Bernardino Licinio: Portraiture, Kinship and Community in Renaissance Venice

by

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Bernardino Licinio was a painter of Bergamasque origin active in Venice from c. 1510 to c. 1550. Licinio was a prolific painter of portraits, concert scenes and religious images for the home and headed a prosperous family workshop. Yet the artist is largely denied importance within the current art historical narrative, being conceived as “minor,” “provincial” or “second-rate.” My dissertation questions the “constructedness” of historical identities and presents the first nuanced understanding of Licinio’s place within Venetian culture. I argue that his status as “minor” is a modern construct rather than a reflection of his contemporaries’ perception. My dissertation inscribes itself within endeavours to “de-centre” the Renaissance conceptually, and is especially indebted to recent studies of material culture that challenge art historical hierarchies and aesthetic biases.

The dissertation provides a multilayered reading of Bernardino Licinio’s artistic identity through frameworks that stem from what I consider unique aspects of his practice, while others arise from problems posed by his historiographical reception. The artist’s position between Venice and Bergamo provides the line of enquiry for chapter one, where I engage with the Bergamasque
community conceived, on the one hand, as a form of historiographical framing, and on the other, as a social reality. In chapter two, music as a cultural phenomenon provides a frame for exploring Licinio’s intellectual world. I contend that his engagement with musical themes suggests an involvement with the communities of interest fostered by music as a social act.

Chapter three addresses Licinio’s hitherto unrecognised contribution to shaping a tradition of female portraiture. The chapter thus challenges the accepted conceit of women’s “artistic invisibility” in Venetian art, while simultaneously highlighting Licinio’s role in forming the genre of family portraiture. Chapter four presents a case study of two images where the artist talks about himself and his family: the Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children and the Self-Portrait with Workshop. Through these portraits, I explore the convergence of familial and professional identities, the conceptual ties between the home and the family, and the structures of kinship that provided the foundation for the Renaissance workshop.
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iv

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. v

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... viii

List of Maps ........................................................................................................................... xxi

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1

‘[I] mio Bernardin Licino’ ...................................................................................................... 1

Bernardino Licinio in Context ............................................................................................... 4

Venice and Bergamo ............................................................................................................... 4

The Family Workshop ............................................................................................................. 6

Critical Reception ................................................................................................................... 9

Vasari to Boschini .................................................................................................................. 9

Modern Constructs ................................................................................................................ 13

The Lombard Connection and the Giorgionesque Family .................................................... 15

“De-centering” the Renaissance ............................................................................................ 19

Preview of Chapters .............................................................................................................. 25

CHAPTER 1 ARTISTIC GEOGRAPHY, IMMIGRATION AND THE POLITICS OF
IDENTITY IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VENICE .................................................................. 29

Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 29

On the Origins of the “Lombard Soul”: Naturalism in a Historiographical Perspective ........ 31

‘The essence of all expatriates’: The Bergamasque Immigrant Between Satire and Reality ...... 44

Urban Geography, Community Dynamics and the Bergamasque Painters ............................. 52

Neighbourhoods and Scuole ................................................................................................. 53

Social Networks ..................................................................................................................... 60

Cultural Contacts: The Export of Altarpieces to the Bergamasque Valleys ............................ 64

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 70
## CHAPTER 2 MUSIC, PAINTING AND LICINIO’S PUBLIC

- Introduction: Musical Cultures .......................................................... 72
- The Public for Music ......................................................................... 75
- The Sight of Sound ........................................................................... 87
- Satire and Morality .......................................................................... 96
  - The Old Man and the Hurdy-Gurdy ............................................. 96
  - Tools of Seduction: Music and the Courtesan ............................. 103
  - Theatrical Cultures ..................................................................... 110
- A Style of Pictorial Legibility: Naturalism, Painted Texts and the Close-Up ............................................... 114
- Conclusion ....................................................................................... 125

## CHAPTER 3 REPRESENTING WOMEN

- Introduction: “A rather unpleasant portrait by Bernardino Licinio” ....................................................... 127
- The Assertive Female Likeness ....................................................... 133
- Motherhood According to Bernardino Licinio ................................ 151
  - Depicting the Christian Family: The Emergence of the Autonomous Family Portrait .................... 152
  - The Widow as Paterfamilias ......................................................... 161
  - Female Genealogy ....................................................................... 166
- The Female Viewer .......................................................................... 170
- Material Identities ........................................................................... 179
- Conclusion: The Compromised Portrait and the Geography of Art ...................................................... 185

## CHAPTER 4 BERNARDINO AND ‘I LICINI’

- Introduction: The Family Workshop and the Venetian Tradition ......................................................... 189
- The Material Conditions of Family Identity ......................................................................................... 192
  - Introducing the Family ................................................................. 192
  - Dynastic Ambitions .................................................................... 194
  - Home and Identity ...................................................................... 202
  - The End of the Family Romance ................................................ 209
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Artisan’s <em>Famiglia</em></td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Workshop</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Portrait and Collectivity: Precedents</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venetian Art Theory</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Master as Teacher</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Workshop Community</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art Market and the Family Author</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Circa 1535 – Claiming a Place in the History of Venetian Art</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children</em>, 1530-1535, Rome, Borghese Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Triptych of the Resurrection</em>, 1528, Church of San Giovanni Battista, Lonato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Madonna Enthroned with Saints</em>, 1535, Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Five Franciscan Martyrs</em>, predella from the Madonna Enthroned with Saints, 1535, Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Courtesan at the Clavichord with a Suitor and a Procuress</em>, c. 1520-1525, Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist</em>, 1520s, Private Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fabio and Giulio Licinio, <em>The Annunciation</em>, 1544, engraving (after Pordenone’s <em>Annunciation Altarpiece</em>, Murano, Santa Maria degli Angeli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Portrait of a Family</em>, 1524, Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Portrait of a Man</em>, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Portrait of a Woman</em>, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio (?), <em>Portrait of a Young Man</em>, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Portrait of a Young Man</em>, 1510s, Kress Collection, Howard University, Washington D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Giovanni Battista Paggi (?), <em>Double Portrait with a Mirror</em>, 1580s, Martin-von-Wagner-Museums, Würzburg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 16  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with a Toothpick*, c.1515, Museo Civico, Vicenza

Figure 17  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1535, Venice, Collezione Cini

Figure 18  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons*, c. 1520, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg,

Figure 19  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1532, Private Collection

Figure 20  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary*, 1524, City Art Gallery, York, UK

Figure 21  Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Portrait of a Tailor*, c.1565-1570, London, National Gallery

Figure 22  Sofonisba Anguissola, *The Chess Game*, 1555, Muzeum Narodowe, Poznan

Figure 23  Sofonisba Anguissola, *Family group*, c. 1559, Nivaagards Malerisammling

Figure 24  The “Facchino” from Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni*, 1590

Figure 25  Veronese, *Presentation of the Cuccina Family to the Madonna*, c. 1571, Staatsgalerie, Dresden

Figure 26  Giulio Licinio, *St Anthony the Great with other Saints*, 1553, Lonno, Church of S. Antonio Abate

Figure 27  Cima da Conegliano, *Olera Polyptych*, c.1486-88, Olera, Parish church

Figure 28  Francesco di Simone da Santacroce, *Annunciation*, Bergamo, Accademia Carrara (originally for church of Sant’Alessandro a Spino al Brembo)

Figure 29  Palma Vecchio, *San Giacomo Polyptych*, c. 1515, Peghera di Taleggio, Church of San Giacomo Maggiore

Figure 30  Lorenzo Lotto, *Sedrina Altarpiece*, 1542, Sedrina, Church of San Giacomo

Figure 31  Lattanzio da Rimini, *Saint Martin Polyptych*, 1499-1501, S. Martino a Piazza Brembana

Figure 32  Giovanni de Galizzi da Santacroce, *Madonna with Saints*, 1543, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (side panels) and Private Collection, Bergamo (central panel)

Figure 33  Giorgione, *Concert Champêtre*, 1509-1510, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 34  Giorgione, *Boy with a Flute*, c. 1510, Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London

Figure 35  Giorgione, *The Three Ages of Man*, early sixteenth century, Palazzo Pitti, Florence
Figure 36  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with a Viola da Gamba*, c. 1515, Kress Collection, Memphis Brooks Museum

Figure 37  Giovanni Cariani, *Young Man Playing the Lute*, 1515-1516, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg

Figure 38  Gian Girolamo Savoldo, *Portrait of a Young Man with a Recorder*, c. 1525, Private Collection, New York

Figure 39  Lorenzo Costa, *Bentivoglio Concert*, c. 1493, Madrid, Thyssen Bornemisza Museum

Figure 40  Bernardino Licinio, *Allegory of Love (Allegory of Musical of Time)*, c. 1520, Koelliker Collection, Milan

Figure 41  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book*, c. 1515-1520, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Figure 42  Bernardino Licinio, detail from the *Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book*

Figure 43  Bernardino Licinio, detail from the *Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary*

Figure 44  Vincenzo Capirola, Compositio di meser Vincenzo Capirola, 22v, 1515-1520, Newberry Library, Chicago

Figure 45  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with Musical Instruments*, 1520s, Private Collection

Figure 46  Attributed to Giovanni Cariani, *Portrait of a Composer*, early 1520s, Private Collection, Bergamo

Figure 47  Painter from the Veneto, *Concert*, c.1530-1540, Museo Borgogna, Vercelli

Figure 48  Frontispiece of Pietro Aaron, *Toscanello in musica*, published in Venice, 1523

Figure 49  Leonardo, *Portrait of a Musician*, 1486-1487, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan

Figure 50  Bernardino Licinio or workshop, *Allegory of Love*, 1520s, Private Collection

Figure 51  Unknown artist, *Allegory of Love*, seventeenth century, Private Collection

Figure 52  Titian, *Interrupted Concert*, c. 1511-1512, Pitti Gallery, Florence

Figure 53  Giovanni Cariani, *A Concert*, c. 1518-1520, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Figure 54  Bernardino Licinio, *Concert with a Garland*, c. 1520, New York, Private Collection

Figure 55  Attributed to Titian, *The Lovers*, c. 1510, Royal Collection, London
Figure 56  Paris Bordone, *The Lovers*, 1525-1530, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Figure 57  Lorenzo Costa, *Concert*, 1485-95, National Gallery, London

Figure 58  Bernardino Licinio, *The Seduction*, c. 1520, Private Collection

Figure 59  Palma Vecchio, *Flora*, c.1520, National Gallery, London

Figure 60  Jan Steen, *The Doctor’s Visit*, c.1663-1665, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 61  Giovanni Cariani, *Fête Champêtre*, 1515-1516, Private Collection, Paris

Figure 62  Attributed to Palma Vecchio, *Fête Champêtre*, 1510s, Private Collection, England

Figure 63  Bernardino Licinio, *Double Portrait with a Hurdy-Gurdy*, early 1520s, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 64  Hieronymus Bosch, *Hell*, detail from the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1510-1515, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Figure 65  Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve* from the *Dance of Death*, designed 1524-25

Figure 66  Master of 1515, *Satyr with a Woman and Sleeping Infant*, 1515

Figure 67  Domenico Campagnola, *Landscape with a Hurdy-Gurdy Player and a Girl*, c. 1540

Figure 68  Florentine (Otto print series), *Man with a Lute*, c.1470

Figure 69  Dosso Dossi, *Allegory of Drunkeness*, c. 1521-1522, Galleria Estense, Modena

Figure 70  Lucas van Leyden, *Old Musicians*, 1524

Figure 71  Albrecht Dürer, *Ill-Assorted lovers*, 1495

Figure 72  Lucas Cranach, *Ill-Matched Couple*, c. 1520-22, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Figure 73  Jacob Hoefnagel after Leonardo, *Ill-Matched Lovers*

Figure 74  Attributed to Bernardino Licinio and Giovanni Cariani, *Lovers’ Portrait*, late 1510s, Private Collection

Figure 75  Bernardino Licinio, *Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor*, c. 1520, Private Collection

Figure 76  Giorgione, *Laura*, 1506, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Figure 77  Palma Vecchio, *Group Portrait*, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627

Figure 78  Giovanni Cariani, *Young Woman with a Suitor*, 1515-1520, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

Figure 79  Bernardino Licinio, *Courtesan with a Mirror*, c. 1530-1535, Private Collection

Figure 80  Titian, *Flora*, c.1520, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Figure 81  Domenico Puligo, *Portrait of Barbara Salutati*, 1525, Salmond Collection, Salisbury

Figure 82  Bernardino Licinio, *Group Portrait (A Bravata)*, c. 1515-1520, Private Collection

Figure 83  Jean Fouquet, *Portrait of the Buffoon Gonella*, 1440s, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 84  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man in a Striped Shirt*, c.1524, Ringling Museum, Florida, c.1524

Figure 85  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of Ottaviano Grimani*, 1541, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 86  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul*, 1534, Royal Collection, London

Figure 87  Giovanni Cariani, *Portrait of Benedetto Caravaggi*, 1521-1522, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Figure 88  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Man in his Study*, c. 1530, Venice, Galleria dell’Accademia

Figure 89  Domenico Capriolo, *Portrait of a Scholar*, late 1520s, Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo

Figure 90  Bronzino, *Portrait of Laura Battiferi*, c.1560, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence

Figure 91  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with a Manuscript*, c.1525-1535, Private Collection

Figure 92  Attributed to Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Dominican Monk in his Study*, c. 1520, Private Collection

Figure 93  Titian, *Portrait of a Musician*, c. 1513-14, Palazzo Spada, Rome

Figure 94  Titian, *Woman with a Page and a Mirror*, c. 1515, Musée du Louvre, Paris
Figure 95  Attributed to Titian, *Standing Soldier and a Seated Woman with a Child* of c. 1509, on loan to the Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge

Figure 96  Bernardino Licinio, *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1540, Museum Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden

Figure 97  Giovanni Bellini and Workshop, *The Circumcision*, c. 1500, National Gallery, London

Figure 98  Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus*, c. 1510, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

Figure 99  Palma Vecchio, *Reclining Venus*, c. 1520, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

Figure 100  Bernardino Licinio, *Sleeping Nude*, 1530s, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Figure 101  Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Figure 102  Bernardino Licinio, *Sleeping Venus*, 1530s, Moscow, Private Collection

Figure 103  Bernardino Licinio, *Sleeping Venus*, 1530s, Private Collection

Figure 104  Hans Holbein, *Dead Christ*, 1521, Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel

Figure 105  Giulio Campagnola, *Sleeping Nude*, c. 1508-1509

Figure 106  Amadeo Modigliani, *Reclining Nude*, c. 1919, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Figure 107  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1536, Private Collection

Figure 108  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man*, 1525-1530, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

Figure 109  Giorgione, *Portrait of an Old Woman (‘La Vecchia’)*, c. 1508, Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice

Figure 110  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman from the Morello Family*, 1515 Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice

Figure 111  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Youth*, c.1520, Fine Arts Gallery, San Diego

Figure 112  Jacometto Veneziano, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1470s, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 113  Vittore Carpaccio, *Portrait of a Lady with a Book*, c. 1495-1500, Kress Collection, Denver Museum of Art

Figure 114  Giovanni Bellini, *Portrait of a Man*, c.1500, National Gallery Washington, Kress Collection
Figure 115  Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus*, c.1500, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Figure 116  Giovanni Bellini, *Portrait of a Woman*, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627

Figure 117  Giovanni Bellini, Portrait of a Woman, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627

Figure 118  Giovanni Bellini, Portrait of a Woman, from the illustrated inventory of Andrea Vendramin’s collection, 1627

Figure 119  Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1505, Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Figure 120  Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1505, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 121  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1505-1506, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon

Figure 122  Francesco Bissolo, *Portrait of Woman*, c. 1500, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles

Figure 123  Pietro degli Ingannati, *Portrait of a Woman*, c.1515, Staatliche Museum Berlin

Figure 124  Venetian, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1510-1520, National Gallery, London

Figure 125  Venetian, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1505, Worcester Museum of Art, Worcester

Figure 126  Venetian, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1505, Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City

Figure 127  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Lucina Brembati*, c. 1518, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Figure 128  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman with a Lion Cub*, c. 1520, Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa

Figure 129  Titian, *Portrait of a Man Holding a Glove*, 1523-1524, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 130  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of Stefano Nani*, 1528, National Gallery, London

Figure 131  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Man holding a Glove*, 1532, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 132  Titian, *La Schiavona*, c.1510, National Gallery, London

Figure 133  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman in a Black Toga*, 1522, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Figure 134  Titian, *Portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere*, 1536-1538, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
Figure 135  Titian, *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga*, 1536-1538, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Figure 136  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1524, Ca d’Oro, Venice

Figure 137  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman with a Fan*, c. 1525, Private Collection

Figure 138  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman with a Weasel Fur*, c. 1525-1530, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Figure 139  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1533, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

Figure 140  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, c. 1530, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 141  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman with a Book*, c. 1530, Private Collection

Figure 142  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1540, Private Collection

Figure 143  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Lady as Lucretia*, c.1533, National Gallery, London

Figure 144  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Man*, 1533-1534, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

Figure 145  Gian Girolamo Savoldo, *Portrait of a Man with a Mirror*, c. 1530, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 146  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Marsilio Cassotti and Faustina Assonica*, 1523, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Figure 147  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Mature Couple*, 1525, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Figure 148  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Mother and her Son*, c. 1520-25, Collezione Egidio Martini, Ca’Rezzonico, Venice

Figure 149  Attributed to Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Family*, c. 1540, Private Collection

Figure 150  Lorenzo Costa, *Bentivoglio Altarpiece*, 1488, Bologna, Bentivoglio Chapel, Church of San Giacomo Maggiore

Figure 151  Andrea Solario’s *Madonna and Child with Donors* of ca. 1490-93.

Figure 152  Titian, *Pesaro Altarpiece*, 1519-1526, Venice, Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari

Figure 153  Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of a Man and his Grandson*, 1480, Musée du Louvre, Paris
Figure 154  Justus of Ghent, *Portrait of Duke Federico da Montefeltro and his Son Guidobaldo*, 1476-77 (also attributed to Pedro Berruguete) Galleria delle Marche, Urbino

Figure 155  Mantegna, Detail from the *camera picta*, c.1464-1467, Ducal Palace, Mantua

Figure 156  Antonio da Crevalcore, *Portrait of the Sacrati Family*, c.1475, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Figure 157  Antonio da Crevalcore, *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph and Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1510, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

Figure 158  Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with Six Saints*, late 1530s, Private Collection

Figure 159  Bernardino Licinio, *Sacra Conversazione with a Donor*, 1532, Musée des Beaux-Art, Grenoble

Figure 160  Andrea Previtali, *Portrait of a Merchant’s Family*, c.1523-24, Bergamo Collezione Moroni

Figure 161  Maerten van Heemskerck, *Portrait of the Haarlem Patrician Pieter Jan Foppeszoon and his Family*, c.1530, Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Figure 162  Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of the Della Volta Family*, 1547, National Gallery, London

Figure 163  Cesare Vecellio, *Family Portrait 1555-1570*, Museo Civico Correr, Venice

Figure 164  Giovan Antonio Fasolo, *Portrait of the Valmarana Family*, c. 1553, Pinacoteca civica, Vicenza

Figure 165  Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist*, 1525-1530, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Figure 166  Fra Antonio da Brescia, Double portrait medal of Niccolo Michiel and Dea Contarini, c.1510

Figure 167  Venetian, *Agnesina Badoer Giustinian*, c.1542, National Gallery, Washington

Figure 168  Workshop of Palma Vecchio, *Madonna and Child with Three donors*, late 1520s, Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

Figure 169  Titian, *The Vendramin Family before the Reliquary of the True Cross*, 1543-47, National Gallery, London

Figure 170  Attributed to Giovanni Cariani, *Portrait of a Married Couple*, 1520-1530, Private Collection
Figure 171  Giovanni Bellini, *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan*, 1501-1502, National Gallery, London

Figure 172  Lucas Furtenagel, *Portrait of Hans Burgkmair and his Wife*, 1529, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 173  Giovanni Cariani, *Portrait of a Man Holding the Image of a Woman*, 1510s, Private Collection

Figure 174  Danese Cattaneo, Double portrait medal (Eugenio Sincritico and Celestia), 1540s

Figure 175  Pontormo, *Portrait of Alessandro de’Medici*, 1534-1535, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 176  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman in a White Dress*, 1525-1530, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Figure 177  “Di Venetia et altrove,” Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni*, 1590

Figure 178  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1540, Musei Civici del Castello Visconteo, Pavia

Figure 179  Titian, *Portrait of a Woman in a Fur Coat*, c. 1535, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 180  Titian, *Lady in a Blue Dress (La Bella)*, c. 1536, Palazzo Pitti, Florence

Figure 181  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Lady*, early 1540s, The Courtauld Gallery, London

Figure 182  Lorenzo Lotto, *Venus and Cupid*, mid-1520s, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 183  Paris Bordone, *Portrait of a Young Woman from the Fugger Family*, 1545-1550, Private Collection

Figure 184  Veronese, *Portrait of a Woman*, c.1555, Musée Municipal, Douai

Figure 185  Veronese, *Supper at Emmaus*, c.1560, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 186  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*, c. 1527, London, Royal Collection, Hampton Court

Figure 187  Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Gian Giacomo Stuer and his Son Gian Antonio*, 1544, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Figure 188  Ugo da Carpi, *Aeneas and Anchises*, 1518

Figure 189  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of Helena Capella*, 1541, Private Collection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>Bernardino and Giulio Licinio, <em>Adoration of the Magi</em>, c.1550, Manfredonia, Church of San Francesco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>Paolo Veronese, Detail from the Sala dell’Olimpio, (Giustiniana Giustiniani with a wetnurse) c.1560, Maser, Villa Barbaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Self-Portrait with Workshop</em> (detail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Self-Portrait with Workshop</em> (detail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio’s signature, ASV, Notarile Testamenti, Busta 938, f. 364 (1544)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>Madonna della Misericordia, façade relief, <em>Scuola dei calegheri</em> (cobblers), Campo San Tomà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>Gentile Bellini, <em>St Mark Preaching in Alexandria</em> (detail), 1507, Gentile Bellini, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Filarete, <em>Self-Portrait with Workshop</em> (detail), 1445, Porta Argentea, Saint Peter’s, Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Antico, <em>Crouching Venus</em>, 1498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>Agostino Veneziano, <em>The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli</em>, 1531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>Bernardino Licinio, <em>Male Head</em>, c. 1520, Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>Niccolo Perotti, <em>Rudimenta grammatices</em>, Venice, 1493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>Bernardino Luini, <em>Christ Among Doctors</em>, 1515, National Gallery, London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 209 Details of the Portale Maggiore (third arch intrados), c. 1235-1250, San Marco, Venice (Sawyers and stone workers)

Figure 210 Titian, *Allegory of Prudence*, c.1550-1565, National Gallery, London

Figure 211 Palma, Madonna and Child with Saints, c.1520, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Figure 212 Bernardino Licinio, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1530s, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, Brescia

Figure 213 Vincenzo Catena, Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Joseph, c.1525, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Figure 214 Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, 1520s, Private Collection

Figure 215 Titian, *Lochis Madonna*, c.1510, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Figure 216 Bernardino Licinio, *A Woman Holding a Vase*, c.1530, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

Figure 217 Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna Enthroned with S. Agostino and S. Vito*, 1530, Private Collection (originally in Ferrara, Church of San Vito)

Figure 218 Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph, Saint Catherine and a Child Donor*, early 1530s, Private Collection, Split

Figure 219 Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph, Saint Catherine and a Child Donor*, Private Collection, Split (reverse)

Figure 220 Bernardino Licinio, *Trevisan Altarpiece*, 1530, Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo

Figure 221 Bernardino Licinio (attr.), *Madonna and Child with Donor*, 1530s, location unknown

Figure 222 Bernardino Licinio (attr.), *Madonna and Child with Donor*, 1530s, location unknown

Figure 223 Bernardino Licinio, *Enthroned Madonna and Child surrounded with Ten Franciscan Saints*, 1531 Church of Saint Francis, Krk

Figure 224 Bernardino Licinio, *Enthroned Madonna with San Lorenzo, San Silvestro and an Angel*, 1535, Church of San Lorenzo, Saletto di Montagnana

Figure 225 Giovanni Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece*, c.1478, Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice

Figure 226 Licinio Workshop, *Female Bust All’Antica*, 1540s, Private Collection
Figure 227  Licinio Workshop, *Female Bust All’Antica*, 1540s, Private Collection

Figure 228  Bernardino Licinio (workshop copy), *Group Portrait*, c. 1530, Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice

Figure 229  Bernardino Licinio, *Madonna and Child with a Couple of Donors*, late 1530s, Private Collection

Figure 230  Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of Andrea Palladio*, 1541, Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London

Figure 231  Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 1516-18, Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice

Figure 232  Bernardino Licinio, *Head of an Apostle*, location unknown (previously at the Galleria Barberini, Rome)

Figure 233  Copy after Dosso Dossi, *A Soldier and a Girl Holding a Flute*, Hampton Court, Royal Collection, London

Figure 234  Caravaggio, *The Lute Player*, c.1596-97, Private Collection

Figure 235  Caravaggio, *The Musicians*, c.1595, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
List of Maps


INTRODUCTION

‘[I]l mio Bernardin Licino’

In 1536, the Venetian writer Ludovico Dolce prefaced his translation of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* with praises to the poets and painters of his time. While Pietro Aretino, to whom Dolce dedicates his work, is first among modern poets, Michelangelo triumphs as the artist who revived the arts of Antiquity. Dolce then lists three contemporary painters whose art could compete with that of Michelangelo (“di quelli che a lui piu s’avvicinano”): “il gentilissimo Titiano, Antonio da Pordenone; o’l mio Bernardin Licino.”¹ Born around 1485/89, Bernardino Licinio was a painter of Bergamasque origin active in Venice from circa 1510 to circa 1550.² Artistically, his work is strongly indebted to Giovanni Bellini with whom he may possibly have trained, as well as to Giorgione, the short-lived and enigmatic master who revolutionised Venetian painting. From around 1530 to his death, Bernardino headed a prosperous family workshop.

Dolce’s preface provides the only mention of Bernardino Licinio in the artistic literature of the Cinquecento. Defenders of Titian and Pordenone have suggested that Licinio’s inclusion in Dolce’s Parnassus implies a personal connection. The familiar “my Bernardino” (“o’l mio Bernardin”) they argue, denotes ties of friendship that can only explain the artist’s presence in such elevated company.³ Scholars have largely denied Licinio any cultural importance, ignoring

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the coincident timing of Dolce's preface and Licinio's first public commission in Venice, an altarpiece for the Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari of 1535. Instead, scholars describe him as a “literal-minded,” second-rate or provincial painter without any artistic pretension or ambition.\(^4\) Like painters who engaged in the mass production of devotional images for the domestic space, the output of Licinio’s workshop has been seen in negative terms, that is, condemned for being repetitive and uneven in its quality of execution. In sum, Licinio is one of the many early modern artists who, in the words of Maria Loh, reveal “the constructedness of historical identities and of history itself, of the counterexamples that must be censured, exaggerated or otherwise transformed for the forward-marching master narrative to cohere.”\(^5\)

The reluctance to assess Licinio’s oeuvre critically exemplifies “art historians’ lingering discomfort with assigning complex cultural meanings to certain classes of objects.”\(^6\) The literature on Venetian painting still privileges major figures for whom “blockbuster” exhibitions continue to feed general and scholarly interest.\(^7\) It is also revealing that Licinio went completely unmentioned in a recent volume on the arts of Venice and the Veneto, which is part of a series that announces itself as “a revisionist history of the arts produced in Italy during the early

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\(^7\) See for instance the catalogue of the recent exhibition on Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese: \textit{Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice}, ed. Frederick Ilchman (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications, 2009).
modern period, from 1300-1600.”\(^8\) The fact that many of his paintings are in private collections and often kept in museum storage rooms explain, to some extent, why the artist is little known to general audiences.\(^9\) Nevertheless, over the past two decades, some of his paintings have been included in exhibitions on Venetian painting.\(^10\) In such contexts, however, Licinio often plays the role of the “counter-example” to the great artists like Titian and Veronese, as a painter to a “bourgeois” clientele rather than to the elite.\(^11\) This point of view is not historically grounded in Venetian society and class distinctions, and as this dissertation will show, does not adequately account for Licinio’s practice.

My dissertation seeks to demonstrate that the artist’s status as “minor” is the product of modern literature and historiography, rather than a reflection of his own contemporaries’ perception.\(^12\) My intention is to provide a multilayered reading of Bernardino’s artistic identity and to revise and assess critically his place in Venice’s artistic culture. In order to tell the story of who Bernardino Licinio may have been, I have selected frameworks that stem from what I consider unique aspects of his artistic practice, while others arise from problems posed by his

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\(^8\) *Venice and the Veneto*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Moreover, in this volume, Tracy E. Cooper briefly addresses family portraiture without mentioning Bernardino Licinio – as this thesis will show, the genesis of the genre can be associated with the artist. Tracy E. Cooper, “Patricians and Citizens” in *Venice and the Veneto*, p. 61.


\(^10\) We may consider the following statement: “Although Bernardino Licinio is not an artist of the first rank, this exhibition includes paintings by lesser talents working in the shadow of the greatest painters in order to provide a balanced appraisal of the period.” Vilmos Tatrai, “Portrait of a Woman,” in *Treasures of Venice. Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest*, ed. George Keyes et al. (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1995), p. 184.

\(^11\) The term “borghese” has been used repeatedly to describe the world that Licinio represents. See for instance Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 375.

historiographical reception. These include the artist’s origin and the Bergamasque community; music and the Venetian culture of leisure and entertainment; representations of women; and the family workshop. Kinship and community, the social life of the artist and domestic spaces are some of the major themes that run through all four chapters of the thesis. Before expanding on the thematic categories that structure the dissertation, it is necessary to introduce Bernardino Licinio and his family by situating them in a historical context. I will then address the artist’s contested place in the literature on Venetian art and situate my dissertation within the larger art historical project that seeks to “de-center” the Renaissance.

**Bernardino Licinio in Context**

**Venice and Bergamo**

The sixteenth century was an important moment of cultural migration between Venice and Bergamo. In 1428, Bergamo passed under the control of the Venetian Republic after having been ruled intermittently by the dukes of Milan (Map 1). Situated at the foot of the Alps near Milan, the province was the most geographically remote from Venice within the mainland empire. Its assimilation into the Republic’s *Stato da terra* initiated a period of intensified migration, especially from the valleys and poverty stricken mountain towns surrounding the city; the Licinio family itself is presumably from the town of Poscante in the Val Brembana in the Alpine foothills North of Bergamo.\(^{13}\) The study of artistic exchanges between the two cities has emphasised the impact of the Venetian painter Lorenzo Lotto who was active in Bergamo from

1513 to 1525. His presence had a transformative impact on the city’s artistic panorama, until then dominated by Milanese artists. Scholars have defined this period of “venetianisation” as the golden age of Bergamasque painting.\textsuperscript{14} By contrast, the significance of artists’ movement from Bergamo to Venice has received less attention.

In the Libro de la Republica de’ Vinitiani (1540) Donato Giannotti reveals the importance of Bergamasque immigration as a social and demographic phenomenon as he writes that Venice’s popolani – the city’s largest and most diversified social group – is mostly composed of “Bergamaschi et altri forestieri, de’quali la città nostra è tutta piena.”\textsuperscript{15} Within this group, we find painters, sculptors, architects and other artisans who were attracted by the patronage opportunities that Venice offered. In addition, the reputation of Giovanni Bellini’s workshop may have stimulated the migration of artists to Venice. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Bellini workshop was a pole of attraction for painters throughout the Venetian terraferma. According to Giorgio Vasari, Bellini was willing to teach almost anyone, including many painters from the territory of Lombardy “of whom there is no need to make record.”\textsuperscript{16} This anonymous group of Lombard painters may have included Bergamasque artists such as Bernardino Licinio, Francesco Simone da Santacroce (c.1470-75 - 1508), Giovanni Cariani (c.1485 - after 1547) and Andrea Previtali (c.1480 - 1528). Little known today, Francesco Simone da Santacroce was already active in Venice in 1492 and continued to paraphrase


\textsuperscript{15} Quoted in Sylvie Favalier, L’immigration bergamasque à Venise dans la deuxième moitié du seizième siècle: phénomène historique et conséquences littéraires (PhD Diss., Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1993), pp. 68-69.

Bellini’s compositions until his death in 1508. Andrea Previtali, who reached the Serenissima around 1500, was also active in Bellini’s workshop over the first decade of the century, creating versions of pictorial types established by his master. Along with Palma Vecchio (c.1479-80 - 1528) and Giovanni Cariani (1485 - c.1547-48), Licinio belongs to a younger generation of Bergamasque artists who, as Philip Rylands noted, worked in the new or modern manner established by Giorgione, and developed by Sebastiano del Piombo and Titian. Whereas Palma arrived in Venice already as a mature master around 1510, it remains unclear whether Cariani and Licinio were born in the Bergamasque Province or in Venice from Bergamasque parents.

The Family Workshop

Whereas contemporary literary sources on Licinio are limited to Ludovico Dolce’s preface, we are nevertheless fortunate to have a variety of documents, both archival and visual, about the artist and his family. These provide more concrete facts about their lives than we have for many painters, including Giorgione, who continues to capture scholarly attention and to invite speculation. For instance, Bernardino signed many of his paintings and demonstrated a particular taste for inscriptions. Additionally, the painter’s presence in Venice is documented through notarial documents, especially legal wills for which he acted as a witness. We encounter his signature for the first time in 1511 as a witness to the will of Caterina Duodo where he identifies himself as “Bernardin che fo de sier Antonio di Licini depentor,” thus indicating that


18 Recent publications on Giorgione include Enrico Maria dal Pozzolo, Giorgione (Milan : Skira, 2009) and the catalogue accompanying the exhibition celebrating the fifth centenary of his death in 2009-2010 in Castelfranco Veneto: Giorgione, ed. Enrico Maria del Pozzolo and Lionello Puppi (Milan : Skira, 2009).
his father was also a painter.\textsuperscript{19} In 1549, Licinio witnessed the testament of Paula Bernardo Mauro and signed “Bernardin Licin pittor.”\textsuperscript{20} This is the last record of the artist and it is generally assumed that he died shortly after around 1550; he would have been around 65 years of age.

Moreover, archival documents relating directly to members of his family allow a glimpse into his domestic life.\textsuperscript{21} Bernardino shared a house with his two brothers: the youngest, Zuan Battista (1491-1568), was a parish priest, and the eldest, Arrigo, was a painter.\textsuperscript{22} While Arrigo is consistently identified as such in archival documents, no painting bearing his signature has survived, thus suggesting that his activities took place within the family workshop headed by Bernardino. The brothers’ collaboration and the communal structure of their artistic practice are expressive of the perseverance of the family workshop as an institution in sixteenth-century Venice.

In addition to archival sources, Licinio created two visual documents that speak to his artistic practice, family values and identity. These are unique and quite extraordinary group portraits produced between 1530 and 1535 and which count among his most well-known works. In the first, he represented himself surrounded with pupils and assistants; in the other, he portrayed his brother Arrigo, with his wife and their seven children (Figure 1, Figure 2). While Bernardino seems to have remained a bachelor all his life, he recognized the importance of his

\textsuperscript{19} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 66, n. 395.
\textsuperscript{20} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 777, n. 385.
\textsuperscript{21} The family’s presence or passage in Bergamo has not successfully been traced in the archives of the city.
\textsuperscript{22} Bernardino possibly had a third brother named Niccolo Licinio, a parish priest at San Biago, but the relationship is difficult to prove. Another branch of the Licinio family lived on the island of Murano, where they owned glass foundries. They also acceded to the Libro d’Oro of Murano. See Ludwig, “Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei. Die Bergamasken in Venedig.” pp. 45-46.
brother’s lineage in order to ensure the livelihood of the family business. At least two of Arrigo’s sons, Fabio (1521-1565) and Giulio (1527- c.1591), were trained with their father and uncle in the family bottega. Fabio, who was the eldest, has been identified as the youth holding the Apollo statue in the Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children (Galleria Borghese, Rome). He eventually became an engraver and goldsmith. Giulio, who has been identified as the young boy who presents a basket of rose petals to his mother, started to contribute to the workshop’s production of devotional images in the 1530s and succeeded Bernardino as head of the bottega in the early 1550s.

Bernardino Licinio was not sought out by civic institutions and confraternities for the creation of religious or narrative cycles. Nor was he in demand as a painter of altarpieces. Only seven works in this field are extant today. He signed his first altarpiece in 1528, a Triptych of the Resurrection for the main altar of the Church of San Giovanni Battista in Lonato near Brescia (Figure 3). After commissions mostly for cities within the Venetian Republic, he signed his first altarpiece for a Venetian church in 1535: the Madonna Enthroned with Saints at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Figure 4). This was undoubtedly one of the most prestigious commissions of his career. Licinio is therefore above all to be regarded as a painter of portraits, concert scenes, and small devotional paintings for the private space (Figure 6, Figure 7). In other words, he may have consciously cast himself as a specialist of domestic subjects. His family

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23 In documents, Fabio is defined both as “stampatore” and “orese.” However, nothing remains of his activity as a goldsmith.

24 ASV, Notarile Testamenti, Busta 777, no. 385.


26 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 435-436.
groups – for which he is most noted for – and his numerous female portraits, represent some of the most distinctive aspects of his artistic corpus. While the domestic setting of his art may partly explain why he quickly fell into oblivion, Giorgio Vasari played a determining role in shaping the artist’s critical (mis)fortune.

**Critical Reception**

*Vasari to Boschini*

Giorgio Vasari initiated a long lasting confusion about Bernardino Licinio’s identity. In the second edition of his *Lives of the most eminent painters, sculptors and architects* published in 1568, the Tuscan biographer merged Bernardino’s artistic personality with that of another painter: the artist Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone (1483-1539). In the biography dedicated to the “Life of Pordenone and other painters from Friuli,” Vasari named Pordenone “Giovanni Antonio Licinio da Pordenone,” thus associating him with Bernardino through the surname Licinio. The painter Pordenone, who was active in Venice and various cities of Northern Italy, and who was one of Titian’s main rivals in the 1530s, had the regrettable habit of using different names in legal documents, including “de Cortellis” and “de Sacchis” or “Sacchiense.” However, he never used the cognomen “Licinio.” By consequence, not only was Licinio more or less

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forgotten, but his paintings, signed “Lycinii opus,” were until recent times attributed to Pordenone. This association still lingers in some museum collection catalogues.

Vasari’s mistake is hard to explain, especially since Ludovico Dolce had previously presented the two as contemporary and autonomous figures in his preface to Horace’s *Ars Poetica*. When Vasari visited Venice to gather new information for the second edition of his *Vite*, Licinio had been dead for at least a decade. Yet, this was not Vasari’s first trip to Venice, as he had sojourned at least twice in the Serenissima during Licinio’s lifetime. It has been suggested that an incorrect reading of a signature on an engraving may have been at the source of this confusion. Vasari possibly saw Fabio Licinio’s engraved reproduction of Pordenone’s Annunciation Altarpiece at Santa Maria degli Angeli in Murano of 1537, made from a drawing by his brother Giulio (Figure 8). Dated to 1544, the engraving was produced jointly by Bernardino’s two nephews and bears the signature “Hanc. Pordenon. I. Lycinius. Ex/Fabio: Ve. F.” From this signature may have derived the association of the name “Licinio” with Pordenone.

Seventeenth-century Venetian art literature is symptomatic of the confusion caused by Vasari. In his *Meraviglie dell’arte* of 1627, the Venetian Carlo Ridolfi reiterates Vasari’s mistake, similarly entitling Pordenone’s life as “Vita di Gio. Antonio Regillo detto Licinio da

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31 Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 278. This was first suggested by Detlev von Hadeln. On Pordenone’s *Annunciation Altarpiece* see Cohen, *Pordenone*, pp. 567-569.


Nevertheless, among Pordenone’s Friulian followers and imitators, Ridolfi acknowledges the existence of a certain Bernardino Licinio. In the few sentences devoted to him, he notes Licinio’s altarpiece at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, signed “Bernardini Lycini opus MDXXXV”: his only work in a public space in Venice (Figure 4). Ridolfi also notes that portraits and other paintings by the artist can be seen in Venetian collections, adding that they are often attributed to Pordenone.35

Yet despite the confusion expressed by biographers, Bernardino’s paintings were identified in many seventeenth-century collections. Inventories can therefore be taken as indicators of the painter’s posthumous recognition. By the first decades of the seventeenth century, two of his large size family group portraits were already part of prestigious collections. The Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children is recorded in the collection of Cardinal Scipione Borghese in Rome as early as 1613.36 The Portrait of a Family (Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London) was part of the Gonzaga collection in Mantua (Figure 9). In 1627, it was inventoried as by Pordenone, but shortly after, Daniel Nys, who was negotiating the collection’s purchase on behalf of Charles I, recognized Licinio’s authorship and valued the painting at 300 scudi, a considerably high price for a portrait in this time period.37

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35 Ibid. Charles Cohen writes that Pordenone’s name has been a catch all for a wide range of Venetianising portraits, where in fact, Pordenone painted few portraits. In the recent catalogue of his work, Cohen attributes only one portrait to Pordenone. Cohen, *Pordenone*, p. 159.
Licino’s paintings are also recorded in seventeenth-century Venetian collections. A portrait of a man holding a manuscript and a female portrait all’antica appear in Andrea Vendramin’s illustrated inventory of 1627 where they bear an attribution to the artist (Figure 10, Figure 11). In addition, an unattributed portrait of a youth reproduced in the Vendramin inventory has been identified as Licinio’s Portrait of a Young Man, an early work produced in the 1510s and left unfinished (Howard University, Kress Collection) (Figure 12, Figure 13). Three other works were part of the sizeable collection of the Corner della Regina, one of the city’s most distinguished noble families, and another one was inventoried in the Widmann palace at San Canziano. Finally, Marco Boschini’s Carta del Navegar Pitoresco of 1660 offers strong evidence of collectors’ appreciation of the artist. Boschini mentions Licinio along with other painters whose work could be seen in the Barone de Tassis’ palace:

\[
\begin{align*}
&De Tician, del Belin e de Zorzon \\
&Ghe xe ancore, e ghe xe del Tentoreto. \\
&Gh’è i Licini, el Malombra, e gh’èl Moreto; \\
&Gh’èl Pozzo da Treviso e’l Pordenon.\end{align*}
\]


39 The Picture Gallery of Andrea Vendramin, plate 56; Fern Rusk Shapley, Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. 2. Italian Schools XV-XVI Century (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), pp. 169-170; Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 436, 438. The date suggested for this painting follows Vertova’s opinion that this is an early work.


41 Marco Boschini, La Carta del navegar pitoresco, ed. Anna Pallucchini (Venice: Istituto della collaborazione culturale, 1966), p. 355. In the Minere (1674), Boschini mentions Bernardino’s altarpiece at the Frari but does not mention the artist in his Breve Instruzione per intendere in qualche modo la maniere dei pittori veneziana. Instead, he contributes to maintaining the confusion between Pordenone’s and Licinio’s names when describing the paintings of “Giovanni Antonio Licinio da Pordenone.” See Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 379.
As this passage demonstrates, the author inscribed the Licinio name among the greatest painters of the Cinquecento, including Titian, Bellini and Giorgione, while conceiving it independently from Pordenone. It is however noteworthy that Bernardino does not appear as an individual artist, but rather through the family workshop’s collective name: “i Licini.”

**Modern Constructs**

Nineteenth-century connoisseurs laid the foundation for the reconstruction of Licinio’s oeuvre and artistic identity. The connection between Licinio and Pordenone had proven tenacious: Donato Calvi (1676-77) and Vincenzo Joppi (1823) who had respectively claimed the artist’s Bergamasque origin and denied his Friulian one had remained mostly unheard. In Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle’s *A History of Painting in North Italy* (1871), Licinio is presented as a distant relative of Pordenone. Yet, the authors deny any stylistic affinities with the Friulian painter and instead stressed a visual kinship with Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Palma Vecchio as well as Paris Bordone. While Crowe and Cavalcaselle recognized Licinio’s achievements as a portrait painter, their judgment remained mostly negative, setting the cornerstone for Licinio’s categorization as a provincial artist. The reconstruction of the artist’s corpus continued with Bernard Berenson who reattributed to him paintings then ascribed to Giorgione, including the introspective and androgynous *Portrait of a Young Man with a Skull* of

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c. 1515 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) (Figure 14).\footnote{44} Scholars such as W.E. Suida and Rodolfo Pallucchini expanded the artist’s corpus throughout the twentieth century.\footnote{45} While Licinio has been included in histories of Venetian art and exhibitions of Venetian painting, the first effort to define Bernardino Licinio’s style and oeuvre came with Luisa Vertova’s catalogue raisonné, published in 1975 as part of the monographic series “I Pittori Bergamaschi.”\footnote{46} Vertova provided a more comprehensive understanding of the artist’s stylistic trajectory, which she articulated along three phases: after a post-giorgionesque period, Licinio demonstrated an awareness of Titian’s work throughout the 1520s, before turning to a “romanising” idiom in the 1530s.\footnote{47} We are also indebted to her for stressing the importance of the family workshop in his production of the 1530s and 1540s, a topic upon which she expanded in her catalogue of Giulio Licinio’s work and in recent articles.\footnote{48}

Since Vertova’s catalogue, scholars have increased Licinio’s corpus with new attributions. While some of them will be included in my discussion of the artist, others still raise


\footnote{47} Ibid, pp. 374-375.

questions. An example is the *Double Portrait with a Mirror* (Martin-von-Wagner-Museums, Würzburg) traditionally attributed to the Genoese painter Giovanni Battista Paggi and dated to 1580-90 and which Severin Hausbauer recently reattributed to Licinio (Figure 15). Following scholars who have maintained Paggi’s authorship since the publication of Hansbauer’s article, this dissertation does not consider the portrait among Licinio’s work for formal and iconographic reasons. More recently, Chriscinda Henry has contributed to the study of Licinio’s work, more specifically of his paintings featuring scenes of music making and amorous themes, in the context of her dissertation on the emergence of “low painting” in Venetian art and its relation to contemporary theatre and elite Venetian pleasure culture.

**The Lombard Connection and the Giorgionesque Family**

Two specific themes have been central to twentieth-century literature: Licinio as a Lombard artist and Licinio as a *giorgionesque* painter. While Berenson and Crowe and Cavalcaselle made a distinction between Licinio and Pordenone, they did not address the issue of the painter’s origin, accepting, as tradition had it, that he was from Friuli. Licinio’s origin took on new meaning only at the turn of the century when Gustav von Ludwig documented the painter’s family. Ludwig’s research on Licinio was published in 1903 in a major article on Bergamasque artists active in sixteenth-century Venice. His research provided the documentary foundation for

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51 Chriscinda Claire Henry, *Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans: Low Painting and Entertainment Culture in Renaissance Venice* (PhD Diss., The University of Chicago, 2009).
the study of a great number of painters – including the Santacroce clan, Andrea Previtali, Giovanni Cariani and Palma Vecchio – and forgotten *pittori, depentori, pittor di cassa* and printers originating from the Bergamasque province.\(^{52}\)

From these archival sources, Ludwig extrapolated what he considered to be some of the “characteristic” behaviour of the diaspora of Bergamasque artisans: a tendency to elect residence in parishes near Rialto, to consult Bergamasque notaries and to deal in business with their compatriots. While conceding that most of these painters were educated in the workshops of Venetian painters, he nevertheless formulated the idea of a Bergamasque school of painting active in Venice. This school is essentially defined in geographic terms as he writes that the Bergamasque painters’ works always maintained qualities that are unique to the “mountain race” from which they came from; these painters excelled as colourists but their compositions are empty of any intellectual content.\(^{53}\) Ludwig’s community of painters, defined, in theory, by a shared visual language, and in practice, through everyday forms of solidarity became a theme of twentieth-century literature on the artist. Scholars, including Rodolfo Pallucchini, Luisa Vertova, Philip Rylands and Francesco Rossi have since then stressed communal ties among Bergamasque painters, or treated them conjointly, especially Licinio, Cariani and Palma Vecchio.\(^{54}\) In this context, the relationship between individual style and geography has emerged as an important theme. The “Lombard taste” or even the “Lombard soul” is conveyed through the careful

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\(^{52}\) Ludwig, “Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei. Die Bergamasken in Venedig.”

\(^{53}\) Ibid, p. 2.

observation and rendering of the world around, as a regime of vision in itself, and is distinctive from the *poesia* of Venetian painters such as Giorgione and Titian.\(^{55}\)

While a proponent of a form of naturalism associated with Lombardy, Licino is simultaneously part of the artistic lineage that binds Giorgione to the group of painters active during his lifetime and in the decades following his death in 1510, and who developed and popularised some of the themes and genres he established. In this scheme, Giorgione has been constructed as a patriarch figure and his offspring, “i giorgioneschi,” practiced what scholars have coined a “giorgionismo.” While very few sixteenth-century documents mention the artist, Giorgione’s mythic fame was constructed in the seventeenth century based largely on paintings that were not his own; Ridolfi for instance credited the painter with around sixty-five paintings.\(^{56}\)

It is also in this period that Marco Boschini coined the term “giorgionesche” in his *Breve instruzione* (1664) to describe Pietro della Vecchia’s “imitations” of Giorgione’s paintings which were popular with seventeenth-century collectors. Jaynie Anderson explains that Boschini “praises della Vecchia’s creations in a Giorgionesque style, which he says are not copies in the literal sense, but ‘astratti del suo intelletto’, intellectual abstractions.”\(^{57}\) Modern art historians have extended the use of this term to sixteenth-century artists whose style approximated that of Giorgione, rather than to denote variations on Giorgione’s compositions following Boschini’s sense.\(^{58}\) Licinio, who according to Vertova had personal contacts with Giorgione, emerged as a

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\(^{58}\) Ibid.
“giorgionesque” painter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, when scholars started to reconstruct his corpus.59 Many of his works were then attributed to the master. The reattribution of many paintings ascribed to Giorgione to painters like Licinio, Giovanni Cariani and Palma Vecchio among others led to the creation of a hierarchy between the elusive genius, and those who failed to surpass the “master.”60 Yet the line that scholars have attempted to draw between Giorgione and “giorgionesque” painters remains vague.61

The “artistic family” headed by Giorgione offers an example of how art history still maintains the genealogical model established by Giorgio Vasari.62 Lionello Venturi, Pietro Zampetti and Rodolfo Pallucchini are some of the major twentieth-century critics who first conceived Licinio as a follower or imitator of Giorgione, thus reinforcing the conceit of Giorgione as “artistic father.” Licinio is considered at his best in the few instances where he captures a giorgionesque mood through subject matter and characteristic elements of style. Venturi is the most critical as he writes that Licinio – who he calls a “ridicolo pittorello” – was a giorgionesco in ritardo, sporadically and superficially inspired by fashion and subject, rather than driven by the “sincere impulse of the soul.”63 Pallucchini’s assessment of Licinio’s appropriation of giorgionesque themes is more sympathetic as he writes that the artist accommodates the giorgionesque sentimental mythology with a descriptive idiom that is

59 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 382.
60 The catalogue of Giorgione’s work is still ridden with controversies and varies from author to author. In her catalogue raisonné on the artist, Jaynie Anderson only maintains twenty-six works as securely attributed to the artist. See Anderson, Giorgione. Painter of Poetic Brevity.
61 Dal Pozzolo, Giorgione, p. 11.
“resigned, bourgeois, and decorative.” In 1955, Zampetti included two male portraits by Licinio in a major exhibition entitled *Giogiorne e i giorgioneschi*. With its soft tonal modulation and impression of nonchalance, he considers the *Portrait of a Man with a Toothpick* of c.1520 (Museo Civico, Vicenza) to be under the direct influence of Giorgione (Figure 16). By contrast, he conceives the *Portrait of a Man* of c.1535 (Cini Collection, Venice) as the work of a provincial artist because of its solid figure and naturalistic physiognomy (Figure 17). The conflict between Licinio’s Lombard naturalism and the *giorgionesque* “spirit” is still today a common point of critique.

**“De-centering” the Renaissance**

When considering the work of a “minor” painter, one might question, and legitimately so, the relevance of studying an artist who has remained in historical oblivion for so long. As Patricia Rubin notes, Renaissance paradigms of progress and artistic perfection have proven to be especially tenacious. By engaging with Bernardino Licinio, I do not intend to rehabilitate him as a great artist or a scorned genius. Unquestionably, painters like Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese were more influential than he. Yet, I believe that he held a significant place in the culture of his own time, and consequently, that he has a rightful one within the current art

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64 Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del cinquecento*, vol. 1, p. 37 (“la mitologia sentimentale giorgionesca s’è accomodata in una vena descrittiva rassegnata e Borghese, affatto decorative”).

65 Zampetti actually quotes Pallucchini when he writes that the Vicenza portrait is “sotto il diretto influsso del giorgionismo, come rivelano il languoroso abbandono del personaggio e a morbida e fusa modellazione tonale.” Zampetti, *Giorgione e i giorgioneschi* (Venice : Arte Veneta, 1955, 2nd ed.), p. 250. Licinio’s *Portrait of a Man with a Rope* (Cini Collection, Venice) was included in the exhibition although with an attribution to Vincenzo Catena. Ibid, p. 160.

66 Ibid. p. 252.

historical narrative. The study of Licinio, one of the many artists whose historical identity has been inflected with the terms “provincial,” “minor” or “second-rate,” unveils the limits imposed by the historiographical frames and canonical formations upon which a field’s discursive structures are established. Their study therefore aptly reveals the constructed value of an artist’s name and of the margins or artistic periphery.

The concept of “centre” and “periphery” has been an important topic of discussion over the past decades. Carlo Ginzburg and Enrico Castelnuovo provided a model for understanding the politics of artistic exchange in the Italian peninsula, emphasising the complex link between a centre and its periphery, and the impossibility of conceiving it in terms of innovation and backward development.68 Instead, this relationship is flexible and subject to sharp accelerations and tensions caused by social and political circumstances or artistic influences. In that sense, peripheries can represent oppositions and alternatives to models of domination.69 Ginzburg and Castelnuovo’s historically dynamic model, defined in relation to the Italian peninsula, has been applied and challenged in the context of other regions of Europe, both on a macro and microgeographical scale.70 Stephen Campbell and Stephen Milner have for instance addressed the various processes of cultural exchange that take place between places or groups, both between and within centres. They employ the concept of cultural translation to designate the changes of meaning that result from such transactions, and the role of culture in resisting or

70 For an example see Thomas da Costa Kaufmann, Toward a Geography of Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 154-186.
securing hegemony.\textsuperscript{71} This calls attention to the importance of recognising and understanding the simultaneous existence of various forms of expression within the same centre at a point in time.\textsuperscript{72}

Our tendency to view culture in terms of region – or in terms of artistic centre defined by a collective style – tends to obscure the patron’s and the artist’s agency by ignoring conflicts between styles at a local level, and the possibility of choice.\textsuperscript{73} From this perspective, the notion of “centre” also points towards a norm. In Italy, this norm’s codification was tied to the emergence of academies and increased publication of artistic literature in the 1540s. These new structures or bodies of knowledge organised and classified past artistic production, while providing a regulating framework for that of the present.\textsuperscript{74} What resulted was the articulation of canonical models where collective styles were understood in terms of geographical categories. It is precisely at that time that Paolo Pino (1548) and Ludovico Dolce (1557) defined and defended the Venetian tradition of colorito and the sensuousness of the pictorial surface.\textsuperscript{75} In practice, however, this canon took shape progressively over the course of the decades preceding the publication of treatises, which correspond to the period of Licinio’s activity. In fact, in the first


\textsuperscript{72} Federico Zeri was one of the first to question the uniformity of the Renaissance as a concept. Although we may disagree with the nature of the dichotomies he establishes – Renaissance of substance vs pseudo or superficial Renaissance – his plea is still valid. See Zeri, \textit{Renaissance et Pseudo-Renaissance}, trans. by Christian Paoloni (Paris: Rivages, 1986).


\textsuperscript{74} See Frédéric Elsig, “La notion de “centre” dans la peinture de la Renaissance,” in \textit{La Renaissance décentrée}, ed. Frédéric Tinguely (Genève: Droz, 2008), p.78.

decades of the sixteenth century, Venice had not yet adopted one sole paradigm. Castelnuovo and Ginzburg for instance compare Venice’s situation to early fourteenth-century Florence, when the “Giotto paradigm” was imposed, and resisted by a number of artists who were then pushed to the periphery.\textsuperscript{76} On the one hand, this was an important moment of change, marked by the visits of two important artists: Leonardo and Albrecht Dürer.\textsuperscript{77} On the other, it should be reminded that the younger generation of Venetian painters, those around whom a “classical” style took shape, including Giorgione, Sebastiano del Piombo and Titian, coexisted with the older generation of Quattrocento painters, such as Giovanni Bellini, Carpaccio and Cima da Conegliano, who were still highly regarded. For instance, up until his death in 1518, Cima was still receiving important commissions and upholding his reputation among his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{78} Some of the artists of the “eye-witness” style such as Giovanni Mansueti and Vittore Carpaccio were also active until their death around 1526.\textsuperscript{79} Finally, Vincenzo Catena, who died in 1531, remained strongly attached to Bellinesque models throughout his career, thus preserving some of the qualities of order and clarity of Quattrocento painting.\textsuperscript{80} The three decades of the Cinquecento can therefore be conceived as a period of change where old and new forms of visual expression coexisted in response to the needs and demands of patrons.

\textsuperscript{76} Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, “Centre and Periphery,” pp. 72-79.
\textsuperscript{77} Leonardo sojourned briefly in Venice in 1500; he was hired by the Republic to work on a hydraulic project. See Anderson, \textit{Giorgione: Peintre de la “brèvelet poétique,”}, pp. 32-38. Dürer’s first visit to Venice has been dated to 1494-95, and his second stay to 1505-1507. For an overview of his stays see Andrew Morrall, “Dürer and Venice,” in \textit{The Essential Dürer}, ed. Larry Silver and Jeffrey Chipps Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c2010), pp. 99-114.
As Anna Brzyski argues, “the language of the canon obscures the historic existence of multiple, temporally and geographically situated canonical formations.” At the time when the rules of a classical canon were taking shape around the works of Giorgione and Titian, a number of heterodox artists, both in Venice and the Veneto, were working outside the High Renaissance style or mainstream. It is within this dynamic that Alessandro Nova addressed the work of Girolamo Romanino, another artist to whom scholars have attached the label “provincial.” Around 1520, a stylistic shift occurred in Romanino’s work, which has been understood by many as symptomatic of the provincial artist incapable of keeping pace with great masters. According to Nova, Romanino deliberately played with the classical mode, adopting a “more expressionistic, more tormented idiom” in order to provide a conscious critique of the North Italian Renaissance canon. One of the ways in which the artist questioned the canon, he argues, was by introducing elements borrowed from contemporary German art.

I therefore adhere to Nova’s belief that “it is unlikely that we can fully understand how the centre took its shape if we do not also examine the margins.” To understand Venice’s visual culture and art market in all its breadth and complexity therefore necessitates that we study artists like Licinio. The concept of “minor languages” enunciated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provides another useful lens through which we can consider these margins and analyse the work of so-called minor painters like Romanino and Licinio. For Deleuze and Guattari, the major and the minor do not qualify as two distinct languages or dialects, but rather

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as two usages or functions of a language. A minor language subjects the major language to a creative treatment of manipulations and variations, of both expression and content. For instance, whereas past scholars have remarked upon Licinio’s misinterpretation of Giorgione’s theme and style, notably through an overly “realistic” or naturalistic idiom, we should instead recognize these paintings as expressions of the artistic eclecticism that characterize Venice’s visual culture of the first decades of the sixteenth century.

My dissertation inscribes itself within endeavours to “de-centre” or “reframe” the Renaissance both in geographic and conceptual terms. The critical examination of a “minor” artist’s work further relates to current scholarship that questions the validity of the dominant model of periodization which tends to privilege the linear progression of artistic styles. It is also indebted to the recent surge of interest for the so-called “minor” or “decorative arts.” Over the past decades, scholars have been actively engaged in the study of various aspects of the material culture of the domestic space, the meanings embodied in objects and their significances in articulating human relationships, therefore recuperating the historical significance of what has long been perceived as the lower end of an artistic hierarchy. My thesis therefore adheres to a


“non-hierarchical approach to the selection of objects for examination” by investing Licinio and his paintings with more complex cultural meanings than have hitherto been recognized.

**Preview of Chapters**

While Luisa Vertova’s catalogue still figures as the authoritative source on Licinio, it is by now outdated. Since its publication in 1975, new attributions have been made and new paintings have emerged on the art market. In addition, my own research into various photographic archives has revealed unpublished works attributed to the artist, lost works and copies. While my dissertation occasionally engages with questions of attribution and draws from the full range of available material, it does not aim to provide a full monograph on the artist and to cover the entirety of his output. The objective of my thesis is instead to provide a layered understanding of Licinio’s artistic identity through four thematic chapters. These emerge from the current interest for family history, the domestic, material and social life of the artist, and are closely tied to the historiographical themes discussed above.

Licinio’s uneasy position between Venice and Bergamo provides the line of enquiry for the first chapter in which I address the themes of migration, displacement and diasporic identity. I engage with the Bergamasque community as conceived, on the one hand, as a form of historiographical framing, and on the other, as a social reality. The still current idea of the “Lombard soul” or “Lombard taste” and the continued association of Licinio’s work with a

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geographical location other than the one where he was active may have resulted in the artist’s marginalisation. Moreover, the “national”/Bergamasque community first outlined by Ludwig is used as a framework for the exploration of the social life of a group of artists in the context of Venice’s ethnic and cultural diversity. I ask how Licinio interacted with this immigrant community and how it may have informed his social life and identity. This chapter is therefore tied to the current interest between art and immigration in sixteenth-century Venice as expressed in Blake de Maria’s recent study of the patronage of immigrant merchants who aspired to cittadino or citizen status.\textsuperscript{89}

In chapter two, music and its role in shaping cultural and intellectual identities provides a frame for understanding aspects of Licinio’s social world and network of patrons.\textsuperscript{90} I contend that his engagement with musical themes through portraits and half-length figure groups suggest a connection with specific communities of interest fostered by music as a social act and the forms of discourse it generated. Moreover, I demonstrate how Licinio conveyed music’s wide spectrum of associations, from courtly elegance to satire, and from harmony to dangerous seductiveness.\textsuperscript{91} The group of images analysed in this chapter offers a point of departure for exploring the idiosyncrasies of the artist’s style, highlighting the singularity of his treatment of some of the themes introduced by Giorgione. This will provide a way of capturing forms of

\textsuperscript{89} Blake de Maria,\textit{ Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).


difference – both in terms of style and appropriation of subject matter – to which the genealogical model of the artistic dynasty is impervious.92

In the following two chapters, Licinio’s artistic identity and social world is addressed in the context of his engagement with portraiture. Throughout the sixteenth century, Venetians embraced portraiture in all its forms – including paintings, medals and busts – as modes of self-presentation and self-fashioning, and as tools within the genealogical project. Licinio responded to an increasing demand for portraits by making portraiture one of his fields of specialty. In this context, chapter three highlights the predominance of representations of women of all ages and states as a unique characteristic of Licinio’s oeuvre as a portraitist (see for example the Portrait of a Widow and her three Sons, c. 1520, and the Portrait of a Woman, 1532, Figure 18 and Figure 19). I suggest that Licinio’s female portraits contradict the often-repeated argument that women are nearly absent from Venetian art of the first half of the sixteenth century, an argument based on the limited contributions in this area of such painters as Titian and Tintoretto.93 Licinio’s depictions of wives, mothers and widows challenge conceptions of gender as they were expressed in contemporary prescriptive literature and visually formulated in the work of his contemporaries. The study of Licinio’s female portraits therefore most potently reveals the limits imposed by the historiographical frames that ensue from canonical structures.

In contrast to the Burckhardtian view of the self-sufficient and autonomous individual, my approach to portraiture emphasizes the “importance of seeing the person as part of a field of

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relations.” It prompts a reflection concerning the family’s role as a place for the exploration of the self and identity formation. The family holds a prime importance in the discussion of female identities, which were constantly redefined according to women’s shifting place within the patriarchal structure, and thus, in relation to men: as maidens, brides, wives, mothers and widows. Chapter four is similarly concerned with the family as a locus of identity formation as well as its relation to the home and the workshop. I address the intersection between family and artistic identities through a detailed analysis of the Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children at the Galleria Borghese, and Bernardino’s Self-Portrait with Workshop at Alnwick Castle (Figure 1 and Figure 2). My discussion will highlight the ideological meaning embedded in the artisan’s casa as well as the role of the domestic community in shaping an individual’s vision of itself, and more precisely, as a context for Licinio’s self-perception as an artist. The co-extensive relationship between the artist, the biological family and the workshop as visualised in these two portraits calls upon the consideration of “I Licini” as a collective “author.” These images are expressive of Bernardino Licinio’s historical consciousness; together, they act as a declaration of his heightened awareness of the importance of the family dynasty in claiming a place in the history of Venetian art.

CHAPTER 1
ARTISTIC GEOGRAPHY, IMMIGRATION AND THE POLITICS
OF IDENTITY IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VENICE

Introduction

Since Vasari, art history has privileged sedentary artists, those who seamlessly inscribe
themselves within a local tradition.\(^1\) Many artists however defy such easy assimilation to a
specific geographical territory. Among those we find artists who have led itinerant lives to seek
work; Carlo Crivelli and Lorenzo Lotto exemplify this phenomenon for their respective
generation. Bernardino Licinio exemplifies yet another form of geographical displacement.

Geography is a theme that runs deep in the literature on Bernardino Licinio. The artist’s
Bergamasque origin, the perceived relationship of his style with Lombardy, and his association
to a community of immigrants are some of the geographical conceits that have resulted in the
painter’s definition as “provincial.” In this chapter, I explore these themes critically by
addressing Bernardino’s Lombard origin and the Bergamasque community both as a form of
historiographical framing and social reality. I start by discussing the notion of the Lombard taste,
or “Lombard soul,” as critical terms by which Licinio’s style and art have been described, thus
stressing the importance of understanding the root of some of the epistemological assumptions or
categories in place. I therefore pay close attention to the association of Lombardy with
naturalism and to the ways in which the notion of place, or the geographical, has been inflected
into discussions of the artist.

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While the artist’s definition as Lombard and provincial has led to his marginalisation in the history of Venetian art, his “Bergamasqueness” nevertheless offers an important avenue for the exploration of his social world. In a recent study of the artistic patronage of a select group of immigrant merchants, Blake de Maria emphasised the importance of individual immigration within Venetian history. Reasons for immigration varied; while religious beliefs forced some into exile, others were interested in exploiting the commercial opportunities that Venice offered.  

This was the case for the merchants and artisans from the province of Bergamo. The community of Bergamasque painters not only reveals an aspect of the Licinio family’s identity, but it further allows us to explore the cultural contacts between Venice and the terraferma as prompted by the movement of both objects and people.  

In the second and third sections, I therefore turn to a consideration of the Bergamasque community and the construction of a diasporic identity in the broader context of Venice’s social and ethnic diversity. After throwing light upon the phenomenon of Bergamasque immigration and the popular and literary stereotype of the Bergamasque immigrant, I map the community’s presence within the city’s urban geography. I suggest that a Bergamasque identity was reinforced and maintained through a concentration of residence and national institutions. It may also have been strengthened through continued contacts with the native land. In the final section, I discuss the export of altarpieces to the Bergamasque valleys as one of the means by which this could be achieved.

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3 Miguel Falomir similarly observes that examining the ties among members of the Brescian community in Venice might be a way to gain a different form of access into the social life of Jacopo Tintoretto, who was of Brescian descent. For instance, Tintoretto’s marriage to a Brescian woman may be indicative of such ties. Miguel Falomir, “Jacopo Comin, alias Tintoretto: An Exhibition and a Catalogue,” in *Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594)*, ed. Miguel Falomir (London: Holberton, 2007), pp. 22-23.
On the Origins of the “Lombard Soul”: Naturalism in a Historiographical Perspective

Bernardino Licinio excelled above all as a portraitist. As the next chapters will show, his portraits reveal a proclivity towards the close and attentive study of his sitters’ physiognomies. The portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary, signed and dated to 1524 (City Art Gallery, York), is a perfect example where Licinio carefully rendered both the man’s facial features, frowning lines and wrinkles, thinning grey hair as well as the missal’s musical notation (Figure 20). The artist’s scrutinising look at the subject anticipates work by Giovanni Battista Moroni, such as the Portrait of Tailor of c.1570 (Figure 21). Luisa Vertova argues that Licinio’s objective approach to portraiture makes him a more faithful witness of his own time than major painters like Titian and Veronese. For this scholar and authority on the artist, Licinio’s Lombard origin explains his objective look at the world around and realistic visual idiom. Although his culture was Venetian she writes, his soul always remained Lombard (“il suo animo resta Lombardo”). This is expressed in his faithful rendering of the “Bourgeois” world in which he lived, whose beauties and defects he captured both equally with an attentive eye and a genuine sense of humour. By using the term “Bourgeois” with all its materialistic implications, Vertova also implies a contrast between the class of sitters represented by Licinio and those represented by painters who have been chosen as most representative of the Venetian tradition; Titian is the best example. A

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6 Ibid, p. 375.
painter to the Venetian nobility and European princes, Titian has been praised for conferring a sense of grandeur and intangible elegance to his sitters.

Naturalism, or the faithfulness to things seen, has been isolated as an important characteristic of Lombard painting of the early modern period; an association which the strong tradition of still-life painting in seventeenth-century Lombardy has further helped sustained. The notion of Lombard naturalism has been explored in a number of exhibitions, starting with Roberto Longhi’s “I Pittori della realtà” organised in Milan in 1953. The painters chosen by Longhi were united by a way of looking and transcribing things seen with “una semplicità accostante, una penetrante attenzione, una certa calma fiducia di poter esprimere direttamente, senza mediazioni stilizzanti, la ‘realtà’ che sta intorno.” Over the past decade, numerous exhibitions have explored the theme, including “Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy” of 2004. This exhibition featured Bernardino Licinio’s Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children which Andrea Bayer described as “remarkably lacking in rhetoric and flourish” (Figure 1).

The association between naturalism and Lombardy however harks back to early modern criticism. In this context, Lombardy has always been used as a very elastic concept, adhering rarely to any of the political boundaries in place. Artistically, Lombardy was a broadly defined geographical area that included cities such as Bologna – part of the Papal States from 1506 –

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8 Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy, ed. Andrea Bayer (New York, New Haven; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2004). Another exhibition that continues the dialogue with Longhi on this theme is Il ritratto in Lombardia da Moroni a Ceruti, ed. Francesco Frangi and Alessandro Morandotti (Varese, Milano; Skira, 2002).
9 Andrea Bayer, in Painters of Reality, p. 117.
Bergamo and Brescia. While the latter two cities had been under Venitian rule since 1428 and 1426 respectively, they long remained under Milan’s cultural ascendancy, being situated much closer to the Lombard capital (see Map 1).

In the first edition of his *Vite* of 1550, Vasari singled out the painter Antonio Allegri da Correggio, active in Parma, as the first artist in Lombardy to work in the modern manner. The artist’s rendering of flesh is one aspect of the painter’s art that Vasari praises most highly; he writes that Correggio’s figures do not appear to be made out of colour, but rather literally out of flesh. In the second edition of his *Vite*, Vasari lumped together artists from Ferrara, Modena, Parma, Mantua, Cremona, Brescia and Milan in his “Life of Benvenuto Garofalo and Girolamo Da Carpi, Ferrarese, and other Lombards.” Vasari isolated naturalness as a defining quality of a number of their works, praising, for instance, Girolamo Romanino’s impressive imitation of “le cose naturali.” On other occasions, the author draws a specific connection between a painter’s Lombard training and the direct study of nature. Another example is found in the painter Sodoma, who, upon his arrival in Siena from the town of Vercelli produced with great ease “molti ritratti di naturale con quella sua maniere di colorito acceso, che egli avea recato di Lombardia.” The biographer also accounts for the transformative experience of Benvenuto Garofalo’s encounter with the Florentine and Roman traditions. Upon seeing the “grazia” and “vivezza” of Raphael’s paintings, and the “profondità del disegno” of Michelangelo’s, Garofalo

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12 Ibid, p. 504.
cursed having been only exposed to the Lombard manner, or “le maniere di Lombardia,” that he had studied with great diligence in Mantua.  

Along with landscape, portraiture was one of the areas that Vasari associated most with Lombard naturalism. He gives special praise to the family portraits by Sofonisba Anguissola that he saw in her father’s house in Cremona (Figure 22 and Figure 23). While the portraits of her sisters playing chess look so lifelike that “they only lack speech,” the portraits of her father Almicare with her sister Minerva and brother Asdrubale seem to breathe and are extremely alive. Carlo Ridolfi would later continue this trope by singling out portraiture as an area of excellence in Lombard painting with regards to the Bergamasque painter Gian Battista Moroni. According to Ridolfi, Titian advised a group of governors, or rettori, about to depart for Bergamo, to have their portraits painted by Moroni, as he would make them naturalistically (“che gli faceva naturali”). The anecdote can either be interpreted as a flattery on the part of Titian, or as a derogative comment. In the latter instance it would suggest that a portrait by Titian would go beyond the strict study of nature, or that the modest rettori were below Titian’s prestigious clientele, which included princes and emperors.

Yet, in Vasari’s biographies, faithfulness to nature is also a recurring characteristic of the work of Venetian painters. Vasari praises Giorgione for counterfeiting the “freshness of living

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14 Ibid, p. 461. That an artist would have improved by going to Rome is a commonplace of Vasari’s discussion, expressed for instance in the life of Correggio.
17 Longhi, I Pittori della realtà in Lombardia, p. III. Francesco Maria Tassi expanded on the anecdote. According to Tassi, a Bergamasque gentleman travelled to Venice especially to have his portrait painted by Titian. However, the painter sent back to his homeland, advising him to seek Moroni who excelled in this art. Francesco Maria Tassi, Vite de’pittori, scultori e architetti bergamaschi, vol. 1 (Milan: Edizioni Labor, 1969-70 [1793]), p. 166.
flesh” better than any other artist in the world, and Titian for the naturalness and “likeness of the flesh-colouring” of his portraits. As noted above, Vasari had recourse to similar conceits when describing the art of Correggio.

Only in the following century do critics come to associate Lombardy with naturalism more systematically. As Bayer explains, this is tied to some writers’ desire to trace the origins of the art of Caravaggio and the Carracci. Giovanni Battista Agucchi recognised the importance of the Carracci’s formative experience in Lombardy. The Carracci, he writes, attained perfection in painting when they united Roman *disegno* to their “colorito Lombardo.” And in fact, in his classification of Italian schools of painting, Agucchi clearly associated Lombard painting with naturalism. Headed by Raphael and Michelangelo, the Roman school, Agucchi writes, followed the beauty of sculpture. The Venetian painters, headed by Titian, imitated the beauty of nature observed. The Lombards imitated nature more than the Venetians. Correggio, which Agucchi designated as the first of the Lombards, followed nature “in a way that was at the same time tender, simple, and equally noble, and in his own manner.” Similarly, in Malvasia’s life of the Carracci, the “Lombard style” is also tied to a colourist tradition; the “lombard softness and fleshiness” used to describe the work of one of Ludovico’s predecessors, gestures toward the new naturalism that the Carracci reform would achieve. The unmediated rendering of nature –

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what Malvasia calls the “inerudite Lombard simplicity” – is seen as a characteristic of Caravaggio’s art, who Bellori criticised for being “tutto soggetto al naturale.”  

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century theory therefore provided the historiographical foundation for what Vertova describes as Licinio’s “Lombard soul,” which finds an artistic expression in his way of seeing and representing the world without stylistic mediation. But Vertova’s judgement is also intimately tied to a more recent tradition that established a close correlation between style and geography; for Licinio and other Bergamasque painters working in Venice, this connection was forcefully articulated in the work of Gustav von Ludwig.

As discussed in the introduction, Ludwig documented a plethora of Bergamasque artists working in Venice in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In his introduction, Ludwig extracted some of the characteristics of the diaspora’s behaviour. He first noted a parallel with the migration of Scottish highlanders who settled according to the valleys from which they come from; similarly, the Bergamasques principally clustered in parishes near Rialto. They also tended to deal in business together, to hire Bergamasque garzoni in their workshops, to consult Bergamasque notaries and to maintain strong ties with their native land. Ludwig was quite perceptive in many of his conclusions, as they coincide with those of the few historians who have been interested in the Bergamasque community. Ludwig also formulated the notion of a Bergamasque school of painting in Venice. While conceding that most of these painters gained their knowledge of the trade in Venetian workshops, their work, according to him, possess a

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23 In Early Modern art theory, the concept of national styles was employed to affirm cultural supremacy. See Philip Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.24-25.


25 While art historians have relied on Ludwig’s findings, they have been ignored by historians who have dealt with the Bergamasque community, such as Sylvie Favalier and Andrea Zannini whose work is quoted below.
distinctive characteristic that is unique to their race, and to the mountain region from which they come from. While they are good in colouring Ludwig writes, the intellectual content of their painting is empty, and they have the tendency to make specific visual references to the topography of their native land.26

Shortly after Ludwig’s article was published, his findings were synthesised by his Venetian friend and colleague Pompeo Molmenti, first in an article entitled “I pittori bergamaschi a Venezia,” and then in his Storia di Venezia nella Vita Privata. Molmenti borrows and expands on Ludwig’s terms, pushing further the idea of the Bergamasque school of painting through the connection between style and race. According to Molmenti, the painters’ work share a “family air” (“un’aria di famiglia”) that is expressive of the vigorous mountain race (“razza montanina”) to which they belong. He adds that they compensate for their lack of imagination and depth of concept (“profondità di concetti”) with excellent technique and luminous colouring, imprinting their work with a rustic simplicity that recalls the streams, mountains and green meadows of the Bergamasque valleys.27 The scholar thus echoes what Malvasia had centuries before described as the “inerudite Lombard simplicity.” In addition, Molmenti reiterated Ludwig’s idea that the Bergamasque painters formed a cohesive community – romanticising this notion to some extant – as he notes that they lived among themselves in amicable consortium, teaching lovingly their fellow countrymen into the trade, consulting with Bergamasque notaries and choosing the workshops of their compatriots to conclude business and contracts.28

Still today, Ludwig’s work provides scholars with an invaluable source of primary documents. Yet, the ideology underlining the project itself, of tracing this migratory movement, has never been questioned as having a particular bearing on the ways in which Licinio and other artists have been analysed. I believe that situating Ludwig’s project could explain the root of certain categories currently in use.

Gustav von Ludwig is one of many nineteenth-century scholars who do not figure within the history of art history. This is perhaps because his main preoccupation was with facts and documents as opposed to the more speculative philosophical approaches of his time.\(^{29}\) Instead, he should be considered among the pioneering archivists of the late nineteenth century who may be said to have “discovered” and significantly exploited the archives of Italy.\(^{30}\) Although now forgotten, their work would guide the researches of generations to come. Within the archivist-researcher’s tradition, Ludwig’s interest for the movement of artists finds parallel in the work of Antonino Bertolotti. From 1870 to 1880, Bertolotti undertook extensive research in the Roman archives in order to trace French, Lombard and Netherlandish painters active in Rome.\(^{31}\)

Ludwig was particularly attentive to the reconstruction of family and kinship ties and social networks. His interest in social ties as a historical topic manifests itself in his collaboration

\(^{29}\) For a history of art historical writing of the German tradition heir to Kantian philosophy see Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

\(^{30}\) Among this new brand of scholar-researcher we can mention the French art historian of the Italian Renaissance Eugène Muntz (1845-1903) who was one of the first to significantly exploit the Italian archives, especially those of the Vatican. His monograph on Raphael was the first to be based on archival documentation. See Germain Bazin, *L’Histoire de l’histoire de l’art: de Vasari à nos jours* (Paris: A. Michel, 1986) p. 144-146; Udo Kultermann, *The History of Art History* (New York: Abaris Books, 1993), pp. 185-186.

and friendship with the scholar Pompeo Molmenti, best known for his monumental *Storia di Venezia nella vita privata*; a work that tackles with the history of Venice primarily through its domestic customs and material culture.\(^\text{32}\) In fact, the little we know about Ludwig’s life comes from a monograph on Vittore Carpaccio which he co-authored with Molmenti.\(^\text{33}\) The book was initiated by the two scholars and completed by Molmenti alone after his colleague’s death. The preface, authored by Molmenti, reads as a eulogy to his deceased collaborator and a tribute to their friendship. Here, we also learn about his career path.

Born in 1852 in Bad Nauheim, Ludwig did not train as an art historian, pursuing instead the family trade to become a medical doctor.\(^\text{34}\) It was while working at the German hospital in London for twenty years that he studied art history as a dilettante. During those decades, he assisted the German industrialist Henry Doetsch in assembling his art collection.\(^\text{35}\) Affected by a chronic pulmonary illness, he left for Italy and decided to settle definitively in Venice where he devoted all his time to the study of painting and archival research. Interestingly, Molmenti tells us that Ludwig travelled throughout the Venetian *terraferma* with the intent of investigating the work of artists who, in the Renaissance, had left their native cities to settle in Venice. The themes of migration and geographical displacement are at the root of some of Ludwig’s other publications that address “foreign colonies” of artists and artisans.\(^\text{36}\)

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\(^{32}\) See Molmenti, *Venezia nella vita privata dalle origini alla caduta della Republica*, 3 vols..


\(^{34}\) His father was a doctor and his uncle Carl Ludwig was a renowned physiologist.


Ludwig’s interest in the journey of artists to Venice resonates with his own experience as an expatriate. But, at the same time, the specific terms by which he frames his research on Bergamasque painters in Venice – the distinctive Bergamasque school of painting whose style is tied to the mountain race – are informed by various nineteenth-century strands of thought. By this time, the notion of schools of painting first articulated by Agucchi had become current in scholarship, notably through Luigi Lanzi’s *La storia pittorica dell’Italia*, published in 1795-96.37 While Lanzi’s “scuole pittoriche” had cemented the firm link between a style and a place, nineteenth-century scholars further articulated art history geographically by conceptualising it in terms of national identity.38 In this context, Hegel’s philosophy, in particular his discussion of the *geist* or spirit, of a time or a people, and its expression in the arts, was particularly influential.39 National and racial assumptions therefore came to pervade the writings of a number of German art historians for whom “the land, the climate and the *Volkgeist* determine the course of art.”40 In France, the philosophy of Hippolyte Taine, who sought to give history the certainty of a science, gave particular weight to race. Taine developed a deterministic theory of cultural history, in which artistic production is determined by race, moment and *milieu* (environment).41 Taine’s ideas have a long history, as Montesquieu, among others, had previously formulated...


40 These ideas are shared by scholars such as Kugler, Burckhardt and Semper. Ibid, p. 50.

theories of environmental influence on human customs and society. These conceits can also be traced further back to the early modern period, notably in the work of Machiavelli and Jean Bodin, who argued that climate shapes a people’s character, its history, customs and government.

In one revealing passage of his *Lives of the painters, sculptors and architects*, Giovanni Battista Passeri demonstrates that similar theories had penetrated the historiography of art already in the seventeenth century. In his life of the sculptor Francesco Mocchi, Passeri writes that individuals born in the same land share a certain nature, because of the climate that affects it. Whether it is due to the stars or because people tend to imitate one another, a great similarity is shared by the individuals of a same region. Passeri adds that no region is without its own particularities, and that one is constrained, as from a natural force, to show the same temperament as his compatriots, sustaining the defects that are characteristic of one’s country even when having received the correction from the good example of other countries. For this reason, Mocchi, being from the Florentine state, was always a rigorous imitator of the Florentine manner.

By establishing a connection between the Bergamasque painters’ styles and the native land, Ludwig therefore drew from early modern criticism as well as from contemporary discourse on art and national identity and theories of racial and environmental determinism. The difference, however, lays in the fact that he was not concerned with a nation proper, as Bergamo was part of the Venetian Republic until its demise. Instead, the scholar invoked race as a useful

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42 In the fourteenth and eighteenth books of *L’esprit des lois of 1748*. DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, p. 36.
43 Ibid, p. 31.
44 The passage is quoted in DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, pp. 31, 365-366.
category to explain what he perceived as distinctive characteristics of the Bergamasque painters; characteristics that seem to fit uneasily in a Venetian canon of art.

The idea that works of art are expressive of the collective psychology of entire nations, and the premises of racial and ethnic essentialism or geographical determinism, have been long discredited. Nevertheless, as Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Claire Farago note, such essentialism still pervades more recent art historical writing.45 Vertova’s comment on Licinio’s “Lombard soul” discussed above is a telling example. Being part of a monographic series entitled “I Pittori Bergamaschi,” her catalogue may also be underlined by the modern campanilismo at the heart of the greater project. The theme of the “Lombard soul” is also expressed by Rodolfo Pallucchini and Francesco Rossi who write that although Palma Vecchio, Giovanni Cariani and Bernardino Licinio find a rightful place within the movement headed by Giorgione, and then Titian and Sebastiano del Piombo, they were always attached to the Lombard taste (“gusto Lombardo”) that is characterised by the truthful ruggedness (“rusticità schiettamente realistica”) that distinguishes the land from which they came.46 In the past decade, scholarship has continued to convey the sense of a determining relationship between the land of origin and style. In a recent exhibition catalogue, Sara Tarissi de Jacobis for instance argues that Licinio’s naturalistic and “Bourgeois” approach – characterised by an attentiveness to the everyday as conveyed in portraits most especially – demonstrates that he is a painter of Lombard and provincial culture.47 Similarly, Mauro Zanchi writes that Cariani’s artistic sensibility is


impregnated with the sanguine temper and frankness of highlanders, which defines the “provincial” character of his work. It is his Bergamasque nature, which, according to Zanchi, renders him attentive to the “true reality of things” (“la realtà vera delle cose”).

In sum, these comments are fraught with the belief that Licinio’s and some of his Bergamasque contemporaries’ naturalism, or realism, is tied to the spiritual essence of a people. This is highly problematic, especially given that Licinio was most probably of Venetian birth. Moreover, that these stylistic characteristics are also tied to the artist’s Venetian training in the orbit of Giovanni Bellini and to the taste and demands of his Venetian patrons has not been considered as part of the equation. I argue that the pervasiveness of such geographical determinism has functioned to cement Bernardino Licinio’s state of displacement. The label “provincial,” applied to the painter with some consistency, has further contributed to the historiographical process of deterritorialisation by reinforcing a centre-periphery dichotomy. Constructed as such, Licinio is therefore denied full participation in Venice’s artistic culture. The categories employed to discuss his work and that of his compatriots also elude the complexities of the cultural rapport between Venice, its minority groups and its mainland empire. It is therefore to the issues of immigration and artistic contacts to which I now turn.

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‘The essence of all expatriates’: The Bergamasque Immigrant Between Satire and Reality

Migration characterised the experience of a vast number of Renaissance individuals, and Venice, more than any other Italian city, was marked by the constant flux and movement of people. Travellers, pilgrims en route to Jerusalem, humanists and residents alike marvelled at the cosmopolitan nature of the city’s population and its religious tolerance. In the late fifteenth century, Cardinal Bessarion and the French traveller Philippe de Commines respectively commented that “men come together [in Venice] from practically the whole world” and that “most of the people [in Venice] are foreigners.” In the late sixteenth century, ethnic diversity characterised the Serenissima’s urban fabric more than ever; Francesco Sansovino, himself a second generation immigrant, son of the Tuscan architect Jacopo Sansovino, described the city as “una stantia frequentata da molte genti d’ogni lingua e paese.”

At the crossroads of Europe and the Levant, Venice was a commercial hub and a stopping point on pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem. For some, however, it was more than a point of transit, as many established themselves permanently with their families. Already in the early fourteenth century, Venice had seen an influx of population coming from the Tuscan region, first from Lucca and then from Florence. In the fifteenth century, many subjects from the Stato da Mar, including Greeks, Albanians and Dalmatians, had sought protection in Venice from the Ottoman

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Turks. Furthermore, the Venetian Republic’s expansion into the *terraferma* in the 1420s and 1430s stimulated, and in some ways facilitated, the arrival and integration of inhabitants from subject cities such as Padua, Verona, Vicenza, and Bergamo. Venice’s military defeat against the allied forces of the League of Cambrai at the Battle of Agnadello in 1509 further intensified this movement. In the decades following the war, famines on the *terraferma* drove many poor to the lagoon city, leading Marin Sanudo to write that “a great horde of poor by day and by night, and many peasants are beginning to come here with their children, looking for food, because of the great famine outside [….] And many have come from the provinces of Vicenza and Brescia – a shocking thing.”52 In addition to these groups we may add religious exiles. In the late fifteenth century, a mass European migration had begun with the mandatory relocation of Muslims and Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. The Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe also prompted further migration movements.53

From the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, the Bergamasque presence in Venice rose steadily. As mentioned in the introduction, Donato Giannotti (1540) gave a strong impression of the importance of this community by describing Venice’s *popolani* as mostly composed of “Bergamasques and other foreigners.”54 This is a major statement given that this social group represented around seventy-six to seventy-nine percent of Venice’s population.55 In quantitative terms however, the Bergamasque diaspora is much more difficult to gage. This is especially true of the period corresponding to Licinio’s life, when proper documentation about the population is

fragmentary. The situation in the second half of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century can better be defined; parish registers, including baptismal and matrimonial records, are available from 1564 onwards, while apprenticeship contracts and marriage attestations are available starting in the 1580s.\textsuperscript{56} The Status animarum, or count of souls, of 1591-94, which gives a detailed description of Christian households in every parish, provides another rich source from which can be gleaned information on the population, especially with what pertains to living patterns.\textsuperscript{57} By surveying these sources, Sylvie Favalier and Andrea Zannini came to the conclusion that the Bergamasques strongly outnumbered immigrants from other provinces of the terraferma.\textsuperscript{58}

Located in the Alpine foothills, close to seventy percent of Bergamo’s territory was composed of mountains (see Map 2). Bernardino Licinio, Palma Vecchio and Giovanni Cariani originated from the mountain towns of Poscante, Serina and Fuipano respectively. In addition, a number of painters from the town of Santacroce were active in Venice in two separate botteghe, one founded by Francesco di Simone da Santacroce and the other by Girolamo da Santacroce. Bergamasque immigration – and the migration of painters – can be situated within the broader migratory movements from the mountains that swept over the Mediterranean region during the sixteenth century. The region’s overpopulation, in the sense that the mountain towns’ resources did not suffice to sustain the needs of their inhabitants, was at the origin of these movements.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} These are some of the documents used by Sylvie Favalier in order to quantify the Bergamasque immigration. Sylvie Favalier, \textit{L’immigration bergamasque à Venise}.

\textsuperscript{57} This is one source exploited to great results by Monica Chojnacka in \textit{Working Women of Early Modern Venice} (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).


\textsuperscript{59} Favalier, \textit{L’immigration bergamasque à Venise}, p. 27.
Extreme poverty and sterility is in fact part of the image penned by some of the Venetian rettori holding office in Bergamo. For example, in the late sixteenth century, Capitano Zuane da Lezze’s relazione described the towns of the territory and its villagers with observations such as “quella gente è tutta povera” or “tutti sono poveri lavoratori,” to the extreme situation in which “li huomini cadono per la fame morti per le strade.”

In urban centres all over Italy, the collective imagination turned the “Bergamasco” into the archetype of the poor immigrant. In fact, many cities of the Italian peninsula were home to a Bergamasque community; the writer Matteo Bandello went so far as to write that “no part of the world, however far-flung, is without its Bergamasque traders.” Among the mass of Bergamasques who came to the Serenissima, many exercised the lower trades of servant and porter, called facchino; occupations often disdained by native Venetians. Late sixteenth-century sources such as Cesare Vecellio’s well known Habiti antichi et moderni (1590) and Tommaso Garzoni’s Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo illustrate and describe the typical facchino as an immigrant who habitually came from the mountains and very often from the province of Bergamo (Figure 24).

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60 Quoted in ibid, pp. 13-14.
61 Ibid, pp. 11-12.
63 As Monica Chojnacka notes, immigrants represented a large part of the servant population, and at times even the majority. Chojnacka, Working Women of Early Modern Venice, p. 86.
64 To be a porter did not demand any training and could be exercised by young boys who came seasonally from mountain regions. In Genoa for instance, Bergamasques were preponderant among facchini and formed a corporation. See C. M. Belfanti and M.A. Romani, “Sur la route: les Migrations montagnardes vers la plaine du Po (XVIle-XVIIIe siècles),” in Les Migrations internes et à moyenne distance en Europe, 1500-1900, vol. 1, ed. Antonio Eiras Roel and Ofelia Rey Castelao (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 1994), p. 613.
characteristics as “parlar grosso, vestire sporco, operatione incivile, et attione da ruffiano.”

Garzoni further remarks on the facchini’s poverty of language, noting that one can only deduce from the Bergamaschi’s boorish accent. As a pseudo-scientific text, Garzoni’s discourse is tinted with the stereotype and literary cliché that had evolved around the Bergamasque immigrant.

Brian Pullan explains that the Bergamasque was portrayed as the “essence of all expatriates, driven abroad by the sterility of his own land,” a man “without courtesy, polish, or refinement, obsessed with making money, and bent on eating, sleeping, and even primping himself at other people’s expense.” This image emerged at the end of the fifteenth century and was widely disseminated through sixteenth-century novelle, popular comedies, and parodies of pastoral comedies. It finally became the cliché of the zanni or of the arlequin of the commedia dell’arte.

As Garzoni’s text reveals, the Bergamasque was noted for his rustic and unrefined language. In literature, the Bergamasque dialect was therefore exploited as a comic motif in itself. In the Cinquecento, multilingual literary compositions staging characters of diverse nationalities and speaking different idioms were a very popular genre, many of which came out


66 Garzoni, La Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo, p. 978.
67 Ibid, p. 975.
69 Among the commedia’s characters, Brighella and Arlequino are immigrants from Bergamo. Favalier, L’immigration bergamasque à Venise, p. 156; Domenico Pietropaolo, “The Theatre,” in Harlequin Unmasked: The Commedia dell’Arte and Porcelain Sculpture, ed. Meredith Chilton (Toronto; New Haven: Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art; Yale University Press, c2001), pp. 16-17.
of the Venetian presses. Among them, we find texts *alla bergamasca* that parodied well-known works such as Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. These *tramutazioni* employ a pseudo-Bergamesque dialect that combined both Bergamasque and Venetian terms. While other foreigners were objects of ridicule and mockery – such as peasants from Chioggia and Padova, Greeks and Spaniards – the Bergamasque character was particularly beloved by Venetian audiences. Paintings further reflect the *commedie alla bergamasca*’s popular appeal. From 1530 onward, paintings with Bergamasque figures are recorded in Venetian property inventories. An example is found in Caterina della Seda’s inventory of 1536 which lists two small paintings on canvas with two Bergamasque figures with a clown (“do quadreti picoli in tella cum do figure bergamasche cum el goffo”).

These visual, theatrical and literary representations are symptomatic of Venetians’ social discomfort in face of a growing immigrant population. In the literary production *alla bergamasca* especially, the Bergamasque is often turned into a scapegoat for foreigners who,

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71 Favalier, “‘Le Roland Furieux’dé L’Arioste dans les ‘tramutazioni’ vénitiennes à la bergamasque du XVIè siècle,” p. 106.

72 Favalier, *L’immigration bergamasque à Venise*, p. 159


74 Quoted in Michel Hochmann, “Genre Scenes by Dosso and Giorgione,” p. 79, note 33.
seeking to rise to urban civilization, disrupts the established order. By making non-native populations their target, these texts’ inherently served to reaffirm “venezianità.”

The image of the boorish and uneducated mountain man sustained by various literary sources however contrasts with the social and economic success of many Bergamasque immigrants. Indeed, they very quickly started to thrive in certain fields to the point of almost exercising monopoly over them. One of the most important fields of professional activity was that of textiles, an industry in which Venice had traditionally relied on its immigrant population. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Bergamasques held a monopoly over the silk and wool cloth industries, which had previously been dominated by the Lucchese and Florentine immigrants in the fourteenth century. They also dominated other fields. The *Compagnia dei Corrieri Veneti* was in great part composed of Bergamasques and sought to remain so by practicing a form of hereditary succession, whereby the official charges were transferred to sons or close kin. The *Fraglia dei facchini della dogana* was similarly composed

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75 Favalier, *L’immigration bergamasque à Venise*, p. 158. It should be noted that the character *alla bergamasca* is not only present in Venice, as there were Bergamasque communities in various towns where Bergamasques immigrated.


77 For seventeenth-century sources commenting on the industriousness and prosperity of Bergamasque immigrants see Andrea Zannini, “L’Altra Bergamo in laguna: la comunità bergamasca a Venezia,” in *Storia economica e sociale di Bergamo. Il tempo della Serenissima. Il lungo cinquecento* (Bergamo: Fondazione per la storia economica e sociale di Bergamo, 1998), pp. 175, 210. From a variety of sources including *contratti di garzonato* and *prove di matrimonio* from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Zannini suggests that members of the Bergamasque community appeared as more literate and schooled than most immigrants from the Veneto.


of immigrants from the towns of Dossena, Zogno and Sorisole in the Bergamasque province, and could only be accessed through succession.  

As we can see, the satirical image fashioned by Garzoni’s pseudo-scientific discourse, street theatre and literary parodies overshadows the nuances of Bergamasque immigration, and this group’s social rise. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the typical candidate for a citizenship privilege was a Bergamasque merchant. Anna Bellavitis has demonstrated that nearly half the petitions presented to the Cinque Savi between 1549 and 1597 were by immigrants from Bergamo and its surrounding valleys. Such was the case of the Cuccina family, a prosperous family of wool merchants. This citizen family of Bergamasque origin built a family palace on the Canal Grande in the parish of San Aponal – within the area associated with the Bergamasque community as discussed below – and commissioned Paolo Veronese a series of four large canvases celebrating their lineage, including the Presentation of the Cuccina Family to the Madonna of c.1571 (Staatsgalerie, Dresden) (Figure 25). I now turn to the sense of community that bound Bergamasque immigrants and its meaning in the lives of another group of residents: artisans and painters.

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81 Bellavitis, Identité, mariage, mobilité sociale, pp. 51-53. Bellavitis describes two waves of Bergamasque naturalisation: one in the 1540s, which corresponds to changes in legislation regarding citizenship after the league of Cambrai, and the second in the first years of the seventeenth century, composed of immigrants who came in the 1580s, a moment of industrial development in Venice.

82 See De Maria, Becoming Venetian, pp. 108-113, 143-159.
Urban Geography, Community Dynamics and the Bergamasque Painters

Early modern communities can be defined as “group(s) of people who perceived themselves as having common interests, and thus, a common identity or self-understanding.” A variety of social relations based on religion, economic activity, politics or family could define a group’s shared identity. Ethnic or national origin was another important variable upon which a collective identity was constructed. Paula Clarke has highlighted the importance of continued contacts with the native land, common spheres of economic activity, a concentration of residence and the creation of national institutions, as factors that contributed to maintaining a sense of national identity among groups of immigrants. In studying national communities, scholars have, on the one hand, noted the difficulty of perceiving second and third generation immigrants, as they tend to be better inserted within a city’s social fabric. On the other, they have highlighted the fact that an individual’s insertion or assimilation did not preclude strong ties with members of their ethnic group. Densely populated cities like Venice were characterised by a multiplicity of potential communities, of shifting, non-corporate and corporate associations, and individuals could and usually belonged to different communities simultaneously.

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85 Scholars have noted the danger of using the term “community” as it implies “a homogeneity, a boundary and a consensus” that is not supported through fieldwork research and which may not acknowledge the fact that communities could be overridden by internal tensions, and that one’s belonging to a community could be either temporary or permanent. Peter Burke, Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 6; Spierling and Halvorson, “Introduction: Definitions of Community in Early Modern Europe,” pp. 1, 6.
origin only accounts for one aspect of the family’s social experience, the community of immigrants nevertheless provides an important framework for understanding aspects of their identity.

**Neighbourhoods and Scuole**

Venice’s urban geography reveals the transitory passages, as well as the prolonged presence, of a myriad of nations. For instance, the Greek community’s presence is still highly visible within a clearly circumscribed neighbourhood in the sestiere of Castello. The Greek Orthodox church, with its attendant scuola built in 1539, along with the toponymy of the area – with its fondaco, calle, and ponte “dei Greci” – still today point to the neighborhood’s geographical bounds.\(^87\) Germans clustered around Rialto near the Confraternity of the Rosary in San Bartolomeo and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.\(^88\) The Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Fondaco dei Turchi – with which the State sought to control the commercial activities of German and Turkish merchants – as well as the Jewish Ghetto were important signposts of ethnic communities. These spatial confinements were also motivated by the threat caused by “religious contamination.”\(^89\) By contrast, the Bergamasques’ presence within the city’s urban geography is not as sharply defined. Like many who travelled from within the Italian peninsula, the Bergamasques shared a lot with the inhabitants of Venice, both in terms of religious beliefs and cultural norms. Despite the use of different dialects and the strong literary stereotype that was shaped around various

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expatriate figures, immigrants from *terraferma* possessions and their communities cannot be perceived as distinctly, especially given that in Venice, rich and poor cohabited all over the city.\footnote{Alexander Cowan suggests a distinction between “outsider” and “foreigner,” the latter being marked as different based on language, appearance and behaviour. See Cowan, “Foreigners and the City. The Case of the Immigrant Merchant,” in *Mediterranean Urban Culture 1400-1700*, ed. Alexander Cowan (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), p. 45.}

Scholars have nevertheless demonstrated that Bergamasque immigrants tended to elect residence within a small number of parishes. By contrast to the six *sestieri* that served as administrative divisions, in Venice the parish – referred to as *parocchia*, *contra*, *contrata* or *confinium* – constituted the most meaningful unit for communal and family identity.\footnote{The six *sestieri* are: San Marco, San Polo, Santa Croce, Cannareggio, Dorsoduro and Castello.} In official documents, Venetians of all classes identified themselves by the parish where they lived.\footnote{Chojnacka, *Working Women of Early Modern Venice*, p. 51. On the contrast between the nature of the Venetian neighbourhood and the Florentine *vicinanza* see Joseph Wheeler, "Neighborhoods and Local Loyalties in Renaissance Venice," In *Mediterranean Urban Culture 1400-1700*, ed. by Alexander Cowan (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), pp. 31-32.} One of the most significant concentration of Bergamasque residence was composed of a group of parishes in the *sestieri* of San Polo and Santa Croce near Rialto: San Silvestro, San Aponal, San Matteo, San Polo, San Cassiano, San Giacomo dall’Orio, San Boldo, and Santa Maria Mater Domini.\footnote{This image combines the results from different scholars, each of which studied different documents. Gustav von Ludwig’s conclusion that the Bergamasques lived in the parishes adjacent to San Cassiano, Santa Mater Domini and San Boldo is based on notarial documents, especially final wills. Favalier’s study of living patterns is based on the *status animarum* of the late sixteenth century; see Favalier, *L’immigration bergamasque à Venise*, p. 92 (the clusters found are located in San Aponal, San Silvestro, San Matteo, San Polo, San Cassiano, San Giacomo dell’Orio, San Moisè, San Giacomo dall’Orio). For the earlier part of the sixteenth century, Joseph Wheeler demonstrated important concentrations in San Aponal and San Silvestro in the context of his study of the demographic profile of the *sestiere* of San Polo based on the census of 1509. See Joseph Wheeler, "Neighborhoods and Local Loyalties in Renaissance Venice," in *Mediterranean Urban Culture 1400-1700*, p. 28.} We may also consider within this area of residence some of the contiguous parishes for which we lack documentation such as San Stae and San Giovanni Elemosinario.\footnote{These two parishes are not represented in the *status animarum* used by Favalier.}
addition, two other parishes on the other side of Rialto have shown a particularly high number of Bergamasques: San Moisè in the *sestiere* of San Marco, and San Giovanni Nuovo in Castello (see Map 3).

Some of the concentrations are difficult to explain, as it is the case with San Moisè, where a *Calle dei Bergamaschi* still today reminds us of the Bergamasques’ passage. By contrast, Sylvie Favalier has explained the cluster at San Giovanni Nuovo in terms of fields of specialisation. San Giovanni Nuovo is situated in close proximity to the *riva degli schiavoni*, which was an important point of arrival for merchandise, thus making it a likely place for immigrants who worked as porters to live and work. In fact, almost half the Bergamasques who lived at San Giovanni Nuovo were young men who had come to Venice to work as porters, most probably seasonally, and who often clustered in the same apartments. But as Monica Chojnacka argues, what linked neighbours together was not necessarily a shared origin, but a shared identity as immigrants. San Giovanni Nuovo was populated by immigrants from around Europe, with an area particularly dense with families from Lombardy, especially from Brescia.

The parishes around Rialto – where we find the most important cluster of Bergamasques – can generally be considered one the most important centres of immigration in Venice. This area was the commercial heart of the city and the professions exercised there were consequently

96 While rich and poor cohabited throughout the city, Favalier argues that San Moisè was a poorer parish inhabited by a large number of immigrants, in particular Albanese. Favalier, *L’immigration bergamasque à Venise*, p. 94, note 55.
97 Ibid, p. 95-96.
linked in great part to commerce and artisanal work. For instance, the sector of textiles, over which the Bergamasques held a quasi-monopoly, was the most important area of production in the *sestiere* of San Polo in the second half of the sixteenth century.\(^{100}\) In addition to professional interests as a factor explaining residential patterns, Joseph Wheeler stressed the importance of processes of chain migration, “with kin and fellow villagers following well-established routes and providing assistance to others adjusting to the city.”\(^{101}\) For instance, from 1474 to 1484, villagers from the Bergamasque town of Poltrànga (today Ponterànica) settled in the area known as the Pasino in the parish of San Aponal. Moreover, around 1500, the Bergamasque *albergo* known as *la Bergama* which welcomed distinguished visitors from the province of Bergamo, was located in the adjacent parish of San Silvestro.\(^{102}\) This institution later moved to the parish of San Simeon Grande, where there is still today a *ponte* and a *calle della Bergama*.

Repeated social interaction within this group of parishes would have therefore fostered a network of neighbourhood loyalties and places of community.\(^{104}\) Confraternities played a significant role in this process. Venice counted more lay devotional confraternities than any other city of the Italian peninsula; according to Marin Sanudo, there were 210 of them in 1501. Membership to *scuole piccole* was inclusive, as both men and women, humble artisans and rich

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\(^{101}\) Wheeler, “Neighborhoods and Local Loyalties in Renaissance Venice,” p. 28. This scholar established the demographic profile of San Polo based on the census of 1509.


\(^{103}\) Ibid, pp. 71-72.

cittadini could join. As scuole were regarded as important agents of social cohesion, fraternalism could play an important role in maintaining national identity. National scuole welcomed temporary visitors to the city as well as long-term immigrants, facilitated integration into the city as well as the creation of social and professional networks with other natives. These institutions would have contributed to shaping and maintaining the Bergamasques’ cultural definition throughout generations, especially through devotion to saints traditionally honoured in the homeland.

In general, scuole did not tend to be parish based but instead drew membership from all over the city. In the case of the Bergamasques, however, the correlation between the residential cluster near Rialto and the places where the various Bergamasque scuole kept altars and meeting houses reinforce the connection between certain places and a sense of community.

The Scuola di Santi Alessandro e Vincenzo dei Bergamaschi was founded in 1491 through the initiative of twenty-five Bergamasques residing in Venice. The members maintained a chapel in the church of San Silvestro and had its meeting house in the adjacent campo. Since an individual could be a member of a number of scuole, many Bergamasques registered in the Scuola di Santi Alessandro e Vicenzo were members of the Scuola di S.

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108 Unfortunately, the scuola’s membership list does not survive.

Giuseppe which also met at San Silvestro.\textsuperscript{110} Four other Bergamasque scuole were based in the Church of San Giovanni Elemosinario.\textsuperscript{111} The Scuola dell’Assunta ‘della Sedrina’ was founded by natives of Sedrina Bassa for immigrants from Val Cedrina.\textsuperscript{112} The other three scuole are tied to the trades dominated by the Bergamasques: the corrieri and facchini. The Scuola di Santa Caterina d’Alessandria dei corrieri veneti, founded in 1306,\textsuperscript{113} the Fraglia dei bastasi della Dogana da Terra, founded in 1512, composed exclusively of Bergamasques from Serina and san Pietro d’Orsio,\textsuperscript{114} and the Fraglia dei Bastasi della Dogana da Mar, founded in 1628, for natives of Dossena and Sorisole.\textsuperscript{115} In 1617, the Bergamasques founded another devotional scuola whose members met in the parish of Santi Apostoli, across from San Giovanni Elemosinario on the other side of the Grand Canal.\textsuperscript{116}

Another scuola whose meeting place is unknown was founded in 1508 by the natives of the village of Fuipano. One of the aims of the Scuola dei SS. Filippo e Giacomo di Fuipano was to help the inhabitants of the village of Fuipano by providing them with the means to maintain a priest and furnishing their parish church with liturgical objects.\textsuperscript{117} The painter Giovanni Cariani, who hailed from this village, was closely involved with the scuola. In 1523, it commissioned

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Ibid, pp. 682-683; Barbara Vanin and Paolo Eleuteri, Le Mariegole della Biblioteca del Museo Correr (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), p. 7. In 1516, the Scuola di Santi Alessandro e Vicenzo granted members of the Scuola di S. Giuseppe the right to use their space on a regular basis.
\item San Giovanni Elemosinario is one of the parishes that is not represented in the Status animarum and which may have revealed a Bergamasque residential cluster.
\item Vio, Le Scuole piccole nella Venezia dei Dogi, p. 715.
\item Ibid, pp. 700-702; Vanin and Eleuteri, Le Mariegole, pp. 118-119.
\item Vio, Le Scuole piccole nella Venezia dei Dogi, p. 711.
\item Ibid, p. 713. The latter two had hereditary membership.
\item Vanin and Eleuteri, Le Mariegole, pp. 16-17.
\item Palluchini and Rossi, Giovanni Cariani, pp. 18, 93, 95, 96.
\end{footnotes}
Cariani an altarpiece (now lost) for the parochial church of Fuipano, and in 1524, the painter was elected as one of the *scuola’s* presidents.

As Edward Muir and Ronald Weissman note, certain places of Renaissance cities can be described as cultural artefacts “embedded in a grid of other meaningful objects and locales.”

In this context, the churches of San Silvestro and San Giovanni Elemosinaro where the various Bergamasque *scuole* met can be regarded as nodal points in the network of solidarity established among immigrants. By fostering social networks among immigrants, the national institutions would have contributed to strengthening the sense of identification with the place of origin, bequeathing continuity and meaning across generations.

Archival documents reveal that the Licinio family had enduring ties with the places associated with the Bergamasque community. In the first place, they are recorded in two parishes located in the Bergamasque neighbourhood broadly conceived. From 1511 to the early 1540s, they lived in the parish of San Stae. From 1544, the Licinio brothers co-owned a house in the small parish of San Agostino, which is adjacent to San Boldo, Santa Maria Mater Domini and San Polo (see Map 3).

Moreover, Bernardino’s younger brother Zuan Battista who was a parish priest at the church of San Giovanni Elemosinaro – which is strongly associated with the Bergamasque confraternities – may have strengthened ties with the community even further. In Venice, parish-level priesthood was dominated by commoners and their influence derived less

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120 In 1528, Bernardino and Arrigo Licinio identified themselves as “Bernardin Lycinius pictor de contra San Stai” and “Arigo Licinio pictor del condam ser Antonio de la contra de Santo Stai.” In 1544, they both identified themselves as “Arigo Licinio depentor de Antonio de la contra de Santo Agustino” and “Bernardin Licinjo pittor de la chontra de Santo Agustin de Venetia”. ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 190, n. 232, 448; b. 410, n. 127; b. 938, n. 364.
from their role as spiritual advisors and preachers than from their direct involvement in the secular world. Parish priests were involved in their communities in myriad ways by acting as notaries, serving as executors of wills, exercising power of attorney, providing small loans and investing in commercial ventures.\(^1\) Later in his life, Zuan Battista was elected *pievano* of the church of San Cassiano – another parish with a strong Bergamasque concentration. The *pievano* was elected by the property owner of every parish and held a lifelong position. While the elected priest had to receive the patriarch’s approval, the choice of a *pievano* remained an affair of the neighbourhood.\(^2\) In addition, the church of San Cassiano was the Licinio family’s burial site.\(^3\)

**Social Networks**

However limited, evidence from archival sources provide insight into the ties of friendship, alliances and networks of trust and solidarity that bound Bergamasque immigrants. In the first place, Bergamasques tended to consult notaries who shared their origins.\(^4\) In addition, baptismal records, which started to be kept by parishes from 1564, demonstrate that the choice of compatriots as godparents was common.\(^5\) For artists and artisans, baptism could provide a way of strengthening alliances and networks with compatriots and colleagues that could sometimes

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\(^3\) As mentioned in Giulio Licinio’s will of 1579. ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 164, n. 520.

\(^4\) As noted by Gustav von Ludwig. Alvise Nadal, brother-in-law of Giovanni Cariani, is one of the Bergamasque notaries whose files contain the names of many Bergamasque immigrants. Ludwig, “Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei. Die Bergamasken in Venedig.”

\(^5\) Favalier, *L’immigration bergamasque à Venise*, p. 86. Marriage registers, which parishes also started to keep in 1564, have not yet been explored as a source for understanding marriage patterns within the Bergamasque community. However, Monica Chojnacka has demonstrated that immigrant women in general did not marry according to a strict pattern. Chojnacka, *Working Women of Early Modern Venice*, pp. 100-101.
yield opportunities for artistic collaboration and patronage. Notarial acts and testaments further reveal ties between artisans from the same region. For instance, in 1515, Bernardino Licinio served as one of the witnesses to the will of an immigrant from the village of Salmezza, located only a short distance from his hometown of Poscante in the province of Bergamo. Later in 1540, the Bergamasque Giovanni Cariani named Arrigo Licinio as one of the administrators of his will, therefore revealing ties with the Licinio family of painters. It has also been suggested that both Cariani and Licinio completed some of Palma Vecchio’s unfinished paintings after his death in 1528. Further ties between Licinio and Palma may also have derived from the neighbourhood, as both lived in the parish of San Stae in the early 1520s.

Giovanni Cariani’s and Palma Vecchio’s ties with the Bergamasque community proved particularly significant and enduring. While Cariani was closely involved with the natives of his village of Fuipano through the Scuola dei SS. Filippo e Giacomo di Fuipano, Palma maintained close relationships with various immigrants from the Bergamasque valleys, as well as with his hometown of Serina. In 1510, Palma acted twice as a witness to the will of Sofía, the wife of

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127 ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 740, n. 48. This is the will of Bernardo di Girardi fariner of Salmezza.


130 Palma is recorded as living in San Stae at least from 1521 to 1523, before which he lived in San Moisé, another parish associated with the Bergamasque community. He also lived in two parishes without any ties to the community: San Giovanni Bragora and San Basso. Philip Rylands, *Palma il Vecchio. L’opera completa* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1988), p. 27.
Rocco Dossena *telarol*, a canvas weaver from the village of Dossena in the Val Brembana.  

Whereas Palma chose two Bergamasques as his own testamentary executors, we learn from his inventory that he had also lent money to an immigrant from the town of Alzano. Moreover, Palma’s will and inventory reveal continued contacts with the native land through pious gifts made to charitable institutions, as well as bequests to family members still living in Serina. He also returned to his hometown at least once upon his brother’s death to take care of family affairs. For many artists such as Palma, immigration did not mean permanent displacement. Other examples of artists who travelled back to the *terraferma* include Cariani, who was active in Bergamo from 1517 to 1523, and Andrea Previtali, who moved back to Bergamo around 1512 after a decade spent in Venice. Interestingly, while in Bergamo Previtali maintained contacts with Venice through commercial activities; from a notarial document of 1525 we learn that he acted as a middleman to a Venetian textile merchant.

Workshops reveal another layer to the network of solidarity that bound this group of immigrants. Apprenticeship contracts – known as *accordi di garzoni* – which were kept by the Giustizia Vecchia systematically from the 1580s onwards show that many young men arriving in Venice became apprentices to Bergamasque masters who were sometimes uncles or other kin, or simply a person who came from the same village. Information gleaned from other sources show that this was also the case earlier in the sixteenth century. While one of Palma’s *garzone*

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131 ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 272, n. 629.
132 ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 740, n. 159.
134 Rylands, *Palma Vecchio*, p. 27.
was Bergamasque – named Alvise Serafin da Bergamo \(^\text{137}\) – the painter Francesco di Simone da Santacroce’s bequest of his *bottega* to his *garzone* Francesco Rizzo di Bernardo, with whom he had no family ties but who originated from his village of Santacroce, is highly significant.\(^\text{138}\) Francesco di Simone, a former pupil of Giovanni Bellini, held an independent *bottega* in the parish of San Cassiano from 1504.\(^\text{139}\) His will of 1508, written on his deathbed, reveals close ties with natives of Santacroce – including two of his testamentary executors and his witnesses – as well as his attachment to the land. Francesco left portions of land to the confraternity of the Misericordia of Santacroce for masses to be told for his own salvation. Francesco di Simone’s workshop remained active under his heir Francesco Rizzo, until the latter’s death in 1545.\(^\text{140}\)

Under Francesco Rizzo, the *bottega* maintained professional relations with another dynasty of painters from the village of Santacroce headed by Girolamo Rizzo.\(^\text{141}\)

However, with time and through succeeding generations, a process of assimilation that eroded a migrant group’s character took place, especially in the case of those of Catholic religion.\(^\text{142}\) Whereas in 1510, Arrigo and Bernardino both acknowledged their Bergamasque origin through their signatures in notarial documents, forty years later, Giulio Licinio would solely emphasize his Venetian identity. In 1553, he signed an altarpiece for the main altar of the

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\(^\text{137}\) In 1532, the Bergamasque painter Alessandro Oliviero acted as a witness to the will of Alvise da Serafin da Bergamo. Ludwig, “Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei. Die Bergamasken in Venedig,” p. 81.


\(^\text{139}\) In the signature to his Murano altarpiece of 1507, he declares himself as a disciple of Giovanni Bellini.

\(^\text{140}\) Under Francesco Rizzo da Santacroce the *bottega* continued to be active in the parish of San Cassiano.


church of S. Antonio Abate in Lonno in the Bergamasque territory as “JULIUS LYCINIUS VENETUS” (Figure 26).\textsuperscript{143} This altarpiece points to another important cultural phenomenon of the period: the export of altarpieces to the mainland. In the following section, I address this issue which sheds light onto the cultural rapport between Venice and the terraferma while pointing to another means by which Bergamasque immigrants maintained a sense of national identity.

**Cultural Contacts: The Export of Altarpieces to the Bergamasque Valleys**

National confraternities facilitated the creation of social and professional networks with other natives, sometimes providing artists patronage opportunities. This was particularly the case of the Greek scuola for whose members Greek painters produced byzantinising devotional images, thus responding to specific devotional and aesthetic demands.\textsuperscript{144} National scuole piccole also acted as corporate patrons in commissioning altarpieces.\textsuperscript{145} The choice of subject matter was intended to gesture towards the patria and the immigrants’ continued attachment to it, thus expressing pride in their collective identity. Yet, by contributing to the decoration of one of the city’s churches, an altarpiece would simultaneously signal the economic and political status of the expatriate community thus underlining its contribution to Venice’s prosperity.\textsuperscript{146} In very rare


cases did national *scuole* favour one of their own, seeking instead the best artist in a spirit of competition with other confraternities. Interestingly, the two exceptions where confraternity members turned to one of their compatriots underlines this rivalry, as they sought artists who were already of great repute. The first example is Donatello’s *Saint John the Baptist* of 1438 commissioned by the Florentine *scuola* for their chapel in the Frari. In 1506, the *scuola* founded by the German community two years earlier took advantage of Albrecht Dürer’s presence in Venice and commissioned the altarpiece of the *Feast of the Rosegarlands* (1505-1506) for their altar in the church of San Bartolomeo a Rialto. The *Scuola dei SS. Filippo e Giacomo di Fuipano*’s commission of an altarpiece to Giovanni Cariani – mentioned above – fits within this context. By contrast, however, the painting was made for a parochial church located outside Venice.

Before the arrival of Lorenzo Lotto in Bergamo in 1513, the city’s artistic culture was dominated by Milanese artists and Venetian painting was still little known. The situation differed in the villages of the Bergamasque territory where altarpieces had been imported from Venice since the fifteenth century. These were destined above all to small parish churches of the Val Seriana and Val Brembana located in the Alpine foothills North of Bergamo. From the 1440s, Jacopo Bellini, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini, Cima da Conegliano and Lattanzio da Rimini

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150 Peter Humfrey repertoried 157 altarpieces commissioned for export between 1450-1530. The largest source of demand came from the Eastern Veneto, with altarpieces destined for cities near Venice such as Treviso, Padua and Rovigo (with 56 altarpieces in total). The Bergamasque valleys were the second most important destinations, with 31 altarpieces repertoried.
all produced polyptychs for villages such as Olera, Sedrina and San Martino (see for instance Cima da Conegliano’s polyptych for a parish church in Olera, 1486-88, Figure 27). In this context, Bartolomeo Vivarini seems to have enjoyed a certain monopoly over commissions for the Val Seriana from 1485 to 1495. The Val Brebbana’s market by contrast, was not dominated by one Venetian bottega alone.\textsuperscript{151} In the Quattrocento, the artists who produced these altarpieces did not have any ties with the region. The situation changed after 1505 with the increasing presence of Bergamasque painters. For instance, in 1504, Francesco di Simone da Santacroce produced an Annunciation for the church of Sant’Alessandro a Spino al Brembo, a small village near his hometown of Santacroce (Figure 28).\textsuperscript{152}

Peter Humfrey suggests that there was a network of contacts between costumers who originated from the terraferma and painters who were native from the same regions but active in Venice. Quite tellingly, a high proportion of Cima da Conegliano’s altarpieces were produced for churches in the province of Treviso, where the town of Conegliano is located.\textsuperscript{153} Similarly, most of the altarpieces that Palma made while in Venice were destined to his hometown of Serina and other villages of the Val Brebbana, as for instance the San Giacomo Polyptych of c.1515, for the church of San Giacomo Maggiore in Peghera di Taleggio (Figure 29).\textsuperscript{154}

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\textsuperscript{151} Peter Humfrey, “L’importazione di dipinti veneziani a Bergamo e nelle sue valli, da Bartolomeo Vivarini a Palma il Vecchio,” in Bergamo. L’altra Venezia, p. 43, 47, note. 3. Vivarini produced polyptychs for Albino (1486) now at the Galleria Ambrosiana; Scanzo (1488), now at the Accademia Carrara; Nese (lost); Alzano (some pieces are now in the parish church of Ranica); Vallata (1490), now at the Getty; San Martino a Torre Boldone, now at the Accademia Carrara.

\textsuperscript{152} See G.V., in Bergamo. L’altra Venezia, pp. 78-79.

\textsuperscript{153} Peter Humfrey, The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice, p. 128. Cima’s work was fairly divided between Venice and the terraferma. The artist also maintained close contact with Conegliano where he owned land and a house, although he was permanently established in Venice. See Peter Humfrey, Cima da Conegliano (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 8-11, 14.

\textsuperscript{154} See Philip Rylands in Bergamo. L’altra Venezia, p. 186-187. Palma produced altarpieces for the churches of San Lorenzo in Zogno (the Adoration of the Shepherds), for the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Serina (the
Bergamasque neighbourhood and community in Venice, in which Palma evolved, may have provided professional opportunities.

The furnishing of local churches with altarpieces and other liturgical objects is indicative of the ties that Bergamasque immigrants maintained with their native land. Such contacts contributed to the immigrants’ sense of national identity. In this case, the paintings themselves acted as agents in maintaining those ties between the land on the one hand, and the patron and artist on the other. As scholars have suggested, the state of poverty that reigned over these regions make it very unlikely that the commissions originated from the villages themselves.\textsuperscript{155} In fact, in 1508, the \textit{Scuola dei Santi Filipo e Giacomo} which reunited people from Fuipano al Brembo met to provide cult objects for the local church “because the people of Fuipano are very poor“ ("poiché la gente di Fuipano è assai povera").\textsuperscript{156} Other cases of documented altarpieces similarly suggest that the commissions were paid for by Bergamasque immigrants, produced in Venice, and sent back as gifts.\textsuperscript{157} In 1541, three wine merchants from Sedrina united to commission Lorenzo Lotto – who has been called a Bergamasque by adoption\textsuperscript{158} – an altarpiece

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Resurrection polyptych}, 1520-22), for the church of Santa Croce of Gerosa (the \textit{Sant’Elena polyptych}, ca.1524), for Alzano Lombardo (the \textit{Saint Peter Martyr Altarpiece}, 1526-28).
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\textsuperscript{156} Palluchini and Rossi, \textit{Giovanni Cariani}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{157} Francesco Rossi, “Pittura a Bergamo intorno al 1500. Ricostituzione di un patrimonio disperso,” \textit{Atti dell’Ateneo di scienze lettere ed arti di Bergamo} XLI (1979): p. 79; Humfrey, “L’importazione di dipinti veneziani a Bergamo e nelle sue valli, da Bartolomeo Vivarini a Palma il Vecchio,” p. 43. In other instances where a client from the terraferma would commission the artist directly, it was not unusual for the painter to travel there to sign a contract.
\textsuperscript{158} Lorenzo Lotto was active in Bergamo from 1513 to 1525 and upon his return to Venice, maintained contacts with various patrons in the terraferma city. He also established social ties with a number of Bergamasque immigrants including artists such as Girolamo da Santacroce, the largely forgotten painter Alessandro Oliviero, and Palma Vecchio, who Vasari describes as Lotto’s friend and companion. See Francesco Rossi, “ ‘Immagine e mito di Venezia. Commitenza artistica e progetto politico a Bergamo tra il 1512 e il 1525,’” in \textit{Bergamo. L’altra Venezia}, p. 23; Vasari - Milanesi, vol. 5, p. 249; Lorenzo Lotto, \textit{Il Libro di spese diverse. Con aggiunta di lettere e d’altri documenti} (Rome, Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1969), pp. 6-7, 108-109, 246. On Alessandro Oliviero see Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré, “Alessandro Oliverio,” in \textit{I pittori bergamaschi}, vol. 1.
for the church of San Giacomo in their native village (Figure 30). Four decades earlier, immigrants from San Martino had similarly formed a syndic to discuss the commissioning of a polyptych for the parochial church of their native village (Figure 31). In that year, they ordered the frame to the sculptor Alessandro da Caravaggio. The year after, in 1500, Lattanzio da Rimini was commissioned to paint the five panels forming the altarpiece. The contract stipulated that the paintings should be as beautiful as Cima’s *Baptism* at San Giovanni e Bragora, produced in 1492-94. Sometimes, the desire to emulate or surpass a painting in the next village was a determining factor in the choice of an artist or model. Francesco Rizzo da Santacroce’s contract for a polyptych for the church of Sedrina required that the work be similar or more beautiful – “ad paragonum et de melius anchone de Leverone” – than the one that his master Francesco di Simone da Santacroce had produced for the nearby parish of Lepreno. In the context of the St Martin polyptych, both painter and frame maker were then entrusted to bring the painting to destination “sana e salva” as the contract specified. Contracts for altarpieces often imposed such conditions so that the artist and frame maker would supervise the installation, or repair any damage caused by transportation.

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161 Humfrey, “L’importazione di dipinti veneziani,” p. 44.
162 In this case, the commission for the altarpiece came directly from Serina. The contract is kept in the archives of Bergamo. See Ludwig, “Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei. Die Bergamasken in Venedig,” p. 6.
164 Humfrey, *Cima da Conegliano*, pp. 14-15. Humfrey notes that in cases where a client from the terraferma would commission the artist directly, it was not unusual for the painter to visit the destinations to sign the contract. This would have enabled a better integration of the composition into the architectural surroundings.
A sense of competition among immigrants who came from various villages might have stimulated the patronage of altarpieces. Offered as gifts, the paintings would have alluded to the patrons’ prosperity abroad and social success. The artist’s signature could sometimes attest to the fact that a painting was a Venetian product; such is the case of a triptych of 1543 produced by Giovanni de Vecchi da Santacroce for the village of Breno, signed “IOANES. DE. GALIZIS. BGOMESIS.| PINXIT. HOC. OPUS. I. VENETIIS” (Figure 32). In this case, Giovanni de Vecchi uses the signature to convey a multi-layered identity as an expatriate painter working abroad by pointing to his Bergamasque origin while specifying that the work was made in Venice.

As scholars have noted, many of these commissions show an enduring preference for the polyptych format, and sometimes for other outmoded features such as golden backgrounds. This is less surprising when coming from more conservative painters, such as Francesco Rizzo da Santacroce, than from a protagonist of the “modern manner,” such as Palma Vecchio. Palma employed the polyptych format in his altarpieces for Serina, Peghera and Gerosa. Humfrey argues that such a preference might have responded to the provincial tastes of a clientele who prioritised the devotional function of the image over artistic innovation. He adds that practical factors could have motivated certain artistic choices, as it was easier to carry large altarpieces in separate pieces, especially in the mountains. However this reasoning does not take into account the

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165 Brudo della Chiesa and Edi Baccheschi, “I pittori da Santa Croce,” in I pittori bergamaschi, vol. 2, pp. 3, 28, 51. He employs the same signature in an altarpiece of Saint Mark enthroned for parish church of S. Maria Assunta in Vertova (also in the Bergamasque province). Giovanni de Vecchi, of whom little is known, was likely tied to Francesco Rizzo’s workshop, who was his cousin. Giovanni da Santacroce’s will of 1565 again reveals that he maintained close ties with his native town, as he leaves all his possessions in the town of Santacroce, to his brother Alvise who still lives there.


167 Humfrey adds that practical factors could have motivated certain artistic choices, as it was easier to carry large altarpieces in separate pieces, especially in the mountains. However this reasoning does not take into account the
factors could have motivated certain artistic choices, as it was easier to carry large altarpieces in separate pieces, especially in the mountains. I would argue that Humfrey invokes the viewers’ “provincial tastes” as part of his explanation because the choice of certain “archaic” forms contradicts a model of artistic progress that evolves without setbacks or interruptions, and which coincides with changes in taste and demand. Indeed, provincial taste does not go a long way in explaining the broad appeal that the painters from Santacroce enjoyed. Their two workshops operated what seems to have been a highly lucrative business of devotional painting for over a century, producing not only works for export but also in response to the local demand in Venice. This shows that the relationship between a “centre” and its “periphery” is much more complex than one of innovation, both in production and taste, and delayed development, especially when producers moved between regions.168

Conclusion

This chapter sought to address two main questions: how have geographical themes been inflected within the construction of Licinio’s identity from a historiographical point of view, and how can the artist’s origin serve to understand aspects of his lived experience. To answer the latter, I have demonstrated the extent of the Bergamasque presence in Venice and that being an immigrant was part of the experience of many other artists. This exemplifies how the simple terminology “Venetian painters,” as Philip Sohm notes, is problematic.169 In the sixteenth and seventeenth

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centuries, many foreigners made Venice their home; in the Cinquecento, some of the city’s greatest painters, including Giorgione, Titian and Veronese, were from “out of town.” Immigrant communities can therefore provide useful lenses through which the everyday experience of painters can be examined, revealing networks of solidarity and kinship ties which, in the present case, enlighten some of the ways in which cultural contacts between Venice and its subject cities took shape. While there is evidence to suggest that Bernardino Licinio’s life intersected with the broader Bergamasque community, this represented only one aspect of his social experience and self-understanding. The following chapters further situate Licinio in relation to Venetian culture and artistic traditions, starting with his visual response to the city’s culture of leisure and entertainment where music occupied pride of place.
CHAPTER 2
MUSIC, PAINTING AND LICINIO’S PUBLIC

Introduction: Musical Cultures

“essendo chiarissima & vera cosa, che la Musica ha la sua propria sede in questa città.”

In *Venetia, citta nobilissima et singolare*, Francesco Sansovino affirmed the unique place that music occupied in Venice and in the lives of its inhabitants. In the sixteenth century, music became an essential part of the cultural as well as political reality of the city. The celebration of civic and religious events involved increasingly elaborate music and ceremony; on such occasions, the choir of San Marco –the finest music establishment in a church outside papal Rome – played a fundamental role. Valued as “an essential component of Venetian self-presentation,” music was put into the service of the State in the elaboration of the “myth of Venice.” Yet, it penetrated both civic and private life, becoming a favoured leisure activity and a suitable form of domestic conviviality at all levels of society.

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5 On the increased importance of different kinds of leisure activities from the late Middle Ages onwards see Peter Burke, “The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe,” *Past & Present*, no. 146 (1995): pp. 136-150.
The vitality of Venice’s musical culture is reflected in its industries of music printing and instrument manufacture as much as in the popularity and variety of its musical iconography. The growth of musical literacy is reflected in the new taste for paintings with musical content. Portraits of musicians and concerts emerged as autonomous subjects in the last decades of the fifteenth century in centres distinguished for their musical vitality, including Ferrara, Mantua, and Venice. It is in Venice, however, that they had most success. From the choir of singing angels that grace Giovanni Bellini’s altarpieces, music emerged as an autonomous subject of secular painting in the first decade of the Cinquecento. With the Concert Champêtre of 1509-1510 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), the Boy with a Flute (Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London) and the Three Ages of Men (also known as The Education of Marcus Aurelius, 6 Various scholars have noted the importance of musical iconography in Venice. See Rosand, “Music in the Myth of Venice,” p. 514; Gabriele Frings, “The Allegory of Musical Inspiration by Niccolò Frangipane: New Evidence in Musical Iconography in Sixteenth-Century Northern Italian Painting,” Artibus et Historiae, vol. 14, no. 28 (1993): p. 141; Patricia Egan, “‘Concert Scenes’ in Musical Paintings of the Italian Renaissance,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 14, no. 2 (1961): p. 189.


8 This is not say that this is an entirely novel theme. Musical representations occur in various contexts in the Medieval period and early Renaissance, in some biblical and mythological scenes, miniatures, tapestries and engravings that allude to courtly pastimes. Nicoletta Guidobaldi, “Musica delle cose invisibili : Le concert dans les peintures italiennes entre le XVe et le XVIe siècle,” in Le concert des voix et des instruments à la Renaissance, p. 317.


11 Ibid, pp.327-328, with an attribution to Titian.
Palazzo Pitti, Florence), Giorgione provided prototypes for these new musical genres (Figure 33, Figure 34, Figure 35).

Licinio’s own engagement with musical themes includes portraits and half-length figure groups where instruments and notations are held, read or played. While his interest for these subjects was not unique, it was arguably more sustained than for his contemporaries. In this chapter, my interest does not lie in musical iconography strictly speaking, but rather in music as a cultural phenomenon that is intimately connected to the material and visual cultural of the time, and to the forms of discourse it generated. Placing Licinio’s music paintings in the context of this broader phenomenon offers great potential for the exploration of his artistic identity, intellectual world, patronage and style. I therefore propose that we take Licinio’s production of music paintings as an identity marker of his patrons and collectors, therefore allowing us to tie the artist to specific communities of interest or in close relation to the public that was fostered by music as a social act that took place in a domestic context. Moreover, the group of images analysed in this chapter brings me to examine the range of music’s cultural associations. Scholars have noted that music paintings, and concerts in particular, often carry meanings associated with an “allegorical and intellectual conception of music as a dream-like interlude in reality,” with the power of music to move and elevate the hearts and minds of men and to bring groups into

12 Ibid, p. 298.
Some of Licinio’s paintings reveal a more prosaic understanding of music, which, although less explored in the Venetian context, deserves equal attention. As I will demonstrate, music’s association with seduction and eroticism is sedimented in images where the theme is employed as a vehicle for social satire and where musical performance is closely associated with courtesanship. Finally, while seeking to enlighten the artist’s social and intellectual milieu, the chapter simultaneously reveals Licinio’s unique stylistic and thematic interpretations of the new genres coined at the beginning of the century, thus providing new ways of understanding his place within the artistic lineage that binds him to Giorgione.

**The Public for Music**

In the late Quattrocento, new pictorial types that reflect the growing prominence and new roles that music came to occupy in the life of the Renaissance gentleman appeared. In the Medieval period, music was mainly associated with Church liturgy, and theory often prized over practice and the enjoyment of sound. By the mid-fifteenth century, the ability to play an instrument became the dominant cultural marker. On the one hand, music as practice came to be associated with princely virtue. On the other, performers and composers, those who wrote and transmitted music, acquired a greater status.

Licinio’s *Portrait of a Man with a Viola da Gamba* of ca. 1515 (Kress Collection, Memphis Brooks Museum) is a good starting point to explore how portraits consolidated new

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forms of identities that emerged with the expansion of Venice’s musical culture (Figure 36). In this painting, a middle-aged man is portrayed bust length in a three-quarter view against a light grey background. He holds the elegant scrolled neck of a viola da gamba as he turns his head to face the viewer, his left hand still placed on the instrument as if we have just interrupted his play. His tired – and slightly annoyed – gaze lends a melancholic and meditative air to the portrait, revealing the influence that Giorgione exercised on Licinio in the first decade of his independent activity. A link can indeed be established with Giorgione’s seductive and slightly androgynous Boy with a Flute. The sensuality conveyed by the moist atmosphere created by Giorgione’s sfumato is also felt in Giovanni Cariani’s Young Man Playing the Lute of 1515-1516 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg) (Figure 34, Figure 37). While we may question if Giorgione’s and Cariani’s musicians are actual portraits or idealised images of male youths, Licinio’s minute rendering of the sitter’s physiognomy leaves no doubt that this is a portrait. The artist here provides a detailed visual description of the man’s balding skull, five o’clock shadow, pointed eyebrows and frown lines. Whereas Giorgione’s and Cariani’s paintings are bound to the pastoral idyll and imagination, Licinio’s middle-aged sitter speaks to the place of music among elite forms of sociability.

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19 The viola da gamba here depicted has eleven pegs instead of six. However, inconsistencies in the depiction of musical instruments are frequent.

20 On Cariani’s painting see Rodolfo Pallucchini and Francesco Rossi, Giovanni Cariani (Milan: Cinisello, 1983), pp. 140-141.

In the *Book of the Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione advocated the cultivation of practical music as “not only an ornament but a necessity for the courtier,” especially sight reading from scores ‘con bella maniera’. In addition, the courtier should be proficient in what Castiglione calls ‘il cantare alla viola per recitare.’ The author here refers to the “widespread tradition of improvised declamatory song performed to a simple instrumental accompaniment.” Iain Fenlon explains that Castiglione’s remarks “reflect the new emphasis upon music as a social accomplishment, as a form of entertainment, to be performed with a certain professionalism, but by amateurs.” *Sprezzatura*, the art of dissimulating effort and learning, was an important aspect of the amateur’s performance. As James Haar notes, while the courtier should be “feigning a slight acquaintance with the art, he would nonetheless take care to give a pretty good account of himself whenever he did perform.” The courtier should strictly perform when urged by others, and distinguish himself from professional musicians as someone who only makes music for leisure, or “per passer tempo.”

The increased importance of musical skills in a social context is signalled by the appearance of elegantly dressed performers in portraiture as seen in Giovanni Cariani’s *Portrait*.

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23 Ibid, p. 73.

24 Ibid, p. 73.

25 Ibid, p. 73.


of a Young Man Playing the Lute as well as in Gian Girolamo Savoldo’s Portrait of a Young Man with a Recorder (Private Collection, New York) (Figure 37, Figure 38). In the latter, a variety of musical objects appear as symbols of culture, including a flute, a notation book on the table and a folded sheet of music pinned to the wall. At the same time, the young man’s fashionable dress – especially the fur piece worn over his grey velvet cloak – attest to his rank and wealth.\textsuperscript{29} Whereas the sitter of Licinio’s Portrait of a Man with a Viola da Gamba wears much simpler clothing, their materials are equally luxurious. With the lighting source coming from the left, the painter directs our attention to the smooth texture of the white silk \textit{camicica} that carelessly spills over his collar and through his sleeve, to fall onto his brown damask overcoat. Given Castiglione’s recommendation to cultivate skills in instruments from the viol family, the sitter’s presentation with the newly fashionable \textit{viola da gamba} speaks to his refined taste as an amateur practitioner, while his elongated and delicate fingers suggest his virtuosic musical skills.\textsuperscript{30} Although a clear distinction between representations of professional and amateur musicians is difficult to establish, I argue that the nonchalance and elegance conveyed in Licinio’s portrait indicates a type of musically accomplished patron from the patrician or \textit{cittadini} class for whom music was an important aspect of social life.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} There is lack of consensus as to the dating of this picture. As early as 1525 has been suggested, while the date 1539 has been read on the folded music sheet on the wall where Savoldo’s signature appears. See H. Colin Slim, “Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo’s ‘Portrait of a Man with a Recorder’,” \textit{Early Music}, vol.13, no.3 (1985): pp. 398-406; Pier Virgilio Begni Redona, in \textit{Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo tra Foppa e Caravaggio} (Milan: Electa, 1990), p. 172-173.

\textsuperscript{30} Haar, “The Courtier as Musician,” p. 174.

\textsuperscript{31} See Deborah Howard, “The Role of Music in the Venetian Home in the Cinquecento,” in \textit{The Music Room in Early Modern France and Italy: Sound, Space and Object}, pp. 95-114. For another portrait where the sitter’s identity as a professional or amateur musician is ambiguous see Giovanni Cariani’s Portrait of a Gentleman with a Lute and a Dog, ca.1520-1522 (Huntington Museum of Art, Huntington). Pallucchini and Rossi, \textit{Giovanni Cariani}, p. 121.
In Venice, professional and amateur musicians gathered to perform as well as to discuss theoretical questions, especially the topics of the paragone, the comparison of music to other arts, and the nature of music from the classical past. Taking place in private homes, these informal gatherings united scholars, writers, musicians and artists. From Paolo Pino’s Dialogo di pittura and Vasari’s Lives, we learn that many Venetian artists, including Giorgione, Pordenone, Sebastiano del Piombo, Paris Bordone and Tintoretto excelled at music as much as in painting. While Giorgione was noted for his lute playing and singing, Sebastiano’s “first profession,” Vasari writes, “was not painting but music, since, besides being a singer, he much delighted to play various kinds of instruments and particularly the lute.” Both artists performed at social gatherings, entertaining close friends or the nobility. Sebastiano’s music in particular “made him very dear to the gentlemen of Venice, with whom, as a man of talent, he always associated on intimate terms.” By making references to musical skills – and to a particular taste for instruments played by noblemen such as the lute and the lira da braccio – Vasari provides an image of the ideal artist-courtier, one that echoes Castiglione’s perfect courtier: a man accomplished in all the arts.

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Bornemisza Museum) alludes to the status of music as a courtly activity or noble pastime by bringing together professionals and amateurs, including artists (Figure 39).\textsuperscript{38} Painted in Bologna c. 1493, it features identifiable individuals from the Bentivoglio court as their names are inscribed in the upper part of the image along with Roman numerals; they include three Bentivoglio brothers and their sister,\textsuperscript{39} Bonaparte dalle Tovaglie, \emph{maestro di cappella} at the cathedral of San Pietro in Bologna, and the painter himself represented in the lower left corner.

The availability of musical instruments and printed music provided the material conditions for these social gatherings. From the 1520s onwards, the number of musical instruments encountered in household inventories witnessed a general increase and their presence kept growing in the following decades. Various types of keyboards, including spinets, clavichords and harpsichord, lutes, instruments from the viol family and the \emph{lira da braccio} were most frequently encountered.\textsuperscript{40} Musical activity took place at all levels of society and instruments were also commonly found in artisans’ households and among the personal possessions of women for whom it was sometimes easier to acquire musical knowledge than other types of instruction.\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, the presence of musical notations in paintings, as can be seen in Licinio’s \emph{Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary}, his \emph{Allegory of Love} and the \emph{Portrait of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Antongaleazzo} Antongaleazzo, Ermes, Alessandro and Bianca Bentivoglio Rangona.
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a Woman with a Music Book, speaks to the greater availability of written music, and especially of printed music aimed at the professional performer and the competent amateur (Figure 20, Figure 40 and Figure 41). Venice played a determinant role in the field’s development; in the first decades of the sixteenth century it shared monopoly over the industry with Rome before dominating it fully in the 1530s.  

The type of music book held by the sitter of Licinio’s Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary of 1524 (York Art Gallery, UK) was the most commonly printed genre of music (Figure 20). By the late 1480s, Venice had already gained a position as a world centre in the field of printed music, issuing more than half of the Italian music incunabula, most of them being Roman missals for liturgical use. In the first decades of the sixteenth century, a broad variety of music for domestic performance and of a song repertory in fashion in Northern Italian courts was disseminated, especially through Ottaviano Petrucci’s early production. Nevertheless, Venice would remain one of the major centres for the publication of plainchant service books. In the Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary we cannot affirm with the utmost certainty that the artist wished to suggest printed notation, especially since the models used for the early printed volumes, both in terms of format and design were the manuscript books already in use.

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42 Music printing was a multiple impression process with technical challenges. Print runs were usually small and the final product costly. Perfected in Venice in 1538, the single-impression process allowed the mass production of music books. See Fenlon, Music, Print and Culture, p. 21; Jane A. Bernstein, Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 22.

43 Fenlon, Music, Print and Culture, pp. 59-60. Bernstein, Print Culture and Music, p. 11. The sack of Rome precipitated the shift from Rome to Venice where music printing reached its peak between 1540 and 1575. The Scotto and Guardano presses were the two most important music presses with a specialisation in music. Their enterprises are discussed at length in Bernstein, Print Culture and Music.

44 Bernstein, Print Culture and Music, p. 20.

45 This included sung madrigals and instrumental music written for the keyboard and the lute. Petrucci also printed the first book of sheet music using moveable type in 1501. Fenlon, Music, Print and Culture, pp. 18-20; Dennis, “Music,” p. 228.

46 Bernstein, Print Culture and Music, p. 20.
Nonetheless, the opened page displays the combination of staves and notes that were characteristically printed in red and black respectively in liturgical chant books (see detail, Figure 43). The decorative initial at the bottom of the page may however have been illuminated by hand, thus adding value to the object. By contrast to the Portrait of a Man with a Viola da Gamba where the fashionable viola functions as an attribute of the sitter’s refinement and musical taste, the liturgical music book represented in the Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary may instead signal a form of musical identity tied to professional activity. While the prestigious music establishment of San Marco employed many musicians, the city’s churches – nearly two-hundred of them – and the scuole grandi provided numerous employment opportunities. Dressed in a black cloak made of expansive watered silk, the self-presentation of the sitter of Licinio’s portrait speaks to the greater social status that professional musicians acquired throughout the sixteenth century. With liturgical music as an attribute, he is perhaps a maestro di cappella. At this time, the maestro di cappella emerged as a professional figure. No longer strictly a music teacher and the leader of singers during the liturgical office, he acquired greater status as a composer responsible for the repertoire, sometimes even collaborating with music publishers.

From the two portraits analysed, we may surmise that Licinio was acquainted both with amateur and professional musicians. Archival documents prove this to be true. Legal wills show

that the Licinio family was to some degree connected to the Brescian nobleman Vincenzo Capirola, a lute theorist and composer whose presence is recorded intermittently in Venice.\textsuperscript{52} Today, he is mostly remembered for the so-called *Capirola Lutebook* (1515-1520), an illuminated manuscript on lute playing and composition, with a preface containing practical information on technique (Figure 44).\textsuperscript{53} In 1528 and 1533, Capirola and Arrigo Licinio both served as witnesses to the wills of two sisters: Elisabetta da Polo and Marietta di Alberti.\textsuperscript{54} That they were both chosen to testify to the wills of two members of the same family suggests that they may have gravitated within the same social circle.

There is no known portrait of Vincenzo Capirola. Yet, a *Portrait of a Man with Musical Instruments* (Private Collection) attributed to Bernardino Licinio most probably alludes to a similar type of identity: the music theorist or composer (Figure 45). The sitter is surrounded with musical things. On the table behind him we see a lute and a *viola da braccio* placed on top of sheets with musical notation, as if to hold them in place. The inscription “ET TEMPORI” (“And time”) appears directly above the instruments. The musician holds a *cornetto* in his hand, either pausing from playing or about to bring the instrument to his mouth. The amalgamation of different types of instruments and music sheets – loose rather than bound into a book – may indicate that he is in the process of completing his harmony and even perhaps about to add some notes to the lower staff which remains unfinished. The *Portrait of a Composer* (Private

\textsuperscript{52} Capirola’s presence is recorded in Venice in the late 1510s (1517), and then again in 1528 and 1533.


\textsuperscript{54} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 190, n. 232, 463.
Collection, Bergamo) attributed to Giovanni Cariani for instance shows a composer at work, quill in hand and about to add notes to his musical score (Figure 46).

The selection of objects seen in the Portrait of a Man with Musical Instruments further reveals the nature of his musical activity. Curiously, the instrument he holds and is about to play is a type of flute; despite its frequent use in chamber ensembles, the flute did not bestow fame upon a virtuoso. Sixteenth-century writers instead eulogize and celebrate the virtuosity of musicians who excelled at the lute, the viola da gamba, the harpsichord, the organ and certain wind instruments, but not the flute. The lower status sometimes accorded to the flute is seen in a Concert of c.1530-1540 (Museo Borgogna, Vercelli) – once attributed to Licinio – where two male figures blow into cornetti, their faces slightly deformed by the pull of their instrument placed at the corner of their mouths (Figure 47). In addition, in this painting where city and country people are united, music possibly takes on erotic connotations as the flute-playing shepherd and the voluptuous woman to his right stand in a somewhat illicit embrace. In certain images however, the flute’s inclusion may act as a symbol of a profession rather than referring specifically to a musician’s practice. In Renaissance treatises, the flute is very often associated with Euterpe, who in Greek mythology was the Muse of music. Euterpe therefore symbolises the inspiration that the composer required. Moreover, the group of instruments seen in Licinio’s

55 Pallucchini and Rossi, Giovanni Cariani, pp. 273-274.
56 Morelli, “Portraits of Musicians,” p. 53.
57 Castiglione advises the courtier against the choice of wind instruments. The Book of the Courtier, p. 77 (II, 13). On the painting see Vittorio Viale, I dipinti. Catalogo. Civico Museo Francesco Borgogna Vercelli (Vercelli: Museo Borgogna, 1969), pp. 75-76 (with an attribution to a painter from the Veneto); Ana Maria Rybko, in Colori della musica: Dipinti, strumenti e concerti tra Cinquecento e Seicento, pp. 124-125. The effect of different types on wind instrument on the face of their players is further exaggerated in the Musicians, c. 1545, attributed to Giorgio Vasari (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston).
58 Morelli, “Portraits of Musicians,” p. 54.
portrait corresponds to the one seen on the frontispiece of Pietro Aaron’s *Toscanello in musica* published in Venice in 1523, which features the portrait of the author (Figure 48). In this image, the music theorist is depicted as a teacher. Sitting on an elevated chair in the centre of the image, he is surrounded with students on both sides with books placed on shelves behind. Most interesting, however, are the objects placed on the table in the foreground of the image: a lute, a *viola da braccio*, a flute, a part book and a small string box. Apart from the latter, the same objects appear in Licinio’s *Portrait of a Man with Musical Instruments* thus lending credence to the suggestion that the man represented is a music theorist or composer.

The portraits featuring professional and amateur musicians produced by Licinio and his contemporaries are imbricated within the homosocial networks to which the informal academies discussed above gave rise. Although Castiglione advised his ideal courtier to be proficient in music in order to seduce women, in Venice, women, and more particularly courtesans, came to occupy a place within such musical gatherings only later in the century. How Licinio interacted with members of this cultural elite is unknown. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that his interest in musical themes was stimulated both by his own skills in performing music and by his engagement with the social networks outlined above. While I have already pointed out the

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60 By the mid-sixteenth century portraits of composers were relatively common. Examples include: Domenico Brusasorci’s *Portrait of Giovanni Nasco*, 1547 (Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona) represented with a flute, a bass viol and a music sheet and Giuseppe Belli’s *Portrait of Gasparo de Albertis*, 1547 (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo) where the sitter is identified by an inscription and the transcription of one of his sacred compositions. See Fenlon, “The Status of Music and Musicians,” p. 67.


62 See Guidobaldi, “Musica delle cose invisibili,” p. 321. Such connections between a painter’s rendering of musical themes and his musical skills and training have been suggested for other artists including Savoldo who was possibly acquainted with the lute maker Magnus Tieffenbrucker the Elder. See Slim, “Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo’s ‘Portrait of a Man with a Recorder’,” pp. 399-400.
Licini’s ties to the lute theorist Vincenzo Capirola, Bernardino’s friendship with Ludovico Dolce, who was a regular participant in the academies, must be recalled. As mentioned in the thesis’ introduction, Dolce’s preface to Horace’s Ars Poetica suggests personal ties to “[il] mio Bernardin Licin” as he calls him. Licinio’s involvement with a musically educated network of men may therefore have offered patronage opportunities. For instance, it might have been Sebastiano del Piombo’s musical skills that led to Philippe de Verdelot’s commissioning of his portrait. Vasari describes the now lost painting that Sebastiano executed while still active in Venice as the portrait of “the Frenchman Verdelotto, a most excellent musician, who was then chapelmaster in S. Marco, and in the same picture that of his companion Ubretto, a singer.”

Scholars have also attempted to associate Leonardo’s Portrait of a Musician of 1486-1487 (Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan), the first image of the type from the fifteenth century, with various professional musicians among the artist’s acquaintances and friendships when he was resident in Milan (Figure 49).

In sum, the portraits discussed in this section can be taken as indicators of social networks that involved artists, poets, noblemen and musicians, both professional and amateurs, and with which Licinio interacted. Being intimately bound to Venice’s blooming musical culture, images related to performance further demonstrate how painters contributed to the discourses that animated these milieux.

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63 Vasari – De Vere, vol. 6, p. 173. While Vasari is mistaking when he writes that Verdelot was maestro di cappella at San Marco, he may however have held another position in Venice. Iain Fenlon and James Haar, The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 38.

64 Musicologists have suggested various identifications, including Franchino Gaffurio (1451-1522), maestro di capella of Milan’s cathedral and personal friend of the artist. Because of the sitter’s young age, a most likely hypothesis is the Florentine musician Atalante Migliorotti (1466-1532) to whom Leonardo allegedly taught music and who is believed to have journeyed with the artist from Florence to Milan in 1482-1483. Luke Syson, in Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan, ed. Luke Syson (London; New Haven: National Gallery, Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 95-97.
The Sight of Sound

Leonardo famously said that “music is not to be regarded as other than the sister of painting, in as much as she is dependent on hearing, second sense behind that of sight. She composes harmony from the conjunction of her proportional parts, which make their effect instantaneously, being constrained to arise and die in one or more harmonic intervals.”\(^{65}\) Permanence and ephemerality distinguish painting and music; while painting will endure, in order to be reborn and re-experienced, sound necessitates numerous performances by music.\(^{66}\) Leonardo’s *paragone* between the art of painting and music is well-known, and so is the declared superiority of painting for its capacity to outlive sonic experiences.\(^{67}\) The popularity of paintings where the musical is encoded within the visual testifies to the vitality of these discussions which were addressed in academies and musical gatherings. I suggest that Licinio participated in this discourse through images that demonstrate the medium’s capacity to trigger a multi-sensorial experience.

Licinio visualises sound and the effects of sound in a group of paintings related to the theme of the concert. In the painting currently entitled *Allegory of Love* of c.1520 (Koelliker Collection, Milan), he does so by calling attention to the experience of musical time (Figure 40). The painting features two men and a woman portrayed in a room with an arched window

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overlooking a landscape. They stand behind a stone ledge with eight delicate rosebuds. Gazing meditatively towards the landscape, the woman holds a pair of gloves in her right hand and a music book in her left hand. The music book is positioned straight against the stone ledge so that its opened pages face an unseen presence outside the picture frame, perhaps a viewer-musician.

Three other versions of the half-length figure group exist, thus attesting to the popularity of the composition. Two are partial copies by Licinio or members of the workshop, where the group is reduced to the female figure and the bearded man (Figure 50). The third version, possibly made in the seventeenth century, replicates the entire composition while leaving the staves of the music book empty (Figure 51).

The painting relates to illustrations of concerts featuring half-length figures that were popular in Venice in the first two decades of the century. Notable examples of the type include Giorgione’s *Three Ages of Man*, Titian’s *Interrupted Concert* of c. 1511-1512 (Pitti Gallery, Florence), Giovanni Cariani’s *A Concert* of c.1518-1520 (National Gallery of Art, Washington), and Licinio’s own *Concert with a Garland* (Private Collection, New York) (Figure 35, Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54). Scholars have also stressed its formal connection to a figurative

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70 Moro, in *L’anima e il volto*, p. 80. The two partial versions were sold at Christie’s, New York, Friday, January 11, 1991 [Lot 21 and 80].

71 The current location is unknown. A black-and-white photograph in the photo-archive of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence (no. 324310) identifies it as as copy after Bernardino Licinio.
scheme without musical connotations composed of two men and a woman, which was coined by Titian in the 1510s. In *The Lovers* (Royal Collection, London) a woman, eyes closed and partly undressed, leans against the man who in turn fondles her breast. A second man stands behind her, overlooking the scene (Figure 55).72 The grouping of two men and a woman is seen in Paris Bordone’s *The Lovers*, 1525-1530 (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan), a painting which has received multiple interpretations, from a marriage portrait to a “ménage à trois” (Figure 56).73 While Licinio’s painting is formally related to these images, it does not share the theme of physical possession or the sexual ambiguity that characterise Titian’s and Bordone’s examples. Instead, love is presented in a more idealised form and it has been suggested that the painting features an allegory of love, especially based on the long visual tradition that connects love to music.74 In the painting, a close association is further established between female beauty and music as the woman holds the part book; they stand for one another in inspiring man’s passion, possibly that of the man who stands behind. But the woman’s partner in love may also be the unseen musician outside of the picture frame, and to whom the musical score is directed. Other iconographical elements reinforce the theme of love: the gloves may suggest the woman’s longing for her beloved, while the roses scattered on the parapet would have readily been understood as the flowers of Venus. Set against the immutable surface of stone, the roses however act as a

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72 Another version is in the Casa Buonarotti in Florence. In both cases, the attribution has been debated. Lucy Whitaker and Martin Clayton, *The Art of Italy in the Royal Collection: Renaissance and Baroque* (London: Royal Collection, 2007), pp. 191-193.


74 Guidobaldi, “Musica delle cose invisibili,” p. 325.
reminder of the transience of youth and beauty, as well as of the ephemerality of music represented through the musical score.  

While love is an important theme of the image, I suggest that the rosebuds and music book, which project into the viewer’s space and with which he/she is first confronted, introduce the real subject of the image: musical time. In the Portrait of a Man with Musical Instruments Licinio alluded to the experience of musical time most literally through the inscription “Et tempori,” located directly above the musical objects (Figure 45). In the Allegory of Love, the musical notation, which the viewer is invited to scrutinize, stands in for music as measured time while the roses convey the idea of transience. In addition, I would argue that the experience of musical time is further reinforced by the gesture performed by the older bearded man who raises a hand with an extended index finger. This hand gesture has been interpreted both as form of instruction directed to his younger companion – warning him of the dangers of love and beauty – and as an invitation to silence. Instead, I suggest that with his raised index the man is keeping the tactus, or musical beat, thus “physically enacting the passage of measured musical time.” Jane Hatter recently identified a variety of fifteenth and sixteenth-century visual sources where a member of an ensemble performs the tactus by lowering or raising a hand or a single finger. An example is seen in Lorenzo Costa’s Concert of c. 1485-95 (National Gallery, London). In this musical performance, the singers keep the tactus by tapping on the table with one or two

75 Humfrey, in The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections, p. 100.
76 Time is a shared theme of many music paintings especially when the theme of the concert intersects with the conceit of the three ages of men as in Titian’s Interrupted Concert or Giorgione’s Three Ages of Men. Patricia Egan, “‘Concert Scenes’ in Musical Paintings of the Italian Renaissance,” p. 190.
77 Franco Moro, in L’anima e il volto, p. 80; Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 432.
extended fingers (Figure 57). In Licinio’s work, the gesture is fully performed as the man raises both his hand and his index. Based on these iconographical elements, I suggest that we retitle Licinio’s Allegory of Love as Allegory of Musical Time.

Licinio expressed the notion of tactus or musical beat in a contemporary painting which, while devoid of any musical content, suggests an embodied experience of music. Produced c. 1520, The Seduction (Private Collection, California) shows a partly undressed woman with unbound golden tresses falling in cascades over her shoulders together with an elegantly dressed young man (Figure 58). The female figure – most probably a courtesan given the context – shows the strong influence of Palma Vecchio’s voluptuous belle donne, most particularly his contemporary Flora (National Gallery, London) (Figure 59). The man looks longingly at her while holding her wrist. With his thumb on the back of her wrist and his index and middle finger placed on its inner side, he seems to be taking her pulse. The pulse taking gesture rarely if ever appears in Venetian and Italian painting from this time period. Instead, it is a common motif of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting where it appears as a diagnostic measure for love sickness; following Galen, the character of the pulse was understood to reflect the emotional condition of a patient. For example, in Jan Steen’s The Doctor’s Visit, c.1663-1665 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), the pulse taking gesture is combined with the sudden sight of the woman’s young lover seen in the doorframe (Figure 60). In the Renaissance, the pulse was also

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81 Vertova also recognizes the gesture as pulse taking. Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 414
ascribed musical meaning; it is to the understanding of “the pulse as a musical tactus of the human body” to which Licinio’s *The Seduction* visually alludes. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, medical theorists from Northern Italy discussed the nature of the music of pulse by drawing analogies with musical practice. Among the commonly held ideas were the beliefs that musical numerical proportions and musical consonance were both found in the pulse, and that “the duration and or intensity of pulsebeats corresponded to particular, identifiable musical proportions.” Music theorists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries followed in justifying “the tactus as a kind of human pulse,” using medical terms to describe musical phenomena.

In Licinio’s *The Seduction*, the young man responds to the courtesan’s pulse by placing a hand on his chest in a well-known sincerity gesture. But with this gesture he may also be feeling his own heartbeat. It should be noted that his left index is raised slightly as if performing tactus, thus suggesting that he is attempting to synchronise his own heart with hers in order to reach Harmony. In this case, the heart is conceived as a musical instrument; the theme of the young man who tunes his heart to his lover’s relates to the tuning figures seen in concert scenes and especially in *fêtes champêtres*. This motif occurs in two pastoral concerts, by Giovanni Cariani (Private collection, Paris) and attributed to Palma Vecchio (Private Collection, England), which

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83 Hatter, “*Col tempo,*” p. 3.
85 Hatter, “*Col tempo,*” pp. 3-4.
86 On the tuning figure and its meaning see Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, pp. 137-150.
feature the moment leading to the forthcoming performance: notations are studied, voices prepared and instruments tuned (Figure 61, Figure 62).\textsuperscript{87}

In the \textit{Allegory of Musical Time} and \textit{The Seduction}, the \textit{tactus} and the conceit of tuning provide ways of suggesting sound, or the attention to sound and voice.\textsuperscript{88} The depiction of a musical performance where the viewer is led to imagine the sound of the instruments depicted was however the most straightforward way of lending an implication of sound to mute imagery.

In half-length figure groups more specifically, the close-up view allowed painters to explore the effects of music over the sitters’ physiognomies, as they sing or play an instrument. Giovanni Cariani provides an eloquent example in \textit{A Concert} where the central figure plays and sings; his lips are parted, his gaze turned upwards as if to seek musical inspiration (Figure 53).\textsuperscript{89} His absorption within his own performance comes out sharply as we compare the passive expressions of the men flanking him. We find the same relationship between musical absorption and impassivity in Licinio’s \textit{Concert with a Garland} which features a woman playing the lute accompanied by three men of different states: a soldier, a gentlemen and possibly a theatrical performer (Figure 54).\textsuperscript{90} The tilt of her head and her upward gaze echoes Cariani’s lute player, while members of her eclectic audience seem unaffected by her performance.

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\textsuperscript{88} Quiviger, \textit{The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art}, p. 144.


In the *Concert with a Garland*, the artist introduces yet another way to suggest the implication of sound, this time through purely formal means. The fruits and vegetables that compose the garland that hangs above the four figures appear like a cluster of notes on a musical staff, which are echoed by the repetition of heads aligned directly below. The figures are separated into two groups: the soldier and the man in a striped shirt in the background, and the woman and gentleman located slightly forward. In each group, the figures adopt the same position, with their heads titled towards the other and in each case forming the same diamond shaped negative space. Simple shapes are also repeated. The curve of the woman’s lute is echoed in the roundness of her face, in her *capigliara* and in her voluminous sleeves. A rhythmic play on repeated forms, *The Concert with a Garland* visually suggests a musical melody.

By making music visible, Licinio’s paintings claim an image’s capacity to captivate the viewer within a multi-sensorial experience that monopolizes both sight and hearing, and which extends through time. Yet, the *Allegory of Musical Time*, with which I have introduced this theme, relies on an external presence to be completed or activated (Figure 40). We may indeed think of this work as an inverted concert, as the actual performance takes place outside the picture frame. The opened part book features real playable music for instruments and is oriented to face a viewer/musician – or a group of them – located to the left of the painting following the orientation of the pages and the woman’s gaze. The ideal response would therefore be for the viewer(s) to engage in a musical performance, thus providing the external stimulus to which the bearded man responds by beating the *tactus*. Following this scenario, the group portrayed takes on the role of the audience. A parallel may therefore be established with the scenographic concerns expressed in a collector’s display of images with musical content. In the

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91 Humfrey, in *The Age of Titian*, p. 100.
seventeenth century, Paolo del Sera placed Titian’s *Interrupted Concert* next to a portrait of Monteverdi by Bernardo Strozzi, so that the composer appeared to be listening to music (Figure 52).92

With music as an important aspect of courtliness and domestic entertainment, musical paintings – which may have evoked the musical gatherings taking place inside the palazzo – would have triggered a form of social play that exploited what Flora Dennis calls “the new social currency of musical literacy.” 93 In the context of the academies and social gatherings described in the previous section, such paintings would have tested a viewer’s musical knowledge – especially in the case of paintings with musical inscriptions – or stimulated the imagined re-enactment of known melodies or musical sound.94 By encoding the musical within the visual, painters inevitably sought to demonstrate their own ingenuity and to challenge their audience’s discernment; as such, musical paintings inscribe themselves within the spirit of the *paragone* which, in the first two decades of the sixteenth-century, had been stimulated by the growing sense of competition among artists.95

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Satire and Morality

Whereas music evolved as an essential component of domestic conviviality, another equally strong visual and literary current attached it much less dignified or socially elevating meanings, by pointing instead to its intersection with seduction and eroticism, and its association with dubious morality.\textsuperscript{96} In Venice, this was expressed in various ways, from the decoration of musical instruments to allusions to sexual practice in sung texts.\textsuperscript{97} The analogy between the human body and musical instruments was a recurring theme of a vast body of literary sources, including riddles and carnival songs. While instruments are described with references to human anatomy, the acts of ‘making music’ or ‘playing instruments’ take on sexual connotations, with the manual dexterity required for both lover and musician being sometimes equated.\textsuperscript{98} This section demonstrates how Licinio’s work contributed to the development of these ideas by turning the pastoral concert to satire and by presenting music as a sensual and erotic invite. The body of work analysed will also reveal the intersection between painting and vernacular theater, as they share a fascination with urban social types, especially the courtesan.

\textit{The Old Man and the Hurdy-Gurdy}

We can start by looking at the \textit{Double Portrait with a Hurdy-Gurdy} produced in the early 1520s (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) as an image that calls into question the Neoplatonic

\textsuperscript{96} The two contradictory meanings of music – as a metaphor for order and harmony and as an incitement to licence and impropriety – are found in classical sources. See Vergo, \textit{That Divine Order}, pp. 15-17.

\textsuperscript{97} Flora Dennis, “Unlocking the Gates of Chastity: Music and the Erotic in the Domestic Sphere in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Italy,” in \textit{Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy}, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Ashgate, 2010), p. 224.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid, p. 226.
meanings generally granted to the theme of the concert (Figure 63).\textsuperscript{99} The painting features a corpulent old man crowned with ivy playing the hurdy-gurdy for his younger female companion. Scholars have emphasised the image’s allegorical and pastoral meanings. Jaynie Anderson described the painting as a “veristic likeness” suggesting an “allegorical portrait, about the relationship between marital harmony or love and musical inspiration.”\textsuperscript{100} Claudia Kryza-Gersch described the man as a poet musician – because of his ivy crown – thus relating the image to the tradition of performing pastoral lyrical poetry to the sound of music.\textsuperscript{101} Seen in profile, the woman is represented with parted lips, thus suggesting that she is singing to the sound of her companion’s instrument.\textsuperscript{102} By contrast to these scholars, I wish to call attention to two unusual features that have not previously been commented upon, and which, I suggest, reveal the painting’s satirical overtone: the choice of the hurdy-gurdy as the musician’s instrument and the formal contrast created by the juxtaposition of the male and the female figures.

While medieval iconographic sources include the hurdy-gurdy in the context of the performance of sacred music, in the fifteenth century, the hurdy-gurdy lost prestige. Its decline in status is signalled through its increasing association with peasants and social outcasts: the poor,
the blind, vagabonds and street performers.\textsuperscript{103} In Dutch and French art where the hurdy-gurdy is more commonly seen, the instrument is often invested with negative meanings.\textsuperscript{104} The itinerant hurdy-gurdy musician is often represented as malicious and deceiving. In other contexts, the instrument is associated with vice and sometimes even acquires demonic connotations. For example, an oversize hurdy-gurdy appears in the \textit{Hell} panel of Hieronymus Bosch’s \textit{Garden of Earthly Delights} of c. 1510-1515 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) (Figure 64). In Hans Holbein’s \textit{Danse Macabre} print series, it is performed by the figure of death in the \textit{Expulsion of Adam and Eve} as a way to emphasise their fallen state (Figure 65).\textsuperscript{105} The hurdy-gurdy appears only rarely in Italian art; the shepherds and nymphs inhabiting pastoral landscapes usually carry instruments such as lutes, flutes or more specific instruments associated with mythological figures. The hurdy-gurdy can however be seen in a small number of printed images. In an engraving by the Master of 1515, it is played by a satyr while a woman and an infant sleep below a statue of Pan (Figure 66).\textsuperscript{106} The instrument’s association with the satyr reinforces its meaning as a symbol of lust, while the cranking motion necessary to produce music has been interpreted as a reflection of the sexual act.\textsuperscript{107} In Domenico Campagnola’s \textit{Landscape with a Hurdy-Gurdy Player and a Girl} of c. 1540, the hurdy-gurdy is similarly associated with dubious morality and unbridled sexuality.

\textsuperscript{103} Dipingere la musica, p. 115; Emanuel Winternitz, \textit{Musical Instruments and their Symbolism in Western Art: Studies in Musical Iconology} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.), pp. 73-75.


\textsuperscript{105} Robert Quist, \textit{The Theme of Music in Northern Renaissance Banquet Scenes} (PhD Thesis, The Florida State University, 2004), p. 105. Examples of paintings where the hurdy-gurdy is invested with a negative meaning include Bosch’s \textit{Saint Anthony Triptych}, 1501 (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon), Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s \textit{The Blind Leading the Blind}, 1568 (Museo di Capdimonte, Naples), and Jacop Cornelisz van Oostsanen’s \textit{Saul and the Witch of Endor}, 1526 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

\textsuperscript{106} In another engraving on the theme of the “satyr’s family” by the Master of 1515, the satyr plays a viol while dancing to the sound of his own music. See Mark J. Zucker, \textit{The Illustrated Bartsch}, 25, \textit{Commentary} (New York: Abaris Books, 1993), pp. 580-582.

\textsuperscript{107} Quist, \textit{The Theme of Music in Northern Renaissance Banquet Scenes}, p. 138.
In this woodcut, Campagnola – who like his master and adoptive father Giulio Campagnola was strongly influenced by Northern art – shows a hurdy-gurdy player who attempts to seduce a much younger woman. The musician is old, bearded and dressed in rags, and although his courtship unfolds in a landscape, it is far removed from the image of the young amorous couples seen in the pastoral imagery of the early sixteenth century.

The theme of lechery, which Campagnola conveys through the combination of the hurdy-gurdy and the contrast between youth and old age is also at play in Licinio’s painting. There is a striking contrast between the visual idioms used to render each sitter: the woman’s fair complexion, blonde hair and idealised profile is set against the almost grotesque appearance of her corpulent and significantly older male companion who wears an ivy crown over his receding hairline. The artist treated his face with greater naturalism, emphasising his frown lines, darkened eye sockets and earthy complexion. His image is therefore more in tune with the grotesque-looking musician seen in the Man with a Lute, a Florentine engraving of c.1470, as well as with the overweight ivy-crowned Bacchus figure of Dosso Dossi’s Allegory of Drunkenness of c. 1521-1522 (Galleria Estense, Modena) than with the poet musician or pastoral shepherd (Figure 68 and Figure 69). Licinio therefore parodies the image of the young pastoral shepherd with a flute as portrayed by Giorgione, as well as the tradition of the music-making couples represented in an idyllic landscape. As such, the painting relates to a tradition of

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Northern imagery that turn to caricature “the tradition of amorous, music-loving couples in bowers of courtly love.” Lucas van Leyden’s the *Old Musicians* of 1524 provides an interesting parallel; in this image, two old peasants are shown tuning their instruments; or more precisely, it is the old man who tunes his lute to the sound of his wife’s rebec and under her commanding stare (Figure 70).

By pointing to the foolishness of old men in love, Licinio’s *Double Portrait with a Hurdy-Gurdy* evokes Castiglione’s comment that “it is unbecoming and most unsightly for a man of any station, who is old, gray, toothless, and wrinkled, to be seen viola in hand, playing and singing in a company of ladies.” That it constitutes inappropriate behaviour is explained by the fact that “the words used in singing are for the most part amorous, and in old men love is a ridiculous thing.” Moreover, Licinio’s painting is part of a well-established figurative and literary tradition where artists accentuate physical disparities to denounce the traps and absurdities of ill-assorted unions and provide moralising commentaries about male lust, female cunning and venality. The theme of the ill-matched lovers became especially popular in Germany from c.1470 to c.1535, first in print, as in Dürer’s *Ill-Assorted Lovers* of c. 1495, and then in painting, becoming a favoured theme in Lucas Cranach’s workshop (among the many

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113 Ibid.

examples is the Ill-Matched Couple, c. 1520-22, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest) (Figure 71, Figure 72).\footnote{See Giorgia Pellini, in Cranach. A Different Renaissance, ed. Anna Coliva and Bernard Aikema (Milan: 24 ORE Cultura, 2010), pp. 234-239. Yvonne Bleyerveld locates the ill-matched lovers in the broader context of the subject of “women’s guiles” in Cranach’s work. See Yvonne Bleyerveld, “The Power of Women,” in Ibid, pp. 75-85.} The theme was also treated in Northern Italy under the influence of Leonardo, whose now lost drawing – known through a copy by Jacob Hoefnagel and an engraving by Wenzel Hollar – proved to be influential on both sides of the Alps (Figure 73). Leonardo’s Ill-Matched Lovers shows a beautiful young man embracing an old woman; as he caresses her cheek, his left hand reaches for her sack of coins.\footnote{In this drawing which is contemporary to his caricature studies, Leonardo illustrates the advice that he gives in his Notebooks of juxtaposing contrasting figure types – the young to the old, the ugly to the beautiful – in order to enhance a painting’s effect. Such juxtaposition is seen in Dosso Dossi’s Nymph and Satyr of ca. 1508-1509 (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), possibly painted in Venice. See Peter Humfrey, in Dosso Dossi: Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara, pp. 84-86. For engraved interpretations of the theme by Zuan Andrea see The Illustrated Bartsch 25 (Commentary), Early Italian Masters, ed. by Mark J. Zucker (New York: Abaris Books, 1984), p. 276.} The Venetian interpretation of the theme very often led to the creation of visually ambiguous images: genre-like scenes featuring couples who are most often physically “equal” but who engage in an illicit form of amorous embrace, as in Paris Bordone’s The Lovers mentioned above (Figure 56).\footnote{The adaptation of this secular theme is possibly indebted to Giorgione’s now lost Lovers illustrated in Andrea Vendramin’s inventory. On the genre of the lovers’ portrait in Venice and the Veneto see Una Roman d’Elia, “Niccolò Liburnio on the Boundaries of Portraiture in the Early Cinquecento,” The Sixteenth-Century Journal 37, no. 2 (2006).} Another example is found in a little-known painting associated both with Giovanni Cariani and Bernardino Licinio (Figure 74).\footnote{See Palluchini and Rossi, Giovanni Cariani, pp. 361-362. The painting is also associated with Domenico Mancini.} In this Lovers’ Portrait (Private Collection) a scantily dressed woman – her bodice is untied and her undergarment sensually reveals the shape of her breasts – is accompanied by a man who pleas for her attention, a scheme that is reminiscent of Licinio’s The Seduction (Figure 58).\footnote{The woman’s strong and direct gaze characterise Licinio’s female portraits and provides an argument for attributing the painting to the artist.}
Partaking of those various traditions, both Northern and Venetian, Licinio’s *Double Portrait with a Hurdy-Gurdy* problematizes the traditional association between music and ideal forms of love. The enigmatic series of objects aligned as a riddle against the dark background – a device that recalls the work of Lorenzo Lotto – further articulates the divide between the ideal and the real. From left to right, we see a fragment of a classical statuette, a full moon – or an oculus window – and a cartouche. Located directly next to the man, the ideal youthful male nude body establishes a contrast with the overweight hurdy-gurdy player, thus emphasising the latter’s own grotesque allure. On the right, the cartouche is more difficult to understand. Showing a musical staff, a series of numbers and simple geometrical shapes, the cartouche may provide the theoretical counterpart to the practiced music seen in the foreground by alluding to the “intellectual understanding of the numerical relationships which are the rational bases of harmonies and rhythms.” The idea of musical harmony is paralleled by the antique fragment, which stands for artistic perfection. However, a musically educated viewer would have understood the lack of correspondence between theory and practice in the painting’s iconography, as the hurdy-gurdy was an instrument played without sheet music. The instrument’s composite and mechanical nature further contrasts with the pure metaphysical world represented above. This higher register – the realm of geometry, numbers and ideal beauty – provides a foil against which Licinio represents music in its lowest forms, as governed by human nature and lust.

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122 Quist, “The Theme of Music in Northern Renaissance Banquet Scenes,” p. 139.
Tools of Seduction: Music and the Courtesan

Music’s association with lust and seduction and its potentially perverse effects on human behaviour are further revealed in images that stage some of the urban social types that were popular in painting as well as in theater. Among them, the courtesan fuelled the imagination of Venetians and visitors alike, and as Bronwen Wilson argues, her image was transmuted into an “urban icon” by means of her repeated appearance, especially in print. Licinio contributed to this process through many paintings related to courtesanship. My discussion here concentrates on three images that demonstrate the importance of music in the courtesan’s self-fashioning and social performance: the Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor of c. 1520 (Private Collection), the Courtesan at the Clavichord with a Suitor and a Procureess of c. 1520-1525 (Royal Collection, London), and the Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) (Figure 6, Figure 41, Figure 75).

The Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor features a young woman and an older man from the waist up. While she holds the fingerboard of her lute with her left hand, she does not strum the chords with her right hand. Continuing the reference to love and musical time, she seems instead to tap against the parapet with her index finger as if keeping tactus. Her dress is also notable as she wears a man’s fur-lined coat with wide lapels over a white camicia. This juxuxtaposition between the intimate item of dress and an outdoor male garment is reminiscent of Giorgione’s Laura who wears a man’s coat over her nude body. As Anne Christine Junkermann

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126 Henry makes this observation. See Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans, p. 194.
has argued, this opposition evokes the antithesis between masculinity and femininity which stood at the core of the courtesan’s sexual allure and identity (Figure 76).\(^{127}\) But while the identity of Giorgione’s *Laura* remains subject to debate, Licinio leaves little room to doubt the young woman’s status as a courtesan as the middle-aged man who peeps over her left shoulder holds a bag of money. Carved in Roman characters on the stone parapet, a Latin inscription confirms the man’s desire to purchase the woman’s attentions: “Beautiful girl, is it a marvel if you yield to the sound of gold as the gods yield to you [i.e. your music]”.\(^{128}\) In the *Courtesan at the Clavichord with a Suitor and a Procuress*, the client’s offer takes place under the watchful eye of the old procuress.\(^{129}\) The surface of the painting is highly damaged and the man formerly held a sack of coins in his right hand, which is unfortunately no longer visible. That this theme enjoyed some popularity is suggested by a closely related painting by Palma Vecchio reproduced in Andrea Vendramin’s illustrated inventory. The now-lost painting shows a young woman flanked by a more mature woman and a middle-aged man (Figure 77).\(^{130}\) In addition, the composition looks back to Titian’s *Interrupted Concert* where three men of different ages are united by a performance at the clavichord (Figure 52). The theme of the three ages of men may provide a subtheme of Licinio’s painting, as the courtesan, playing the clavichord in the center, represents

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128 The latin inscription reads: “HIC AURI SONITUS PALLEN / PULCHRA PUELLA / QUID MIRUM SI TE / FLECTIT ET ILLE DEOS.” This English translation is provided in Henry, *Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans*, p. 195.


130 *The Picture Gallery of Andrea Vendramin*, by Tancred Borenius (London: Medici Society Limited, 1924), plate 17. Another three-figure composition in Vendramin’s inventory relates to Licinio’s and Palma’s paintings; it shows a concert by moonlight, in which an old woman, accompanied by a man, a young girl and a cat, holds a *viola da braccio*. Ibid, plate 16 (according to Borenius, the painting suggests the authorship of Savoldo).
youth; her client, middle-age; and the procuress old age. The painting also comments on the transience of female beauty through the juxtaposition of the young and the old women, another recurring theme of Venetian painting.\footnote{We may think for instance of a group of paintings by and attributed to Palma Vecchio and Paris Bordone where the young woman at her toilet is juxtaposed with an older servant or a procuress. See Giordana Mariani Canova, in Paris Bordon (Milan : Electa, 1984), p. 78 ; Cathy Santore, “The Tools of Venus,” Renaissance Studies 11, no. 3 (1997) : pp. 190-191.}

In these two concerts, the reference made to greed and money confirms the women’s identity as courtesans. By treating love as a financial transaction, the scenes relate to the tradition of the ill-assorted couple. The money pouch or purse spilling with coins is a recurring motif of these images, as seen in Leonardo’s drawing, but mostly in Northern interpretations of the theme as in the work of Dürer and Cranach. The only other Venetian artist to present the motif is the Bergamasque Giovanni Cariani.\footnote{In Italy, the theme of the appeal of gain is more frequently encountered on maiolica (Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 440). An Urbino trencher of c. 1535 echoes Licinio’s Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor and a Latin inscription reads “Ominia per peconia fata son,” or “All things are done by money.” See Norman, A.V.B., Wallace Collection Catalogue of Ceramics I: Pottery, Maiolica, Faience, Stoneware (London: The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 1976), p. 117.} His \textit{Young Woman with a Suitor} of 1515-1520 (The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) features a contrast of types: an old and wrinkled patrician man who attends to a young beautiful woman (Figure 78). The inappropriateness of his offer is expressed through the opened purse, whose content spills over the table; it is with these coins that he seeks to secure her attention.\footnote{Palluchini and Rossi, Giovanni Cariani, p. 122; Henry, Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans: Low Painting and Entertainment Culture in Renaissance Venice (PhD Diss., The University of Chicago, 2009), pp. 171-194, who analyses the painting in relation to vernacular theatre.} Licinio makes a reference to the potential appeal of gain in two other paintings.\footnote{In a similar vein, the satirical tract \textit{La tariffa delle puttane di Vinegia... nel quale dinota il prezzo e la qualità di tutte le Cortigiane... col nome delle Ruffiane} published in 1535 is modelled on the tariffs of merchandise thus portraying prostitutes as mercenary and deceitful. For other references to courtesans as merchandise see Patricia Fortini Brown, Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 167.}
embodied experience of music – the nature of the man’s proposal is conveyed both through the woman’s state of undress, and the moneybag attached to the man’s belt (Figure 58). Licinio’s *Courtesan with a Mirror* (Private Collection), produced more or less a decade later (ca.1530-1535), is closely related to this painting (Figure 79). A voluptuous, half-dressed, blonde haired woman dominates the main pictorial field. The woman leans against a round mirror, a popular motif of Venetian painting; Licinio exploited its surface as a small vignette suggesting, in the words of Paul Joannides, a moralising narrative about “the absurdity of age playing at youth’s game.” Within the intimate interior setting lit by the fireplace, an elderly man is introduced by a maidservant, perhaps a procuress. He seems to hold a bag of money, thus suggesting that he is about to pay for her services.

By contrast to the *Seduction* and the *Courtesan with a Mirror* where the woman’s partial state of undress and unbound hair reveal the sensuous implications of her invite, in the *Courtesan with a Lute and Suitor* and the *Courtesan at the Clavichord with a Suitor and a Procuress*, musical instruments are foregrounded as a lure and source of temptation. Music is here presented as the courtesan’s tool of seduction. As such, the lute and the clavichord substitute the objects associated with the courtesan’s paraphernalia, or “istromenti di Venere,” that are seen in the


foreground of "The Courtesan with a Mirror" – the comb and perfume bottle reflected in the mirror, and the mirror itself – thus reinforcing the association between music and eroticism.

While noblewomen were expected to be talented in the art of singing, the propriety of female musicianship was simultaneously questioned. For instance, years after having praised Isabella d’Este’s singing, Pietro Bembo refused his daughter’s request to study music, which he then considered a thing for “vain and frivolous women.”\textsuperscript{138} Bembo’s change of heart may be tied to the increased association of female musicianship with the courtesan, who performed both for, and with her clients.\textsuperscript{139} Music was therefore associated with the indecorous display of the body, and conceived as a threat to the modesty and chastity of its performers.\textsuperscript{140} Vocal performance in particular was for the courtesan an important means of gaining renown. As Shawn Marie Keener argues, “the cortigiana cultivated a highly individual, artful singing style, capitalizing on the moral ambiguity of music and using the voice as an instrument of social mobility.”\textsuperscript{141} For instance, the courtesan Gaspara Stampa, who sang poetry to the sound of her lute, was a recognised solo performer, acclaimed for her power to stir the feelings of her male audience.\textsuperscript{142} Furthermore, Pietro Aretino praised the solo performance of a courtesan named Franceschina, writing that “the things which (she) sang yesterday to the tune of her lute, penetrated my heart


\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, p. 126.

with so sweet a sort of musical persuasion, that I must need come to the point of amorous conjunction.”

Household inventories hint at the extent of a courtesan’s musical training. Among the possessions listed in Paolina Prove’s inventory of 1638, we find a clavichord, a spinet, two different types of lutes in their boxes, a large harp and part books. In addition, she owned a painting described as “Ritratti in concerto di Musicha,” which we can imagine to be in the vein of the music paintings discussed in this chapter.

The importance of music in the courtesan’s self-fashioning and the association of musical performance with the immodest display of the body brings me to associate another of Licinio’s painting with courtesanship: the Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book of c. 1515-1520 (Figure 41). With her left hand, she holds her music book while her right hand is placed on her chest in a gesture that may suggest vocal performance. A rite of seduction through music is therefore staged between the sitter of the painting and its viewer: while she pauses, she casts her sidelong, somewhat languorous glance towards the viewer. The courtesan’s identity is therefore conveyed much more subtly than in Licinio’s The Seduction and Courtesan with a Mirror as well as other images that have traditionally been associated with courtesanship: the ideally beautiful belle donne painted by Titian and Palma Vecchio (Figure 59, Figure 80). This portrait

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145 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 426.
by contrast is not overly erotic and can be compared with one of the rare portraits of a known courtesan: Domenico Puligo’s *Portrait of Barbara Salutati* of c. 1525 (Figure 81). Salutati was a famous Florentine courtesan renowned for her beauty, voice and musicianship. Her claims to fame are highlighted in her image, where she is shown dressed as a noblewoman and surrounded with music books and quotations from popular French chansons.

The relationship that Licinio establishes between music and the courtesan speaks to the agency of music in influencing human behaviour through what moralists called “obscene and dishonest” sounds. While in the *Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book* the female voice is foregrounded as having the power to inspire lust, in the *Courtesan with a Lute and Suitor* an inscription functions to convey the idea of seductive and inciting sounds (Figure 75). Inscribed as if voiced by the man behind her, the inscription which reads “Beautiful girl, is it a marvel if you yield to the sound of gold as the gods yield to you” suggests the seductive power of the music produced by the clinking gold coins in the moneybag, the music of which can be considered as an example of “the ‘informal’ music or quotidian soundscape that formed part of everyday experience.”

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148 It may be the painting described by Vasari in the life of Puligo as a portrait of “Barbara of Florence, a famous and beautiful courtesan of the time, beloved of many not less for her beauty than for her fine manners, and especially because she was a good musician and sang divinely.” Quoted in Rogers, “Fashioning Identities for the Renaissance Courtesan,” p. 92.


150 Flora Dennis, “Resurrecting Forgotten Sound: Fans and Handbells in Early Modern Italy,” in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), p. 194
Theatrical Cultures

Ultimately, the paintings discussed in this section add a layer to our understanding of Licinio’s audience through their intersection with vernacular theatre.\textsuperscript{151} The \textit{Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor} and the \textit{Courtesan at a Clavichord with a Suitor and a Procuress} stage some of the characters that animated Venetian comedy, especially the native farcical genres of the \textit{buffonesca} and \textit{bulesca}: the lusty Venetian gentleman, the greedy courtesan or prostitute, and the procuress.\textsuperscript{152} The \textit{bravo} – an armed bodyguard and hitman employed by noblemen and prostitutes and renowned for his violent and quarrelsome nature\textsuperscript{153} – was another beloved character of dialect and multilingual comedies that fascinated Licinio. Chrsicinda Henry recently interpreted his signed \textit{Group Portrait} of c. 1515-1520 (Private Collection) as “the visual iteration of a typical \textit{bulesca} farce, in which one or more \textit{bravi} engage in amorous intrigues alongside their patrician masters, prostitutes, and other sexually available women,” therefore suggesting that we retitle the painting as \textit{A Bravata} (Figure 82).\textsuperscript{154} In this painting, a richly attired young man is about to pull out his sword as if to defend the young woman behind him. A \textit{bravo} enters

\textsuperscript{151} Representations of performers further testify to the emergence of new subject matter tied to the spread of theatrical entertainment in an urban context and to the intersections between painting and theatre. See Michel Hochmann, “‘El retratto del quondam Zuan Polo che sona de lauto’. Les portraits de bouffons et la naissance de la peinture comique Italie du Nord au XVIe siécle,” \textit{Studiolo}, no. 7 (2009).

\textsuperscript{152} These stock characters take their roots in the comedies of Plautus which were then translated in the vernacular on the Plautine revival in Venice and its reception. See Henry, \textit{Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans}, pp. 151-156; Ferguson, “Ruzante and the Veneto,” p. 71.


\textsuperscript{154} Henry, \textit{Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans}, p. 165; Vertova, \textit{Bernardino Licinio}, p. 415, who interprets the man on the right as a self-portrait. Vertova also notes that Licinio’s composition provides a precedent to Bordone’s \textit{The Lovers} of 1525-1535 (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan). The painting is known through a black and white photograph only (see Frick Art Reference Library (W7277)).
the scene from the right, armed with a dagger. He stares at the viewer with an irreverent look on his face, ready to react to defend his master. With his right hand, he grasps firmly the sizeable codpiece that projects out of his opened tunic in a provocative gesture that alludes to the bravo’s exaggerated masculinity which was often expressed through violence.  

The Concert with a Garland also points to the intersection of painting and theatre (Figure 54). The green and yellow striped garment worn by the man standing behind the woman may indicate his status as a performer, as such polychromatic striped clothing have been interpreted as a symbol of transgression of the social order. Striped garments are seen in some of the rare Italian representations of jesters and buffoons, including Jean Fouquet’s Portrait of the Buffoon Gonella, jester at the court of Ferrara (Figure 83). The suggestion that the Concert with a Garland features a performer is further supported by references made to buffoons – “buffoni” or “figure bergamasche” – as well as portraits of specific actors that start to be encountered in Venetian inventories from the 1530s onwards. Licinio’s Portrait of a Man in a Striped Shirt of c. 1524, which stands out for the sitter’s almost condescending gaze and black shirt with red satiny stripes with an almost metallic glitter, possibly belongs to this category (Figure 84).  

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155 Henry, Buffoons, Rustics, and Courtesans, pp. 164-165; Walker, “Bravi and Venetian Nobles, c.1550-1650.” Henry locates the painting within a small group of enigmatic works produced between 1515 and 1525 where a menacing armed man is depicted as in Titian’s so-called Il Bravo (Kunsthistoriches Museum, Vienna).  
In Venice, theatrical entertainments were often sponsored by the *Compagnie della calza* (Companies of the Hose), which were formed by patrician youths. Their repertoire usually favoured contemporary plays with a humorous, satirical and erotic overtone as well as ancient authors such as Plautus and Terence, with their mocking of urban social stereotypes. It is believed that these theatrical performances were interspersed with musical interludes. Licinio’s signed portrait of the twenty-four year old Ottaviano Grimani of 1541 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) – who would later become procurator in 1571-76 – confirms Licinio’s involvement with an audience involved in theatrical activities (Figure 85). This painting is seemingly unique in Venetian art for representing a nobleman dressed as a *compagno*, as Grimani emphasised his belonging to the *Sempereterni* as a salient aspect of his identity. Set against a dark background, an inscription reads: “OTAVIANUS / GRIMANUS / SEMPITERNA / SOCIETATE / PRIOR.” In addition, Grimani wears a red jacket with red and green pants that exemplify the colourful clothing and multi-colored hoses that characterised the dress of members of the *compagnie*.

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Although the compagnie’s activities are poorly documented, we know that they provided a considerable source of patronage for artists: every year, each company employed a painter, a poet and an architect. For instance, in 1541 and 1542, the company of the Sempereterni commissioned elaborate stage settings to Titian and Vasari respectively for one of their major performances. It seems therefore reasonable to wonder if Licinio’s portrait, which the artist produced towards the end of his career, could indicate that he had previously enjoyed the Sempereterni’s patronage, or that of another company.

Up to this point, this chapter has suggested different ways of understanding Licinio’s cultural identity by tying him to communities of interest centred around popular forms of leisure and entertainment, both through the themes of his paintings and personal connections with noted individuals such as Ludovico Dolce, Vincenzo Capirola and Ottaviano Grimani. In addition, his more prosaic treatment of the theme of the concert has testified to the continuous interchange of ideas between Venetian and Northern artists. In this regard, an original aspect of his figurative language is found in his interpretation of the theme of courtesanship. By depicting courtesans clearly as such, his approach differs profoundly from the work of his most acclaimed contemporaries: in Giorgione’s and Titian’s paintings, the theme of the beautiful woman or bella donna is by contrast ridden with visual ambiguities that have veiled meaning and prompted multiple interpretations. It is to the theme of visual legibility as an aspect of Licinio’s style that characterise many of the paintings discussed so far, and which has often prompted scholars to dismiss the artist, that I attend to in the final section.

163 According to Francesco Sansovino’s count, there were 43 different compagnie between 1400 and 1560. Anderson, “Spectacle in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” p. 117.

A Style of Pictorial Legibility: Naturalism, Painted Texts and the Close-Up

In discussing Licinio’s *Allegory of Love (Allegory of Musical Time)*, Mina Gregori writes that Bernardino Licinio “can be distinguished from other artists in Venice as a Lombard interpreter of the idealised visions of Venetian painters, both in the way he treats his models and in his more sustained and realistic use of colour” (Figure 40).\(^{165}\) While I agree with her claim as to the distinctiveness of Licinio’s pictorial language, the form of her characterisation reveals the pressing need to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the artist’s style.

In this section, I start by revisiting some of the paintings discussed above before expanding my discussion to other themes coined in the first half of the sixteenth century to demonstrate how pictorial legibility – as characterised by a marked proclivity towards naturalism, the repeated use of inscriptions, and a commitment to the close-up view – was used as a strategy of engagement with the viewer.

The music paintings discussed so far revealed Licinio’s keen interest for inscriptions. In the *Allegory of Musical Time*, the musical notation tests the viewer’s musical education while inviting him/her to participate in the unfolding action. In the *Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor*, the Latin inscription carved in stone provides a form of narrative elaboration while stimulating the imagined enactment of everyday sounds (Figure 75). While inscriptions play an important role in the paintings’ rhetoric, I wish to address the fact of their readability and graphic quality. I turn to the *Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary* in which various types of writing are contrasted, in order to explore the effects of this graphism (Figure 20). In the first place, the date, the sitter’s age and the artist’s signature are inscribed in Roman capitals, floating against the

\(^{165}\) Gregori, in *In the Light of Apollo*, p. 513.
background. Written in black against brown, these letters contrast with the sharpness of the music and text transcribed in the opened choir book. While defining the sitter’s professional identity, the book serves as a point of entry into the image; placed in the foreground, its presence is monumental. The viewer is therefore first invited to scrutinize the textual surface of the chant book, where words and musical notations are juxtaposed, before pausing over the musician’s face. The graphism of the inscription parallels the physiognomic exactitude of the man’s facial features.

The *Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary* belongs to a group of male portraits by Licinio in which sitters are represented with large books; they are opened and sometimes show legible writing. One of them is reproduced in Andrea Vendramin’s illustrated inventory; the drawing shows a man standing by a window holding a text for the viewer to see (Figure 10).\(^{166}\) The drawing cannot be identified among Licinio’s surviving paintings. However, two other male portraits based on a similar conceit strengthen the analogy between the rendering of the individual’s facial features and the painted text. In the *Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul* of 1534 (Royal Collection, London), Licinio contrasts different types of calligraphy as in the *Portrait of a Man with an Antiphonary* (Figure 86). The date and the artist’s signature, “M.D.XXXIII/Bernardinj Lycinij/Opus,” appear in cursive script on a rolled up piece of paper affixed to the wall, thus following the long standing Venetian tradition of the *cartellino*.\(^ {167}\) The painter used this device on numerous occasions, including in a *Male Portrait* of 1535 (Cini

\(^{166}\) *The Picture Gallery of Andrea Vendramin*, by Tancred Borenius (London: Medici Society Limited, 1924), plate 34.

\(^{167}\) In 1842, the painting was exhibited as by Leandro Bassano. The *cartellino* was then painted over and revealed by a cleaning in 1973. John Shearman, *The Early Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 140, cat. 139.
Collection, Venice) (Figure 17). In the *Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul*, the viewer is confronted with another, more imposing piece of writing. An opened manuscript written in Gothic minuscule script, dramatically pressed against the picture plane, serves as intermediary between the sitter and the viewer. In the Veneto, the portrait of a man in his study or the humanist-scholar’s portrait developed as a type: contemporary examples include Giovanni Cariani’s *Portrait of Benedetto Caravaggi* of 1521-1522 (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo) and Lotto’s *Portrait of a Man in his Study* of c. 1530 (Venice, Galleria dell’Accademia) (Figure 87, Figure 88). In its composition however, Licinio’s *Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul* of 1534 relates very closely to Domenico Capriolo’s *Portrait of a Scholar* (Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo) – a painting once attributed to Licinio himself – where the sitter is represented against a dark background with the opened manuscript placed in the foreground of the picture (Figure 89). In both portraits, the frame cuts across the book’s pages, thus providing a close-up onto the text. Both men indicate that the text should earn our attention by pointing to a specific line on the page. But Licinio’s painting suggests a different type of engagement with the page; not only does he frame the book to offer the viewer a close-up view but, by contrast to the examples cited above, the words are clearly legible.

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168 John Shearman suggests that this painting, where the man’s age and date appear on the piece of paper as “DANI. XXX/MDXXXV” is a companion piece to the *Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul*, because the two paintings are of similar dimensions. He does not however justify this hypothesis, which seems in my opinion unfounded. Ibid, p. 140.


170 A Venetian artist, Domenico Capriolo was mostly active in Treviso (from c.1517 onwards). This painting has previously been attributed to Bernardino Licinio and Lorenzo Lotto. *Catalogo della Pinacoteca della Accademia dei Concordi di Rovigo*, a cura di Pier Luigi Fantelli and Mauro Lucco (Vicenza: Neri Pozza editore, 1985), p. 46.
By including texts that are clearly meant to be read and engaged with, Licinio’s approach can be compared to that of Florentine painters such as Pontormo and Bronzino. For instance, Elizabeth Cropper notes that in Bronzino’s portrait of Laura Battiferi, the handwritten text is meant to be read, its calligraphy part the address made to the viewer (Figure 90). In the Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul, the invitation is clear; with his left index, the sitter points to a passage from Saint Paul’s Letters to the Ephesians which reads “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.” (4.25). While John Shearman has interpreted the portrait to be a representation of Saint Paul himself, because of the epistle and the sword – the saint’s attributes – it is more likely that we are instead facing a portrait of a man as Saint Paul, especially given the use of conventions associated with portraiture. Moreover, the portrait relates closely to a Portrait of a Man with a Manuscript of c.1525-1535 (Private Collection) in which a passage from the same source can be read (Figure 91). Vertova identified the text transcribed on the left page of the book, held straight on the table and parallel to the picture plane, as a passage from Saint Paul’s Letters. Unfortunately, she is not more specific about the passage chosen, and the quality of the reproduction does not allow closer study. The sitter does not engage visually with the viewer, but instead communicates by pointing towards the text with his right index. However, his gesture remains indeterminate, simultaneously calling attention to the book and the cartellino affixed to the tablecloth. On the piece of paper an inscription in Latin is


172 Shearman, The Early Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, p. 140. The passages are from Ephesians iv, verses 1-4 (on the left page) and verses 23-28, on the right page. Each passage is preceded by the invocation fratres.

173 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 431.
followed by the artist’s signature, all rendered in cursive script: “Sic oculus, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat / Lycinii opus.” An educated viewer would have recognised the citation’s origin in Virgil’s Aeneid, in which Andromaque presents an image of her deceased son Astyanax, declaring: “Such was he in eyes, in hands, and face.”

Followed by the artist’s signature, the inscription claims that the portrait – the unidealised image of a man in his late forties or early fifties, with angular features, hollow cheeks and deep-set eyes – is bound to the close study of nature. The painting is therefore connected to the Portrait of a Man as Saint Paul through its concern with truth and authenticity. While the latter proclaims the sitter’s inner sincerity and moral virtue, the latter claims the painter’s faithfulness to exterior appearances. Taken together, they provide a manifesto of the painter’s ethics of representation, of his choice of naturalism over idealism.

The graphic sensibility of the carefully rendered painted texts of Licinio’s paintings provides a metaphor for the artist’s style. The analogy between painting and writing, or between the pen and the brush, is pursued in a painting attributed to the artist where writing implements are included. In the Portrait of a Dominican Monk in his Study (Private Collection), inkwell and quills are placed on the scholar’s desk in the foreground of the image (Figure 92).

Unfortunately, the reproduction does not allow us to see if the text is legible. Paintings which do not include inscriptions such as the Portrait of a Man with a Viola da Gamba, also convey the graphism realised in the painted texts (Figure 36). The man’s elegant fingers, his arched eyebrows, his delicately drawn facial features and hair are all rendered as if written. This extends

174 Virgile, Aeneid, III, 490.
175 The work is recorded in the photographic archive of the Fondazione Federico Zeri (photo no. 39410). Another Portrait of a Scholar in his Study recently attributed to Licinio may also be considered in this context. Sotheby’s Milan: Monday, October 12, 2009 [Lot 00606] Salvatore e Francesco Romano Antiquari a Firenze: A century as antique dealers at Palazzo Magnani Feroni.
to the scrolled neck of his instrument. The visual clarity that characterises Licinio’s style forcefully comes out when we compare this image to a contemporary Portrait of a Musician of c. 1513-14 which Paul Joannides attributes to Titian (Palazzo Spada, Rome) (Figure 93). Licinio may possibly have known this painting as they share the same basic composition; in each, the musician sits in profile while turning his head towards the viewer. In Titian’s portrait, rendered in a restricted colour scheme of black, brown and white, the musician sits within a shadowy and indeterminate space. While the musical score is left empty, the scroll in a light brown tone suggests the presence of an instrument, probably from the viol family.

This approach parallels the ways in which Licinio and Titian respectively exploited the mirror, a frequent motif of Venetian painting of the period. Licinio’s Courtesan with a Mirror and Titian’s Woman with a Page and a Mirror, c. 1515 (Louvre, Paris) provides a telling parallel (Figure 79, Figure 94). As Paul Joannides explains, Titian exploited the mirror with “deliberate poetic vagueness, to evoke multiple beauty, different visions of the same woman, but without showing them in detail.” A young page holds the second mirror so that the woman can contemplate her coiffure’s reflection in a larger convex mirror. The shadowy reflection offers us a view of the back of her head and a window. By contrast to the imaginative space created by Titian, Licinio exploited the mirror image as a small vignette in which, as we have seen, he elaborated a moralising narrative. Joannides further describes the artist’s use of the mirror image

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177 Joannides, Titian to 1518, pp. 219-220.
178 Licinio was also possibly aware of Titian’s Allegory of Vanity c. 1520 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich), where the mirror reflection shows a composition of jewellery and coins, however these are considered additions of the later sixteenth century which conceal the image of a woman with a distaff. See Joannides, Titian to 1518, p. 262; Harold E. Wethey, The Paintings of Titian, vol. 3 (London: Phaidon, 1975), pp. 184-185.
as “little more than a pretext for a pin-up” and “a pseudo moralising adjunct to legitimise an erotic image.”\(^{180}\) While the scholar’s terms are unnecessarily dismissive and do not take into account the contemporary taste for satire that I have described, the fact is that Licinio employs the mirror in a way that negates the game of identification that constitutes an intrinsic part of the viewer’s response to Venetian painting.

Licinio’s construction of surfaces that can clearly be read is closely tied to his commitment to the close-up view. Unlike his contemporaries, including the Bergamasques Palma Vecchio and Giovanni Cariani, Licinio did not experiment with the pastoral mode. His landscapes are usually limited to very generic outdoor settings in religious paintings, where they do little to suggest a mood, or are carefully framed by windows in portraits. The Giorgione he seems to have been most influenced by is the author of the “meze figure e ritratti,”\(^{181}\) rather than the landscape painter. While I have already argued that Licinio’s *Double Portrait with a Hurdy-Gurdy* applies a form of visual satire to the genre of the pastoral concert, I suggest that the *Concert with a Garland* most fully thematizes the artist’s anti-pastoral approach (Figure 54). In the first place, the painting appears as a pastiche of motifs gleaned from different artistic genres. While the division of the background into a blue sky and a wall recalls the structure of Licinio’s religious paintings, the garland of fruits, flowers and vegetables is also reminiscent of sacred iconography. It is in fact an archaic motif that is often seen in fifteenth-century devotional paintings by Andrea Mantegna or Carlo Crivelli. While the garland suggests an allegorical meaning associated with love – the flora and fauna which forms it all have meanings associated with love, marriage and procreation – it simultaneously functions as a stand-in for nature itself,

\(^{180}\) Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, p. 264.

\(^{181}\) Mark W. Roskill, *Dolce’s Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 188.
encapsulating and substituting the pastoral landscape. The figure of the soldier is also seen in pastoral paintings, such as the *Standing Soldier and a Seated Woman with a Child* of c. 1509 attributed to Titian (Figure 95). Finally, with their heads towards one another, the female performer and the man on the right form an independent group that recalls the amorous, music playing couples set in pastoral landscapes.

While the *Concert with a Garland* is bound to pastoral themes, the artist treats the subject with a clarity of vision at odds with the pastoral aesthetic; his palette is bright and his forms are clearly circumscribed. By contrast to Titian’s and Giorgione’s pastorals where the mood created triggers the viewer’s imagination by inviting him to enter into the painting’s fiction, to complete forms concealed by shadows, Licinio monumentalises the figures, treating them in simplified forms and contours. His approach therefore goes against the essence of the pastoral which Patricia Emison describes as the “the invalidation of the rational and linear, or even of precise thought.”

Licinio’s choice of the close-up mode, which allows him to focus on the human figure, can partly be explained by his interest in portraiture. Such compositions featuring half-length figure groups derived from religious painting where the dramatic close-up view had been adopted since the mid-fifteenth century. The pictorial formula allowed the beholder to focus

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182 Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, pp. 78-82. A painting attributed to a follower of Palma Vecchio of c.1515 (Philadelphia Museum of Art) which is organised following a similar arrangement of figures, also shows a soldier.


attention on a singular moment extracted from a narrative to heighten the image’s emotional impact. It was particularly popular in Venice, especially in the workshop of Giovanni Bellini.\textsuperscript{186}

Its influence carried well into the sixteenth century, both in Venice as well as in Lombardy.\textsuperscript{187} For instance, in a rendering of \textit{The Presentation at the Temple} of c. 1540 (Museum Wiesbaden), Licinio still relies on a model popularised by Giovanni Bellini (Figure 96, Figure 97).\textsuperscript{188} As Lorenzo Pericolo explains, the dramatic close-up framing contracts and condenses the beholder’s field of vision, compressing the pictorial space into shallowness.\textsuperscript{189}

Licinio employs the process described by Pericolo in his rendering of a completely different Venetian type: the reclining nude. With the \textit{Dresden Venus}, Giorgione initiated a long tradition of reclining nude figures – sometimes sleeping as in Giorgione’s prototype – to which Giovanni Cariani, Palma Vecchio, Paris Bordone and Titian all responded (Figure 98, Figure 99).\textsuperscript{190} Licinio produced the first of three sleeping nudes in the 1530s. The painting, which is now at the Uffizi, shows a woman lying asleep on a bed covered with white linen (Figure 100). The room is very shallow and closed off by a dark red curtain behind the reclining woman.\textsuperscript{191} Licinio departs in many ways from the conventions established by Giorgione and carried on by others, most particularly in setting the nude in an interior rather than in a landscape. As the


\textsuperscript{187} Joannides, \textit{Titian to 1518}, pp. 238-241; Vertova, \textit{Bernardino Licinio}, p. 373.

\textsuperscript{188} The painting now in Wiesbaden may have served as a model for the one in a private collection. Vertova, \textit{Bernardino Licinio}, pp. 423, 439.


\textsuperscript{190} For a general overview of these images see Millard Meiss, “Sleep in Venice: Ancient Myths and Renaissance Proclivities,” \textit{Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society} 110, no. 5 (1966): 348-82.

painting possibly predates Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* of 1538, this represents a significant departure (Figure 101). Her pose is also distinctive in various ways. First, Licinio abandons the traditional sleep gesture – the arm flung behind the head – as seen in Giorgione’s Venus. Her legs are spread apart rather than placed tightly together. The two doves in the left corner are the only iconographical elements to suggest her status as the goddess Venus. Licinio confirms this identity in two other versions of the painting (one in a private collection in Moscow and the other of unknown location) (Figure 102, Figure 103). In both of them, the female figure and the pillow onto which she lies are so closely replicated that a cartoon must surely have been used; as I will discuss in chapter four, this mode of production was employed in the family workshop from around 1530 onwards. In the two versions, Venus is accompanied by a winged cupid who draws the curtain to reveal a landscape. What is most distinctive about Licinio’s nude, however, is her monumentality and almost schematized body. Vertova rightfully commented on the painter’s objective approach by which he neatly delineated the body’s contours, establishing a sharp distinction between zones of light and shadow. Asleep and immobile, the female body is treated as a massive object, which the viewer confronts in the foreground as if a still-life.

In Giorgione’s *Sleeping Venus* as in other examples of the genre – for instance Palma Vecchio’s *Reclining Venus* (Dresden) – the landscape in the background opens up the viewer’s field of vision (Figure 99). A depth of field is also conveyed in Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* through the perspectival rendering of the floor tiles that lead the eye to back of the room. By contrast,


Licinio creates a narrow field that gives the impression that the nude is confined within a small space, which she dominates and even overpowers; her foot, covered by a thin veil, brushes against the right edge of the canvas, while her right hand, holding the veil, is extended in the foreground, reinforcing the impression of closeness. This effect is particularly striking in the Uffizi version due to the narrowness of the canvas, which accentuates the painting’s horizontality (Figure 100). This composition, which some would find claustrophobic and oddly reminiscent of the effect of Holbein’s Dead Christ (1521, Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel) trapped into a shallow coffin, is characterised by a reductive simplicity which points to another equally unique sleeping nude by Giulio Campagnola of c. 1508-1509 (Figure 104, Figure 105). Set in a landscape, the nude woman is the first “object” the viewer confronts. While she turns her back at us, her face is still presented in a straight profile carefully outlined against the background as in Licinio’s painting. Licinio may have been looking back at Campagnola’s print, which as Emison explains, is much less lyrical than most of its pastoral painted counterparts, and “falls outside of the boundaries of idealised images of sleep.”

By monumentalising and schematizing the female subject and detaching it definitely from the landscape, Licinio’s Sleeping Nude epitomizes the artist’s reaction against the pastoral. With its sharp contour, angular forms, and cool colouring, it is also unsettlingly modern in a way that strangely recalls Modigliani’s numerous treatments of the genre (Figure 106). Whether Modigliani knew Licinio’s work is not the point. Yet the association with a modern painter of the

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195 The thin veil wrapped around the body recalls the Reclining Nude in the Galleria Borghese (maybe 1520) attributed to Girolamo da Treviso and once believed to be the nude by Savoldo that Michiel saw in Odoni’s collection.


early twentieth-century avant-garde which, at least for the present author, inevitably comes to mind when confronted with Licinio’s Uffizi nude, may partly explain why such a work has never been addressed in the context of discussions of one of the genres which has become almost synonymous with Venetian art. Such exceptions to the rule, which are common in Licinio’s oeuvre, are of great importance, and in the following chapter I will seek to reintegrate the artist’s work within another history: the history of the Venetian female portrait.

I have chosen to introduce this discussion through Mina Gregori’s assessment of Licinio as a “Lombard interpreter” because it exemplifies the continued use of geographical conceits inherited from a historiographical tradition that has led to Licinio’s marginalisation within Venice’s artistic culture. As I argued in the previous chapter, this conception is flawed, as nothing indicates that Licinio ever lived in or travelled to Bergamo, leaving us with biological determinism as the only possible geographical justification for the artist’s style. From the Venetian point of view, Licinio’s style, which I have described in terms of pictorial legibility, inscribes itself in the tradition of Quattrocento painting characterised by attention to detail and clearly delineated forms, and whose main protagonists continued to be active in the first decades of the sixteenth-century: Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio and Cima da Conegliano. Moreover, since the paintings discussed throughout this chapter testify to Licinio’s profound participation in, and engagement with Venetian culture, it is much more productive to consider the peculiarities of his style as a conscious choice rather than a short-coming as scholars have implied, and as a deliberate visual strategy and mode of communication with the viewer.

**Conclusion**

The major objective of this chapter has been to understand aspects of the culture that motivated Licinio’s choice of subject matter. In the near absence of written documents that would reveal
how Licinio sought to fashion his artistic identity, my analysis of his music paintings and some of his related works in the context of the period’s visual, material as well as theatrical cultures has shed light onto his intellectual milieu, thus tying him to communities of interest and social networks that united patrons and artists. The next chapter adds another layer of understanding to Licinio’s public and clientele as I engage with the theme of portraiture as one of the painter’s field of specialisation, analysing the originality of his contribution in formulating a Venetian female portrait type and in shaping the nascent genre of the family portrait.
CHAPTER 3
REPRESENTING WOMEN

Introduction: “A rather unpleasant portrait by Bernardino Licinio”

In the theory and practice of Italian Renaissance painting, “the portrayal of a beautiful woman…came to function as a synecdoche for the beauty of painting itself.”¹ With this argument Elizabeth Cropper situated the creation of female beauty within the context of the paragone debate between painting and poetry; the portrayal of the beautiful woman being “the test that the poet sets the painter” in the creation of naturalistic art.² This thesis gains particular significance in Venice, a city associated with women and femininity on multiple levels.³ On the artistic front more precisely, the reclining nude and the bella donna, two genres coined by Giorgione at the turn of century, transformed the female body into a contentious site of artistic discourse, so that the beautiful woman became the image of beautiful art.⁴ To a large extent, sensuously rendered female beauty maintains a strong association with the achievements of Venetian painters. Is it possible then, that female beauty, or the beautifully rendered female subject, still today functions as a test that the modern viewer/scholar sets the Renaissance painter?

² Ibid, p. 190.
⁴ This was particularly the case with Titian. Rona Goffen, Titian’s Women (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 84.
In modern scholarship as in the Renaissance, the boundary between the beauty of the woman represented and the representation of beauty itself remains fragile, if sometimes non-existent. The critical reception of some of Licinio’s paintings reveals a persistent tendency to operate along subjective aesthetic hierarchies, even at a time when the study of material culture has gained unprecedented importance in the field of art history. Just six years ago, Sylvia Ferino-Pagden briefly mentioned “a rather unpleasant portrait by Bernardino Licinio.”\(^5\) Despite the vagueness of her reference, Ferino-Pagden was in all likelihood reacting to Licinio’s signed Portrait of a Woman of 1536 (Private Collection) (Figure 107).\(^6\) While she does not explain why she judged this image to be unpleasant, we can easily locate the source of her discomfort in the portrait’s unsettling combination of individuality with a genre closely associated with idealisation.\(^7\) The picture features a mature woman in a partial state of undress, her camicia casually untied to reveal one of her breasts. By contrast to the eroticised body, her face reveals the idiosyncratic irregularities of her physiognomy, thus pointing to the painting’s status as a portrait, rather than a belonging to the category of the idealised anonymous beauty as typified by Titian’s Flora (Figure 80). The painting both demonstrates Licinio’s subversion of the demands set by the genre of the bella donna and the originality of his approach to female portraiture.

While the woman is unconventionally unidealised to be eroticised, the frankness of her representation is a common feature of Licinio’s female portraits, but one that is less frequently

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\(^6\) The context of her discussion- the erotic bella donna and its possible relationship to courtesans - allows her us to identify the painting. On the painting see Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 410-411.

\(^7\) Ferino-Pagden herself describes the intersection between naturalism and idealism in Giorgione’s Laura as unsettling. Ferino-Pagden, “Pictures of Women – Pictures of Love,” p. 194.
seen in the art of his contemporaries. A painting such as this one pressures us to revise how certain histories have been written.

Bernardino Licinio was a prolific painter of portraits. Along with private devotional images, he seems to have developed portraiture as a niche market. This chapter singles out a particular area of innovation within his large corpus by engaging with his portrayal of women. The artist represented women of all ages in the context of single portraits and family groups. The literature on female portraiture has traditionally been characterised by the vast scholarship on ideal, youthful beauty, which, as Erin Campbell argues, “has contributed to the neglect of portraits that fall outside of this discourse, or that challenge it.”

Many of Licinio’s female portraits, including the aforementioned Portrait of a Woman of 1536, fall outside the category of youthful beauty in various ways. This chapter thus builds on the recent work of scholars who have broadened the boundaries of this discourse by considering, for instance, representations of women according to categories of age, and thus consequently images which do not always fit neatly within ideals of female beauty as conveyed through text.

One of the reasons why Licinio’s contribution to the shaping of a Venetian tradition of female portraiture has gone unrecognised may be tied to the widespread and accepted conceit of

women’s “artistic invisibility” in Venetian art.\textsuperscript{10} In the sixteenth century, patricians and \textit{cittadini} embraced the art of portraiture as a concomitant to genealogy.\textsuperscript{11} Within the surge of interest for portraits, representations of women however remained relatively rare among those of husbands, fathers and sons displayed in the great halls of family palaces; a feature singled out by Vasari as unique to the Venetian domestic interior. Rona Goffen argues that until at least the mid-sixteenth century, portraits of Venetian women as companion pieces to male portraits did not exist either in the work of Titian or that of his contemporaries. This situation, she explains, goes against the unprecedented importance that was placed on matrilineage in the definition of nobility and the increased financial weight of noble brides as a result of dowry inflation.\textsuperscript{12} The fear of giving the appearance of dynastic ambitions is one of the possible reasons that Goffen suggests to explain women’s “artistic invisibility.” Another may be tied to the power with which women were imbued in state iconography, as well as in family law and theory.\textsuperscript{13}

There is certainly truth to Goffen’s argument, as Titian – the object of her study – produced very few female portraits.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, most of them feature sitters from Northern Italian courts.\textsuperscript{15} Yet, her argument lacks important nuances.\textsuperscript{16} Taking Titian’s oeuvre as a standard against which to measure the place that women occupied in Venetian art and society.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Goffen, \textit{Titian’s Women}, p. 59.
\item Ibid, p. 57.
\item Ibid, p. 58.
\item Ibid, pp. 59-60.
\item Of the “great” Venetian masters, Veronese produced more female portraits than his peers, Tintoretto and Titian. John Garton, \textit{Grace and Grandeur: The Portraiture of Paolo Veronese} (London: Harvey Miller, 2008), p. 61. In his study of Veronese’s female portraits, Garton does not acknowledge Licinio as a precedent for Veronese.
\item This view is still repeated in the most recent scholarship without consideration of Licinio’s work. See for instance Catherine Whistler, “Uncovering Beauty: Titian’s \textit{Triumph of Love} in the Vendramin Collection,” \textit{Renaissance Studies} 26, no. 2 (2011): p. 222.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
may lead to a limited, and even distorted, view of the visual culture and representational concerns of Venetians.\textsuperscript{17} There is also evidence to suggest that Titian charged more to produce a female portrait than a male one. For example, in 1534, Zuan Paolo da Ponte noted in his account book an agreement made with the painter for two portrait commissions: one of himself and the other of his daughter. While Titian would make his portrait for ten ducats, his daughter’s portrait would cost twice the amount in addition to an extra five ducats to cover the cost of ultramarine pigments for her dress. Zuan Paolo noted that he agreed to the twenty-five ducats charged for his daughter’s portrait because Titian had to travel to their home.\textsuperscript{18} This suggests that female portraits potentially raised issues of propriety. While it was socially acceptable for a man to sit in the painter’s studio to pose for his portrait, painters may have been expected to travel to a client’s home to paint a wife or a daughter. This situation may explain why Titian produced few portraits of Venetian women, as patrons perhaps turned to painters of a less elevated stature who charged lower prices. In fact, in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, a significant number of female portraits were produced by some of the “followers” of Giovanni Bellini, including Francesco Bissolo, Marco Bello and Pietro degli Ingannati.\textsuperscript{19} These artists have not yet entered art historical discussions, perhaps because their paintings are still largely in private collections or relegated to museum storerooms because considered of lesser quality.\textsuperscript{20} In some cases, uncertain

\textsuperscript{17} Paul Joannides however notes that “proportionally, Titian’s oeuvre of the 1510s contains fewer portraits of women than those of Palma or Cariani.” Paul Joannides, \textit{Titian to 1518. The Assumption of Genius} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 229.


\textsuperscript{19} For these painters see Fritz Heinemann, \textit{Giovanni Bellini e i Belliniani}, 3vols. (Venice; Hildesheim: Neri Pozza; Georg Olms, 1962-1991).

attributions may have dissuaded scholars from dealing with the paintings critically.\textsuperscript{21} That
Venetians increasingly became interested in female portraiture over the course of the sixteenth
century is further confirmed by Isabella Palumbo-Fossati’s recent study of the Venetian interior.
Based on property inventories of the last the decades of the century, her research demonstrates
the strong presence of portraits of women.\textsuperscript{22} Moreover, she argues that the presence of female
portraits was greater than in Florentine households.

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of Licinio as a painter of female
portraits and the great originality of his approach. It foregrounds the place of female
representations within the formation of the painter’s artistic identity, while highlighting the
meaning of his contribution to the genres of marriage and family portraiture. The first part of the
chapter provides a survey of the artist’s independent female portraits and the visual conventions
employed in the creation of assertive female likenesses. By studying the unique characteristics of
Licinio’s approach to female portraiture, whilst demonstrating its ties to the Venetian tradition, I
prepare the ground for two case studies where women are looked at relationally in the context of
the family. The second part of the chapter offers an analysis of \textit{The Portrait of a Widow and her
sons} of c.1520: an image about motherhood, widowhood and female old age all at once (Figure
18). This family representation reveals how images may complement written texts in our
understanding of the construction of female identity, and of the place that upper class women
occupied in Venetian society. I then turn to the \textit{Portrait of a Woman Holding the Image of a Man

\textsuperscript{21} A telling example is the \textit{Portrait of a Lady} of 1510-1520 (National Gallery, London), a painting which has been
variously attributed to six different artists: Gentile Bellini, Francesco Bissolo, Bartolommeo Veneto, Francesco
Rizzo da Santacroce, Pietro degli Ingannati and a pupil of Palma Vecchio. Christopher Baker and Tom Henry, \textit{The

\textsuperscript{22} Isabella Palumbo-Fossati, \textit{Intérieurs vénitiens à la Renaissance: Maison, société et culture} (Paris: Michel de
of 1525-1530 (Castello Sforzesco, Milan) (Figure 108). A marriage portrait, the painting takes as its subject the affective dimensions of portraiture and can therefore be located within a broader discourse—textual and visual—on the emergence of an engaged beholder for works of art. Licinio, however, participates in this conversation by positing a female beholder at the nexus of discourses about art, desire and possession, thus raising the issue of female spectatorship. The final section pursues one of the broader objectives of this dissertation, which is to understand the identity of Licinio’s patrons through a discussion of the symbolic and financial values attached to the fashions that make up his portraits. All these discussions will provide us with new perspectives from which to reconsider the *Portrait of a Woman* of 1536: that “rather unpleasant portrait.”

The Assertive Female Likeness

Giorgione’s *La Vecchia* (Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice) is often taken as the visual counterpart to the images of ideally beautiful women that flourished in the first three decades of the sixteenth century (Figure 109). Licinio’s portraits occupy the spaces in-between. On the one hand, with a naturalistic idiom, the artist affirms female individuality in contrast to the anonymous and generic *belle donne* popularised by Titian and Palma Vecchio. On the other, with respect and sensibility towards his sitters, Licinio counters the image of female aging as a time of poverty and decrepitude as conveyed by Giorgione and other satirical images where the signs of aging are exaggerated to comic effect.23 I begin with an exploration of Licinio’s independent

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female portraits to show how, in the Venetian context, he may be credited for popularising the assertive female likeness.

His earliest known female portrait, the *Portrait of a Woman from the Morello Family* of 1515 (Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice), set the tone for his unique trajectory (Figure 110). The half-length portrait features a corpulent middle-aged woman presented in a three quarter pose from the waist up against a dark grey background, her right hand placed on her chest and her left hand slightly lower on her stomach. She is flanked by a lion on each side, one holding the sun, the other a moon crescent. These heraldic symbols suggest her possible belonging to the Morello family of Treviso. Beneath each lion, two inscriptions –“E.A. XLVIII” and “A.A. XV” – probably indicate the sitter’s age, forty-eight, and the date of production, 1515. The sitter’s appearance can be described as modest and severe. Her black dress is only enlivened by the white transparent veil, or *coverciere*, tucked into her neckline to cover her *décolleté*. Her blonde hair is parted in the centre, pulled back and covered by a white *cuffietta*. Remarkably simple and unadorned, her attire possibly suggests widowhood, but since the wearing of black was not restricted to widows, it may illustrate the austere style of clothing that married women of a certain age wore at home. At the age of forty-eight, she is in fact many years beyond the prescribed age for female beauty – a limit which Paolo Pino sets at thirty-five in his *Dialogo di Grotesques: Originals and Copies,* in *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman* ed. Carmen C. Bambach (New York; New Haven: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2003), p. 205.

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Following the female life cycle, she may also be considered within the last phase of her life; in the Renaissance, women’s lives were marked by watersheds at the ages of twelve, when girls entered adulthood and marriageability, and forty, the onset of old age.  

In this image, Licinio favoured a naturalistic approach that sets the painting apart from what has been considered as the dominant Venetian mode of female representation: the youthful, erotic and idealised female beauty. This genre is characterised by the repetition of a generic type, suggesting that it did not record the likeness and identity of a specific individual. By contrast, Licinio treats the female subject by employing the same conventions used in his male portraits. The presentation of the sitter against a dark background, the restricted colour palette – limited to tones of grey, black and brown – and her full occupation of the pictorial space compare to the contemporary Portrait of a Man with a Toothpick of c. 1515 (Museo Civico, Vicenza) and the Portrait of a Youth of c. 1520 (San Diego, Fine Arts Gallery) (Figure 16, Figure 111). It should be noted however that this approach does not represent a reaction against the idealising aesthetic of his contemporaries. Instead, it is inscribed within a rather overlooked tradition of female portraiture with roots in the late fifteenth century. In Venice, female portraits started to be produced several decades after they had become common currency in Florence. A small number of these early examples survive, most of which are associated with Jacometto Veneziano and Vittore Carpaccio. Jacometto’s Portrait of a Lady made in the 1470s (Philadelphia Museum of

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28 Campbell, “Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs,” p. 809.

29 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 433, 437. This sombre palette was popularised by Titian in his male portraits. Joannides, Titian to 1518, p. 220.
Art, Philadelphia) and Carpaccio’s Portrait of a Lady with a Book of 1495-1500 (Denver Museum of Art, Kress Collection) show that the conventions employed are those seen in contemporary male portraits: the images are of a small format and the sitter is represented bust length in a three quarter pose – less often facing the viewer – against a plain background (Figure 112, Figure 113, Figure 114). From 1500 to 1520, painters expanded very little on this tradition. The most well known female representation of this period is probably Gentile Bellini’s Portrait of Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, painted around 1500 (Figure 115). While female portraits by his brother Giovanni Bellini have not survived, a number of examples of his work in the genre are mentioned in contemporary documents. In 1525, Marcantonio Michiel recorded one such painting in the house of Taddeo Contarini: “El quadretto della donna retratta insino alle spalle fo de man de Zuan Bellino.” This format is visualised in Andrea Vendramin’s

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30 The painting is double-sided with the reverse featuring a Latin inscription against a marble background. See Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown, in Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürrer and Titian, ed. Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown, pp. 326-327 (with an attribution to Jacopo de’Barbari); David Alan Brown, in Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo Ginevra de’Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women, ed. David Alan Brown (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2001), p. 160-161; Knauer, "Portrait of a Lady?,” where the author argues that the painting does not present a lady or any specific individual, but “the type of an aging harlot as handed down from antiquity as a literary topos.” Other female portraits by Jacometto Veneziano include the Portrait of a Woman (A Nun of San Secondo?), c.1490 (Cleveland Museum of Art) and his miniature Portrait of a Woman (A Nun San Secondo?) which is a pendant to the Portrait of Alvise Contarini (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

31 Jan Lauts, Carpaccio: Paintings and Drawings (London: Phaidon Press, 1962), p. 239, cat. 37. Other female portraits attributed to Vittore Carpaccio include: the Portrait of a Woman of 1450-70 (also attributed to Giovanni Bellini) (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam), the Portrait of a Woman of 1500-1520 (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), the Portrait of a Woman (attributed to), c.1506 (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo), the Portrait of a Woman (Private Collection) and the Portrait of a Woman (Rome, Galleria Borghese).


33 Ibid, p. 118, 121.


illustrated inventory of 1627 in two bust length portraits by the artist (Figure 116, Figure 117).\textsuperscript{36} In the third female portrait attributed to Bellini reproduced in Vendramin’s inventory, the sitter looks out at the viewer and is shown from the waist up (Figure 118).\textsuperscript{37} It has been suggested that Bellini’s female portraits provided a prototype to artists working in the early sixteenth century, including Dürer who produced two examples around 1505 on his second visit to the city (Figure 119, Figure 120).\textsuperscript{38} In these images, Dürer reacted to Giovanni Bellini’s portraiture – which we know through his male portraits – characterised by an “objective yet dignified treatment of the sitters who were depicted in close up views.”\textsuperscript{39} A number of contemporary examples, including those by Lorenzo Lotto (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon), Francesco Bissolo (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles), Pietro degli Ingannati and others without firm attributions (National Gallery, London; Worcester Museum of Art; and Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City) confirm the diffusion of a pictorial type (Figure 121, Figure 122, Figure 123, Figure 124, Figure 125, Figure 126).\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Tancred Borenius, \textit{The Picture Gallery of Andrea Vendramin} (London: Medici Society Limited, 1924), plate 16 and 17.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid, plate 3. In addition to these examples, Giovanni Bellini produced a portrait of Pietro Bembo’s mistress, now lost, which was mentioned by Vasari and eulogized in a poem by Bembo. See Mary Rogers, “Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy,” \textit{Word and Image}, vol. 2, no. 4, (1986): pp. 291-305.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Beverly Louise Brown, in \textit{Renaissance Venice and the North}, pp. 330-331.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p. 331. For Giovanni Bellini’s male portraits and how aspects of his approach were rejected by Giorgione and later readopted by Titian see David Allan Brown, “Portraits of Men,” \textit{Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting}. On changes in male portrait conventions from the mid-fifteenth century to c.1520, see Katherine R. Smith Abbott, “‘Sons of the Truth, Lovers of Virtue’: Painting the Patrician in Renaissance Venice,” \textit{Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation} 28, no. 1 (2012): pp. 43-57.
\end{itemize}
Among these examples, Licinio’s dignified representation of a mature woman looks back more specifically at Gentile Bellini’s and Lorenzo Lotto’s work. In the first place, there is particular echo of Gentile’s *Portrait of Caterina Cornaro* in the sitter’s three quarter pose, her gaze directed to the left, as well as in her gait and corpulence. However, the sobriety of Licinio’s subject closely recalls Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of a Woman* of c.1505-1506 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon) (Figure 121). Lotto produced this unsparing and severe likeness of a woman dressed in black during his first stay in Treviso, also possibly the city of origin for Licinio’s sitter.\(^{41}\) The direct and unmediated encounter with the subject was to become a staple of Lotto’s work, as exemplified by the *Portrait of Lucina Brembati* produced c.1518 (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo) where the Bergamasque matron sustains the viewer’s gaze (Figure 127).\(^{42}\)

The strong female gaze would also become a defining characteristic of many portraits by Licinio. It takes on particular meaning in the *Portrait of a Woman with a Lion Cub* of c. 1520 (Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa) where a mature woman is portrayed with a lion (Figure 128).\(^{43}\) In this painting, the parapet employed in combination with a landscape background takes us back to conventions occasionally encountered in late fifteenth-century male portraits

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\(^{42}\) For a reading of this portrait informed by archival evidence see Zaharia-Roth, *La Matrona Bergamasca*, pp. 38-54.

\(^{43}\) Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 411; Licisco Magagnato and Bruno Passamani, *Il Museo civico di Bassano del Grappa* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1978), p. 71. The painting has been heavily restored, especially the figure and the animal. Vertova conveys doubts on the attribution to Licinio and suggests his brother Arrigo as author.
including those by Netherlandish artists who were appreciated in Venice. Like his contemporaries, Licinio usually favoured a neutral background or limited the landscape to a window aperture. More unusual than the setting however, is the lion cub whose leash the woman holds with her gloved hand. With her other naked hand she pets the animal’s fur. On the one hand, the animal may have an allegorical meaning associated with love and its ability to tame the passions here symbolised by the lion. On the other, as the lion’s characteristics included strength, determination and magnanimity, it may provide a comment on the woman’s character and is thus in accord with her presentation as a solid matron who engages the viewer with a direct gaze.

The two images discussed so far demonstrate that Licinio’s approach to the female subject as characterised by the dignified rendering of mature women was strongly indebted to a tradition of female representation that flourished in the Bellinian ambient alongside the belle donne, while showing a strong affinity with the work produced by Lotto in the Veneto. While these models would continue to retain their importance, I suggest that the visual source that determined Licinio’s articulation of a full-fledged female portrait type was provided by Titian: the dominant voice in portraiture in sixteenth-century Venice. In the 1520s, Titian established a

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45 Licinio’s Portrait of a Man Pulling a Rope (Cini Collection, Venice) is among the few examples where the artist uses the landscape for the portrait’s background. Because of the unusual attribute, it is however possibly a fragment of a larger composition. Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 436.


type for male portraits where the sitter is represented almost three quarter length standing against an indeterminate and sombre background as in the Portrait of a Man Holding a Glove (Musée du Louvre, Paris) (Figure 129). We can see Licinio adapting the formula in two signed portraits: the Portrait of Stefano Nani of 1528 (National Gallery, London) and the Portrait of a Man Holding a Glove of 1532 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) (Figure 130, Figure 131).

Licinio’s borrowings from Titian have often been unjustly criticised as a mark of a lack of originality. However, the appropriation of titianesque models was widespread and practiced by such artists as Tintoretto, thus suggesting that painters most often reverted to formulas that met the expectations of clients familiar with Titian’s work.

Titian’s female portraits, on the other hand, found a less interested clientele despite the powerful model he provided in the so-called La Schiavona of c.1510 (National Gallery, London) (Figure 132). Goffen described it as a “one-off”: a work without precedent and without following. La Schiavona dramatically departs from the conventions in use in the first decade of the century. By contrast to the bust-length female portraits of small dimensions discussed above, La Schiavona is portrayed three-quarter length on a large scale and engages visually with the viewer, thus anticipating aspects of Titian’s later male portraits. In fact, Goffen argues that in this painting, Titian represented his subject “not as a woman but as a man.” He did so by exploiting her “placement, size and posture to enhance her importance, to establish her presence with a force otherwise found only in portraits of men at this point.

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49 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 421-422, 437. The Portrait of Stefano Nani is inscribed “STEPHANUS NANI/ABAURA/XXII. MDXXVIII/LYCINIUS P.” The Portrait of a Man Holding a Glove is signed “LYCINI OPUS/MDXXXII.”


51 Goffen, Titian’s Women, p. 52
La Schiavona, I suggest, was of seminal importance in Licinio’s codification of a female portrait type, which, through gesture, dress and accessories, blur the boundaries of gender. The representation of the woman “as a man” was thus employed as a pictorial strategy in the creation of assertive female likenesses.

The Portrait of a Woman in a Black Toga of 1522 (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest) may be Licinio’s earliest response to La Schiavona (Figure 133). It is also the first painting in which he articulates some of the conventions that he would use in a number of portraits, both male and female. The young woman is shown almost three quarter length against a plain greyish background. She holds an opened book on top of a marble ledge, thus giving the impression that we have interrupted her reading. As with the Portrait of a Woman with a Lion Cub, the portrait is difficult to interpret, but this time because of her unusual dress. Over a simple white camicia, she wears a large black damask overcoat with voluminous sleeves. As in La Schiavona, the exaggerated volume of her garment functions to render her presence both forceful and imposing. Her robe may further be invested with meaning as it is a typical male garment of which different versions are worn by Licinio’s male sitters (see Figure 14 and Figure 131). As a counterpoint to her masculine dress, her reddish hair is covered by a black scuffia like the one worn by married women as a sign of subservience and modesty.

52 Ibid.
53 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 414.
54 Goffen, Titian’s Women, p. 52.
55 The white camicia may also be a man’s undergarment. Coming closer around the neck, it is similar to that worn by men.
The combination of male and female attributes evokes Licinio’s *Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor* and Giorgione’s *Laura* as discussed in the previous chapter. In these examples, the wearing of a male garment was a way of ascribing male virtues to the sitter (Figure 75, Figure 76). Combined with the laurel branch or the lute, it suggested the courtesan’s independence and mastery of the arts of poetry and music. In contrast to these images however, the sitter of the *Portrait of a Woman in a Black Toga* is neither sensuous nor seductive as she looks at the viewer with a severe expression and almost condescending gaze. The sitter’s male attire may therefore function to suggest her intellectual achievements and to convey her learnedness. While her black robe could be associated with distinguished male professions including physicians and philosophers – as noted in Ludovico Dolce’s *Dialogo dei Colori* (Venice, 1565)57 – her white *camicia* also makes a reference to ancient dress, therefore suggesting erudition and humanist learning.58

One of the most remarkable features of the *Portrait of a Woman in a Black Toga* is perhaps the sitter’s authoritarian presence. While this impression of self-assertiveness may partly be tied to the sitter’s ambiguous identity, it is also a feature of Licinio’s straightforward representations of women from the upper echelons of Venetian society. The *Portrait of a Woman* of 1532 (Private Collection) exemplifies how Licinio introduced gesture in order to convey aspects of the female sitter’s character (Figure 19).59 The painting features a young woman represented almost three quarter length. She leans against a light coloured stone ledge onto which the year “MDXXXII” and the artist’s signature – “B. LYCINII OPUS” – are carved. Her

dress and accessories signal her status as a married woman; these include the elaborate *capigliaria* that covers her hair, a pearl necklace, a gold paternoster belt and rings. In her left hand, she holds a pair of ochre leather gloves. Her right hand is firmly placed on her hip. In this portrait, Licinio reversed the composition employed a few years earlier in the *Portrait of Stefano Nani* of 1528. Stefano Nani similarly leans against a stone ledge, holds a pair of gloves in one hand, while placing the other on his hip (Figure 130). Since the arm akimbo was understood as a masculine gesture, its performance by a female sitter should be addressed.

Renaissance dance manuals and etiquette books established a distinction between masculine and feminine gestures. Sharon Fermor, who analysed the terminology used in the description of movement, argued that among the terms employed “*leggiadria* and *gagliardezza* are two of the most gender-specific and together feature prominently in discussions of sexual difference in movement and behaviour.” The term *gagliardo* occurs in Castiglione’s *Libro del Cortegiano*. Castiglione polarises notions of femininity and masculinity, writing that men and women should take care to differentiate themselves with regards to movement and speech, so that a man will not appear effeminate and a lady virile. Castiglione therefore discourages women to engage in “vigorous and boisterous masculine pursuits” or “to use movements which are too *gagliardi* and *sforzati*.” A woman should instead cultivate “a soft and delicate tenderness,

60 Ibid, p. 421.


with an air of womanly sweetness in her every movement." By contrast to the term *gagliardo*, *leggiadrià* is expressive of feminine ideals of comportment and demeanour. In the *Dialogo della bellezza delle donne*, Agnolo Firenzuolo defines the term as follows:

...elegance (*leggiadrià*) is nothing more than the observance of an unspoken law, given and promulgated by Nature to you ladies for the movement, bearing, and use of both your entire body and of your specific limbs with grace, modesty, gentility, measure, style, so that no movement, no gesture be without moderators, without manner, without measure, without intention, but rather, as this unspoken law obliges us, it be trimmed, composed, regulated, graceful.

Frequently seen in male portraits, the arm akimbo figures among the spectrum of gestures associated with masculinity. Joaneath Spicer interprets the hand on the hip as a symbol of manly virtues, indicating boldness, control and self-assertion. The gesture finds military associations in sixteenth-century Italian, Netherlandish and Spanish portraits of the more powerful segments of society. Contemporary authors commented on the arm akimbo. In his treatise on comportment of 1532, Erasmus reinforced its military association as he writes that those who “stand or sit and set [the] one hand on [the] side which manner to some semeth comly like a warrior but it is not forthwith honest.” In *Il Galateo* (1558), Giovanni della Casa saw pride and boldness in those who “set their hands to their sides and go up and down like a Peacock.” Further, in *L’Arte de’

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63 Ibid.

64 The language used by Firenzuola to define ideal beauty was also employed in art theory. On the feminine connotations of *leggiadrià* see Sohm, “Gendered Style,” pp. 764-766.


68 Quoted in Ibid, p. 95.
Cenni (1616), Giovanni Bonifacio described the arm akimbo as a pose that gives the impression of strength.  

Titian’s pendant portraits of Francesco I Maria della Rovere and Eleonora Gonzaga of 1536-1538 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) have been taken to exemplify how Renaissance portraits sometimes seem to reinforce or reflect the ideals of gender codified in text (Figure 134, Figure 135). The Duchess is seated next to a window in a space suggestive of a domestic interior. Fermor explains that her upright carriage and the “appearance of containment arising from control of the limbs” may have been understood as “almost emblematic of the physical and mental purity deemed essential in well-born women.” The immediacy of the Duke’s presence and physical thrust against the picture plane contrasts with his wife’s remote presence, immobility and constrained movements. Francesco I Maria della Rovere is dressed in armour and stands alert with a thick bastone resting against his hip, and trusting forward by the action of his extended arm that threatens to invade our space. With its implication of action, this pose, which is akin to the arm akimbo, may be described as gagliardo.

In contrast to Titian’s pendants, Licinio’s Portrait of a Woman of 1532 complicates this dichotomous reading of gender, movement and deportment. Yet, in the context of female portraits, the specific gesture of the arm akimbo is neither unique nor novel. Licinio had

\[\text{Ibid.}\]

\[70\] Fermor, “Movement and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting,” p. 143.


introduced the motif – often combined with an assertive and direct gaze – in earlier portraits: the *Portrait of a Young Woman* of 1524 (Ca d’Oro, Venice) and the contemporary *Portrait of a Woman with a Fan* of c. 1525 (Private Collection) (Figure 136, Figure 137). In the *Portrait of a Woman with a Weasel Fur* of c. 1525-1530 (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo), the angle of the woman’s left arm also suggests that her hand rests on her hip (Figure 138). The arm akimbo is more fully articulated as the artist adopts a more remote point of view and expands the dimensions of his canvas. By 1530, it is firmly established within the repertoire of gestures that characterise feminine demeanour in a series of portraits that show women of various ages. These include the *Portrait of a Woman* of 1533 (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), the *Portrait of a Young Woman* of c. 1530 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia) and the *Portrait of a Woman with a Book* of c. 1530 (Private Collection) (Figure 139, Figure 140, Figure 141). In the latter, the woman holds her opened book – a common accessory in female representations – at the end of her extended and foreshortened arm, thus challenging the often-repeated advice that women should contain their limbs. The arm akimbo culminates in the *Portrait of a Woman* (Private Collection) which recently emerged on the art market (Figure 142). The subject is represented almost in profile but still directs her gaze towards the viewer. As her right hand rests on her hip,

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74 Ibid, p. 411
76 Ibid, p. 429.
77 Ibid, p. 429. Although she recognises that it belongs to a type established by Licinio, Vertova is slightly ambivalent about its attribution. She also suggests Arrigo Licinio as a possible attribution, given the monogram A.P. which appears above the date, and which may stand for “Arrigo Pinxit.”
it is with her pointed elbow, which brushes against the picture plane, that the viewer is first confronted with.

The theme of the woman “as a man” which Titian formulated in *La Schiavona* was therefore not without following as Rona Goffen asserts. In the paintings analysed, Licinio blurs notions of masculinity and femininity through the connotations of dress and gesture. Licinio’s portraits may in turn serve to explain another female image which, as *La Schiavona*, has been considered an anomaly within the history of Venetian portraiture: Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of a Lady as Lucretia* of c.1533 (National Gallery, London) (Figure 143). Peter Humfrey argued that it is a “rare local example of a straightforward female portrait, as opposed to the ideal, erotic, and anonymous type so popular in early sixteenth-century Venice.”79 This portrait features a woman, dress in disarray, who holds a drawn representation of the suicide of Lucretia. She calls the viewer’s attention to the drawing through her dynamic arm movement and pointing gesture. Goffen analysed the portrait in light of the contemporary discourse on deportment discussed above, thus defining her pose – which she describes as forceful, athletic and even aggressive – as masculine rather than feminine. She therefore relates it to the gesture performed by male sitters in Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of a Man* (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland) and Gian Girolamo Savoldo’s *Portrait of a Man with a Mirror* (Louvre, Paris), in which the sitter extends one arm in a dynamic movement (Figure 144, Figure 145).80

While it is true, as Goffen argues, that Lotto’s *Portrait of a Woman as Lucretia* uses pose to underscore the sitter’s commitment to the historical Lucretia as a masculine heroine,81 I

81 Ibid, p. 760. Lucretia committed suicide after being raped by her husband’s enemy.
believe that this painting can also be understood in the context of Licinio’s creation of assertive female likenesses whose evolution I have traced here. This is not the first parallel between Lotto and Licinio’s work with regards to female portraiture as I have already noted the connection between Lotto’s *Portrait of a Woman* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon) and Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman from the Morello Family* (Figure 110, Figure 121). Luisa Vertova has also drawn iconographic and formal analogies between Lotto’s *Portrait of Lucina Brembati* and Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman with a Weasel Fur* as both feature an unidealised representation of a mature woman surrounded by symbols associated with marriage and childbirth (Figure 138, Figure 127).\(^{82}\) Whether Licinio was aware of these two paintings by Lotto – both produced outside Venice – or if the similarities in approach result from the artists’ like-mindedness is uncertain. The case of Lotto’s *Portrait of a Woman as Lucretia* is different however. Since Lotto returned to Venice around 1526 and produced this painting around 1533, he would undoubtedly have had the opportunity to become acquainted with Licinio’s work, if not with the artist himself. In those circumstances, I suggest that Lotto pushed some of the visual conventions that had been first articulated by Licinio over the course of the previous years in the creation of an allegorical image.

We may ask if the hand on the hip, which Licinio introduced into female portraiture, was deemed subversive or disruptive.\(^{83}\) I would argue that through repetition, Licinio naturalised the gesture, turning it into a well-mannered pose that may have complemented a husband’s

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\(^{82}\) Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 411.

\(^{83}\) This posture would be adopted by other painters, including Palma Vecchio in his unfinished *Portrait of Paola Priuli* (Galleria Querini-Stampalia).
representation into the larger marriage portrait. The increase in Licinio’s production of female portraits in the 1520s coincides with the emergence of the autonomous marriage portrait. In the Quattrocento, spouses were either represented as donors in devotional images or in portrait diptychs; the latter being popular in the courts of Northern Italy, but virtually absent in Republican Venice. Lorenzo Lotto played a crucial role in the history of marriage portraiture as it unfolded in the Veneto. His Portrait of Marsilio Cassotti and Faustina Assonica (Museo del Prado, Madrid) of 1523 and his Portrait of a Mature Couple of 1525 (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), which were both produced in Bergamo, were the first in Italy to bring the spouses into the same pictorial space (Figure 146, Figure 147). But despite these developments, pairs of pendants instead became the most popular form of conjugal representation, both in Venice and the Veneto. Pendants may not however have always been


86 Humfrey, Lorenzo Lotto (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 70; Wendy Stedman Sheard, “The Portraits,” in Lorenzo Lotto. Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance, p. 46; Zaharia-Roth, La Matrona Bergamasca, chap. 2. Filippo Lippi’s Portrait of a Woman and a Man at a Casement c.1440-44 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) which formally recalls pendant diptychs through the use of the profile may be an exception. It is uncertain however if it was planned as such from the beginning. David Smith argues that both types of marriage portraits – pendants and double – originate from the Netherlands with Jan Van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait, 1434 (National Gallery, London) and Robert Campin’s Pendant Portraits of a Man and his Wife, 1435 (National Gallery, London) being the first examples to be produced. David R. Smith, Masks of Wedlock. Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture (University of Michigan Press, 1978), p. 2.

87 Pendants were also more popular than double marriage portraits in seventeenth-century Holland. Smith, Masks of Wedlock, p. 2. Starting in the 1560s, portraits of husband and wife displayed side by side appear more frequently in Venetian property inventories. For example, in the inventory of Nicolò di Franceschi, a cittadino living in the parish of San Provolo, pendant portraits of his deceased brother Zuan Francesco and his wife were displayed in the portego, while two pendants of himself and his wife were displayed in the camera. ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, misc. notai diversi, b. 42, n.35 (1577).
conceived as pairs from the start. In some cases they could have been made years apart and even by different artists to complement an already existing image. Consequently, a wife’s and a husband’s portrait would have become a conjugal image only when displayed side by side. Given their reflective compositions, it is possible that Licinio’s Portrait of a Woman of 1532 and the Portrait of Stefano Nani of 1528 may have functioned as a pair (Figure 19, Figure 130). The two images, which are of similar dimensions, mirror one another and suggest a dialogic relationship, as when juxtaposed, the sitters’ bodies and gazes seem to be turning towards one another. However, symmetry was not always a concern, as the lack of visual relation – both in terms of setting and pose – between Titian’s portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino indicates.

This foray into Licinio’s independent female portraits demonstrates that the artist treated male and female sitters equally and that women were not as artistically absent as scholars who have studied the art of Titian and the like lead us to think. While Rona Goffen argued that the unprecedented economic and social importance that women acquired due to escalating dowries

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88 Given the vagueness of property inventories, it is sometimes uncertain if images of husband and wife were conceived as such from the start. Among the paintings listed in one of the rooms of Zuan Alvise Bragadin’s palazzo there are two portraits of himself - one with a gilded frame and the other without a frame – and a portrait of his wife, simply designated as “sua consorte,” with a wooden frame. The different forms of framing and the inventory’s ambiguity as to the placement of the paintings – if the list suggests the actual sequence of the works, then a painting of Saint Jerome was placed between Bragadin and his wife – could suggest that the two paintings were not initially planned together or that they were not displayed so as to function as a pair. ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, misc. notai diversi, b. 40, n.45 (1566). On the language employed in property inventories see Chriscinda Henry, “What Makes a Picture? Evidence from Sixteenth-Century Venetian Property Inventories,” Journal of the History of Collections 23, no. 2 (2011): pp. 253-65.

89 Another possible pair of pendants is composed of a male and female portrait of similar dimensions attributed to Bernardino Licinio (previously to Giovanni Cariani), at the Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice. The female portrait in which the woman adopts the arm akimbo pose is in poor condition. See Pallucchini and Rossi, Giovanni Cariani, pp. 332, 334-335, who argue in favour of their attribution to Licinio.

90 Harry Berger writes that “The word pendant suggests that the ideal relation between any pair of figures is achieved when each figure is shown to depend on and learn toward the other.” Harry Berger, Jr., Manhood, Marriage, Mischief: Rembrandt’s ‘Night Watch’ and other Dutch Group Portraits (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 147.
and the new emphasis on their nobility in the definition of patrician identity had the counter effect of rendering women invisible from the artistic field, I argue that Licinio’s female portraits testify to the contrary. The following case study further reveals how women’s growing role as “the symbol and medium of an articulated patrician culture” was expressed in visual sources.91

**Motherhood According to Bernardino Licinio**

Female identities were constantly redefined according to women’s shifting place within the patriarchal structure, and thus, in relation to men, as maidens, brides, wives, mothers and widows.92 Like the archival documents that reveal the nuances of the lives of early modern women, certain images can help us achieve a more complex understanding of the place and roles that women occupied within the family, and on a larger scale, within Venetian society. Licinio’s *Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons* of c.1520 (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg) is one such image (Figure 18). This painting provides an ideal starting point to explore the nascent genre of family portraiture. But more than that, the image pressures us to rethink Renaissance motherhood through its meaningful intersection with two often related forms of female experiences and identities: widowhood and female old age. I will show that the *Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons* derives its multilayered meaning from the positioning of a woman at the nexus of various life experiences, as well as from the visual convergence of two genres – portraiture and devotional imagery – that take place within the space of the image.

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Depicting the Christian Family: The Emergence of the Autonomous Family Portrait

The family group is composed of three middle-aged men and an old woman who, given the context, may be defined as both a mother and a widow. They are presented from the waist up in a setting suggestive of an exterior space or garden. The widow wears a black dress with a white coverciere and a white cuffia. By contrast to the austerity of her appearance, the three men are dressed in rich fur – the man on the left with costly ermine – and wear neck chains and rings that indicate their patrician status. The widow is the central protagonist as her sons’ gazes are all directed towards her while she seems to be gazing at the man located on the far left. Yet, her relationship with her youngest son seems to be more intimate. Located slightly in the foreground, they stand in an intimate embrace. While he seems to kneel or incline himself before her, she responds to this mark of respect by placing one hand on his shoulder and the other on his heart. Rodolfo Pallucchini suggested that the painting captures a family drama, interpreting the painting as a scene of leave taking between the mother and the youngest son who has passed away, and whose portrait may in turn be posthumous. While an aura of sadness permeates the scene and the painting’s composition calls attention to the young men through his lower position and placement along the axis dividing the sky and the hedge, our lack of knowledge about the


94 Fomicheva suggested a resemblance between the man that the mother embraces and Ottaviano Grimani, portrayed by Licinio in 1541 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). As Artemieva notes, the twenty years that separate the paintings’ production precludes the possibility that the same man is represented. Fomicheva, The Hermitage Catalogue of Western European Painting, p. 188; Artemieva in Cinquecento Veneto, p. 78.

95 Pallucchini, “Due Concerti Bergamaschi,” p. 93.
sitters does not allow to substantiate the scenario as outlined by Pallucchini, or to propose an alternative narrative. Instead, I wish to focus on the prominence of the mother’s position from which derives the painting’s most immediate meaning. To do so, it is necessary to trace the genesis of the genre of family portraiture and its articulation of Christian ideals.

Licinio’s *Portrait of a Widow and her three Sons* seemingly offers the earliest representation of a widow with her mature sons in the nascent genre of the independent family portrait. It is probably the first of a series of paintings where Licinio represents at least two individuals united by family ties or ties of kinship understood more broadly. These include the *Portrait of a Mother and her Son* of c. 1520-25 (Collezione Egidio Martini, Ca'Rezzonico, Venice), the *Portrait of a Family* of 1524 (Royal Collection, London), the *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* of 1530-1535 and Bernardino’s own *Self-Portrait with Members of the Workshop* of 1530-1535 (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 9, Figure 148). Another *Portrait of a Family* of c.1540 has also recently been attributed to the artist when it emerged on the art market (Private Collection)\(^96\) (Figure 149). These paintings signal a meaningful departure from the ways in which the family had previously been represented in Italy.\(^97\)

In Quattrocento Italy, representations of kin emerged primarily in a religious context.\(^98\) In Florence as well as in the courts of Northern Italy, family members were sometimes depicted

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\(^96\) I maintain certain doubts as to the attribution of this painting to Licinio.

\(^97\) Philippe Ariès argued that the emergence of family representations from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century signalled the emergence of a “sentiment familial” previously unknown in the Middle Ages. See Ariès, *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien Régime*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973, 1960). In an important essay on family representations in early modern Italy, Diane Owen Hughes has questioned the “direct mirroring in domestic scenes and family portraits of values and relationships existing in family affairs.” See Diane Owen Hughes, “Representing the Family: Portraits and Purposes in Early Modern Italy,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1986): 7-38.

within narrative scenes as witnesses to sacred events or as donor figures. For example, Giovanni II Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, is shown along with his wife and children, both male and female, adoring the Virgin in an altarpiece by Lorenzo Costa of 1488 (Figure 150). As in other contemporary examples, male and female family members are represented on each side of the Virgin, thus following the separation of devotees according to gender during mass. Located in the family chapel at San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna, the donor portraits make a statement about the family’s wealth and posterity while promoting dynastic ambitions through the portraits of the ruler’s children. The use of the altarpiece as a vehicle for the family’s representation insured that the message carried would have been conveyed to a large public. The representation of Giovanni II Bentivoglio’s family finds no equivalent among fifteenth-century Venetian altarpieces or funerary monuments. Peter Humfrey, who remarked on the scarcity of donor portraits in general, explains this situation by the Venetian patriciate’s suspicion of public magnificence, display and self-promotion. Since patrician families were all considered equal and the doge only first among equals, family representations in the public

99 Representations of Florentine families in chapel decorations and altarpieces include: Ghirlandaio’s portrait of members of the Sassetti family in their burial chapel at Santa Trinità (1486-88); Hugo Van der Goes representation of the Portinari family in the Altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi, made in Bruges but destined for the Portinari family chapel in Florence (late 1470s); and Ghirlandaio’s portraits of the Tornabuoni family in their chapel at Santa Maria Novella (1485).

100 See Murphy, Lavinia Fontana, p. 125. Another altarpiece by Francia made for the church S. Maria della Misericordia, Bologna in 1498 shows members of the Bentivoglio family.

101 Ludovico il Moro is similarly represented with his wife and two children in the Pala Sforzesca, by the Master of the Pala Sforzesca, painted for S. Ambrogio ad Nemus in Milan in 1496 (Brera, Milan). This artist represented another anonymous family group in the Madonna and Child with Four Saints and Twelve Devotees of 1490-95 (National Gallery, London).


103 Ibid, p. 90.

sphere may have carried dynastic overtones that ran against the nobility’s collectivist ideology. In Venetian altarpieces, the donor’s image is more often restricted to a male donor, in some cases portrayed with his wife. Small family groups started to make their appearance in the context of devotional images made for the domestic space. An example is Andrea Solario’s *Madonna and Child with Donors* of c. 1490-93 (Figure 151). Produced in Venice, it shows a patrician family including two children, one male one female, adoring the Holy family. It is therefore through donor images that Venetians introduced family portraiture into their homes. In this context, Titian’s *Madonna of the Pesaro Family*, produced from 1519 to 1526, has been considered pivotal, not only in the history of the Venetian altarpiece, but also in that of family representations (Figure 152). Its novelty lies in its inclusion of a more extended family group, whilst one restricted to male members of the family, in a public viewing context. Humfrey explains this first significant instance of public display of status, which breaks with the Venetian ethos of *mediocritas* and equality, by the fact that the Pesaro family held allegiance to the papal court, and was thus more inclined towards magnificence. As this section will show,

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106 Some fourteenth century funerary monuments show the doge and the dogaressa as kneeling votive figures. See Holly S. Hurlburt, “Individual Fame and Family Honor: The Tomb of Dogaressa Agnese da Mosto Venier,” in *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison M. Levy (Aldershop; Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), p. 139, who notes that the dogaressa’s presence does not however signify her burial with her husband, but her role as a mourning figure. Other examples of spouses as donors in devotional images include Vittore Carpaccio’s *The Adoration of the Child with two Kneeling Donors*, 1505 (C.S. Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon), his *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saint and Donors* (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore) and Francesco Bissolo’s *Virgin and Child with Saints Michael and Veronica and two Donors* of 1500-1525 (National Gallery, London).

107 David Alan Brown suggests that Andrea Solario produced this painting when active in Venice as he considers the horizontal format of the painting, the Virgin’s gesture and the woman’s coiffure as staples of Venetian art and dress of the period. David Alan Brown, *Andrea Solario* (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 34, 37, 68.

Titian’s Pesaro altarpiece can also be understood by more generic circumstances, specifically the independent family portrait that Licinio helped formed.

While precedents have been identified in the field of religious painting, Licinio’s autonomous representations of kinship groups relate to a few examples produced outside Venice. Among them, we find a small number of double portraits that feature a relationship between a father or grandfather and a male child. These include Ghirlandaio’s *Portrait of a Man and his Grandson* of 1480 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and Justus of Ghent’s *Portrait of Duke Federico da Montefeltro and his Son Guidobaldo* of 1476-77 (also attributed to Pedro Berruguete, Urbino, Galleria delle Marche) (Figure 153, Figure 154). Mantegna’s *camera picta* in the ducal palace in Mantua of c.1464-1467 has been isolated as the first instance where the family is extracted from its religious context (Figure 155).  

Also known as the *camera degli sposi*, the painted chamber presents the Marquis’ extended family, including his wife, their children and other members of the household such as a court dwarf and secretaries. The pictorial decorations blending family life and courtly politics are tied to the *camera’s* multiple purposes as family sitting room and formal audience chamber. However, the lesser-known *Portrait of the Sacrati Family* by Antonio da Crevalcore, produced in Ferrara circa 1475 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich), provides a more direct precedent in terms of autonomous and portable family representation (Figure 109).

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110 Ronald Lightbown notes that the Camera Picta is the “supreme representative of a well-established genre” of fifteenth-century frescoed *camere* featuring a mix of family representations and courtly life. Decorations in Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza’s Castello at Pavia (known through descriptions) and in Milan and the frescoes at the Schifanoia Palace in Ferrara include such scenes. Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna: With a Complete Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Oxford: Phaidon, Christie’s, 1986), pp. 98-117.
Facing an unprecedented pictorial genre, Antonio da Crevalcore seems to have resolved this problem by adapting a format commonly employed for representations of the Madonna and Child. His later *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph and Saint John the Baptist* of c. 1510 (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart) shares the basic composition in addition to symbolic fruits such as the apple on the parapet, the bunch of miniature pears, and the coral beads (here worn as a necklace by Christ) (Figure 157). By borrowing visual conventions associated with the Holy Family, the artist thus figured the Sacrati as an ideal Christian family. This strategy would continue to be employed by artists throughout the sixteenth century.

While Licinio’s family groups are removed from religious space, the use of the language of devotion contributes to the image’s ideological statement about the values that the family wishes to embody. Religious imagery provided a range of gestures, compositions and settings easily accessible and understandable to viewers. Spectators would have been prompted to establish comparisons between the secular families represented and images of the Madonna and Child, the most commonly owned type of painting. The *Portrait of a Woman and her Son* echoes very simply and directly the theme of the Virgin and Child through the child’s gender, the pair’s affectionate relationship and the woman’s golden *capigliaria* that suggests a halo (Figure

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113 Wheaton defines family portraits as “ideological statements by the family’s members, emphasizing a set of interlocking values: cohesion, cooperation, unity, fidelity, piety, and respect.” Wheaton, “Images of Kinship,” p. 398.

Like Virgin and Child imagery, this portrait conveys a highly desirable model of female behaviour: that of prolific maternity. This idea is most potently conveyed in the Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children (Figure 1). The group portrait echoes the figural arrangement seen in the artist’s contemporary Madonna and Child with Six Saints from the 1530s (Private Collection) or his signed Madonna and Child with Saints and a Donor of 1532 (Musée des Beaux-Arts Grenoble) (Figure 158, Figure 159). Located in the centre of her family, Agnese holds a newborn in a way that parallels the motif of the Virgin holding the Christ child. Surrounded by seven offspring attesting to her fertility, and probably to her recent completion of her wifely duties, she appears as a “veritable icon of motherhood.” The visual associations that stem from the comparison of secular and sacred paintings may also point to a child’s religious education as a mother’s duty. Andrea Previtali’s Portrait of a Merchant’s Family produced in Bergamo c. 1523-24 (Bergamo Collezione Moroni) speaks to the role of mothers in teaching faith to their children as expressed in prescriptive literature (Figure 160).

The portrait presents a mother, father, and baby boy, thus literally evoking the idea of the Holy Family. The inscription held by the boy speaks of the parents’ respective roles in the education

of children: “I, your father, want you, my son, to be heir more of the best morals than of riches; mother of my son, fear God and observe his commandments.”  

Licinio’s *Portrait of a Family* of 1524 (Royal Collection, London) where the mother similarly holds a central position is reminiscent of religious iconography by other means (Figure 9). In this painting, the artist introduced the motif of the table – here covered by a “small patterned Holbein” Turkish carpet as an indicator of the family’s wealth and status – thus prompting associations with various themes such as the Last Supper, the Supper at Emmaus or the Wedding at Cana, but also the Presentation at the Temple as seen in his own rendering of the event where the altar stands in for the dining table (Figure 96). In Venetian inventories, representations of Christ dining with the apostles were often found in the *portego*, a space used by families to entertain guests. In Northern art, where important developments in family representations took place in this time period, the bourgeois family sitting around a table emerged as a type (see for example Maerten van Heemskerck’s *Portrait of the Haarlem Patrician Pieter Jan Foppeszoon and his Family* of c.1530 (Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) (Figure 161)). We should credit Licinio for introducing the motif of the table, sometimes covered with an ottoman carpet, as part of the conventions

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120 “Pater/magis te fili optimorum morum / quam divitiarum opto heredem/ mater/ fili deum time et mandata / eius observa.” The English translation is provided in Zaharia-Roth, *La Matrona Bergamasca*, p. 123.


123 Morse, “Creating Sacred Space,” p. 162.

employed in family portraiture from Venice and the Veneto. The compositional device is employed in Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of the Della Volta Family* completed in 1547 (National Gallery, London), Cesare Vecellio’s *Family Portrait* 1555-1570 (Museo Civico Correr, Venice), as well as Giovan Antonio Fasolo’s *Portrait of the Valmarana Family*, c. 1553 produced in Vicenza (Pinacoteca civica, Vicenza) (Figure 162, Figure 163, Figure 164).\(^{125}\)

Domestic spaces in Venice, like family portraiture, were imbued with sacred meanings. Margaret Morse defined the Venetian household as a place where the sacred and the secular intermingled.\(^{126}\) For instance, in his memoir written around 1543, the Venetian Benedetto Arborsani conceived the home as Christian and equated it with moral space. His use of the term “sagrestia” to define the home points to his conception of the “family residence as a model of divine order,”\(^{127}\) thus also emphasising the role of the family as the principal medium through which religion was conveyed.\(^{128}\) The family portraits discussed would therefore have acted as idealised reflections of the family who inhabited the house, as well as “emblems of the honourable character of the family to those who called on the home from the outside world.”\(^{129}\)

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\(^{126}\) Morse, “Creating Sacred Space,” p. 158

\(^{127}\) Ibid, p. 158.

\(^{128}\) Ibid, p. 179

\(^{129}\) Morse, “Creating Sacred Space,” p. 162. She here refers to various types of paintings with narrative subjects found in the *portego.*
The Widow as Paterfamilias

The Portrait of a Widow and her three Sons makes use of the vocabulary of private devotion in multiple ways (Figure 18). The painting points to a type of composition employed by Licinio in small domestic sacre conversazioni in which the space is divided in two zones. In the Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist from the 1530s (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan) the Virgin Mary is located in front of a palace in ruin, while a landscape opens up behind St John (Figure 165).\textsuperscript{130} In the Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons, the combination of a blue sky and a wall covered with ivy replicates this composition, with the mother placed against the darker zone. We may also consider the relationship between the mother and her sons, and especially the one she embraces, as akin to that of a donor and an intercessor saint, suggesting that the mother has both exemplary and protective power.\textsuperscript{131} The use of these conventions raises an important question. As noted above, paintings featuring young mothers and children presented an ideal of female behaviour associated with maternity that was reinforced through visual associations with images of the Madonna and Child. But how can the creation of a “devotional” space framed around a woman who has reached the limits of her reproductive capacity be understood? I suggest that in the Portrait of a Widow and Her Three Sons, the blurring of the sacred and secular realms speak to the meaning of female old age while being tied to the reconfiguration of motherly authority and gender boundaries upon widowhood.

Licinio’s representation of the old mother is in keeping with his proclivity towards naturalism. The artist emphasises the deep wrinkles at the corner of her mouth, her cavernous

\textsuperscript{130} Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, p. 424.

eye sockets and the reddish skin of her eyelids. While uncompromising in his rendering of the effects of time, the portrait however imbues the old woman with an air of patrician dignity and demeanour that shows that old women could earn a place of respect.\textsuperscript{132} The image can be compared to some of the few portraits of Venetian patrician women represented in old age. Fra Antonio da Brescia’s double portrait medal of Niccolo Michiel, procurator of San Marco, and his wife Dea Contarini offers an example (Figure 166).\textsuperscript{133} The medal captures the unidealised image of a stout woman of about sixty years of age dressed in modest clothing with a \textit{cuffia} covering her hair. Another extraordinarily naturalistic portrayal is found in the portrait bust featuring Agnesina Badoer Giustinian, a twice-married noblewoman, mother of eight children who managed a large family estate (Figure 167).\textsuperscript{134} Erin Campbell recently argued that images of old women and the visible signs of aging can be read against the vast array of visual and textual representations of matriarchs, prophets and elderly saints and written sources that sanctify old age.\textsuperscript{135} For instance, in \textit{De l’Institutione de la femina Christiana}, Juan Vives describes female old age as a stage of sanctity: a woman’s “most holy life.”\textsuperscript{136} According to Vives, “the truly good woman through obedience to her husband will hold sway and she who always lived in obedience to her husband will command great authority over him.” For the moralist, women gain

\textsuperscript{132}See Frank, “Visible Signs of Aging: Images of Old Women in Renaissance Venice.”


\textsuperscript{134}See Frank, “The Badoer-Giustinian Portrait Busts: A Visual Ricordanza of a Noble Venetian Family.”

\textsuperscript{135}Campbell, “Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs,” p. 810.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid, p. 813.
wisdom with old age, as they “become an equal and a source of advice, an advocate, or patrona (protector).” As Campbell notes, the “image of female old age as a stage of sanctity characterized by chastity, abstinence, spirituality, wisdom and masculine authority acquires its most substantive form in the examples of the elderly saints, prophets and matriarchs.” The Prophetess Anna, who remained a widow for eighty-four years after only seven years of marriage, is part of the canon of female exemplars who provided role models for female conduct. Anna is both an ideal of female old age and a model of perfect widowhood. The Franciscan Friar Fra Bernardino da Siena describes her as a “true” and “manly” widow, thus demonstrating the level of moral authority that a widow who rejects remarriage could achieve. He adds that thinking of “nothing else save serving God and her children,” a widow who can support herself “is half a saint.”

The rejection of marriage was part of the ideal of the chaste and pious widow, of the perpetually mourning wife as conveyed by secular writers. From Francesco Barabro’s De Re

137 Ibid, p. 814
138 Ibid, p. 814. On the didactic use of the cult of widowed saints in Florence see Catherine Lawless, “‘Widowhood was the time of her Greatest Perfection: Ideals of Widowhood and Sanctity in Florentine Art’” in Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe.
139 Campbell, “Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs,” p. 814.
142 The emphasis on perpetual widowhood as an ideal of female behaviour but also as tied to inheritance patterns, has been suggested as an explanation for the near absence of the Holy Kindred as a theme in Italian Renaissance art (a rare example being Perugino’s altarpiece for S. Maria degli Angeli in Perugia of 1502, now at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille). The Holy Kindred, which shows St Anne, the Virgin’s mother, with her three successive husbands and her descent, which includes the Christ Child, enjoyed great popularity in Northern Europe. See Catherine Lawless, “‘A Widow of God”? Saint Anne and Representations of Widowhood in Fifteenth-Century
Uxoría (1415) to Cesare Cabei’s Ornamentsi della gentildonna vedova (1574), a conduct manual for widows, perpetual widowhood is conceived as an ideal state of being and the ultimate test of a wife’s love for her husband. The advice offered by conduct books “reflects popular values and notions of ideal behaviour that affirm social and patriarchal hierarchies” that did not always account for women’s social realities. On the one hand, widows often remarried out of economic necessity. On the other hand, for the elite woman, widowhood could represent a newfound liberty; a time when she could negotiate a certain degree of independence that she may not have wanted to give up by remarrying. Widowhood was one of the rare moments when a woman had access to an advantageous socio-economic position. In Venice, mechanisms were in place for widows to reclaim their dowries, which they could, in turn, administer themselves. But one of the most distinctive features of the Venetian widow’s condition may have been the


143 The ideal of the pious, confined and chaste widow can be contrasted to the stereotype of the lustful and foolish widow. Informal perceptions and literary fictions conceived the widow who was freed from the control of a husband, both as a threat and an opportunity for men. On popular perceptions of widows see Alex Cowan, Marriage, Manners and Mobility, p. 140-141; Konrad Eisenbichler, “At Marriage End: Girolamo Savonarola and the Question of Widows in Late Fifteenth-Century Florence,” in The Medieval Marriage Scene: Prudence, Passion, Policy, edited by Sherry Roush and Cristelle L. Baskins (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), pp. 25-26.


145 Authors sometimes alluded to such realities. Girolamo Savonarola – for whom ideal or “true widowhood” meant a separation from society and complete devotion to God – allowed widows to remarry for economic reasons. A century later, Giulio Cesare Cabei also acknowledged remarriage for similar reasons; Giulio Cesare Cabei, Ornamentsi della Gentil Donna Vedova, (Venice: 1574). On Savonarola’s Libro della vita viduale (Florence, 1491) see Eisenbichler, “At Marriage End.”

autonomy she enjoyed in terms of living arrangements. In Venice, widows rarely returned to their natal families and very often headed their own households.¹⁴⁷

These moral ideals and social realities can inform our reading of Licinio’s painting. The wrinkles that the mother developed over the course of a lifetime can be interpreted as signs of wisdom, virtue and masculine authority.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, by employing the language of domestic devotion, Licinio visually formulates the understanding of female old age and ideal widowhood as potential moments of holiness. The widow’s way of commanding respect through her dignified presence as well as her sons’ reverential stance – in particular that of the central one who bends slightly in front of her – alludes to the form of moral authority that a widow could attain according to Saint Bernard. This mutual sense of devotion is reinforced by the use of the ivy that climbs on the wall on the right. A common symbol of eternal love and marriage, it is here imbued with meanings of consistency of motherly love and enduring filial piety, respect and devotion.¹⁴⁹ The idea of the saintly widow is similarly articulated in a private devotional painting from the workshop of Palma Vecchio where earthly and celestial motherhood collide. In this work dated to the 1520s, an old widow and her two sons appear as donors below the Virgin and Child (Figure 168). The Virgin and the widow are simultaneously being celebrated; while the

¹⁴⁷ The Status animarum reveals that slightly more than sixty percent of all Venetian widows were heads of their own households. By contrast, Florentine widows had little choice but to stay with their in-laws when they had children, or to return with their natal families. Fiona M. Colclough, Widows and Widowhood in Early Modern Venice (PhD Thesis, University of Northumbria, 1999), pp. 78-80.


former is being crowned by an angel, the latter is being blessed by the Christ child. Positioned on
the left, the old mother is subsumed within the holy group, while her sons are only witnesses to
this holy blessing. With Licinio’s *Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons*, this devotional image
is, to my knowledge, the only other contemporary example of a painting where an old mother is
represented with mature sons.\(^{150}\) Her inclusion in these images therefore speaks to her
importance within the formation of the family’s identity.

**Female Genealogy**

By juxtaposing faces, group portraits incite viewers to compare and draw visual relationships
between the sitters’ physiognomies. In Medieval and Renaissance thought, a lot of attention was
given to resemblance between parents and children from scientific, social and religious
perspectives. Eduard Frunzeanu defines resemblance as a symbolic relation that served to
objectify kinship, and which could also be used as evidence for it.\(^{151}\) For example, Gabriele
Paleotti mentions the use of portraits as a way of proving family relationships by resemblance in
the context of legal trials.\(^{152}\) Although resemblance with the mother was recognised, patrilineal
societies strongly privileged the son’s physical resemblance to his father; a son’s resemblance to

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\(^{150}\) Portraits of young mothers with one or more young children were more common in Venice and the Veneto.
Examples include Paris Bordone’s *Portrait of a Young Woman and a Child* (State Hermitage Museum, St.
Petersburg) and Paolo Veronese’s *Portrait of a Widow and her Son* of 1548 (Louvre, Paris).

http://halshs.archivesouvertes.fr/docs/00/43/05/58/PDF/Le_corps_et_la_ressemblance_parentale_XII-XVIs.pdf,
accessed 10 February 2012.

\(^{152}\) Gabriele Paleotti, Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane, Bologna, 1582, quoted in Lorne Campbell,
*Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale
his father perpetuated the act of divine Creation, in which God created Christ in his own image.

Theories of resemblance therefore served to reinforce the agnatic line of descent.\textsuperscript{153}

In Licinio’s \textit{Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons}, the matriline provides the vector for family identity through the mother’s central position and her resemblance to her sons. The reiteration of hereditary facial features shared by mother and sons, including the arch of their finely drawn brow, their long and thin nose and pronounced lower lip, is key to the expression of a shared identity within the family portrait.\textsuperscript{154} I suggest that by locating the mother as a source of identity, the painting points to socio-political developments that ascribed increasing value to matrilineage. A flurry of law making on patrician marriage was initiated in 1422 when the Great Council declared maternity as a determinant factor of nobility.\textsuperscript{155} The importance of the mother in breeding worthy patrician sons had previously been expressed in Francesco Barbaro’s \textit{De Re Uxoría} (1415-16). The patrician humanist emphasised the importance of the mother’s nobility of blood and character for the well being of the lineage and household.\textsuperscript{156} In the following century, two measures further refined the definition of nobility while ensuring the purity of the ruling class. From 1506, all male births were to be recorded in the \textit{Libro d’Oro} and from 1526, noble marriages registered with the \textit{Avogadori di Comun}.\textsuperscript{157} These measures manifest a new


\textsuperscript{154} Vertova notes this resemblance among the sitters. Vertova, \textit{Bernardino Licinio}, p. 420.


\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, p. 59.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, pp. 64-67.
genealogical conscience and culture whose material products included genealogies replete with family trees, book of arms, *libri di nozze* as well as portraits.¹⁵⁸

The configuration of the family as portrayed by Licinio may also suggest the involvement of patrician mothers and especially widows in the shaping of their children’s adult identities – both male and female – and in guiding them into successful adulthood. In Venice, the *Balla d’Oro*, or *Barbarella*, a lottery that allowed young patrician men to enter into the Great Council at the age of twenty instead of twenty-five, provided an occasion for women to participate in a public act. In the absence of fathers, due to travel or death, it was the wife or the widow who presented and sponsored her son.¹⁵⁹ In addition, widows could act as legal representatives in their daughter’s marriage contracts.¹⁶⁰

In sum, Licinio’s *Portrait of a Widow* reframes the conventional definition of the family as dominated by an authoritative *paterfamilias* by reorienting the ideas of filial piety and motherly devotion.¹⁶¹ The painting in turn speaks to the profound ways in which widowhood altered the family structure and its identity by visually redefining the widow’s role as mother by


¹⁶⁰ Colclough, *Widows and Widowhood in Early Modern Venice*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁶¹ The mother’s portrait possibly appears in a later *Group Portrait with the Head of John the Baptist* (Private Collection) which Licinio produced in the 1540s. This may be a family or marriage portrait where the young woman is represented in the guise of Salome. The painting’s iconography remains obscure, however the severed head may be understood as a sacred relic and Salome a redeemed Christian figure. Licinio addressed the theme of Salome in two other group representations (Private Collection and Pushkin Museum, Moscow). See Ettore Mogidliani, “L’‘Erodiade’ di Bernardino Licinio un tempo nella Galleria Sciarra a Roma,” *L’Arte* 6 (1903): pp. 380-381; Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, pp. 411, 426-427, 431; Victoria Spring Reed, *Piety and Virtue: Images of Salome with the Head of John the Baptist in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., 2002), pp. 224-227. On Salome in Renaissance art see also Martha Levine Dunkelman, “The Innocent Salome,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 133, no. 1563 (1999): pp. 173-80.
casting her as family head. The image therefore challenges the exclusively patriarchal structure suggested by Titian’s contemporary Pesaro Altarpiece, or his later portrait of the Vendramin Family Adoring the True Cross of 1543-47 (National Gallery, London) where only male members of the family are represented and which have been taken to exemplify the exclusion of women from Venetian family representations (Figure 152, Figure 169). Yet, while Licinio’s family portrait honours and dignifies the mother within the family, crucial questions remain. Who commissioned the image and why? Does it exclude other living family members such as daughters? As Andrea Pearson notes, early modern women were critical to the genre of portraiture in manifold ways, including as patrons, spectators and subjects. But as it is the case with all the paintings analysed thus far in this chapter, the question of agency, of “who contributed what to the image and why,” remains a vexing problem. In the case of female artists such as Sofonisba Anguissola or Lavinia Fontana, the sensitive approach to female sitters has been explained through gender, as female artists enjoyed a privileged view onto the domestic world and, it has been assumed, a natural empathy towards their female subjects. While gender cannot be taken as an easy explanation for the domestic inclinations of Licinio’s work, it is important to recognise his sensibility and attentiveness to the roles that women played within the family as being a central aspect of his artistic identity. The following case study, where a woman is simultaneously shown as subject, spectator and beholder, will add an additional layer of understanding to this interpretation.

162 A Madonna and Child with Donors (Longleat, Collection of the Marquess of Bath) including a father and his five young daughters attributed to Bernardino Licinio and possibly by Polidoro da Lanziano provides another counter argument to Titian’s family representations. Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 423-424. There is a version of this painting in the National Museum, Poznan (with an attribution to “Venetian School”).


The Female Viewer

Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man* of c. 1525-1530 (Milan, Castello Sforzesco) is one of the few images that explicitly acknowledges the contemporary awareness of the image’s role, power, language and affect (Figure 108).\(^{165}\) Featuring the *mise-en-abîme* of a portrait within a portrait, it is the most frequently discussed of Licinio’s paintings. Nevertheless, scholars have never situated the work in the broader context of the artist’s oeuvre or considered its meaning in relation to his approach to representations of women.

The painting features a woman seated in a domestic space next to a window. A man’s portrait in a brown wooden frame is placed below the landscape view. The woman’s torso and extended arm act as an additional frame for the portrait. The painting’s overall composition and the woman’s gesture finds parallel in two portraits of married couples by Lorenzo Lotto and Giovanni Cariani (attributed to). In both examples, the couple is shown by an opened window and the woman, positioned on the right, places her right hand on her husband’s shoulder (Figure 147, Figure 170). Like these paintings, Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man* is most probably a marriage portrait.\(^{166}\) The woman’s attire suggests an elevated social status. She wears a black dress with lavish gold embroidery around the neckline, two strands of pearls, a gold paternoster belt and a *capigliara* embroidered with gold thread. The running dogs

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embroidered on the white trim of her neckline perhaps symbolize marital fidelity.\textsuperscript{167} But they may also function as heraldry, therefore underscoring the woman’s entrance within her husband’s line of descent upon marriage.\textsuperscript{168} Interestingly, a similar dog motif is embroidered on the neckline of an unidentified woman portrayed between 1510 and 1520; if heraldry, this could suggest a family connection between the two sitters (Figure 124).\textsuperscript{169} We should note at this point that the symbol of the dog appears on the coat of arms of the Tagliapietra, a noble family acquainted with the Licini.\textsuperscript{170} Some years after the painting was produced in 1535, Arrigo Licinio served as a witness to the will of Franceschina, then widow of Alvise Tagliapietra; Franceschina had been widowed since at least 1523, the date of her first will.\textsuperscript{171} The possessions she bequeathed her children is in accord with the wealth displayed through her dress.

Scholars have indeed generally understood Licinio’s double portrait as a widow holding the effigy of her deceased husband, thus analysing the painting within the rhetoric of widowhood, commemoration and ideal femininity.\textsuperscript{172} Allison Levy for instance argues that the image speaks to a masculine fear or anxiety of being forgotten by not only memorialising the husband, but by providing him with a perpetual mourner.\textsuperscript{173} This perceived relationship between

\textsuperscript{167} Also symbolising the chase of love, the motif of the running dogs is often depicted on betrothal objects. Nancy Edwards, in \textit{Art and Love in Renaissance Italy}, p. 270.


\textsuperscript{170} See Eugenio Morando di Custoza, \textit{Libro d’arme di Venezia} (Verona : 1979), table 339.

\textsuperscript{171} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 740, n. 124, including wills and codicils from 1523, 1529, 1532 and 1535.

\textsuperscript{172} See Patricia Simons, “Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization.”

\textsuperscript{173} Alison Levy, “Framing widows: Mourning, Gender and Portraiture in Early Modern Florence,” p. 223.
the living and the dead rests on the woman’s black dress as well as on the contrast created by the juxtaposition of different modes of portrayal. The man’s bust length image recalls the pictorial conventions of an earlier time. With its blue background especially, it is reminiscent of Giovanni Bellini’s *Portrait of a Man* of c. 1500 and the *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan*, 1501-1502 (National Gallery, London) (Figure 114, Figure 171).\(^{174}\) While it takes us back to a near past, the anachronism of the form could suggest that this is a posthumous image.

The embedded image therefore sustains the commemorative role of portraiture, a straightforward illustration of Leon Battista Alberti’s statement on painting’s power to “make the absent present,” to “represent(s) the dead to the living many centuries later” and to allow “the faces of the dead” to “go on living for a very long time.”\(^{175}\) But it also functions as a reminder of the imminence of death to the beholder both within and outside the painting, thus functioning as a *memento mori* as does the skull in Licinio’s *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Skull* (Figure 14).\(^{176}\) In its intent, Licinio’s double portrait can therefore be compared to Lucas Furtenagel’s *Portrait of Hans Burgkmair and his Wife* of 1529 (Figure 172). In the convex mirror held by Burgkmair’s wife, the sitters’ heads are reflected as skulls. The inscription on the mirror further reminds us of the inevitability of death: “Such was our shape in life, in the mirror nothing remains but this.”\(^{177}\)

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\(^{174}\) This format is employed in the *Portrait of a Man* attributed to Bernardino Licinio. Semenzato Venezia, 14 July 2005, lot.159, p. 183


\(^{176}\) Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 428.

Yet, while the inclusion of dead family members within family representations is frequently seen in images produced both North and South of the Alps, the *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of Man* raises the possibility of an alternative scenario: one in which the sitters are more broadly inscribed within a relationship of absence and presence.\textsuperscript{178} While the sitter’s identification as Alvise Tagliapietra’s widow remains a hypothesis, there is reason to question the woman’s self-presentation as that of a wife in mourning.\textsuperscript{179} Licinio’s sitter is clad with the ornaments worn by patrician ladies which, as I will later show, symbolised the matrimonial state while signalling wealth and social status. Her black dress therefore remains the only tangible sign of her widowhood. However, while widows were advised to wear dark colours, black was also worn by noble women as in Titian’s *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga* (Figure 135).\textsuperscript{180} It is therefore highly plausible that Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of Man* served to memorialise a wife’s attachment to an absent, but living husband.\textsuperscript{181} As patrician men were frequently abroad for trade or government duty, a husband’s absence from home for long periods was not unusual. The landscape view placed directly above the male

\textsuperscript{178} Examples include Lavinia Fontana’s *Family Portrait* of c. 1600 (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan) and the *Portrait of the Gozzadini Family* of c.1600 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna). See Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana: A Painter and her Patrons in Sixteenth-Century Bologna*, pp. 119, 150. For a Northern example, see Hans Holbein’s *Burgomeister Meyer’s Family Adoring the Virgin* where the portrait of the patron’s deceased first wife was added after his second wife died.

\textsuperscript{179} A possible portrait of a widow has recently been attributed to Licinio: it shows a woman with a black veil holding a feather fan. Finarte Milan, Tuesday, November 28, 1995 [Lot 00131] Dipinti Antichi. Later Venetain portraits of widows include: Leandro Bassano, *Portrait of a Widow at her Devotions* (c. 1590, Private Collection) Jacopo Tintoretto, *Portrait of a Young Widow* (c. 1550, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden). In Venice, the widow’s portrait never became as widespread as it did in Bologna through the work of Bartolommeo Passerotti, Lavinia Fontana and Ludovico Carracci. See Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana: A Painter and her Patrons in Sixteenth-Century Bologna*, chap. 5.

\textsuperscript{180} Black, which was most commonly worn by men, is also worn by Sofonisba Anguissola in her self-portraits. See Mary D. Garrard, “Here’s Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1994): pp. 583-586.

\textsuperscript{181} Edwards, in *Art and Love in the Italian Renaissance*, p. 270.
portrait could sustain such a narrative; the small path provides a visual link between the sitter and the fortified city on top of the hill that may symbolise a journey to a distant land.

While it is impossible to recover the exact context of the image’s production, I suggest that Licinio’s Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man serves to exemplify the search for visual solutions to convey the idea of a relationship that bridges spatial or temporal boundaries, or the world of the living and the dead. This seems to have been a concern shared by many of Licinio’s contemporaries, as the painting fits within a group of objects produced in Venice in the first half of the century. A first example is Giovanni Cariani’s Portrait of a Man Holding the Image of a Woman painted in Venice in the 1510s before the artist left for Bergamo (Figure 173). Cariani employed the form of the mise-en-abîme of a painting within a painting, manipulating both portrait conventions and scale to create a commemorative form that evokes a sense of loss and of time passing.182 The miniature image of a woman in profile, an archaic mode of representation that suggests her existence in the past, contrasts with the man’s frontal pose and visual engagement with the viewer. Given the exacerbated contrast between the visual conventions employed, the painting’s common interpretation as the portrait of a widower and his deceased wife is in my opinion more convincing than it is in the case of Licinio’s painting. Similar themes are reiterated in a number of double portrait medals, a form both public and private because of its small scale and production in multiple.183 Danese Cattaneo’s medal


183 Double portrait medals were relatively common in Venice and have generally been neglected within the history of marriage portraiture.
featuring Eugenio Sincritico and his wife Celestia (1540s) provides an example. While Eugenio is identified by his full name, the inscription surrounding the image of his wife reads “Celestis imago” (Figure 174). The word “imago” suggests her absence and very possibly her death at the moment of the object’s making, a theory that is supported by an alternative reading of the inscription as “heavenly image.”

The function of these images is informed by the rhetoric surrounding the portrait’s role as a surrogate presence. But most importantly, I suggest that they account for “historical forms of social, emotional and psychological interaction with objects.” Through the mise-en-abîme of the beholder, they call attention to the spectator’s engagement and subjectivity. The emergence of an affective beholder for portraits is tied to the expansion of their expressive range from the early sixteenth century onwards. Sonnets for instance comment on the potency of the beloved’s image and of naturalistic painting in general. Mary Rogers argues that a recurring theme of neo-petrarchan poems written in praise of the beauty of a lover or a mistress is “the assertion that the painted lady is alive and speaking or otherwise responding to the spectator/poet, who may be her lover.” In a sonnet (1500) on his mistress’ portrait painted by Giovanni Bellini, Pietro Bembo speaks to the image as if it were alive; the painting itself is also

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187 For further discussion of the importance of Petrarch’s poetics of desire with regards to the emergence of the affective beholder see Elizabeth Cropper, “The Place of Beauty in the High Renaissance its Displacement in the History of Art,” in *Place and Displacement in the Renaissance*, ed. Alvin Vos, 1995, pp. 174-175.

188 Rogers, “Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy,” p. 292
capable of reacting, showing pity for the poet’s torment. Emphasising the liveliness and animation of the painted lady, Giovanni della Casa writes that his “idol (…) opens and turns her lovely eyes,” “talks and breathes as if alive, and moves her sweet limbs.” Poems on female portraits therefore sketch a relationship between the image and its beholder while emphasising the subjectivity of the spectator/poet/lover. In Cariani’s double portrait, the discourse on the desire to possess the image of the beloved is visualised through the physical act of beholding. Pontormo’s *Portrait of Alessandro de Medici* 1534-35 (Philadelphia Museum of Art) goes further in acknowledging a man’s agency as a beholder by addressing his active status in the creation of the female image (Figure 175). The Duke is represented in the act of drawing the outlines of a woman’s profile, which we are led to understand as his lover’s image.

In poetic and visual sources – as in Cariani’s and Pontormo’s paintings – the case for the affective power of portraiture is most commonly made through examples of images of beautiful women, thus establishing a dichotomy between a masculine subject and female object. Written sources that place a man’s image under a woman’s gaze, as is the case of Licinio’s painting, are comparatively rare. One of them is Castiglione’s poem on his own portrait by Raphael written in 1519. Pretending to be written by his wife Ippolita, the verses underscore “the position of the effigy as a substitute for reality” as it becomes a participant in the life of the

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189 Ibid, with a transcription of Bembo’s sonnets on p. 301.
190 Ibid, p. 302. The poem dates to 1543.
191 Ibid, p. 293.
family while Castiglione is absent on ambassadorial duty. Ippolita speaks to the image and takes comfort in her husband’s painted presence:

*Only the picture painted by the hand of Raphael, which shows your countenance, always alleviates my cares. To this I sport, I laugh, I address jokes, but as if it could speak it agrees and often seems to say something to me with a nod, and to speak your words. The boy greets his father and hails him with lisping mouth. With this I find consolation and beguile the long days.*

Although the sitter of Licinio’s portrait does not engage visually with the painted image – rather experiencing it physically with her arm extended along the frame – Castiglione’s poem and the painting serve as mutual commentary. On the one hand, they set the ideal terms by which male portraits should be viewed, with the poem most clearly setting a man’s expectations as to the potency of his own image. On the other, they underscore the domestic space as a field of vision in which women could hold a powerful gaze as the home was the only space “in which Renaissance culture not only legitimized, but required, an assertive, commanding female gaze.” This was further justified in the context of a husband’s prolonged absence from the home when a wife’s managerial duties expanded.

I suggest that Licinio’s choice to enter the discourse about the affective status of naturalistic painting with an image that emphasise the place of women as spectators and

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196 David Rosand, “The Portrait, the Courtier and Death,” pp. 94.
198 This is how Rogers explains Giustiniana Giustinianì’s authoritarian presence in Veronese’s frescoes at Villa Barbaro, Maser (c.1560). On the cycle see also Garton, *Grace and Grandeur*, chap. 1. See also Blake de Maria’s interpretation of Zuanna di Mutti’s central position in Veronese’s *The Cuccina Family Presented to the Madonna and Child* in *Becoming Venetian*, p. 154.
beholders resonates with his construction of an assertive female presence in his independent portraits and family groups. By acknowledging women’s role as viewers, the painting further compels an association with the story of the origins of portraiture as told by Pliny the Elder. In the *Natural History*, Pliny recounts the invention of the modelled portrait by the potter Butades: “he did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by a lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief.”¹⁹⁹ Both Cariani and Pontormo’s portraits mentioned above allude to Pliny’s story by presenting an image in profile.²⁰⁰ While Licinio does not present the beloved’s image in profile, his painting speaks to another essential aspect of Pliny’s tale by locating a woman as the source of the desire that triggered the invention of portraiture. But there is one possible explanation as to why Licinio chose not to render the image in profile. Taking us back to a more recent past, the conventions employed in the embedded image provide a conscious reflection on the history of Venetian portraiture, an updated account of Pliny’s story of origins. By suggesting a visual kinship with Giovanni Bellini’s male portraits, Licinio situates the origins of portraiture in the art of his alleged master who, in Venice, has been credited for popularising the genre in the late fifteenth century.²⁰¹


²⁰⁰ On Pontormo’s portrait and Pliny’s tale see Simons, “Disegno and desire in Pontormo’s *Alessandro de’ Medici.*”

Material Identities

An important question remains unanswered: who are the sitter’s of Licinio’s portraits? The fact that very few of Licinio’s sitters are known by name can be frustrating and many scholars have indeterminately defined Licinio’s clientele as Venice’s “middle-class.” Miguel Falomir’s comment on the Portrait of a Woman in a White Dress (Museo del Prado, Madrid) – who has been tentatively identified as Arrigo Licinio’s wife Agnese – is a case in point. Falomir writes that the dress worn by Agnese “conforms to the style of the middle-class sitters who constituted the bulk of Licinio’s clients” (Figure 176).202 On the one hand, among the portraits surveyed, her dress stands out for its simplicity and lack of costly materials and accessories, representing an exception rather than the rule. On the other, the term middle-class does not appropriately describe Venetian society. Is Falomir thinking of the cittadini who could sometimes rival in wealth with the nobility, or the merchants and prosperous artisans, who were part of the popolo?

In Venice, social classes were based on genealogical determinants and legal distinctions that did not always correlate with life-style and wealth. In chapter two, I used the theme of music as a context to gain knowledge of the artist’s social circle, positing a link between the themes depicted and a group of patrons for whom music was an important aspect of sociability. Here, I suggest to use fashion as a framework to further our understanding of the socio-economic identity of Licinio’s clientele. Female fashion provides the ideal context as it was closely scrutinised by writers of prescriptive literature and sumptuary laws.203


The *Portrait of a Lady* of 1532 offers a good starting point to investigate the moral, symbolic and financial values attached to the luxury goods and fashions that make up Licinio’s portraits (Figure 19). The painting compares to a plate from Cesare Vecellio’s *Habiti antichi et moderni* (1590) which shows a type of dress worn by women in Venice and other parts of Italy (Figure 177).  

204 The fabrics, colors, belt chains and headdresses described by Vecellio are all featured in Licinio’s portrait.  

In the first place, the woman’s gown is made of crimson velvet with floral motifs embroidered in gold thread on each side of its collar with slashed sleeves revealing a white undergarment. Red velvet is the fabric and colour of choice in many contemporary portraits - including the *Portrait of a Lady* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden) which features a seemingly more mature woman, the *Portrait of a Lady* of 1540 (Musei Civici del Castello Visconteo, Pavia),  

206 the *Portrait of a Young Woman* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), and the *Portrait of a Woman with a Weasel Fur* (Figure 138, Figure 139, Figure 140, Figure 178). This repetition of materials points to the importance that Venetians attached to specific colors and fabrics.  

Along with white, red was one of the colours worn by Venetian brides.  

Since these women were probably not all recently married women given their various ages, red dresses must have instead functioned more broadly as an indicator of the sitters’ elevated social status and wealth. For instance, in 1537, a dress made of rose-coloured velvet with a cream underdress beneath perhaps similar to the one worn in the *Portrait of a Lady* was valued at 83


205 This may suggest that Vecellio used Licinio’s paintings as documentary sources in the making of his costume book.

206 Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, p. 429. A date is inscribed against the marble ledge: “1540 DIE / 25 FEBR.”


208 Goffen, *Titian’s Women*, p. 35.
ducats, 23 grossi, a sum that equalled two years of rent for an ample-sized apartment in Venice (Figure 19). 209 The *cremisino* color was produced from an expensive and rare dye and was associated with women and men of rank. 210 This would have been recognised by contemporary viewers who “learned to read the value of textiles and the meaning of their cut as signs of profession, wealth, social status and geographical provenance.” 211

Economic and social meaning is also embedded in the gems and pearls seen in the *Portrait of a Woman* of 1532. In addition to her five gold rings with precious stones, her most notable accessory is the long pearl necklace that comes down to her waist, almost touching the heavy gold paternoster belt worn by married women and which has been interpreted as a symbol of the conjugal union. 212 In other portraits, as in the *Portrait of a Woman* (Musei Civici del Castello Visconteo, Pavia) and the *Portrait of a Woman* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), the pearl string is ornamented with a cluster jewel of gold, gemstones and pear-shaped pearls (Figure 139, Figure 178). 213 Meanings of purity and chastity were attached to pearls in particular, which were among the items that noble and *cittadini* brides most commonly brought in their dowries; dutifully noted in marriage contracts, the value of a bride’s pearls sometimes even equalled the

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209 This was the rent paid by Lorenzo Lotto. Garton, *Grace and Grandeur*, p. 63.
210 Ibid. See also Mary Rogers, “Evaluating Textiles in Renaissance Venice”
213 The wearing of pendants with cluster jewels is suggested in Vecellio’s *Habiti Antichi et Moderni* where they are worn by the “women of modern times.” However, the prints remain unspecific, thus precluding comparison with Licinio’s earlier paintings. It is unknown if in Venice such cluster jewels held a role in the marriage ritual, as they did for instance in the city of Florence.
Throughout the sixteenth century, sumptuary laws sought to control the wearing of pearls and their value; women were allowed to wear pearls “round the neck on a tight string” for only ten years after their marriage. The length and value of the necklace worn by many of Licinio’s sitters goes beyond what sumptuary laws permitted. Such costly ornaments therefore advertised the family’s prosperity and social standing, and its capacity to pay the luxury fines incurred when breaking such restrictions. While belonging to the fictive realm of painting and out of the reach of government legislation, portraiture provided an ideal venue to flout sumptuary laws and a means by which rank and magnificenza could be fixed permanently.

Weasel furs, headdresses and gloves were similarly invested with ambivalent meanings. Like pearls, the weasel fur worn around the wrist in the Portrait of Woman with a Weasel Fur calls attention to the sitter’s marital status, while pointing more specifically to the fulfilment of her procreative role (Figure 138). Worn as talismans before and during pregnancy, weasel furs were also sought by consumers as luxury fashion statements and were, in certain cities, the object of sumptuary laws restricting their usage. The pelts were sometimes elaborately outfitted with enamel, gems and sometimes metal or glass heads; in Licinio’s painting, the

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214 Garton, Grace and Grandeur, p. 64. For examples of marriage contracts see Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630, pp. 246-247, 265-266.


217 Garton, Grace and Grandeur, p. 64. The display of pearls and precious stones also emphasised “Venetianess” by pointing to objects that spoke to the city’s position as an import and trade centre, as Venetian goldsmiths also produced work for export. Hackenbrock, Renaissance Jewellery, pp. 24, 49.

animal’s head is joined to the fur by a jewelled collar. Elaborate headdresses, known as capigliare, and leather gloves are however more frequently encountered in Licinio’s portraits. Evelyn Welch analysed these specialised goods as “distinctive signifiers of social standing within and without court.” First introduced by Isabella d’Este of Mantua, it can be seen in numerous female portraits from Lombardy and the Veneto from the 1520s and 1530s. The headdresses worn in the Portrait of a Woman of 1532 (Private Collection) and the Portrait of a Woman (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden) are elaborately interwoven with a flower pattern (Figure 19, Figure 139). In addition, both women hold a pair of leather gloves, a motif often seen in both male and female representations by the artist – sometimes one or both gloves are worn – which was first popularised by Titian (Figure 130, Figure 131, Figure 136, Figure 138, Figure 140). On the one hand, since gloves were popular as amorous gifts, their depiction summoned the Petrarchan and neo-petrarchan poetic fixation on the beloved’s hand and glove where “the woman’s hand entering or exiting the glove was presented as a highly sensual act.” On the other, leather gloves would have been recognised as costly fashion items mostly produced in Spain and exported all-over Europe.

Certain items seen in Licinio’s male portraits would also have easily been recognised as signs of wealth and status. While men usually wore dark colours, variety was achieved through

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the juxtaposition of different textiles thus calling attention to their intrinsic value.\textsuperscript{223} In the
 Portrait of a Man Holding a Glove (Vienna) for instance, patterns and textures are carefully
described as the dark grey pile-on-pile velvet stole worn over the black overcoat contrasts with
the supple undershirt finished with a lace collar (Figure 131). Fur collars and trimmings –
especially the costly ermine fur seen in Licinio’s Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons (Figure
18) – were common ornaments of male dress indicating an elevated social status.\textsuperscript{224} Finally, we
may isolate other rare objects such as the gold toothpicks attached to chains as seen in the
Portrait of Stefano Nani and in the Portrait of a Man with a Toothpick (Figure 130, Figure
16).\textsuperscript{225} Ornamented with pearls and gems, such luxury items were often encountered in Venetian
inventories.\textsuperscript{226} Tied to notions of good breeding, they were a distinctive mark of gentility
through their reference to personal hygiene.\textsuperscript{227}

This catalogue of luxury accessories throws Falomir’s statement into question. While it is
most often difficult to determine specifically to which social group Licinio’s sitters belong – the
cittadini or the nobility – the fashions singled out functioned as “meaningful signs of a shared
cultural identity” that bound the city’s elites.\textsuperscript{228} As Alexander Cowan argued, the boundaries
between the distinctive groupings that formed the upper levels of Venetian society overlapped, as

\textsuperscript{223} In The Courtier, Castiglione advocates black or dark colours for men. Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the

\textsuperscript{224} Fortini Brown, Art and Life in Renaissance Venice, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{225} Other portraits featuring toothpicks include Lotto’s Portrait of Lucina Brembati and Alessandro Oliviero
Portrait of a Man (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin).


\textsuperscript{227} Ibid, p. 584. Penny explains that the fashion of wearing toothpicks around the neck was abandoned “when
gentility came to imply a preference for concealing any explicit reference to a ‘bodily function’.”

what was shared – such as membership to kinship networks or life style – was more important than was not: a monopoly over political power.\textsuperscript{229} Dress and accessories therefore created “visible communities” based upon wealth, taste, values and forms of gentility; aspects of identity shared by many of Licinio’s patrons.\textsuperscript{230}

**Conclusion: The Compromised Portrait and the Geography of Art**

To conclude this excursus into Licinio’s female representations, I wish to reconsider the image with which I have introduced this chapter: the *Portrait of a Woman* of 1536 (Figure 107). The painting relates very closely to Titian’s contemporary *Portrait of a Woman in a Fur Coat* (c.1535); both women are partially undressed, wrapped in a large garment and wear ornaments associated with patrician or *cittadini* women (Figure 179). The young woman who appears in Titian’s painting can be seen in the *Portrait of Woman in a Blue Dress* and in *The Venus of Urbino* (Figure 101, Figure 180). It has been suggested that she was Titian’s favourite model at this time, and that her identity was of little consequence to the patron.\textsuperscript{231} As a portrait of a beautiful woman, the *Woman in a Fur Coat* belongs to “a distinct discourse from which the woman herself is necessarily absent.”\textsuperscript{232}


Because it builds on a genre based on the negation of identity, presence becomes a problematic feature of Licinio’s *Portrait of a Woman*: a highly naturalistic rendering of a mature woman. By inscribing the date and apposing the personalised signature “Jo. Bernard. Licinius p.” in cursive script – as opposed to the more formal Roman capitals usually favoured by the artist – Licinio confirms the image’s function as a record of a particular individual at one point in time. In fact, she is possibly the same woman portrayed in a badly damaged painting at the Courtauld Institute of Art attributed to him (Figure 181). By destabilising the visual conventions associated with certain categories of representation, Licinio’s approach reinforces the connection with Lorenzo Lotto that I have sought to establish in this chapter. Licinio’s portrait provides an ideal pendant to Lotto’s famous *Venus and Cupid* of the mid-1520s, a painting recognised for its unique blurring of genres: the reclining nude and the portrait (Figure 182). Venus’ highly individualised facial features sets the painting apart from the reclining Venuses produced by Giorgione, Palma and Titian; her face may well be that of the woman whose marriage the painting commemorated.

As this chapter has shown, both Licinio and Lotto innovated in fields associated with female representation – including marriage and family portraits – and demonstrated a proclivity for the objective, and sometimes uncompromising, rendering of physiognomies. I suggest that


234 Enrico Maria dal Pozzolo’s suggestion that the painting represents Agnese Licinio based on a resemblance with her likeness in the *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* is unconvincing. Enrico Maria dal Pozzolo, “Il lauro di Laura e delle ‘maritate venetiane’,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 37 (1993): p. 277.


this shared artistic vision may have contributed to Licinio’s off-centre position in the historiography of Venetian art; a form of marginalisation which can be understood in geographic terms. Although it can be seen in works produced in Treviso around 1505, Lotto’s development of a realistic approach to female portraiture has tended to be associated with his Bergamasque period. Among scholars who have commented on Lotto’s Portrait of Lucina Brembati, Mauro Lucco argued that the “realistic and frank approach to the representation of a person’s rather plain features [that] would have perhaps caused some unease” in Venice and elsewhere in the Veneto. According to the same scholar, the painter’s way of casting a woman in a style reserved for male sitters is not only the result of the painter’s unconventional manner, but is also tied to the demands of a clientele, who, in the city of Bergamo, was “much more attentive to the values of domesticity than those in Venice.” Lotto’s Portrait of a Lady as Lucretia is another case in point. Although produced in Venice, Humfrey suggested that it results from the artist’s experience in Bergamo, where fewer social inhibitions controlled female representation than in the metropolis.

By associating Licinio with a “provincial” culture, scholars have failed to recognise the importance of his work within the history of Venetian portraiture but also as visual documents within the history of the family. I would suggest that the images discussed in this chapter, which have largely been overlooked because of aesthetic and historiographic biases, played an important role as precedents to painters of the younger generation. Licinio’s independent female

238 Ibid. Andrea Zaharia-Roth similarly argues that a distinctive feature of female portraits in Bergamo (produced by Lorenzo Lotto and Giovanni Battista Moroni) is the representation of a stout and dignified married woman. See Zaharia-Roth, La Matrona Bergamasca. The author does not consider Bernardino Licinio’s work.
239 Humfrey, in Lorenzo Lotto: Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance, p. 185.
portraits provided models for Paris Bordone (1495-1570) as suggested in his Portrait of a Young Woman from the Fugger Family of 1545-50 (Private Collection) where the woman’s depiction follows the conventions popularised by the Bergamasque artist (Figure 183).\textsuperscript{240} The connection between the Trevisan painter and the Licinio family is further reinforced by Arrigo’s role as a witness in the will of Paris’ wife Cinzia Spada in 1536.\textsuperscript{241} By the time Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) arrived in Venice, the formula was well established; the sitter of Veronese’s Portrait of a Woman of c.1555 (Musée Municipal, Douai) is shown wearing a crimson dress with a hand on her hip, looking at the viewer with a direct gaze (Figure 184).\textsuperscript{242} Furthermore, I suggest that the domestic sensitivity expressed in the family images embedded in Veronese’s Supper at Emmaus or in the Cuccina Family Adoring the Virgin in which mothers hold a prominent position inscribe themselves within a genre that Licinio helped form (Figure 25, Figure 185). In the following chapter, I take the family workshop as another framework that ties the artist to the Venetian tradition.


\textsuperscript{241} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b.740, no. 54.

\textsuperscript{242} On this portrait see Garton, Grace and Grandeur, pp. 63-66, 193-194.
CHAPTER 4
BERNARDINO AND ‘I LICINI’

Introduction: The Family Workshop and the Venetian Tradition

In the *Dialogo di pittura* (1548) Paolo Pino conceived family ties as a threat to the painter’s liberty. This view is conveyed by Fabio, who states that “the charge of a wife and children leads to poverty and avarice, so that when a painter takes a wife, he will have to deprive himself of his art; to the exception of Apelles, no ancient painter ever married.”¹ We may be led to believe that Bernardino Licinio would have been a proponent of such an advice, as he seemingly remained a bachelor all his life. However, documentary and visual evidence reveal that in both his life and artistic practice, professional and family interests were closely intertwined. In fact, the strong position on marriage and the family conveyed in Pino’s text, the first treatise on painting written in the Venetian *milieu*, is quite surprising, as in the *Serenissima*, the family was still the privileged unit of artistic production.²

It is often said that the history of Venetian art, more than any other centre of the Italian peninsula, unfolds as a history of great workshops. While the communal structure of artistic production was not unique to the city, the ubiquity of its endurance throughout the sixteenth century and beyond may have been related to the continued authority that dynastic workshops

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exercised. In the Quattrocento, the Vivarini, Bellini and Lombardo families all capitalised on the efforts of family members to ensure dynastic continuity. In the following century, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese would similarly make strategic use of the studio. This chapter demonstrates how, as the head of a family workshop, Bernardino Licinio expressed a form of historical consciousness about the history of Venetian art, adroitly using group portraiture to claim a place for himself and his family within that history.

Between 1530 and 1535, and with the help of assistants, Bernardino produced two unique visual testimonies that demonstrate the ideological and everyday intersections between the workshop, the family and the domestic space. The first is the *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) which I addressed briefly in my discussion of the nascent genre of family portraiture in Chapter 3 (Figure 1). The second is Bernardino’s *Self-Portrait with Workshop* (Alnwick Castle, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland) (Figure 2). This chapter takes these two group portraits as a case study as they raise important questions about the convergence of individual, familial and professional identities, the conceptual ties between the home and the family, and the structures of kinship that provided the foundation for the Renaissance workshop.

I start by addressing the ideological meaning conveyed by the *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* (also referred to as the Borghese Portrait in this chapter), arguing that its dynastic message was reinforced by the space in which it was displayed: the *portego* of the family *casa*. I then consider the portrait of Arrigo’s family in relation to the *Self-

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Portrait with Workshop (also referred to as the Alnwick Portrait in the context of this discussion), therefore complicating the definition of the family as a biological unit. By juxtaposing the two images, we achieve a vision that is multi-layered and nuanced, and which reminds us that the Renaissance famiglia was more than a genetically constituted unit, but one that was simultaneously based on relationships that stood outside of blood ties and that may not be understood as “familial” in the conventional sense.4

The family and workshop representations also prompt a reflection about the domestic community’s role as a place for the exploration of the self and of identity formation. In the third section, I am therefore concerned with the ways in which Bernardino fashioned his own identity as an artist as part of a field of relations, thus challenging a narrative that has since Vasari privileged individual genius.5 As Lisa Pon argues, “the fashioning of the Renaissance artist as author was as resolutely dialectical as the more general phenomenon of the fashioning of Renaissance selves.”6 At a time when a new perception of the artist was slowly emerging, it is quite revealing that Licinio chose to construct his identity in relation to the family workshop; one

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4 This approach is indebted to Natalie Boymel Kampen’s study on the ways in which elite families and their relationships – including those between master and servant – were visually given form in Ancient Rome. See Natalie Boymel Kampen, Family Fictions in Roman Art (New York: Campbridge University Press, 2009). By contrast to Boymel Kampens’ more comprehensive and nuanced approach to family representations, Severin Joseph Hansbauer’s recent survey of sixteenth-century family portraits in Northern Italy looks at the genre as a closed category by focusing on the nuclear family. See Das Oberitalienische Familienporträt in der Kunst der Renaissance: Studien zu den Anfängen, zur Verbreitung und Bedeutung einer Bildnisgattung (PhD dissertation, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, 2004).


of the collective structures expressive of the “old” forces that were constantly challenging the desire for a unique artist-author.\(^7\) In the last section the family and workshop portraits are further located within the context of Licinio’s career and workshop practices to suggest that they functioned as a form of introduction to “I Licinii” as a collective/family author and artistic dynasty.

The Material Conditions of Family Identity

**Introducing the Family**

Inscribed as *maestro dell’arte* in the *Fraglia dei pittori*, Bernardino Licinio headed a *bottega* in which his brother Arrigo most probably served as his main collaborator.\(^8\) In archival documents such as testaments where he figured as witness, Arrigo consistently identified himself as a painter.\(^9\) In 1525, he was also listed as “Rigo depentor” in the membership list of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco*.\(^10\) While Luisa Vertova has tentatively attributed paintings to the artist, no work bearing his signature has survived.\(^11\) The extant and exact nature of his contribution to the family workshop is therefore quite vague. In addition to an artistic form of collaboration, Arrigo possibly held managerial duties. Such a role was often assumed by some of the “less talented”

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\(^7\) Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, p. 68.


\(^9\) Like his brother, he defines himself as “pictor,” and more rarely as “depentor.” For examples see ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 190, no. 232 (1528) and no. 319 (1531), b. 410, no. 127 (1544).

\(^10\) He is listed among the “assente alla disciplina.” ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, Mariegola, no. 4 (1480-1589), f. 129.

\(^11\) The *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Book* of 1530 (Private Collection) and the *Portrait of a Woman with a Lion Cub* (Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa) are two paintings which Vertova suggests to attribute to Arrigo. Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, pp. 411, 429.
family members. Some of the best-documented examples are found in Titian’s workshop, where his son Orazio and brother Francesco both painted and took care of financial matters.\(^{12}\) Besides his brother, Bernardino may have had other collaborators, pupils and assistants, including his nephews. Among Arrigo’s sons, Fabio and Giulio both pursued artistic trades. Fabio, who was the eldest, became an engraver and goldsmith.\(^{13}\) As an engraver, Fabio made cartography his specialty, both engraving and publishing his own plates.\(^{14}\) Giulio, who became a painter, succeeded Bernardino as the head of the family workshop around 1550.\(^{15}\) In 1556, he was chosen along with other painters to decorate the ceiling of the Marciana library, producing three *tondi* for the central vault. Giulio maintained the Licinio *bottega* until 1559, when he moved to Augsburg to eventually become a court artist.\(^{16}\)

It is specifically this branch of the Licinio family that the *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* represents (Figure 1).\(^{17}\) Agnese – who is allegedly portrayed in the

\(^{12}\) Giorgio Tagliaferro, “In the workshop with Titian, 1548-1576,” in *Late Titian and the Sensuality of Painting*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), pp. 72-73.

\(^{13}\) In documents, Fabio is defined both as “stampatore” and “orese.” While a lot of his work as a map engraver has survived, nothing remains of his activity as a goldsmith.

\(^{14}\) That Fabio acted as both engraver and publisher is hinted at through his signature. When acting as a printer (*stampatore*) Fabio signs “fabius licinius excudebat” instead of “Fabio Licinio f.” This means that he created impressions from plates that he might or might not have owned. Fabio Licinio collaborated with Giacomo di Gastaldi, the official cartographer appointed by the Venetian Republic, and with the publisher Giolito de Ferrari. Some of his maps were also published by the Lafreri press in Rome. See Albert Ganado, “Description of an Early Venetian Sixteenth-Century Collection of Maps at the Casanatense Library,” *Imago Mundi* 34 (1982): pp. 26-47; R.V. Tooley, “Maps in Italian Atlases of the Sixteenth Century,” *Imago Mundi* 3 (1939): pp. 12-47.

\(^{15}\) Benardino is last recorded in 1549 as a witness to the will of Paula Bernardo Mauro. ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 777, no. 385. Arrigo is last recorded in 1555 as a witness to the will of Giulia Bonrizzo. ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 252, no. 128.


Portrait of a Woman with a Book (Prado, Madrid) – is dressed in a white gown with red sleeves and wears a costly black capigliara with gold embroidery (Figure 176). Seated in the centre, she dominates the group. With her right arm, she embraces one of her daughters protectively while holding a swaddled infant in her lap. Five other children of various ages and her husband Arrigo, located on the left, surround her. Of the seven children represented, only four are mentioned in various archival documents. These include Fabio who, sitting on the right, holds a small cast after the antique. Camillo, who became a doctor, has been identified as the youth in black whose head pokes in between his mother and father. Giulio is possibly the young boy who offers a basket of roses to his mother. Finally, the young girl in the green dress who clings to Agnese is possibly Virginia, who remained an unmarried maiden.

**Dynastic Ambitions**

Whereas the portrait concentrates on the nuclear family unit and celebrates the fecundity of Agnese and Arrigo’s marriage, it would have been displayed in a domestic environment shared by the extended family. It is thus in relation to the Licinio family as a whole that the image should be understood. As mentioned in the first chapter, until 1528, Arrigo and Bernardino both lived in the parish of San Stae. Given their collaboration, we can assume that they shared the same dwelling, as in Venice, workshop and living spaces often intersected. At some point between 1528 and 1544, the Licinio brothers moved to the small parish of San Agostino; like

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18 See ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 190, nos. 232, 448.
San Stae, the parish was located in an area associated with the Bergamasque community. They co-owned the house with their younger brother Zuan Battista who, as a parish priest, was childless. The family house at San Agostino was inventoried in 1568 following Zuan Battista’s death. At this point, Zuan Battista shared the house with various family members, most probably including Fabio’s widow Elena and some of their children, and possibly his widowed sister-in-law Agnese and her unmarried daughter Virginia.

We are fortunate to have an inventory of the house at San Agostino as it reveals aspects of the family’s way of life. Four paintings are itemized among the possessions inventoried in the portego. These include a large painting with many portraits with its frame, a nude, and two unfinished paintings of unidentified subject matter. Along with the ultramarine blue pigments found in the “studio,” the unfinished paintings are the only tangible remnants of the presence of a painter’s workshop in the house. The nude, described as “una nuda da portego,” probably conforms to the genre of the reclining nude as the ones produced by Licinio and discussed in chapter two (Figure 100). After religious subjects and portraits, the nude woman or “donna nuda” was the most popular category of painting identified in household inventories at all levels.

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19 See ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 938, n. 364 and b. 279, n. 228. Between 1528 and 1544, Bernardino and Arrigo were both witnesses to various wills, but their signatures do not specify the parish in which they lived. On the Bergamasque community, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.


21 This is suggested by his wills of 1565 and 1568, Giulio Licinio’s various wills and codicils of 1574, 1579 and 1580 and Elena’s will of 1574. See ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 297, nos. 164, 350 (for Zuan Battista), b. 684, no. 967 and b. 164, no. 520 (for Giulio), b. 164, no. 315 (for Elena).

22 ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, misc. notai diversi, b. 40, no. 22.
of society. The fourth painting, described as “quadro uno grande de ritratti et cassa,” might have held an even closer connection to the family. I suggest that this large painting with portraits can be identified as the representation of Arrigo Licinio’s family now at the Galleria Borghese.

Portraying Arrigo’s lineage, the painting would have found a natural and legitimate place in the portego of the family house, which, at the time of the inventory, was strongly associated with Arrigo’s descent. The identification of the painting as a family portrait is also sustained by its placement in the portego, the long hall that runs from the front to the back of Venetian palaces and houses. In the previous chapter, I noted that the house acted as a symbol of the honourable and ideally Christian character of the family. Functioning as a repository of family memory and identity, the portego was the prime space to convey such values. It was a space of display where one could vaunt family ancestry through the representation of its most dignified members. Giorgio Vasari noted this practice in the life of Giovanni Bellini, writing that “in many gentlemen’s houses one may see their fathers and grandfathers, up to the fourth generation, and in some of the more noble they go still farther back.” Vasari adds that this fashion existed among the ancients; the biographer may have been referring to the practice of displaying portraits of ancestors around doorways and in the halls of houses, as recounted by Pliny the Elder. In addition to portraits, the quadro da portego evolved as a distinctive type of painting.

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whose large format, subject matter and thematic content, responded to the symbolic associations of the space itself.\textsuperscript{27} As Monika Schmitter demonstrated, the historical or biblical narratives represented in \textit{quadri da portego} often engaged with civic and dynastic themes that conveyed moralising messages suited to the glorification of family interests.\textsuperscript{28}

It is precisely within the context of the \textit{portego}, where the family defined itself and expressed its values through paintings and other objects, that the ideological message conveyed by the Borghese Portrait can be fully understood. The space of display thus reinforced the image’s articulation of family identity built upon the generational passage of the artisan’s trade, and which was thus inscribed within the Venetian family workshop as an institution.

The representation of sculpture within the portrait plays a fundamental role in formulating this identity. Sculptural fragments or miniature reproductions of ancient marbles appear relatively frequently in sixteenth-century portraits where they contribute to the visual definition of the sitter as an artist, antiquarian or collector.\textsuperscript{29} For example, Lorenzo Lotto’s portrait of the Venetian collector Andrea Odoni of c. 1527 (Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London) features the sitter in the midts of his antiques (Figure 186). Brought together around Odoni, the pieces comment upon the sitter’s “identity, circumstances, or personal philosophy.”\textsuperscript{30}

In the Borghese Portrait, the marble miniature version of the Torso Belvedere – in a partially


\textsuperscript{28} The cycle of four paintings by Paolo Veronese made for the \textit{portego} of the Cuccina palace are some of the most representative examples of the type. See Ibid.


restored state – held by Fabio similarly functions to identify the group as a family of artists. But by contrast to the accretion of objects that surrounds Odoni, the singularity of the statuette calls attention to its importance as an embodiment of the tools of the trade that are passed down to the next generation.

In the previous chapter, I argued that this family group assimilates the language of sacred devotion in order to celebrate an ideal of maternity conveyed through images of the Madonna and Child. Yet by contrast to, and perhaps to counterbalance Agnese’s central position and matriarchal stance, the figures that frame the group together with the inscription make a highly patrilineal comment.\textsuperscript{31} Arrigo and his son Fabio appear on each of the group’s extremities. They wear the same type of artisan’s clothing – also worn by Bernardino in the Alnwick Portrait – composed of a dark overcoat with a white \textit{camicia} underneath and a beret. The simplicity of their dress contrasts with the more lavish fabrics of the younger children’s accoutrements. What is most significant is that Fabio, instead of Arrigo, is the one holding the statue. This detail calls attention to the process of transmission of the trade from one generation to the next. This is confirmed by the reciprocal gaze of acknowledgement exchanged by Arrigo and his son as they seem to be turning their heads in order to look into each other’s direction. Lotto would similarly articulate – and even more literally – the theme of professional continuity in his portrait of the surgeon Gian Giacomo Stuer and his son Gian Antonio; in this case, Gian Giacomo places, and one might even say forces, the surgeon’s instruments in his son’s hands as if to designate him as successor (Figure 187).\textsuperscript{32} Yet again, a major distinction arises in that Licinio does not display the

\textsuperscript{31} Patricia Fortini Brown similarly notes how the painting visually celebrates matriarchy, while its inscription emphasises patriarchy. \textit{Art and Life in Renaissance Venice}, pp. 165-166.
painter’s own working tools – such as brushes and palette – as explicitly as Lotto does in the surgeon’s portrait. Instead, the Torso Belvedere serves as a symbolic focus of family devotion; held high and respectfully by its base, it is presented almost as a family idol, and icon of the younger generation’s future. As such, it recalls the *penates*, or the household god, that Aeneas’ father Anchises carries as they flee from Troy in Ugo da Carpi’s chiaroscuro woodcut of 1518 (Figure 188).

Bernardino is physically absent from the family image. But despite Arrigo’s position as *paterfamilias* within the nuclear family group, a signature and an inscription forcefully remind us of Bernardino’s active role in transmitting the tools of the trade. Although the intervention of different hands has been discerned in the painting, the signature “B. LYCINII OPUS” attributes authorship to Bernardino alone. The signature is located next to Fabio’s head and right above the statue. Along the upper edge of the canvas, a longer inscription in Latin reads: “Exprimit Hic Fratrem Tota Cum Gente Lycinus/ Et Vitam His Forma Prorogat Arte Sibi” (“Here Licinio portrayed his brother and all his family and thereby prolonged life for them with their image, for himself with his art”). While establishing the fraternal relationship that binds Bernardino to Arrigo, the inscription emphasises the commemorative function of art by alluding to painting’s power to “make the absent present”, thus pursuing the reflection initiated in the *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man* of c. 1525-1530 and the *Portrait of a Man* of

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36 The English translation is provided in Ibid.

ca.1525-1535 (Private Collection) in which Licinio inserts a quotation from Virgil (Figure 91, Figure 108). To this group of images that claim the commemorative function of art, we may add the Portrait of Helena Capella of 1541 (Private Collection) in which the sitter is portrayed behind an imposing stone parapet that clearly signals the portrait’s memorial function (Figure 189). Carved in stone in Roman capitals, a Latin epitaph declares that this is a posthumous image and a celebration of the sitter’s virtue as a wife and mother of six children.

The inscription in the Borghese Portrait speaks to another aspect of Alberti’s well-known comment on the function of painting. By specifically underlining Bernardino’s role in prolonging his and his family’s life, it points to the “deep admiration for the artist” felt by the viewers of portraits. Alberti adds that “the virtues of painting, therefore, are that its masters see their works admired and feel themselves to be almost like the Creator.” The inscription thus posits Bernardino at the origins of representation, rhetorically placing him as artistic father and true head of the family dynasty – a role we see him perform in the contemporary Self-Portrait with Workshop. It is in fact with Bernardino, instead of his father Arrigo, that Giulio would co-sign his first public commission as “Bernardinus Iuliusque Lycinii / Patruus et Nepos Faciebant” (Figure 190). The painting, an Adoration of the Magi for the church of San Francesco

38 These two paintings are discussed in chapter 3 and 2 respectively.


42 Ibid, (On Painting, 26). That portraiture brings glory to the person portrayed and to the artist himself is an ancient topos found in Cicero (Epistulae ad Familiares, V, 12). See Rossi, in Pittura a Bergamo dal Romanico al Neoclassicismo, p. 248.
in Manfredonia, has been dated to c. 1550 and represents one of Bernardino’s last works. Vertova suggested that it was begun by Bernardino, left unfinished at his death and then completed by Giulio.\textsuperscript{43} However, the use of a double signature to underline the painters’ relationship as uncle and nephew inscribes itself within a specific practice, where it functioned as a form of artistic introduction. The strategy was notably used by Jacopo Bassano to introduce his son Francesco to the art market.\textsuperscript{44}

The ideological message conveyed by the Borghese Portrait goes beyond the Licini’s definition as a family of painters, as it speaks more broadly to their participation in the Venetian institution of the family workshop. Throughout the Cinquecento, the painter’s practice continued to be regulated by the \textit{Arte dei Depentori}; with its \textit{capitolari} of 1271, it was the oldest medieval guild. Along with the \textit{figurer}, the \textit{Arte} grouped professions such as guilders and embroiderers.\textsuperscript{45} The \textit{Collegio dei Pittori} was only established in 1682, more than a century after Florentine and Roman artists had successfully established their own academies.\textsuperscript{46} David Rosand argued that as an institution, the family workshop was both a “product and a function of the traditions of institutional conservatism” of the Venetian Republic.\textsuperscript{47} It was simultaneously dependent on and

\textsuperscript{43} Vertova, \textit{Giulio Licinio}, pp. 517, 560.

\textsuperscript{44} Jean Habert, \textit{Bassano et ses fils dans les musées français} (Paris : Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), p. 28. The painting in question is \textit{Saint Paul Preaching} of 1574, produced when Francesco was twenty-five. Jacopo Bassano also renewed the practice with his son Leandro.

\textsuperscript{45} See Favaro, \textit{L'arte dei pittori in Venezia e i suoi statuti}.

\textsuperscript{46} See James E. Shaw, “Institutional Controls and the Retail of Paintings: The Painters’ Guild of Early Modern Venice,” \textit{Mapping Markets for Painting in Europe, 1450-1750}, ed. Neil de Marchi and Hans J. van Miegroet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 107-124; Rosand, “The Crisis of the Venetian Renaissance Tradition,” \textit{L'Arte} 12-13 (1970): pp. 25, 29-32. It is only in 1754, when most artistic centres of Italy and Europe boasted their academy, that the Venetian \textit{Accademia di Pittura e Scultura} was approved. By contrast, Florentine artists had successfully established an academy that united the arts of \textit{disegno} in 1563 and had been emancipated from the guild in 1571. In Rome, the \textit{Accademia di San Luca} was established in 1593, but artists were not released from their guild obligations.

reinforced by the notion that talent is inborn and therefore genetically transmitted. At the same time, the opposite idea, that painting was a craft that could be learned, provided the institution’s very foundation.\textsuperscript{48} By emphasising artistic lineage and professional continuity, the Borghese Portrait thus claims the family’s adherence and contribution to longstanding Venetian institutions.\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Home and Identity}

Proudly displayed in the \textit{porte go} of the family house, the Borghese portrait simultaneously glorified the Licinio family and Venetian civic institutions. We may now take a step back from this specific space in order to look at how the Licinio \textit{casa} as a material structure also functioned as a tangible symbol of the patriline, and of professional and social success.\textsuperscript{50}

In the early modern period, the home and the family were separate, but yet intimately related concepts. On the one hand, homelessness did not mean being without a family. Families of gypsies who wandered about Europe are a case in point.\textsuperscript{51} On the other hand, the house and the family resonated with one another on a semantic level. In Venice, the words \textit{casa}, \textit{cà} and \textit{domus} were used interchangeably to refer to the house as a physical dwelling as well as to its inhabitants. The second semantic meaning of the “house” as the family that lived in it could also

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} The painting can be compared to Titian’s \textit{The Vendramin Family Venerating a Relic of the True Cross} which emphasises the family’s participation in Venetian history. See Blake de Maria, \textit{Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice} (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 28-29.


refer to the lineage and more specifically to the patriline. Patricia Fortini Brown has demonstrated that for the Venetian patriciate, the home acted as “the primary locus of family identity.” Through the accretion of luxurious and exotic objects, works of art, portraits of family members, and the recurrence of the family stemma, wealthy families displayed their taste, property and prominence. Studies of the domestic space and its material culture have tended to focus on the upper strata of society -the nobility and the cittadini, with whom they often rivalled in wealth – and on the unique and the singular. Isabella Palumbo-Fossati is one of the rare scholars who has analysed the domestic environement of the Venetian popolo, which, in the sixteenth century, represented approximately ninety percent of the city’s total population. Property inventories provide a mirror of the economic and social diversity that characterise this group.

Occupying seven rooms, the Licinio casa was much larger than the average dwelling of the popular class which consisted of two to three rooms. The inventory of the house was drafted in 1568 following Zuan Battista’s death in order to establish his succession. As noted

57 This average represents a very modest dwelling. Isabella Palumbo-Fossati, “L’interno della casa dell’artigiano e dell’artista nella Venezia del Cinquecento,” Studi veneziani n.s. 8 (1984), p. 120; Palumbo-Fossati, Intérieurs vénitiens à la Renaissance, p. 61.
above, he was by then sharing the house with various family members including a niece and his sister-in-law. But the inventory shows no trace of their presence, through, for instance, items of female clothing. The inventory is still relatively lengthy, and goes beyond Zuan Battista’s personal possessions to include shared household furniture and kitchen stuffs, since he was family head or capofamiglia. This post-humous record can therefore be taken as a general indicator of the family’s level of wealth.

In the first place, the furniture listed – chests, tables and chairs – are all made of walnut rather than of the more modest pinewood found in humble dwellings. In addition, very few items are described as being in poor condition, as “vecchie” or “triste.” The inventory also lists many carpets, painted chests and wall hangings. For instance, we find in Zuan Battista’s room twenty-six feet of textiles painted with floral motifs (“panni verdi depenti”). Such ornamental wall hangings were a favoured decorative element of Venetian homes and were among the most valuable possessions.  

For the reasons stated, the inventory of Zuan Battista’s camera is the longest and most detailed. The objects found in this space include many precious items, such as a silver saltcellar, rings, medals and an inkstand made of gold. It is also home to a collection of thirty-two books, a high number in this time period that may be explained by Zuan Battista’s clerical profession.

In addition to the four paintings found in the portego which have already been noted, twelve other pictures were displayed in Zuan Battista’s camera. Like his selection of books, their subject matter are both religious and secular, including among others, portraits of Petrarch,

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59 ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, misc. notai diversi, b. 40, no. 22. The list of books includes twenty books in folio, described as theology and humanities, six books in quatro and six octavio of diverse subject matter. On book ownership see Sarti, *Europe at Home*, p. 125.
Laura, Virgil, Dante, a Mary Magdelen, a Madonna and a scene of Hell. As common with inventories of this period, authorship remains unspecified. It is therefore impossible to know if these are products of the family workshop, or if they are expressive of a taste in collecting. If the latter was the case, the total of sixteen paintings would have represented a sizeable collection for this time period. While owning paintings was widespread throughout the Cinquecento, most inventories list between one and three paintings.\(^\text{60}\) In addition, Bertrand Jestaz has demonstrated that before around 1600, households with more than ten paintings were comparatively rare.\(^\text{61}\)

The general image provided by the inventory suggests a prosperous family of artisans.\(^\text{62}\) As such, it is consistent with the way in which the family is represented in the Borghese Portrait. The younger children’s dress, all made of lavish, expensive fabrics, were given particular attention. This is consistent with the concern for children’s clothing that is expressed in inventories of families from the popolo who had reached a certain level of wealth.\(^\text{63}\) Yet what speaks to the family’s social success rests on the very fact of their portrayal and the painting’s placement in the portego. Despite portraiture’s spread to various social classes, the genre was still emblematic of an aristocratic lifestyle.\(^\text{64}\) By contrast, members of the popolo minuto, to which the Licini belonged, and which was the most varied social class both in terms of


\(^{62}\) Evidence that would allow to further quantify the Licinio family’s wealth such as landholding in the Veneto is unavailable. On Veronese’s investments in the terraferma see John Garton, “Paolo Veronese’s Art of Business: Painting, Investment, and the Studio as Social Nexus,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012): pp. 753-808, where the author argues that the painter was comparatively rich.

\(^{63}\) Palumbo-Fossati, *Intérieurs vénitiens à la Renaissance*, p. 83.

occupation and wealth, were rarely represented in portraits. The Borghese Portrait is therefore one of the rare independent representations of a family of artisans produced during the sixteenth century, and may even be the first. In fact, there existed little precedent for representations of the artist’s family. One example is the portrait of members of the Gaddi family of painters active in the thirteenth century, but which was produced much later in the second half of the fifteenth century by the family’s descendants (Figure 191). With its coat of arms and its individual representations deriving from various sources, the Gaddi portrait only offers a retrospective dynastic statement.⁶⁵

Whereas the inventory provides an image of prosperity, other archival documents gesture to the symbolic meaning of the home itself by pointing to the close connection between the casa as a material structure and as a lineage. In Venice, a family’s continuous ownership of property was imbued with particular significance for the lineage. While no single noble family ever succeeded in extending its hold on a part of the city’s urban space, many were successful in perpetuating their presence in the same parish throughout centuries. This type of “enracinement lignagier,” as termed by Jean-Francois Chauvard, was ensured by prohibiting the sell of family property, or by imposing limitations on its subdivision. With such clauses in their wills, family heads sought to extol patrilineal transmission in perpetuo in order to ensure that material durability would transcend generations.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the fraterna, an institution and domestic


arrangement that was particular to the Venetian patriciate, is strongly related to the desire to protect the patrimony. The *fraterna* was a model of cohabitation according to which brothers, along with their families, shared the family palace and were thus considered a financial and legal unit.  

By recalling the *fraterna*, the Licinio family’s domestic unit demonstrates that family interests were shared among the different social orders. It shows that there did not exist a clear divide between the domestic and family values embodied by the house for the artisan class and the upper ranks.  

Bernardino, Zuan Battista and Arrigo’s family – as I recall Arrigo was the only one to marry – exercised a form of joint ownership of the house located in campo San Agostino from at least 1544 and established a patrimonial strategy that would benefit future generations. Unfortunately, we have neither Bernardino’s nor Arrigo’s wills, but Zuan Battista’s testament of 1565 is expressive of a strong desire to keep the patrimony within the family, and more specifically within the male line of descent. In the first place, it is worth mentioning that he does not designate Camillo and Giulio among his beneficiaries since they are

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70 In Venice, forms of property ownership were diversified; that of the Licinio family was characterised by the payment of a *livello* of seven ducats a year for 70 years to the adjacent church of S. Agostino (now destroyed) as indicated on their property inventory. ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, misc. notai diversi, b. 40, n. 22. The *livello* was most likely a form of rent paid to the owner of the land by the individual enjoying its use (usually the constructor of the building). Ecclesiastical institutions were the most common beneficiaries. See Chauvard, *La circulation des biens à Venise*, pp. 75-85.

already “men of means” ("homeni accomodati").\textsuperscript{72} While Giulio had succeeded as a court painter, his brother Camillo did not practice the family trade, becoming instead a medical doctor. This is expressive of the Licini’s professional success and social rise. From the mid-sixteenth century, Venetian painters who succeeded in their trades often encouraged some of their sons – usually the least artistically gifted ones – to embrace a liberal profession.\textsuperscript{73} Zuan Battista therefore bequeaths his part of the house to the sons of his deceased nephew Fabio, with the condition that they continue to house their widowed mother Elena, who he names among his executors.\textsuperscript{74} What he adds emphasises the importance of preserving the family patrimony: Zuan Battista ordains that his part of the house should never be sold or rented, but passed down from heir to heir.\textsuperscript{75} In addition, Zuan Battista stipulates that if Elena ever decides to remarry, she should not enjoy the house and all other properties he has bequeathed her sons.\textsuperscript{76} Preventing widows to enjoy their husband’s property upon remarriage was a common strategy to secure the safeguard of family wealth, as the offspring of a second union could potentially pose a threat.\textsuperscript{77} Elena’s own will, drafted on her deathbed in 1574 in the house at San Agostino, reveals that she chose to remain a widow.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{72} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 297, no. 350.
\textsuperscript{73} Michel Hochmann, \textit{Peintres et commanditaires à Venise 1540-1628} (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992), pp. 50-52. For instance, Titian actively sought to ensure that his son Pomponio would have a brilliant ecclesiastical career. Also, Gerolamo Bassano was, according to Ridolfi, destined to become a medical doctor, and trained as such in Padova.
\textsuperscript{74} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 297, no. 350.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. “Item ordeno che la mia parte de casa posta in S. Augustin non possa mai esser vendita, obligata ne impegnato, ma vadi d herede in herede.”
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. “Item voglio et ordeno che se la ditta Helena se maritasse in tal caso voglio che lei non habbia altramenti viver con il mio, over con quello ho lassato a soi fioli et non voglio che lei sia piu mia commissaria.”
\textsuperscript{78} ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, b. 194, no. 315.
Zuan Battista’s testament shows that keeping the house within the family over generations held symbolic weight not only to the patriciate and cittadini class, but also to prosperous families from the popolo. Owning a house or having a ‘permanent address,’ especially if transcending generations, anchored families of merchants or rich artisans within urban space. The ‘permanent address’ gave them a sense of perpetuity that was “immediately obvious to the eyes of the entire community.” The desire of “enracinement lignagnier” and material continuity that transpires through the visual and archival documents may have been tied to the Licini’s sense of achievement within their social class, profession and community.

The End of the Family Romance

In the Renaissance, the house was far from a neutral space but a visual and material embodiment of the family. In the past decade, great attention has been paid to the various images and objects that formed its material environment and that were intimately tied to the processes of family formation. However, as Patricia Simons and Monica Schmitter note, the life cycle of the object should be given more consideration. Simons and Schmitter stress the fact that most objects associated with the rituals of marriage or family formation had transitory meanings and changing identities, very often prompted by changes in audiences and viewing circumstances over time. For instance, bridal gifts, such as gowns and jewellery, could be

79 Anna Bellavitis and Isabelle Chabot, “People and Property in Florence and Venice,” in At Home in Renaissance Italy, p. 77. See also De Maria, Becoming Venetian, pp. 105-106.
82 This critique intersects with Igor Kopytoff’s thesis on the cultural redefinition of things in “The
loaned or resold on second-hand markets. In fact, it is possible that the Borghese Portrait’s place within the *portego* of the house at San Agostino did not correspond to the painting’s initial viewing context, as it is uncertain in which parish the family lived at the moment of its production. And while I have mainly analysed it as a statement of the family’s professional identity, the painting may also have initially been produced in order to commemorate a family event, such as the birth of a child.

Objects and images had the power to construct family identity. But their dispersal over time could also signal the family’s demise. The *Portrait of Arrigo and Agnese Licinio with their Children* is recorded in the collection of Cardinal Scipione Borghese in Rome as early as 1613. In the Cardinal’s collection, the portrait’s presentation of “an exemplary, normative image for admiration and imitation,” would have been immaterial. In reality, the family mythology established by the portrait, through which the Licini fashioned their identity as an artistic dynasty, had already started to collapse from the moment when the home ceased to be the site of artistic production. As mentioned, Giulio headed the workshop for some years, but quickly sought a more prestigious position as court painter. It was slowly brought to a firmer end with the codicil that Giulio appended to his will in 1579, and with which he completely disinherited

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his nephews, Fabio’s sons. Profoundly disappointed by their behaviour – and unfortunately there is no specification as to what that entails – Giulio instead made his brother Camillo his universal heir. Not only did he revoke his nephews any right to the family house but also to that of his personal possessions, including all of his drawings (“tutti li miei disegni fatti a man”).\textsuperscript{86} From the \textit{status animarum} compiled from 1591-1594, we learn that the house in campo San Agostino was then only inhabited by “Camillo Licinio dottor.” Camillo was a bachelor and renting part of the house to a widow named Giulia Persia and her two children.\textsuperscript{87} At this point, the family romance once so eloquently celebrated by the portrait was over.

**The Artisan’s \textit{Famiglia}**

My analysis of the Licinio family’s representation and household has so far emphasised the patriline and the definition of the family as a biological unit. Bernardino’s \textit{Self Portrait with Workshop} complicates this image.\textsuperscript{88} In the Renaissance, families were not solely defined by biological relationships. Recently, Monica Chojnacka’s research into the lives of Venetian women from the \textit{popolo} has brought to light the vast array of living arrangements that may have

\textsuperscript{86} ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 164, no. 520. For Giulio’s first will of 1574 see Ibid, b. 684, no. 967.
\textsuperscript{87} ASCP, Sez. antica, Status animarum, b. 2 (S. Agostin), f. 10.
fostered ties of kinship that were not understood as “familial” in the conventional sense.\textsuperscript{89} The artisan’s household is also characterised by different patterns of cohabitation and the fluidity of the domestic space.\textsuperscript{90} For instance, male offspring left their parents at an early age to learn a trade, thus spending the greater part of their teenage years living in their master’s household. The blurring of the professional with the familial was further prompted by the conflation of working and living spaces. In Venice, the \textit{bottega} was usually located within the artisan’s household and inventories of artists’ estates most often suggest an undifferentiated usage of rooms.\textsuperscript{91}

By considering the Borghese and Alnwick portraits conjointly, we obtain a more nuanced understanding of the artisan’s domestic community. Being contemporary, the two group portraits may have consciously been devised to exist in an intertextual relationship. A number of visual references link the two images, the most important being the display of casts after the antique and the strong resemblance between Bernardino and his brother Arrigo, both in terms of dress, facial features, and demeanour. In addition, each painting is characterised by the centrality of the feminine: through Agnese in the Borghese portrait, and through the Prado Venus, centrally placed in Licinio’s hands in the Alnwick group. This parallel establishes a visual analogy between the notion of biological procreation and the idea of artistic creation. In fact, the notion of the lifecycle is extremely potent in both works, as each image brings us to visualise a trajectory of human life that spans from infancy to adulthood, with the small cast of a sleeping


\textsuperscript{91} Sohm, “Venice,” p. 223. For a discussion of the lexical shift from the use of the word “bottega” to “stanza” in sixteenth and seventeenth-century art literature to designate the artist’s studio, as well as its social implications, see Linda Bauer, “From bottega to studio,” \textit{Renaissance Studies} 22, (2008): pp. 642-649.
baby lying on the table echoing the newborn in Agnese’s arms. While the baby in the Alnwick group is in all likelihood a sculpture because of its small size, it is important to note that it is not rendered in the same chalky white colour as the other casts, but rather using tones that evoke the sensation of flesh. In addition, by setting the master and pupils around a table, Licinio employs a favoured motif of family representations that finds parallel in his Portrait of a Family of 1524 (Royal Collection, Hampton Court, London).

Licinio’s conspicuous use of the language of family portraiture in order to represent his workshop evokes the authoritative structure of the “famiglia.” The Italian term “famiglia” takes its etymological roots in the Latin “familia” which referred to the group of individuals placed under the authority of the same “paterfamilias,” including slaves, blood related descendents and other members of the household. The term “pater” was therefore employed to designate the holder of authority, rather than a biological parent or “genitor.” Such hierarchical relations pervaded the usage of the term throughout the Medieval period and the Renaissance. For instance, Pope Gregory the Great coined the expression “famiglia pontificia” to define the staff working at the papal estate under his authority. In the Renaissance, the term maintained its expanded meaning, which was imbued with relations of dependency and authority. From the definitions provided by Leon Battista Alberti’s fifteenth-century Libro della famiglia and the fifteenth-century Venetian humanist Giovanni Caldiera, to the one formulated by the Accademia della Crusca in 1612, the family was understood as the children, wife, and members of the household, both relatives (siblings and nephews) and servants under the care and authority of a

92 Sarti, Europe at Home, pp. 31-32.
paterfamilias. In addition, Caldiera defines the home as “a certain domestic community under one person ruling well and rightly.”

Scholars have recently emphasised the importance of forms of kinship that existed outside of blood relations. Spiritual kinship, or “parentela spirituale,” was an important dimension of family life in the Renaissance. In this context, baptism played an important role in fostering symbolic communities where ties of kinship were established both through godparenthood and co-parenthood. Symbolic forms of kinship also extended to midwives and wetnurses. The latter’s inclusion in family representations from Venice and the Veneto, as for instance in the Portrait of a Family of c.1540 attributed to Licinio and Veronese’s well known frescoes at Villa Barbaro of c. 1560, testify to the bonds of kinship that could emerge between a nutrice and the children, as well as with the mother (Figure 149, Figure 192).

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94 King, “Caldiera and the Barbaros on Marriage and the Family: Humanist Reflections of Venetian Realities,” in *Humanism, Venice and Women*, pp. 27-28


In the popular classes, the apprenticeship was another form of social experience that could generate spiritual kinship. In Venice, apprenticeships usually started between the ages of eleven and thirteen – even earlier when the garzone was a member of the master’s family – and lasted for about six years. Contracts clearly reveal the master’s responsibility for the physical upkeep of his young apprentices. An example is provided in the written agreement between a young boy named Giovanni Francesco and the painter Girolamo Romanino and his brother. It stipulates that the two brothers are bound to house Giovanni Francesco for the duration of his apprenticeship, to provide him with food, clothing and shoes, and to “treat him well according to how it is appropriate between masters and their apprentices.”\(^97\) The master’s home could therefore become a surrogate family to garzoni who were uprooted from their biological families at an early age.\(^98\) A number of Vasari’s Vite begin with such tales. For example, he recounts that a ten-year-old Titian was sent to Venice from his hometown of Cadore to live in the house of an uncle who, having quickly recognised his inclination for painting, placed him with Giovanni Bellini.\(^99\) Paris Bordone, who was born in Treviso, was similarly taken to Venice at the age of eight to live in the house of “some relative.”\(^100\)

\(^{97}\) The contract is transcribed in Renaissance art reconsidered. An Anthology of Primary Sources, ed. Carol M. Richardson et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 13. In Venice, contracts started to be registered at the Giustizia Vecchia in the 1570s and employ a standard formula for every trade. They can be consulted in ASV, Giustizia Vecchia, Serie XIV, Accordi di Garzoni.


\(^{99}\) Vasari – De Vere, vol. 9, p. 159.

\(^{100}\) Ibid, p. 178.
That the period of apprenticeship could foster a deep emotional bond between a master and a pupil is once again suggested by Vasari’s *Lives.*\(^{101}\) The Florentine painter Piero di Cosimo, Vasari writes, was entrusted by his father to the house of Cosimo who took him “with no ordinary willingness; and seeing him grow no less in ability than in years, among the many disciples that he had, he bore him love as to a son, and always held him as such.”\(^{102}\) Piero’s taking of his master’s name further testifies to this sense of filiation. Girolamo Dente, also known as Girolamo di Tiziano, provides a Venetian example of this practice. Dente arrived in Titian’s workshop around the age of fifteen, and lived in the Vecellio household for at least thirty years. His status in Titian’s household was so unclear that a Spanish ambassador referred to him as “deudo o criado” (relative or pupil).\(^{103}\) Signatures can also be regarded as expressions of a sense of spiritual filiation between a master and a pupil, if not of a profound respect for a teacher. Two pupils of Giovanni Bellini, Marco Marziale and Andrea Previtali sometimes added “dissipulo Bellín” to their signature.\(^{104}\) Another evidence of profoundly rooted kinship ties between masters and assistants is found in testamentary bequests. These span from small to large gifts. While in 1543, Bartholomeo di Paiaoli bequeathed his former *garzone* Zaneto *depentor* all of his *spolveri* “per segno de beninvolentia,” the Bergamasque painter Simone da Santacroce left


\(^{102}\) Vasari – DeVere, vol. 4, p. 125.


his entire *bottega* to his *garzone* and compatriot Francesco Rizzo di Bernardo, with whom he has no blood relationship.\(^{105}\)

Nevertheless, the relationships that grew within the workshop were not always positive and nurturing. Federico Zuccaro’s biographical series of drawings on his brother’s Taddeo’s life provides a unique document that reveals the hardships and abuses that a workshop assistant could go through, as Taddeo is forced to accomplish domestic chores unrelated to his artistic education in the house of his master Piero Calabrese (Figure 193).\(^{106}\) Lotto’s account book also provides an example of a master-pupil relationship gone awry; in 1548, he notes that he terminated his assistant Piero’s contract a year and a half earlier because of a conflict of personality.\(^{107}\)

The roles and status of individuals who lived in the artisan’s household are often difficult to delineate. As Dennis Romano demonstrates, in Venetian households the line between servant, apprentice, salaried assistant and biological kin was not firm and clear. The language employed by Lotto is again revealing, as he refers to his apprentice Josep da Poltrenga, as both “mio *garzon*” and “mio *servitor*.\(^{108}\) The adoption of children, which was a common practice in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Venice, introduced to the household other forms of familial relations whose meanings are today difficult to assess. Adoption could indeed hold contradictory

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purposes and values. In some cases, the adoption of children could be a way of securing help in the workshop. In those circumstances, children could be treated as little more than servants. Nevertheless, adoption could potentially respond to affective needs and the concern for family perpetuation. In his *Libro della famiglia*, Alberti writes that it “is a most practical and legitimate custom, to adopt children born to others when you cannot have any of your own.” In order “to avoid leaving a barren solitude, to prevent the decline of the family into emptiness and sadness one should legitimately adopt a son.”

The adoption of children within the artisan class could sometimes speak to these concerns. For instance, from his will of 1439, we learn that the childless painter Jacobello del Fiore had adopted two sons, Ercole and Matteo. Jacobello bequeathed his stock of drawings to Ercole in the hope that he would pursue the art of painting, thus revealing the artist’s preoccupation with the perpetuation of an artistic tradition that was established by his own father a generation earlier. The use of the term “figliogli d’anima” (“spiritual children”) to designate adopted children also shows that adoption could be a charitable and pious act from which an emotional and spiritual bond ensued. For example, in her will, Giovanni Cariani’s adoptive daughter identifies herself as “Perina fia di anima di messer Zuane de Busi depentor.”

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112 Ibid, p. 100.

113 ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 641, no. 321.
Romano notes, adoption sometimes followed the development of an emotional bond between a master and a servant, as if to cement the familial or filial nature of that relationship.\footnote{Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft*, p. 101. On the adoption of children from charitable houses in Venice, see Chojnacka, *Working Women of Early Modern Venice*, p. 132.}

The various forms of *parentela spirituale* that I have explored bring important nuances to our understanding of the early modern “famiglia” and its representations. As such, they underscore the impossibility of considering the family portrait as a clearly circumscribed genre, as the category of the family was itself multiple and problematic.\footnote{In her study of family representations in Ancient Rome, Natalie Boymel Kampen puts great stress on the fact that the category of the “family” is multiple and problematic and that it is impossible to write a linear history of the family in Roman Art. This is, in my opinion, equally true for the Early Modern period. See Kampen, *Family Fictions in Roman Art*.}

I suggest that the Alnwick and Borghese portraits, which may at first sight appear to outline the contours of distinct communities, instead participate in a unique discourse by providing a multifaceted picture of kinship structures in the early modern period. In fact, each portrait could stand as much for the *casa* as for the *bottega*. The blurring of the professional with the familial was facilitated and encouraged by the enduring structure of the family workshop in sixteenth-century Venice.

**In the Workshop**

*Self-Portrait and Collectivity: Precedents*

In my analysis of the *Portrait of Arrigo, Agnese and their Children*, I have argued that Bernardino Licinio uses his signature and an inscription in order to assert his role as artistic father. In the *Self-Portrait with Workshop*, he assumes this role physically, thus making his status as master the principal component of his own self-image. The painting features a casual moment of encounter that takes place in the space of the workshop. Master and pupils gather around a
small table on which lie a sleeping cherub, drawing implements, and a rolled up piece of paper. At the heart of the group, the master, who holds the small cast of a crouching Venus, is the only one who pays attention to the viewer. The crouching Venus provided the model for the drawing that one of the younger pupils on the left presents to his colleagues. With a hint of a smile, he seems fairly proud of the results of his study, as the inscription on the lower edge of the sheet reads “Vardé si sta ben sto desegno” (Look at how good this drawing is). On the other side of the table, the other pupil is still working on the reproduction of the Apollo statue he holds in his left hand. Below his drawing, the inscription reads “le deficile starte” (this art is difficult) (see details Figure 194, Figure 195). These phrases written in Venetian dialect provide another example of the artist’s unique interest for writing on painting and for the variety of forms it can assume: as signatures, musical notations, manuscripts and other types of commemorative inscriptions. Moreover, as they are rendered in Licinio’s own everyday cursive script – which can be compared to his own signature on archival documents – the pupils’ utterance serves as a mark of his authorship and identity (Figure 196).\textsuperscript{116}

Whereas I have argued for the importance of the \textit{Self-Portrait with Workshop} as an expression of Renaissance conceptions of the family, the image synthesises other iconographic traditions: group portraiture, self-portraiture and workshop representations. While Licinio had previously engaged in representations of groups of anonymous individuals making music, the \textit{Self-Portrait with Workshop} is also tied to the collective portrait whose history harks back to a

tradition of group portraiture associated with confraternities starting in the Trecento. We see for instance anonymous groups of *confratelli* placed under the protection of a patron saint on *mariegole* and portal reliefs, such as the relief of the Madonna della Misericordia on the façade of the *Scuola dei calegheri* (coblbers) in campo San Tomà (Figure 197). The narrative cycles commissioned by *scuole* are also known for their inclusion of members among the witnesses to sacred events. In the foreground of *St Mark Preaching in Alexandria*, Gentile Bellini represented the administrative hierarchy of the *Scuola di San Marco*, followed by a group of Venetian merchants (Figure 198). The type of the independent group portrait was introduced by his brother Giovanni with the *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan and his Kinsmen* of 1507 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin) (Figure 199). In what Rona Goffern argues to be the first “corporate group portrait” to be produced in Venice, the Doge is represented seated behind a table covered by an ottoman carpet and surrounded by four kneeling senators or kinsmen. Licinio most probably knew of this painting produced in the workshop of his alleged master.

The emergence of self-portraiture in Venice can also be located in the context of narrative painting, as Gentile Bellini included his own image within the group of *scuola* members.

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118 On portraiture in narrative painting see Ibid, pp. 219-235. In his study of the group portrait in seventeenth-century Holland, Alois Riegl writes that portraits of individuals linked by trade never flourished in Italy. He however concedes that a type of corporate portraiture had emerged in Venice by the second half of the sixteenth-century. The scholar may have been referring to the many portraits of confraternity members inserted in *scuole* cycles or that commemorates the foundation of other civic institutions of which examples can be seen in the work of Palma Giovane’s work. Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), pp. 80, 96-97.

119 Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.212-214. To the genre of portraits of rulers and ecclesiastical figures represented with advisors we may include Sebastiano del Piombo’s *Ferry Carondolet and his Secretary*, c.1512-13 (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid) and *Cardinal Bandinello Sauli, His Secretary, and Two Geographers*, 1516 (National Gallery, Washington) and Raphael’s *Portrait of Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de’ Medici and Luigi de’ Rossi*, c.1517 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).
Independent self-portraiture emerged in the first decades of the sixteenth century and is associated with a taste for allegory, as the artist represents himself in the guise of a mythological or biblical figure. Giorgione’s *Self-Portrait as David* (Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig) which originally included the decapitated head of the giant Goliath – the iconography is confirmed by Hollar’s engraved reproduction – is the most important expression of the genre (Figure 200, Figure 201). Scholars have argued that it is only around the mid-1550s that artists all over Italy started to represent themselves as craftsmen, accompanied with the tools of their trade. In Venice, the first such image is considered to be Titian’s *Self-Portrait* engraved by Britto around 1550, in which the artist holds a tablet and a stylus (Figure 202). Licinio’s painting, produced around 1530-35, therefore provides an important exception to this line of development, as the artist draws attention to the working hand and its products. By representing himself surrounded by studio assistants or pupils, the image also relates to earlier workshop representations. These had generally taken the form of anonymous genre scenes and were sometimes embedded in works of art where they functioned as signatures or claims to authorship. Filarete’s *Self-portrait with his Workshop* on the reverse of the doors of St Peter’s in Rome of 1445 does both. Filarete represented himself with a pair of compasses in hand, heading his assistants’ joyous parade (Figure 203). From this

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124 In his *Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple* at Santa Maria Novella, Ghirlandaio represented members of his workshop, including himself, his brother Davide, his brother-in-law Sebastiano Mainardi and his master
consideration of precedents, I suggest that Licinio’s *Self-Portrait with Workshop* departs from existing traditions; by blurring genre and portraiture, the image frames the workshop as a community, defining it as a space of debate and education.

**Venetian Art Theory**

We have already witnessed Licinio’s visual engagement in theoretical discussions through images that comment on the function of portraiture or allude to the *paragone* debate between painting and music. The *Self-Portrait with Workshop* similarly raises a number of discursive scenarios that are tied to current artistic concerns. On a first level of interpretation, the juxtaposition of drawings and casts may allude to the question of the *paragone* between painting and sculpture; seen from two different angles, the male statuette and its drawn rendering declare the superiority of painting. The casts, which include one of the most disseminated and frequently appropriated ancient sculptures – the Prado Venus – might also refer to a specific step in the artist’s curriculum (for an example of its reproduction see Antico’s bronze statuette commissioned by Lodovico Gonzaga of 1498, Figure 204). After mastering drawing after two-dimensional models, from drawings or prints, pupils would learn to draw three-dimensional objects using casts and sculptures. In addition, these casts also stress the importance of the study of the antique in the artist’s curriculum; classical reliefs and sculpture embodied the ideal,

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125 Selma Holo, “A Note on the Afterlife of the ‘Crouching Aphrodite’ in the Renaissance,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 6 (1978-1979): p. 28. The statue appears in its unrestored state – missing head, arms and a breast – in two drawings of the early sixteenth century: one is an unattributed sketch and the other has been attributed to Giampietrino. Like other artists, Licinio partly reconstructed some of her missing limbs.

126 Bleeke-Byrne, “The Education of the Painter in the Workshop,” p. 35.
as they represented a selection of nature’s purest elements.\(^{127}\) For those who did not travel to Rome to study the true remnants of Antiquity first hand, casts could provide worthy substitutes. In Venetian workshops, they were often used as models and educational tools.\(^{128}\)

The importance of the casts after the antique does not however lie strictly in the fact of their presence, but rather in the peculiarities of their rendering. On the left, a pupil presents a drawing of the Prado Venus rendered in red chalk with white highlights on a pinkish paper. The contours of her body are smooth and the chalk’s tonal modulation and highlights emphasise the statue’s mass and volume. On the other side of the table, an older pupil seems to be caught in a moment of reflection. His silverpoint still pressing against the sheet of paper, he is absorbed in the visual scrutiny of his model. Below his mostly linear rendering of the Apollo-like statue, the inscription, “le deficile starte,” contrasts with the confidence of the younger pupil’s words, “Vardé si sta ben sto desegno.” His statement could potentially refer to the technical difficulties inherent to the unforgiving medium of silverpoint. Silverpoint is mostly associated with Quattrocento drawing practices, as its fine and precise line was particularly suited to the model book tradition. The technique demanded great care and labour in the preparation of the ground and a high degree of technical control, as every line was definitive.\(^{129}\) While the technique of metal point drawing on prepared paper had in the sixteenth century become archaic, it was periodically used by artists in the conception of drawings conceived as precious objects, as the

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\(^{128}\) Ibid, p. 18.

level of virtuosity required heightened their status as “luxury.” Simultaneously, the use of the silverpoint and the qualities of the line could provide a statement about disegno, as it does in Pontormo’s contemporary Portrait of Alessandro de’ Medici where the duke draws the profile of his beloved by means of circumscription using a metal point (Figure 175). As Alberti considered circumscriptio – “the process of tracing the outlines in the painting” – as the primary rule of painting to be followed by composition and the consideration of light and colour, Pontormo’s portrait calls attention to the Duke’s mastery of the fundamentals of disegno.

This takes us back to the inscriptions and the semantic meanings embedded in the use of the term disegno in the Alnwick group. By saying “look at how good this drawing is,” the younger pupil uses the term with reference to disegno as a material and graphic sign. When the two inscriptions are read continuously – “Vardé se sta ben sto desegno” and “le deficile starte” – the word “arte” makes a reference to the term “desegno” employed by his colleague. By claiming the difficulties inherent to “l’arte del disegno” the older pupil goes beyond the drawing’s materiality to conceive disegno as a mental and cognitive faculty. The older pupil’s pensive look further conceptualises disegno as the materialisation of an idea that is first born in the intellect and then given shape on paper.

The portrait can therefore be considered in relation to contemporary engraved representations of ideal academies that started to circulate in print in the 1530s. The earliest known is Agostino Veneziano’s engraving of the sculptor’s Baccio Bandinelli’s academy in the

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Vatican Belvedere of 1531 (Figure 205).\textsuperscript{132} Many parallels between Bandinelli’s academy and Licinio’s \textit{bottega} can be drawn: both emphasise the study of the antique, juxtapose a Venus and Apollo type prominently on the table and use the table to unite the group.\textsuperscript{133} By obliterating the specificities of their respective trades – painting and sculpture – Licinio and Bandinelli both provide a comment on the emphasis on \textit{disegno} as the key to the entire artistic process, or in Giorgio Vasari’s terms, as the father of the three arts.

In Licinio’s workshop portrait, the theoretical emphasis on drawing anticipates the Venetians’ recognition of \textit{disegno} as the source of painting’s perfection. David Rosand argues that in Venice this coincides with the publication of drawing manuals in the first decade of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{134} While the Florentine and Roman schools had emphasised the use of preparatory drawings, sixteenth-century Venetian painters often favoured the building up of pictures in paint directly onto the canvas. This gave rise to the well-known controversy between Venetian \textit{colorito}, the construction of form through colour, and Florentine \textit{disegno}, a linear and circumscriptive approach to form.\textsuperscript{135} The debate was codified in writing almost two decades following the portrait’s production, notably in Paolo Pino’s \textit{Dialogo di Pittura} of 1548.\textsuperscript{136} In the

\textsuperscript{132} A second engraving of Bandinelli’s Academy was made by Enea Vico twenty years later. For a discussion of the first engraving see Ben Thomas, “The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli,” \textit{Print Quarterly} XXII (2005). On representations of academic ideals see Cynthia E. Roman, “Academic Ideals of Art Education,” in \textit{Children of Mercury: The Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries}.

\textsuperscript{133} Bandinelli also produced a \textit{Self-Portrait} of c. 1545-1550, where he presents himself with a preparatory drawing in red chalk for his Hercule and Caucus (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston).


\textsuperscript{135} See Tordella, “Sulla carta azzura nei ritratti disegnati di Ottavio Leoni e una rilettura del dipinto di Bernardino Licinio a Alnwick Castle,” p. 21.

\textsuperscript{136} In Pino’s \textit{Dialogo di pittura} of 1548, the relative importance of each approach is discussed by the Tuscan speaker – proponent of \textit{disegno} – and a Venetian – who praises Venetian colouring and its atmospheric effects. Stronger and more polemical defences of each approach to the art of drawing were then exposed by Giorgio Vasari, who in the
Alnwick group, the juxtaposition of the two drawings visually articulates this conceit. On the one hand, the older pupil uses the fine line of the silverpoint to map the outlines of the statue whose form he has schematised. On the other hand, the tonal rendering in red chalk with white highlights on coloured paper stands in for the Venetian painterly aesthetic. It also evokes contemporary Venetian drawing practices where a combination of black and white chalks on blue paper, or *carta azzura*, was favoured. The drawing of a male head attributed to Bernardino Licinio dated to c.1520-1530 provides a fine example of this aesthetic (Figure 206).

**The Master as Teacher**

Licinio leaves the debate as to the superiority of one approach over the other open-ended. With his gaze directed at the viewer, the workshop master invites a subjective viewing experience, compelling the audience to resolve the questions raised, to judge the pupils’ skills, or even to initiate new discussions. The relationship between the spectator and the work of art that the written word establishes can adequately be described as transitive. The “transitive mode,” to employ John Shearman’s expression, allows Licinio to position himself intellectually both inside

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137 Originally imported from the East, the *carta azzura* was in use by Venetian artists since the Quattrocento. Ames-Lewis and Wright, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop*, p. 47.

138 Boorsch and Marcari, *Master Drawings from the Yale University Art Gallery*, p. 26; Lucy Whitaker and Martin Clayton, *The Art of Italy in the Royal Collection: Renaissance & Baroque* (London: Royal Collection, 2007), p. 240. Whitaker and Clayton attribute the drawing to Savoldo, following its former attribution by Mauro Lucco to Bernardino Licinio. They argue that the drawing is “broader and more free than the rather flatly conceived heads of Licinio’s many painted portraits.” This opinion reveals a misunderstanding of Licinio’s oeuvre.
and outside the work of art as a participant in emerging theoretical discussions.\textsuperscript{139} On the one hand, he participates in the space of the workshop, a space of artistic debate and conversation. On the other, he situates himself within a Venetian community of art producers and consumers conceived broadly. In sum, the master is teaching his pupils, but he is also teaching us.

In its evocation of the painter as teacher, the Anlwick Portrait compels comparison with visual structures of learning, both secular and religious, that may have provided Licinio with formal and conceptual sources. Scenes of schooling as seen on the frontispieces of a number of printed grammar books are similarly organised along the lines of a hierarchical and authoritative arrangement around a master (Figure 207). Such a composition was also employed in the frontispiece of Pietro Aaron’s \textit{Toscanello in musica} discussed in chapter two (Figure 48). In addition, by representing the workshop as a half-length figure group, the \textit{Self-Portrait with Workshop} also recalls the iconography of Christ among the doctors. In Bernardino Luini’s version of the biblical event of 1515, Christ’s teachings similarly takes place on a dual level, as he instructs both the doctors who surround him, and the viewer with whom he engages visually (Figure 208).\textsuperscript{140}

An artist’s willingness to teach his art is a recurring \textit{topos} of discussion in Vasari’s lives of the artists. Vasari writes that Giorgione “taught well and willingly, and with lovingness, all that he knew” and that Giovanni Bellini, who had many disciples, “was ever most willing to


\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, p. 36. Licinio’s Alnwick group can also be compared to Dürer’s \textit{Christ among the Doctors} which was produced in Venice in 1506, and Cima da Conegliano’s version of the subject produced c.1504-1505. On the analogy between the artist and Christ in self-portraiture see Joseph Leo Koerner, \textit{The Moment of Self Portraiture in German Renaissance Art} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 63-79 esp.
As mentioned earlier, many of Bellini’s former pupils signed as “disciples of Giovanni Bellini” and sometimes continued to do so even after having qualified as masters. Such expressions of indebtedness may suggest that Giovanni Bellini was a conscientious and devoted teacher. By opposition, although many went to Titian to learn, Vasari writes that very few can be called his disciples, as the painter showed little inclination for teaching.

The Workshop Community

The original sense of the term “bottega” is very often lost to modern critics. Like the word “casa,” “bottega” designates both the physical structure and a group of individuals. The Alnwick group fulfils the two sides of the definition. A space of production is suggested through the studio props and the allusion to manual work. The phrase “le deficile starte” further gestures to the process of learning that binds the group together psychologically. But the term deficile can also be set against the notion of facilità. In Castiglione’s Il Libro del Cortegiano (published in 1528), facilità holds a tight connection with the art of sprezzatura, of giving the impression of doing something with great ease, of making what is said or done seem “uncontrived and effortless.” In the book, facilità is similarly conceived as a quality to be found in painting. The painter working with facilità gives the appearance of working without effort, labour and study.

141 Vasari – De Vere, vol. 3, p. 183; vol. 9, p. 179.
142 Fletcher, “Bellini’s Social World,” p. 28.
143 Vasari – De Vere, vol. 9, pp. 178-179, on Paris Bordone’s brief stay in Titian’s workshop.
144 Tagliaferro, “In the Workshop with Titian, 1548-1576,” p. 71.
145 In Castiglione’s dialogue the term facilità finds its direct opposite in the word affezione.
Grace, the quality that Castiglione’s courtier will derive from the art of *sprezzatura*, is located within a system of reciprocity.\(^{147}\) Ita Mac Carthy describes the abstract, intangible quality of grace as a behavioural process that depends on its reception by one’s public for success.\(^{148}\) Although Licinio’s workshop portrait is not located within Castiglione’s courtly environment, *facilità*, grace or absence thereof, still finds recognition within a sociable context. This highlights the performativity that permeates the workshop environment, as well as its didactic purpose. The gathering of aspiring artists therefore recalls Leonardo’s insistence that one should always draw in the company of others. While the shame of failure will lead to careful study, lessons are to be learned from the drawings of others; the good ones will inspire, while self-satisfaction will be derived from the bad ones.\(^{149}\)

The master’s and pupils’ performance of simple actions such as drawing, looking, comparing and judging suggests everyday forms of encounter that mark the moment when individuals are drawn together into a community. The portrait therefore visually conveys a type of spontaneous community that Edward Muir has defined as “a particular moment in a certain kind of space,” or “a transitory fusion of people who came together in spaces.”\(^{150}\) The transience of the moment pictured is conveyed by different means, one of them being the fragmentary representation of the pupil on the right, represented as if in the act of joining the group. It is also implied by the use of the Venetian dialect to suggest speech rendered in Licinio’s own


\(^{148}\) Ibid, p. 40.


handwriting. Yet, the resulting impression remains one of stillness and suspended time rather than interrupted action, thus dramatically foregrounding the “fictiveness of the pose.”  

Licinio’s identity as a painter is embedded within the conditions of the workshop. As fashioned in the group portrait, his artistic identity depends less on his own power of creation than on his role as teacher within the bottega defined as a place and community of learning. By underscoring imminent obstacles and failures as well as the need for repeated study, Licinio justifies the significance of his function as a source of knowledge. As in the Borghese Portrait – where his presence is signalled by the inscription – Bernardino’s identity as an artistic paterfamilias resides in his participation in the family workshop system. As noted earlier in this chapter, its endurance rested on two opposing ideas: that talent is genetically transmitted and that painting is a craft that can be learned. While the Borghese Portrait conveys the idea of biological continuity, the Alnwick group, conveys the opposite idea by presenting the workshop as a cognitive space. An interesting parallel can be made with the thirteenth-century reliefs of the cycle of the trades that unfolds around the central portal of the Basilica of San Marco, which may have provided Licinio with a visual source (Figure 209). The reliefs, which prompt a reading of Venetian labour as cooperative, explicitly foreground the transmission of skill and knowledge from master to assistant, as each scene includes two or three generations of workers. In a

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151 According to Berger, this is one of the main characteristics of group portraiture as a genre. As a fiction, one might even ask the workshop members sat for the portrait separately or together and if the moment even existed. See Harry Berger, Jr. Manhood, Marriage, Mischief. Rembrandt’s “Night Watch” and other Dutch Group Portraits (New York: Fordham University, 2007).


similar fashion, the value of Bernardino’s self-image is predicated upon his ability to transmit his skill successfully to future generations.

The passing down of the tools of the trade to a son, a nephew or a *garzone* is a commonplace of Renaissance painters’ wills. Such gestures are expressive of an artist’s desire to ensure the continuity of his practice. The Alnwick and Borghese Portraits are both expressive of this desire for artistic lineage. The need to ensure artistic progeny may have motivated Bernardino’s close association with his brother Arrigo. As the next section will show, the artist was far from unique in capitalising on family members in the establishment of collaborative workshop practices. But what distinguished Bernardino is his conscious use of portraiture to visualise and introduce the “family author” at a pivotal moment of his career.

**The Art Market and the Family Author**

The dynamic interplay between Licinio’s two portraits testifies to the enduring strength of the family dimension in Venetian art production. Venice’s major painters exploited the communal and familial nature of artistic enterprise in different ways and to various ends. Increasing the workshop’s productivity and meeting demand motivated in great part the active use of assistants. Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese’s children and other family members all contributed to the greater output of their respective workshops. Keeping matters in the family also ensured the

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154 Another childless painter, Lorenzo Lotto, expressed his concern for artistic succession in his will of 1546 in which he entrusts *Scuola de’Depentori* the task of selecting two worthy young painters at the beginning of their careers, who will be able and keen to make good use of his materials – including drawings, plaster and wax models, unfinished paintings, paints and brushes. The *Scuola* should also choose two young women of good nature from the Ospedale of San Giovanni e Paolo, with whom these young painters will set up a household. Lotto’s testament is transcribed in Peter Humfrey, *Lorenzo Lotto* (Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 179-181.

perpetuation of a name. At the end of his life, Titian would express his concern for artistic succession visually in the *Allegory of Prudence* of c.1550-1565 (National Gallery, London); his young relative Marco Vecellio embodies the future of the workshop, his son Orazio the present, while his own image is associated with the past (Figure 210).

While the breadth of the Licinio family enterprise has been forgotten historically, the workshop’s production of *sacre conversazioni* suggests that it was responding to a high demand. Images of the Madonna and Child were by far the most commonly encountered type of paintings in households. From the late 1480s, images of the Virgin and Child, created along a range of compositional variants and other half-length figure groups of sacred scenes dominated the output of workshops headed by Cima da Conegliano, and most especially Giovanni Bellini. From the 1510s and 1520s onwards, a great number of artists contended for a share in this market. Palma Vecchio became the most important exponent of a new type of Madonna and Child with

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156 Frederick Ilchman, “Venetian Painting in an Age of Rivals,” in *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese. Rivals in Renaissance Venice*, p. 28. Octavia Robusti, was also strongly incited by her brother Domenico to marry a painter so that the Tintoretto family name would be perpetuated.


160 In Florence, the commissioning of devotional images has been tied to marriage and the establishment of a new household. By contrast, the appropriate documents from which we might come to similar conclusions do not exist for Venice. On Florence see Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, “The Madonna and Child, a Host of Saints, and Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Florence,” in *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, ed. Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
saints set in a landscape which enjoyed great popularity; these were among the models that inspired Licinio (Figure 211, Figure 212).\textsuperscript{161} Palma’s death in 1527 followed by that of Vincenzo Catena in 1531, who also specialised in this type of production, left part of this niche market open (Figure 213). Artists were of course eager to grab their share.\textsuperscript{162}

This context explains the greater production of private religious paintings in the Licinio workshop in this time period. From around 1530, the Licinio workshop increasingly produced variations and copies, thus suggesting that it was responding to a high demand. For example, the same model for the Madonna and Child was used in the signed \textit{Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist} (Private Collection) and the \textit{Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria} (Private Collection) (Figure 7, Figure 214). It should be noted that the motif of the Madonna and Child is a direct quotation from Titian’s \textit{Lochis Madonna} of 1510 (Figure 215).\textsuperscript{163} The drawing of a woman holding a vase rendered in black chalk with white highlights on a light grey-blue paper allows us to explain the Licinio workshop’s practice of repetition (Figure 216).\textsuperscript{164} The female figure served as a model for the Virgin Mary in close to ten different paintings.

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Characterised by her veil, her hair parted in the centre and voluminous drapery, she appears with slight variations – in the placement of her legs and drapery – in the *Madonna and Child with a Donor* of 1532 (Grenoble), in the *Enthroned Madonna and Child with San Agostino and San Vito* of 1530 for the Church of San Vito in Ferrara (Private Collection), as well as in the *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari of 1535 (Figure 4, Figure 159, Figure 217). In each case, the vase was substituted for the Christ child. In the contemporary *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph, Saint Catherine and a Child Donor* (Private Collection, Split) the same model was reversed (Figure 218). This painting is also filled with quotations from other paintings, which suggests that various cartons were combined in the making of new compositions. With her classicising face, hair and drapery, the figure of Saint Catherine derives from that seen in the *Altarpiece of Saint Margaret Enthroned between Saint Lucy and Saint Catherine of Alexandria* made for the Benedictine monastery of San Cipriano in Murano in 1530 (commissioned by its abbot Giovanni Trevisan, later to become Patriarch of Venice) (now at the Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo) (Figure 220). The *Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph, Saint Catherine and a Child Donor* (Private Collection, Split) testifies to another technique of serial production. The outlines of the composition, to the exception of the donor figure, were

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traced directly on the back of the canvas with pigments that showed through the other side; this method provided an easy way to reverse an existing template (Figure 219).\(^{168}\)

A comparison between two paintings of the Madonna and Child with a donor can further inform us on the workshop’s strategies of production (Figure 221, Figure 222).\(^{169}\) In both paintings, the motif of the Madonna and Child, the wall in ruin behind the group and the landscape are almost exact replicas thus suggesting their dependence on the same template. The only exception occurs in the donor portraits; while a young man appears in the first painting, the other shows an old man. These two paintings could suggest a mode of production by which Madonna and Child images were mass-produced in the workshop, chosen by a client and then personified through the addition of a donor portrait. This method gestures towards important points of connection with other genres of representation in other media. For instance, a form of mass production was common in the potter’s workshop. The production of dishes with female portraits that were personified with names and qualities – known as belle donne dishes – at the moment of purchase is a case in point.\(^{170}\) Medallists also reused the templates of iconographic reverses in the production of portrait medals of various individuals.

The practice of repetition also characterises the production of altarpieces. While I have already noted the use of the drawing of a Woman Holding a Vase as the model for the Virgin in the San Vito and Frari altarpieces, we should also note that almost all the altarpieces produced between 1530 and 1535 are attached to the same compositional formula. This also includes an


\(^{169}\) Reproductions of these works are found in the photographic archive of the Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence where an attribution was made to Bernardino Licinio by Luisa Vertova.

Enthroned Madonna and Child Surrounded with Ten Franciscan Saints of 1531 for a Franciscan monastery on the Adriatic island of Krk in the Venetian Stato da mar (in present-day Croatia)\(^{171}\) and the Enthroned Madonna with San Lorenzo, San Silvestro and an Angel of 1535 for the church of San Lorenzo in Saletto di Montagnana near Padova in the Venetian terraferma (on site) (Figure 223, Figure 224).\(^{172}\) At a time when artists such as Titian and Pordenone were injecting the altarpiece with dynamism and introducing novel formulas, Licinio’s model of the enthroned Madonna, which is strongly indebted to the hieratic symmetry seen Giovanni Bellini’s models, is conservative if not slightly archaic (see for instance Bellini’s San Giobbe Altarpiece, Figure 225). It is surprising that he used this formula for his Madonna Enthroned with Saints at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari – which originally incorporated a predella featuring Franciscan martyrs\(^{173}\) – his first and only altarpiece commission for a Venetian church (Figure 4, Figure 5).\(^{174}\) The altarpiece was originally located in the second chapel on the right of the high altar, and was moved in the late 18\(^{th}\) or early 19\(^{th}\) century to the chapel of the Franciscans, the first to its left.\(^{175}\) Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari was a highly prestigious site; with San Giovanni e Paolo, it was one of the city’s two largest churches, as well as the site where Titian had introduced revolutionary models for the altarpiece.

Many scholars have criticised Bernardino Licinio’s religious paintings for their lack of originality and explained their repetitive character and variations in quality by the involvement


\(^{172}\) Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, pp. 432-433. The painting is signed: “BERNARDINI LYCINII OPUS MDXXXV.”

\(^{173}\) Ibid, p. 436.

\(^{174}\) The altarpiece is an expanded version of the one produced four years earlier for Krk.

of the studio. We must remember however that in the context of private devotional images repetition characterised the production of most Venetian painters who were often reluctant to discard successful formulas, particularly for economic reasons. As a production strategy, repetition allowed the Licini to participate in one of the most lucrative niches within the domestic art market. The conservative flavour of the types and compositions employed may also have satisfied the religious needs as well as conservative tastes of Venetian patrons. In addition, the workshop’s practice of repetition would have served an ideological purpose. Self-referentiality through the adaptation of compositions and the reuse of drawings was a way to insure collective compliance and conformity to the norms established by a master in order to maintain a recognisable “house style” and visual language associated with the latter’s name, and which would, ideally, be perpetuated after his death. Veronese, who, as David Rosand writes, created a style and institutionalised it, perhaps provides one of the best examples. After his death, the workshop was run collectively by his two sons and brother who signed their paintings as “Haeredes Pauli Veronensis” (Heirs of Paolo Veronese).

Through the repetition of style and form as a modus operandi, the Licinio family succeeded in crafting a visual identity that viewers recognised as a collective product. This is confirmed by seventeenth-century sources including inventories where paintings are attributed to the workshop: for instance, the inventory of Giovanni Nani’s palace in San Trovaso lists two

176 Anik Waldeck, “A New Addition to the Oeuvre of Vincenzo Catena,” St Andrew Journal of Art History and Museum Studies 13 (2009): pp. 19-25. Repetition was also at the chore of Vincenzo Catena’s workshop practice, who showed until his death in 1531 an attachment to the Quattrocento tradition.
paintings by “delli Liccini.” Likewise, in Marco Boschini’s *Carta del Navegar Pitoresco*, it is the family author designated as “I Licini” rather than the individual artist, which figures in the list of the most eminent Venetian painters of the Cinquecento. While no paintings are literally signed as such, these sources confirm that contemporary audiences well understood that Bernardino Licinio’s name stood for a studio organization that involved family members, and perhaps other collaborators and pupils.

But how can the Licini’s visual identity be defined? In chapter two, I have emphasised naturalism and pictorial legibility as defining characteristics of Licinio’s style. This was expressed particularly in portraiture. In addition, Licinio was among the first artists in Venice to assimilate the Roman classicism diffused in Northern Italy through the prints of Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael; an interest which started to be felt most forcefully at the end of the 1520s, when the workshop started to be increasingly involved. His interpretation of this classicism is characterised by massive, voluminous and statuesque figures as seen in the *Altarpiece of Saint Margaret Enthroned between Saint Lucy and Saint Catherine of Alessandria* (Figure 220). Licinio’s interest for the antique is expressed in other images as well. In the 1540s, the workshop produced a series of idealised female heads *all’antica* (Figure 226, Figure 227). These may have enjoyed great popularity as eighteen versions survive, with one reproduced in Andrea Vendramin’s illustrated inventory (Figure 11). In addition, the *Group Portrait* of

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179 These are “Un testa di huomo grasso delli Liccini incolato sopra la tavola della medema misura” and “Una testa di donna delli Liccini della sud.a misura.” See Paolo Benassai, Sebastiano Mazzoni (Firenze: Edifir, 1999), pp. 201-202.


c.1530 (Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice) testifies to Licinio’s interest for ancient art. The painting’s composition at the centre of which a couple exchange a handclasp and the use of the parapet derives from Roman funerary stele where the *dextrarum junctio* is performed in presence of Juno Pronuba who shows the couple into matrimony (Figure 228). In Licinio’s painting, a matron is instead positioned in her place where she seems to act as a witness. This iconography was also a way to convey the virtue of marital fidelity on the reverse of ancient coins. For this reason, it has been assumed that the painting records the marital union of specific individuals, and that this alliance carried social and political importance as three workshop versions of the painting exist. In my opinion however, the generic character of the portraits – which recall the types encountered in Licinio’s concert scenes – and of the bride’s dress in comparison to the detailed and costly attire usually worn by Licinio’s female sitters may instead suggest a genre-like scene based on an ancient model.

This brings me to suggest an additional function for the Borghese and Alnwick Portraits. By displaying antique casts, the images signpost the family’s assimilation of the language of antiquity; a gesture that can be read in relation to the broader socio-artistic turn towards *Romanitas* that occurred at that time. The Sack of Rome of 1527 catalysed Venice’s physical transformation. Rome’s political humiliation and material devastation brought the psychological

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185 Only a fragment of the original survives (now in a private collection). For the four versions see Vertova, *Bernardino Licinio*, pp. 420, 427, 435, 439.
incentive to create a new Rome elsewhere.\textsuperscript{186} The Roman architectural “revival” was carried out under doge Andrea Gritti (1523-1538) who, together with an inner group of like-minded nobles – including the procurators Antonio Capello and Vettor Grimani – sought to restore the grandeur of Ancient Rome on Venetian soil. They supported the work of Jacopo Sansovino and Michele Sanmicheli who introduced the “Roman” style in both official and private architectural commissions.\textsuperscript{187}

Portraits from the early 1540s further suggest that Licinio navigated in circles of patrons and artists who expressed a deep interest for the art of Antiquity and supported the adoption of a classicising vocabulary. Two of them depict members of the Capello and Grimani families who supported Gritti’s \textit{renovatio urbis}: the \textit{Portrait of Helena Capella} (Private Collection) and the \textit{Portrait of Ottaviano Grimani} of 1541 (Figure 85, Figure 189). The \textit{Portrait of Helena Capella} was one of two commissions from the patrician family; Helena’s image appears as a donor figure along with her husband in Licinio’s \textit{Madonna and Child with a Couple of Donors} (Private Collection) (Figure 229).\textsuperscript{188} Ottaviano Grimani was the nephew of Girolamo Grimani who owned the most important collection of antiquities in Venice. Transferred from Rome to Venice in 1523, the Grimani collection was accessible to artists as part of it was displayed in the Palazzo Ducale and the rest in the family palace at Santa Maria Formosa.\textsuperscript{189} Moreover, in 1541, Licinio portrayed another major exponent of architectural classicism: Andrea Palladio (Figure 230).

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\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, pp. 140, 157-163. As \textit{proto} to the \textit{Procuratia de Supra}, Sansovino led the renovation of Piazza San Marco.
\textsuperscript{188} See Christie’s, London, Friday, July 5, 1996, Lot 00401, Important Old Master Paintings. This painting probably provided the source for Helena Capella’s post-humous image in the individual portrait.
Palladio is here represented as a young man holding a compass and leaning against a marble parapet where his name and age are inscribed along with the artist’s signature: “B. LYCINII/OPUS/ ANDREAS/ PALADIO/ A/ ANNOR./ XXIII/ MDXL.”

That Licinio’s artistic identity was associated to Venice’s embrace of the language of the antique is suggested by Ludovico Dolce’s statement in the preface to his Italian translation of Horace’s Ars Poetica. As mentioned in the thesis introduction, Dolce praised artists of his time for reviving the arts of Antiquity: Michelangelo comes first, followed by a group of artists active in Venice, Titian, Pordenone and Licinio. Yet this statement’s full meaning is revealed when considered in the context of the artist’s career. Published in 1536, one year after Licinio signed the Frari altarpiece, Dolce’s comment would have pursued the visual comparison between Licino and Titian that had been initiated in the Franciscan church where Titian’s Assumption of the Virgin (1516-18) graced the main altar (Figure 231).

In sum, the Borghese and Alnwick portraits serve an enunciative function. On the one hand, they provide a descriptive statement about what the name “Bernardino Licinio” or the signature “B. Lycinii opus” stands for. On the other, they introduce “I Licini” as a family author on the art market, thus suggesting the collaborative structure governing their production and the rules upon which lied the formation of their collective visual identity.

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190 Vertova, Bernardino Licinio, pp. 419-420. Palladio was then just starting his career in Vicenza and about to depart on his first trip to Rome with his protector Gian Giorgio Trissino. The portrait is however problematic because of its inscription; given that Palladio was born in 1508 rather than 1518, as it was long believed, the architect would have 33 years old instead of 23 as stated in the inscription.

191 La Poetica d’Horatio tradotta per messer Lodovico Dolce (Venice: Francesco Bindoni and Mapheo Pasini, 1536), A4r.

**Conclusion: Circa 1535 – Claiming a Place in the History of Venetian Art**

This chapter has sought to provide a multi-layered understanding of Bernardino Licinio and his family’s participation in the well-established and enduring tradition of the family workshop. What differentiates Bernardino’s enterprise, however, is the use of portraiture as a self-conscious declaration of dynastic ambitions and of the family’s place within the history of Venetian art. This statement was momentous. I suggest that the years of the portraits’ production, between 1530 and 1535, correspond to an important moment in the artist’s career. This period coincides with an increase in workshop activity in response to a growing demand; to his most prestigious public commission, the Frari altarpiece of 1535; and his appraisal by Ludovico Dolce of 1536. At this point in time, Licinio was about forty-five years old and independently active for about twenty to twenty five years. I therefore suggest that circa 1535 was an important moment of public recognition in Licinio’s career. We should recall that at this time, Palma Vecchio was already dead and that Tintoretto (1518-1594) and Veronese (1528-1588) had not yet actively entered the artistic scene. It is therefore highly probable that Licinio was at the forefront of Venice’s artistic culture, if however briefly, along with Titian and Pordenone. From Bernardino Licinio’s perspective, this may have been a moment of extreme self-confidence in things to come. It is within the context of such a change in his own self-perception as an artist, and a heightened sense of awareness as to the role that his family *bottega* could play in inscribing the Licinio name along the sequence of family dynasties that shaped the history of Venetian painting, that the idea of professional continuity that thematizes both portraits can best be understood.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that Licinio’s current status as “minor” is a modern construct rather than a reflection of the perception of his contemporaries. It has provided an example of the need to disrupt familiar narratives by questioning the validity of established art historical paradigms, emphasising the importance of going beyond historiographical and aesthetic biases as well as established conceptions of what it meant to be a successful artist in the Renaissance.

This project therefore responds to Alessandro Nova’s claim that we must examine the margins in order to fully understand how the center took shape. While achieving a multi-layered understanding of Licinio’s social and artistic identity, my discussions enable us to further contextualise certain images that have achieved canonical status. The artist’s engagement with female and family portraiture in particular has offered a compelling example of the need to look closely at how certain histories have been written. For example, Licinio’s articulation of an assertive female portrait type provides an important context for understanding a painting often considered to be without precedent or following: Lorenzo Lotto’s *Portrait of a Woman as Lucretia* (Figure 143). Seen from the perspective of Licinio’s innovations in female portraiture, Lotto’s work does not appear as foreign to Venetian culture as previously conceived. Moreover, Licinio’s contribution to family portraiture brings us to review the place of two paintings by Titian: the *Pesaro Altarpiece* and the *Vendramin Family Adoring the True Cross* (Figure 152, Figure 169). These two works have often been said to reflect Venice’s patriarchal structure and

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the exclusion of women from social life and family representations. Licinio’s *Portrait of a Widow and her Three Sons* where the mother’s position is exalted brings an essential nuance to this story (Figure 18). The painting suggests that women could indeed achieve prominent roles within the family and that the new genealogical laws that granted an important place to mothers in the definition nobility found echo in painting.

My discussions have also sought to counter the view of Licinio as a literal-minded artist by drawing attention to his involvement with the artistic discourses of his time. We have seen him engaged with the question of the *paragone* between painting and music, where he proclaimed painting’s capacity to engage the viewer in a multi-sensorial experience. The question of the *paragone*, this time between painting and sculpture, recurs in the *Self-Portrait with Workshop* where the artistic community fostered by the artist’s workshop is fashioned as a space for debate and theoretical discussions. Licinio’s reflection on the function of art and the role of the portrait in constructing memory emerges as another pervasive line of discourse, from the embedded image in the *Portrait of a Woman Holding the Portrait of a Man*, to the use of group and family portraiture to inscribe his own family within the history of Venetian art.

In chapter two, I have chosen music as a cultural phenomenon as a framework for understanding aspects of Licinio’s public, social life and the communities of interest with whom he may have interacted. To conclude, I wish to return briefly to the half-length figure groups discussed in this chapter as they allow us to assess Licinio’s place within one of the broader narratives of Renaissance art: the emergence of genre painting. Michel Hochmann has located the beginnings of genre in the half-length figures produced by Dosso Dossi and Giorgione in his
last phase that explore the expression of the passions or possess an anecdotal content. Concerts, *scènes galantes* and images featuring the theme of the odd couple popular in vernacular theater are also to be connected to this group; as I have demonstrated, such themes occupied an important place within Licinio’s repertoire. Hochmann suggests that “genre painting was a sort of reaction against the high classicism that Titian and Giorgione had begun to develop in the early years of the sixteenth century, as well as a figurative equivalent of the satire found in the theatre and in dialect poetry.”

It is only in late sixteenth-century Bologna, where genre painting flourished under the brush of Bartolommeo Passerotti, Vincenzo Campi and Annibale Carracci, that a tradition of comic painting would be consecrated in art theory. In his *Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura* of 1584, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo described a type of painting that “makes us laugh.” In composing a “history of happy or comic things,” it is of the foremost importance, according to Lomazzo to see “the cause for which happiness, laughter or cackling occur...; for example, in a love story, joking, teasing, and other games of love, and in a funny

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2 Michel Hochmann, “Genre Scenes by Dosso and Giorgione,” in *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Luisa Ciammitti, Steven Ostrow and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Publications, 1998), p. 63.

3 Ibid, p. 65.

4 Ibid, p. 75.

story, certain things that by their nature cause all those watching to laugh.”

Caricature then becomes an essential ingredient to provoke laughter in comic paintings by showing “happy faces, turned upward, or to the side, or in another manner, which gaze at each other and laugh, breaking their jaws [with laughter] and showing their teeth in throwing open their mouths indecently in a new and different act of laughter, flaring their nostrils and hiding their eyes in their heads.”

In his Discorso, Paleotti defined such “dipinti ridicoli” as images that stimulate laughter through the representation of such immoral behaviour as drunkenness and gluttony, thus conveying a moral message serving the Christian man “come di un mezzo e di un aiuto per operare più virtuosamente.”

Although comic painting and genre should not be equated with one another, there is nevertheless a concidence between the two. While Licinio’s half-length figure groups lack the contorted laughing and grimacing faces described by Lomazzo, a painting such as The Seduction certainly relates to the “games of love” that the theorist deems appropriate for such work (Figure 58). In addition, paintings such as the Courtesan with a Lute and a Suitor would undoubtedly have raised a form of moral reflection by ridiculing a man’s foolish behaviour, which Paleotti identified as the main purpose of the “dipinti ridicoli” (Figure 75).

Licinio’s connection to Caravaggio who was active in Paleotti’s own time further sustains the meaning and importance of his contribution to the development of genre painting as it took

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7 Quoted in Hochmann, “Genre Scenes by Dosso and Giorgione,” p. 73.


9 See Hochmann, “Genre Scenes by Dosso and Giorgione,” p. 74.
shape in late sixteenth-century Italy. Early modern sources already established a relation between Caravaggio and Venetian painting through Giorgione.\(^\text{10}\) In his biography of the artist, Giovanni Baglione reported the words of Federico Zuccaro who, at the unveiling of the Calling of Saint Matthew in the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi allegedly exclaimed: “What’s all the fuss about? I see nothing here beyond Giorgione’s conception of painting?”\(^\text{11}\) Another biographer, Giovan Pietro Bellori, introduced the idea that Caravaggio travelled to Venice; the trip is undocumented and its existence has been debated by scholars.\(^\text{12}\) Like Baglione via Zuccaro, he establishes formal connections between the artists, writing that The Cardsharps is one of “the first works from Caravaggio’s brush, painted in that straightforward manner of Giorgione, with tempered shadows.”\(^\text{13}\) In the seventeenth century, Giorgione’s output had taken great proportions, and his fame rested largely on works that were not his own.\(^\text{14}\) Bellori’s comment hints at this phenomenon, as the “straightforward manner” which he sees in Caravaggio’s early half-length figures also evokes the work of Licinio.

Roberto Longhi, who was the first to emphasise the importance of Caravaggio’s Lombard precedents, established an important relationship between Licinio and Caravaggio. According to Longhi, after a “giorgionesque” period, Licinio firmed up his impasto, became sharp and meticulous (“si fa scritto e attento”) and “the fine series of apostles now in the Galleria


\(^\text{11}\) Quoted in Christiansen, A Caravaggio Rediscovered, p. 12.

\(^\text{12}\) According to Mina Gregori, Caravaggio’s trip to Venice can reasonably be accepted. Gregori, “I ricordi del Caravaggio,” p. 18.

\(^\text{13}\) Christiansen, A Caravaggio Rediscovered, p. 12.

Barberini, studies for a Last Supper, have all the rude vitality of a group out of Caravaggio” (the paintings are now in a private collection) (Figure 232). The Italian word “scritta” (written) chosen by Longhi to describe Licinio’s style evokes the graphic quality that I have ascribed to some of the artist’s work. Keith Christiansen is one of the rare scholars to have reiterated the connection between the two artists. He writes that “although Licinio is not usually considered one of Caravaggio’s precursors, the remarkably placid naturalism of his figures, invariably shown against plain, darkly coloured backgrounds, is far from unrelated to Caravaggio’s early work,” which was mainly produced under the patronage of Cardinal del Monte. Caravaggio’s naturalistic detailed style and minute rendering of musical scores and instruments finds parallel in Licinio’s pictorial legibility.

The connection between the two artists is reinforced by the fact that Caravaggio was also in direct contact with Licinio’s work, if not in Venice, then in Rome. Del Monte’s collection was rich in Venetian art. Among the Venetian paintings listed in his inventory of 1627 we find two music pieces. One is an unattributed picture of a “musica.” The picture was purchased in 1628 by the Barberini and then listed as “believed to be by Giorgione”; the painting shows a soldier with a young girl holding a flute and may instead be a copy of an early work by Dosso Dossi (Figure

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16 For instance, Licinio is not included in the recent exhibitions of Caravaggio’s forerunners: *Gli occhi di Caravaggio*.


The other “musica” in the inventory is by Bernardino Licinio; in addition, Del Monte owned two other paintings by the artist, including a “Saint Margaret” and a “Saint John the Baptist.”

As a resident in Cardinal del Monte’s household, Caravaggio produced five paintings with musical content, including *The Musicians* and *The Lute Player* (Figure 234, Figure 235). As Christiansen suggests, given Del Monte’s love of Venetian painting, it is possible that he may have had the “Giorgionesque style” of these pictures in mind when commissioning *The Musicians* and later *The Lute Player*. It is impossible to associate Licinio’s “musica” in Cardinal del Monte’s inventory with a specific work. Yet, this painting serves to locate Licinio as part of the symbolic lineage that binds two artists who have been credited with a revolution in painting: Giorgione and Caravaggio.

While highlighting the importance of Bernardino Licinio’s contribution to the breadth, richness and variety of the art of the Serenissima in the first half of the sixteenth century, the portrait of the artist that I have penned in this thesis does not pretend to be definitive. Rather, it is my hope that it will stimulate further research on the painter, using other methodologies and frameworks, and at the very least, that it will grant him a rightful place within the history of the visual culture of early modern Italy.


20 Christiansen, *A Caravaggio Rediscovered*, pp. 16, 50 note 22. The paintings by Bernardino Licinio were listed under the conventional name of Pordenone.

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