is correct) is wearing a garment with a floral pattern, like St. Elizabeth of Hungary (a widow), who stands opposite to her in the same chapel, and like the bride of the wedding in Cana, depicted in one of the frescoes in the refectory. Therefore, the picture may represent Angelina, after her husband's death, now almost thirty years old, asking God to show her the way to follow. The mysterious hand which appears above her head is to signify Divine protection and guidance, while the angel who is in front of her has a small decanter (not a little bottle) in his hands for the water, and in all probability some small loaves of bread wrapped in a

quicksand, especially if we take into account the freedom with which the artists "canonized" their heroes through the picture they offered to the eyes of the faithful.⁴³

But whatever the paintings in the chapel in which Blessed Angelina was buried may have been like, I believe that they could in no way justify Jacobilli's narrative, an extremely-detailed narrative, in which he resorts very often to direct speech, perorations, conversations, and prayers. In reading them, one is tempted to think that Jacobilli followed his protagonist with a movie camera and tape recorder on his shoulder!⁴⁴ Obviously, what is in question is not only his narrative style, characteristic of 17th-century historiography—and not of it alone—which, in order to shed light on situations, problems and feelings, resorts to direct speech, placed on the lips of various characters. On the contrary, one has the well-founded impression that Jacobilli, on the basis of weak and ambiguous evidence, invented events and situations.

I will limit myself to putting forward a few hypotheses. Angelina's expulsion from the Kingdom of Naples, attributed to her own propaganda in favor of the state of virginity, (the Kingdom of Naples threatened with depopulation because a few girls choose not to marry!)⁴⁵ could have been due to quite different motives. Angelina was a widow, and could not have inherited the countship. In addition, we have to wonder whose side her husband was on during the struggles in 1381-1385 which set Charles II of Durazzo and Louis I of Anjou against each other for the dominion of the kingdom of Naples.⁴⁶ Did he die in his bed or in battle? Angelina's expulsion from the countship of Civitella falls precisely at this time.

cloth which is swelling out under the chin of the same angel. Therefore, not a bottle to catch the tears nor a towel to dry them - as Jacobilli interprets the scene - but bread and water, which can be interpreted either as a sign of the Providence which will not fail, or of penance. To live on "a little bread and a little water" meant to be committed to a harsh penitential regimen: cf. Carolus Dufresne Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, V (Paris 1734) col. 110.

⁴³ Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident*, 103. Even the ancient portrait in the monastery of St. Anna in Foligno has a halo on her head, and it was very probably painted there from the beginning, that is, before the end of the fifteenth century.

⁴⁴ Examples of direct speech can be seen in Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 14-16, 19-21, 23f, 36-39, 46, 50, 64f, 78-80.

⁴⁵ But after all, the girls who actually follow Angelina to Foligno can be counted on the fingers of one hand and are her relatives: Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 48 and 50.

⁴⁶ Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 76f.

Jacobilli's biography presents us with an Angelina who is comforted by frequent enlightenment and revelations from on high.⁴⁷ This divine guide seems to have been particularly clear and effective in determining her going to Foligno to found the monastery of St. Anna and, with it, the congregation of tertiaries living a cloistered life with the traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.⁴⁸ But there were, or there could have been, very concrete motives behind this choice. In Foligno lived Angelina's older sister, Francesca,⁴⁹ the wife of a Trinci, and therefore related to Fra. Paoluccio, who gave her so much help in giving life to her foundations.⁵⁰

The great liberty that Jacobilli took in constructing Angelina's biography is also demonstrated by the errors he made in assigning the parts to the various characters. Thus he has Angelina's father and mother intervene a number of years after their deaths,⁵¹ and points to Ladislaus as the person responsible for Angelina's expulsion from the kingdom of Naples, at a time⁵² when Ladislaus was a child not yet ten years old. The speeches attributed to the various characters are not always in harmony with their natures. At times, without realizing it, Jacobilli creates decidedly grotesque situations, as when he places words of high poetry on the lips of a rough man of arms like Angelina's father,⁵³ or when he has the young child, Ladislaus, presented as a man of "harsh and cruel character" engage in profound philosophical and theological reflections.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Cf. above, notes 12-17.

⁴⁸ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 48, 52, 54.

⁴⁹ Jacobilli erroneously calls her "Sister Minor," *Vita della beata Angelina*, 13; Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 91f.

⁵⁰ The monastery of St. Anna is called not only "of the Countesses" and "of Lady Angelina," but also "of Fra. Paoluccio." Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 91-96.

⁵¹ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 10-24; cf. Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 39-43.

⁵² In all probability before 1385, certainly some time before 1388, in which year the monastery of St. Anna in Foligno was already in operation. Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 89f.

⁵³ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 50: "The Count, greatly moved and full of remorse, no matter how hard he tried, could never stop his weeping; therefore he said: although I feel it is superfluous, for you, who have been blessed by God, to be blessed by me; nevertheless, to satisfy your piety, your filial obedience and the appeal that you make to me, I give you more blessings than there are Flowers in the Fields, Sands in the Seas and Stars in the Skies: accompanying the movement of his hand in saying this was a great abundance of tears, which flowed ceaselessly not only down his face, but his neck and breast."

⁵⁴ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 37: Ladislaus, "meek, and calmed by his majestic Throne, after gazing reverently on the Blessed, reasoned thus placidly within himself. If

As for the description of facts and events of Angelina's life, a great difference can be noted between the first and second parts of the biography. Roughly, the first part extends to her going to Foligno;⁵⁵ the other treats of her foundations and her companions, as well as Angelina's death and the events which followed it.⁵⁶ Without wishing to insist on the evident disproportion between the two parts, it should be pointed out that in the first part, concrete, detailed events — many of them miraculous — are reported. In the second part the references to Angelina's person are meager and generic. But the most notable thing is something else. None of the miraculous events narrated take place in the area around Foligno; they are located in Montegiove, Civitella, Naples, and Assisi. They are therefore, episodes remote in time (they involve, all of them, Angelina as a young woman and not yet a religious) and in space (far from Foligno). Obviously, the memory that the people of Foligno had of the wise foundress did not allow myth-making. Therefore, in order to find material for the legend, recourse was had to distant times and places.

There is an exception, however, (and it is more than understandable) in the *post mortem* miracles, which are connected to the Blessed's tomb. The walls of the chapel in which Angelina was buried were said to have oozed blood on the day that the Turks conquered Constantinople;⁵⁷ then, on July 14, 1492, Angelina is said to have cured the Conventual friar Giacomo Colombini, commanding him to see to it that her body was placed in better view "on the altar of the same Chapel."⁵⁸

The Biography and the Cult of the Blessed

Before closing it is necessary to say a few things about the circumstances that might have led Jacobilli to write a biography of Blessed Angelina. Even though he had already previously published the life of

you, as has already been narrated to me, renounced your dominion over the Vassals of your Countship, God has decided today with greater magnificence to restore it to you over insensate creatures; and therefore to the astonishment of nature itself, the fire in your mantle, having controlled its voracity, has changed its nature and has, as it were, transformed its substance." Cf. also Jacobilli, 33.

⁵⁵ Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina*, 6-60.

⁵⁶ Jacobilli, 60-98.

⁵⁷ Jacobilli, 87f; but Jacobilli erroneously establishes the date as May 27, 1452, instead of May 29, 1453.

⁵⁸ Jacobilli, 88 91; obviously, the saints are dispensed from modesty!

St. Feliciano⁵⁹ and of Blessed Tomasuccio,⁶⁰ and would later gather in four huge volumes the lives of the saints and blessed of both Foligno and Umbria, we must nonetheless keep in mind the innovations that were taking place at that very time in the area of the cult of the saints. Scarcely two years earlier, on March 13, 1625, the Congregation of the Inquisition had issued in the name of Urban VIII a decree prohibiting the cult of individuals not canonized or beatified by the Holy See, unless they had been venerated "from time immemorial" with the consent, or at least without the opposition, of the Holy See or the Ordinary of the place.⁶¹

Now, for Angelina, not only had there not been a formal canonization, but there had not even been a request to institute a canonical process on her life and the miracles attributed to her.⁶² The matter is, at least apparently, inexplicable. In fact, Angelina had all the necessary qualifications⁶³ for opening a process of canonization: public opinion praised her as noble, holy from her childhood, a virgin in marriage, a religious, and the founder of a monastic Order. She had saints in her own family.⁶⁴ Because she was related to Blessed Paoluccio Trinci she was favored by bishops and popes and esteemed by St. Bernardine of Siena, who had asked her for sisters to found the monastery of St. Agnes in Viterbo.⁶⁵ Finally, she was considered a miracle-worker. To this should be added the support that was accorded to the new foundation by the Franciscan friars of the Observance, who were well-liked at

⁵⁹*Vita di San Feliciano martire, vescovo e protettore della città di Foligno*, (Foligno, 1626).

⁶⁰*Vita del beato Tomaso detto Tomasuccio del Terz'Ordine di San Francesco*, (Foligno, 1626).

⁶¹*Bullarium diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis editio*, XIII, Augustae Taurinorum 1868, 309: "Declaring, that, by the above [The Holy See] does not wish in any way to prejudice or refer to those [saints] who have been honored, either by the common consent of the Church, and from time immemorial, or by the writings of the fathers and holy men, or for a long time with the knowledge and tolerance of the Apostolic see, or of the Ordinary;" the said prescriptions were inculcated again by the famous brief *Caelestis Hierusalem cives* (July 5, 1634): Bullarium, XIV, 436-440.

⁶²Vaucher, *La sainteté en Occident*, 7.

⁶³Vaucher, 593-601.

⁶⁴She was the niece of the Dominican Blessed Reginaldo of Orvieto, who died in Priverno on April 19, 1348: Jacobilli, *Vita dei santi e beati dell'Umbria*, II, 34.

⁶⁵For the critical attitude of St. Bernardine of Siena toward the life that was being led in monasteries for women (at least in those in Perugia), see Dionisio Pacetti, "La predicazione di S. Bernardino da Siena a Perugia e ad Assisi nel 1425," in *Collectanea Franciscana* 10 (1940) 164-66.

the Roman Curia and who just a few years later easily brought to a successful conclusion the cause of canonization for Bernardine of Siena.

But perhaps the failure to carry out the canonical processes for Angelina should be charged precisely to the Friars Minor, for on November 22, 1430, she had decisively revoked the obedience she had promised to them by an act of notary public on the third day of the same month.⁶⁶ As Mariano of Florence and Mark of Lisbon, who resented this revocation wrote: conflicts and misunderstandings became acute after the Blessed's death. Yet Jacobilli does not mention them, because this would have been out of place in a biography written for edification.

Conclusion

Mark of Lisbon and Ludovico Jacobilli both "read"—though seventy years apart—the paintings in the chapel of S. Anna. But their descriptions differ greatly. The first states only the titles; the other develops a work of fiction, with a great many examples of direct speech and an exact description of events and situations. Jacobilli also did this type of "reading" of the ancient fresco in the oratory of the monastery of St. Anna, in which the Blessed was comforted by an angel who offers her bread and water, while a blessing and protecting hand appears over her head. Brother Mark probably did not know about the painting, since he does not mention it. He begins his story by presenting Angelina as a widow who, having been driven out by the King of Naples, goes to found a monastery in Foligno. For him there is no vow of virginity, no appearance of the angel who—on the night of her marriage—goes to dry Angelina's tears, no vow of virginity by her husband, no "pro-virginity" campaign in the kingdom of Naples.

Therefore the sources of the biography of Angelina are first of all the paintings, "interpreted" by the devotion of the sisters and the people, on which the young Jacobilli, not yet thirty (he was born in 1598), exercised his talent as a seventeenth-century man of letters.

In reality Jacobilli is a hagiographer, not a historian, and he rendered a great service to the cause of the cult of the Blessed at a critical moment in which it was placed in danger by the decrees of Urban VIII, as is demonstrated by the success of his biography, which was accepted universally with blind trust, repeated by the other hagiographers in a substantially identical manner, and reprinted⁶⁷ and translated into

⁶⁶ Rossetti, *La Beata Angelina*, 122 and 228-31 (documents).

⁶⁷ This was done in 1740 by the apostolic protonotary Francesco Medina, who prefaced it with an interesting "Notice to the Reader" (pp. V-VIII) on the family of the Blessed: Jacobilli, *Vita della beata Angelina di Marsciano*, dedicated to Giuseppe de Conti di

German again in 1919.⁶⁸ But if all this tells us for centuries what Angelina was believed to be like, it lets us know little or nothing of what she really was like and really did. Here we are interested in knowing who Angelina really was according to history, that is, according to the truth.

Marsciano vescovo di Orvieto, in Montefiascone, 1740.

⁶⁸ Jacobilli, *Die selige Angelina von Marsciano*, Dulmen i.W., 1919