INTRODUCTION:
"NAPLES IS THE WHOLE WORLD"

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Naples was one of the largest cities in early modern Europe and, for about two centuries, the largest city in the global empire ruled by the kings of Spain. Its crowded and noisy streets, the height of its buildings, the number and wealth of its churches and palaces, the celebrated natural beauty of its location, the many antiquities scattered in its environs, the fiery volcano looming over it, the drama of its people's devotions, and the size and liveliness—to put it mildly—of its plebs all made Naples renowned and at times notorious across Europe.

The new essays in this volume aim to introduce this important, fascinating, and bewildering city to readers unfamiliar with its history. In this introduction, I will briefly situate the city in the general history of Italy and Europe and offer a few remarks on the themes, topics, and approaches of the essays that follow.

The city of Naples was founded by Greek settlers in the 6th century BC (although earlier settlements in the area date to the 9th century). Greeks, Etruscans, and, eventually, Romans vied for control over the city during its first few centuries. After Rome absorbed the southern areas of the Italian Peninsula, Naples followed the history of the Roman state; however, through much of that era, it maintained a strong Greek identity and culture. (Nero famously chose to make his first appearance on the stage in Naples, finding the city's Greek culture more tolerant than stern Rome of such behavior.)

Perhaps due to its continued eastern orientation, Naples developed an early Christian community. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the west, Naples and all of southern Italy were ruled in succession by Goths, Byzantines, and Lombards. In the late first millennium, Naples had its own independent dukes.

The southern Italian kingdom as a distinct political entity was created by the Normans in the early 12th century, as part of their far-flung conquests which took them, roughly in the same period, from their settlement in northern France to England, southern Italy, and the Levant. In 1130 Roger "the Norman" was crowned King of Sicily in Palermo after his

family had for nearly a century gradually established dominion over the fragmented Byzantine, Arab, and Lombard powers that had ruled in Sicily and in the peninsula south of Rome. The new kingdom was soon recognized by the papacy and placed in fact in a formal relationship of feudal dependency from the papacy that was to last through the late 18th century. The kingdom consisted of the island of Sicily and of the southern regions of Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata, Abruzzo, and Campania. Its only land boundary, with the papal state, was to change remarkably little for seven centuries, until the creation of the kingdom of Italy in 1861. This remarkable period of territorial stability belies the kingdom's tumultuous political history.

Sicily and the southern regions were indeed ruled by a confusing succession of European dynasties; when the Normans died out in the 1190s, they were succeeded by the Swabians, at the time the German imperial dynasty. In the first half of the 13th century, Frederick II—the Holy Roman emperor and king of Sicily and Jerusalem—dominated European affairs from his beloved southern Italian realm. Though Frederick's capital remained formally in Palermo, the emperor began the modern development of Naples, where he founded a university in 1224, the first one in Europe primarily dedicated to the training of secular administrators for the royal government. The hostility between the Swabians and the papacy led the latter to seek an alternative ruler for the southern kingdom, and in 1266 Charles of Anjou, brother of King Louis IX of France, conquered the kingdom with papal support. In 1282 a rebellion in Sicily—the famous *Vespers of Sicily* of Romantic lore—severed the island (henceforth ruled by a branch of the Aragonese royal family) from the mainland regions of the kingdom, which the Angevins now ruled from their new capital in Naples. From that date until 1816, Sicily and Naples (the city's name eventually became the new name for the mainland kingdom as a whole) remained formally separate kingdoms, though after 1500 they were usually ruled by the same monarch.

Naples grew under Angevin rule, gaining population and a new appearance thanks to the construction of castles and many churches in the French Gothic style favored by the dynasty. When the Angevin line in Naples died out in the 1430s, Naples and its kingdom were conquered by Alfonso of Aragon (already king of Aragon, Sardinia, and Sicily), who made the city the capital of his Mediterranean realm and a major center of Humanist studies and Renaissance art. At Alfonso's death in 1458, the Aragonese kingdom and the two islands passed to his brother, but Alfonso claimed the right to leave Naples, as a kingdom he had conquered and not inherited,

to Ferrante, his illegitimate son. Ferrante and his successors ruled until 1501, but in the 1490s they became embroiled in the Italian wars, a series of conflicts that brought French, German, and Spanish armies to the peninsula in a struggle that soon became central in the battle for achieving European hegemony.

Two years of an uneasy Spanish and French occupation of southern Italy ended with the Spanish victory over French troops in 1503, which gave the Kingdom of Naples to Ferdinand, king of Aragon, Sardinia, and Sicily and husband of Queen Isabella of Castile. Naples thus lost its resident monarchy, and under Ferdinand (and then under his and Isabella's successors) Spanish viceroys governed the city and its kingdom for over two centuries. This is when Naples's remarkable population growth really took off: over the 16th century the city grew from an estimated 50,000 inhabitants to about 200,000, and by 1600 Naples was by far the largest city in Italy. Indeed, with Paris and London, it had become one of the largest cities in Christian Europe. Masses of the rural poor flocked to Naples, attracted by cheap bread and lower taxes; provincial elites and feudal nobles joined them, seeking proximity to the viceregal court and government and access to the cultural activities, social life, and political opportunities offered by the city. Merchants, administrators, diplomats, soldiers, and clerics also came to Naples from all the Spanish dominions, as well as other parts of Italy and Europe; by the 1630s it was plausible for a city administrator to write that Naples "was the whole world."¹

Under the veneer of stable Spanish rule in the 17th century, the Kingdom of Naples faced some of its greatest challenges, both natural and man-made. The 1631 eruption of Vesuvius brought damage and death up to the city's gates. (It was then that San Gennaro, believed to have spared the city from destruction, became the most popular of Naples's growing roster of patron saints; by 1731 there were thirty-five.) The dramatic revolt of 1647–48 produced casualties and devastation across the kingdom. Finally, in 1656 the greatest plague epidemic since the 14th century struck the city, killing about half of its population (which by then numbered somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000 inhabitants). In the wake of such devastation, Naples remained by far the largest city in Italy, although it would not fully regain its pre-plague population until the late 18th century. In spite of these calamities, 17th-century Naples was a major center of art and architecture, filled with magnificent churches, royal buildings, and

¹ Capaccio, *Forastiero*, 940.

aristocratic palaces, and its musical, literary, and intellectual life grew in variety and quality.

The Spanish Habsburgs' rule over the kingdom remained more or less secure even during the monarchy's declining decades under Charles II (1665–1700), but the succession wars of the early 18th century eventually brought about dynastic change. In 1707 Spanish rule was replaced by Austrian rule (still enforced through viceroys) and in 1734 Charles of Bourbon, younger son of the king of Spain, conquered the kingdom and ruled it on his own, adding Sicily the following year. When Charles succeeded to the Spanish throne in 1759, he took his older son and heir to Spain but left his younger son, Ferdinand IV, as autonomous ruler of Naples and Sicily. The Naples Bourbons ruled until Italian unification in 1861, though they lost the mainland kingdom to revolutionary forces for a brief period in 1799 and to Napoleonic control from 1806 to 1815.

After over two centuries of government through viceroys, the return of a resident monarchy in 1734 brought major developments to Naples, not only in terms of demographic and, though at a slower pace, also economic growth but also with regard to cultural and social life. The king became the center of an increasingly splendid court and elite life; the monarchy built new palaces, theaters, and other impressive public buildings, and it sponsored developments in scholarship, music, and the arts. The archeological discoveries of the 1730s and 1740s at Herculaneum and Pompeii, also facilitated by royal support, added to the attractions of Naples and its area. The Bourbons presided over a city that by mid-century became a major stop on the European Grand Tour, drawing foreign visitors with its natural beauty, museums, musical performances, dynamic and fascinating street life, and nearby archeological sites and volcanic phenomena. Foreigners continued to come to Naples in ever larger numbers until the revolutionary troubles of the 1790s began to impede European leisure travel.

Yet this image of progress and cultural expansion, often celebrated by Naples's Enlightenment writers at least until the early 1780s as part of their praise for a reform-minded monarchy, belies the city's—and even more the kingdom's—continuing sociopolitical problems: an entrenched feudal class; a rich and privileged church; a weak and overwhelmingly agrarian economy, in which what trade and manufacturing existed was often dominated by foreign capitalists or maintained only through royal monopolies; and an inefficient, bloated, and often corrupt administrative system. All these factors proved resistant to reform efforts and projects, especially after the so-called “heroic” years of the Bourbon dynasty

in the 1730s and 1740s. The city itself remained fragile, depicted by some Enlightenment writers as a gigantic head over a sickly body, and, as David Gentilcore's essay discusses, prone to devastating famines. When revolutionary developments came in the 1790s, neither Naples nor its kingdom had resolved their long-standing difficulties.

In part due to these elements, and also because the Brill series in which this volume appears focuses on the premodern period, the essays in this volume focus on the viceregal and first Bourbon periods, that is, the time from 1503 to 1799, although there are occasional references to the Aragonese period, depending on the topic of each essay. This is to some extent a novel way to consider the periodization of the history of Naples. Historians working on the viceregal period (up to 1734) often discuss the Bourbon period only in passing, whereas many scholars focusing on the period after 1734 tend to regard it as prelude to the revolutionary and unification eras (up to 1861). However, the significant changes the Napoleonic government in 1806–15 brought to both city and kingdom, with major changes to the kingdom's social and economic structure (above all, the abolition of the feudal system in 1806), judicial and administrative institutions (modeled on French examples), and the intellectual and cultural stagnation that followed the Bourbon Restoration in 1815, make the break at 1800 an effective one for the aims of this volume. The multiple challenges of modernity to both city and kingdom remain largely outside its scope, though they are discussed in part in Anna Maria Rao's conclusion.

Finally, in line with the series in which this volume appears, its goal is to focus on the city of Naples itself; therefore, the volume does not aim to present a history of the kingdom as a whole, though of course many essays often refer to that history.

The contributors to this volume include some of the most established scholars who have written about the city, as well as members of a younger generation of international scholars. In selecting the topics for the essays, the contributors and I have attempted to include both traditional topics on which there is a rich historiographical tradition, especially in Italian (such as issues in political, economic, or ecclesiastic history), and topics such as political culture, patronage, or court rituals which have more recently attracted the interest of Italian, Spanish, French, and Anglophone historians. As in any collection such as this, topics that could have been the central object of specific essays, such as popular religion or charity, instead appear in a more transversal manner, across several essays. On the other hand, there are topics that now interest many historians of other

areas of Europe that have not yet been the focus of scholarly attention in the case of early modern Naples and are thus largely absent from this volume, such as the environment or the history of sexuality.

The near absence of one topic in this volume calls for a slightly longer explanation. Historians of early modern Europe have now for some time used criminal trial records to access popular culture and behavior and to investigate various elements of European society. In the case of Naples, this has happened to some extent with Inquisition records, as Giovanni Romeo discusses in his essay in this volume; however, there has been virtually no historical work done on the records of secular courts, especially the Vicaria, the main criminal court in the city. Some Vicaria records survive, but they are very poorly catalogued, if at all, and difficult to access. The study of legal history, a rich and old tradition in Naples which is discussed in several essays in this volume, has perhaps turned the interest of historians (who have focused primarily upon jurisprudence, jurists, lawyers, and judicial institutions) away from the study of actual criminal behavior. Thanks to narrative chronicles and, especially, to the records of the Bianchi di Giustizia—a confraternity devoted to assisting those condemned to death—we know that executions, as was true in other early modern cities, were rich in religious and at times political significance and could generate both fury and pity in Naples's large crowds; we also know that on average thirty-two convicted criminals per year were put to death in the late 16th century, about twenty in the mid-17th century, four by the 1690s, and finally only two or three by the late 18th century.² But the social history of crime in early modern Naples, and of its significance in relation to city life and popular culture, remains largely to be written.

All the contributors and I share one primary goal for this volume: that it serve as a scholarly introduction to Naples for readers whose interest in history does not include specialized knowledge of the city. Therefore, all essays undertake to survey major characters, events, and developments, to review major issues and questions relating to each topic, and to introduce, when appropriate, relevant historiographical traditions.

The first three essays in this volume set the scene by introducing the city in three fundamental ways: historiographically, in terms of the questions, debates, and sources that have shaped its study; physically, in terms of its urban development and growth, as well as the main features of its spatial organization and appearance; and visually, in terms of the history

² Panico, *Carnefice*; Notari, "La compagnia."

of how Naples has been perceived and represented. Many of the essays in the last section of the volume are the work of scholars in disciplines other than history; therefore, the main aim of those essays, even more so than for all the others, is to survey major individuals, events, and trends in the literary, musical, artistic, and intellectual life of the city. Those authors bravely took on the difficult challenge of finding appealing and accessible ways to synthesize long traditions that are rich and complex in subject matter.

Another set of essays focuses on fields that have long been staples of historical analysis, both for Naples and for early modern Europe generally, such as economic systems, social structures, religion, and politics. On these topics, the authors take on the challenge of explaining and reviewing, for the non-specialist, interpretive questions and debates that emerge from a long and dynamic historical tradition. Other essays address topics that are related to those I just mentioned, but do so more from perspectives informed by recent studies of political culture, ritual, and historical anthropology. Essays on gender, medicine, and the history of science creatively synthesize the growing work on these topics and offer innovative methodological suggestions for future studies.

As I mentioned above, by the mid-18th century Naples was a major destination on the European Grand Tour. This volume does not include an essay specifically on tourism in the city. However, how Naples was perceived by foreigners, how it provoked in visitors (from conquerors to tourists) responses that were both enthusiastic and censorious, and how it compared to other early modern European cities are fundamental questions that underlie many of the essays. It is my hope that modern readers will find in these essays a useful basis to inform their own opinion of this much-celebrated and much-vilified city.

This volume has provided an occasion for me to work with old friends and to make new ones. I wish to thank all the contributors for their cooperation. In particular, I wish to thank John Marino and Gaetano Sabatini for their help, support, and advice throughout the project.³ I am also grateful to Julian Deahl, Gera van Bedaf, and Marcella Mulder of Brill for their shepherding of the volume, to the Georgetown University Graduate School for help in defraying the costs of illustrations, to the authors and

³ I translated all essays submitted in Italian and Spanish, namely chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17, and the conclusion. I thank the authors for their friendly availability and help during the translation process.

all others who have helped in the process of obtaining the illustrations, and to the manuscript's anonymous reader.

Most of the essays include a full listing of all works cited therein. (A couple of authors include an essential bibliography on their topic.) New Italian terms are explained at their first appearance in each essay. At the end of the volume, readers may find a short bibliography of titles available in English, a glossary of the Italian terms most frequently used in the essays, and lists of the kings, viceroys, and archbishops of Naples.

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