Space and spectacle in the Renaissance pharmacy

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**Summary**

Pharmacies, variously termed, apoteche, spezierie or aromatarii, were important social and commercial sites in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italy. Like barber-shops, they provided spaces where men, and occasionally women, could gather, gossip, gamble and exchange information. As such, they often had unusual spatial arrangements, with more space for display, back-rooms and attics than the majority of Renaissance botteghe. The goods on display were often packaged in specialist containers which demonstrated the speziale’s integrity. While tradition was a key component in encouraging trust, updating the shop display was an important mechanism for ensuring commercial success; this demonstrated the speziale’s ability to invest regularly in his business. Although these displays were, theoretically, restricted to local customers, apothecaries increasingly printed and circulated images and descriptions of their shops, supplies and knowledge of natural history in order to enhance their reputations. The trade in generic drugs such as theriac provides a particularly good example of such practices which became increasingly competitive at the end of the sixteenth century.

In 1533, the Florentine nobleman Puccio Pucci placed a bet with the apothecary Matteo speziale over the number of fetuses that the latter’s wife was carrying. When she gave birth to the five infants that Matteo had predicted, Pucci handed over his 7 lire stake. The short annotation in the Pucci household accounts does not mention whether mother and quintuplets survived, simply the loss. Gambling on the number or sex of unborn children, on the election of cardinals and popes, or other forms of chance were regular

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1 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASFi), Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia, 4180: *Questo giornale è di Puccio di Rinaldo di Bernardo Pucci*, 1533, f. 2.
pastimes in sixteenth-century Italy. But it is unclear how and why Pucci became involved in this particular bet. Did he know Matteo speziale and his wife well? Did the unusual nature of the pregnancy (normally regarded a private matter amongst women) make it a public matter of some interest to the wider community? It is difficult to answer these questions for the short story ends here. But it is not surprising to find a speziale and his family at its centre. In the early sixteenth-century, the speziale, which can be variously translated into English as spicer, apothecary or pharmacist, sold goods ranging from wax, sugar, spices, sweets and sauces to complex, bespoke medications. In urban areas, large and small, his shop often acted as a key site of commercial and social exchange. As Filippo da Vivo has shown, a pharmacy’s mixture of clients and its often comfortable interior meant that it became an important place for communication. Rumour, political information and popular songs were all exchanged alongside medical advice, pills, syrups and electuaries.

Not all such interchanges were pleasant. The inquisition kept a close eye on the traffic of a number of Venetian outlets, fearing that heresy could pass as easily as gossip. The social mix could also lead to aggression. For example, when waiting in the Aromatario della Luna in the Mercato Vecchio in the early fifteenth-century, the prostitute Maddalena of Ragusa hit the daughter of one of the servants of the Florentine Signoria over the head with her clog, resulting in a 3 florin fine with a florin to be paid in compensation to the victim. Thus these interchanges needed to be managed as well as encouraged. While circulation was good for business, it was also important to distinguish between different types of clients and their social needs.

Yet despite the commercial, medical and cultural importance of this space, the Renaissance apothecary has only recently been the subject of focussed scholarly investigations. For Italy, there are now a series of important studies on individual cities, on pharmacies in hospitals, and on the relationship of apothecaries with charlatans, doctors and other practitioners.
For England, Patrick Wallis has recently published a detailed examination of the shops and practices of English apothecaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. This paper builds on this earlier work to explore the distinctive strategies for display that were deployed and disseminated by apothecaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across the Italian peninsula. Most studies of design history assume that elaborate shop interiors were a product of the eighteenth century, as were new systems of advertising wares. In Paris and London, the elegant interiors of mercer’s shops allowed a more sophisticated clientele, particularly women, to congregate in ways that had previously been impossible while trade-cards and newspaper advertisements drew attention to the goods for sale. But the lessons that mercers learned about the benefits of a bespoke environment allied to advertising and the development of ‘branded’ goods can be traced back much earlier and the Italian apothecary or speziale had an important role in this development. Nonetheless, the links were neither linear nor straightforward. Medicines were produced and sold from many different outlets: apothecaries were attached to monasteries, hospitals and charitable institutions; empirics and charlatans sold pills and lotions in the streets and squares; even doctors sold their own products directly while basic medications were often made at home. This meant that a privately-owned commercial enterprises such as the pharmacy faced considerable competition for medicinal services. This may not have been a problem when the speziale made most of his profits from bulk goods such as wax, sugar, honey, jams, preserves, spices and pigments. But by the mid-Cinquecento, speziale shops faced competition from specialists who began trading exclusively in one or more of these items. For example, in Venice, vendecolori provided colours for artists while perfume or muschieri shops sold the musk, ambergris, cinnamon and other spices that were amongst the apothecary’s most expensive offerings. The latter even used some of the apothecary’s display techniques, further blurring the divisions. For example, in 1576, Antonio, muschiere at the sign of the Siren, had a shop dominated by a large

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8 Wallis, 2008. 
9 Davis, 1966. For a critique see Welch, 2005, pp. 4-5. 
10 Sargentson, 1996; Walsh, 1995 and Hann and Stobart, 2005. For discussions of earlier shop forms and fittings see the essays in Blondé et al., 2006. 
wooden cupboard containing 200 maiolica jars which provided the essences with which he scented paternoster beads, perfumes, and scented gloves, bags, buttons, stockings and ribbons13.

In some cities the speziale’s shop was termed an aromatarius, reflecting the long-standing overlap between perfume shops and apothecaries14. It could be equally difficult to distinguish a small apothecary’s stock from that of a grocer or pizzicagnolo; indeed some apothecaries specialised almost exclusively in confectionary, biscuits and sweets15. In Rome, the sixteenth-century College of Apothecaries formalised this by controlling “apothecaries, grocers, confectioners, perfumers, chandlers, honey-sellers, [and] bakers who sell spices, sugars, waxes, spiced cakes (panpepati) or other things pertaining to the apothecary’s trade”16. In Venice, the republic carefully distinguished between those that were allowed to sell medicines, speziale da medicina, and those which sold spices and other products but could not dispense prescriptions17.

The intersections, which provoked considerable guild disputes, were understandable18. With prescriptions based around humoural theory, food was often indistinguishable from medicine. Nonetheless, despite, or perhaps because of the overlap with the trade in foodstuffs, ambitious apothecaries tried to make their distinction from other purveyors very visible, a feature that an anonymous artist drew upon around 1500 when producing a series of lunettes for the courtyard of the de Challant family castle in Issogne, Val d’Aosta19. Commissioned by the widowed Marguarite de Challant, each lunette contains an image of a place of sale: a tavern, vegetable market, pie shop, grocers, drapers’ shop and apothecary. At first sight they seem simple illustrations of daily activities but a closer investigation reveals considerable moralising contrasts. Brawling, thieving and gambling characterise the tavern; in the market, women are openly fondled by their male customers (Fig. 1).

13 Ludwig, 1906. The scenting of good is the subject of my forthcoming, ‘Scented gloves and perfumed buttons: smelling things in Renaissance Italy’.
14 For example, Tomaso Garzoni uses the terms “speciari o vero aromatari” in his Piazza Universale published in 1585, see Garzoni, 1996, p. 1059.
15 Ciasca, 1927.
Unobservant servants fail to notice a dog stealing meat from the pie shop. But as the spaces become more formal, behaviour becomes more respectable. In the draper’s shop, bolts of cloth are laid out in even rows while the salesmen measure a customer’s wares. The most detailed attention is given to the apothecary’s shop, where measurement and weighing are to the fore (Fig. 2). Labelled jars are placed on shelves and to the left, one male figure is seen either writing or keeping accounts. Slightly lower down, the set of scales held by a salesman provides the picture’s central focus. In the lowest space of all, sits a beggar wearing a single shoe and ragged clothing. He has been given the menial task of grinding the ingredients, unskilled labour that was often offered as an act of charity. Finally, a single female figure stands in the central foreground, directly in front of the scales. Although her dress is relatively simple, her high, belted waist and long sleeves suggest she belongs to the urban elite. Only in this site, where arithmetic, measurement, social decorum and charity were all present, could a woman be seen to shop in safety on her own.20

The image was an ideal rather than an actuality; but the calm, ordered

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20 This is a point that Wallis 2008 makes for seventeenth-century England while Laughran 2003 demonstrates that the term ‘scrupulous’ comes from the apothecary measure, lo scrupolo.
nature of the shop was meant to contrast with the bustle of the open, disordered marketplace. In an era when sound was the primary means of gaining attention, silence was a precious commodity separating important commercial places and activities from its more mundane counterparts. While open markets were noisy and pedlars shouted and sang, shopkeepers and stallholders were supposed to control themselves. Thus, the fourteenth-century statutes of the Florentine grocers’ guild forbade its members from calling over customers who were browsing in other shops\(^\text{21}\). In Venice the bread sellers who stood at their stalls in Piazza San Marco and Rialto were told they were not to ‘shout and thrust bread at clients, they must stand with composure behind their bancone’, while a Venetian decree of 29 October 1507 prohibited the vendors of berets and hats from leaving their stalls, ‘to call out to anyone, or to grab them by the hand or by their clothing’\(^\text{22}\). The purchase of valuable or rare items was, above all, supposed to be undertaken in silence. In 1502, the Venetian chronicler Sabellico tried to emphasise the superior nature of the international trade that took place in the Rialto by stressing that it was transacted in whispers\(^\text{23}\).

The apothecary who wanted to meet these conditions had to invest in a well-furnished interior space and provide controlled conditions under which sales could take place. There would be no shouting, no crowding, only visible and aural order. This was intended to provide a very distinct contrast to one of the speziale’s main competitors, the charlatan or mountebank\(^\text{24}\). As a number of studies have shown, these figures used a wide range of theatrical pursuits to draw the attention of the crowd in order to sell their ‘secret’ remedies\(^\text{25}\). The Florentine diarist and apothecary, Luca Landucci describes one such figure from the late fifteenth-century, ‘Lo Spagnolo’ who undertook a fire-walking and fire-eating in order to attract a crowd and prove his products’ value:

> On the 15\(^\text{th}\) of November 1509, there was a certain Spaniard who got up on bench like a charlatan to sell his orations, and he said, ‘And so that you believe that these are from a saint who performs miracles, come and lead me to an oven which is hot and I will enter it with this prayer. And finally, he was taken to the oven at Santa Trinità, with the people behind him and many

\(^{21}\) Morandini, 1961, p. 55.
\(^{22}\) Welch, 2005, p. 123.
\(^{23}\) Howard, 2000, p. 113.
\(^{24}\) Gentilcore, 2003.
of the most distinguished citizens. On arrival at the bakers, he said: give me some uncooked bread and threw it on the oven to show that it was hot, and then he stripped down to his shirt and dropped his stockings to his knees, and in this way he entered the oven all the way up to the top, and stayed there awhile, and came out with the bread in his hand and turned around inside. And note, the oven was hot, he brought out the bread and he didn’t harm himself at all. When he came out of the oven, he was given a torch and he lit it and put it in his mouth and kept it there until it was extinguished. And many other times on the bench, over the course of several days he took a handful of lighted tapers, and held up his hand for a length of time, and then he put them burning into his mouth so that they went out. And he was seen to do many other things with fire: washing his hands in a frying pan full of boiling oil that was seen many times by all the people. And thus he sold as many of the orations as he could make; and I say that among all the things I have ever seen, I have not seen a greater miracle than this, if it is a miracle26.

Here, ocular testimony provided the proof needed to guarantee the product in question: short prayers written out on pieces of paper. Although Landucci’s last line, ‘if it is a miracle’, suggests a high level of scepticism, he paid a great deal of attention to every stage of the operation, stressing the fact that he, and many others had seen these events with their own eyes.

Landucci would have probably denied any overlap between his own practice as an apothecary and the charlatan’s demonstrations27. But there were considerable intersections. Witnessing and testing lay at the heart of both operations. Observable, public testimony to quality and efficacy was very important to any purveyor of goods in the Renaissance marketplace,

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26 Landucci, 1883, pp. 299-300: “E a di 15 novemvre 1509, ci fu un certo Spagniuolo el quale montava in panca come cininmatorle, per vendere sue orazioni, e diceva: Acciocchè voi crediate ch’ell’è d’una santa che fa miracoli, e ch’egli è vero quello che io vi dico, venite e menatem a un forno che sia caldo, e io s’enterrò dentro con questa orazione. E finalmente fu menato a questo forno, da Santa Trinità, col popolo dietro e molti cittadini de’ principali; perch’è si partì di Mercato nuovo dove egli montò in panca. E giunto al forno disse: Datemi un pane crudo; e gittolo nel forno per mostrare ch’egli era caldo, e poi si spogliò in camicia e mandò giù le calze a piè del ginocchio, e così entrò nel forno insino lassù alto, e stette un poco, e recò quel pane in mano, e voltolovvisi dentro. E nota che l’forno era caldo, aveva carato el pane allora, e non si fece male veruno. E uscito del forno, si fece dare un torchio e acceselo, e così acceso se lo mise in bocca e tennolo tanto che lo spense; e più molte volte in panca, e in più di toglievole una menata di moccoli accesi e tenevati su la mano per buono spazio di tempo, e poi se gli metteva in bocca così accesi, tanto che si spegnevano. E fu veduto fare molte altre cose del fuoco; lavarsi le mani in una padella d’olio che bolleva sopra l’fuoco, fu veduto molte volte da tutto il popolo. E così vendeva di quelle orazioni quante ne poteva fare; e io dico che, fra tutte le cose che io o mai vedete, non o veduto el maggiore miracolo che questo, se miracolo è”.

not just to the apothecary. Guild regulations across a wide range of services stipulated that goods had to be available for inspection at all times and not kept in private homes or in ‘dark places’\(^28\). The most important transactions were supposed to be carried out under public scrutiny. Thus even when buying expensive products or changing money, the customer usually stood out in the street while the shopkeeper stood behind his or her stall, as in the illustration of the sale of ‘musk’ in a fifteenth-century *Tacuinum sanitatis* (Fig. 3). This form of exchange was considered ‘above board’ and had the benefit of allowing the shop-keeper to invest in stock rather than in his fixtures and fittings. As most shops were rented rather than owned outright, this made good financial sense; mobility allowed for a flexible approach and the shop-keeper could rapidly expand or contract a business according to the current economic climate\(^29\).

This meant that while gambling and gaming took place in a range of shops (one grocer used parmesan cheese rounds as seats for his card-playing customers), only a small number of sites openly encouraged clients to linger inside in some comfort\(^30\). Barbers who shaved, cut hair, and removed ear-wax, activities performed alongside blood-letting and other minor operations had rooms where pictures and antiquities were displayed and sold in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries\(^31\). Apothecaries also

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28 Welch, 2005.
30 Franceschi, 1999.
provided spaces where clients could wait; they usually engaged in polypharmacy where prescriptions were highly individualized, meaning that there could be a considerable delay in collecting medications. Additionally, they might employ doctors to see clients in their shop, providing seats, writing desks and an appropriate waiting area filled with cabinetry, pottery, glassware and boxes.\textsuperscript{32}

While not everyone who entered an apothecary bought medicines, this service made the shop distinctive, ensuring that they were heavily regulated, and, at the same time, exempt from other common rules. The availability of essentials such as medications for the sick and wax torches for funerals meant that they did not always have to observe statutory opening and shutting times. In 1444, for example, the Venetian government ordered,

\begin{quote}
That the apothecaries on the street that goes from Rialto to San Marco must not open their shops on feast days, with the exception of a single shop that must not show what they have on display except for medications. They should keep their balconies open with carpets, and not show or sell anything except that which pertains to medicine.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Similarly the published gride of 1566 for Modena describe a range of different strategies which allowed access to essential medical services despite the post-Tridentine crack-down on Sunday trading,

\begin{quote}
from now on no one, whether merchant or artisan, should keep their shop, warehouse, stall or habitation of any sort, open during the days of Sunday and those of the Apostles and of all the solemn feasts at a fine of ten lire marchesani for each time they disobey […] with the exception of the medicinal apothecaries, \emph{speciale di medicine}, who may keep only their door and the shutter of their shop open […] and to the barbers it is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Pelling, 1998, pp. 223-229.

\textsuperscript{33} Welch, 2005, p. 112: \textit{“Che li specieri di Rialto sino a San Marco venendo con la ditta via non possano in giorno di festa tener aperte le loro botteghe, eccettuato una bottega solo […] in ora di prendere tutto quello che avrai in mostra non compresi li specier di medicine, li quali devono tener li balconi aperti con tapeti, non tenendo alcuna cosa in mostra, ne vendeno cosa alcuna che non spetti a medicina ne meno in questi si intendono compresi li specier delle contrade”}. 
permitted to keep open his door and the shutters of his shop in order to meditate, cup or bleed and for no other purpose 34.

By 1481, the Florentine guild would select 4 shops that were allowed to stay open, a turno on Sundays and holy days while the accounts for the Florentine Speziale al Giglio from the 1490s indicate that the shop made sales every day of the year, including Sundays, Easter and the town’s major feast day of San Giovanni 35. It may be that these seemingly illicit transactions were for family or friends, but Florentine officials seem to have been more interested in the whether a shop ‘appeared’ to be trading than in the trade itself. In other words, these solutions suggest that it was the display of non-medicinal goods through open doors and windows that was more problematic than the actual sales themselves.

But given the overlaps between medical and non-medical products was it that easy to distinguish an apothecary from other shops? There were few guidelines on what speziale shops should look like. The generic advice was to avoid wind, sunshine and strong smells; the shop needed a series of preparation rooms and storage areas and some ricettari insisted that apothecaries invest in an exterior terrace or garden to dry their products 36. Prospero Bogarucci’s manual, La fabbrica degli speziali, published in 1566 instructed the would-be apothecary to invest in a range of goods required for storage and preparation, including specialist vases, syrup jars, albarelli, boxes and bags, as well as balances, scissors, knives, spatulas, mortars of different sizes and ‘everything else need to run a beautiful spetieria’ 37. Careful storage was essential to ensure that the properties of ingredients were not

34 Welch, 2005, p. 114: “Che per l’avenire non ardisca alcuno, ne mercante, ne artigiano di qual grado et condizione si voglia, in questa città di Modena tenere aperte le boteghe loro, fondachi, stationi et habitatione di qualunque sorte, nè in parte, dove si facciano, o vendono alcune sorte nelle giorn de dorne, et degli Apostoli et di tutte le feste solenni, sotto pena di lire dici marchesani […] eccettuando però dalla presente grida, che sia lecito ad ogni uno in tali giorni vendere herbe comestibile et frutti di qualunque sorte sopra le piazze et alla Hortolane alli suoi soliti luochi et similmente all Speciali di medicine tenere l’uscio et il scassetino delle lor boteghe aperto solamente”.

35 Astorri, 1988, pp. 50-51 and Shaw and Welch, forthcoming.


37 Bogarucci, 1566, p. 3: “Converrà che prepari la sua Spetiaria con provederla di vettine, di zarre, di pittari, di buste, di vasi, di boccali da scorroppi, di albarelli, di bussoli, di scatole, di sacchetti, di casse, di bilancio, di forfici, di coltelli, di spatole, di mortari, mortarette, mescole, trepiedi, torchi, forme et tutt’altre cose, che bisoguano per uso d’una bella spetieria”. Interestingly Garzoni’s 1585 description simply lifted this list. See Garzoni, 1996, 2, p. 1062: “I’strumenti sono le vattine, le zarre, i pittari, le buste, i vasi, i boccali da siropi, i barattoli, i bussoli, le scatole con le lettere da scatole, le balance, le forfici, i coltelli, le spatole, i mortari, i mortarette, le cazze, i trepiedi, i torchi, le forme e altre cose simile”.
damaged or altered. An early seventeenth-century manual summarised earlier advice that,

It is not enough to have composed and prepared the medications that are needed for human health [...] you have to also with great effort ensure that their vigour and good qualities are conserved for the future; this is easily done if you put them in appropriate jars and in places that are far away from damaging qualities. It will be useful as Democrats says, referring to Galen [...] if they are of glass, silver, horn, pewter or terracotta as all these are dense and hard materials, amongst which glass and gold are to be praised the most as nothing can mix with them that can be damaging but pewter can adulterate with lead which is to be avoided in medicines, and silver is also dangerous unless it is very pure [...] The jars must be of such a nature that they have no qualities or odours of their own which would damage the medicines, changing them or communicating some poor qualities\(^{38}\).

The fear of contamination was real and the need for careful preparation and clean, interior spaces was also well understood. Most inventories list a cucina where goods were made up either in advance or to order. The Speziale al Giglio in Florence, for example, had just such a kitchen for preparing goods and a terrace for drying medicinal and three other main rooms, a much larger interior than most Tuscan shops\(^{39}\). Although this was large, it was not uncommon. Speziale had long invested heavily in shop-fittings. For example, Landucci described the costs involved in his first outlet:

And on the fourth of September 1462, I took my leave of Francesco di Francesco, apothecary at the Sun, who gave me a third of my annual salary, in florins, and I set up in partnership with Ispinello di Lorenzo [...] And we

\(^{38}\) Marinello, 1620, pp. 168-169: “Non basta lo haver con diligenza composti, & preparati tutti li medicamenti necessary per l'uso humano, havendo adoperato nel comporli tutti li semplici & più perfetti, & più scielti, che si possono ritrovare; acciòche tutte le compositioni, & antidoti fossero più eccellenti, che possibile fosse: ma bisogna anco con tutte le forze procurare, & affaticarsi, che per lo tempo avvenire nel suo vigore, & bontà si conservino: la qual cosa facilmente si ottenirà, se in vasi convenienti saranno risposti, & in luoghi lontani da ogni mala qualità con diligenza conservate. Saranno utili, come dice Damocrate referendo ciò Galeno nel primo de gli Antidoti al capo 16 quelli, che sono di vetro, di argento, di corno, di stagno, ò di terracotta, ò tutti quelli che sono di material denta, & dura, ma quelli di legno sono inutili, & Galeno nel medesimo libro al cap. 8 ragionando de Trosci di vipera, dice che si ripongano in vase di stagno, ò di vetro, ò di oro, tra li quali lodo più quello di vetro e di oro; perché à loro non si può mescolare alcuna cosa, che possa apportare danno, ma lo stagno adultera col piombo, il qual in tutto è da eser schiato nelle medicine, si come anco l’argento è dannoso, se non è molto puro, divenendo rugginoso. Li vasi sieno di natura tale, che in se non habbiano alcunà qualità, o vero odore, che si apponghi al medicamento, alterandolo overo à quello communichi qualche mala qualità”.

\(^{39}\) De Lancey, 2003, p. 145.
first opened the apothecary of the King in the Mercato Vecchio, which had first been a second-hand clothes dealers’ shop, which had a low roof. And we raised the building and spent a treasure, even though such an expense was against my wishes, we did every thing without thrift. The cupboard alone cost fifty gold florins.

It is notable that Landucci had to raise the roof. This suggests that a client’s ability to enter and examine goods in a well-lit interior may not have been important to a second-hand dealer but that it was crucial for an apothecary. The expensive cupboard in Landucci’s shop was only the start of this investment; it would have undoubtedly contained numerous jars, boxes and other containers. For example, the early sixteenth century inventory of the Speziale al Giglio included over two hundred albarelli jars of different sizes, 44 syrup jars, 30 oil ceramic oil flasks and 58 glass flasks for distilled waters. There were 40 boxes of dried herbs and pills which were held in small boxes. At the heart of the shop was the descho da vendere in botega, a counter that was approximately 10 braccia long and 2 braccia wide, and included cupboards with fifteen drawers. To the side were additional cupboards with drawers that held ingredients, recipe books and boxes and vials for dispensing goods. Mortars, bronze basins and weights were all on display at the front of the shop while the specialist items needed for the shop’s main business of candle making were kept in the kitchen to the rear. An inventory taken about the same time of a apotheca aromatarii belonging to Taddeo de Galdis in Florence also listed over 500 albarelli, 16 wooden boxes, 32 “bossoli da pillole”; an “armario grande con 74 chassette” and numerous other cabinets. The appearance of a “descho da scrivere con seggiola dal medicho” makes it clear that diagnosis and prescribing took place within the shop. These traditions were not unique to Florence. An inventory taken almost a century later of a speziale shop in Venice, the ‘Two Towers’, shows a similar range of goods. The first item was the requisite image of the Madonna and Child with a lamp hanging.
beneath it followed by the shop sign itself, *La insegna delle 2 torre usade*. Stamps listed in the inventory showing the same sign were presumably used to mark products that left the shop such as wax candles guaranteeing both their origin and quality.

With some variations, these inventories suggest a remarkable consistency in structure and decoration over time. Whether they were visited in the fourteenth or the sixteenth century, apothecary shops would be instantly identifiable by their displays of cabinetry, bronze mortars, painted jars, glass bottles, boxes for confectionary, and other specialist containers. This was not, of course, necessarily where the real investment lay. The inventory of a sixteenth-century shop in Pavia which includes prices makes it clear that the cost of stock made up 75% of the total value; the *masseritie* (jars, cupboards, etc.) only accounted for 25%44. Likewise, the late sixteenth-century inventories of Stefano Rosselli’s Speziale al Giglio concentrated on the valuable products while the containers such as the 76 “fiaschi vuoti dove erano l’acque”; 76 “ampollini et alberellini ventiani” and ’30 “schatole vuote di confetti” are only briefly described45. Interestingly, this is in contrast to English apothecaries of the seventeenth century whose inventories suggest that fittings formed up to 40% of their shop’s value46.

But however expensive, ground-up pearls, coral, pepper, saffron, syrups, waters, sugar, wax, civet and musk were rarely impressive in their own right and it is clear that Roselli, like his predecessors, still relied on jars and boxes to create an appropriate impression. The inventory’s compiler noted that when an earlier stock-list had been taken in 1569, Roselli had valued the second-hand goods he had inherited from the previous owner, the “masseritie di ogni sorte, ottoni, bronzi, rami, ferri, argenti, vasi, sacco, casse, oricelli et fornelli et tutte le cose di qualunque sorte attenente alla detta bottegha”, at 300 florins but then had gone on to invest a further 66 florins in new goods47.

Updating these items may have been prompted by wear and tear, but it

44 Fagnani and Bruno, 1996.
45 ASFi, Pupilli 2709, ff. 3v–10r: *Inventario et descriptione di tutte le drogherie et masseritie della bottegha di spetieria di Stefano Roselli […] di 20 di settembre 1570*. This is immediately followed by a second inventory of the adjacent shop: *Inventario delle masseritie et robbe della bottega dello spetiale del Giglio contanti in Stefano Rosselli et Giovanni Manzoni et compagni spetiali fatto il giorno 22 di settembre 1570*. On Rosselli see Butters, 1996 and Rosselli, 1996.
47 ASFi, Pupilli 2709, f. 10r.
was also caused, in part, by the need to demonstrate that a pharmacy like the Giglio had the capital to invest in effective ingredients\textsuperscript{48}. As suggested above, most of the business of manufacturing took place out of sight in the kitchen, a problem for generating trust, particularly when producing ‘chemical’ medicines that might prove poisonous\textsuperscript{49}. Customers had to believe in the apothecary’s knowledge and skill because they couldn’t watch their medicines being made; as numerous texts warned, they couldn’t be sure that the ingredients were genuine much less that the apothecary had gathered all the herbs required at the appropriate season and time of day or night. While personal relations might have been the most important mechanism for generating trust in a small town, this was more difficult in a large urban centre. This meant that new jars and other forms of display provided a crucial indication of a creditable business. Yet this is somewhat surprising given that supervisory oversight had become much more rigid in most Italian cities after 1500. There were \textit{pharmacopeia} which dictated the ingredients and manner in which medications were to be prepared; price-lists for drugs issued by civic authorities and annual or spot inspections by officials from health boards, \textit{protomedi\c{c}ati}\textsuperscript{50}. In some cities such as Venice, apothecaries, who commonly regulated their business through guilds, had established ‘colleges’ on a par with those of doctors\textsuperscript{51}. None of this, however, seems to have reduced the anxieties that medical products created. Instead, the tropes of misconduct, fraud and abuse seem to have grown as printed publications allowed greater dissemination of claims and counter-claims. For example, Giovanni Antonio Lodetti’s \textit{Dialogo degli inganni d’alcuni malvagi speciali} of 1572, which called on Brescia’s town council to establish its own \textit{pharmacopeia}, described a wide range of ways in which pharmacists might replace one ingredient with another, or use poor quality goods, either through fraud or ignorance while Curzio Marinello’s instruction manual of 1586, \textit{Precetti necessari ad un perfetto speziale, ne’ quali manifestamente si mostra, come si possano fuggire ben trecento errori} made it clear how easily mistakes could occur\textsuperscript{52}. Although such complaints were commonplace in many market sectors, an apothecary’s abuses, like those of the mountebank, could have potentially fatal consequences. In a 1602 diatribe,

\textsuperscript{48} Gentilcore, 1998. See also the discussion in Carra, 1978, p. 250.
\textsuperscript{49} Pollard, 2004.
\textsuperscript{50} Gentilcore, 1998.
\textsuperscript{51} Laughran, 2003; Smith, 2003.
\textsuperscript{52} Lodetti, 1572; Marinello, 1586.
for example, Johannes Oberndoerffer wrote,

Neither the patient nor his friends, shal be able to know whether instead of a soveraigne medicine, far set, and deare bought, they receive rank poison, or at least some uncouth, unfitting, or counterfeit dregge, or druge \(^{53}\).

With concerns increasing as new-world products such as the ‘holy wood’ thought to cure venereal disease and Paracelsan distillates entered the apothecary shop \(^{54}\), Patrick Wallis has made the important point that, ‘the separation that the drug jars established between raw material and finished product and the association between their value and the value of the goods they contained offered a defense of the worth of the apothecaries’ labour and the authenticity and reliability of their drugs’ \(^{55}\). But if drug-jars and their display provided reassurance, they also created further problems. In a highly regulated market which tried to impose consistency, the only way to differentiate a product or shop might be through impressive packaging. But this could quickly look dated, requiring yet further investment. Here, entrepreneurs managing kilns in Urbino, Faenza and other parts of the Marche had an increasingly important role to play. They employed artists to produce designs incorporating classical scenes, grotesque motifs and other characteristic formulae \(^{56}\). A full set of these jars might number up to 350 or more vessels of different shapes and sizes, all bearing a common design. With a set from the Fontana or Patanazzi kilns on display in the 1580s, it would have been very clear to any customer entering the shop that it was indeed ‘up-to-date’. Supplying pharmacists was excellent business for the kilns in Faenza, Castel Durante, Urbino and other ceramic centres in the Marche and elsewhere. The basic types of pharmacy jars were well established and could be kept in stock, keeping prices down. Innovations could be rapidly introduced in the decoration, drawing on prints and other contemporary design sources. Although pharmacy jars usually included inscriptions that made their ingredients clear, they rarely referred to their products through the imagery employed. Instead, potters recycled motifs such as portraits, animals, foliage, _trionphi_ while classical and even satiric scenes all proved popular \(^{57}\).

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\(^{53}\) Pollard, p. 31.

\(^{54}\) Huguet-Termes, 2001.

\(^{55}\) Wallis, p. 44.

\(^{56}\) Drey, 1978.

\(^{57}\) Waldman, 1992.
Clients appear to have been able to select any combination of imagery they preferred. In 1550, for example, when the Genoese merchant, Nicola Carlizia commissioned a set of 300 jars from Luca Picchi in Castel Durante he asked for groups, *a trofeo, a quartieri e alla veneziana*\(^{58}\). Thus while the shape, size and function of pharmacy *corredi* suggested traditional practices, the ‘look’ of the jars indicated that they were new.

Carlizia may have been one of the numerous Genoese merchants who exported their commissions to southern Italy, particularly to Sicily. One notable survival of such imports is the Benedictine pharmacy in the small village of Roccavaldina, outside Messina\(^{59}\) (Fig. 4 & 5). Two-hundred and thirty-eight pieces of the much larger set (which probably numbered around three-hundred and fifty in total) still survive *in situ* in the early seventeenth-century charitable pharmacy run by the confraternity of the *Santissimo Sacramento*. Although they look as if they were designed for the site, this was not the case\(^{60}\). Signed and dated 1580, they were produced by Antonio Patanazzi’s Urbino workshop for the Milanese *aromotari* Cesare Candia who had a shop in the main city of Messina. Candia seems to have ordered the set in Palermo through an intermediary and was presumably shown a range of styles to choose from at that stage. This may have been quite common. For example, the Picchi family pottery made up 200 jars of ‘beautiful colouring’ according to a

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\(^{59}\) Welch, 2005, pp. 151-158.  
\(^{60}\) Liverani, pp. 35-43 and http://www.comune.roccavaldina.me.it/cittaestoria/farmacia.html.
design lodged with a notary in 1550\textsuperscript{61}. While all Patanazzi’s jars carry the dove and star motif that comprised the shop sign, the decorations selected were generic, if elaborate, grotesques. The two largest jars have mythological scenes with Caesar receiving captives and Apollo and Marsyas, issues of justice and punishment rather than cures. They indicate investment in novelty rather than a narrative related to the ingredients themselves. The danger, however, was the rapidity with which these jars dated. Forty years later, the style was out of fashion and the heir, Francisco Beninato sold the jars. They were eventually acquired by don Gregorio Bottaro from Roccavaldina who donated them to his local confraternity. This allowed a small pharmacy in a tiny town to hold a set similar to that had been commissioned by the Duke of Urbino and were housed in the Santa Casa di Loreto. While this may have been prestigious for a small-scale charitable outlet, this was no longer sufficient for a city-centre pharmacy\textsuperscript{62}.

Two elaborate pharmacy jars now in the Getty Collection, Los Angeles illustrate other issues of fashionable display\textsuperscript{63} (Fig. 6 & 7). Elaborately designed with gilded strap-work, and sensuous caryatids, they are meant to suggest manufactures in silver and gold rather than terracotta. These jars have no

\textsuperscript{61} Ugolini, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{62} Speziali, aromatari e farmacisti, 1990.
\textsuperscript{63} Italian Ceramics, 2002, pp. 204.
inscriptions. Instead, the imagery refers directly to the substances held within, theriac and mithridatum. Each is decorated with gilt narrative scenes showing scenes from the lives of the drug’s respective inventors, Andromachus, physician to the emperor Nero and King Mithridatas VI of Pontus and topped by a seated figure of each.

The jars have been associated with Venice on the grounds that the republic was an important site for the production of theriac, a cure-all made up of multiple ingredients including viper’s flesh that was supposed to heal the sick and keep those who were well in good health. Mithridatum had similar generic properties and both had been supplied by Venetian outlets since the twelfth century under considerable regulation. Before theriac was prepared its ingredients were supposed to be on public display for three days. The mortars and pans involved were also open to inspection. When problems were discovered, as in 1441, for example, inauthentic ingredients, particularly of theriac were publicly burnt at the Rialto. From the 1480s there are records of an armadio delle teriacche that the magistracy responsible, the Giustizia Vecchia kept in order to provide a set of standard ingredients against which others could be measured. Only a small number of outlets were licensed to sell theriac and delegates from the Ufficio di Sanità and representatives of the Collegio Medico were supposed to be present when it was made to verify its contents and provide a seal of authenticity. The preparations themselves were carried out in public with great fanfare something John Evelyn noted when he described watching the preparation of what he termed ‘Venice treacle’. Figures such as Henry Wooten the English ambassador wrote signed and sealed testimonials to the reputation of Venetian theriac which were then translated into Italian for further distribution.

If the Getty jars were used in Venice, they may have been employed by the pharmacies such as the Del Struzzo which literally trumpeted the very special nature of its ingredients and distributed pamphlets attesting to its benefits. But although Venice used a wide range of public displays and print-strategies to promote the theriac sold from its stores, it was not alone in

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64 Watson, 1996.
66 Meneghini, p. 60.
69 Schwarz, 1981.
70 Schwarz, 1981, p. 38. The letters are in ASVe, Giustizia Vecchia, B.211.
holding public rituals to mark its preparation\textsuperscript{71}. Debates about the true nature of the drug and its components flourished in numerous parts of Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century. The Getty jars could have been exported to any number of locations including Paris where theriac was first publically manufactured in this period or to any number of smaller centres across the continent\textsuperscript{72}. Wherever they were used (and their remarkable level of preservation suggests they were not on continuous public display), the jars were part of an increasingly heated battle to establish a brand identity as the ‘true’ theriac. This had an intellectual dimension: the lost Galenic ingredients had to be identified with simples that could be found in Europe and the new world; but it also had a commercial dimension. Theriac, particularly Venetian theriac, was a very profitable product with a large export market. Defending its quality and reputation was not simply an academic matter; it was important for the urban economy as well. As pharmacists and naturalists competed to create a theriac that was ‘truer’ than their rivals to the classical original, the stakes could prove very high.

In Bologna, for example, the famed naturalist, Ulisse Aldrovandi, one of the protomедиcati responsible for supervising the city’s speziali entered into a particularly bitter public dispute with the Collegio dei Medici and the city’s apothecaries in the 1570s\textsuperscript{73}. Aldrovandi had publicly prepared a sample of his theriac using ingredients that were very difficult to obtain; but the local speziale contested his authority which threatened to damage their products. The latter publicly prepared their own version which Aldrovandi then tried to ban, accusing them of having used vipers which were pregnant in contravention of the recipe. In the disputes that followed, Aldrovandi lamented the confusion between those who were learned and those whom, he argued, were effectively simple grocers, claiming that,

\begin{quote}
The majority of apothecaries who ought to be knowledgeable in this material are, nonetheless, completely ignorant and often barely know how to read. From time to time, they mistake one simple for its opposite with poisonous qualities as may can tell you. One can find apothecaries in Flanders, Bohemia and Germany who are more expert than in Italy. As a minimum they know Latin and make a knowledge of simples their profession rather than selling groceries such as wax, oil, soap and a thousand other impertinent things as
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{71} Stössl, 1983.
\textsuperscript{72} Stössl, 1983.
\textsuperscript{73} Olmi, 1997; Olmi, 1978.
we do, but they sell medicines separately from other drugs\textsuperscript{74}.

But other writers such as Tomaso Garzoni were less perturbed by the intersections. In his \textit{La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo} (Venice, 1585), the writer accused apothecaries of having,

amongst them frauds and tricks, not only of ridiculous appearance – like those jugs, those jars and boxes with large capital letters, which tell of a thousand unguents or confections or precious aromatics – but they are empty inside, carrying these ridiculous inscriptions outside, as the jars of master Grillo of Conigliano do – but there are also evil acts of sinister souls, making dangerous medications by switching one thing for another, or mixing poor quality stuff, old and rotting in their goblets, and sometimes they are aware of this, and other times it is due to the shameful ignorance with which they buy goods from Levantine barbarians at a cheap price in order to cobble together a shop as best they can […] And the Health Boards (should) be advised that they, more than me should damage the apothecaries, since every year they inspect the theriac, mithradatum, and the rest of the medicines that they have in the shop\textsuperscript{75}.

In Garzoni’s view, it was surveillance and the public spectacle of manufacture rather than the storage jars themselves which provided security. Indeed, the first part of his description paid homage to laudable contemporary practitioners in Venice and elsewhere, singling out, ‘messer Francesco

\textsuperscript{74} Olmi, 1997, p. 218: “\textit{La maggior parte de speciali che dovria haver cognitione in questa materia nondimeno si ritrovano tutti ignari che apena sanno leggere e il piu. Delle volte pongono un simplice per un altro di opposite e venenose qualità come mi potrei dir di molti; si trovano molto piu essercitati li speciali in Flandra, Bohemia e Germania che non son in Italia, intendendo almeno la lingua latina e facendo profession di cognoscer li semplici non vendendo cose vive cioè cere, oli, saponi e mille altre cose impertinenti come fanno li nostri, ma seperatamente facendo il medicinale distinto da l’altre droghe}”. This was a common trope. See the continued complain-ts in Marinello, 1620.

\textsuperscript{75} Garzoni, 1996, 2, p. 1063: “\textit{Ci sono anco fra loro di molte fraudi e inganni non solamente di apparenza ridicolosa – come quei bussolotti, quegli albarelli, e quelle scatole che con lettere maiuscole e grosse, e allidono talora a mille unguenti o confezioni o aromati preziosi, e nondimeno sono vacui di dentro, portando lo soprascritto ridicoloso di fuori come fanno i bussoli di maestro Grillo da Conigliano – ma di malizia sinistra di animo, componendo alle volte medicine mortifere col ministrare una cosa per una altra o col meschiar nei calici dalle bevande robba maria, vecchia, stentita e fracida quanto dir si possa, la quale alle volte conoscono, e alle volte ancora con disconcia ignoranza hanno comprata da barbari levantini a buon mercato per levar su bottega alla meglio che succeda […] E resteranno i protomedici avvertiti che tocca piu a loro che a me a dannare i speciali, facendo essi le visite alla teriaca, al mitridate e al resto delle medicine c’hanno in bottega}”. See also Laughran, 2003, p. 103.
Calzolari, the apothecary at the Golden Bell who makes the true theriac and an unguent that if you put it on the stomach cures the whole body, and he had the true Armenian bole, the true balsam, sealed earth and the true satirión, never before seen since Dioscorides.\(^{76}\)

Garzoni was not the only writer to admire Calzolari, a well-connected figure who corresponded with and was visited by naturalists such as Pietro Andrea Mattioli and Ulisse Aldrovandi (with whom he climbed Mount Balbo outside Verona to collect specimens in 1544).\(^{77}\) Calzolari had been given a unicorn horn by Mattioli (which Aldrovandi considered a fake when he visited the shop\(^ {78}\)) and a bird of paradise from the Mollacas by the Florentine, Domenico Bartoli.\(^ {79}\) Although Calzolari had limited Latin and had never attended university, he was part of a growing group of specialists who aimed to gather and study ‘simples’, efforts that were important across Italy for the creation of botanical gardens and catalogues of *naturalia*.\(^ {80}\) But unlike many of his colleagues, Calzolari had a strong commercial as well as an academic interest in his finds and provides an excellent example of how the two created both opportunities and tensions. In 1566, two books appeared simultaneously. The first was a short description in the vernacular by Calzolari himself of the simples gathered during the botanical expedition to Monte Balbo he had undertaken with Aldrovandi and others almost twenty years earlier; the second was a letter in Italian by Calzolari to a friend in Cremona (supposedly written for private circulation) defending the theriac he had created using these simples from ‘calumny’.\(^ {81}\) Although printed separately (the former in Venice, the latter in Cremona) and in very different formats, the two were intimately connected. The account of the trip to Monte Balbo was designed to prove the origins of Calzolari’s ingredients and, despite his limited education, his skill for, as he stressed in his letter, ‘a knowledge of simples cannot be had from reading books unless it is also connected with the

\(^{76}\) Garzoni, 1996, p. 1061: “Messer Francesco Calzolari speciale alla Campana d’Oro in Verona, che faceva la vera teriaca e un’unguento che, opongendosi lo stomaco, solveva il corpo; e aveva il vero bolo armeno, il vero balsamo, la terra sigilata, e il vero satirión non più conosciuto da Dioscoride in poi”.


\(^{79}\) Fahy, 1993, p. 20.

\(^{80}\) Findlen, 2006.

\(^{81}\) Calzolari, 1566 and *Lettera*, 1566.
experience of one’s own eyes. The letter was a response to attacks on the validity of his theriac made by Ercole Scalcina of Perugia, a gargone or apprentice at a rival Veronese apothecary. Here, Calzolari defended himself against charges of failing to read Latin texts, misidentifying key ingredients and working in secret, occultamente. In doing so, Calzolari contrasted his rival’s low social and commercial standing with his own status and contacts with famous naturalists. He emphasized that far from hiding his work, he had always sought to validate his product in public. Any disputed ingredient had been sent to the most trusted figures available such as Mattioli; before preparing his medicine, he had shown his final ingredients to two doctors and indeed, eventually, to the entire medical council of Verona. It had then been prepared under public surveillance with trumpets, tambourines and criers announcing its fabrication. As in Venice, this was a drug produced for the public under public conditions.

Perhaps prompted by the quarrel, Calzolari seems to have been inspired not only to publish the two accounts but also to create what was termed a ‘museum or theatre’ containing the ingredients from which his theriac was made along with numerous other examples of naturalia. This was, however, a very different exercise in display because while it helped to create Calzolari’s reputation, it was not open to the public. The theatre was a privileged site, and required permission to enter. While it is not entirely clear whether the rooms were above his shop or in his home, published descriptions make it clear that the suite began with a chamber containing the portraits of contemporary naturalists including Giovanni Battista Montani, Girolamo Fracastoro, Mattioli and Aldrovandi. These figures had all been asked to provide Calzolari with their images and the room was as much a display of the apothecary’s intellectual and social connections as of artistic production. The second room contained a range of equipment designed for the distillation of simples while the final space, described in a lengthy letter by the Veronese doctor, Antonio Passieno to Giacomo Scutellari, physician to the condottiere Sforza Pallavicino was, a most abundant repository and true treasure of all remarkable medicinal things, in which I observed each one placed in wonderful order in most decorative and elegant compartments and cases. First, [Calzolari] sought

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82 Lettera, 1566, p. 13: “la cognizione de’ Semplici non puo haversi dal legger libri, quando insieme non non vi sia congiunta la sperienza de gli occhi stessi, cosi per conoscere la spetie loro, come per distinguere I buoni da’ rei”.
exceptional herbs and then the rest from their own distant places and regions, sent to him as gifts from the greatest princes and rulers; here it is pleasing to see not a few whole plants and plant roots, rinds, hardened or liquid saps, gums, flowers, leaves, fruits, and rare seeds and to recognize them as authentic. Also many metals. I omit how many dried terrestrial and aquatic animals I was astounded to find that I had never seen before.

Passieno had been shown the collection, with its botanical specimens, stuffed fish, crocodiles and fossils and Egyptian papyrus by Calzolari’s son. The young man had opened up boxes, drawers and cabinets and invited the visitor to smell some of the precious oils and distillates making it clear that access was carefully controlled and by invitation only. In return, the apothecary took care to get his most prestigious guests to leave some form of testimonial. Aldrovandi sent a public attestation to the quality of the collection following his visit in 1571; in 1585, the rooms were seen by two Japanese princes who, having converted to Christianity travelled through Verona on their way to pay homage to the Pope. Following their visit, they presented Calzolari with an exotic head-dress and garment made from feathers which joined the collection. But if access to the rooms and their contents was carefully controlled, their reputation was more widely disseminated. Passieno’s letter was printed in 1584 as part of a compendium of writings dedicated not to Calzolari himself, but to his museum. Opening with letter addressed to the personal physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Girolamo Mercuriale of Forlì, it contained a long Latin poem; several sonnets in Italian praising the *rico museo del Calzolari;* an inventory of its contents; letters written in the 1570s from Mattioli and Aldrovandi authenticating the theriac ingredients and praising the collections; Latin descriptions of the museum by Passieno and Olivi; and finally Calzolari’s earlier publication of his ascent of Mount Balbo, now translated into Latin (this Latin version had originally been published by the same Venetian printer as an addendum to Pietro Mattioli’s *Herbal*).
tioli’s 1571 book on plants\textsuperscript{88}). But despite its comprehensive nature, the book lacked illustrations, something that another apothecary connected to the same circle of naturalists, Ferrante Imperato remedied when he published a more systematic description of his own collection just over a decade later (Fig. 8). In 1620, Calzolari’s nephew, who had inherited the shop and its famous theriac recipe, followed suit. He had a much expanded version of the description printed at considerable expense which included numerous engraving, including a large fold-out depiction of the display of naturalia, jars, jugs and simples\textsuperscript{89} (Fig. 9). An expensive and complex project, forty copies were given away as gifts to distinguished figures such as the Duke of Mantua to whom it was dedicated, while a large number were sent for distribution north of the Alps. This project was partly for prestige but would have also resulted in awareness of the continued importance of Calzolari’s theriac and other remedies amongst distinguished Italian clients and re-stimulated the lucrative export market.

The strategy of connecting a fixed physical space for display to the highly mobile printed leaflet or book was also used by Aldrovandi and Imperato, each of whom created their own ‘museums’ in Bologna and Naples respectively and printed their extensive investigations into natural history. But although they are now very famous, they were not alone. Although now almost forgotten, the Mantuan apothecary Filippo Costa had similar aspirations. In 1586, he was described as,

\begin{center}
Francesco Costa […] (who) ran one of the principle apothecary shops of the city […] under the sign of the King. And for the particular delight
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{88} Mattioli, 1571.
\textsuperscript{89} Fahy, 1993.
and pleasure of the discerning, he maintained and enriched a studiolo or pleasant theatre of the most rare simples that have been discovered in our time\textsuperscript{90}.

Alongside Costa’s ‘theatre’ of simples, the apothecary published his \textit{Discorsi sopra le composizioni degli antidoti et medicamenti che più si costumano di dar per bocca}\textsuperscript{91}. His example suggests that these parallel techniques of display through spaces variously termed ‘theatres’ or ‘museums’, alongside a campaign of the circulation of manuscripts and printing may have been quite widespread. This allowed the apothecary to separate out his commercial shop which was open to all, private spaces for study which had a restricted audience (carefully expressed in the non-commercial environment of a \textit{studiolo}, theatre or museum) and his intellectual reputation which circulated in print or manuscript form.

But this was not always possible to sustain in full. While the Latin texts included in the 1584 compilation of praises to Calzolari’s museum called the owner, \textit{Calcolarius pharmacopola} or \textit{pharmacopaeo}, the vernacular poems simply addressed him as Francesco Calzolari ‘at the sign of the Campana d’Oro’, emphasizing his identify as a shopkeeper\textsuperscript{92}. Garzoni’s description similarly listed the products associated with Calzolari’s name: armenian bole, theriac and \textit{terra sigilata} were the stock items sold by charlatans, all of whom made similar claims for their products. When Calzolari pointed to the beneficial effects that his theriac had had on the son of Vespasiano Gonzaga who had turned black after he had been poisoned by arsenic, he was using the

\textsuperscript{90} Carra, 1978, p. 268, note 4: “Messer Filippo costa, cittadino comodo di beni di fortuna ma più di quelli dell’animo che per esercizio della città fa camminare una delle principalissime speciarie dirizzata dagli avoli suoi sotto l’insigna del re. Et per particolare delitto et in gratia degli intendenti mantiene et arricchise tuttavia un suo studiulino anzi gentile theatre, di quei rari semplici, che all’età nostra siano scoperiti”.

\textsuperscript{91} Carra, 1978, p. 268, note 4.

\textsuperscript{92} Olivi, 1584.
same evidence used by mountebanks. The difference, of course, was that Calzolari’s status, connections, museum and publications provided the evidence for the efficacy of his generic cure-all medications. His theatricality was fixed, exclusive and for a limited audience; the theatres of the mountebank were for the marketplace. Although we might connect the two today, Calzolari would have strongly argued against any intersection.

As this suggests, there was no single strategy for the promotion of an apothecary’s products or skills as the profession developed in the sixteenth century. Regulatory devices provided reassurance while shop displays, elaborately decorated pots, testimonials from satisfied customers and learned colleagues, publications that promoted specific products and those that promoted the learning of the apothecary himself were all deployed. But there was also inherent risks associated with each technique. Suspicions of fraud and poor practice were common to all retailers and Renaissance consumers expected to be wary about their purchases. The attacks and counter-attacks made by apothecaries or their supervisors with scientific interests such as Aldrovandi and Calzolari on their contemporaries did little for the profession as a whole. Most scholars have rightly seen these debates as part of wider confrontations as some apothecaries sought to distance themselves from mountebanks and grocers and assert their associations with the university educated medical professionals93. Yet these were also commercial strategies designed to promote the theriacs and other products of shops such as the ‘Golden Bell’ in Verona or the speziale da medicina in Venice who hoped to sustain valuable export markets. In denigrating their competitors, they encouraged long-term suspicion and a cycle of demand for yet more reassurance. Here, shop display alone would not be enough to convince the sceptics. Indeed an impressive array could have the opposite effect, suggesting that the accoutrements disguised the poverty of either the apothecary’s knowledge or ingredients. Bringing together the commercial and intellectual spaces that had been so carefully separated by Calzolari and Costa caused particular anxiety. It was one thing to have a private study or museum; it was another to dress one’s shop with similar goods. For example, the Swiss naturalist, Conrad Gessner complained of, “apothecaries and others who dry rays and shape their skeletons into varied and wonderful forms for the ignorant”94, while William Shakespeare’s description of the

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apothecary shop from which Romeo would buy his poison was similarly framed,

    I do remember an apothecary –
    And hereabout a dwells – which late I noted […]
    And in his needy shop a tortoise hung,
    An alligator stuffed and other skins
    Of ill-shaped fishes; and about his shelves
    A beggarly account of empty boxes
    Green earthen pots, bladders and musty seeds
    Remnants of packthread and old cakes of roses
    Were thinly scatter'd to make up a show.95.

Whether Shakespeare knew of Calzolari’s Veronese apothecary shop or the prints after Imperio’s collection is irrelevant. Shakespeare’s audiences, just like Calzolari’s customers knew that they had to probe beyond the ‘show’, forcing a constant reassessment of the shop, its products and its people. That apothecaries and their theriacs or ‘Venetian treacles’ succeeded in meeting their expectations for so long, is as much a testimony to the customer’s need to believe in cures as it was to the apothecary’s clever marketing96.

Riassunto

Nell’Italia dei secoli XV e XVI le spezierie, o farmacie, rappresentavano degli importanti luoghi di commercio e di socializzazione. Al pari delle botteghe dei barbieri erano dotate di spazi, dove gli uomini, e occasionalmente anche le donne, potevano radunarsi, fare pettinegolezzi, giocare d’azzardo e scambiare informazioni. Per questa ragione, spesso le spezierie avevano una non comune organizzazione dello spazio, esse possedevano più luoghi adibiti all’esposizione, retrobotteghe e soffitte di quante ne avessero la maggior parte dei negozi rinascimentali. I prodotti in mostra erano spesso raccolti in particolari recipienti, intesi ad attestare l’onestà dello speziale. Mentre una lunga gestione era la chiave per accattivarsi la fiducia dei clienti, rinnovare l’esposizione della merce in negozio costituiva un’importante tecnica per assicurarsi il successo commerciale; ciò dimostrava l’abilità dello speziale nel promuovere la propria attività. Nonostante queste esposizioni di merci fossero, teoricamente, riservate ai clienti del luogo, sempre più frequentemente gli speziali stampavano e diffondevano immagini

95 Perkins Wilder, p. 156.
e descrizioni delle proprie botteghe, della mercanzia e nozioni di storia naturale al fine di migliorare la propria reputazione e di avviare commerci con acquirenti non locali. Il commercio in droghe generiche come la teriaca fornisce un buon esempio di come la vendita di questi prodotti divenne sempre più competitiva alla fine del XVI secolo.

**Keywords:** Apothecary, speziale, shop display, drug-jars, theriac.

**Running head:** Space and spectacle in Renaissance pharmacy.

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