

for. Countless antiquities and artefacts had been brought to Italy from its African colonies, with very little information about provenance, complicating the return of colonial loot to its places of origin. Such issues have become increasingly prominent in international conversations around decolonization. Being in Rome also allowed me to meet curators at the Museo delle Civiltà who are in the process of making accessible the collections of the former Museo Coloniale, and are rethinking the framing of the collections to educate the public on the legacies of Italian imperialism.

Three months was not enough time. The community of the BSR, its resources and its location made it an ideal venue for this research, but, owing to the intellectual richness of the School and the city itself, for every research objective met, several more were formulated. Fruitful detours were made from my original plan, meaning that I will just have to return in the near future. I am sincerely grateful to the BSR and its staff, as well as my fellow award-holders, for such a collegial, stimulating and genuinely interdisciplinary environment.

SAMUEL AGBAMU

(Department of Classics, University of Reading)

s.agbamu@reading.ac.uk

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Spaces of diversity in eighteenth-century Ancona

In the last stages of my PhD in History, I became increasingly interested in the complex and diverse cultural and religious landscape of early modern Mediterranean cities. My proposed research project at the BSR focused on Ancona, a city that I investigated extensively for my PhD on early modern quarantine stations. The project initially focused on cross-cultural encounters and urban space within Ancona, during the eighteenth century. Positioned on the opposite shore to the Balkans, Ancona, a historically important trading post of the Papal State on the Adriatic Sea, has been defined by the historian Jean Delumeau as ‘a bridge between East and West’. The city’s social structure reflected this assertion as in the early modern period the city was populated by several foreign communities of merchants, including Ottomans, Greeks and Jews.

I originally aimed at analysing three key urban institutions within the diverse and cross-cultural environment of the city: the *lazzaretto* (a permanent preventative quarantine station for goods and travellers coming from the Ottoman Levant), the *fondaco* (merchant’s lodging house and goods warehouse) and the *ghetto*. In addition, the project also aimed at investigating the presence of non-Catholic burial grounds within the city or in its vicinity. Indeed, while researching the presence of non-Catholic burial grounds inside quarantine stations across the Mediterranean, I started to wonder how religious minorities (Jews, Muslims, Protestants and other non-Catholic confessions) managed funerary rituals in the Catholic context of Italian cities. In the early modern period, religious minorities, from permanent ones to more transient groups, had to follow specific rules in staging their funerary rituals and burial practices: canon law forbade the mixing of members of different confessions and religions during rituals and prohibited the burial of non-Catholics, heretics and excommunicated

subjects in consecrated cemeteries and churches. While at the BSR, I decided to focus my research solely on this aspect and across the Italian peninsula, thanks to the BSR's assistance in gaining access to the Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede in the Vatican. The archive holds documents produced by the Holy Office, and letters sent by the Inquisition from different cities of the Mediterranean area, providing an overview of the issue of non-Catholic burial practices and rituals in different cities of the peninsula. The holdings of the BSR library were also significant in developing my research on secondary literature which was also enhanced thanks to access to other institutions in Rome such as the Biblioteca Hertziana, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale and the Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea.

My stay at the BSR was essential for the development of my current postdoctoral project on Death and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Italy. My current research aims at investigating issues of non-Catholic burials and funerals to understand the relationship between the dominant Catholic society and religious minorities, from permanent communities to transient ones, including travellers and slaves. The experience as a Rome Awardee was invaluable and has enriched me both as a researcher and as a person, thanks to the multidisciplinary environment and close contact with other scholars and artists.

MARINA INÌ

(Churchill College, University of Cambridge)

mi380@cam.ac.uk

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Maria Mancini and the development of female equestrian culture in Rome, 1661–72

During my three-month stay at the BSR as a Rome Awardee, I investigated the role of noblewoman Maria Mancini (1639–1715) in diffusing the French taste for female horseback riding during her residence in Rome between 1661 and 1672.

My doctoral thesis and recent publications argue that Louis XIV's court provided a fertile ground for the development of a thriving female equestrian culture that allowed some elite women to exercise and display their proficient skill in the saddle. Following the completion of my PhD, I have been exploring how aristocratic women marrying abroad played a key role in spreading equestrian habits from the French court to other European centres such as Madrid, Turin, Florence and Rome.

Maria Mancini was a niece of Cardinal Giulio Mazzarino, Louis XIV's closest adviser and chief minister during the early years of his reign. Born in Rome, Maria moved to France aged thirteen and spent the next twelve years at court, where her charm and intellect succeeded in beguiling the young king. To break the young lovers' idyll and avoid diplomatic troubles, the cardinal arranged for Maria to move back to Rome and marry the Conestabile Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna in the spring of 1661. After a few years of happiness, the relationship between the two spouses progressively deteriorated until, convinced that her husband planned to poison her, Maria escaped from Rome in