

**BETWEEN TASTE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY:
WRITING ABOUT EARLY RENAISSANCE WORKS OF ART IN
VENICE AND FLORENCE (1550-1800)**

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation is an investigation of how early Renaissance paintings from Venice and Florence were discussed and appraised by authors and collectors writing in these cities between 1550 and 1800. The variety of source material I have consulted has enabled me to assess and to compare the different paths pursued by Venetian and Florentine writers, the type of question they addressed in their analyses of early works of art and, most importantly, their approaches to the re-evaluation of the art of the past. Among the types of writing on art I explore are guidebooks, biographies of artists, didactic poems, artistic dialogues, dictionaries and letters, paying particular attention in these different genres to passages about artists from Guariento to Giorgione in Venice and from Cimabue to Raphael in Florence. By focusing, within this framework, on primary sources and documents, as well as on the influence of art historical literature on the activity of collecting illustrated by the cases of the Venetian Giovanni Maria Sasso and the Florentine Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, I show that two principal approaches to writing about the past emerged during this period: the first, adopted by many Venetian authors, involved the aesthetic evaluation of early Renaissance works of art, often in comparison to later developments; the second, more frequent among Florentine writers, tended to document these works and place them in their historical context, without necessarily making artistic judgements about them. A parallel analysis of these two approaches offers a twofold perspective on how writers and collectors engaged with early Renaissance art from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

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EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

When quotations are taken directly from manuscript or printed sources, the original spellings have been retained without the addition of modern accents or punctuation.

I have given full bibliographical references on the first occasion a work is cited; for subsequent citations, I have given only the author and the short title. Full bibliographical references for all works can also be found in the Bibliography.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i>
NGA	National Gallery Archive
Bocchi, <i>Le bellezze</i> (1591)	Francesco Bocchi, <i>Le bellezze della città di Firenze</i> (Florence 1591), ed. J. Shearman, Farnborough 1971.
Bocchi/Cinelli, <i>Le bellezze</i>	Francesco Bocchi, <i>Le bellezze della città di Firenze</i> , ed. Giovanni Cinelli, Florence 1677.
Sansovino, <i>Venetia</i>	Francesco Sansovino, <i>Venetia città nobilissima</i> , Venice 1581.
Sansovino/Martinioni, <i>Venetia</i>	Francesco Sansovino, <i>Venetia</i> , ed. Giustiniano Martinioni, Venice 1663.
Sansovino/Stringa, <i>Venetia</i>	Francesco Sansovino, <i>Venetia</i> , ed. Giovanni Stringa, Venice 1604.
Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> (1550)	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori</i> (Florence 1550), ed. G. Einaudi, Turin 1986.
Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> (1568)	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori</i> (Florence 1568), ed. G. Milanesi, 9 vols, Florence 1998.
Vasari/Manolesi, <i>Le vite</i>	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> , ed. Carlo Manolesi, 4 vols, Bologna 1647.
Vasari/Bottari, <i>Le vite</i>	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> , ed. Bottari, 3 vols, Rome 1759-1760.
Vasari/Gentili, <i>Le vite</i>	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> , ed. Tommaso Gentili, 7 vols, Livorno, 1767-1772 .
Vasari/della Valle, <i>Le vite</i>	Giorgio Vasari, <i>Le vite</i> , ed. Guglielmo della Valle, 11 vols, Siena 1791-1794.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

‘Time is a long staircase and the centuries are its steps; from Raphael one descends to Cimabue just as from Cimabue one ascends to Raphael.’¹

My dissertation is an investigation of how early Renaissance paintings from Venice and Florence were discussed and appraised by authors and collectors writing in these cities between 1550 and 1800. In the first part of my study, which concerns Venice, my timeline begins with an analysis of the first edition of Francesco Sansovino’s *Venetia città nobilissima* published in 1581,² continues through the artistic literature and collecting activity of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ending with a discussion of Giovanni Maria Sasso’s *Venetia pittrice*, written in the second half of the eighteenth century. The second part, which deals with Florence and follows a similar structure, begins with Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, published in 1550,³ and concludes with the encyclopedic effort of Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri to compile the biographies of all artists up to his own day in his *Le vite de’ pittori*, datable to between 1739 and 1741.⁴ The variety of source material I have consulted has enabled me to assess and to compare the different paths pursued by Venetian and Florentine writers, the kind of questions they addressed in their analyses of early works of art and, most importantly, their approaches to the re-evaluation of the art of the past. Among the types of writing on art I explore are guidebooks, biographies of artists, didactic poems, illustrated art history books, dictionaries and letters, paying particular attention in these different genres to passages about artists from Guariento to Giorgione in Venice and from Cimabue to Raphael in Florence. By

¹ Guglielmo Della Valle, *Lettere senesi sopra le belle arti*, 3 vols, Venice 1782-1786, II, p. 267: ‘Il tempo è una lunga scala, e i secoli ne sono i gradi; da Raffaello si scende per essi sino a Cimabue, come da Cimabue si sale a Raffaello.’

² Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, Venice 1581.

³ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (Florence 1550), ed. G. Einaudi, Turin 1986.

⁴ Initially, Fabia Borroni Salvadori dated the manuscript to between 1719 and 1741. More recently, however, Alessia Cecconi suggested that it was written between 1739 and 1741; see A. Cecconi, ‘Nella presente aggiunta all’Abecedario pittorico del padre maestro Orlandi. Per una rilettura delle Vite gabburriane’, *Memofonte*, 1, 2008, pp. 1-23, at pp. 11, 18; see also http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/cecconi_1_2008.pdf.

focusing, within this framework, on primary sources and documents, as well as on the influence of art historical literature on the activity of collecting, illustrated by case studies of the Venetian Giovanni Maria Sasso and the Florentine Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, I show that two main approaches to writing about the art of the past emerged during this period: the first, adopted by many Venetian authors, involved an evaluation of early Renaissance works of art, which reflected, to some extent, the artistic preferences of the time; the second, more frequent among Florentine writers, tended to document these works and place them in their historical context, without necessarily making judgements about their artistic quality. This parallel analysis of these two approaches will offer a twofold perspective on how writers and collectors engaged with early Renaissance art from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

The reassessment of early Italian works of art from the perspective of later generations led scholars of the twentieth century to address a number of issues concerning the development of the taste for paintings of the early Renaissance.⁵ The first important study of the reception, or *fortuna*, of the ‘primitives’ was Lionello Venturi’s *Il gusto dei primitivi*, published in 1926.⁶ Venturi explored the theme of re-evaluation in art, with a particular focus on the ‘primitives’, that is, artists from the Duecento to the Quattrocento, and their reception throughout the centuries. The conclusion at which Venturi arrived was that early works of art deserved to be appreciated more than the modern ones because they were more pious.⁷ While it is true, as I shall show, that the religious element had long played an important role in assessing works of art of the early Renaissance, and that some of the authors with whom I deal touched on this devotional aspect, the issue of the rediscovery of the ‘primitives’ is a far more complex one and deserves to be readdressed. In this dissertation, I trace how attitudes towards the art of the past developed from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, what changes occurred and what factors determined them. I also challenge Venturi’s conclusion by proposing other angles from which the reassessment of the art of past between 1550 and 1800 can be explained more accurately. My aim, therefore, is to look at the ways in which historiography, antiquarianism and connoisseurship influenced and contributed to the reception of the ‘primitives’.

⁵ By ‘taste’, I mean appreciation or preference.

⁶ L. Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Bologna 1926.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

In his *La fortuna dei primitivi*,⁸ Giovanni Previtali examined the reception of the art of the past between the Cinquecento and the Settecento. His approach consisted of a critical overview of the attitudes of different writers on art to the works of early Renaissance painters. While the main sources he referred to were Italian guidebooks, biographies of artists, art treatises and historiography books, he also mentioned French, English and German ones. In the appendices to his book, Previtali presented the views of foreign travellers to Italy on the art of the ‘primitives’ and gave examples of eighteenth-century collectors exclusively interested in acquiring works by artists of the earlier generations. My study supplements that of Previtali by offering an in-depth analysis of the primary sources concerning early Venetian and Florentine works of art and challenges it by showing that writings on art and views on collecting early Renaissance art works should be treated together rather than separately. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that while appreciation depends on works being on public display and is bound up with a good understanding of art history, collecting depends on the existence of a supply of objects for sale. So, as I shall attempt to show, collectors were advised to purchase paintings by earlier artists whose names were praised in writings on art, provided such works were available on the market.

Furthermore, Previtali suggests that views of and preferences for the art of earlier generations developed over the three centuries covered in his study.⁹ I assess this interpretation by analysing the artistic vocabulary used over this period, in order to identify changes in taste and to determine how these affected the reception of the ‘primitives’.

Both in his *Il gusto dei primitivi*,¹⁰ and in *The Preference for the Primitive*,¹¹ E. H. Gombrich explored this topic, emphasizing the role and meaning of ‘primitivism’ in art. Drawing on Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas’s *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*,¹² Gombrich made it clear that he did not employ the term ‘primitivism’ in either of the

⁸ See G. Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi dal Vasari ai neoclassici*, Turin 1964.

⁹ The most recent publication on the reception of the ‘primitivi’ which dwells on Previtali’s study is the catalogue accompanying the exhibition entitled *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d’arte dalle collezioni italiane fra Sette e Ottocento* organized by Gianluca Tormen and Angelo Tartuferi and held at the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence between 24 June 2014 and 8 December 2014. It provides the historical and artistic context in which Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century views on the art of the ‘primitivi’ emerged and developed and offers an overview of the collecting practices during this timeframe, with particular emphasis on Florence and Tuscany; see G. Tormen and A. Tartuferi, eds, *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d’arte dalle collezioni italiane fra Sette e Ottocento*, Florence 2014.

¹⁰ E. H. Gombrich, *Il gusto dei primitivi. Le radici della ribellione*, Naples 1985.

¹¹ See n. 5 above.

¹² A. O. Lovejoy, G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, Baltimore 1935.

meanings established by these two authors (chronological primitivism and cultural primitivism),¹³ but rather as an expression of the desire to rediscover periods from the past. ‘Primitivism’, according to Gombrich, was a movement or tendency which emerged in the nineteenth century and referred to the re-evaluation of the art of the earlier generations. In this context, the nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelites suggested a return to the Renaissance ideal of beauty and especially to artists up to Raphael to whom they had become sensitive.

In addition, Gombrich drew on the tradition of rhetoric in order to explain the interest in the re-evaluation of the past. Citing Cicero and Quintilian, he concluded that the return to the past was a nostalgic attempt by later generations to recover earlier prototypes.¹⁴ According to Quintilian, it was also regarded as a fashionable practice among the elites.¹⁵ In my dissertation, I try to determine whether this observation can be extended to the connoisseurs and collectors of the early modern period.

In my opinion, previous studies of the rise and development of interest in the ‘primitives’ are incomplete, since the topic needs to be addressed in light of the issues, mentioned above, which earlier scholars have neglected. For instance, Venturi’s view that earlier works of art were appreciated mainly on account of their religious subjects led him to disregard historical and artistic factors, which I contend were also an important part of the story. My belief that there were three main reasons for the appeal of early Renaissance art – historical, artistic and religious – also calls into question Gombrich’s view that collectors acquired these works because of their relative cheapness.¹⁶ Finally, Previtali’s separate treatment of writings about art and collecting art works by early masters hindered his understanding of how these two aspects influenced each other. By contrast, my investigation looks at the literary tradition in close connection with the activity of collecting, in an attempt to clarify their similarities and interactions.

It is necessary to establish, from the outset, whether there was a desire on the part of writers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century to re-evaluate the art of the past and

¹³ Gombrich, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴ Gombrich mentions the example of Roman imitations of ancient Greek statues: *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Gombrich, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, pp. 13-14, esp. n. 9, and Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae*, 2 vols, Leipzig 1922, II, p. 263 (XII.x.3): ‘qui post eos [Polygnotus atque Aglaophon] extiterunt, auctoribus praeferant, proprio quodam-intelligendi, ut mea opinio fert, ambitu’.

¹⁶ Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive*, pp. 87-144, (‘The Pre-Raphaelite Ideal’).

to construct a hierarchical ranking of painters.¹⁷ I therefore investigate how the art of the past was perceived to stand in relation to that of more recent generations, and how the posthumous reputations of artists were established and maintained. To this end, I provide a detailed analysis of a large spectrum of writings of the period, which, as Luigi Grassi has indicated, can be divided into two categories: artistic literature and historiography.¹⁸ Even though they belong to different genres and stem from different traditions,¹⁹ both literary and historical writings provide evidence of an awareness of the evolution of artistic styles and of a revival of interest in the early Renaissance works of art.²⁰

Guidebooks, for instance, promoted artists from different schools and enhanced their reputations by discussing key pieces of their work, which were displayed publicly or, occasionally, privately. Moreover, the messages conveyed by these texts were often coloured by *campanilismo* in order to illustrate differences or disagreements between cities, or simply because the writers were mainly familiar with the art of their own locality: several texts were written to defend the superiority of a local school of painting against the views expressed by authors from elsewhere in Italy.²¹ In addition to such polemical positions, different authors took different approaches to describing art works, presupposing a reader standing in a particular place: some were expansive, others more selective, mentioning only those pieces they considered worthy of praise.

While art writers generally tried to give up-to-date information about contemporary artists and their works, it is striking that authors of guidebooks, in particular, continued to list, often in appreciative terms, paintings before Raphael in a style which was, or seemed to be, outdated. I consider how and to what extent attitudes to such past art changed over time and how knowledge of it increased or became more easily available.

¹⁷ By 'art of the past', I mean early Italian Renaissance paintings, from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, especially those artists whose works inspired later writers to express or to allude to ideas of taste.

¹⁸ The first of Grassi's categories includes, among other writings, guidebooks; and the second, biographies of artists; see L. Grassi, 'La storiografia artistica del Seicento in Italia', in *Il mito del classicismo nel Seicento*, Messina 1964, pp. 61-79, at pp. 61-2.

¹⁹ See J. R. von Schlosser, *La letteratura artistica: manuale delle fonti della storia dell'arte moderna*, Florence 1977, p. 527.

²⁰ Of course, some writers were more interested in earlier art than others, and this preference was justified in different ways.

²¹ See, e.g., Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 2 vols, Bologna 1678; see also G. Perini, 'Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters: Insight into Conflicting Trends in Seventeenth-Century Italian Art Historiography', *Art Bulletin*, 80, 1988, pp. 273-99.

Biographies of artists offer an historical perspective, sprinkled with anecdotes, on the reception of artistic styles and of individual artists. They help to supply us with the critical tools needed to interpret judgements on and descriptions of the style of particular artists. Unlike guidebooks, which centre on specific works of art, without providing a broader view, biographies focus on the careers of individual artists and on the context in which their works were produced. In their different ways, nonetheless, both genres were able to transmit views on the art and artists of the past.

In view of the extended chronological timeframe of this dissertation, from the mid-sixteenth century to 1800, I decided to limit my study to two cities, Venice and Florence, for both of which there is a wide range of primary source material illustrating how tastes were shaped and how local artistic culture was promoted. I believe that examining a selection of writings from both cities in parallel helps to assess and to compare the type of questions which Venetian and Florentine writers asked, the judgements they made on artists and their works and, most importantly, their approaches to the re-evaluation of art and artists from the Duecento to the Quattrocento.

In one of his four talks on the subject of the ‘primitives’, Gombrich explained that the term was first used in 1797 by one of Jacques-Louis David’s pupils, Étienne-Jean Delécluze, who, in discussing his teacher’s painting the *Intervention of the Sabine Women*, stated that: ‘you find in it no grandeur, no simplicity, in short nothing “primitive”’.²² The word ‘primitive’ was sometimes used to refer to the purity of the Greek vase painting; but in the nineteenth century it began to be applied to the art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as a way of characterizing the ‘pure and religious style’ of Italian, Flemish and Dutch artists from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.²³ The problem of the periodization of the ‘primitives’ has been addressed by various modern scholars.²⁴ Gombrich, for instance, draws on Vasari, suggesting that the endpoint is the early stage of Raphael’s

²² See E. H. Gombrich, ‘The Primitive and its Value in Art’, *The Listener*, I-IV, 15 February-8 March, 1979 (I: ‘The Dread of Corruption’), pp. 242-5.

²³ The term ‘primitive’ was also used in order to refer to earlier periods, as a way to suggest chronological priority; see S. Battaglia, ‘Primitivo’, in *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, Turin 1961- , XIV, pp. 353-5, at p. 354, with quotations from, e.g. Giovanni Boccaccio and Gabriele D’Annunzio.

²⁴ For studies of the treatment of historic and stylistic periods, see J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, London 1937; E. Panofsky, ‘Renaissance and Resuscitations’, *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*, Uppsala 1960, pp. 42-113; E. H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, London 1966, pp. 81-98 (‘Norm and Form: The Stylistic Categories of Art History and their Origins in Renaissance Ideals’).

career, when he was working in Perugino's workshop.²⁵ Previtali also equates *primitivi* with the pre-*raffaelliti*.²⁶

In this dissertation, I shall be looking at the reception of works of art which were created in the period from the late Middle Ages²⁷ to 1520, the date of Raphael's death. Since I shall be examining artistic development from the perspective of the Venetian and Florentine writers whose works I analyse, I shall avoid the anachronistic term 'primitive' for pre-1520 art, using instead, interchangeably, 'art of the past', 'art of earlier generations' and 'art of the late medieval and early Renaissance period'.

Peter Burke has argued that it was during the fifteenth century that a sense of history began to develop in Italy and that this was achieved by fulfilling the following three prerequisites: 'a sense of anachronism', 'an awareness of evidence' and 'an interest in causation'.²⁸ This line of investigation was carried forward by Patricia Fortini Brown in her *Venice and Antiquity*; by looking at chronicles, history books and works of art, she masterfully explored the way in which the Venetians perceived their own past and traditions.²⁹ The writings on art analysed in this dissertation also indicate that Venetians and Florentines had a sense of the past, which was usually conveyed through their juxtaposition of the terms *antico* and *moderno*. As we shall see, however, the way in which both Venetian and Florentine writers deployed these terms was inconsistent; and, therefore, it is not always easy to decipher a straightforward meaning.³⁰ *Antico* variously referred to ancient Greek and Roman art, to painting before Guariento in Venice and Cimabue in Florence, or indeed before Giovanni Bellini in Venice and Masaccio in Florence, or even before Giorgione in Venice

²⁵ E. H. Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art*, London 2002, p. 91; see also Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 611-12.

²⁶ Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi*, p. 11.

²⁷ Among the late medieval art works I discuss are the mosaics of San Marco and paintings by Guariento, Nicoletto Semitecolo, Jacobello del Fiore and Cimabue.

²⁸ P. Burke, 'Medieval Historical Past', in *Renaissance Sense of the Past*, London 1969, pp. 1-20, at p. 1.

²⁹ P. F. Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven 1997.

³⁰ For a discussion of these terms and an attempt to clarify their meaning, see E. Panofsky, 'Renaissance'-Self-Definition or Self-Destruction', in his *Renaissance and Renascences*, pp. 1-35, at pp. 33-5. He examined Vasari's terminology and established what he meant by *vecchio*, *antico* and *moderno*: e.g., in Vasari's view, while *maniera vecchia* referred to the Byzantine style, *maniera antica* designated the ancient Greek style. Vasari also applied the term *moderno* to the art of his own time as opposed to that of the Middle Ages; see Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (Florence 1568), ed. G. Milanesi, 9 vols, Florence 1998, I, ('Proemio delle Vite'), p. 242: 'Ma perchè più agevolmente s'intenda quello che io chiami vecchio ed antico; antiche furono le cose innanzi a Costantino, di Corinto, d'Atene e di Roma..., perciocchè l'altre si chiamano vecchie, che da San Silvestro in qua furono poste in opera da un certo residuo de' Greci', and ('Life of Cimabue'), p. 249: 'avevano fatte quelle opere nel modo che elle si veggono oggi, cioè non nella buona maniera greca antica, ma in quella goffa moderna di quei tempi.'

and Raphael in Florence. The term *moderno*, often used in opposition to *antico*, could refer to the art of the High Renaissance or to that of the author's own time. This lack of consistency can perhaps be explained by the fact that authors tended to construct their own classifications and divisions of artists, depending on what they regarded as the most important contributions to artistic development.

Antico and *moderno* are not the only two terms which will concern us here. The range of artistic terminology employed by Venetian and Florentine writers will also be considered in this dissertation. The artistic vocabulary which these writers used was closely related to that found in works on art theory from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In his study of art theory in sixteenth-century Venice, Mark Roskill examines the origins of some of the key terms and suggests that many of them were borrowed from ancient rhetoric.³¹ Similarly, in formulating a scheme for painting which consisted of *circonscriptione*, *compositione* and *receptione di lumi*,³² Leon Battista Alberti drew on an ancient model which divided rhetoric into *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*.³³ Paolo Pino and Lodovico Dolce, in their artistic dialogues of 1548³⁴ and 1557,³⁵ also divided painting into three parts: *inventio*, *disegno* and *colorito*. Terms such as *bellezza*, *grazia*,³⁶ *proprietà*,³⁷ *gravità*, *facilità*, *dolcezza*³⁸ likewise belonged to a standardized vocabulary shared between literary and artistic writings of the time,³⁹ which was adapted, transmitted and enriched by each writer. This same vocabulary was applied to the description and judgement of late medieval and Renaissance Venetian and Florentine works of art.

³¹ M. W. Roskill, 'Introduction', in *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, Toronto 2000, pp. 5-61. The main ancient sources were Cicero's *De oratore*, Horace's *Ars poetica* and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

³² Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura*, ed. L. Mallè, Florence 1950, p. 82: 'Adunque la pictura si compie di conscriptione, compositione e ricevere di lumi.' On the influence of rhetoric and humanism on Alberti's writing, see Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, Oxford 1971, pp. 121-39 ('Alberti and the Humanists: Composition').

³³ See Roskill, 'Commentary on the Text of the Dialogue', in *Dolce's Aretino*, pp. 219-351, at p. 267.

³⁴ Paolo Pino, *Dialogo della pittura*, Venice 1548, p. 15: 'L'arte della pittura è imitatrice della natura nelle cose superficiali, la qual per farvela meglio intendere, dividerò in tre parti à modo mio, la prima parte sarà disegno, la seconda inventione, la terza e ultima il colorire.'

³⁵ Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, Venice 1557, in Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino*, p. 116: 'Tutta la somma della Pittura a mio giudicio è divisa in tre parti: Inventione, Disegno, e Colorito.'

³⁶ On *bellezza* and *grazia*, see, e.g., P. Barocchi *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols, Milan and Naples 1971-1977, II, pp. 1611-12.

³⁷ See Roskill, 'Commentary on the Text of the Dialogue', in *Dolce's Aretino*, pp. 219-351, at p. 271.

³⁸ For a theoretical discussion of artistic terms such as *stile*, *ornato* and *rilievo* and their application in the Renaissance, see H. Wohl, *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance: a Reconsideration of Style*, New York 1999; see also D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton 1981.

³⁹ See, e.g., Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, Florence 1947; Pietro Bembo, *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), ed. C. Vela, Bologna 2001; and Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, Parma 1995; see also Roskill, 'Introduction', in *Dolce's Aretino*, pp. 17-26.

These writings on art, especially those dating from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, contain disappointingly few stylistic comments on individual works of art. Therefore, it is often necessary to consider which works of art writers chose to mention, rather than how they described them.

In Part One, after a brief survey of the earliest discussions of art in Venice, I focus on four key texts by Venetian authors. The first of these is Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*, published in 1581, together with the subsequent editions by Giovanni Stringa in 1604 and by Giustiniano Martinioni in 1663. I investigate Sansovino's accounts of Venetian art, what these reveal about his appreciation for early paintings and whether his views on particular works of art were adopted by the later writers. I also consider whether any early works of art which were left out by Sansovino but included in later editions.

I then analyse a different genre, Carlo Ridolfi's biographies of Venetian painters grouped under the title of *Le meraviglie dell'arte* and published in 1648. I extract and interpret those passages which gave an indication of Ridolfi's artistic views and preferences, as both a connoisseur and a painter, and determine whether he finds models of excellence among the earlier Venetian artists. Next follows a discussion of Marco Boschini's guidebook, which is specifically devoted to painting. His *Le minere della pittura veneziana* of 1664 and the second edition entitled *Le ricche minere*, published in 1674, reveal his attitude to early art and his rankings of Venetian artists; I also point to significant changes which occurred from one edition to the other. Finally, I explore two guidebooks written by a major figure of eighteenth-century Venice: Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger. I place these works within the evolution of this type of artistic literature and outline Zanetti's contributions to Venetian art historiography. My account of these four representative examples of Venetian artistic literature attempts to illustrate developments and changes in the attitude towards the art of the past which occurred from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, as well as the reasons which led to these changes and their implications.

With the same aim in mind, but from a different perspective, I present a case study showing that textual evidence played a major role in shaping the views of collectors and connoisseurs and in influencing the art market. The Venetian collector, art writer and connoisseur Giovanni Maria Sasso was interested in acquiring and promoting early Italian paintings and also planned to write biographies of the most important Venetian artists up to his own time. By investigating these two complementary activities, I try to determine the

extent to which collectors and connoisseurs were aware of and adopted the attitudes towards early Renaissance painting in the literary sources.

In Part Two, I explore a selection of writings on art produced in Florence from the second half of the sixteenth century and to the end of the eighteenth. While for Venice, it was possible to present the texts in a chronological sequence regardless of the genre, for Florence, the difference between the trajectories of the genres was such that it proved necessary to treat them separately. I begin therefore with an examination of Florentine guidebooks, including Francesco Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Firenze* of 1591 and the subsequent edition by Giovanni Cinelli. This is followed by a contextual presentation of Giorgio Vasari's thought and especially his views on the art of the past, as presented in the first edition of his *Lives*. Next, I study the reception of Vasari's *Lives* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, trying to identify the reasons why new editions of the *Lives* were produced. I focus on the innovations which later editions contained, considering, in particular whether these changes altered the original text and affected the contemporary understanding of early Renaissance paintings. Throughout I make comparisons between Florentine and Venetian attitudes to this art.

In the final chapter, I trace the development of connoisseurship and taste in the writings of an important Florentine figure of the eighteenth century, the collector Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri (1675-1742). Following in the footsteps of Baldinucci, Gabburri was a prolific writer and publisher, as well as a collector and artistic adviser to Duke Leopoldo de' Medici. Moreover, his regular exchange of letters with artists, collectors and connoisseurs, both inside and outside Italy, sheds light on the artistic preferences of his day and on his contribution to the development of the taste for early Renaissance paintings in eighteenth-century Florence.⁴⁰ On the basis of my analysis of Gabburri's *Le vite*,⁴¹ which was based on Pellegrino Orlandi's *Abecedario pittorico*, and its context, I attempt to position him within the general lines of the historiography of art established by his predecessors.

⁴⁰ For the corpus of letters associated with Gabburri, most of which were sent to him, see Giovanni Gaetano Bottari and Stefano Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura scritte da' più celebri personaggi dei secoli XV, XVI, e XVII*, 8 vols, Milan, 1822-1825, II, pp. 97-405.

⁴¹ For a transcription of the entire manuscript, together with online reproductions, see <http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/Gabburri.consultazione.html>; in quoting from Gabburri's *Le vite*, I have maintained the pagination given in the transcription.

PART ONE: VENETIAN ART WRITINGS

Introduction

Italian history writing of the sixteenth century developed from an encounter between, on the one hand, the tradition of classical texts which touched on history and rhetoric,¹ and, on the other, a more recent tendency which departed from the conventional way of recording historical events as a continuous narrative by 'breaking down the content of history into categories'.² Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia* and Paolo Giovio's *Historiarum sui temporis libri XLV* are two representative examples of the type of historical writing emerging throughout Italy in this period, especially with regard to their universal approach and their inclusion of non-historical information.³

This characteristic was also present in historical works from northern Italy,⁴ which contained a large amount of material dealing with various aspects of city life, placed in separate sections. While, for instance, in Venice, the chronicle tradition dates back to the eleventh century,⁵ the first attempts to provide a humanist historiography of Venice arose only later in the fifteenth century with the writings of Poggio Bracciolini and Flavio Biondo, followed later by Marin Sanudo and Marc'Antonio Sabellico.⁶ These texts, however, contained little or no material on the leading artists of the time. The first serious attempt in the north of Italy to promote the artistic legacy of a city and to include an account on the lives of the most famous artists in an historical work was Bernardino Scardeone's *De civitate urbis Patavii*, published in 1560.⁷ Written in Latin, Scardeone's book contained a chapter on the best-known painters and architects in Padua, mentioning their most important works.

¹ E.g., Cicero's *De oratore*, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Quintilian's *Institutiones oratoriae*.

² See P. F. Grendler, 'Francesco Sansovino and Italian Popular History', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 16, 1969, pp. 139-80, at p. 173.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5 and 151.

⁴ See Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 365-6.

⁵ See E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Early Renaissance*, Chicago 1981, pp. 59-85 ('Venice and Genoa'), at p. 62; and M. L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance*, Princeton 1986.

⁶ Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 64-5.

⁷ See Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 365-6.

CHAPTER 1

The Reception of Early Venetian Works of Art in the Writings of Francesco Sansovino

Francesco Sansovino belongs in this category of writers from northern Italy. ‘Tuscan in essence... Venetian by choice’,¹ as he describes himself in the preface to his *Venetia città nobilissima*, dedicated to Bianca de’ Medici, Sansovino was a prolific writer and publisher, and the son of the sculptor and architect Jacopo Sansovino. In his short autobiography, written in the form of a letter dating from 15 December 1579 and addressed to Gian Filippo Magnanini, the secretary of Cornelio Bentivoglio,² Sansovino gives an account of different stages of his life: his birth in Rome,³ his childhood in Florence, his education in Venice, Padua and Bologna and his career as a man of letters in Venice;⁴ afterwards comes a list of his writings, which he divides into three categories: original works, translations and collections.⁵ We learn from the autobiography that he was born in Rome in 1521 during the pontificate of Leo X, but due to the Sack of 1527, he was constrained to move to Florence and, finally, to Venice, where he joined his father Jacopo.⁶ There he studied Latin and rhetoric under Stefano Planzone and Giovita Rapicio, and learned Greek from Antonio Francino da Monte Varchi.⁷ His father wanted Francesco to become a lawyer, and sent him, against his will, to study law in Padua and Bologna. Of this period, Sansovino writes: ‘it was spent in vain because I was not inclined to study law’.⁸ He did, however, frequent the humanist circles of the Paduan Academy, where he met, among others, Benedetto Varchi, Alessandro Piccolomini and Sperone Speroni, and was, at the same time, a member of the

¹ Sansovino, *Venetia*, sig. A2^r, ‘Toscano per natura...Veneto per elettione.’

² Giovanni Filippo Magnanini was a diplomat and writer employed by the Este court; see http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2010/892/pdf/Davis_Fontes45.pdf (C. Davis, ‘Individual and Polity in the *Vita* of Francesco Sansovino’, *Fontes*, 45, 2010, pp. 1-24, at p. 15).

³ Temanza also writes of Sansovino’s Roman origins in: Tommaso Temanza, *Vite dei più celebri architetti e scultori veneziani che fiorirono nel secolo decimosesto* (Venice 1778), ed. L. Grassi, Milan 1966, p. 211.

⁴ For the letter, see Sansovino, ‘Al. Mag. Sig. Gian Filippo Magnanini Secretario dell’Illustriss. Sig. Cornelio Bentivogli’, in his *Secretario*, Venice 1580, fols 219^r-222^r.

⁵ *Ibid.*, fols 220^r-221^r. This list, however, is incomplete; for a more comprehensive account of Sansovino’s life and works, see E. Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, 6 vols, Venice 1824-1861, IV, pp. 31-91.

⁶ Sansovino, *Secretario*, fol. 221^v: ‘mi trovai nel sacco memorando di quella Città, e vidi finalmente la Repubblica di Fiorenza risolversi nel Principato. Di quindi trasferitomi a Venezia, dove mio padre buo: mem: s’era salvato dal sacco.’

⁷ For further information about Sansovino’s teachers, see Davis, ‘Individual and Polity’, p. 15.

⁸ See Sansovino, *Secretario*, fol. 219^v: ‘consumai il tempo assai vanamente, non essendo io punto inchinato alle leggi.’

Florentine Academy, where he took part in discussions on the use of the vernacular.⁹ This milieu seems to have had a direct influence on Sansovino's response – as a writer, editor and publisher – to the Venetian tradition of histories and chronicles, which, for the most part, were written in Latin.¹⁰ Sansovino favoured instead vernacular publications: he produced Italian translations of Latin and Greek texts by Justinian, Aristotle, Plutarch and other ancient authors;¹¹ he edited works by St Augustine, Leonardo Bruni and Francesco Guicciardini, which he published at his own printing house;¹² and he wrote various books and treatises on Venetian history, rhetoric, oratory and epistolography.¹³

Sansovino's writings on Venetian history belong to the type of writing characteristic of this period in the Veneto, in that they derived from the long-standing tradition of *laudes civitatis* and also reached out to a popular readership. His works were designed to inform and instruct, and they were structured so that the readers could easily choose the section which they wanted to consult.¹⁴ Two of them, *Dialogo di tutte le cose notabili* (1556) and *Venetia città nobilissima* (1581), also included substantial accounts of Venetian art. An analysis of this material will help to shed light on Sansovino's view of the artistic past and the elements which he sought to revive in order to assess the present. At the same time, it will allow us to determine whether he anticipated new directions in the interpretation of the art of the past and the way in which his approach influenced local writings on art that emerged afterwards.

⁹ For Sansovino's connections with the Accademia degli Infiammati in Padua and the Accademia degli Umidi in Florence, see E. Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino imprenditore, libraio e letterato*, Venice 1994, pp. 167-8 and 81-2. For the debates on the use of the vernacular in these two academic circles, see M. Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols, Bologna 1926-1930, III, p. 269 and IV, p. 363.

¹⁰ E.g., Flavio Biondo, *De origine et gestis Venetorum*, Venice 1454, Marc'Antonio Sabellico, *Rerum Venetarum* (1487) and Pietro Marcello, *De vitis principum Venetorum*, Venice 1502; see Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, p. 62, and A. Prosperi's preface to Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*, Bergamo 2002.

¹¹ Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni*, pp. 40-5, gives a list of 15 such works together with a short summary.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 16-68.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-84.

¹⁴ See Grendler, 'Francesco Sansovino', p. 143.

Dialogo di tutte le cose notabili che sono in Venezia (1556)

In 1556, Sansovino published the *Dialogo di tutte le cose notabili che sono in Venezia*.¹⁵ It was a fictitious exchange between two gentlemen, a foreigner and a Venetian, containing brief but informative accounts of the most illustrious inhabitants of the city and different aspects of daily life, including customs, celebrations and historical facts, as well as a succinct account of the leading artists, with examples of their work. It also included important comparative remarks on the past and the present, which will help us to situate Sansovino's reception of the art within a more general context. For instance, while introducing the foreigner to the 'splendours' of the past, the Venetian gentleman points out that:

Among our antiquities, there are many things which are unknown to people, but which please me greatly; for I examine those times with my own judgement and, on this basis, I look at the present, seeing whether I appreciate it more or not.¹⁶

In this passage, Sansovino acknowledges that a good understanding of the past, together with its lesser known aspects, helps to assess the present. There then follows a discussion of some of the most important early Venetian artists and their works, starting with Gentile and Giovanni Bellini. Sansovino considered them to be 'highly esteemed artists in their day...but, in their excessive diligence, they failed by making the figures appear without softness or great relief'.¹⁷ In spite of this critical attitude towards the two artists, Sansovino makes positive remarks about their works. He mentions Giovanni Bellini's San Giobbe altarpiece in San Giobbe and the San Zaccaria altarpiece in San Zaccaria and a number of 'very beautiful and devout' paintings of the Madonna.¹⁸ He dwells on one piece in particular, a private commission for Simon Zeno, which represented 'a [Madonna] in majesty in a very small painting. She was reading the office, with her arms crossed over her

¹⁵ The work was published under the pseudonym of Anselmo Guisconi but is thought to be by Sansovino; see Bonora, *Ricerche*, pp. 186-7.

¹⁶ Sansovino, *Dialogo di tutte le cose notabili che sono in Venezia*, Venice 1563, sig. BIVv: 'Nelle nostre antichità son molte cose incognite alle persone, le quali mi diletmano grandemente: perciò che col pensiero misuro quei tempi e con quella misura, veggio i presenti e quanto più mi piacciono o no.'

¹⁷ Sansovino, *Dialogo*, sig. BVI: 'Costoro ne lor tempi furono stimati assai... Ma peccavano più tosto nella troppo diligenza, perche le figure nella lor qualità venivano a esser non morbide, e di non molto rilievo.'

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 'si trovano diverse opere, come in S. Iob, in San Zaccaria...alcune nostre donne molto belle e devote.'

chest with such modesty and grace that I have never seen represented better.’¹⁹ Giovanni and Gentile Bellini (who had been treated with respect in the first edition of Vasari’s *Vite*)²⁰ are the earliest artists mentioned in *Tutte le cose notabili*; others include Giorgione, Paris Bordone, Bonifacio Veronese, Pordenone, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese²¹ and Andrea Schiavone.²² His comments on their works, with the exception of Titian, who is discussed in detail,²³ are rather general, brief and not always accompanied by examples. Although less substantial, *Tutte le cose notabili* can be viewed as a preparation for Sansovino’s more comprehensive enterprise of 1581, *Venetia città nobilissima*: just as the earlier dialogue transmits a message about the importance of Venetian culture (it was also a commercial product intended for the instruction of visitors), so, too, the later work extols the virtues of the Venetians and calls attention to the great significance of the city’s public monuments and the works of art which they contain.

***Venetia città nobilissima* (1581)**

Sansovino’s *Venetia città nobilissima*, published in 1581, was the earliest substantial publication after Vasari’s *Lives* (1550 and 1568) to contain accounts of works of art displayed both publicly and privately in Venice. In a letter of 22 June 1573, Sansovino informed Alvise Michiel about his plan to write a history of Venice in the vernacular, as would ‘a noble foreigner’, rather than in Latin, as would ‘a noble Venetian’, on the grounds that it would be ‘more credible’.²⁴ He also expressed his concern about obtaining a licence

¹⁹ Ibid., sig. BVIr: ‘Ella è in un picciolo Quadretto e in maestà. Sia in atto di legger l’officio con le mani incrociate al petto con tanta modestia, con tanta venustà, ch’io non ho visto mai meglio.’ On Zeno, an important collector, see I. Favaretto, *Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima*, Rome 1990, p. 156.

²⁰ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 431-9.

²¹ The reference to Veronese is worth noting, given how recently he had arrived in Venice (c. 1555-1556). On Veronese’s activity in Venice, see T. Pignatti, ‘Cittadino di Venezia’, in *Veronese*, 2 vols, Venice 1976, I, pp. 26-49.

²² Sansovino, at least implicitly, seems to distinguish between the artists of the late 15th century (the Bellini) and those from Giorgione onwards, in this respect following Vasari.

²³ One of Titian’s closest friends was Venice’s leading sculptor Jacopo Sansovino; as his son, Francesco was also acquainted with Titian; see C. Hope, ‘Vida y época de Tiziano’, in *Tiziano*, ed. M. Falomir, Madrid 2003, pp. 17-31.

²⁴ The letter is published in Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni*, IV, pp. 89-90: ‘nè per questo do noja ad alcuno perchè se’l Nobile Vinetiano scrive l’Historia latina, il Nobile forestiero scriverà la vulgare, la qual forse sarà più creduta, che la latina.’

from the Council of Ten. There were two conditions which had to be fulfilled in order to receive approval for a publication on the history of Venice: either one had to be the official historian of the city or a member of the patriciate; but Sansovino was neither.²⁵ He therefore felt that he had to justify the importance of the book from a political perspective and give guarantees that it would be of great interest to readers.

Sansovino's book perpetuated a well-established tradition of celebrating the city of Venice and its famous citizens, many of them artists whose works were displayed publicly. At the beginning, after the dedication to the Venetian-born Bianca Cappello, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, also known as Bianca de' Medici, Sansovino gives a complete list of authors whose works he constantly cites, including, among others, local writers such as Leandro Alberti (Bolognese), Donato Giannotti (Florentine), Marc'Antonio Michiel, Marc'Antonio Sabellico, Marin Sanudo and Bernardo Scardeone (Paduan). The writings of these authors – whether chronicles, registers, orations or journals – highlighted the most significant aspects of particular cities in Italy, especially Venice and towns in the Veneto.²⁶

Venezia città nobilissima is structured in thirteen books, nine of which include information about the most important churches, confraternities and palaces in the city. Sansovino's method of presenting the sites is to provide a short history of the monument, together with comments, usually brief but sometimes quite extensive, on the most significant works of art, as well as inscriptions (to which he paid great attention), found there. It is very likely that he had seen most of the paintings he recorded, so his lengthier remarks were meant to single out paintings he particularly admired.

Works of Art in Churches

Sansovino devoted the first six books of *Venetia città nobilissima* to churches, which he grouped geographically within their *sestieri*. Here a number of accounts refer to early works

²⁵ See Bonora, 'Storiografia locale', in *Ricerche*, pp. 164-7.

²⁶ See Sansovino, *Venetia*, p. [vii] ('Autori citati nel presente volume'); see also Bonora, 'Storiografia locale', pp. 163-94.

of art which Sansovino considered worthy of note. In analysing these references, I shall begin by discussing the early artists and their works in chronological order.²⁷

Sansovino's remarks on Trecento and some early Quattrocento artists are not very detailed. Of the frescoes in the chapel of the Volto Santo in Santa Maria de' Servi, for instance, he records what the inscription said: that they were executed by Nicoletto Semitecolo in 1370 (fig. 1), without adding any further comments.²⁸ With the paintings of Francesco de Franceschi, Donato Veneziano and the Vivarini, he simply names the subject, gives the precise location and, occasionally, the date of execution, which he often takes from the inscription.²⁹ None of Sansovino's notes on these artists is found in Vasari's *Lives*, which shows that he was not relying on it as a source for this material.

At times, he reveals more about a painting or an artist, making appreciative remarks; but these fuller passages occur in connection with works by later artists. Such is the case of Marco Basaiti: alongside an altarpiece of St Catherine by Jacopo Tintoretto, Sansovino records a painting of St Jerome as a penitent by Basaiti (fig. 2), whom he refers to as 'a master of some celebrity in his day'.³⁰ The other two paintings by Basaiti which he mentions are *The Agony in the Garden* and *The Calling of the Sons of Zebedee* (fig. 3). Of the latter he writes: 'Marco Basaiti, a master of great reputation painted the main altarpiece with the conversion of the apostles in 1510. There one can see beautiful and charming landscapes, lively colours and very graceful figures.'³¹ Sansovino also informs us that Benedetto Diana's altarpiece of *St John the Baptist* in the chapel of Girolamo Bragadino in San Francesco della Vigna was very highly praised by painters of the time for its 'singular beauty'.³² He does not, however, tell us why this painting was considered beautiful.³³ Although relatively brief and not very

²⁷ I have chosen to discuss his references to earlier artists chronologically since this may help to establish what his preferences were. In the first edition of his *Venetia*, Sansovino mentioned 81 works of art by 23 artists before Giorgione.

²⁸ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 59r: 'Et fu dipinta la Historia del Volto Santo, nella fraterna, da Nicoletto Semitecolo l'anno 1370.' For further details, see R. Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento*, Venice 1964, p. 123. Only the vault frescoes have survived.

²⁹ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 46r: 'Vi dipinse anco la tavola di S. Hieronimo e S. Sebastiano e S. Luigi posta alle spalle del coro, Francesco Franceschi l'anno 1448.' Most of the works were signed and dated.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 5r: 'una palla di mano di Jacomo Tintoretto, dove Santa Caterina disputa con gli Idolatri, e un San Hieronimo dipinto da Marco Basaiti, maestro assai celebre del suo tempo'.

³¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 79v: 'dove si veggono bellissimo e vaghissimi paesi, colori vivissimi, e figure con molta gratia'.

³² *Ibid.*, fol. 16v: 'La cappella di Hieronimo Bragadino è notabile per la famosa palla di San Giovanni Battista dipinta da Benedetto Diana, la quale è tenuta in gran pregio da i Pittori moderni ed è cosa di bellezza singolare.'

³³ Before Sansovino's account, the second edition of Vasari's *Lives* contained a discussion – in fact, more accurate – of the subject of Diana's altarpiece, which represented St John between two other saints, each of

specific, Sansovino's accounts of works by these two artists nevertheless provide a sympathetic evaluation.

He not only discussed and praised works of art by Italian masters, but also celebrated the German painter Albrecht Dürer. He mentioned an altarpiece by him of Our Lady, 'of singular beauty for design, diligence and colour' in the church of San Bartolomeo (fig. 4).³⁴ It is one of the rare occasions where Sansovino explains why a painting was worthy of admiration.

Even though he showed appreciation for early Renaissance art works, his observations do not seem to reveal a set of aesthetic criteria with a wider application. Several questions remain unanswered, such as what he actually meant by 'beautiful'; on what basis he ranked painters and what qualified their works as significant and noteworthy; and, finally, whether his views reflected what art-lovers at the time were looking for in a painting. When, for instance, he discusses Giovanni Bellini's San Giobbe altarpiece (fig. 5), he tells us that it was composed of the figure of the Virgin Mary, placed in the middle, with St Sebastian to the right and St Job to the left and that it was very much appreciated for its excellence by the good masters of Bellini's time, as well as by those in Sansovino's day.³⁵ Compared to later accounts of the same painting, however, he did not provide a detailed description of the subject.³⁶ It remains significant, nonetheless, that Sansovino emphasized that the painting continued to be highly regarded by artists of a later generation.

them holding a book; see Vasari/Milanesi, *Le vite*, III, p. 650: 'Sono di sua mano in Vinezia in S. Francesco della Vigna, dove all'altare di San Giovanni fece esso Santo ritto in mezzo a due altri Santi che hanno in mano ciascuno un libro', and n. 4. Vasari's modern editor informs us that the painting has been destroyed, without giving any evidence or dates. There is no reference to it in the second edition of Sansovino's book, or in later Venetian writings on art. While discussing the Bragadin chapel, Marco Boschini indicated the existence of three paintings, none of which, however, was by Benedetto Diana. There was an altarpiece by Giuseppe Porta, also known as Salviati, with the figures of St Jerome, St Catherine, St John the Baptist and St James and, to the sides, a *Feast in the House of Simon* by Andrea Vicentino and a painting of Christ with Our Lady, St Mark, St John the Baptist and St Jerome by Jacopo Palma il Giovane. This new display of paintings within the chapel may indeed suggest that Diana's painting had been replaced by one of these variants; see Marco Boschini, *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana*, Venice 1674, (Castello), pp. 43-4, on the altarpiece.

³⁴ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 48^v: 'una palla di Nostra Donna, di mano d'Alberto Duro, di bellezza singolare, per disegno, per diligenza e per colorito'. The painting is now in the National Gallery of Prague; see B. Aikema and B. L. Brown, eds, *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*, ed. New York 2000, pp. 59 and 306-9.

³⁵ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 57^r: 'e si come allora fu stimata molto da i buoni maestri, così al presente per la sua molta eccellenza è tenuta in gran prezzo'.

³⁶ Boschini, e.g., noted that the painting contained other figures besides the ones mentioned by Sansovino such as the Christ child, St Dominic, St Francis, St Louis, St John the Baptist and 'three angels singing in sweet harmony'; see Marco Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (Canareggio), p. 64: 'Continua la famosa Tavola di Giovanni Bellino, con Maria, il Bambino, san Giobbe, san Sebastiano, san Domenico, san Francesco, san Luigi, san Giovanni Battista, e tre Angeli, che suonano con soave armonia.'

When writing about the *Baptism of Christ* in the church of San Giovanni de' Cavalieri in Castello (fig. 6), Sansovino provides no details beyond the subject of the painting.³⁷ Stringa, however, in the second edition, mentions another work by Giovanni Bellini in the same church, describing the subject as *The Supper at Emmaus*³⁸ – a problematic identification since there are only two known paintings by Giovanni Bellini of the Supper at Emmaus, neither of which was in the church of San Giovanni de' Cavalieri. Vasari recorded one in the collection of Giorgio Cornaro, preserved today in an engraving by Pietro Monaco in the British Museum (fig. 7).³⁹ Sansovino, in the original edition of his book, briefly mentions the other, which he calls 'the Supper of Christ' in San Salvatore (fig. 8);⁴⁰ but Stringa, in the second edition of Sansovino's work, describes this painting as the *Feast in the House of Simon*.⁴¹ Carlo Ridolfi, however, correctly identified the subject as the Supper at Emmaus,⁴² after which, all sources referred to it in this way.⁴³

An exception to Sansovino's usual practice of providing quite skimpy accounts of paintings is his description of the *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians on Mount Ararat* by Vittore Carpaccio in the church of Sant'Antonio (fig. 9). He says that Carpaccio was one of

³⁷ Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia*, ed. Giovanni Stringa, Venice 1604, fol. 137r: 'Vi dipinse Giovanni Bellino la pala dell'altar maggiore, che rappresenta il battesimo di Christo, fatto da San Giovanni.' Giustiniano Martinioni also mentions this painting in the third edition; see Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia*, ed. Giustiniano Martinioni, Venice 1663, p. 47: 'nell'Altar Maggiore il Signor Nostro al Giordano'; see also C. Gamba, *Giovanni Bellini*, Paris 1937, pp. 161-2.

³⁸ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 137r: 'a man manca vi è un quadro grande di notabile bellezza ove si vede sedere a mensa Christo, e gli Apostoli che andavano in Emaus, da i quali fu invitato a mangiare, come narra S. Giovanni.'

³⁹ See Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, p. 164: 'in casa messer Giorgio Cornaro è un quadro similmente bellissimo, dentro Cristo, Cleofas e Luca'.

⁴⁰ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 47v: 'la cena di Christo di Gian Bellino', which does not clearly indicate that the subject is the Supper at Emmaus. The picture is still in the church of San Salvatore; see Pignatti, *L'opera completa di Giovanni Bellini*, Milan 1969, p. 101.

⁴¹ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 93v: 'Di pittura si vede nella cappella del Sacramento un bel quadro, in cui fù già dipinto da Gian Bellino quando Christo Signor nostro nella casa del Fariseo, fu da Santa Maria Maddalena unto, e lavato i piedi; e fù una delle cose eccellenti, ch'egli operasse giamai.' I have not been able to identify any painting by Bellini which corresponds to this description, nor have I found any textual evidence of a similar reference.

⁴² Carlo Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie dell'arte* (Venice 1648), ed. D. von Hadeln, 2 vols, Berlin 1914-1924, I, p. 71: 'Nella Cappella del Sacramento in San Salvatore è Christo alla mensa con Luca, e Cleofa, e seco vede un Gentilhuomo Venetiano, e un mendico chiede l'elemosina molto naturale: ma sopra tutto, e singolare l'effigie del Signore spirante affetti divini.' For further details, see Gamba, *Bellini*, pp. 163-6, and R. Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, New Haven and London 1989, pp. 278-9.

⁴³ See, e.g., Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (San Marco), p. 104: 'Nella Capella del Santissimo, vi è Christo in Emaus, di Giovanni Bellino'; Giovanni Albrizzi, *Forestièr illuminato*, Venice 1740, p. 69: 'si vede un Quadro di Giovanni Bellino, rappresentante Gesucristo in Emmaus'; and Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Della pittura veneziana*, Venice 1771, p. 75: 'Niuna pittura tuttavia di Giovanni dimostra più il vero carattere Giorgionesco, il colore, e la forza, quanto il bel quadro che sta in S. Salvatore nella cappella del Sacramento. Si vede in esso Cristo in Emmaus con i discepoli, ed un ritratto.'

the ‘noblest painters of his own time’ and acknowledges the admiration which *intendenti* showed for the painting,⁴⁴ one of the few occasions where he states that an early picture was appreciated by art-lovers. Yet such comments provide little indication of what people looked for in a painting.

An explanation for Sansovino’s customary brevity when mentioning paintings perhaps lies in the nature of the book. It was meant to celebrate the Venetian people by giving a short history of the city’s monuments and a record of the inscriptions and art works which they contained. The presentation of material in *Venetia città nobilissima* and the type of information provided by Sansovino, which was historical rather than artistic, suggest that it was not used by most readers as a guidebook. Instead, his accounts of paintings were intended to signal the presence of various works of art in Venice and, occasionally, to point out the most noteworthy ones. He usually gave the name of the painter and, where possible, the year in which each work was executed. What he wrote seems to be based mostly on direct observation; and his attributions were facilitated by the fact that the works of art were sometimes signed and dated, though he did not invariably indicate this.⁴⁵

Sansovino does not appear to have followed a set procedure as he wandered around the churches of Venice, and his reasons for choosing to comment on particular art works are not obvious. These references, as I have suggested, were merely intended to raise awareness among his readership of certain notable items, including a number of paintings from the early Renaissance which were still appreciated. He did display some interest, although not always expressly stated, in promoting the art of the past, as well as that of the present: for instance, he describes the private collection of paintings in the Palazzo Pesaro as ‘excellent paintings both ancient and modern’.⁴⁶

In investigating Sansovino’s treatment of written sources such as Vasari’s *Lives* in his accounts of works of art from before 1550, we need to consider whether he used a

⁴⁴ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 8^r: ‘il terzo ricchissimo di colonne, di marmi e di molto oro, contiene con delicatissima e eccellente pittura, la historia di dieci mila martiri fatta da Vittorio Scarpaccia Pittore nobilissimo del suo tempo: e molto stimata dagli intendenti?; see also G. Nepi Scirè, *Carpaccio. Pittore di storie*, Venice 2004, p. 27.

⁴⁵ E.g., Antonio Vivarini’s altarpiece of St Andrew; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 10^r: ‘l’altare di Santo Andrea fu dipinto da Antonio’.

⁴⁶ Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 376: ‘possedono una copiosa raccolta di Eccellenti Pitture, così antiche, come moderne’. Although he praises both ancient and modern works of art, Sansovino may be drawing attention to the owners rather than to the paintings.

rigorous selection procedure or simply took an arbitrary approach. To answer this question, we have to keep in mind the difference between Vasari's biographies and Sansovino's book. Vasari grouped works of art under biographies of artists, while Sansovino organized his material by churches. The information about Venetian paintings which Sansovino could have found in the *Lives* was often incomplete since Vasari did not normally provide an extensive biography of those artists whom he considered to be of minor importance or about whom he had managed to acquire only limited information. So, for instance, his notes on the works of Marco Basaiti, Cima da Conegliano and Benedetto Diana in the life of Vittore Carpaccio were very brief.⁴⁷ At other times, he gave only the names of artists who worked in Venice such as Vincenzo Catena and Vittore Bellino, without providing further details. Many paintings mentioned by Vasari were also listed by Sansovino. There were occasions, however, when Sansovino referred to works not mentioned by Vasari such as two paintings by Marco Basaiti and Vittore Carpaccio,⁴⁸ while Vasari mentioned some paintings not included by Sansovino in his book such as Bartolomeo Vivarini's altarpiece in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 627-47.

⁴⁸ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 5: 'un San Hieronimo dipinto, da Marco Basaiti, maestro assai celebre del suo tempo', and fol. 54r: 'Dall'altro lato di quà, è situata Santa Fosca anco ella antica, dove dipinse una palla Vittorio Scarpaccia Maestro chiarissimo nell'età sua.'

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 647-8: 'Bartolomeo Vivarino da Murano si portò anch'egli molto bene nell'opera che fece, come si può vedere, oltre a molte altre, nella tavola che fece all'altare di San Luigi nella la chiesa di San Giovanni e Polo; nella quale dipinse il detto San Luigi a sedere, col piviale in dosso, San Gregorio, San Bastiano, e San Domenico; e dall'altro lato, San Niccolò, San Girolamo, e San Rocco: e sopra questi, altri Santi infino a mezzo.' In his article on the authorship of the *Lives*, Charles Hope has shown that the biographies of artists from Parts 1 and 2 of the 1568 edition were printed in 1564, while those from Part 3 started to come to light from 1565 onwards. Most of the information on Venetian art which was added to the 1568 edition came from Cosimo Bartoli, who was in Venice in 1563; see C. Hope, 'Le *Vite* vasariane: un esempio di autore multiplo', in *L'autore multiplo*, ed. A. Santoni, Pisa 2005, pp. 59-74, at pp. 68-74. Given, therefore, that the passage was printed before Vasari's trip to Venice in 1566, it must have been written by Bartoli, not Vasari. For another discussion of the issue of authorship in Vasari's *Le vite*, see Thomas Frangenberg, 'Bartoli, Giambullari and the Prefaces to Vasari's *Lives* (1550)', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 65, 2002, pp. 244-58.

Works of Art in the *Scuole*

After describing the most significant Venetian churches and their paintings, Sansovino devoted a section of his book to the nine *scuole grandi*, recording the art works contained in three of them: Santa Maria della Carità, San Giovanni Evangelista and San Marco.⁵⁰ Among the earlier paintings in the Scuola della Carità, he briefly mentions a representation of the apostles by Jacobello del Fiore and an image of the Madonna by Antonio Vivarini, without, however, providing any further assessment of these paintings.⁵¹ He gives a somewhat more informative account of the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, where there were paintings with scenes from the Old and New Testament by Jacopo Bellini and others by Benedetto Diana, Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, Lazaro Sebastiani and Gentile Bellini. Even though Sansovino does not identify the subjects of most of the paintings to which he refers, he clearly shows an interest in a number of artists, including Benedetto Diana and Giovanni Bellini, whom he regards as ‘the most praiseworthy and famous masters’, and Vittore Carpaccio, ‘a man of uncommon excellence’.⁵² In his account of the Scuola di San Marco, the first work he mentions is the *Agony in the Garden* by Giorgio Schiavone, a pupil of Squarcione.⁵³ Next comes the scenes from the life of St Mark by Jacopo Tintoretto, Gentile Bellini, Giovanni Mansueti and Vittore Belliniano.⁵⁴ Finally, Sansovino lists *Noah’s Ark* by Bartolomeo Montagna, which was begun but never completed due to a fire.⁵⁵

In mentioning works of art in the *scuole*, Sansovino does not necessarily follow the same pattern which he employed when writing about churches. His accounts are even more abbreviated, and many of the subjects are not identified at all. In attempting to explain this

⁵⁰ Several other works of art were added in the following editions.

⁵¹ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 99v: ‘vi sono gli Apostoli fatti a guazzo maggiori del naturale, da Iacomello dal Fiore, che visse l’anno 1418. Et nell’Albergo la nostra Donna dipinta anco essa a guazzo, fu opera di Antonio Vivarino da Murano.’

⁵² Ibid., fols 100v-101r: ‘conciosia che la prima tela a man destra fu di Benedetto Diana. La seconda di Gian Bellino amendue lodatissimi e famosi maestri. La terza di Giovanni de Mansueti, è la tela alla sinistra dell’altare di Vittorio Scarpaccia huomo di rara eccellenza. L’altra all’incontro fu di Giovanni Mariscalco. Et oltre all’altare, la prima tela dalla sinistra, fu dipinta da Lazaro Sebastiani. La seconda da Gentil Bellino, e la terza da Giovanni de Mansueti. La palla dell’altare fu opera di Jacomo Bellino.’

⁵³ Ibid., fol. 102r: ‘nell’entrar della Scuola il Christo fatto a guazzo nello horto, fu opera di Giorgio Schiavone allievo dello Squarcione.’

⁵⁴ Ibid.: ‘i quadri nella sala co i miracoli del Santo, di Iacomo Tintoretto e Gentil Bellino vi dipinse il quadro, nel quale San Marco predica a gli infedeli posto in faccia dell’albergo, e Giovanni de Mansueti, il quadro dove San Marco guarisce un calzolaio... Il martirio di San Marco fu di Vittorio Bellino.’

⁵⁵ Ibid.: ‘Vi fu anco cominciata l’arca di Noè da Bartolomeo Montagna...che non fu finita da lui per l’incendio’; see P. Paoletti, *La Scuola Grande di San Marco*, Venice 1939, pp. 132-3.

change, it is worth noting that a large number of paintings in the *scuole* were not included in Vasari's *Lives*.⁵⁶ Therefore, Sansovino must have based his accounts on his own direct observation of the paintings (many of which were signed and dated) or on other written accounts.⁵⁷ It may be that he chose to provide so little information about the paintings in the *scuole* because he was more interested in documenting them historically, especially those which were no longer extant, such as Montagna's *Noah's Ark* and, as we shall see, some of the paintings in the Palazzo Ducale; and for this purpose, a simple mention of the work would have been sufficient.

The Palazzo Ducale

In the section on the Palazzo Ducale, Sansovino offered detailed and precise information about the works of art situated in each of the rooms. It is important to note that he carefully recreated in words the decoration and the display of the paintings before they were damaged by fire. So, he tells us that the room which preceded the Sala dell'Anticollegio had a new ceiling, made of gold. It was admirable for its intaglios and had exquisite paintings at the sides, doors of marble and columns crafted with great skill: 'All these were destroyed in the fire of 1574.'⁵⁸ They were replaced with paintings by Tintoretto and Veronese in the Sala dell'Anticollegio itself. Sansovino enumerated these paintings in the order in which they were displayed and discussed various aspects, including their

⁵⁶ Only two paintings in the *scuole* are recorded by Vasari: Giovanni Mansueti's *St Mark healing St Aniano* in the Scuola di San Marco and Jacopo Bellini's scenes from the Life and Passion of Christ in Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 648 and 152-3 respectively.

⁵⁷ E.g., Sansovino's descriptions of works of art by Jacobello del Fiore and Antonio Vivarini in the Scuola della Carità are similar to the ones found in Marc'Antonio Michiel's manuscript; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 99v: 'vi sono gli Apostoli fatti a guazzo maggiori del natural, da Iacomello dal Fiore che visse l'an 1418. Et nell'Albergo la nostra Donna dipinta anco essa a guazzo, fu opera di Antonio Vivarino da Murano'; see also Marc'Antonio Michiel, *Notizie d'opere del disegno*, ed. T. Frimmel, Vienna 1888, p. 116: 'La nostra donna in testa dell'albergo, cun el puttino in braccio, cun li altri dui santi un per lato à guazzo, in tavola, et maggior del natural, furono de man de Antonio da Muran. Nel ditto albergo a man manca li apostoli pur in tavola a guazzo, mazor del natural, furon de man de Jacomello dal Fior l'anno 1418. 13. Febbrajo.' The idea that Sansovino used Michiel was proposed in D. von Hadeln, 'Sansovinos Venetia als Quelle für die Geschichte der venezianischen Malerei', *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 31, 1910, pp. 149-58, at pp. 152-8; see also Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 268.

⁵⁸ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 122r: 'Il Salone avanti all'Anticollegio haveva il soffitto nuovo, carico d'oro e ammirabile per i suoi intagli, con pitture esquisite fatte a i primi di queste parti, e le porte di marmo pari colonnate e figurate con gran maestria, le quali tutte cose furono consummate dal fuoco l'anno 1574.'

subject and location within the room. Earlier works were recorded in the Sala del Gran Consiglio; among the most noteworthy artists were Luigi Vivarini, Giovanni Bellini, Pisanello, Gentile da Fabriano and Gentile Bellini.⁵⁹ Sansovino drew particular attention to twenty-two paintings in the Sala del Gran Consiglio representing scenes from the life of Pope Alexander III, some of which were by Gentile and Giovanni Bellini. For instance, he carefully described the tenth painting by Gentile Bellini, which showed the pope and the Great Chancellor engaged in the act of signing a peace treaty:

And in this painting with beautiful figures, excellent draughtsmanship and very charming and fine colouring, with very well rendered and conceived perspectives by the painter, three things are to be noted. First, the gowns of the ambassadors of that time, who used to wear the collar and the silver trumpets in front of the emperor... Second, a common error, that the pope transferred the authority to seal in lead to our doge, which he had since ancient times, as one will see clearly more than in the present. Third, the way in which the Great Chancellor was dressed, at the time the painting was made by Giovanni Bellini. He was wearing a long crimson gown and sleeves flowing at the back like caftans, and a hat on his head, which displayed greatness and majesty and was very solemn and beautiful to see.⁶⁰

Similarly, describing the thirteenth painting in the room, which was by Giovanni Bellini, Sansovino wrote that it 'depicted with diligence the naval battle between the doge and Emperor Otto, in which one perceives the great patience of the painter. He managed to render the intertwining of the galleys, the fury of the combatants and the victory achieved. All this was shown with marvellous excellence...'⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., fol. 123^v: 'Furono rifatti molti quadri vecchi perche vivendo allora i Vivarini, i Bellini, e diversi altri Pittori di nome, piacque al Senato di servirsi dell'opera loro.'

⁶⁰ Ibid., fol. 127^v: 'Et in questo quadro ripieno di belle figure, con molto disegno, e con coloriti grandemente vaghi e fini, con prospettive molto ben tirate et intese dal Pittore, si notavano tre cose. L'una lo habito degli ambasciatori di quel tempo, i quali portavano il bavaro e le trombe d'argento quando andavano all'Imperatore, il quale uso durò per lunghissimo tempo... L'altra, l'error commune, ch'il Papa desse l'autorità al Principe nostro, di sigillare in piombo: havendola essi ab antiquo, come si vedrà chiaramente più oltre nel presente. La terza, il modo col quale andava vestito il Cancellier Grande, nel tempo che fu dipinto il quadro da Gian Bellino. Percioche con habito lungo, rosato, e con le maniche pendenti come i caffettani dietro alle spalle, e con berretta a tagliere in capo, dimostrava grandezza e maestà, cosa molto grave e bella a vedere.'

⁶¹ Ibid., fol. 128^v: 'Nel tredicesimo era diligentemente esemplata la battaglia navale del Principe con Othone, nella qual si scorgeva la gran patientia di quell Pittore nel conflitto. Percioche esprimendo l'intrecciamento delle galee, la furia de combattenti e la vittoria ottenuta, mostrava altrui quell fatto con maravigliosa eccellenza.'

The elaborate descriptions of these art works show that Sansovino had a sharp critical sense and a good grasp of detail. He commented on multiple aspects of the paintings in order to recreate them and their context, so that the readers of his book could get an accurate idea of how they were displayed and what they looked like. He lamented that all these works were destroyed in a second fire of 1577, an event which ‘brought great displeasure to everyone, because of the loss of works by such excellent artists and of the memories of such excellent historical figures’.⁶² This, too, indicates that the idea of recording lost works was uppermost in his mind.

The Second Edition of *Venetia città nobilissima* (1604) by Giovanni Stringa

Sansovino’s *Venetia città nobilissima* was re-edited twice: in 1604 and 1663. The second edition brought out by Giovanni Stringa, a canon at San Marco and expert on liturgical ceremony,⁶³ differs from the original in having a clearer structure and in including works of art from the Quattrocento and early Cinquecento which Sansovino had failed to record.⁶⁴ It also includes a different dedication, which was addressed to the archbishop of Salzburg, Wolfgang Theodoric.⁶⁵ In the preface, Stringa states that his initiative to provide a new edition of Sansovino’s book was due to its popularity and the requests for further copies on the part of both local and foreign readers.⁶⁶ A new edition, however, could only be

⁶² Ibid., fol.132v: ‘le quali tutte cose consummate dal fuoco del 1577 apportarono gran dispiacere a tutto l’universale, per la perdita delle fatture di tanti valentiuomini, e delle memorie di tanti personaggi eccellenti’.

⁶³ See J. Bettley, ‘The Office of Holy Week at St Mark’s, Venice, in the Late 16th Century, and the Musical Contributions of Giovanni Croce’, *Early Music*, 22, 1994, pp. 45-62, at p. 45.

⁶⁴ I have identified a total of 9 additional art works from the Quattrocento and early Cinquecento which were included in the second edition. These were by artists such as Lazzaro Sebastiani (one in *Corpo di Christo* and one in *San Silvestro*; Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 148v and fol. 153v), Giovanni Bellini (one in *San Felice* and one in *Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari*, *ibid.*, fols 140v and 157v), Cima da Conegliano (one in *Madonna dell’Orto* and one in *Santa Maria de’ Crocicchieri*, *ibid.*, fol. 146r and fol. 147v), Girolamo Santa Croce (one in *San Silvestro*, *ibid.*, fol. 153r), Vincenzo Catena (one in *Santa Maria Mater Domini*, *ibid.*, fol. 164v) and Antonello da Messina (one in *San Cassiano*, *ibid.*, fol. 165v).

⁶⁵ See frontispiece of the second edition of Sansovino’s *Venetia*, and Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni*, IV, p. 72.

⁶⁶ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, (‘Stringa ai lettori’), p. [v]: ‘è stata senza dubbio così grata all’universale, che quasi non rimase alcuno così terrier, come forestiero, che non ne pigliasse una, e quella avidamente non leggesse; di modo che essendo state in brevissimo tempo tutte le copie, all’hora stampate, date via e egli che stava in procinto di farne di nuovo stampare un’altra mano’.

published twenty years after the previous one, according to the initial privileges given by the Venetian government, as Stringa goes on to explain.⁶⁷

In discussing Stringa's new 'embellished and adorned edition',⁶⁸ I shall try to determine whether the works of art which he added had been deliberately omitted by Sansovino, as part of a more or less rigorous process of selection, or whether he was simply less diligent than Stringa. On the face of it, it is surprising that Sansovino had not included a number of works by artists such as Giovanni Bellini or Antonello da Messina which he could either have seen in Venetian churches or read about in Vasari's *Lives*.⁶⁹

The most important innovation in the second edition, as announced by Stringa, consisted in an enlarged account of the basilica of San Marco, together with the addition of various works of art and changes to the ordering of the churches within each *sestiere*.⁷⁰ It is not surprising that he decided to pay more attention to the most significant church in Venice. The augmented account did not, however, focus mainly on the mosaics, but instead provided a detailed history of the basilica's construction. Stringa preserved all the references to mosaics from the original edition, expanding these with further descriptions of individual scenes. Even more importantly, for our purposes, his updates to Sansovino's 1581 edition included one or two additional paintings by each of the following artists: Lazaro Sebastiani, Giovanni Bellini, Cima da Conegliano, Vincenzo Catena, Antonello da Messina and Girolamo Santa Croce. Although Stringa's descriptions of these works do not normally reveal much in terms of appreciation or evaluation, there are four exceptions. First, in referring to Lazaro Sebastiani and his depiction of St Veneranda in Corpo di Christo, he describes the artist as 'an excellent painter for his time'.⁷¹ Second, he says that Vincenzo Catena's altarpiece of St Christina (fig. 10) was regarded as 'most noble' and that Catena was 'a painter much esteemed in his time'.⁷² Finally, Stringa discussed two paintings by Cima da Conegliano. One, representing *St John the Baptist with Sts Peter, Mark, Jerome and Paul*

⁶⁷ Ibid.: 'che non prima c'horà per il privilegio di 20 anni, c'haveva questa sua opera, s'habbia potuto conforme al desiderio di voi gentilissimi lettori ristampare.'

⁶⁸ Ibid.: 'l'abbellimento e adornamento dell'aggiunta delle cose nuove'.

⁶⁹ E.g., Antonello's commission for the church of San Cassano, which Stringa added in the 1604 edition, also appears in Vasari; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), II, p. 570: 'gli fu fatta allogazione di una tavola che andava in San Cassano, parrocchia di quella città: la qual tavola fu da Antonello con ogni suo sapere, e senza risparmio di tempo, lavorata'.

⁷⁰ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia* ('Stringa ai lettori'), p. [v]: 'non solamente in molti luoghi riordinata, e delle predette cose, chel'hanno più d'un terzo accresciuta, ampliata...ma ancora di una minutissima descrizione della Chiesa Ducale di San Marco, fatta da me ultimamente con non poca mia fatica, ornata e abbellita'.

⁷¹ Ibid., fol. 148v: 'eccellente Pittore a' suoi tempi'.

⁷² Ibid., fol. 164v: 'la cui pala è nobilissima, e la dipinse Vincenzo C. Pittore molto stimato a' suoi tempi'.

(fig. 11) and located in Madonna dell'Orto, had been briefly mentioned by Sansovino;⁷³ but Stringa added a comment on the manner in which Cima depicted the 'very noble' landscape in the background.⁷⁴ The other work was 'a most noble' rendering of the *Virgin Annunciate* in the main chapel of Santa Maria de' Crocicchieri.⁷⁵ These observations pointed out aspects of the paintings or of the style of the artists which might be of interest to readers. Stringa's remarks on works of art, however, tend to be generic in character and to refer mainly to the 'nobility' or 'excellence' of the execution.

Other descriptions of early works of art added to the second edition are limited to basic information about titles, locations and dates. For instance, Stringa briefly mentions Giovanni Bellini's altarpiece in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (fig. 12) as a work by the hand of the 'great Gian Bellini', located in the sacristy.⁷⁶ Given the position of the sacristy, separated from the rest of the church (fig. 13), it may be that Sansovino had simply not visited it and therefore had not recorded the painting in the first edition.⁷⁷ This explanation is supported by Sansovino's omission of another painting in the same church, which Stringa included in his account: Bartolomeo Vivarini's triptych of St Mark (fig. 14), also located in an isolated place in the Cornaro chapel.⁷⁸ There is a short description of the triptych in Vasari's *Lives*;⁷⁹ but since Sansovino failed to mention the painting, it seems clear that he was not making extensive use of Vasari's work as a source.

These examples also give an indication of the way in which Sansovino recorded works of art: he seems to have jotted down those paintings which he happened to see and

⁷³ Ibid., fol. 59^v: 'Vi dipinse anco la palla del San Giovanni, Gian Battista da Conegliano.'

⁷⁴ Ibid., fol. 146^r: 'la pala di quello di San Giovanni Battista fu dipinta da Giovanni Battista da Conegliano, ove oltre quattro altre figure di Santi, vedesi dipinto il nobilissimo sito della sua patria in vaghissima maniera'; see L. Coletti, *Cima da Conegliano*, Venice 1959, p. 78. This painting was mentioned in the 1581 edition, without any further description; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 10^v: 'È assai notabile per pitture fatte ne' tempi conciosia che l'Altar maggiore fù opera di Gian Battista da Conegliano, dove è ritratto il bellissimo sito della sua patria.'

⁷⁵ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 147^v: 'nella cappella dell'altar dell'Annunciata, che giace a man dritta nella cappella Maggiore, la cui pala è nobilissima per esser stata da Giovanni Battista da Conegliano eccellentissimo Pittore dipinta'.

⁷⁶ Ibid., fol. 157^v: 'Vi dipinse anco il gran Pittore Gian Bellino la pala dell'altare, posto nella Sagrestia'; see Gamba, *Bellini*, pp. 134-5.

⁷⁷ For further details about the Sacristy Chapel of the Pesaro, see R. Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice. Bellini, Titian and the Franciscans*, New Haven and London 1986, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 159^v: 'l'altare sotto titolo di S. Marco, la cui pala dipinta si vede da Bartolomeo Vivarino da Murano'. In Sansovino's book, this painting was attributed to Antonio Vivarini; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 66^v: 'Vi dipinse anco Antonio Vivarino la palla della seconda cappella verso la Sagrestia.' In reality, as the signature shows, the altarpiece was by Bartolomeo Vivarini; see R. Pallucchini, *I Vivarini*, Venice 1962, pp. 121-2.

⁷⁹ Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 162-3: 'nella sagrestia de' Frati Minori, detta Ca grande, n'è un'altra di mano del medesimo, fatta con bel disegno e buona maniera'.

which he admired in the churches of Venice, occasionally expressing his views about them. He generally took note of the paintings which were located on the main altar of a church or on the altars of important chapels, including most of the signed and dated works. His omissions were probably for the most part due to his lack of thoroughness and to his unsystematic selection of works of art to be described in his book. There is no evidence that he chose to include or exclude paintings according to his own preferences.

Stringa, for his part, did not add much information about early painters. If we compare the number of new entries on early works of art with those on more recent paintings by artists such as Sante Peranda, Tintoretto and Veronese, the balance is strongly in favour of the latter group. Moreover, when discussing recent paintings, Stringa employed a richer vocabulary than for earlier ones. For instance, he writes that the figure of Esther in Veronese's painting in San Sebastiano was depicted 'with such great movement, beautiful draperies and delicate colouring that it was held to be a magnificent thing' (fig. 15).⁸⁰ The reason why he devoted more attention to work by modern artists was obviously that his principal aim was to provide an up-to-date account of painters and paintings which had not been included in the 1581 edition. Giving information about recent works was also a good way to arouse the interest of readers.

The Third Edition of *Venetia città nobilissima* (1663) by Giustiniano Martinioni

In the third edition of *Venetia città nobilissima*, the editor Giustiniano Martinioni, who was also the first titular priest at SS. Apostoli in Venice,⁸¹ introduced new and significant material about paintings before 1550.⁸² If we compare the additions in the second and third

⁸⁰ Sansovino/Stringa, *Venetia*, fol. 183r: 'con tanta forza d'atti, con sì bei panni, e con colorito tanto gentile, che fu riputata per cosa illustre.'

⁸¹ See frontispiece of the third edition of Sansovino's work, in Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, and Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni*, IV, p. 72.

⁸² There were twenty-two new additions of works; these are by Luigi Vivarini (one in San Ieronimo, Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 176), Bartolomeo Vivarini (one in Santa Maria Formosa, *ibid.*, p. 40, and one in Sant'Eufemia, *ibid.*, p. 251), Vittore Carpaccio (one in San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, *ibid.*, p. 47, and one in San Ieronimo, *ibid.*, p. 176), Gentile Bellini, (one in Madonna dell'Orto, *ibid.*, p. 167), Giovanni Bellini (nine works: one in San Giovanni dei Forlani, *ibid.*, p. 47; one in San Francesco della Vigna, *ibid.*, p. 53; one in San Felice, *ibid.*, p. 147; two in San Ieronimo, *ibid.*, p. 176; one in San Cristoforo della Pace, *ibid.*, p. 234; one in Chiesa dei Capuccini, *ibid.*, p. 256; one in Santa Maria Maggiore, *ibid.*, p. 270, and one in Palazzo Ducale,

editions, we see that there are only a few shared entries.⁸³ This suggests that, even though Stringa's name is mentioned several times in the third edition, Martinioni worked independently in collecting the information with which he enriched the book. It seems that he mainly built on and referred to the first edition, preserving all of its contents, without including very much material from the second edition.

By focusing on a number of earlier paintings which Martinioni recorded in his edition, I will try to clarify the way in which he compiled his information, what his working methods and sources were, and whether he wanted to update Sansovino's book by adding material mainly about earlier or about later works of art.

Martinioni seems to have made a clear distinction between modern and 'ancient' paintings. For instance, while listing a number of paintings in Santa Maria delle Carmine, he stated that 'there are other worthy paintings, both ancient and modern; among the ancient ones, there is the Nativity of Our Lord painted by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano, in which he depicted St Helen and other figures'; and among the modern ones, in the same church, he mentioned paintings by Tintoretto and Iacopo Palma.⁸⁴ Bartolomeo Vivarini's works in Santa Maria Formosa and Sant'Eufemia were also described as 'ancient'.⁸⁵ It is not clear whether Martinioni's divisions of paintings into these two categories influenced his assessment of them. Generally, his notes for each entry are relatively brief and precise, in line with Sansovino's original accounts. There are, nonetheless, a number of somewhat more detailed remarks throughout the book about the style of a particular artist or the quality of his work. The most common phrases he uses to refer to a painting are 'stimatissima',⁸⁶ 'commendabile' and 'fatta con molto artificio e diligenza', as he describes a painting by Giovanni Bellini in the church of San Girolamo.⁸⁷ Martinioni claimed that Cima

ibid., p. 338), Cima da Conegliano (six works: two in Santa Maria de' Crocicchieri, ibid., p. 169; one in San Ieronimo, ibid., p. 176; one in San Michele, ibid., p. 236; one in Santa Maria delle Carmine, ibid., p. 263, and one in San Giovanni della Giudecca, ibid., p. 257), Giovanni Buonconsiglio (one in San Cosmo e Damiano, ibid., p. 254) and Albrecht Dürer (one in Sant'Anna, ibid., p. 24).

⁸³ Both editions mention Giovanni Bellini's Madonna in San Felice and the *Virgin Annunciate* by Cima da Conegliano in Santa Maria de' Crocicchieri.

⁸⁴ Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 263: 'Vi sono altre degne pitture, così antiche, come moderne: delle antiche, è la Natività di Nostro Signore dipinta da Gio: Battista Cima da Conegliano, dove ritrasse S. Elena, e altre figure. Di Jacopo Tintoretto è la Tavola della Circoncisione, creduta da molti dello Schiavone... Di moderno si vede di Iacopo Palma nella Cappella Maggiore il miracolo di Christo nel satiar con poco pane fameliche Turbe.'

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 40: 'Si vede ancora un'antica Tavola dipinta l'anno 1457 da Bartolomeo Vivarino', and p. 251: 'Di antico si conserva una tavola di mano di Bartolomeo Vivarini.'

⁸⁶ E.g., he refers to Jacopo Palma's *St John* in San Cassano as a 'pittura stimatissima': ibid., p. 200.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 176: 'il tutto fatto con molto artificio e diligenza'.

da Conegliano's painting of the *Madonna with Sts Nicholas and Ursula* in the church of San Ieronimo was considered to be among the artist's best works.⁸⁸ Although these are the only occasions on which he expresses appreciation for works of art, this does not necessarily mean that he considered other paintings, on which he made no pronouncements, to be less important or less beautiful. In dealing with all three editions of *Venetia città nobilissima*, we need to keep in mind the purpose of the book: to promote the culture of Venice and its illustrious citizens. It did not provide in-depth descriptions of works of art, but only brief notes. Even though few works of art were praised, a number of these were early paintings, both in the original edition and in the later ones.

Of the early works of art added by Martinioni, two were mentioned by Vasari, but the descriptions are not similar.⁸⁹ Where, then, did Martinioni get his information? I have checked all the early paintings recorded by Martinioni to see whether the artists signed and dated their works and it turns out that most of them did so.⁹⁰ It is likely, therefore, that his accounts were based on this data.

Five of the additions in the 1663 edition, however, correspond to Carlo Ridolfi's accounts of early painters in his *Le meraviglie dell'arte* (1648). For instance, when referring to a painting of St Jerome by Luigi Vivarini, Martinioni wrote: 'Luigi Vivarino...depicted the

⁸⁸ Ibid.: 'È posto in questa Chiesa, ad'un picciolo Altare un quadro di mezze figure, con la Madonna, San Nicolò, e Santa Orsola di Giovanni Battista da Conegliano, stimato per una delle migliore opere sue.'

⁸⁹ Both Vasari and Martinioni mention two paintings by Giovanni Bellini: one in San Francesco della Vigna and the other in the Confraternity of San Girolamo, but the descriptions of both are different. Cf. Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 53: 'vedesi la Cappella della Concettione...dove nell'Altare è posta la Tavola con la Vergine, e San Sebastiano di mano di Gio: Bellino', with Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, p. 163: 'ed in San Francesco della Vigna, dove stanno Frati del Zoccolo, nella chiesa vecchia, era in un quadro un Cristo morto, tanto bello, che que' signori, essendo quello molto celebrato a Lodovico Undecimo re di Francia, furono quasi forzati, domandandolo egli con istanza, sebbene mal volentieri, a compiacernelo: in luogo del qual ne fu messo un altro col nome del medesimo Giovanni, ma non così bello nè così ben condotto come il primo'; and Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 176: 'Nella scuola di esso Santo, vedesi doi Quadri di Gio: Bellino, in uno stà il Santo Dottore sedente in atto di favellare à suoi Frati, quali siedono anch'essi d'intorno in naturalissime posture: ma più d'ogn'altra cosa viene osservato un Frate, che distende alcuni drappi in una loggia. Nell'altro figurò l'istesso Santo intento al studio con altri Frati, che leggono, altri, che discorrono, il tutto fatto con molto artificio, e diligenza, e quivi il Pittore vi pose il suo nome, e il tempo, che li fece, che fù del 1464', with Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 163-4: 'Nella Confraternità parimente di San Girolamo è un'opera del medesimo Bellino, di figure piccolo molto lodate.'

⁹⁰ The practice of signing and dating Venetian paintings was widespread from the fourteenth century. Venetian painters signed and dated their works on a *cartellino* or a fictive stone parapet placed near the base of the painting: e.g., Bartolommeo Vivarini's *St Ambrose Polyptych* in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice: 'BARTHOLOMEUS VIVARINUS DE MURIANO PINXIT. 1477'; Giovanni Bellini's *Madonna of the Trees* in the Accademia: 'IOANNES BELLINUS P. 1487'; Cima da Conegliano's *Lamentation* in the Accademia: 'Ioannis Baptiste Coneglanensis opus'; and Vittore Carpaccio's *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* in the Accademia: 'V. Carpathius MDXV'. For more information on this topic, as well as the changes in signature practices on Venetian paintings between the 15th and the 16th centuries, see L. C. Matthew, 'The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures', *The Art Bulletin*, 80, 1998, pp. 616-48.

Holy Father followed by the lion, which, when it is seen by the brothers, they appear to flee into the cloister'.⁹¹ Ridolfi's discussion is more complete, but includes similar information: 'In the Company of St Jerome, he portrayed that saint and cardinal followed by the lion from whose foot he had drawn the thorn, and his frightened brothers flee through the portal to the cloisters and the church in front of which a river flows is painted with great attention.'⁹² Another example is Martinioni's description of Bartolomeo Vivarini's stories from the life of the Virgin in Santa Maria Formosa: 'One can also see an ancient painting made in 1457 by Bartolomeo Vivarini, divided into three parts, with the encounter between Joachim and Anne, the Birth of the Virgin and the Virgin who gathers many of her devotees under her mantle.'⁹³ Ridolfi's very similar account reads: 'The fifth [painting] in Santa Maria Formosa, divided into three parts: to the right there is the encounter between Joachim and Anne, to the left, the Birth of the Virgin and in the middle, the same Virgin, who gathers her devotees under her mantle, was made in 1475.'⁹⁴

That Martinioni sometimes drew on Ridolfi is further proven by three other nearly identical passages describing works by Bartolomeo Vivarini, Vittore Carpaccio and Giovanni Buonconsiglio.⁹⁵ Since, however, Martinioni added twenty-six works, only five of which are in common with Ridolfi, his reliance on this source was limited. Also there were many other works mentioned by Ridolfi which Martinioni could have included in the book, but did not do so. Martinioni was apparently interested in filling out Sansovino's edition

⁹¹ Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 176: 'Luigi Vivarino anch'egli fece il Santo Padre seguito dal Leone, che veduto da i Frati, pare che se ne fuggano nei chiostri.'

⁹² Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 36: 'Nella Compagnia di San Girolamo ritrasse quel Santo Cardinale seguito dal Leone a cui tratto haveva la spina dal piede, e i suoi frati impauriti se ne fuggono per entro a'Chiostri; e vi è figurata con molta pazienza la Chiesa dinanzi, alla quale passa un fiume.'

⁹³ Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 40: 'Si vede ancora un'antica Tavola dipinta l'anno 1457 da Bartolomeo Vivarino, divisa in tre spatii, con l'incontro di Gioachino e Anna, la Natività della Vergine e l'istessa Vergine, che raccoglie sotto al suo manto molti suoi divoti.'

⁹⁴ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 38: 'La quinta in Santa Maria formosa divisa in tre vani, nel destro è l'incontro di Gioachino e Anna: nel sinistro la nascita della Vergine, e nel mezzo la medesima, che raccoglie sotto il manto alcuni suoi divoti, operata l'anno 1475.'

⁹⁵ Cf. Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 40: 'Si vede ancora un'antica Tavola dipinta l'anno 1457 da Bartolomeo Vivarino, divisa in tre spatii, con l'incontro di Gioachino, e Anna, la Natività della Vergine, e l'istessa Vergine, che raccoglie sotto al suo manto molti suoi divoti', with Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 38, quoted in n. 94 above. Cf. also Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 176: 'Nel secondo lo figurò morto steso sopra una stora, co' Frati piangenti, che tengono lumi in mano, fatti con proprie attitudini du duolo, e di mestitia', with Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 36: 'Nell'altra è quell defonto Cardinale steso sopra ruvida stora, co' Frati piangenti co' lumi in mano, che nelle attitudini e nella mestitia de' volti rappresentano il duolo'; and Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 254: 'la sottoscrittione posta nella Sede della Vergine, che dice: Ioannes Bonconsilius Mariscalchus de Vicentia 1497', with Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 43: 'e nel sedile della Vergine scrisse Ioannes Bonconsilius Marescalcus de Vicentia 1497.'

rather than in providing exhaustive information on Venetian monuments and art. There is no clear indication, however, of why he chose to include particular works and not others.

Even though Sansovino was not aiming at comprehensive and systematic coverage, his descriptions of works of art, while not particularly revealing of his attitudes and preferences, nevertheless contain certain elements of novelty in the interpretation of early Venetian paintings, which would be developed more fully in the artistic literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The artistic vocabulary he used when describing the paintings and the careful attention he paid to recording lost works would establish patterns which writers such as Carlo Ridolfi, Marco Boschini and Antonio Maria Zanetti would enrich and redefine in their later guidebooks and biographies of artists.

CHAPTER 2

Could Early Renaissance Paintings be considered *Marvels of Art*? Carlo Ridolfi and the Biographies of Early Italian Artists

Carlo Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie dell'arte* was published in Venice in 1648. The text builds on Vasari's model of biographies of artists and discusses the lives of the most important Venetian and non-Venetian painters who worked in Venice, whether they undertook public or private commissions. Ridolfi's biographies occupy a significant place within the local artistic literature of the Seicento because of their exclusive focus on painters.¹ A contemporary equivalent to this specialized approach, but in the format of a guidebook to the most important paintings in Venice, is Marco Boschini's *Le minere* (1663).² This tendency towards specialization was continued during the eighteenth century in the writings of Tommaso Temanza (biographies of architects and sculptors) and Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger (biographies of painters).³

Ridolfi's work, he tells us, was the result of the encouragement he received from the publisher Giovanni Battista Sgava and from his own circle of literary friends;⁴ and his initiative to write biographies solely of painters can be explained by the fact that he himself was a painter and perhaps also because information about sculptors was not so easy to assemble or because writers tended to give preeminence to painting.⁵ Having been trained in the workshop of Antonio Vassilacchi l'Aliense,⁶ he adopted a late mannerist style

¹ See Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 531.

² I discuss Boschini's *Le minere* in Chapter 3 below.

³ See Angelo Comoli, *Bibliografia storica-critica dell'architettura civile ed arti subalterne*, 4 vols, Rome 1788, II, p. 282; see also Tommaso Temanza, *Vite*, and Zanetti, *Della pittura*.

⁴ Among them, he names the noblemen and writers Giovanni Francesco Loredano (1607-1661), Pietro Michiele (active 1632-1658), Nicolò Crasso (1586-1656), Giulio Strozzi (1583-1652), Antonio Romiti, Jacopo Pighetti, Angelico Aproso (1607-1681) and Alessandro Berardelli (active 1626-1650); see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, II, p. 308.

⁵ T. Frangenberg, 'The Art of Talking about Sculpture: Vasari, Borghini and Bocchi', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 58, 1995, pp. 115-31, at p. 115.

⁶ Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 295: 'mi accomodò in casa dell'Aliense Pittore'. On Ridolfi's life and artistic activity, see his autobiography in Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, II, pp. 306-23, and Pellegrino Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, Venice 1753, p. 117.

influenced by Palma il Vecchio, Veronese and Tintoretto.⁷ By examining his biographies of early artists, we will be able to see how Ridolfi, from his dual perspective as a writer and an artist, relates to the previous generations of Venetian painters and what contributions he brought to the reception and appreciation of Venetian art, both locally and outside Venice.

Ridolfi's biographies were also a response to Vasari's *Lives*, promoting the preeminence of Venetian, as opposed to Florentine, painting. For instance, in the short introduction to the first part, he takes issue with Vasari's belief in the superiority of Florentine art:

... in modern times, painting was first revived in Venice, before it had been introduced in Florence, as Vasari has it, when he says that in 1240 some painters were called from Greece to Florence by the Florentines to restore the art in their city, and then he continues with great ostentation to describe the works of Cimabue, Andrea Tafi, Gado Gadi, Giotto, Stefano, Pietro Laureati, Bufalmacco and other Florentine painters.⁸

It was Ridolfi's intention to argue in favour of Venetian artists and to maintain that praiseworthy painting existed in Venice before Cimabue and Giotto were working in Florence. In his opinion, it was in the early fourteenth century that significant changes began to happen in Venetian art: 'after 1300 the manner of painting started to improve, and among those who made significant works of art in Venice was Guariento from Padua'.⁹

Guariento's fresco in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale (fig. 16) was among the earliest Venetian paintings discussed by Ridolfi. As he informs us, the fresco

⁷ For Ridolfi's activity as painter, see K. Prijatelj, 'Le opere di Carlo Ridolfi in Dalmazia', *Arte Veneta*, 22, 1969, pp. 183-5.

⁸ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 31: 'la Pittura ne' moderni tempi si rinovasse in Venetia, prima che fosse introdotta in Firenze, come riferisce il Vasari, dicendo che da Fiorentini l'anno 1240 furono chiamati di Grecia alcuni Pittori per rimetter l'arte nella Città loro, seguendo egli con molta ostentatione à descrivere le opere di Cimabue [1240-1302], d'Andrea Tafi [?-1320], di Gado Gadi [1260-1333], di Giotto [1267-1337], di Stefano [1320-1369], di Pietro Laureati [1320-1348], di Bufalmacco [1320-1336] e d'altri suoi Pittori.' In listing these painters, Ridolfi maintains the order in which Vasari presented them; see also Vasari, *Le vite*, (1550), p. 103: 'ma – quel che importava assai più – spentone affatto tutto'l numero degli artefici, quando, come Dio volse, nacque nella città di Fiorenza l'anno MCCXL, per dare i primi lumi all'arte della pittura, Giovanni cognominato Cimabue'; for further examples of Vasari's Tuscan *campanilismo*, see *Le vite* (1550), pp. 109, 111, 114, 117, 130, 136 and 144. Ridolfi's disagreement with Vasari was not an isolated position in seventeenth-century writings on art. As we shall see, the expansion of local schools of painting in various towns of Italy, other than Florence, also encouraged such reactions.

⁹ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 32: 'Quando dopo l'anno 1300, si cominciò à migliorar la maniera, e trà quelli, che fecero opera di qualche considerazione in quella Città fu Guariento Padovano.'

was later replaced by Tintoretto's depiction of *Paradise* (fig. 17).¹⁰ Ridolfi describes Guariento's fresco in great detail, giving precise information about the figures which composed the scene:

In the middle he represented the Saviour, who was about to place a golden crown above the head of his Virgin Mother. They were surrounded by a number of holy angels, cherubim and seraphim, just as they are described in the Holy Scriptures. Beneath, one reads the following verses by Dante

*L'Amor, che mosse già l'Eterno Padre
Per figlia haver di sua Deità trina
Costei, che fu del suo figlio poi Madre,
De l'universo qui la fa Regina.*¹¹

But how did Ridolfi know about Guariento's fresco, given that it had been covered over by Tintoretto's painting? As he tells us, though without giving a specific reference, there were other 'writers on Venetian matters' who mentioned Guariento's works in their accounts.¹² Ridolfi most likely based a part of his account on Sansovino, who mentioned Guariento's fresco and the year in which it was made.¹³ There were also two visual sources available

¹⁰ Ibid.: 'hor ricoperto da quello del Tintoretto?'

¹¹ Ibid.: 'nel cui mezzo rappresentò il Salvatore in atto di poner aurea corona in capo alla Vergine Madre sua, con numero di Beati all'intorno, Angeli, Cherubini e Serafini, come ci vengono descritti nelle sacre carte: e sotto quello leggevansi questi versi di Dante ...' As Hadeln noted in his edition of Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie*, these verses are in the style of Dante, but they are not by him; see *ibid.*, p. 33, n. 1. For further information, see Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, ed. D. de Robertis, 3 vols, Florence 2002, II.2, pp. 1014, 1056 and 1099, and L. Frati, 'Tradizioni storiche del Purgatorio di S. Patrizio', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 7, 1891, pp. 46-79, at p. 54. I thank Alessandro Scafi for his help in investigating this matter further.

¹² Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, p. 33: 'Raccontano ancora gli scrittori delle cose Venete che Guariento dipingesse in quella sala.' Ridolfi repeatedly mentions the Venetian chronicles, including those by Marcantonio Sabellico, Scardeone and Marin Sanudo, throughout his book.

¹³ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 123v: 'Guariento, il quale, l'anno 1365 vi fece il Paradiso in testa della Sala'. One of the earliest references to the fresco was by Michele Savonarola in *Libellus de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis Padue*, ed. A. Sergarizzi, Castello 1902, p. 44: 'Guarientus autem magnificum, stupendum, superbumque nimis serenissimi domini Veneti pretorium, quod Sala Maior nominatur, digitis propriis miro cum artificio depinxit, illudque mirum in modum ornavit. Cuius intuitus tanta cum aviditate expectatur, ut cum adest solemnibus Ascensionis dies, quo omnibus ingressus licet, nulla supersit diei hora, qua locus innumerabili diversarum patriarum hominum copia non repleatur, tantusque est earum admirandarum figurarum iucundus aspectus, et tanti depicti conflictus admiranda res, ut nemo exitum querat.' Another author with whom Ridolfi was familiar was Bernardo Scardeone: as we shall see, he explicitly referred to Scardeone in his biographies of Paduan artists. Scardeone's account of Guariento is, however, less likely to have been Ridolfi's source, given its rather general character; see Scardeone, *De antiquitate*, p. 370: 'Guarientes Patavinus pictor egregius, qui ob eximiam illius artis peritiam accitus a Veneto Senatu Venetias, pinxit ibi curiam magni consilii pulcherrimo

which reproduced Guariento's fresco. The first one was an anonymous print produced after the restoration of the fresco by Francesco Cevola in 1541, illustrating the Sala del Gran Consiglio during a meeting presided over by the doge (fig. 18).¹⁴ He is seated underneath Guariento's fresco depicting the Coronation of the Virgin at centre and the Virgin and the Angel of the Annunciation placed in tabernacles on the sides above the two entrance doors.¹⁵ The other was Paolo Forlani's engraving of the Sala del Gran Consiglio dating from 1566 (fig. 19), which also shows a meeting of the members of the council presided over by the doge and his party, who are seated underneath Guariento's fresco, which is shown in reverse.¹⁶ In the places occupied by the Virgin and the Angel in the painting, there are two explanatory cartouches. The one at top right states that Guariento's fresco was painted 'alla greca',¹⁷ a term which was often used by writers of artistic literature when describing Trecento painting.¹⁸ The cartouche on the left reproduces the inscription underneath the main scene, with the quotation from Dante that Ridolfi also transcribed. It is significant, for our purposes, that in the inscription below the image, which contains a descriptive account of all the works in the Sala, a distinction between ancient and modern works is made.¹⁹ The importance of both prints lies in their function: they are visual documents that record, in its original location, a fresco which was subsequently replaced by another work. They thus complement the written accounts which only allowed readers to

apparatu colorum et figurarum.' Vasari mentioned the fresco, but attributed it to Antonio Veneziano; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), VII, p. 99: 'la facciata principale della sala grande del Consiglio dove già dipinse Antonio Viniziano'.

¹⁴ The print is in the collection of the Museo Correr; see A. Moschetti, 'Il "Paradiso" del Guariento nel Palazzo Ducale di Venezia', *L'Arte*, 7, 1904, pp. 394-97, at p. 394.

¹⁵ See G. Lorenzi, *Monumenti per servire alla storia del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, Venice 1868, p. 180. I would like to thank Dr Joachim Jacoby for bringing this print to my attention.

¹⁶ Paolo Forlani was a prolific engraver of maps who worked in Venice. He collaborated with different Venetian publishers including Giovanni Francesco Camocio, Ferrando Bertelli and Bolognino Zaltieri. The latter published Forlani's print of the Sala del Gran Consiglio; see D. Woodward, 'Paolo Forlani: Compiler, Engraver, Printer, or Publisher?', *Imago mundi*, 44, 1992, pp. 45-64 and his *The Maps and Prints of Paolo Forlani A Descriptive Bibliography*, Chicago 1990, p. 38, and Lorenzi, *Monumenti*, p. 180. The print was also reproduced in F. Zanotto, *Il Palazzo Ducale illustrato*, 4 vols, Venice 1841-1861, III, ill. CXXV; see also E. Cicogna, *Saggio di bibliografia veneziana*, Venice 1847, p. 641, entry 4666.

¹⁷ See inscription on the print on top right: 'Il Paradiso dipinto alla Greca ... Paradisus usu Graeco depictus.'

¹⁸ On 'maniera greca', see n. 25 below. For a list of the most common artistic terms used with reference to early Renaissance works of art in the writings between 1550 and 1800, see Appendices IX and X in volume two of this dissertation.

¹⁹ Paolo Forlani, *Il Gran Consiglio di Venetia*, Venice, 1566, engraving, London, The British Museum, no. 1872,0511.819, inscription below image: 'D'intorno vi sono 20 quadri antiqui e moderni cioè di Giovan Bellino, Gentil Bellino, Vettor Carpatio, Titiano, Giacomo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Oratio figliuolo di Titiano ... circum circa et nostro et altero seculo depicte 20 visuntur tabulae opera hec sunt Ioannis et Gentilis Bellino, Victoris Carpatii, Titiani, Jacobi Tintoretti, Pauli Veron, Horatii Titiani filii.'

imagine what the Sala del Gran Consiglio may have looked like before the fire in 1577. When Tintoretto's work replaced Guariento's, printmakers also started to represent the new version: Giacomo Franco produced an engraving which, like Forlani's print, showed a meeting of the Gran Consiglio with Tintoretto's painting decorating the great hall (fig. 20).

The next artists acknowledged by Ridolfi to have established a good reputation for themselves in Venice were Francesco and Jacobello del Fiore.²⁰ He mentions a number of works by Jacobello, occasionally giving his personal opinion about the paintings.²¹ In most cases, however, he seems to have consulted and drawn on Sansovino's accounts of Jacobello. For instance, when referring to the painting of St Peter Martyr in SS. Giovanni e Paolo, both writers note that it was later replaced by Titian.²² In *Corpo di Christo*, Ridolfi briefly mentions another painting by Jacobello, without giving the subject.²³ Sansovino, on the other hand, informs his readers that it was a depiction of St Dominic,²⁴ which was painted in the 'Greek manner'.²⁵ There were also differences of opinion between Sansovino and Ridolfi, especially when referring to the works in the Scuola della Carità. In the Albergo, Sansovino rightly attributed the painting of the Madonna to Antonio Vivarini (fig. 21),²⁶ whereas Ridolfi assigned it to Jacobello, even though it was signed and dated. There

²⁰ According to Ridolfi, their reputation was due to the 'reform' which they brought about in painting; however, it is not clear what exactly this entailed; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 33: 'Crebbe la Pittura di riputazione in Francesco, e Iacobello Flore, perche aggiunsero all'arte alcuna riforma, onde con facilità puotero que'primi Artefici acquistar nome, e riputazione con le fatiche loro.'

²¹ Of Jacobello del Fiore, Ridolfi records a painting of the *Virgin and the Child* in the confraternity of the Charity, the depiction of St Peter Martyr in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, one painting in the church of Corpus Domini and another one of the Virgin and Child in the chapel of Marco Morosini in the church of San Francesco della Vigna. Ridolfi does not seem follow a specific order when listing the paintings and the churches; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. 33-5.

²² Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 23v: 'Quela di s. Pietro martire, prima da Jacomello dal Fiore e poi rifatta del tutto da Titiano pittore illustre', and Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 34: 'Dicessi ancora, ch'egli dipingesse la tavola di San Pietro Martire nella Chiesa di San Giovanni e Paolo, rinovata poscia da Titiano.'

²³ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 34: 'Era nel Corpus Domini un'altra Pittura'.

²⁴ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 62r: 'la palla di s. Domenico, di Jacomello de Flore'.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 'dipinse con maniera greca opera per la città'. See also Vasari, *Le vite*, (1568), III, p. 635: 'In Venezia ne' medesimi tempi, fu tenuto in pregio, sebbene tenne la maniera greca, Iacobello de Flore.' The term 'maniera greca' had a twofold meaning in Vasari's *Lives*, where it could refer to *la buona maniera antica* of ancient Greek art or to *la maniera greca vecchia* of Byzantine art. In these passages, Sansovino and Vasari were obviously using the term in the second sense. For a detailed discussion, see E. Concina, 'Giorgio Vasari, Francesco Sansovino e la "maniera greca"', in *Hadriatica. Attorno a Venezia e al Medioevo tra arti, storia e storiografia*, ed. E. Concina, G. Trovabene, M. Agazzi, Padua 2002, pp. 89-96. On the terms *maniera greca* and *maniera tedesca*, see T. S. R. Boase, "The Maniera Greca" and "The Maniera Tedesca", in his *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book*, Princeton 1979, pp. 73-92 and 93-118.

²⁶ See Chapter 1, n. 57 above and Pallucchini, *I Vivarini*, p. 62. The painting was made by Antonio Vivarini in collaboration with Giovanni d'Alemagna in 1446. Ridolfi's misattribution was repeated by Boschini and Zanetti.

was a painting by Jacobello in the Scuola della Carità, but its subject was different.²⁷ Although Ridolfi misattributed the painting of the Madonna, he still provided a detailed description of the figures which composed the scene:

in a very able painting there is the figure of the Virgin sitting on a rich and sumptuous chair with intaglios. She holds Our Lord as an infant in her arms and a little book in her right hand. To the sides, she is surrounded by four gracious angels, who are holding the canopy which covers her, and in the background there is a view of a majestic palace. In the two wings, there are the four Doctors of the Church: Pope Gregory with the cross and the dove on his shoulder; next, St Jerome dressed as cardinal, his cowl on his head and holding the church in his hand; St Ambrose dressed in a bishop's garments with a whip; and St Augustine with a cape embroidered in exquisitely made gold figures, a gilded mitre and other gracious ornaments. This work was very much esteemed by the Venetians of those times.²⁸

Another example of misattribution occurs with regard to the *Madonna and Child Enthroned* in Marc'Antonio Morosini's chapel in San Francesco della Vigna. Sansovino says that it was by Francesco da Negroponte,²⁹ while Ridolfi presents it as a painting by Jacobello and provides further details about the subject, writing: 'in the chapel of Marco Morosini, there is preserved the figure of the Madonna seated on a chair with her hands joined together in adoration of the child, who sits on her lap. Her mantle is depicted with

²⁷ According to Sansovino, Jacobello's painting in the Scuola della Carità, which is now lost, represented the apostles; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, f. 99v: 'vi sono gli Apostoli fatti a guazzo maggiori del natural, da Iacomello dal Fiore che visse l'an 1418'.

²⁸ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 34: 'In quadro assai capace è la figura della Vergine sedente in ricca, e sontuosa sede inserita di vaghi intagli, che tiene in braccio Nostro Signore fanciullo, e un libretto nella destra mano; ha dalle parti quattro gratiosi Angeletti, che tengono l'ombrella, che la ricopre, e di dietro passa la veduta di maestoso Palagio. Ne' due vani delle parti sono compartiti i Quattro Dottori della Chiesa, San Gregorio Papa con la Croce e la Colomba sopra alla spalla, San Girolamo appresso vestito da Cardinal e col capuccio in testa e la Chiesa in mano, e Santo Ambrogio parato con la Pianeta e la sferza e Sant'Agostino col piviale ricamato con figure d'oro raramente fatte e diademe dorate in capo ed altri gratiosi ornamenti: qual'opera fu per all'hora assai stimata da Venetiani.'

²⁹ Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 15v: 'Nella la cappella di Nostra Donna, la cui palla fu dipinta da fra Francesco da Negroponte assai buon maestro'.

such artistry that it seems to be brocade.³⁰ In fact, neither of the attributions is correct: the painting was executed by Antonio da Negroponte.³¹

Despite his inaccurate note-taking, one of Ridolfi's main contributions to his book was to express his own opinions about paintings and to attempt attributions. Occasionally, he revealed his preferences and indicated which of the early artists he considered to be the most distinguished. The first recognition in the book of the merit of an early painter, as well as the first criticism of a painter, came in his life of Bartolomeo Vivarini. Regarded by Ridolfi as the best painter of the Vivarini family, Bartolomeo was nevertheless criticized for his slightly old-fashioned manner of painting.³² Listing six of his paintings in the various churches of Venice, Ridolfi singles out for special praise the altarpiece in the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo (fig. 22):

The sixth, considered to be the best, is the one in the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo, located in the first altar, inside the main door to the left; in the middle area is the seated figure of St Augustine, at the sides are Sts Mark and John the Baptist, and above the Virgin together with Sts Dominic and Vincent... It is regarded as one of his best works.³³

Another aspect which Ridolfi seems to have valued in early paintings of religious subjects was their ability to inspire devotion, a characteristic which he identified in most of Marco Basaiti's renderings of saints.³⁴ Drawing attention to the high altar of the church of Sant'Andrea in Certosa, where Basaiti depicted the *Calling of the Sons of Zebedee*, Ridolfi claimed that those who gazed at such a beautiful painting were imbued with a sense of piety

³⁰ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. 34-5: 'nella Cappella di Marco Morosini conservasi la figura della Vergine Nostra Signora sedente sopra trasforato seggio con le mani giunte adorante il Bambino, che ha disteso sù le ginocchia, il manto della quale è finto con tale artificio, che par di broccato.'

³¹ A. M. Schulz, *La cappella Badoer-Giustinian in San Francesco della Vigna a Venezia*, Florence 2003, p. 101.

³² Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 38: 'il migliore per avventura di tutti loro', and 'tutto che non sapesse dipartirsi dall'usata maniera'.

³³ Ibid.: 'La sesta riputata la migliore è la quella della Chiesa de'Santi Giovanni e Paolo, posta nel primo Altare dentro la porta maggiore a mano manca, ove nello spatio di mezzo è Santo Agostino sedente, dalle parti San Marco, e San Giovan Battista, e di sopra la Vergine e li Santi Domenico e Vincenzo nella quale Bartolomeo si diportò vantaggiosamente bene dall'altare, e è nella stimata delle migliori sue operationi.' For more information on this painting, see Pallucchini, *I Vivarini*, pp. 46-7. Ridolfi did not correctly identify all the saints: the figure on the right is not St Vincent, but St Lawrence.

³⁴ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 42: 'il Basaiti il quale arrecò alle immagini de' Santi certa purità, che muove gli animi alla divotione, parte veramente molto degna nel Pittore'.

and devotion: just as the sons of Zebedee were called to become apostles of Christ, so viewers of the picture were encouraged to live a more pious life.³⁵

This attitude was typical of seventeenth-century writers on art, who, when evaluating early Renaissance paintings, often insisted on this religious aspect and measured the quality of a picture in terms of the impact which it had on the viewer. For instance, comparing Trecento paintings with those of his own day, Carlo Cesare Malvasia concluded, in his *Felsina pittrice*, that the former were of greater value in this respect:

Let me be excused for a cautious choice...since nowadays these painters are condemned for their dry and hard manner; but it cannot be denied, at any rate, that their works inspire a certain veneration and piety which the painters of our times do not achieve, in spite of all their modern smooth, beautiful and refined strokes. And this is the reason why they [Trecento paintings] were so esteemed.³⁶

Malvasia supported his argument by referring to the Bolognese painter Lippo Dalmasio, whose depictions of the Madonna were particularly favoured by collectors for their private devotions.³⁷ Also mentioned by Malvasia – and repeated by Filippo Baldinucci – was Guido Reni's great admiration for the paintings of the Madonna by Lippo Dalmasio, in which he 'noted something supernatural...because they emanated purity, modesty, decorum and a great sanctity, all of which no modern painter has ever known how to render at once'.³⁸

Turning to Ridolfi's biographies, in his life of Giovanni Buonconsiglio, he described a painting of the Madonna and the Child, together with various saints, in the church of Sts

³⁵ Ibid.: 'la più singular sua pittura è quella de la chiesa di Certosa, quivi il Salvatore sopra il lido di Tiberiade chiama a se Pietro e Andrea, e v'appariscono alcuni scogli e una piaggia di mare molto naturale: e con molto decoro figurò il Salvatore, ed in quegli e ne' loro fratelli ivi rappresentati diede à vedere la prontezza nell'obbedire il suo Signore, che per grido di sua bellezza tra la curiosità di molti a vederla.' The painting is now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. For further information, see A. Ottieri, 'Laguna di Venezia, mare di Galilea: la *Vocazione dei figli di Zebedeo* di Marco Basaiti', *Artibus et historiae*, 8, 1987, pp. 77-89.

³⁶ Malvasia, *Felsina*, I, p. 26: 'si scusi per una prudente elezione...che severamente oggi si dannà per una seccaggine, e durezza; non potendosi ad ogni modo negar mai che non ispirino elleno, le cose di costoro, una certa venerazione, e pietà, che con tutti i liscii, e sbelletti moderni, le tanto raffinate dei nostri non conseguono. Ed ecco per qual cagione fossero in tanto pregio.'

³⁷ According to Malvasia, *Felsina*, I, p. 26, the popes Gregory XIII, Innocent IX and Clement VIII were among the enthusiastic buyers of Dalmasio's paintings.

³⁸ Malvasia, *Felsina*, I, p. 26, and Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in quà* (7 vols, Florence 1681-1728), ed. V. Batelli, 5 vols, Florence 1845-1847, I, p. 399: 'eccellente pittore Guido Reni era solito dire, che ne'volti delle Madonne di mano di Lippo scorgeva un certo che di sovrumano...perche spiravano una purità, una modestia, un decoro e santità grandissima: le quali cose mai nessun modern pittore aveva saputo tutte in un sol volto fare apparire'.

Cosmas and Damian, saying that it was ‘a truly fine painting and executed with great style, which very much fits with the manner that was later employed by the best painters, and all the more worthy of praise since art was still young’.³⁹ Ridolfi focused on a stylistic analysis, praising Buonconsiglio’s execution of the painting, which was in advance of its time. Although it is not possible to say whether his judgement was widely shared in the seventeenth century, it does seem significant that in these short biographies of early Renaissance artists he chose to indicate what, in his view, made a painting worthy of praise.

The second group of biographies, which tend to be longer and to have more coherence, commences with the life of Vittore Carpaccio. Acknowledged by Ridolfi as the first artist to have improved the style of painting and to have departed from the ‘hard style of the ancients’, Carpaccio was also among the artists who, in his opinion, deserved to be called a ‘good master’.⁴⁰ This was due to the care with which he depicted the portraits of his figures in order to make them look attractive. Ridolfi divided Carpaccio’s works into two categories – public and private commissions – and attempted a chronological presentation, which would not have been too difficult since most of Carpaccio’s works were signed and dated.⁴¹ In discussing the paintings which comprise the legend of St Ursula in the Scuola de Sant’Orsola, Ridolfi provides a detailed description of each of the nine stories, making meticulous observations about the figures, their clothing and the interiors. So, for instance, in his account of *The Reception of the English Ambassadors*, he notes the figures ‘dressed in rich clothes with gilded collars, golden chains and jewels round their necks’.⁴² Writing about another of the paintings, the *Dream of Saint Ursula*, he draws particular attention to ‘the

³⁹ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 43: ‘pittura gentile in vero, e con buono stile condotta, e che molto s’accosta alla maniera, che poi fù posta in uso da’ migliori Pittori, e maggiormente è degna di lode, essendo l’arte ancor giovinetta’.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 44: ‘Fu egli nel principio del suo operare di maniera più tosto secca, che nò, ma poscia raddolci lo stile col progresso del tempo, onde acquistò il titolo di buon maestro, poiche nella spiegatura delle historie non solo ma in certo che di gratia, ch’egli diede all’arie de volti, e per una tale diligenza, che si parte da quella total durezza usata degli antichi, si rende grato e piacevole.’

⁴¹ Ridolfi includes independent works in churches such as Santa Fosca and San Vitale, as well as narrative cycles painted for the Venetian *scuole* (San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Sant’Orsola and Santo Stefano). In describing a work of art, Ridolfi very rarely indicated its date; however, with reference to Carpaccio’s works, there are two exceptions found in the Scuola di Sant’Orsola: *The Martyrdom and Funeral of St Ursula*, which he says was executed in 1493, and *St Ursula and The Prince Taking Leave*, painted in 1495. The other paintings in the Scuola di Sant’Orsola were also dated, but Ridolfi seems to have mentioned these two dates at random: see also J. Laubs, *Carpaccio. Paintings and Drawings*, London 1962, pp. 228-9.

⁴² Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 46: ‘ricche vesti con bavieri fregiati d’oro, auree catene, con gioielli pendente al collo’.

noble room where St Ursula was lying on a sumptuous bed'.⁴³ At the end of his closely observed narrative accounts of the cycle in the Scuola di Sant'Orsola, he states that Carpaccio's paintings were still admired by more recent painters as 'graceful works'.⁴⁴ Expressing his own view, he says that the perspectives and the variety of garments enchanted the eyes and that they were executed with great diligence.⁴⁵

There are two other paintings by Carpaccio which Ridolfi discussed in great detail. The first, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (fig. 23), was a public commission for the church of San Giobbe and, in Ridolfi's opinion, was 'among his most perfect works'.⁴⁶ The other was a private commission for the Venetian physician Viviano Viviani, in which Carpaccio depicted the Madonna with St Simeon and other saints; it was described by Ridolfi as 'an excellent painting'.⁴⁷ Such concise comments on important paintings are very often to be found in his second group of biographies of artists, though in some cases he is more expansive. In his life of Giovanni Bellini, Ridolfi, as in his account of Marco Basaiti, refers to the devotional aspect of the figures of saints depicted by the artist:

He renounced the old and dry manner in favour of a smooth style with which he uniquely imitated nature. He gave a noble purity and devoutness to the figures of the saints; for this reason, he rightly acquired the title of the most famous artist of the previous epoch.⁴⁸

Ridolfi identifies the same piety in the beautiful figures in Bellini's San Giobbe altarpiece, mentioning St Francis, who gazes affectionately at the crucifix, the nude figure of St

⁴³ Ibid.: 'entro nobile stanza giace in sontuoso letto Sant'Orsola dormiente'.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 47: 'onde vengono tuttavia ammirate da'Professori per opere gentili'.

⁴⁵ Ibid.: 'arrecando molto diletto, e essendo ripiene, come dicemmo, di prospettive, d'habiti vari, e con molta diligenza condotte'.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 48: 'in Venetia nella Chiesa di San Giob dipinse la Purificatione della Vergine, la quale porge al Pontefice Simeone il fanciullo, che fù dell'opere sue più perfette, e havui tre Angeletti à piedi, che suonano con molta gratia'.

⁴⁷ Ibid.: 'Un quadro eccellente di questa mano trovasi il signor Vivian Viviani Medico celebratissimo in Venetia, e chiarissimo scrittore il quale, oltre le singolari opere date alle stampe ha composto un celebre trattato del custodire la sanità, evvi in quello Nostra Donna, San Simeone e altri santi.'

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 47: 'Egli ridusse la maniera usata per l'addietro, che teneva del secco, ad un più esquisito, e soave utile, col quale unicamente imitò la Natura: arrecando alle Imagine de' Santi certa nobile purità, e divotione, onde con ragione ottiene il titolo di celeberrimo tra gli scorsi Pittori'; see also K. Christiansen, 'Giovanni Bellini and the Practice of Devotional Painting', in *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion*, Indianapolis 2004, pp. 7-57, for a discussion of the motives that lie behind the application of the label of 'religious artist' to fifteenth-century painters and especially to Giovanni Bellini.

Sebastian and the three graceful angels playing music – all of which indicate that Ridolfi admired the painting.⁴⁹

At the beginning of his biography of Bellini, Ridolfi states that he chose to include only those works of art which he thought were the most noteworthy.⁵⁰ He referred to paintings executed both in Venice and elsewhere, whether public or private commissions. Neither Vasari nor Sansovino mentioned as many private commissions of Bellini as Ridolfi,⁵¹ which suggests that he was keen to provide a well-documented account of the life of a painter who interested him. Another early artist whom he greatly appreciated was Andrea Mantegna. According to Ridolfi, in spite of Mantegna's 'somewhat hard style', his works were given due consideration in his own time and were also a source of inspiration for artists of the following periods.⁵²

A striking feature of Ridolfi's book is that for a number of the paintings, churches and writers which he discussed he gave notes in the margins, providing us with information about his sources,⁵³ some of which were written accounts. For instance, the material on Paduan artists, presented in his biography of Andrea Mantegna, was based, he tells us, on Bernardo Scardeone's *De antiquitate urbis Patavii* of 1550. This Latin work was a celebration of the city of Padua and its illustrious citizens; and it contained a small section on Paduan painters from Giusto de' Menabuoi to Domenico Compagnola.⁵⁴ Ridolfi presented an Italian equivalent of Scardeone's Latin text, preserving most of the content and retaining the order in which the artists were discussed. This shows that his aim was to give as much information as possible on the artists mentioned in his book. For Venice, he resorted to Sansovino, as well as relying on his own first-hand observations.

How diligent Ridolfi was in his selection of artists and, more importantly, of their works, and how reliable his accounts are, remains to be investigated.⁵⁵ Some of his

⁴⁹ Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 66: 'San Francesco, che mira con molto affetto la Croce; San Sebastiano ignudo...e la bellezza di tre Angeletti'.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 64: 'ridurremo alla narration di quelle, che più note, e famose sono'.

⁵¹ E.g., Ridolfi lists the paintings which Bellini made for various patrons in Venice, Antwerp and Rome.

⁵² Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 90: 'Le opere di questo autore furono molto apprezzate nel tempo suo, e tuttavia si conservano negli studi per memorie degne; e benchè ritenghino qualche durezza, non havendossi in que' tempi lume maggiore, non dimeno sono condote di venustà.'

⁵³ E.g., Sallust, *De bello Iugurthino*, Valerius Maximus, *Dictorum et factorum memorabilium libri novem*, Venice 1502, Scardeone, *De antiquitate* and Sabellico, *Dell'istoria vinitiana*, Venice 1558. For a complete list of authors cited by Ridolfi, see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. XXII-XXIII.

⁵⁴ Scardeone, *De antiquitate*, pp. 370-4.

⁵⁵ On this matter, but with reference to modern artists, see A. Carroll, 'On the Credibility of Carlo Ridolfi's "Lives of the Venetian Painters"', *Australian Journal of Art*, 2, 1980, pp. 51-62.

attributions of paintings, as we have seen, need to be treated cautiously, since, as we have seen, he did not record inscriptions on paintings. Nevertheless, when he gives especially thorough descriptions, this clearly tells us something about his preferences, as well as his method of drawing attention to particular works of art. That the book was dedicated to the Reynst brothers, two Dutch collectors was, as Francis Haskell noted,⁵⁶ part of Ridolfi's strategy to promote Venetian art abroad and, indirectly, to encourage foreign collectors to acquire Venetian paintings. Haskell also suggested that the increase in purchases of Venetian paintings (whether early or modern) on the art market after 1648 was, to some extent, the result of the publication of Ridolfi's book and its influence.⁵⁷

Ridolfi's collection of drawings, now held in the library of Christ Church, Oxford, gives us a deeper insight into his taste for artists of previous generations.⁵⁸ Even though the collection was primarily of mannerist artists, it still included a significant group of drawings by earlier Venetian artists, whom he also praised in his biographies, including Andrea Mantegna, Vincenzo Catena, Giovanni Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio.⁵⁹

Ridolfi provided his readers with an important source of information about early Italian works of art which he had seen first-hand and which he described in great detail, expressing particular admiration for religious images such as those by Basaiti and Giovanni Bellini. He also cited the written sources which he had consulted, including Vasari's *Lives*, to which he often referred in a critical manner,⁶⁰ and Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*,

⁵⁶ F. Haskell, 'La sfortuna critica di Giorgione', in *Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano*, ed. R. Pallucchini, 2 vols, Florence 1981, II, pp. 583-614, at p. 592.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ For Ridolfi's collection of drawings, see M. Muraro, 'Di Carlo Ridolfi e di altre "fonti" per lo studio del disegno veneto del Seicento', in *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf*, ed. A. Kosegarten and P. Tigler, 2 vols, Berlin 1968, I, pp. 429-33; C. F. Bell, *Drawings by the Old Masters in the Library of Christ Church Oxford*, Oxford 1914, pp. 20-2. Ridolfi's drawings were originally grouped in three small volumes entitled *Libro A* (74 drawings), *Libro B* (73 drawings) and *Libro G* (45 drawings). Although he does not refer to this collection in *Le meraviglie dell'arte*, he does encourage the study of drawing; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, II, p. 241: 'Da quello [disegno] dipende tutta la perfezione della pittura.' A precedent for Ridolfi's collection of drawings is the much larger one of Vasari, which he grouped under the title of *Libro de' disegni* and which he often mentions in *Le vite*. It comprised drawings from the Trecento, Quattrocento and Cinquecento, and it was meant to illustrate the history of Italian art from Cimabue to Vasari's own day. For further information, see O. Kurz, 'Il "Libro de' disegni" di Giorgio Vasari', in *Studi vasariani: atti del convegno internazionale per il IV centenario della prima edizione delle "Vite" del Vasari*, Florence 1952, pp. 225-8; O. Kurz, 'Giorgio Vasari's "Libro de' disegni"', *Old Master Drawings*, 45-47, 1937, pp. 1-15 and 32-44; and L. Ragghianti Collobi, *Il Libro de' disegni del Vasari*, 2 vols, Florence 1974.

⁵⁹ For a complete list of Ridolfi's drawings, see Bell, *Drawings*, pp. 25-93; see also S. Mason, 'Dallo studiolo al "camaron" dei quadri. Un itinerario per dipinti, disegni, stampe e qualche curiosità nelle collezioni della Venezia barocca', in *Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia. Il Seicento*, ed. L. Borean and Mason, Venice 2008, pp. 3-37, at p. 31.

⁶⁰ E.g., in the lives of Gentile da Fabriano and Vittore Pisanello, Ridolfi points out that Vasari failed to record their works in Venice: see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 23: 'Benche il Vasari di questi due pittori habbia à lungo

probably the first edition, though Ridolfi added a considerable number of works of art, both before and after 1550, not documented by Sansovino. Moreover, while Sansovino's work was a guidebook to Venice, with a strongly historical orientation, Ridolfi, a painter himself, wrote biographies of painters who had been active in Venice, in which the focus, inevitably, was on art.

descritte le vite e le opere, nondimeno non fà punto mentione di quelle cose, che dipinero in Venetia.' See also *ibid.*, p. 31.

CHAPTER 3

Marco Boschini's Writings

'Upon a comparison of Ridolfi's style of writing with that of Boschini, we might suppose that these authors flourished at two different epochs, though they were nearly contemporary.'¹ This observation by Luigi Lanzi prompts us to consider those elements in the writing style and approach of the two authors which seem to divide them. Even though Ridolfi and Boschini were very well acquainted with the Venetian art world since they were both painters (Boschini was also an art dealer in Venetian art); however, they are best known today for their writings on Venetian art in which they expressed their artistic views.² They wrote in different genres: while Ridolfi opted for the narrative style of biographies, Boschini favoured the brief and precise accounts appropriate for a guidebook, as well as the encomiastic and satirical tone of the didactic poem.

La carta del navegar pittoresco (1660)

In 1660, Marco Boschini published *La carta del navegar pittoresco*, a eulogy of Venetian painting in the form of a poem in the dialect of Venice.³ Boschini's decision to write this work in dialect provoked a number of criticisms in his day. Bellori, for instance, when discussing Raphael and his critics in the life of Carlo Maratta, directed a sarcastic remark against Boschini, describing him 'twisting his head and singing in his distorted language', an

¹ L. Lanzi, *The History of Painting in Italy: From the Period of the Revival of the Fine Arts to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. T. Roscoe, 3 vols, London 1847, II, p. 254; see also Lanzi, *Storia pittorica della Italia*, ed. M. Capucci, 3 vols, Florence 1968-1974, II, p. 135: 'chi paragon lo scrivere del Ridolfi con quello del Boschini, gli crederebbe vivuti in due secoli differenti benche fosser quasi coetanei'.

² Boschini states in the 'Breve instruzione', in his *Le ricche minere*, Venice 1674, that he was a pupil of Palma il Giovane. He also studied under Odoardo Fialetti, whose paintings were in the style of Tintoretto. Unfortunately, none of Boschini's paintings has survived. For an account of his paintings, see Sansovino/Martinioni, 'Quinto catalogo de gli pittori di nome, che al presente vivono in Venetia', in *Venetia*, pp. 22-3. In addition to his activity as painter, Boschini also trained as printmaker, restorer and draughtsman. A number of prints and a map of Venice testify to his interest in learning and applying various artistic techniques. For further information about Boschini's artistic legacy and a complete list of his extant and lost works, see M. F. Merling, *Marco Boschini's "La carta del navegar pittoresco": Art Theory and Virtuoso Culture in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, Ann Arbor 1992, pp. 31-56 and 344-89.

³ For a summary of the content of the *Carta*, see Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 548, and also Boschini, *La carta del navegar pittoresco*, ed. A. Pallucchini, Venice 1966, pp. XVIII-XXIX.

obvious reference to the unconventional vocabulary of the *Carta*.⁴ Similarly, but in a less strident tone, the Florentine Paolo del Sera maintained that the publication of Boschini's poem in Venetian dialect hindered foreigners like himself from enjoying and understanding the nuances of the book.⁵ Didactic poems, whether or not they were devoted exclusively to artistic matters, were popular during the seventeenth century: Giambattista Marino's *La Galleria* (1619), Giulio Cesare Bona's *Miserie del Mondo* (1658), Agostino Coltellini's *Istituzioni del corpo umano* (1660) and Francesco Redi's *Bacco in Toscana* (1685) are just a few Italian examples of the genre.⁶

Even though Boschini's poem may not have had as many readers as his later work, the much shorter *Le Minere della pittura veneziana*, and may have earned him a reputation as an unorthodox writer because of the satirical notes and the use of Venetian dialect, the content of his *Carta* reveals interesting and influential views on the art of earlier generations. Boschini's tribute to the Venetian school of painting was largely, but not exclusively, concerned with artists after Giorgione whose works were displayed either in the churches of Venice or in various private collections such as that of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (to whom the poem is dedicated). Boschini's belief in the pre-eminence of the Venetian school caused him to react against Vasari. In contrasting Raphael and Giovanni Bellini, for instance, he confidently rejected Vasari's preference for Raphael and championed Bellini.⁷ Indeed, he placed Bellini at the summit of his ranking of painters, backing up this choice by giving especially high praise to the artist's San Giobbe altarpiece.⁸ Although Boschini's extended description reads like a literary exercise (the vocabulary he uses invites such an appraisal), one can still identify a number of elements which show his wide-ranging artistic knowledge and his appreciation for specific aspects of the painting. Particular attention is paid to the beautiful arrangement of the figures within the

⁴ Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, ed. E. Borea, Turin 1976, p. 627: 'distorcendo la testa e cantando il suo linguaggio distorto'.

⁵ L. Procacci and U. Procacci, 'Carteggio di Marco Boschini con il Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici', *Saggi e Memorie*, 4, 1965, pp. 87-113, at p. 111: 'ma veramente bisognerebbe farselo leggere da un venetiano nativo, perchè molte cose noi altri non le possiamo, diro strapallar con quella gentilezza con che le trinciano i venetiani'.

⁶ See Merling, *Marco Boschini*, pp. 184-5; on didactic poetry, see A. Harder, A. A. MacDonald and G. J. Reinink, eds, *Calliope's Classroom: Studies in Didactic Poetry from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Leuven and Paris 2007.

⁷ Boschini, *La carta*, p. 46: 'È però per responder al Vasari,/Che porta in sete Cieli Rafael,/Dirò, che doto più fusse el penel/De Zambelin: sti sentimenti è chiari.'

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9: 'Zambelin fu sì doto e valente,/Che'l se puol ben chiamar Pitor di cima;/Tal in San Giopo el so valor se stima,/Dove un'opera gh'è, molto ecelente./Prima se vede in bela maestà/La Madre col Babin; forma sì dota/Non fu mai vista, o idea cusì devota;/Se puol ben dir: l'è una divinità!'

composition: the humble and pious expressions of Francis and Job in meditation, which prompt viewers to devotion, and the solemn posture and finely rendered flesh tones of St Sebastian.⁹ No previous account of Bellini's painting contains a description which goes into such detail about every figure, finding in each of them a characteristic to admire. Boschini's descriptions of works by Vittore Carpaccio and Marco Basaiti reflect a similar approach. He considered Carpaccio to be a painter 'as exquisite in style as' Giovanni Bellini and expressed admiration for his painting of *The Presentation of Christ at the Temple* in San Giobbe, which he said was executed carefully, with the figures beautifully rendered, displaying pious attitudes and depicted in noble clothing.¹⁰ In the same church, Boschini praised a painting by Marco Basaiti, which he described as 'beautiful, charming and diligent, with all the figures well rendered'.¹¹

In addition to expressing his views on paintings of the past, Boschini also raised issues of contemporary concern. The fictional dialogue between the Venetian senator 'Eccellenza' and the painter 'Compare', includes, for example, the following exchange, in which Eccellenza asks: 'What is new in the field of painting? I know that you have had experience with all the painters and have had many conversations with them about this profession. What are they interested in? What are the foreigners buying, looking for and demanding?'¹² Compare's responses reveal information not previously found in the artistic literature of Boschini's day: that foreigners were interested in acquiring Venetian paintings, that Quattrocento art tended to become more valuable and, therefore, more expensive as the years passed, and that the export of such art was a grave loss for Venice's patrimony, due primarily to the ignorance of local *dilettanti*. These sharp observations showed that, in Boschini's opinion, Venetian collectors underestimated the art produced in their city and that it was essential for them to have someone knowledgeable, ideally a painter, to help shape their taste and to give them advice about buying paintings.¹³

⁹ Boschini, *La carta*, p. 29: 'san Francesco, che pietoso/ fa mostra del costato ai Reguardanti./San Giope star se osserva in oracion, Tuto devoto, e umile, e modesto;/.../San Bastian, martire degno; E chi no vede quella positura/ Non ha vista dasseno una figura: la xe de carne; l'è tuta dessegno.'

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34: 'El Carpaccio xe stà cusì esquisito.'

¹¹ Ibid., p. 36: 'L'è tuta bela, vaga e diligente;/Xe tute le figure ben intese.'

¹² Ibid., p. 21: 'che cosa gh'è da niovo in la pitura? So che vù partiche tuti i Pitori./E diversi discorsi avè con lori/Sora sta profession per aventura. Ghe xe curiosità? Ghe' è forestieri, che compra, che ricerca, che domanda?'; see Philip Sohm, *Pittoreesco. Marco Boschini, His Critics, and Their Critiques of Painterly Brushwork in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy*, Cambridge 1991, p. 89 and n. 6.

¹³ Boschini, *La carta*, p. 23: 'Fin che i particolari xe sta mati,/ E che molti ha vendù quei gran tesori.' Boschini's remark is directed at collectors who have not sought artistic advice.

Le minere della pittura veneziana (1664) and Contemporary Texts on Painting

A year after the publication of the third edition of Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*, a new guide to Venice, specifically devoted to painting, became available to the public: Marco Boschini's *Le minere della pittura veneziana* (1664). Perhaps influenced by his own interest and training as a painter, but also by practical considerations (a guide to paintings was more likely to appeal to a wide readership and, consequently, to sell better), Boschini provided a careful record of the paintings in Venice from 1314 to his own time. According to Paolo del Sera, the Florentine art collector, dealer and adviser to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, in a letter of 1663 addressed to the archduke, Boschini was a worthy and honourable virtuoso, who had written his guidebook for his own entertainment and so that the art lovers could become familiar with the most famous painters in Venice. In the same letter, del Sera also recognized the unique character of Boschini's guidebook, in that it recorded only paintings, which, according to him, was a 'cosa non più stata fata'.¹⁴ Previous local literature was generally in the form of detailed writings which contained various sections covering topography, historiography and biographies of famous people.¹⁵ Boschini's specialized guide proved to be popular; and, in line with an established practice of producing new editions of successful works, it was followed by later enlarged versions in 1674 and 1773.¹⁶

The increase in this type of literature, together with the reprinting of original editions, suggests an attempt to build, maintain and expand a tradition of works promoting various aspects of Venetian culture by continually updating the information, in response to an evident demand on the part of the reading public.¹⁷ Other contemporary examples include Francesco Scannelli's *Il microcosmo della pittura*,¹⁸ Giacomo Barri's *Viaggio pittoresco*¹⁹

¹⁴ Boschini's publication is recorded in a letter addressed to Leopoldo de' Medici by del Sera; Procacci and Procacci, 'Carteggio', p. 112: 'Quel virtuoso tanto degno et honorato, che compose et fece stampare la Carta del Navicar Pittoresco, dico il Sig. Marco Boschini, ha fatto stampare adesso per sua ricreatione e per informatione de dilettaanti di pittura un indice di tutte le pitture pubbliche che sono in questa città, cosa non più stata fatta; per il che io ho preso ardire d'inviarne uno a V. A. S. la quale da esso potrà vedere di mano in mano dove sono le opera de più celebri pittori, e se si degnerà d'honorarmi di un esemplare del libro della direzione de fiumi, io lo porgerò a detto sig. Boschini, che è molto curioso'; see also Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 548-9.

¹⁵ Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 559-64.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Sansovino, *Tutte le cose notabili*, Venice 1556, 1564, 1601, 1606, and *Venetia città nobilissima*, Venice 1581, 1604, 1663. The final version of *Le ricche minere* was edited by Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger under the title of *Descrizione di tutte le pubbliche pitture della città di Venetia*, Venice 1771.

¹⁷ As we shall see, the publication of the second edition of *Le ricche minere* was the result of such popular demand.

¹⁸ Francesco Scannelli, *Il microcosmo della pittura ovvero trattato diviso in due libri*, Cesena 1657.

and Luigi Scaramuccia's *Le finezze de' penelli*.²⁰ Although they belong to different genres (the first is an art treatise, the second a guidebook and the third an artistic dialogue), all three texts focus exclusively on painting. Instead, however, of presenting works of art from one Italian city only, the writers of these works discuss paintings from all over Italy. In the section of his 'Italian voyage' dedicated to Venetian painting, Giacomo Barri guides travellers through the *sestieri*, pointing out the principal attractions. Rather surprisingly, he only mentions works by artists from Giorgione to Pietro da Cortona, leaving out all the earlier ones. For the foreign travellers who were unfamiliar with Venetian art, the missing elements from Barri's guidebook might not have been significant; but for those who were familiar with the writings of Sansovino, Ridolfi and Boschini, omitting paintings by artists such as the Vivarini, the Bellini, Carpaccio and Marco Basaiti would presumably have seemed odd, since they were always mentioned and admired in these written accounts. Barri adopts a similar pattern when discussing Florence, mentioning only works by artists from Andrea del Sarto to Agostino Carracci, and Bologna, including paintings by later artists such as the Carracci, Domenichino, Parmigianino, Guido Reni and Francesco Albani. Nor was Barri the only writer to follow this path: Scaramuccia applied the same principles in his dialogue on art. On their journey through Italy, the two interlocutors, Girupeno and Raffaello, stop to admire the churches of Venice under the guidance of Boschini's *La carta* and *Le minere*.²¹ Again, the emphasis is on paintings by later artists (from Titian onwards),²² who are highly praised, while the earlier ones are omitted, with the exception of works by Giovanni Bellini.²³

Like Barri, Scaramuccia does not say why he neglects earlier artists. One possible reason in both cases is that these authors do not attempt to explain the origins of Italian

¹⁹ Giacomo Barri, *Viaggio pittoresco in cui si notano distintamente tutte le pitture famose...che si conservano in qualsivoglia città dell'Italia*, Venice 1671. Barri's guidebook was translated into English under the title: *The Painters Voyage of Italy in which All the Famous Paintings of the Most Eminent Masters are Particularised, as They are Preserved in the Several Cities of Italy*, London 1679.

²⁰ Luigi Scaramuccia, *Le finezze de' penelli italiani ammirate e studiate da Girupeno sotto la scorta e disciplina del genio di Raffaello d'Urbino*, Pavia 1674.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97: 'Che io nel mio Libro della Carta del Navigare m'ingegno far credere essere il più bel quadro di Venetia'; and p. 110: 'il che inteso dal Boschini molto resto sodisfatto, e volle, che per loro maggior istruzione s'accompagnassero del suo Libretto, poco anzi posto alle Stampe sotto il titolo delle Minere della Pittura, nel quale come havrebbero potuto osservare si era da esso diligentemente fatta menzione di tutto ciò che di Pittura in Venetia.'

²² Scaramuccia follows the same pattern for Florence and for other cities.

²³ Scaramuccia records paintings by Giovanni Bellini, the only Venetian painter discussed in this section, in San Francesco della Vigna (Scaramuccia, *Le finezze de' penelli*, p. 96), San Pietro Martire (*ibid.*, p. 98), Santa Maria della Salute (*ibid.*, p. 102), Santa Maria della Carità (*ibid.*, p. 103) and Madonna dell'Orto (*ibid.*, p. 108).

painting. Dealing with paintings from all over Italy, they do not indulge in *campanilismo*, and their purpose was not to illustrate the development of Italian painting in particular cities, but instead to offer travellers some guidance by pointing out the more recent works of art which they should look out for on their journey. Furthermore, Barri and Scaramuccia appear to have been more interested in discussing a large number of cities and churches than in revealing their own preferences for particular paintings. Writing general guidebooks to Italy, they mostly recommended more recent works of art, while travellers who wanted to find out about a specific city would consult more specialized guidebooks which were more likely to include earlier works of art and which, occasionally, offered more insightful analyses of the paintings. So far, it seems that attitudes towards early Renaissance paintings did not develop in a uniform manner: there were surprising changes from one text to another, depending on the type of writing and to whom it is addressed.

Returning to Boschini's guidebook *Le minere*, we notice a different approach from the works of Barri and Scaramuccia, with more attention devoted to earlier paintings. Before Boschini, the nature of guidebooks usually constrained authors such as Sansovino to make only laconic and general assessments of works of art, as opposed to the detailed and specific comments found in his *Carta*.²⁴ What distinguishes Boschini's *Le minere* from Sansovino's guidebooks and even from Ridolfi's biographies is that he not only added a considerable number works of art which were previously unmentioned, but also showed more interest in expressing his own views on Venetian art. Recording works of art displayed publicly in Venetian churches, which he grouped geographically, he, for instance, said about some anonymous paintings of stories from the life of Christ and the Virgin in the Scuola dell'Annunciata, dating from 1314, that, in his opinion the reason these paintings were worthy of admiration, even though they were not necessarily 'exceptional', was because of their 'antiquity'.²⁵ This observation indicates, on the one hand, Boschini's awareness of a *caesura* between older and more recent art, and, on the other, his belief that an 'ancient' work of art, that is, one from the early Trecento, deserved consideration and appreciation in itself, regardless of its beauty. Moreover, Boschini's comments were likely to

²⁴ As has been shown, the main purpose of the guidebooks was to record the most important works of art in a particular city. Additional comments on paintings are not always present. Sansovino's book contains only a few modest references in comparison to those offered by Ridolfi and Boschini.

²⁵ Boschini, *Le minere della pittura veneziana*, Venice 1664, p. 470: 'Nella detta scuola, per l'antichità delle pitture benchè non siano di molta rarità, essendo fatte dell'anno 1314 sono degne di ammirazione.'

help his readership to acquire a sense of the past and to become aware of stylistic developments. By consulting his guide, a traveller would be able to place works of art within their appropriate time period and to understand, for example, that an older painting had specific attributes which made it different from later works.

There is an intriguing, observation by Luigi Lanzi, who not only disapproved of Boschini's local patriotism but also criticized him for not being able to distinguish adequately between past and present painters:

[His misguided patriotism is the source of his calumnies against Vasari and against the methods of the foreign schools, as well as his exaggerated praise for Venetian painters... Even worse, he does not make any distinction] between the good old masters and the mannerists of his own time and speaks of them as if they were still alive and teaching the masters of the previous century, or as if the moderns had the same gifts and resources.²⁶

In analysing Lanzi's remark, it is essential to understand what he actually meant by 'distinction' and what might have led him to react in this way. As we have seen, Boschini had a clear idea of where to place the artists of the past in relation to those of the present. Although the vocabulary tinged with culinary resonances which he employed in the *Carta* might have seemed inappropriate for art criticism,²⁷ what appears to have struck Lanzi was that Boschini referred to artists from different generations with the same degree of enthusiasm. Ironically, however, Lanzi's disapproval seemed to confer on Boschini a unique position among Venetian art critics: as a writer who longed for the art of the past and appreciated it as much as that of his own time. In fact, however, Boschini regarded artists of earlier generations as part of a continuum, 'a living tradition'.²⁸ He believed that the greatness of the old masters was perpetuated and perfected by later generations which

²⁶ English translation from Lanzi, *The History of Painting*, II, p. 237, with my alterations between square brackets. Lanzi, *Storia pittorica*, II, p. 123: 'da questo non beninteso patriottismo procedono in lui e le maldicenze contro il Vasari e contro i metodi delle scuole forestiere; e l'esagerate lodi de' pittori veneti... Il peggio è che non fa differenza da' buoni antichi a' manieristi de'suoi tempi; e parla come se vivessero e insegnassero ancora i maestri del secolo precedente, o i moderni avessero gli stessi doni e gli stessi capitali.'

²⁷ For an extended analysis Boschini's vocabulary in the *Carta*, see Sohm, *Pittoresco*, p. 117, n. 126. Boschini associates Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi* with marzipan and appreciates that Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe* altarpiece has good seasoning. See Boschini, *La carta*, p. 210: 'Che xe dal marzapan', and p. 47: 'Ma el condimento de sta nobil Pala/Xe tre Anzoletti con varii istrumenti;/E par sentir quei musichi concenti;/Ogni cosa là su tutta è de gala.'

²⁸ Sohm, *Pittoresco*, p. 109.

included painters such as Veronese and Tintoretto. This attitude would become evident in the 'Breve instruzione' to his *Le ricche minere*, discussed below.

In writing about late Trecento and early Quattrocento artists in *Le minere*, Boschini starts from Iacobello del Fiore, Donato Veneziano and the Vivarini family. There are no references to earlier altarpieces such as those by Paolo and Lorenzo Veneziano.²⁹ Nor does Boschini mention the early Paduan artists Guariento and Nicoletto Semitecolo, whose activity in Venice was recorded by Sansovino and Ridolfi. It seems that these omissions are the result of his belief that Venetian art began with Bellini and that, therefore, he did not need to dwell on earlier artists.³⁰

Boschini's comments on Quattrocento painters were often quite brief, though he did give a precise indication of the location of each work and of the figures it contained. For instance, in referring to Donato Veneziano's *Crucifixion* in San Nicolo de' Frari, he informs us that it was in the refectory and portrayed Christ on the cross, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene and three saints, adding that in the background there was 'a beautiful landscape'.³¹ With even greater brevity, Luigi Vivarini's *St Jerome* is said to be a 'rare work'.³² *Le minere* does not abound in rich descriptions of earlier works of art; however, it has the merit of including a number of paintings which had not previously been recorded. This suggests that Boschini carried out most of his research independently, documenting as many paintings as possible and, occasionally, expressing his own views on their quality. The two artists whose works he seemed to appreciate most were Vittore Carpaccio and, above all, Giovanni Bellini. Carpaccio's *St Vitalis* and *The Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* are both described as 'exceptional', while the stories of the life of St Ursula are said to be a 'treasure of perfection'.³³ In discussing Bellini's works, Boschini generally uses the term 'beautiful':

²⁹ Sansovino and Ridolfi also omit them. Zanetti is the only writer to dedicate a section to painters before 1300 and to mention Lorenzo and Paolo Veneziano. See Zanetti, *Della pittura*, pp. 11, 15, 16.

³⁰ See Marco Boschini, *I gioielli pittoreschi*, Venice 1676, p. 24.

³¹ Boschini, *Le minere*, p. 316: 'Nel Capitolo de detti Padri, una Tavola con nostro Signore in Croce, la Beata Vergine, Santa Maria Maddalena, San Giovanni, San Francesco, San Bernardino, e un bel paese, di mano di Donato Veneziano.' Boschini's reference to the 'beautiful landscape' does not necessarily indicate artistic appreciation; it could serve merely as indicator enabling visitors to identify the painting without difficulty.

³² Ibid., p. 462: 'opera rara di Luigi Vivarino'.

³³ Ibid., p. 162: 'cosa rara', and p. 213: 'un Tesoro di perfezione'. The latter phrase is not used elsewhere by Boschini, nor is it found in other Venetian writers on art examined in this dissertation.

for instance, he writes that *The Virgin and the Child* in Santa Maria Maggiore is among Bellini's 'beautiful' works.³⁴

In *Le minere* Boschini did not employ the variety of terms which he had used in the *Carta*; and there are a number of words which crop up frequently such as 'exceptional', 'beautiful', 'rare' and 'precious',³⁵ which are more likely to reflect stereotyped judgements than his own personal taste. That Boschini, Sansovino and Ridolfi tended to admire the same painters – the Vivarini, the Bellini, Carpaccio and Cima – indicates, firstly, that there was a tradition among Venetian writers on art of appreciation for these artists, which would presumably have helped readers to differentiate their styles and to associate them with specific attributes, and, secondly, that preferences for these artists remained largely unchanged over a long period of time.

Looking at Art through Marco Boschini's Glass Panel: *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana* (1674)

In a letter of 18 August 1674, Boschini asked Archduke Leopold Wilhelm to accept his second and enlarged edition of *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana* as a gift.³⁶ The edition was published the same year, and the additional material consisted of a preface entitled 'Breve instruzione' and new accounts of works of art which had been omitted from the 1664 edition. At the beginning of the 'Breve instruzione', Boschini informed readers that all copies of the first edition had sold out; and, in response to demand from art lovers, he had decided to reprint and update the book by adding new paintings.³⁷ Furthermore, he had

³⁴ Ibid., p. 365: 'un'altro con Maria, il bambino e molti cherubini, che la circonda, delle belle di Giovanni Bellini'.

³⁵ Boschini uses the phrase 'opera rara' four times with reference to Luigi Vivarini, Giovanni Buonconsiglio, Carpaccio, Giovanni Bellini and Giovanni Buonconsiglio. 'Bellissima' or 'bello' appear six times in connection with Donato Veneziano, Benedetto Diana, Giovanni Buonconsiglio and Giovanni Bellini. The works of Carpaccio and the Bellini are described as 'precious'.

³⁶ Procacci and Procacci, 'Carteggio', p. 91: 'hora pure resta da me supplicare di benignamente aggradire questa mia seconda impressione delle Ricche minere della Pittura veneziana, con nove aggiunte'.

³⁷ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve instruzione'), sig. A1^r: 'mentre ho veduto che con brevità di tempo si sono smaltite tutte le coppie stampate: onde in mancanza di esse altre novamente me ne havete richieste; ed io pure a questo effetto ho ristampate le presenti, con l'aggiunta di quelle pitture, che sono state accresciute da molti virtuosi'.

been asked by readers for more artistic advice and wanted to satisfy these requests.³⁸ It is, therefore, worth examining the preface in some detail, since it tells us more about Boschini's practical advice and his appreciation of art than the first edition.

After explaining why he had added a preface, Boschini introduces a general discussion about judging paintings. He constructs his argument starting from two premises. First, in order to give an expert opinion on art, one has to have a clear idea of the difference between 'good' and 'bad' painting. Second, the viewer has to become familiar with the style of artists.³⁹ In Boschini's opinion, it is a natural inclination which allows one to determine if a painting is good or bad, a faculty which immediately detects the sources of visual delight. But in order to make the right choice regarding the quality of a painting, additional practical knowledge is required. Although Boschini was interested in providing his readers with a set of criteria for assessing paintings accurately, he believed that only painters had the necessary first-hand experience to judge art. Amateur art-lovers should, therefore, let themselves be guided by someone with expertise such as himself.⁴⁰ There were, he explained, two ways of looking at art, one from the *intendente's* point of view, the other from the *dilettante's* perspective:

Let us say that there is a pane of glass between the *intendente* and the *dilettante* and that the *intendente* is sitting at a table with the most extraordinary foods, which he can eat according to his own choice; and, on the other hand, the *dilettante* also desires to eat the same delicacies. Since he is not able to penetrate the pane of glass, he can only glance at these foods and ask the other person if they are good and nourishing. While the former, who enjoys possession of them, responds affirmatively, the latter, on the outside, not being able to eat them because of the obstruction, has to feed on his answer, which only satisfies the sight and hearing superficially, but does not provide inner nourishment.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.: 'Restami hora da sodisfarvi in nuova cosa, che mi ha chieduto alcuno di voi, cioè che io vi mostri il modo di praticar le maniere gli autori, e distinguer l'una dall'altra.'

³⁹Ibid, sig. A1^v: 'Dirò nondimeno che due cose, in questo caso, son necessarie: la prima, che è la più essenziale, è il sa per intender il buono, e distinguerlo dal non buono, la seconda è il conoscere il carattere de gli Autori, cioè a dire la maniera dell'operare.'

⁴⁰ Paolo del Sera, for instance, characterized Boschini as a 'uomo intendente di pittura'; see Procacci and Procacci, 'Carteggio', p. 113.

⁴¹ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve instruzione'), sig. D8^r: 'Ma siami concesso il dire, che trà l'Intendente e il Dilettante vi sia un Cristallo di mezzo, e sia l'Intendente ad una mensa imbandita di preziose vivande, de quali à suo arbitrio, si vada nutrendo; ed all'incontro il Dilettante habbia egli ancora desiderio di cibarsi delle stesse lautezze: ma non potendo penetrar quel Cristallo, vada con l'occhio osservandole, e con la voce interrogando l'altro se son buone, e sostanziose, e quello, che ne gode il dominio risponda che si: dove quel di fuori non

In applying this metaphor to the analysis of works of art,⁴² Boschini was suggesting that practical knowledge was a prerequisite for a sound assessment of paintings. Having such an artistic background, in his opinion, exerted a powerful influence on one's understanding and appreciation of paintings; and, the preface was meant, as its title indicated, to instruct art lovers on how to distinguish between the styles of various Venetian painters by giving them the benefit of his wisdom and professional experience. Boschini does not state explicitly whether by reading his guidebook art lovers could achieve the same level of knowledge and experience as the *intendenti* and penetrate the glass pane in order to enjoy the 'delicacies' fully. Nevertheless, the purpose of the guidebook was to take them a step further – from a state of superficiality and ignorance to in-depth knowledge – and help them to formulate clearer and more accurate judgements on art.

In the 'Breve istruzione' Boschini also provided a list of the most significant writers on art from other towns in Italy including Gian Paolo Lomazzo (Milan), Giorgio Vasari (Florence), Francesco Scanelli (Lombardy), Lodovico Vedriani (Modena), Giovanni Baglione (Rome), Carlo Cesare Malvasia (Bologna), Gioseffo Montani (Pesaro) and Luigi Scaramuccia (Pavia).⁴³ Significantly, this is the first time that an author of a Venetian

potendo per l'impendimento cibarsene, si nutre delle riferite, che solo sarollano la vista, e l'udito superficialmente, ma non li rende il nutrimento interiore.⁷

⁴² In his *Della pittura*, Leon Battista Alberti employs similar metaphors, involving a pane of glass and a transparent veil. But while Alberti refers to the way in which the artist should construct a painting in perspective, Boschini instead considers the viewers' experience; see Alberti, 'Della pittura', in *Il Nuovo De pictura di Leon Battista Alberti. The New De Pictura of Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. R. Sinigalli, Rome 2011, pp. 127-8: 'Non altrimenti che se questa superficie che ei cuoprono di colori, fosse quasi che di vetro o di altra cosa simile trasparente, tal che per essa passasse tutta la piramide visiva a vedere i veri corpi, con intervallo determinato e fermo, e con ferma positura del raggio centrico, e de' lumi posti in aria lontani a lor luoghi, e che questo sia così, lo dimostrano i Pittori, quando ei si ritirano in dietro dalla cosa che ei dipingono a considerarla da lontano, che guidati dalla natura vanno cercando in questo modo la punta di essa stessa piramide. Laonde si accorgano, che da quel luogo considerano e giudicano meglio tutte le cose', and translation in *ibid.*: 'Not otherwise than as if this [surface], which they cover with color, were completely of glass or transparent, in such a way that, having to observe real bodies, the whole visual pyramid penetrates it according to a certain distance and according to a certain disposition of the centric ray and of the light, once established the respective positions, at a distance in space. That this truly happens this way, the painters demonstrate in the moment in which they move away from what they paint and place themselves further back [from the painting] to look for the apex of this pyramid itself, Nature being [their], from where they perceive that everything is more correctly judged and measured'; see also *ibid.*, p. 176: 'un velo tessuto di filo sottilissimo e poco folto...che piazzo, certamente, fra l'oggetto da rappresentare e l'occhio, in modo che la piramide visiva passi attraverso le scarse densità del velo', and translation in *ibid.*: 'a veil woven of very thin tread and loosely intertwined,...which I place, indeed, between the object to be represented and the eye, so that the visual pyramid penetrates through the thinness of the veil.'

⁴³ Vedriani was the author of a local guidebook on the most famous artists in Modena; see Lodovico Vedriani, *Raccolta de' pittori, scultori et architetti modonesi più celebri*, Modena 1662. Montani, although known to Malvasia, was

guidebook named other writers on art in an attempt to raise awareness of and promote such literature.

Next, Boschini illustrated his criteria for judging paintings by giving a number of brief profiles of Venetian artists, arranged chronologically, from Giovanni Bellini to Giovanni Battista Zelotti. He begins with Giovanni Bellini because he laid the foundations of good painting in Venice, and he takes Bellini's works as a point of reference in assessing those of later artists. Even though Bellini's 'excessive diligence may give the impression that his style is rather hard and his works are lacking in softness, if compared to those of his followers', one can, nevertheless, observe 'by means of his precision, the wit in the ideas, the movement in the poses and the harmonious arrangement in the stories'.⁴⁴ Boschini cites the example of the San Giobbe altarpiece, which seems to illustrate best the excellence of Bellini's style: accuracy, perfect rendition of the sacred figures which inspire devotion, harmony and attention to detail. What *dilettanti* should look for, therefore, when making a stylistic analysis of Bellini's paintings, is their precision and accuracy. No other writer before Boschini provided such a thorough, complete and critical assessment of Bellini's style.

The next 'great master of those times' was Vittore Carpaccio.⁴⁵ In Boschini's ranking, Carpaccio was nearly at the same level as Bellini, especially on account of the 'marvels' which he painted for the Scuola di Sant'Orsola.⁴⁶ Boschini then referred to Cima da Conegliano's works, especially his painting of the Virgin with St Nicholas and St Ursula in the church of St Jerome, which he considered one of his best and which, consequently, raised him almost to the level of the Bellini and Carpaccio.⁴⁷ Another element which distinguished Cima's paintings from those of his contemporaries was the way he depicted

a minor painter and writer of the lives of the painters from Pesaro; see Perini, 'Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters', p. 278, and esp. n. 46.

⁴⁴ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve istruzione'), sig. A4^r: 'Vero è, che questa sopprabbondante diligenza ha causato, che col paragon dell'opera de suoi derivanti, paiono un poco durette, e manco morbide: ma in ogni modo con l'accuratezza sua, vi si vede lo spirito nelle Idee, il moto ne gli atteggiamenti, e l'armonioso concerto nelle Historie.'

⁴⁵ Ibid., sig. B1^r: 'gran Maestro de quei tempi'.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: 'nella Scola di Sant'Orsola ha fatto maraviglie'.

⁴⁷ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve istruzione'), sig. B1^r: 'è stato egli ancora Pittore appunto di Cima (come si suol dire) e assai consimile a questi suoi Contemporanei; come si può vedere: e in particolare nella Tavola alla sinistra dell'Altar Maggiore di San Girolamo'.

the ‘delightful’ landscape of his hometown.⁴⁸ In assessing works of art, Boschini thus tended to make comparisons and to rank artists according to their quality.

The last group of early painters, listed only briefly by Boschini, included Marco Basaiti, Benedetto Diana, Giovanni Buonconsigli, Lazaro Sebastiani, Cristoforo Parmese, Vittore Belliniano, Girolamo Santa Croce and the Vivarini. According to Boschini, they all painted in a similar manner. Even though there were not appreciable changes from one artist’s style to the other, it was possible to tell them apart by their signatures.⁴⁹ It is here that Boschini gives an explicit indication of his principal method of recording works of art and, at the same time, provides the viewers with advice to follow when attempting attributions: always look for the signature.

Boschini’s introductory accounts of early artists are conventional and still largely influenced by previous writings in terms of his examples of works of art and the specific qualities of an artist or a painting which he regards as praiseworthy (for example, both Sansovino and Ridolfi discuss the particularities of Cima’s landscapes and consider his painting in St Jerome as one of his most esteemed works).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Boschini seems to bring the discussion to a different level, with more emphasis on the practical aspects of painting and a more careful assessment of the works of art from multiple perspectives.

Discussing later artists, he draws attention especially to Giorgione, Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto, to all of whom he gives high praise. He compares, for instance, Giorgione’s contribution to painting to Gutenberg’s role in printing.⁵¹ Titian was the most excellent of painters and, together with Veronese and Tintoretto established the future direction of Venetian painting. Interestingly, Boschini does not seem to be especially enthusiastic about many painters of the late sixteenth century, nor does he take much interest in those of his

⁴⁸ Ibid.: ‘Di pore quasi in tutte le opera, in distanza, l’aspetto di Conegliano, sua Patria, che è un delizioso Monticello, il che serve anco per distinguerlo con tal rimarca da gli altri Autori di quei tempi.’

⁴⁹ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (‘Breve istruzione’), sig. B1^v: ‘Tutti questi, e altri furono in un ordine di tempo, e seguirono l’un l’altro le stesse pedate: di modo che difficilmente si fà di essi la distinzione... Quello poi che molte volte facilita la distinzione è, che usavano tutti quei Pittori in ogni sua opera ò grande, ò picciola registrare il loro nome.’

⁵⁰ Sansovino/Martinioni, *Venetia*, p. 176: ‘È posto in questa Chiesa, ad’un picciolo Altare un Quadro di mezze figure, con la Madonna, San Nicolò, e Santa Orsola di Gio: Battista da Conigliano, stimato per una delle migliori opera sue’, and Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. 59-60: ‘nella Chiesa vicina de’ Padri di S. Maria dell’Horto dipinse la tavola di San Giovanni Battista in piedi sotto ad antica tribuna, imitando con molta accuratezza le macchie de’ marmi e le roture, che vengono cagionate dal tempo, e dalle parti del Santo Precursore vi stanno riti li Santi Pietro e Paolo, Marco e Girolamo, e di lontano appare il Castello di Conegliano, Patria del Pittore.’

⁵¹ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (‘Breve istruzione’), sig. B2^r: ‘Giorgione sia stato nella Pittura un’altro Gio: Cuthembergo inventore de Caratteri di Stampe.’

own generation (he does not mention any artists from the seventeenth century). He gives the distinct impression that, after Tintoretto and Veronese, there was a sense of decline in painting.⁵² Starting with Veronese's followers, Boschini becomes more critical, pointing out less praiseworthy aspects of their work. For instance, although he acknowledged Alvise dal Friso as an excellent painter, he nevertheless thought that he was not a good colourist.⁵³

Boschini observed that, in contrast to the older masters, the artists of his day no longer regarded their profession as an activity which would earn them esteem but rather as one exercised out of self interest.⁵⁴ This statement reveals his nostalgic attitude towards the art of past generations, especially the paintings of Giovanni Bellini and his contemporaries. Boschini's position was, however, not at all representative of the views expressed by other writers of his day. In general, seventeenth-century artistic literature was focused on contemporary artists. Authors such as Malvasia and Bellori were much more likely to promote the art of their own time than to praise artists who came before the Carracci.⁵⁵ It is striking, therefore, that Boschini, who was also a painter and had acquaintances among contemporary artists, looked to painters of the past, rather than those of his own day, as models.⁵⁶ He even mentions the Accademia of Fialletti as an example of an attempt to revive the past by perpetuating an artistic training which would produce painters capable of producing styles which resembled those of painters such as Titian, Giorgione, Pordenone, Palma il Vecchio, Iacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Giovanni Battista Zelotti, Iacopo Bassano and Giuseppe Salviati.⁵⁷ In his 1676 guidebook to works of art from Verona, *I gioielli pittoreschi*, Boschini also expressed great admiration for the Quattrocento artists who worked in Vicenza, and he mentioned many paintings there by Giovanni Bellini and

⁵² Cf. Merling, who maintains that Boschini saw no lowering of quality from sixteenth- to seventeenth-century painting; see Merling, *Marco Boschini*, pp. 299 and 324.

⁵³ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve instruzione'), sig. D2^r: 'fu singular pittore, di grave, e maneroso stile, non dirò tanto vago nel colorire, ma di maniera natural'.

⁵⁴ Ibid., sig. D4^r: 'l'Arte della Pittura viene al presente più esercitata per interesse, che per premura d'honore'.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Malvasia's laudatory passages on the Carracci, Guido Reni, Domenichino and Guercino in Bologna; see Malvasia, *Felsina*, II, pp. 3-4: 'Nella nobiltà, e celesti idée, come un Guido; ne gli erudite ritrovi, e nella espressione de gli affetti, come un Menichino...nella forza del chiaroscuro, e nel bel scomparto de' colori, come un Guercino.' Bellori's biographies of Roman and of non-Roman artists who worked in Rome also begin with Annibale Carracci; see Bellori, *Le vite*, pp. 31-108.

⁵⁶ Boschini knew Palma il Giovane (1548/50-1628), Domenico Tintoretto (1560-1635), Gabriele Caliari (1568-1630), Pietro Liberi (1605-1687), Nicolo Renieri (1591-1667) and Pietro Vecchia (1603-1678); see Sohm, *Pittoresco*, p. 109.

⁵⁷ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve instruzione'), sig. D10^r: 'Essendo forse la più necessaria di tutte le altre per conservare, aumentare e da nuovo far rissorgere quei talenti (per così dire) smarriti di quegli Oracoli, che oggidì vengono da tutti ossequiati, dico d'un Tiziano, d'un Giorgione, d'un Pordenone, d'un Palma il Vecchio, d'un Tintoretto, d'un Paolo Veronese, d'un Zilotti, d'un Bassano, d'un Salviati, e di tanti altri.'

Bartolomeo Montagna which he considered to be rare and precious.⁵⁸ He believed that Bellini and Montagna were among the first painters to have contributed significantly to the development of painting in Vicenza, and he thought that their works were as valuable as those of the modern painters.⁵⁹ He also documented older works by unknown artists and considered them worthy of praise.⁶⁰

Boschini's appreciation of the art of the past needs to be connected with his keen interest in art preservation and conservation and with his observations on the effects of bad restorations on painting. He is one of the first authors of a guidebook to discuss these issues in detail. He admired works that were well preserved, like Bartolomeo Montagna's painting in San Bartolomeo in Vicenza, which was in such good condition that it seemed to be a modern work.⁶¹ Equally, he pointed out paintings which were badly preserved. In a subsection of *Le ricche minere* entitled 'Distinzione di sette Maniere in certa guise consimili', Boschini recorded a number of paintings by Titian and Palma il Vecchio and analysed all the areas which had suffered partial or total damage due to negligence.⁶² His criticism of his contemporaries for allowing these 'grave errors' to happen and for not taking sufficient measures to prevent harm coming to paintings shows Boschini's engagement with issues which began to concern writers, connoisseurs and collectors of the seventeenth century, who were increasingly aware of the value of works of art from the past.⁶³

New Additions to *Le minere*

The second edition of *Le minere* took shape against the background of the principles and criteria set out in the 'Breve instruzione'. These were intended as a preliminary guide for art

⁵⁸ E.g., Boschini included the painting of an enthroned Madonna in Santa Corona among the precious works of Bartolomeo Montagna; see Boschini, *I gioielli*, p. 69: 'opera delle rare di Bartolomeo Montagna', and p. 72: 'opera delle preziose di Bartolomeo Montagna'.

⁵⁹ Ibid., sigs B6^v-B7^r: 'poiche sono cose di sì rara virtù, che meritano ogni lode, sì de pittori antichi come de moderni; incominciando da Gio: Bellino Veneziano, e Bartolomeo Montagna Vicentino'.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 4: 'sacrestia vi è un quadro ove un santo comunica diversi, opera antica d'autor incerto degna di lode'.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 90-91: 'opera di Bartolomeo Montagna, così ben conservata, come se fosse stata di presente'.

⁶² Examples include a number of paintings by Titian in San Marciliano, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and SS. Giovanni e Paolo, which had suffered considerable damage, as well as a painting by Palma il Vecchio in Madonna dell'Orto which had been partially destroyed by fire.

⁶³ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* ('Breve instruzione'), sig. D12^r: 'Gravi errori per certo!'

lovers or *dilettanti*, enabling them to gain a better understanding of how to look at paintings by keeping in mind notions such as *disegno*, *colorito* and *invenzione*.⁶⁴

The structure and the content of the first edition were preserved, and new additions were marked with an asterisk, including works by the Vivarini family and their followers, Giovanni Bellini and his followers, Cima da Conegliano and, finally, Palma il Vecchio.⁶⁵ Boschini also attempts to provide attributions. For example, referring to a painting in San Spirito, he says that it ‘resembled the manner of Bartolomeo Vivarini’.⁶⁶ Likewise, two other works in the same church are assigned to followers of Giovanni Bellini and Palma il Vecchio respectively.⁶⁷ For other works whose authorship was clear, Boschini provided concise information about the painter, the subject and the location. With respect to his vocabulary, there do not seem to be major differences from the original edition. He commonly uses terms such as ‘majestic throne’ and ‘decorous architectures’, especially when referring to paintings by Bartolomeo Vivarini and Giovanni Bellini.⁶⁸ Most of the early works of art added to the second edition, with very few exceptions, were not recorded either by Sansovino or Ridolfi.⁶⁹ Moreover, Boschini made more of an effort than those two earlier writers to record as many works of art as possible in every church. So, for instance, in the church of San Spirito alone, he mentioned works by Bartolomeo Vivarini, Giovanni Bellini, Bonifacio Veronese and a follower of Palma il Vecchio.⁷⁰ Boschini was aware of the changes which had occurred over time, especially the replacement of paintings in various churches, which he noted carefully.⁷¹

Like Ridolfi’s *Le meraviglie dell’arte*, *Le ricche minere* marks a significant moment in Venetian artistic literature. With its specific orientation, it brings a new breadth of perspectives to the judgement of paintings by adding a practical dimension and by

⁶⁴ These terms are brought in at the end of his short history of art: *ibid.*, sigs E1^r-E8^v.

⁶⁵ Boschini, *Le ricche minere*, pp. 20, 49, 77 (the Vivarini and followers); *ibid.*, pp. 58 and 77 (Giovanni Bellini and followers); *ibid.*, pp. 10-11 (Cima da Conegliano).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (Castello), p. 77: ‘opera che si avvicina alla maniera del Vivarini’.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: ‘opera sopra lo stile di Giovanni Bellini’, and ‘opera sopra lo stile del Palma il Vecchio’.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20: ‘maestoso trono’, and p. 77: ‘decorose architetture’.

⁶⁹ One such exception is *The Virgin and the Child* in Santo Stefano, which Boschini, following Ridolfi, mistakenly assigned to Palma il Vecchio; it is, in fact, by Bonifacio Veronese; see P. Rylands, *Palma il Vecchio*, Cambridge 1992, p. 307.

⁷⁰ Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (Castello), pp. 77-8.

⁷¹ E.g., a painting by Cima in Santa Maria de’ Crocicchieri, which, to Boschini’s regret, had been replaced by a modern one by Giacomo Moratto; see Boschini, *Le ricche minere* (Canareggio), p. 11: ‘ove era pure l’Annunciata di Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano, è stata levata, ne si vede più; ed era cosa preziosa ed in suo luogo vi è stata posta altra pittura moderna di mano di Giacomo Moratto’.

introducing an artistic vocabulary which equips the viewer with the critical tools needed to assess paintings both of the past and of the present with greater care and awareness. It is also an illustration of Boschini's ambition to provide the public with an informative and authoritative guide to Venetian painting, which would inspire eighteenth-century writers such as Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger to make their own contribution and to challenge some of Boschini's views about early Venetian painters.

CHAPTER 4

‘Taste and Scholarship’ in Eighteenth-Century Venice: Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger

On the last folio of *Varie pitture a fresco*, an innovative work by Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger (1706-1778), published in 1760 and containing prints after frescos by Venetian painters from Giorgione to Tintoretto,¹ we find a posthumous addition entitled ‘Memoria’. It consists of a one-page biography written by his brother, Girolamo, who informs us that Antonio:

was born on 1 January 1706 in San Jacopo all’Orio in Venice. His father, Alessandro, although not a learned man, had a special interest in fine arts and sciences... His mother was Antonia Limonti from Milan. He was trained as a painter in Cavaliere Bambini’s studio; and his patron, the illustrious *procuratore* of San Marco, Lorenzo Tiepolo, appointed him librarian of the Marciana. He was proficient in ancient Greek, which he had learned from Antonio Bongiovani, a priest in Lonigo... He was the main author of *Bell’Opera delle antiche statue greche e romane*, for which he made the drawings; and wrote a book on Venetian painting full of interesting and useful notes on the paintings and the artists of our highly reputed school. He died in 1778 and was buried in Santa Maria Mater Domini.

He understood architecture and perspective very well; he was also a good poet, an expert in music, most knowledgeable in numismatics, statues, cameos, sculpted gems and other ancient works of this type. He was handsome, well-proportioned, had very good manners, was a faithful friend, too serious at times, brave-hearted, difficult for the most part with the fairer sex, sober and not at all materialistic. He was a member of the most important European academies, and all the scholars of his day knew him.²

¹ Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger, *Varie pitture a fresco de’ principali maestri veneziani. Ora la prima volta con le stampe pubblicate*, Venice 1760. In a letter to Giovanni Gaetano Bottari, Pierre Jean Mariette recommends Zanetti’s work because it included 24 prints after Venetian works which were lost; see letter CCXXV, Mariette to Bottari, 23 May Paris, 1761, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, IV, pp. 538-40, at pp. 539-40: ‘Vi si vegono in 24 tavole le triste reliquie delle ammirabili pitture di *Giorgione*, di *Tiziano*, di *Paolo Veronese*, ec., ce una volta già abbellivano le facciate di Venezia, e di cui non ci rimane quasi niente. Queste non sono quasi altro che frammenti di figure, ma la cui memoria è sempre preziosa, e voi non vi potete dispensare dal provvedervene per la libreria *Corsini*.’

² Girolamo Zanetti, ‘Memoria’, in Zanetti, *Varie pitture*: ‘Egli nacque il primo giorno dell’anno di N. S. 1706 in San Jacopo dall’Orio anticamente in luprio di Vinegia. Ebbe il padre, per nome Alessandro (uomo non dotto ma grandissimo amatore dele Scienze e buone Arti)... La sua madre fu Antonia Limonti Milanese. Ebbe per

As Edward Grassman noted, among the most important activities in the intellectual life of eighteenth-century Italy were exchanging letters and participating in academies; and these activities were engaged in by representative figures of the period such as Lodovico Antonio Muratori, Giovanni Bottari and Girolamo Tiraboschi.³ As librarian of the Marciana, Zanetti, too, exchanged letters with learned colleagues and belonged to academic circles.⁴ His own and his cousin's correspondence with Giovanni Brunacci, Francesco Algarotti and Anton Francesco Gori on artistic matters reveal Zanetti's active involvement in the cultural life of his day.⁵ At the same time, the circulation of Italian translations of French publications containing accounts of Venetian painting, together with the extensive reconstructions of the histories of literature or art by writers such as Tiraboschi and Saverio Bettinelli,⁶ seems to have had an impact on Zanetti's thought and his own approach to reconstructing the art history of Venice.⁷ His views on Venetian art were also influenced by earlier or contemporary texts of Italian and French writers such as Francesco Algarotti, D'Argenville, Roger de Piles, André Félibien and Nicholas Cochin, even though he does not explicitly cite them.⁸

maestri nelle scienze un valente prete chiamato dottore Hocker, indi i Gesuti, e nella pittura, cui fu dalla natura stessa invitato e spinto, il celebre cav. Bambini e procc. di S. Marco Lorenzo Tiepolo d'illustre memoria, fu suo particular protettore e sostegno, e lo promosse, essendo Bibliotecario, insieme cogli eccell. Riformatori dello studio di Padova all'onorevol posto di Custode della pubblica libreria che sostenne non senza molta riputazione per quarantadue anno. Fu valentissimo nella Lingua greca imparata in parte da se, e in parte colla guida del suo e mio ottimo e desideratissimo amico D. Antonio Bongiovanni prete di Lonigo... Fu principale autore e disegnatore della Bell'Opera delle antiche statue greche e romane che si ammirano nell'antisala della teste accennata biblioteca, e scrisse un libro della pittura viniziana ripieno di curiose ed utili notizie intorno alle opera e a' professori della nostra riputatissima Scuola. Finì di vivere per fiera colica il dì 3 di novembre del 1778 e fu sotterrato in Santa Maria Mater Domini... Intese molto bene l'architettura, e la prospettiva, e fu anche buon poeta, perito nella musica, versatissimo poi nella numismatica, e singolarmente nella cognizione di statue, cammei, gemme scolpite, e altri antichi lavori di ogni genere. Fu di bell'aspetto, di giusta statura, di ottimi costumi, amico fedele, talvolta alquanto più serio del dovere, di animo forte, difficile per lo più col bel sesso, sobrio, e niente inclinator al guadagno... Fu aggregato alle principali Accademie di Europa, e conosciuto da tutti i principali letterati del suo tempo.'

³ See E. Grassmann, *All'ombra del Vasari. Cinque saggi sulla storiografia dell'arte nell'Italia del Settecento*, Florence 2000, pp. 143-75 ('Lettere dello Zanetti al Brunacci'), at pp. 143-4.

⁴ The Zanetti family, for instance, is recorded among the members of the Paduan Accademia degli Ricovrati; see G. Banzoni, 'I Ricovrati nel '600', in *Dall'Accademia dei Ricovrati all'Accademia Galileiana. Atti del convegno storico per il IV centenario della fondazione (1599-1999): Padova...2000*, ed. E. Riondato, Padua 2001, pp. 11-57, at p. 25.

⁵ See Grassmann, *All'ombra del Vasari*, p. 144.

⁶ Saverio Bettinelli, *Risorgimento d'Italia negli studi, nelle arti e ne' costumi dopo il mille*, Bassano 1775.

⁷ See Previtali, *La fortuna*, p. 99.

⁸ E.g., Francesco Algarotti's *Saggio sopra la pittura*, Venice 1756; the Italian edition of André Félibien's *Entretiens*, entitled *Vita degli architetti ...*, Venice 1755; and Roger de Piles's *Idée*, Venice 1770; see also Grassmann, *All'ombra del Vasari*, pp. 117-24, and N. Ivanoff, 'Antonio Maria Zanetti – critico d'arte', *Atti dell'Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 111, 1953, pp. 29-48, at pp. 30-32, for the influence of de Piles and Cochin.

In this section I shall examine two of Zanetti's writings on art, *Descrizione della pittura veneziana* (1733) and *Della pittura veneziana* (1771), with the aim of outlining his contributions to Venetian art historiography and establishing the position of his writings within the spectrum of Venetian artistic literature.

Descrizione della pittura veneziana (1733)

One of Zanetti's earlier writings, published in Venice in 1733, was entitled *Descrizione di tutte le pubbliche pitture della città di Venezia*. It was intended as a new edition of Boschini's *Le ricche minere* and was dedicated to his elder cousin, also called Antonio Maria Zanetti, whom he describes as 'one of the most distinguished *dilettanti* of drawings of the present day and one of the most erudite connoisseurs of ancient and modern paintings'.⁹ In the preface, Zanetti recounts the history of painting from its origins to the first appearance of art works in Venice; and, like Boschini, he emphasizes *disegno*, *invenzione* and *colorito*, devoting three separate sections to these notions.¹⁰ There then follows a compendium of short biographies of artists ordered chronologically from Guariento (1310-1370) to Angelo Trevisani (1669-1753), most of which were based on those found in the books of Ridolfi and Boschini.¹¹ What differs, however, from the previous descriptions is Zanetti's use of new pictorial terms and of different criteria for judging works of art. Analysing Jacobello del Fiore's paintings, for instance, he singles out 'the figures of saints depicted with modesty and propriety, which inspire devotion' (fig. 24).¹² In contrast to previous Venetian writers, who, in referring to Jacobello, had noted that he still painted in 'a Greek manner', that is, in the Byzantine style, Zanetti focuses on a different aspect of his paintings: their 'proprietà', or appropriateness, which, in his opinion, was a distinctive quality of Trecento and

⁹ Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. [ii]: 'uno de' più distinti dilettanti della presente età nel disegno, e per uno de' dotti conoscitori delle antiche e moderne pitture.' Antonio Maria Zanetti the Elder (1680-1767) was a Venetian collector, artistic adviser to English consuls and correspondent of Pierre Jean Mariette (1694-1774) and Count Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15: 'Compendio delle vite, e maniere de' più riguardevoli pittori didotto da quello, ch'il Cavalier Carlo Ridolfi, e Marco Boschini ne scrissero.'

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 16: 'e facendo le arie de' volti de' Santi con certa modestia e proprietà, che veramente incitano alla divozione'.

Quattrocento art.¹³ With Zanetti's description in mind, the eighteenth-century viewer would gaze at Jacobello's paintings with different eyes, aware of what saints should look like in order to exert a powerful impression on them.

Colour and composition were two other features which particularly interested Zanetti. In his opinion, Donato Veneziano's *Crucifixion* in the refectory of San Giorgio in Alga provided the best example of the two elements joined together in an exquisite manner. He praises their 'neat and beautiful colours' and the artist's skill in integrating the figures within the composition.¹⁴

Referring to Bartolomeo Vivarini, Zanetti identifies the three main characteristics of his art which made him stand out as an excellent painter: propriety, charm and naturalness.¹⁵ This is the second time that the term 'propriety' crops up in Zanetti's vocabulary to designate a particular feature of Trecento and Quattrocento paintings. These three terms also served as indications of the qualities on which he based his rankings of painters and allowed him to highlight the stylistic progress from one artist to another. For instance, he considered Giovanni Buonconsiglio 'among the greatest representatives of the ancient manner' and acknowledged Marco Basaiti's contribution to 'good painting' through his 'softness' and his 'delightful and expressive compositions, with many figures'.¹⁶ Zanetti was, in fact, the first Venetian writer to use the term 'softness' in connection with Basaiti's works, suggesting a contrast with the 'hard manner',¹⁷ a pejorative label often applied by Sansovino, Ridolfi and Boschini to Trecento paintings such as those by Jacobello (figs 25, 26).

At the summit of his ranking of artists before Giorgione, Zanetti placed Giovanni Bellini, who, in his opinion, painted 'infinitely better than his predecessors'.¹⁸ Bellini's

¹³ See Chapter 2, n. 25 above.

¹⁴ Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 17: 'Donato...fu de' primi che cominciassero ad operare con netto e bel colore, e con qualche arbitrio, campeggiando le figure con paesi, e con altro, e facendo copiose istorie; particolarmente nel Refettorio de' Padri di S. Giorgio in Alga dipinse in gran tavola la crocifissione del Signore con molte e ben disposte figure.'

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17: 'proprietà, vaghezza, e naturalezza'.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 'tra i migliori operatori nell'antica maniera', and p. 18: 'avvantaggiò la pittura buona parte nella tenerezza, nella composizione gustosa e ben espresso di più figure'.

¹⁷ Sharp outlines, together with the static figures depicted in a Byzantine style, were among the features which, in Zanetti's view, gave the impression of a 'hard manner'; for some of the artistic terms employed by Zanetti in this case, see Appendix IX, nos 12, 17, 24, in vol. II of this dissertation; for a contrast between Basaiti's style and that of the 'ancients', see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 75: 'e ben segnati sono gli occhi, il naso, e la bocca, che par di rilievo e viva; oltre al dimostrare un'aria umile veramente e divota. Quest'arte era nuova in quei dì; e non l'aveano conosciuta ancora i seguaci degli antichi modi.'

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19: 'dipinse...infinitamente meglio degli altri tutti, che prima di lui dipingessero'.

paintings, he believed, had reached perfection, even though they still lacked softness.¹⁹ In Zanetti's view, he was 'a diligent painter and a charming colourist'.²⁰

Although Zanetti does not set out a strict chronology in his short biographies, he divides artists broadly into four groups. The first group begins with Guariento and ends with Giovanni Bellini.²¹ The next covers painters from Giorgione to Girolamo da Ponte (1566-1621). Zanetti includes two of the four canonical painters of the Venetian manner in this group: Titian and Jacopo Bassano (the other two being Tintoretto and Veronese).²² The penultimate group starts with Tintoretto and ends with Fra Cosimo (1537-1620); and the last one goes from Pietro Liberi (1605-1687) to Angelo Trevisani (1699-1753).²³ This final group, unlike the previous ones, which, for the most part, included painters Zanetti regarded as excellent – an opportunity for him to produce an array of laudatory passages – features artists who, in his view, belonged to a less talented generation, whose styles were not equal to those of their predecessors. So, instead of producing a complete set of biographies, which would have constrained him to make negative judgements, he provided accounts only of those painters whom he considered to be praiseworthy and advised readers to consult Ridolfi's biographies for the rest.²⁴ Even so, Zanetti gives biographies of thirty-three artists who had caught his eye.²⁵ It is striking, nevertheless, that he preferred to

¹⁹ Ibid.: 'la pittura alla perfezione ridotta; non mancando alle cose sue...che alquanto più di morbidezza.'

²⁰ Ibid., p. 20: 'Fu diligente e vaghissimo coloritore.'

²¹ In his biography of Giorgione, Zanetti reaffirms the developments and progress of the first period of painting which culminated with Giovanni Bellini; see Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 22: 'Furono non piccioli i progressi, che fece la pittura in quella prima sua età in riguardo a' primieri, che la trattarono fino a Gio: Bellino.'

²² Ibid. p. 40: 'Quattro dicemo essere stati i classici autori della Viniziana maniera, e di due primi cioè di Tiziano, e del Bassano assieme cogli allievi loro abbiamo descritte le vite, e le maniere; passiamo ora al terzo ch'è Jacopo Robusti, detto il Tintoretto.' The four artists most appreciated by Boschini were Giorgione, Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto; see Chapter 3, n. 57 above.

²³ Zanetti, *Descrizione*, pp. 40-54.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 54: 'Il seguire onde noi sceglieremo alcuni pochi, che con gran vantaggio dagli altri si distinsero, rimetendo il diletante, che volesse di alcuni altri sapere i ragguagli, al libro II delle *Meraviglie dell'Arte* del Cavaliere Ridolfi.' The artists whose biographies should be consulted in Ridolfi's work were: Tommaso Dolobella (1570-1650), Antonio Vicentino (1538-1617), Alessandro Maganza (1556-1630), Marcantonio Bassetti (1588-1630), Giorgio Damini (?-1631), Tommaso Sandrino (1575-1630), Francesco Zugni (?-1636), Giovanni Battista Bissone, Filippo Zanimberti (1585-1636), Claudio Ridolfi (1560-1640) and Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658).

²⁵ These are: Pietro Liberi (1605-1687), Pietro Vecchia (1602-1678), Carlo Loth (1632-1698), Sebastiano Bombelli (1635-1716), Luca Giordano (1632-1705), Federico Cervelli, Francesco Ruschi, Giulio Carpioni (1613-1678), Andrea Celesti (1637-1712), Antonio Fumiani (1645-1710), Antonio Molinari, Giovanni Segalla, Gregorio Lazzarini (1655-1730), Luca Carlevari (1663-1730), Marco Ricci (1676-1729), Sebastiano Ricci (1659-1734), Antonio Balestra (1666-1740), Nicolò Bambini (1651-1736), Matteo Bortoloni, Girolamo Brusaferrò, Antonio Canale (1697-1768), Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), Alessandro Marchesini (1663-1738), Giovambattista Mariotti, Bartolommeo Nazari (1699-1758), Santo Piatti, Giovambattista Piazzetta (1682-

leave out the less gifted artists rather than including them in his compendium and criticizing their works or styles of painting. This attitude reveals Zanetti's selectivity and his well-defined ranking of artists.

He took a similar approach in the foreward. Setting out his working method, Zanetti stated that he only recorded paintings of good quality, whether they were extant or lost. He further explained that he had not included all the paintings mentioned by Boschini because he believed that some of these were by less important artists. Moreover, because he considered the painters of Boschini's day, that is, the late seventeenth century, to be of little merit, Zanetti reduced the length of his descriptions of their paintings.²⁶

Zanetti's principles of selection clearly indicate a new approach towards Venetian art compared with that adopted by previous writers. While Boschini and Ridolfi largely made arbitrary choices as to the paintings which they recorded in their guidebooks. Zanetti's preferences were more primarily dictated by aesthetic criteria. He paid greater attention to the quality of a painting than his predecessors had done and was more confident than they had been about what was, or was not, of value in them. His guidebook therefore marks an important stage in the development of Venetian writings about art. His introduction of an expanded artistic vocabulary allowed him to express more nuanced opinions on particular paintings, as well as helping him to shape his readers' appreciation of these works. He was also more dogmatic in his judgements than his predecessors.

In what follows, I shall examine the extent to which Zanetti's programmatic statements in the compendium and foreward are reflected in his choice of works of art in the *Descrizione*. I shall also analyse the relationship of Zanetti's book to Boschini's *Le ricche minere* and Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie dell'arte* and identify which works he considered to be less important and therefore decided not to include in his guidebook.

1754), Antonio Pellegrini (1675-1741), Giambattista Pittoni (1687-1767), Francesco Polazzi, Giovambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770) and Angelo Trevisani (1699-1753).

²⁶ Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 64: 'abbiamo levate le lunghe descrizioni fatte da quello [Boschini] alle cose di poco merito, come degli autori che vivevano al suo tempo'.

Artists and Works of Art Not Mentioned by Zanetti

Even though Zanetti produced a new edition of Boschini's guidebook, this did not mean that he added a large amount of earlier works to those already discussed by Boschini. On the contrary, comparing the number of paintings by artists before Giorgione mentioned by both writers, there are 87 in Boschini's book and only 56 in Zanetti's.²⁷ And in comparison to Ridolfi, Zanetti cut the number of pre-Giorgione paintings down from 127 to 65.²⁸ This, however, was not the only change reflected in Zanetti's new guidebook: unlike earlier writers, he recorded only those works of art which measured up to his standards, leaving out all the rest. In contrast to Boschini, for instance, he did not record any works by Lodovico Vivarini or Giovanni Battista Lorenzetti. He omitted as well Jacopo Bellini, who had been discussed by both Sansovino and Ridolfi.²⁹ Among the painters included by Ridolfi, but absent from Zanetti's book, are Guariento, Giorgio Veneziano, Gentile da Fabriano, Cristoforo Parmese, Bellin Bellino and Francesco Bissolo. In excluding all these artists, Zanetti was, no doubt, applying the criteria announced at the beginning of his guidebook: he regarded these painters as less significant, and their works did not arouse his interest sufficiently to list them.

These omissions provide a revealing indication of his own preferences with regard to earlier generations of artists. They also show which artists Zanetti championed and how he attempted to teach his readers to appreciate works of art by subtly proposing a new method and a different vocabulary. Since, however, he says nothing at all about the painters whom he omits, we can only speculate as to his specific reasons for leaving them out. Nonetheless, it seems very likely that he would have found their works lacking in the main

²⁷ The scale of Zanetti's reduction of Boschini's list of paintings by earlier artists is apparent from these figures: Luigi Vivarini: two out of three works; Bartolomeo Vivarini: twelve out of twenty-one; Benedetto Diana: three out of four; Vittore Carpaccio: nine out of twelve; Lazzaro Sebastiani: three out of four; Gentile Bellini: three out of six; Giovanni Bellini: twenty-two out of thirty-three; Vincenzo Catena: two out of four.

²⁸ Similarly, the scale of Zanetti's reduction of Boschini's list of paintings by earlier artists is apparent from these figures: Iacobello del Fiore: two out of five works; Giovanni and Antonio Vivarini: one out of five; Benedetto Diana: three out of five; Marco Basaiti: four out of five; Vittore Carpaccio: nine out of fifteen; Lazzaro Sebastiani: three out of five; Giovanni Mansueti: two out of five; Gentile Bellini: three out of nine; Giovanni Bellini: twenty-two out of forty-eight; Cima da Conegliano: ten out of fifteen; Girolamo Santa Croce: two out of five; and Vincenzo Catena: four out of five.

²⁹ Sansovino mentions one work by Jacopo Bellini in SS. Giovanni e Paolo and two works in the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fols 23^v and 101^r; Ridolfi also mentions the works in the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista as well as two portraits of Jacopo Lusignano and Laura and Petrarch; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. 54-5.

attributes which he praised so highly when discussing the painters whom he admired: *proprietà*, *naturalezza* and *vaghezza*, appropriateness, naturalness and charm or gracefulness.

Works of Art Mentioned Only by Zanetti

Zanetti included a number of earlier paintings which had not been mentioned by Ridolfi or Boschini. In discussing four of them – located in Santo Stefano, Patriarcato, San Pantaleone and the chiesa de' Gesuiti – Zanetti did not name the artists, but recorded these paintings on the grounds that, although executed in the 'ancient manner', they were in 'quite good taste'. He regarded the paintings in Santo Stefano as among 'the most beautiful and well-preserved examples of this type in Venice'.³⁰ His descriptions of these works show that he was interested in the art of the past from both an aesthetic and an historical point of view: even though the artists were no longer identifiable, they nevertheless remained an invaluable 'document' of the past, while their artistic quality further enhanced his appreciation of their worth.

Among Trecento works, Zanetti mentions Nicoletto Semitecolo's frescoes executed for the Compagnia de' Lucchesi, noting that they had been replaced by Pietro Ricchi's paintings.³¹ Before Zanetti, only Sansovino had referred to these frescoes.³² Some Quattrocento works appeared solely, though only very briefly, in Zanetti's guidebook such as those by Bartolomeo Vivarini located in eleven churches of Venice.³³ Likewise, he is the first to mention Benedetto Diana's *The Virgin and Child with Sts Jerome and Francis* in Magistrato della Zecca, though he merely identifies the subject, without providing any assessment of it. A slightly different approach can be observed in connection with Marco Basaiti's *Assumption of the Virgin* in Santa Maria degli Angeli and Giovanni Buonconsiglio's altarpiece in Magistrato della messettaria: Zanetti admires the beautiful landscapes depicted

³⁰ For the descriptions of the works, see Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 175: 'Sonovi poi nell'altra facciata diverse figure pure dipinte a fresco di maniera antica ma assai di buon gusto. Queste pitture benchè sieno alquanto logorate sono delle più belle e conservate, che veggansi a fresco in Venezia.'

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 409: 'sonovi diversi quadri, che contengono l'istoria del Volto Santo di Lucca, opere di Pietro Ricchi, poste in vece di quelle di Nicoletto Semitecolo, che andarano a male per l'antichità.'

³² See Chapter 1, n. 28 above.

³³ The paintings were located in Magistrato del Monte (Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 282), San Giovanni Evangelista (*ibid.*, p. 292), San Rocco, San Giorgio (*ibid.*, p. 339), Santa Maria della Carità (*ibid.*, p. 341), San Giovanni Crisostomo (*ibid.*, p. 379), San Giobbe (*ibid.*, p. 418), San Cristoforo di Murano (*ibid.*, p. 443), San Michiel di Murano (*ibid.*, p. 447) and Sant'Andrea della Certosa (*ibid.*, p. 466).

by both artists and describes their works as ‘rare’.³⁴ He is also the only guidebook writer to refer to the paintings by Cima in the Magistrato della camera dell’armamento sotto il Broglio (*Sts Mark, Andrew and Louis*), in San Samuello (*St Thomas Altarpiece*) and in San Cristoforo di Murano (*The Virgin with Other Saints*).³⁵ In all three cases, he provides no more than basic information about the works. Finally, he mentions five paintings by Vincenzo Catena, two of which had not featured in other guidebooks: *The Virgin and the Child with Angels and Sts Theodore and Mark*, in the Procuratie di San Marco, and the *Benediction of Pope Alexander III*, in Santa Maria della Carità, executed in a ‘very delicate’ manner.³⁶

In adding new works of art from the Trecento and Quattrocento to the repertory of Venetian guidebooks, Zanetti chose to be concise and to follow Boschini’s model, in ten cases not expressing any opinion about the quality of the paintings. It is important to bear in mind, however, that he included only those works of art which satisfied his taste, so all these paintings must have measured up to his aesthetic criteria.

Della pittura veneziana e delle opere pubbliche de veneziani maestri (1771)

Suspendit picta vultum mentemque tabella

Horace, *Epistles*, II. 1. 97.

Thirty-eight years after the publication of *Descrizione della pittura veneziana*, Zanetti wrote a new guidebook to Venetian paintings entitled: *Della pittura veneziana e delle opera pubbliche de veneziani maestri*. It was published in 1771 by Giambattista Albrizzi, who was himself an author of this type of literature.³⁷ In the preface, Zanetti explains that, even though this guidebook was conceived primarily as a new edition of his *Descrizione della pittura veneziana* (1733), he had larger ambitions in this work, referring to it as ‘a general treatise’, in which

³⁴ Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 449: ‘un bellissimo paese è di mano di Marco Basaiti cosa rara’, and p. 276: ‘un paese bellissimo opera rara di Giovanni Buonconsigli’.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 172-3, 443.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 341: ‘cosa in vero molto gentile’.

³⁷ Albrizzi (1698-1777) published his *Il Forestiere illuminato intorno alle cose più e curiose antiche e moderne della città di Venezia* in Venice in 1740. This guidebook was modelled on previous examples, except that Albrizzi did not make qualitative distinctions between the works of art which he included.

he hoped to provide a complete history of Venetian art and artists.³⁸ He envisioned two possible categories of readership: *l'amator dilettante* and *il dotto professore*.³⁹ Adopting a twofold perspective, he explained how, on the one hand, each type of reader might benefit from his book and, on the other, how his carefully layered accounts of paintings, moving from basic information to complex analyses, would appeal to every taste. Although Boschini had already defined these two categories metaphorically in the 'Breve istruzione', his explanation was not as coherent as Zanetti's.⁴⁰ For instance, in the case of the *dilettanti*, Zanetti aimed at activating their natural impulse, which, he believed, was the origin of 'good taste'. This impulse was the preliminary basis for what he intended to cultivate further in the art-lover: the ability to recognize good paintings, regardless of who painted them.⁴¹ He hoped that through this 'educational approach', his readership would learn to appreciate art works of great merit, so that, whenever they found themselves in the churches of Venice admiring their favourite pieces, they would desire to see whether there were other paintings worth viewing.⁴² As for *professori*, or painters by profession, Zanetti believed that the guidebook could serve only as a reference work; for those, however, who aspired to become painters, he intended to offer proper guidance and explain complicated issues such as the origins of 'the marvellous effects of grand and sublime works of art', a very challenging task which his predecessors had not attempted.⁴³

This is the first time that a Venetian writer formulated a new system for his guidebook and set out to explain it with such clarity. Zanetti offered his readers an innovative and authoritative perspective on art, which he created by introducing aesthetic notions such as 'taste', but also by relying on common sense and his personal reflections. The most systematic Venetian writer up to his time, he was also consistent: repeating ideas from his earlier writings, he maintained that he discussed only 'beautiful' paintings and left out those which were of no interest to him or to 'those who were able to judge them' and

³⁸ Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. VII: 'formarne seriamente un intero generale trattato... L'opera mia e un'istoria dell'arte e degli artisti veneziani, in quanto appartiene ad essa arte e non altro.'

³⁹ Ibid., p. IX.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 3, n. 41 above.

⁴¹ Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. IX: 'Per l'amator dilettante volli aggiungere a'racconti miei tutti quei lumi che sogliono raffinare il natural sentimento di esso, onde il buon gusto ha l'origine.'

⁴² Ibid.: 'trovandosi in una chiesa o in altro luogo, per vedere un quadro, vuol sapere se ivi sta qualche altra opera degna d'essere veduta, prima di partirsi'.

⁴³ Ibid.: 'Ma per chi è sulla via d'arrivare a quell grado, feci ogni sforzo per farci capire donde nascessero i maravigliosi effetti delle opera grandi e sublimi; cosa da altri, per quanto io sappia non mai tentata.'

which ‘deserved to be removed from churches, without any regret’.⁴⁴ In this section, I shall explore how Zanetti organized his ‘treatise’ and how his judgements on Venetian painters and works of art evolved, as he announced in the preface, from simple to more complex assessments.

Zanetti conceived of his *Della pittura veneziana* as a combination of a guidebook and a collection of biographies of artists. It was divided into five books, each of which contained chronologically arranged sections on Venetian painters and descriptions of their works, a detailed list of non-Venetian painters who had been active in Venice and, finally, a catalogue of prints after public works of art in Venice. Occasionally, the order in which he presented the painters was not strictly chronological, because he wanted to organize them into groups according to their style.⁴⁵ The work begins with a discussion of the first forms of art which appeared in Venice, including the mosaics in the basilica of San Marco and a number of anonymous paintings dating from around 1300.⁴⁶ Zanetti thought that the style of these paintings had been influenced by the Greek or Byzantine manner and that, therefore, they were lacking in good technique. He did not, however, include these works solely for purposes of historical documentation, as had most of the earlier writers on art when dealing with pre-1350 paintings. Instead, he found a new justification for their presence in his guidebook by acknowledging that there was sound reasoning behind their execution, even though the paintings were not excellent in themselves.⁴⁷ This observation alone shows that he had an acute critical sense and a good grasp of detail.

Zanetti’s classification of painters after 1350 differs considerably from those of Boschini and other guidebook writers and, unlike theirs, is based on stylistic evaluations rather than chronology. The first group consists of Quattrocento and early Cinquecento painters from Lorenzo Veneziano (1357-1372) to Bartolomeo Vivarini (1440-1500). Earlier

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. X: ‘Tutte le opere belle io descrissi; ‘i quadri di cui non parlo sono i più disapprovati da chi può giudicare, e che potrebbero levarsi dalle chiese senza rimorso’. Zanetti did not, for instance, discuss the paintings of Jacopo Bellini.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 32: ‘Perciò volendo io seguir l’orme della pittura nostra nei suoi progressi, mi conviene dividere questa varia turba, e formarne tre differenti schiere, senza seguire rigorosamente la cronologia, che non resterà tuttavia stranamente alterata.’

⁴⁶ These works were: a portrait of St Donato in San Donato in Murano; a painting of St Nicholas in Scuola di S. Niccolò; stories from the life of Christ or the Virgin in Scuola dell’Annunziata; a painting of St Peter Martyr in San Giorgio Maggiore; and a painting of St Gregory in San Gregorio. In most cases, the attribution of these works was unclear.

⁴⁷ Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 7: ‘che in esse opera veder si fa, molti assai sensibilmente, come alcune teorie nella pittura, fossero rendute migliori assai prima della buona esecuzione; e che perciò intendasi che questa seconda fu ed è più difficile delle prime a ottenersi’.

writers had not mentioned Lorenzo Veneziano's works; however, in Zanetti's opinion, he was a worthy representative of the first period of painting. Writing of his *Virgin Annunciate* in Sant'Antonio (fig. 27), Zanetti observed that the main action was visualized with 'great propriety...and shows quite clearly the good insight of the wise painter, who attempted to give life and expression to his figures by following in the footsteps of nature and truth'.⁴⁸ Zanetti, however, claimed that in order for this work to be classed as a good painting, Lorenzo would have had to prove that he had mastered a better style.⁴⁹

Discussing another painter of the same period, Guariento, Zanetti described his early style, in his Paduan frescoes, as 'greccheggiante' (figs 28, 29).⁵⁰ Even though his style was not pleasing to Zanetti's taste, he still regarded him as talented on account of his ideas.⁵¹ Although he had not included Guariento in the 1733 edition of his guidebook, because he did not consider his works to be 'beautiful', Zanetti now decided to record and evaluate his works in Padua – though not the fresco in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, which was no longer visible and which he had briefly touched on in the preface to his *Descrizione*.⁵² Since he was determined to exclude works of art which did not correspond to his aesthetic criteria, Zanetti's decision to introduce Guariento is somewhat surprising. It can perhaps be explained by the fact that Venetian art history was generally held to have begun with him or else as a result of Zanetti's innovative view that the value of earlier paintings lay in their conceptual, rather than stylistic, assessment by viewers.⁵³ He also provided his readers with a brief comparative analysis of the styles of Lorenzo Veneziano and Guariento, praising Lorenzo's ability to depict heads and capture expressions (fig. 30), and Guariento's skill in depicting folds, clothing and movement (fig. 31).⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 8: 'con molta proprietà è immaginata l'azione principale, e mostrassi assai chiaramente il buon animo del saggio pittore, che tentò di dar vita ed espressione alle sue figure sulle tracce della natura e della verità.'

⁴⁹ Ibid.: 'Se a sì giusti pensamenti avesse egli potuto aggiungere bontà di stile, sarebbe questa tavola fra le buone pitture tenuta; ma le scuole di que' tempi non potean dare di più.'

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 10: 'trovasi lo stile di Guariento greccheggiante'.

⁵¹ Ibid.: 'nei pensamenti apparisce un genio'.

⁵² Zanetti, *Descrizione*, p. 16: 'Guariento Padovano, essendo stato scelto dal Senato nel 1365 sotto il Principato del Doge Marco Cornaro, a dipingere nella sala del gran consiglio il Paradiso.'

⁵³ Zanetti shared this view about the beginnings of Venetian art history with Sansovino and Ridolfi; see Sansovino, *Venetia*, fol. 123v: 'il primo che vi colorisse fu Guariento'; Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 17: 'Quando dopo l'anno 1300, si cominciò à migliorar la maniera, e tra quelli che fecero opera di qualche considerazione in quella Città fu Guariento'; and Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 9: 'questo artefice da cui comincia l'istoria appunto de' nostri pittori'.

⁵⁴ Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 10: 'Guariento forse dispose meglio di questo le pieghe de' panni e le movenze delle figure; ma Lorenzo mostra qualche maggiore abilità nelle teste e nelle espressioni.'

As he continued his account of Venetian painting, Zanetti began to point out a subtle evolution in style, which became more noticeable in the works of Andrea da Murano. He observed that Andrea da Murano and his followers – including the Vivarini, Jacobello del Fiore, Carlo Crivelli and Donato Veneziano – had managed to escape from the ‘very ancient rigidities’ and to replace these with ‘intelligence and skill’.⁵⁵ In other words, in Zanetti’s view, the early Trecento painters had a hard or stiff manner, while the new group of artists had developed a less rigid style. Accordingly, his analyses become more detailed and less critical. For instance, he notes that Luigi Vivarini’s painting of *St Jerome with the Lion* in Scuola di San Girolamo had ‘appropriate figures, dressed with proper clothes, disposed and rendered with naturalness’.⁵⁶ Writing about Giovanni and Antonio Vivarini’s *Coronation of the Virgin* in San Pantaleone, he says that ‘it was carried out with great love; and the figures were placed in good order and with decorum’.⁵⁷ As for Jacobello del Fiore’s *Virgin* in Scuola della Carità, it showed that ‘the painter’s imagination was not only noble but also at times graceful’.⁵⁸ Zanetti considered Bartolomeo Vivarini’s *Virgin of Humility* in Santa Maria Formosa (fig. 32) to be ‘one of his best works, carried out with great love, competent taste and intelligence’.⁵⁹ Or, referring to Alvise Vivarini’s *Resurrected Christ* in S. Giovanni in Bragora (fig. 33), he noted that the figure of Christ was portrayed ‘with elegance, briskness and skilful drawing. The colours and the shading are quite delightful and blended with artistry’.⁶⁰ Zanetti’s comments on these works reveal a different approach from the attitude reflected in his accounts of Guariento or Lorenzo Veneziano: he regards them as representatives of a better style, of a new aesthetic and taste, which needs to be described with a new vocabulary and judged with higher expectations. ‘Imagination’, ‘decorum’, ‘order’, ‘taste’ and ‘skilful drawing’ are just a few of the notions he employed to describe the stylistic evolution which was beginning to take place in Venetian art.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 11: ‘ma si esca oramai di quelle antichissime rigidetze, e si cominci a vedere nelle pitture nostre ingegno ed arte’.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 13-14: ‘figure molto bene inventate e situate, vestite di ben intesi panni, disposti e fatti con molta naturalezza’.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 15: ‘È condotta con molto amore; e non ne sono le figure disposte senza buon ordine e decoro.’

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 17: ‘che nobile non solamente, ma qualche volta graziosa era la fantasia di questo Pittore’.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 25: ‘condotta con molto amore, con sufficiente gusto ed intelligenza’.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 26: ‘questa figura ritratta...non senza eleganza, sveltezza e disegno. I colori e gli ombreggiamenti sono lieti abbastanza, e uniti con artificio’.

Writing about painters from Vittore Carpaccio (1460-1525/26) to Girolamo Santacroce (1480-1556), Zanetti divides them into three groups: those who followed the 'old ways', from Carpaccio to Francesco Rizzo (1500-1541); those who distanced themselves from the previous 'coldness', from Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516) to Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506); and those who attempted to come up with new ideas, from Marco Basaiti (1470-1530) to Girolamo Santacroce (1480-1556).⁶¹ These classifications were based, like the previous ones, on stylistic criteria. So, Carpaccio, in Zanetti's eyes, was largely influenced by the old style: although his figures were not noble, he understood perspective; and although his manner of execution was not soft, he painted with infinite love and ingenious appropriateness.⁶² This assessment of Carpaccio does not seem as positive as one might expect from a painter considered to be the leader of the first group.⁶³ Nevertheless, his account of Carpaccio's cycle of stories from the life of St Ursula is one of the most detailed and interesting descriptions in the book and seems to raise the artist to a different level from his contemporaries:

I...believe that one of the greatest merits of this work lies in the effects, especially those which it has on the feelings and on the hearts of people without the slightest artistic knowledge. I sometimes stand in this chapel unobserved and see certain respectable people entering, who, after a brief prayer, and even during the prayer itself, turn their eyes to these paintings, their faces and minds transfixed just as Horace said: 'mind and vision enraptured by painted panels', showing that they readily understand each representation; they judge with their hearts and cannot hide the internal emotions which they experience. Truth imitated and depicted with reason has great power over the feelings of every spectator, even without the aid of art... I am not, to be sure, saying that one should necessarily paint like Carpaccio.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 16: 'Sarà la prima classe quella dei seguaci più costanti delle vecchie maniere; la seconda di quelli che da se si partirono dall'antica freddezza, e la terza di quelli che vissero ai tempi di Giorgione e dopo, e che tentarono di sgombrare le vecchie immagini, e dar luogo nella loro mente alle nuove.'

⁶² Ibid., pp. 33-4: 'ma nobil non furono le forme delle sue figure. S'intese di prospettiva quanto altro mai... Dipinse con infinito amore; e segue la buona espressione con verità pienissima, e ingegnosa proprietà.'

⁶³ Ibid., p. 33: 'Vittore Carpaccio si dee tenere come duce della prima schiera.'

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 35-6: 'Uno de' maggiori pregi tuttavia di essa opere io credo che consista negli effetti, e in quelli singolarmente che fanno sul senso, e sul cuore delle genti lontane dalle cognizioni dell'arte. Io mi sto in questa cappella inosservato alcuna volta, e veggio entrare certe buone persone, che dopo una breve orazione, anzi spesso nell'orazione medesima, rivogliendo gli occhi a queste pitture, restano sospese il volto e la mente, appunto come disse colui: *Suspendit picta vultum mentemque tabella*, mostrano d'intendere agevolmente ogni rappresentazione; ragionano in suo cuore; e non possono nascondere l'interno movimento che provano. Gran

Zanetti enhances the impact of his description by quoting a line from Horace's *Epistles*. He also creates an almost theatrical scene in which he hides in the chapel in order to witness people's reactions in front of Carpaccio's cycle and observes how the paintings make such a powerful emotional impression on viewers that they are even distracted from their prayers.⁶⁵ Zanetti here gives us an insight into that 'natural impulse' which he had mentioned in his preface, claiming that it enables even the most inexperienced spectators to detect attractive features in a good painting. In his view, an image needs to be simple, clear and truthful in order to stimulate their senses, so that they experience a positive response, and Carpaccio's stories seem to fulfil all these requirements. Even though Zanetti recognizes that contemporary painters have a different and more accomplished approach to painting, he feels that they should still take Carpaccio's works as an example of simple beauty and the truthful depiction of reality.

Unlike most of the writers on art – including Ridolfi and Boschini, who, in discussing Giovanni Bellini's images of *The Madonna and Child*, pointed out that their beauty derived from their capacity to inspire devotion and that they should be appreciated on this account – Zanetti's description of Carpaccio's St Ursula paintings goes beyond the devotional element. Even though he acknowledged the link between an image, aesthetic beauty and devotion, Zanetti's stance in relation to Carpaccio's paintings was innovative.⁶⁶ Since these works were part of a narrative cycle, they had to be treated differently from devotional images and were to be admired primarily for their aesthetic beauty and power. Discussing other paintings by Carpaccio such as those in the Scuola di San Giorgio and San

forza ha la verità imitata e dipinta con la sola ragione, anche senza gli aiuti dell'arte, sul senso d'ogni spettatore!... Non pretendo io già, che si dipinga come il Carpaccio.' For the translation of Horace, see A. S. Kline at:

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceEpistlesBkIIEpI.htm>

⁶⁵ For more information on the 'beholder's experience' of visual images in the early modern period, see T. Frangenberg and R. Williams, eds, *The Beholder: The Experience of Art in Early Modern Europe*, Aldershot 2006.

⁶⁶ For Zanetti's assessment of Giovanni Bellini's altarpiece in San Zaccaria, see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, pp. 50-1: 'in Zaccaria evvi una delle più celebrate opera di Gian Bellino. È questa una tavola che sta al secondo altare alla sinistra, dipinta, come si vede, nel 1505. Il campo figura un casamento a volta, sostenuto da pilastri che corrispondono appunto a quelli dell' altare sicche l'istesso l'altare mostra come d'esserne l'ingresso; e se chi ha aggiunta modernamente la cornice dorata intorno ad essa tavola, e nell'orlo dell'altare, che non è se non un foro, avesse bene intesa l'idea del pittore, conceputa con tanto giudizio, non sarebbe incorso in un error tanto grande. Sotto essa volta evvi la Madonna a sedere in alto seggio, e nel piano stanno i santi Pietro e Girolamo, e le sante Catterina ed Agata. Ognuna di queste figure decorosamente è vestita, e spira nel volto e negli atti santità e divozione. Ottima n'è la ragione del disegno, bellissimi sono i panni, e n'è amorosissimo il lavoro. L'arte dell'ombre è molto più avanzata che nelle altre sue pitture: il colore è più caldo; e chiaramente si vede in fine, che chi dipinse questa tavola avea vedute l'opere di Giorgione, e avea saputo cogliere da esse alcuni frutti, ma non ancora quello della morbidezza dell'ombre, e dell'opportuno abbagliamento dei secchi contorni.'

Girolamo, Zanetti pays attention to the way in which he composed his scenes and the diligence with which he depicted the figures.⁶⁷

Zanetti does not include many paintings by other artists in this group – Lazzaro Sebastiani, Giovanni Mansueti, Marco and Pietro Veglia and Francesco Rizzo.⁶⁸ He makes sure, however, to select those which best express the particular characteristics of that period, using terms such as ‘beautiful’, ‘noble’, ‘very ornate’, ‘languid and dry’ in his descriptions.⁶⁹

The influence of the earlier manner of painting was less apparent in the second group of artists from this period, who inaugurated a new, improved style. These included Giovanni and Gentile (but not Jacopo) Bellini, Cima del Conegliano, Vittore Belliniano, Il Cordella, Francesco da Santa Croce, Giovanni Buonconsiglio, Benedetto Diana and Andrea Mantegna. For Zanetti, Giovanni Bellini was not only the key figure in this second group, but also the ‘prince’ of Venetian painting of the first period:

To him, more than the others is due the honour of having embellished the small and narrow figures by making them bigger, of reviving with gusto the languid and dull colours and of introducing the study of light and shadows as necessary to render any object rounded to the eyes and to make it appear near or far, according to the circumstances, from which sweet harmony begins to take shape.⁷⁰

The idea that these artists started to distance themselves from the old style of painting and to express themselves more powerfully crops up in most of Zanetti’s assessments. For instance, evaluating Giovanni Bellini’s *Dead Christ* in the Magistrato dell’Avogaria, he writes:

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 37-8.

⁶⁸ Zanetti mentions three paintings by Lazzaro Sebastiani in the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, Corpo di Christo and San Severo (ibid., pp. 41-2); three paintings by Giovanni Mansueti in Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista and Scuola di San Marco (ibid., pp. 43-4), one painting by Marco and Pietro Veglia, in the Scuola di Sant’Alvise and Magistrato della Tana, respectively, (ibid., pp. 44-5) and two paintings by Francesco Rizzo (ibid., p. 45).

⁶⁹ See, e.g., his descriptions of paintings by Mansueti: ‘belle, ornate di nobile architetture’ (ibid., p. 44) and by Rizzo: ‘languido e secco’ (ibid., p. 45).

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 46: ‘principe della pittura nostra nella prima età’; ‘a lui si dee l’onore sopra gli altri di aver abbellite di carattere più grande le forme delle figure, già meschine e ristrette: di averne riscaldate saporitamente le tinte, languide e smorte; e d’aver fatto conoscere lo studio dell’ombre e dei lumi, come necessario per rendere ogni oggetto rotondo agli occhi, e farlo comparire lontano e vicino, secondo la situazione; onde ne cominciò a nascere la dolcissima armonia’.

The features of the old style can still be clearly recognized in this painting; nevertheless, it somehow conveys more grandeur and suggests that whoever painted it was able to cross the ancient line and give better shape to the naked figures and compose with greater artistry and grace than his masters.⁷¹

Zanetti praised many of Giovanni Bellini's paintings and gave them the most extensive accounts in his entire guidebook. He carefully recorded their location and date, described the frame, examined every detail of the composition, categorized the style and expressed his critical assessment. He considered the *Madonna with St Peter, St Jerome, St Catherine and St Agatha* in San Zaccaria (fig. 34) to be Bellini's most distinguished painting, impeccably drawn and able to inspire devotion.⁷²

Zanetti, moreover, judged the works of the other painters in this group in comparison to Bellini, as well as to the older masters. He observed, for example, that Cima da Conegliano's painting in San Michele in Murano resembled Bellini's style, especially on account of the diligence and love with which it was painted and its finishing touches; however, there was one decisive feature which distinguished the two artists: the *durezza*, or the hard manner, of Cima.⁷³ By contrast, Zanetti considered that Cordella imitated the style of Bellini's most beautiful paintings, that is, the later ones, and that his painting of the *Virgin with St Joseph, St Anthony, St Louis and St Francis* in the Magistrato dell'extraordinaria alla dogana del mare displayed the most praiseworthy qualities of the period: warm tones and softness.⁷⁴

The stylistic developments which Zanetti perceived in this group of painters consisted of a better sense of colouring, well-organized compositions, accurately proportioned figures and bodies, and a smooth transition from light to shadow. Such improvements clearly separated their paintings from the efforts of Trecento and early

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 49: 'In questa opera benchè chiari veggansi i caratteri ancora del vecchio stile, tuttavia qualche maggior grandezza apparisce; e fa conoscere chi la dipinse, che potea passare l'antica linea, e dar miglior forma agl'ignudi, e comporre con più arte e di grazia di quello che fatto aveano i maestri suoi.'

⁷² Ibid., p. 51: 'spira nel volto e nelli atti santità e devozione. Ottima n'è la ragione del disegno.'

⁷³ Ibid., p. 61: 'Non puo essere meglio espresso in essa lo stile, e il vero carattere del Bellino; specialmente per la diligenza del dipingere, per l'amore, e per la finitezza: conoscendosi solamente il discepolo dal maestro in qualche maggior durezza.'

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 66: 'Questo quadro è dipinto nell'ultimo stile e nel più bello di Gian Bellino. V'è in esso calore di tinta e un buon principio di tenerezza.'

Quattrocento artists and laid the foundations for the new artistic solutions proposed by the painters of the third group.

Zanetti placed Marco Basaiti at the summit of this group and regarded his *Calling of the Sons of Zebedee* as ‘one of the most beautiful paintings of that age’.⁷⁵ Basaiti’s painting embodied most of the qualities which Zanetti had already appreciated in other artists from this period such as grace, charm and truthfulness, but also began to exhibit novel features, like the delightful landscape in the background against which appeared the silhouettes of individual figures, defined by light. All the beauties of Basaiti’s brush were united in this painting, creating a sweet enchantment for the eyes of every spectator – a description which resembles his account of the reaction of viewers to Carpaccio’s St Ursula cycle.⁷⁶ Zanetti observed in some painters of Basaiti’s generation an influence of Giorgione’s style. Writing of Francesco Bissolo’s *Coronation of St Catherine of Siena* in San Pietro Martire, he says:

The imagination of the artist who devised this composition was occupied with ancient images, but not so much as to be unable to give way to new ones. There is spirit and vivacity and, above all, a taste for colouring which defers to Giorgione’s style;⁷⁷ but the whole painting has a warmth which is charming, original and graceful.⁷⁸

For Zanetti, moreover, Girolamo Santa Croce’s *Last Supper* in San Martino proves that he was a disciple of Giorgione and Titian and that he had managed to distance himself from the older schools.

In his two guidebooks to Venetian painting, Zanetti took the unprecedented step, for works belonging to this genre, of systematically classifying early painters into groups, enabling his readers to understand and discern a clearer path of development, governed by

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75: ‘uno de’ più bei quadri di quella età’.

⁷⁶ Ibid.: ‘Non può essere immaginata questa pittura con più di verità, di grazia, e vaghezza. Il campo in cui vedesi una città in lontano, e più vicino un delizioso colle, da cui si scende a una spiaggia di mare, favorisce a meraviglia il gruppo delle figure, nelle quali sono benissimo disposti i lumi e cominciasi a vedere quell’ultimo consiglio, che passò poi in regola, di raccogliere il lume maggiore sulla principale figura, così essendo appunto in quella del Signore, che invita a se l’occhio, prima della altre e lo arresta. Tutte le bellezze che avea il pennello del Basaiti, sono unite in questa tavola, che forma un dolce incanto per l’occhio d’ogni spettatore.’

⁷⁷ Referring to Giorgione’s manner of painting, Zanetti especially praises his beautiful colouring, his exquisite way of rendering the flesh, the shadows and the outlines; see *ibid.*, pp. 89-90: ‘Acquistò sì colore compiuto sapore nelle mani di lui, che arrivò a contraffare la freschezza delle vive carni perfettamente... a render più dolci i contorni delle figure... Abbagliò opportunamente le ombre.’

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 83: ‘Si vede che si pensò l’invenzione di questa tavola avea la fantasia occupata dalle antiche immagini; ma non così che non potesse dar luogo alle nuove. V’è spirito e vivacità, e sopra tutto un gusto di colorire che piega allo stile Giorgionesco; ma che insieme ha un certo calore vago originalmente e grazioso.’

aesthetic principles, than had been available in previous guidebooks. While the artistic efforts of the earliest artists were less praiseworthy than those of later ones in terms of their execution, Zanetti introduced a novel way of appreciating them, by separating the conception behind the painting from the work itself. In this way, he cast a different light over these earlier paintings and offered a new justification for their inclusion in a history of Venetian painting. His judicious assessments of paintings, coupled with a profound understanding of artistic principles and a good intuition of his readers' expectations, make Zanetti's writings a significant contribution to the historiography of Venetian art. They provide invaluable insights into how earlier paintings were regarded in eighteenth-century Venice and illustrate the 'taste and scholarship', to borrow Haskell's phrase,⁷⁹ of Venetian writers in the age of the Enlightenment.

⁷⁹ See F. Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, New Haven 1980, p. 345.

CHAPTER 5

Collecting and Connoisseurship

In this chapter, I shall investigate the collecting of early Renaissance paintings in Italy, the reasoning behind their acquisition and the rise of connoisseurship, focusing on an important collector and artistic advisor: the Venetian Gian Maria Sasso (1742-1803). In Part II of the dissertation, I shall discuss a similar figure: the Florentine Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri (1676-1742).¹ Although not contemporaries, the two men had shared interests and approaches to art, especially the art of the past. Both were, for instance, interested in acquiring and promoting early Italian works of art. Both, moreover, attempted to write biographies of the most important artists (Venetian and Florentine respectively) up to their own day, though drawing on different sources; and both failed in the end to produce a finished work.

Giovanni Maria Sasso and His Network

The Venetian connoisseur, collector, artistic adviser and art dealer Gian Maria Sasso (1742-1803) (fig. 35) was a leading figure in the Venetian art market. He planned to write biographies of the most important artists, going up to his own time, drawing on Zanetti's *Della pittura veneziana* (1771).² He did not, however, manage to complete this work, which survives in a manuscript in Padua, containing Sasso's memoirs and a document of 32 folios on the lives and works of Venetian painters from Guariento to Sebastiano Zuccato, entitled

¹ See Chapter 8 below.

² See M. Magrini, 'Gian Maria Sasso e Lorenzo Veneziano', in *Hadriatica. Attorno a Venezia e al Medioevo tra arti, storia e storiografia*, ed. E. Concina, G. Trovabene and M. Agazzi, Padua 2002, pp. 126-7. An unpublished transcription by E. Cicogna of Sasso's notes on Zanetti survive in Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Giammaria Sasso nel margine del suo Zanetti 'Della pittura veneziana' dell'edizione 1771*. For a reproduction and transcription of the document, see Appendix I in vol. II of this dissertation.

Venezia Pittrice.³ Although transcribed by Raimondo Callegari, the biographies have not previously been discussed nor studied in relation to Sasso's memoirs and his correspondence with English collectors.⁴ Looking at the book from this perspective will help to reveal the motivation behind its preparation, as well as shedding light on his expertise in early Venetian artists. Sasso's project also involved producing prints which were meant to accompany his text.⁵

To gain a full understanding of Gian Maria Sasso, it will be necessary to examine the catalogue of the works of art in his collection and to situate his understanding of the art of the past in a broader context. This will help to answer the more general question of how far collectors and connoisseurs were aware of the theoretical attitudes towards collecting articulated in their time and, in the light of this, to provide a foundation for constructing the profiles of other collectors, both in terms of the art works they acquired and the reasoning behind their acquisitions.

Most of the information on Sasso's life comes from his *Memorie*, an extract of which was published in 1806 by Giannantonio Moschini.⁶ In a footnote to the third volume of his *Della letteratura Veneziana del secolo XVIII fino a' nostri giorni*, Moschini states that his friend Giovanni de Lazzara had lent him a book in his own hand, which included a transcription of Sasso's manuscript notes. Summarizing the biographical content, Moschini writes that:

Sasso...was born on 13 January 1742 in the parish of San Geremia, where he also died on 25 March 1803. He wrote an autobiography entitled *Memoria*. In it, he recounts that his parents were Francesco and Giacomina de' Rossi. On 11 April 1786, he left his father's house without anything to marry Angiola, the daughter of Stefano Rizzi, a satin weaver. He

³ Padua, Biblioteca civica, MS 2538: *Memorie di Giovanni Maria Sasso pittore veneziano da lui medesimo scritte con altre sopra alcuni pittori veneziani e padovani*, 1804, fols 1^r-17^r. The manuscript in its present form survives as a copy made by Sasso's friend, the collector Giovanni de Lazzara (1744-1833); it circulated among a restricted circle of his friends including Gianantonio Moschini and Giacomo della Lena. For the correspondence between Sasso and Lazzara, see Giovanni Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche inedite*, Modena 1866, pp. 344-52. For R. Callegari's transcription, see "Trascrizione del manoscritto di Giovanni Maria Sasso, *Memorie di Giovanni Maria Sasso pittore veneziano da lui medesimo scritte con altre sopra alcuni pittori veneziani e padovani* 1804, conservato nella Biblioteca Civica di Padova (ms. B.P. 2538), in *Scritti sull'arte padovana del Rinascimento*, Udine 1998, pp. 296-324.

⁴ Sasso was in close contact and corresponded regularly with English collectors, consuls and ambassadors, including Gavin Hamilton, John Strange, Richard Wolsley and Abraham Hume, for whom he acted as an artistic advisor; see, e.g., F. del Torre, *Lettere artistiche del Settecento*, ed. A. Bettagno and M. Magrini, Vicenza 2002, pp. 431-61, and L. Borean, ed., *Lettere artistiche del Settecento: Il Carteggio Giovanni Maria Sasso-Abraham Hume*, Vicenza 2004.

⁵ They are now in three volumes in Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr: C2, B 15 bis and B 11.

⁶ See n. 3 above.

also studied this craft for some years and then studied drawing, first by himself and, afterwards, helped by the kindness of Antonio Marinetti and Fabio Canal and, in 1771, Giovanni Battista Mignardi called on him to assist with his work. He advised James Wright and John Strange between 1774 to 1786 on their acquisitions of paintings. They supported him generously and loved him tenderly... Giovanni de Lazzara possesses a transcription he made of all the records dictated by Sasso for his *Venezia pittrice* with the summary of the first part, and what, in short, is most important about our old paintings found among the writings of that most expert connoisseur.⁷

Sasso's notes covered 17 pages and included details of his life between 11 April 1768, the day of his marriage with Angela Rizzi, and 1800, when, at the age of 65, he was 'overtaken by worries caused by hypochondria and continuous studies'.⁸

In his biography, Sasso not only provided information about his family and described his unfavourable financial situation, but also supplied significant details about the beginnings of his activity as art dealer and artistic advisor. He writes, for instance:

I rapidly acquired familiarity with painters of every sort and became an expert; and now, when I am asked to judge various paintings whose author is uncertain, my opinion is generally accepted.⁹

⁷ Giovanni Antonio Moschini, *Della letteratura veneziana del secolo XVIII fino a' nostri giorni*, 4 vols, Venice 1806-1808, III, p. 51: 'Qui posso con piacere recare alcune buone notizie somministratemi ultimamente dal cav. Lazzara, il quale mi diede a gentile prestito un libro scritto di suo pugno, onde le potei ritrarre. Intorno a Gio: Maria Sasso adunque, che nacque ai tredici del gennaio dell'anno 1742 nella parrocchia di s. Geremia, ove morì ai venticinque del marzo dell'anno 1803, v'è una Memoria, ch'egli medesimo detto di sua vita. In essa racconta che nacque da Francesco e da Giacomina de' Rossi, che il dì undici dell'aprile dell'anno 1768 uscì povero di tutto della sua casa per isposare Angiola figliuola di Stefano Rizzi tessitore di rasi, ch'egli pure attese per qualc'anno a quest'arte, che poi studiò il disegno prima da per se, assistito quindi dalla carità d'Antonio Marinetti e di Fabio Canal, che Gio: Battista Mingardi lo chiamò seco nel 1771 ad ajutarlo nei suoi lavori; che il cav. Giacomo Wraight da prima e il cav. Gio: Strange dappoi dall'anno 1774 fino al 1786 l'ebbero seco ad ajutatore negli acquisti, che facevano di quadri, che lo sovvennero generosamente, e che lo amarano con tenerezza, siccome fece con lui ogn'altro della legazione Britannica, finche durò in Venezia. Oltraccio il medesimo cavalier Lazzara possiede da lui trascritte tutte le Memorie, che s'erano dettate dal Sasso pella sua Venezia Pittrice con il Sommario della Prima Parte, e quanto in somma di più importante in argomento di nostre antiche pitture si trovò fra gli scritti di quel peritissimo conoscitore.'

⁸ MS 2538: *Memorie di Sasso*, fol. 16^r: 'ora sono negli anni 65 di mia vita pieno di disturbi cagionati dalla ipocondria, e da i continui studi fatti quasi tutta la mia vita'.

⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 8^r: 'presi in breve grandissima pratica degli autori di ogni classe e ne divenni praticissimo, ed ora chiamato a dar giudizio di alcune pitture dubbiose che non si conosceva l'autore, ed in ciò fui da tutto compatito'.

Sasso, however, was still in difficult financial straits, a matter which he touches on repeatedly throughout his notes; and, for this reason, he organized a viewing at his house, hoping that he would sell some prints and studies by his own hand.¹⁰ The auction, as he writes, led to a good result, since his art works were bought by the painter Giovanni Battista Mignardi, for whom he began to work in 1771.¹¹

Other noteworthy episodes from Sasso's biography include descriptions of his relationships with the English ambassadors in Venice. He remembers, for instance, the two prosperous years spent in the service of James Wright.¹² As artistic advisor, Sasso would accompany Wright whenever he desired to purchase a work of art, giving him his expert advice. For his assistance, he was paid 10 percent of the price of each painting bought on his recommendation.¹³ He acted in a similar position for John Strange between 2 September 1774 to 31 October 1786, a period which he considered to be 'very happy'.¹⁴ He was designated 'agent' and 'director' of the gallery of paintings owned by the English resident in Venice and assisted him with every purchase.¹⁵ Whether he was in Venice or Paese, a province of Treviso in the Veneto, Strange assigned Sasso the tasks of selecting the best paintings for him to acquire and of ensuring their safe delivery. There are 82 letters by Strange which stand as proof of their long and fruitful collaboration.¹⁶

Sasso was not only an art dealer and artistic adviser; he was also a restorer and collector of both early and modern pieces.¹⁷ An inventory of 1803, the year of Sasso's

¹⁰ Ibid., fol. 6r: 'Mi restavano solo alcuni miserabili avanzi de' miei studi pittorici, cioè poche stampe, ed alcuni frammenti di miei Disegni i quali cercai vendere ai Professori per quell poco che potevo, ed invitai perciò molti a vederli.'

¹¹ Ibid., fol. 7r: 'Providenza del Cielo che venisse il Sig. Gio. Battista Mignardi celebre pittore, ed ora Pubb.co Ispettore delle pubbliche pitture di questa Dominante, il quale mosso a compassione del mio miserabile stato, e sentendomi dal discorso tenuto con Lui informato nelle teorie dell'arte, non ebbe difficoltà di accordarmi subito L. 5 venete alla giornata ajutandolo ne' suoi lavori e questo fu l'anno 1771.'

¹² Ibid., fol. 8r: 'Steti col sudetto signore per lo spazio di due interi anni.'

¹³ Ibid., fol. 7r: 'Mi conduceva con Lui alle compre che faceva di Quadri ed altri generi...e mi pagava a parte il 10 per cento delle pitture che comprava col mio mezzo.'

¹⁴ Ibid., fol. 11r: 'Passai gli anni di servizio con Mr Strange molto felici.'

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 10r: 'agente e direttore della numerosa sua Galleria'.

¹⁶ See A. Dorigato, 'Storie di collezionisti a Venezia: Il residente inglese John Strange', in *Per Giuseppe Mazziariol*, ed. M. Brusatin, W. Dorigo, G. Morelli, Rome 1992, p. 127, and Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr: Epistolario Moschini, 'John Strange'. Sasso's letters to John Strange, however, have not been preserved.

¹⁷ For Sasso's activity as restorer, see Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, MS 467: Giacomo della Lena, *Spoglio della pitture di Venezia dal secolo XVII fino al secolo XIX*, entries 3, 8, 14, 16, 21, 31, and F. Haskell, 'Some

death, shows that he owned a great variety of art works including paintings, prints, drawings, printed books, miniatures, statues, bronzes and vases, displayed all over his house located at 'Ponte di Canalregio n. 381 presso il Palazzo Manfrin'.¹⁸ The inventory contains information about the artists, subjects and dimensions of the paintings, as well as the way in which they were arranged in each room.¹⁹ For example, in the *portego*, there were 87 paintings, most of which were by modern artists of the Italian school such as Giovanni Battista Pitoni, Palma il Giovane, Tempesta and Niccolò Renieri; but there were also paintings by Dutch artists including Jan Lys, Joachim Brachen, Philip Peter Roos, and copies after originals (by, e.g., Solimena, Veronese and Correggio).²⁰ The works were not arranged chronologically or by subject; and the only earlier piece in this room was a *Madonna with Child, St Jerome and St Augustin* by Alvise Vivarini.²¹ The paintings displayed in the *camerone* were also by modern painters and included, among many others, a copy after a painting by Tiepolo made by Sasso himself and a painting by his own master, Fabio Canal.²² Interestingly, Sasso kept all his originals and copies after earlier masters in his own room.²³ These included pictures thought to be by Giorgione, the circle of Giovanni Bellini and Leonardo, Andrea Mantegna, Marco Basaiti, Gentile Bellini and Palma il Vecchio. There were also copies or prints after Raphael and Titian. While this method of display, in which the early Renaissance paintings were kept separately from later works by modern artists and were largely accessible only to Sasso and a few privileged intimates, somewhat in the manner of a private cabinet of curiosities, created a distinction between older and more recent art works, it is not clear whether it also indicated an inclination on Sasso's part towards early paintings.

Collectors of Venetian Art at the End of Eighteenth Century', in *Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Art*, 31, 1967, pp. 173-8.

¹⁸ MS Cicogna 5194: *Catalogo de' quadri del qu[ondam] Giammaria Sasso, che si mettono all' incanto nella sua Casa al Ponte di Canalregio n. 381 presso il Palazzo Manfrin...*, pp. 1-31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2, entry 9: 'si passerà a quello de' Disegni, e delle Stampe divise e distribuite nelle loro varie Scuole, in Cartelle, co' rispettivi prezzi d'ogni cartella contenente i Disegni, e d'ogni scuola in quanto alle Stampe, e finalmente ad altri pochi oggetti riguardanti le Belle arti notati in fine di questo Catalogo.'

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6, entry 64: 'La Madonna, e'l Bambino con S. Girolamo, e Sant'Agostino, di Luigi Vivarini, con belle Architetture, e Paese in tre compartì.'

²² *Ibid.*, p. 9, entry 50: 'Copietta d'una Palla di Tiepolo, fatta da Sasso', and p. 11 entry 137: 'Modello quadrato, sottoinsù con S. Domenico di Fabio Canal.' For the rest of the paintings in this room, see *ibid.*, pp. 8-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17.

The Correspondence with Abraham Hume

Sasso's acquisitions for his clients were always discussed and negotiated in advance in writing. His vast correspondence with the English consuls and ambassadors, as well as his Italian friends, has survived and is preserved in London and Venice.²⁴ The letters evoke his personality as well as give an insight into acquisitions, interests the eighteenth-century Venice.

'A melancholic' and 'hypochondriac', as he often describes himself in letters addressed to the English consul in Venice, Abraham Hume (1749-1838),²⁵ Sasso was an indispensable figure for the collecting world, especially the English one, on account of his expertise, network of contacts and enthusiasm for Venetian painting.²⁶ His correspondence with Hume began in 1787 and ended in 1803, the year of Sasso's death. Some letters include descriptions, prices and locations or current owners of individual art works which were offered to Hume but not necessarily acquired. For those which he did buy, there are details of the transactions and of the transport arrangements. The letters also contain references to natural history specimens, mainly minerals, which Hume also collected. The correspondence between Sasso and Hume provides information about their assessments of and attitudes toward works of art and about their interests. The frequent delays in Sasso's responses create suspense regarding the outcome of Hume's transactions: did he acquire most of the works endorsed by Sasso, and was he always pleased with Sasso's recommendations, acquisitions and price negotiations? Although one needs patience, the answers to these questions can usually be found in the correspondence.

Sasso, who had access to private collections in Venice and elsewhere, chose the best works for sale and negotiated prices in his clients' interest. Very often, he supported his descriptions of paintings with arguments extracted from writers on art such as Ridolfi and

²⁴ E.g., Venice, Biblioteca del Seminario Patriarcale: letters of Armano to Sasso (MSS 1013.3 and 1038.61), letters of Giovanni Battista Nalesso to Sasso (MS 1033.57), letters of Mario Torlonia and Francesco Pullini to Sasso (MS 666), letters of Antonio Remondini to Sasso (MS 692), correspondence between Sasso and Hume (MSS 565-6); Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr: Epistolario Moschini; and London, National Gallery Archive: correspondence between Sasso and Abraham Hume (NGA 8/1-8/1/144).

²⁵ The correspondence between Abraham Hume and Sasso is divided between the National Gallery Archive (NGA 8/1-8/1/144) and the Biblioteca del Seminario Patriarcale (MSS 565-6); see also Borean, ed., *Lettere artistiche*. I have chosen a number of relevant examples from their correspondence in order to illustrate the idea that Sasso attempted to shape the tastes and direct the preferences of English collectors towards early Renaissance art works.

²⁶ NGA 8/1/16, letter of Sasso to Abraham Hume, 28 April 1788: 'per solevarmi un poco dalla mia ipocondria' and 'mi farà bene alla mia malinconia un poco di distrazion'.

Malvasia.²⁷ Most of Hume's acquisitions, whether they were paintings or semi-precious stones, were made through Sasso. In a letter of 20 March 1788, Hume informed him that he 'would take pleasure in acquiring good paintings of schools other than the Venetian one, if there were any available in Venice'. He also added that while he was in Venice, he was focusing solely on paintings and, therefore, neglecting the specimens of natural history; so he asked Sasso to procure some of these for him.²⁸

As an art dealer, Sasso bought paintings which he then tried to sell to his clients by describing them in favourable terms. For instance, he bought a *Virgin and Child* by Giovanni Bellini from the Casa Soranza and encouraged Hume to add it to his collection. In general, Sasso considered Bellini's manner of painting to be somewhat hard; but this piece belonged to a later stage of artist's career, so it looked softer, and the head of the Virgin seemed to be by Titian.²⁹ Since Hume remained silent about Bellini's painting and instead showed interest in works by Tintoretto and Giorgione, Sasso reminded him about it in another letter, adding information about the price and telling him that although the painting had been reserved for Gavin Hamilton, he would have priority if he decided that he wanted to buy.³⁰ Hume, however, never bought the painting. Moreover, when Sasso tried to get him to acquire Bellini's *Christ at Emmaus* from the Zanetti collection,³¹ describing its subject,

²⁷ Extracts from Ridolfi appear several times in their correspondence. Sasso cites Malvasia in connection with the acquisition of two landscapes by Guercino; see NGA 8/1/38, 5 May 1789: 'Per caso comprai ultimamente due belli paesi dipinti a tempera per il Guercino: l'uno rappresenta la notte a l'altro il tramonto del sole con bellissime figure...e si trovano descritti da Malvasia'; see Malvasia, *Felsina*, II, p. 368: 'Rappresentano questi le quatr'hore, o tempi del giorni, cioè la levata del Sole con figurette, che al lido aspettano l'imbarco: il mezzo giorno, maggiormente significato per i viandanti, che lasciato pascere l'erba al cavallo, sotto ad un'ombra pranzano: la caduta del Sole che affretta i cacciatore con la preda di lepri e altro al ritorno in città: e la mezza note con risplendente Luna rimirata da viandanti, per attendere l'houra di loro partenza, mentre un cane a quella inutilmente manda i suoi latrati.'

²⁸ NGA 8/1/14, Hume to Sasso, 20 March 1788: 'Soggiungere ch'avrò piacer de far acquisto di buoni quadri delle altre scuole oltre dalla vostra se se ne trovano a Venezia... Quando ero a Venezia fui tanto occupato coi quadri, che il mio gusto per l'istoria natural fu obbligato di nascondersi... Ma se potete ancora procurarmi senza molto inconveniendo alcune belle pietre che si tengono l'acqua, ve ne sarei molto obbligato.'

²⁹ NGA 8/1/10, Sasso to Hume, 21 February 1788: 'dirò prima di aver acquistato un bel Giovanni Bellino, Vergine e putino col nome del'autore in casa Soranza – e un autore un poco duretto al suo solito ma è de l'ultima maniera cioè della più morbide e la testa della Vergine sembra di Tiziano.'

³⁰ NGA 8/1/16, Sasso to Hume, 28 April 1788: 'la mia Madonna di Giovanni Bellino è della migliore maniera alta circa due piedi e mezzo e larga due e mezzo. Tiene il nome de l'autore sotto il piccolo cartellino cioè JOANNES BELLINUS PINXIT. Il quadro è intatto e la testa della Vergine sopra il tutto e Tiziannesca già dipinto in tavola. Circa il preggio mi fa esibito zucchini numero 50 da un pittore romano per portarla a Roma al Signor Hamilton – io non la diedi – se poi serve per Lei io gliela do – al patto che se vede poiche con lei a degli obblighi che non sono indifferenti.'

³¹ For the dispersal of the Zanetti collection, see G. Tormen, ed., *L'epistolario Giovanni Antonio Armano-Giovanni Maria Sasso*, Verona 2009, pp. 39-54 ('"Battere il chiodo per li Parmigianini": aggiunte alla raccolta grafica Zanetti').

provenance and condition, and supporting his positive assessment with a passage from Ridolfi's book, Hume was reluctant to pay 200 zecchini for it.³² Similarly, Sasso wrote enthusiastically about a painting by Palma il Vecchio, 'much softer than Giovanni Bellini's, with a beautiful landscape which resembled Leonardo's style', bought for 30 zecchini. Again, Hume rejected it and disapproved of Palma's dry and old-fashioned manner, adding, however, that he would have bought the painting straightaway if it had been by Leonardo.³³ Hume preferred paintings by later artists such as Tintoretto, Veronese, Guido Reni, Lodovico Carracci, Titian, Guercino and Rubens, and he was prepared to pay high prices for their works.³⁴ Hume was a demanding client, confident about his taste, but nevertheless keen to get specialist advice in order to buy works in perfect condition.³⁵ He always asked for precise descriptions of paintings from Sasso. He wrote to him, for instance, complaining: 'you speak of a figure by Giorgione without producing a description'.³⁶

For his part, Sasso showed his expertise by responding to such requests with thorough examinations of works of art. He also made lists of paintings with their prices. An example of his connoisseurship is the careful and close examination he made of Tintoretto's *Nativity*, which Hume had agreed to buy. After taking a closer look at the painting, Sasso found it to be less beautiful than it had initially appeared to him from a

³² NGA 8/1/44, Sasso to Hume, September 1789: 'un quadro grande di figure al natural di Giovanni Bellino rappresenta Christo con li discepoli ad Emmaus. Sono in tutte figure numero 5 alla tavola. Il quadro è intato, nè mai stato toccata. Tiene il nome de l'autore e l'anno 1504 in lettere romane. La maniera è la più grandiose e calda de l'autore e le teste più morbide del solito. Questo quadro era altre volte in casa Cornaro e comprato dalli Signori Zanetti, cioè dal Vecchio Zanetti e citato nel Ridolfi pagina 56: "in casa Cornaro a S. Maurizio evvi il Signore alla mensa con Lucca e Cleofa di forma al natural dipinto da l'autore in Grazia del Signor Giorgio Cornaro Cavaliere Fratello della regina Catterina", vedi Ridolfi come sopra. Il fatto sta che vogliono 200 zecchini ed allora è caro'; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, I, p. 72.

³³ NGA 8/1/40, Hume to Sasso, 24 June 1789: 'Ma per il ritratto di Palma Vecchio temo che sia d'una maniera secca, ed antica. Ditte che somiglia alla maniera di Lionardo da Vinci, se fosse di lui non esitarmi a prenderlo.'

³⁴ I have made a list of all the prices mentioned in the correspondence between Sasso and Hume, whether they refer to earlier or more recent paintings or other collectables such as precious gems or books; see Appendix II in vol. II of this dissertation. It appears that the highest price paid for a painting by Giovanni Bellini was 200 zecchini; the price for the rest of the earlier paintings ranged from 15 to 100 zecchini. The prices for most recent paintings by artists such as Veronese, Tintoretto, Titian, Guercino, Lodovico Carracci, Rubens and Castiglione varied between 100 to 500 zecchini. Small paintings, landscapes, drawings and sketches were valued between 15 to 60 zecchini. The price paid for opals was 3 zecchini; and a copy Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie* cost 3 zecchini in 1788 and 12 zecchini the year after.

³⁵ See, e.g., Hume's view of a painting by Tintoretto, in NGA 8/1/46, Hume to Sasso, 11 October 1789: 'il Tintoretto mi pare che sia stato abbruciatto per da le candele del'altare o dal sole, principalmente nella draperia e nelle ombre che sono quasi intieramente guastati... L'ho deto sinceramente il mio sentimento sopra delle dette cose sapendo che questo vi farà piacer.'

³⁶ NGA 8/1/47, Hume to Sasso, 12 October 1798: 'Mi parlate d'una mezza figura di Giorgione senza fare una descrizione.'

distance. Moreover, he discovered some ‘significant faults’ in the representation of the hands and the feet, which adversely affected the quality of the painting.³⁷ In this case, Sasso advised Hume against the purchase, which he, in the end, decided not to buy: ‘I trust your judgement and your thoughtfulness; I shall no longer consider buying Tintoretto’s painting anymore.’³⁸ Instead of *The Nativity*, Sasso suggested another painting by Tintoretto, *The Martyrdom of St Lawrence*, which he had bought from the Ca’ Morosini. In order to convince Hume of its merit, he cites a passage from Ridolfi’s *Le meraviglie* on the provenance of the work and its perfect execution.³⁹ In a letter of 23 February 1789 from Hume, we discover that the painting was in Sasso’s possession, but that its quality did not measure up to his expectations.⁴⁰

The examples above allow us to discover two personalities: on the one hand, we have an enthusiastic connoisseur and artistic adviser who provides detailed descriptions of paintings which he supports with quotations from the available artistic literature; and, on the other, a demanding client, with a real interest in art who has clear ideas about the purchases he wants to make. While Sasso’s attempts – often unsuccessful – to sell early art works to his clients may have reflected a genuine interest on his part,⁴¹ it is possible that this was primarily a selling strategy, enabling him to establish himself as a dealer of Renaissance paintings in the Venetian art market of the eighteenth century.

Sasso’s *Venezia pittrice* and Its Context

In September of 1785, the English consul John Strange wrote to Sasso asking for his manuscript of *Pittura veneta* ‘for his own instruction and delight’.⁴² In another letter dated 10 September 1785, he insisted that Sasso should send him the manuscript without delay and

³⁷ NGA 8/1/14, Sasso to Hume, 28 April 1788: ‘ho ritrovato de diffeti notabili’.

³⁸ NGA 8/1/16, Sasso to Hume, 28 April 1788: ‘E penso che sarà meglio a non prendela’; and NGA 8/1/19, Hume to Sasso, 31 May 1788: ‘come mi confido nel vostro giudizio e dalla vostra delicatezza, non ponderò più al gran quadro di Tintoretto’.

³⁹ NGA 8/1/25, Sasso to Hume, 28 August 1788: ‘Osservi il Ridolfi, pag. 44’; see Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie*, II, p. 52: ‘una picciola pittura historia di San Lorenzo sopra la graticola, di fierissima maniera, fatta dal Tintoretto.’

⁴⁰ NGA 8/1/33, Hume to Sasso, 23 February 1789: ‘che finalmente tenete alla casa vostra il Giorgione e che il martirio di San Lorenzo di Tintoretto non è d’eccellente qualità’.

⁴¹ Sasso did, after all, collect such pieces himself and also wrote about them in his *Venezia pittrice*.

⁴² See Epistolario Moschini: ‘John Strange’, Strange to Sasso, 20 September 1785: ‘mi faccia avere prima che puolo quell manoscritto suo della Pittura Veneta ultimato come vole evvi, per mia istruzione e piacere’; see Appendix III in vol. II of this dissertation.

should start working on a description of the paintings in Strange's own collection.⁴³ Sasso's response, however, was not very prompt; and there were a variety of reasons for his delay in submitting the manuscript; first, he was still gathering information at the time Strange wrote to him; second, the production of illustrations was a lengthy process; and third, he had no financial means to get it published. On the last point, Strange offered to help.⁴⁴

Strange's letters indicate that Sasso was already working on his project as early as 1785 and that Strange had commissioned the text.⁴⁵ Moreover, this was not their only collaboration: Sasso was in charge of new editions of books such as Gaetano Zompini's *Arti che vanno per via nella città di Venezia* and *Vari Capricci del Castiglione, Disegni del Parmigianino* and Zanetti's *Varie pitture a fresco* (1760), which Strange intended to promote in England.⁴⁶ In this connection, the English resident was keen to pay a high price to acquire Zanetti's original edition and to supply the best paper for the production of the prints.⁴⁷ He also sent Sasso a list in which he requested six impressions of each print after some of the frescoes reproduced in Zanetti's book in order to distribute them, and he made sure that they did not contain mistakes.⁴⁸

⁴³ Epistolario Moschini: 'John Strange', letter 25, Strange to Sasso, 10 September 1785: 'Per l'amore del cielo sbrighi e mi mandi quell suo Manoscritto Pittura Veneta, premendomi averla, per travagliare anche alla Descrizione de miei quadri, onde faccia per servirmi?'; see Appendix IV in vol. II of this dissertation.

⁴⁴ Epistolario Moschini: 'John Strange', letter 81, Strange to Sasso, 24 September 1785: 'ella mi accena che l'opera sua e arenata per la mancanza di bezzi, accole in prestito perciò venti zechini se ella poi mi pagherà con comodo a poco per volta, ne la vorrei e.g. di settimana, a ½ zecchino per volta, e come la vuole'.

⁴⁵ See M. Orso, 'Giovanni Maria Sasso: mercante, collezionista e scrittore d'arte della fine del Settecento a Venezia', *Atti dell'Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 144, Venice, 1985-1986, pp. 37-55, at p. 42.

⁴⁶ Epistolario Moschini: 'John Strange', letter 18, Strange to Sasso, 19 June 1785: 'per dare un'idea del libro; poco conosciuto fuori?'; see also Orso, 'Giovanni Maria Sasso', pp. 44-5.

⁴⁷ Epistolario Moschini: 'John Strange', letter 2, Strange to Sasso, 2 April 1785: 'pagandolo caro volentieri comprerei il libro Freschi Zannetti specialmente miniati', and letter 18, Strange to Sasso, 19 June 1785: 'Bensi la carta di Treviso però grossa al pare di quella Zanetti è consimile anche di grandezza; ma non so poi cosa giudicare di quel liscio e lucidezza che la superficialmente e differente delle altre due mandatemi, ella e li stampatori meglio sapranno, e V. S mi dirà il suo parere di tutto e quale carta giudicano meglio di scegliere, scrivendomi le ragioni. Per la grossezza va meglio la carta di Treviso, ma non so cosa dire di quel liscio, che scompagna, benchè il colore o patina di essa corrisponde anche bene con quella Zanetti.'

⁴⁸ Ibid., letter 18, Strange to Sasso, 19 June 1785: 'Ella mi faccia tirare in carta sottile (da mandare per lettera) e mi mandi sei copie per sorte de seguenti rami freschi cioè: 1. Il ritratto Zanetti; 2. La stampa n. 4 Giorgione; 3. Detta n. 5 Tiziano; 4. Detta n. 10 Tintoretto; 5. Detta n. 19 Zilotto; 6 Detta n. 20 P. Veronese; 7. Detta n. 24 P. Veronese'; and letter 16, Strange to Sasso, 1 June 1785: 'Sento dell'iscrizione sotto il ritratto Zanetti eppure il non dire sotto dove esista un tale iscrizione sempre mi pare una mancanza; ed io aggiungerei in carattere più minute, ed in una riga staccato sotto come nell'annessa prova; tanto piùche nella memoria in fondo non è citata detta iscrizione al ritratto come in una nota almeno si avrebbe potuto fare; incidendola però sul rame prenderà manco sito, onde Mat. Domini si puole mettere al lungo cosi, Matrio Domini, lasciando però questa come è. Unisco due disegni per lionardis, da ridurre consimile di grandezza e maniera all'annessa stampa, che poi mi si rimanderà, unitamente a detti disegni, che spero riusciranno eccellentemente.'

Sasso himself was particularly interested in Zanetti's books. His own work – the *Venezia pittrice* – was based on Zanetti's *Della pittura veneziana*, for which he compiled a list of emendations, dating from 1802 – as appears from the first comment on a painting representing St Donatus in St Donato in Murano, of which Sasso produced a print (fig. 36);⁴⁹ and the views he expresses in these short notes agree with those found in his own treatise. The list, made up of 7 folios, has survived under the title of *Annotazioni scritte da Giammaria Sasso nel margine del suo Zanetti della Pittura Veneziana dell'edizione 1771* in a transcription by Cicogna.⁵⁰ In the notes, Sasso indicates the pages and lines in Zanetti's book which he disputed, as well as his suggested alterations. Generally, Sasso corrects Zanetti by proposing different attributions of paintings and rankings of painters,⁵¹ referring to other writers in support of his arguments,⁵² and tracing works of art and their owners.⁵³ There are also four references to illustrations for the *Venezia pittrice*: a print after Giovanni

⁴⁹ In tracing the history of the painting mentioned by Zanetti, Sasso refers to its condition at the time he was writing (i.e., 1802); see MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*, fol. 1: 'Pag. 4, lin. 9. Fu lavata barbaramente per rimadernar l'altare vidi alcuni pezzi in giro maltrattati in quest'anno 1802.' On page 4, line 9 of his *Della pittura*, Zanetti does discuss this painting.

⁵⁰ See n. 2 above. It is still unclear whether the notes for Zanetti's *Descrizione*, also transcribed by Cicogna, are by Sasso or Daniele Farsetti; see MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*: 'Le postille qui manoscritte le ho copiate da un esemplare comunicatomi dal Sig. Giacomo Dalla Lena, che lo trovò ne' libri di Giammaria Sasso; e forse sono del Sasso medesimo (vedi p. 113). Presso Moschini Di Murano p. 87 sono credute di Daniele Farsetti'; see also Orso, 'Giovanni Maria Sasso', p. 53.

⁵¹ While Zanetti attributes the painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross* in SS. Giovanni e Paolo to Luigi Vivarini, Sasso has a different opinion; see MS Cicogna 3042/40, fol. 2: 'Pag. 13, lin. 8. Non posso persuadermi che questo millesimo sia originale, poichè il quadro è aggiuntato, ed appunto il millesimo è nella giunta, e perciò più moderno, o modernamente fatto'; and fol. 3, for Sasso's ranking of painters: 'Pag. 29, lin. 19. Viene riputato Bartolomeo Vivarino per il migliore della Scuola vivarinesca. Ma io lo trovo più secco e più tagliente degli altri tanto nelle prime, che nelle ultime sue opera ed io darei la preferenza a Luigi Vivarino sopra ogni altro di dotta Scuola.' Here Sasso disagrees with Zanetti's view that Bartolomeo Vivarini was better than Alvise Vivarini; see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 29: 'in S. Giobbe nella sagrestia si conserva una bella tavola...opera probabilmente del miglior Vivarino [Bartolomeo]'.

⁵² Among the writers cited are: Jacopo Sansovino, Scipione Maffei, Flaminio Cornaro, Allegrotto Algretti, Carlo Ridolfi, Ludovico Muratori, Marco Boschini and Antonio Zanetti the Younger. All these authors are mentioned in the *Venezia pittrice*. See, e.g., MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*, fols 2-3: 'Pag. 10, lin. 15. [where Zanetti discusses the life of Nicoletto Semitecolo] Sarebbe che la miracolosa immagine della Vergine de' Miracoli fosse di questo pittore. Il nome, e l'epoca, ed anche la maniera era confrontata con quelli di Padova lo manifesta. Vedi Flaminio Cornaro nella sua opera delle Immagini miracolose di M. V.'; Sasso refers here to F. Cornaro's *Notizie storiche delle apparizioni e delle immagini più celebri di Maria Vergine Santissima nella città e dominio di Venezia*, Venice 1761, p. 52: 'dipingere da un tal Mastro Niccolò Pittore allora assai célèbre l'Immagine della Gloriosa Vergine col Divin suo Figliuolo fra le braccia'.

⁵³ He refers, e.g., to a painting by Antonello da Messina in the collection of Bartolommeo Vetturi, which was transported to London after his death; see MS Cicogna 3042/40, fol. 2: 'Pag. 21, lin. 15 ... Questo Ritratto di Antonello passo a Londra dopo la morte del N. U. Vitturi, e ciò fu circa il 1779'; see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 21: 'Nella Galleria di scelte pitture, che per suo nobile piacere formò il Veneziano Patrizio S. E. Sig. Bartolommeo Vitturi, v'è il ritratto d'un Gentiluomo parimente Veneziano, dipinto da Antonello.'

Mansueti's *St Jerome* in the collection of Salvatore Orsetti (fig. 37),⁵⁴ one after Jacopo Bellini's *Virgin and Child* in the collection of abbot Foscarini (fig. 38),⁵⁵ one after Jacopo Bellini's *Entombment* in Casa Cornaro (fig. 39),⁵⁶ and, lastly, one after Gentile Bellini's portrait of St Lorenzo Giustiniani (fig. 40).⁵⁷

Sasso's knowledge of literature on art is reflected in his own writings, where he mentions a wide range of books. The evidence I have assembled so far suggests that Sasso had a good awareness of the published literature on art, especially the works of Zanetti, Ridolfi and Malvasia, which provided guidance on shaping the preferences of collectors and influenced what they acquired. Moreover, as appears from two letters by the abbot and antiquarian Giovanni Battista Nalesso, Sasso intended to buy, either for his own library or for his patrons, a large number of books on the lives of artists from different parts of Italy, as well as some books published in the fifteenth century.⁵⁸ Ridolfi, in particular proved to be a popular author among English collectors: in a letter dated 30 October 1789, Sasso

⁵⁴ MS Cicogna, 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*, fol. 3: 'Da Sr Salvatore Orsetti ritrovassi di questa mano un S. Girolamo nel deserto, che io feci disegnare, e dare alle stampe.'

⁵⁵ Ibid., fol. 4: 'Da un suo frammento, posseduto dall'abate Foscarini di Padova, feci trarre il disegno, e lo diedi alle stampe'; see also E. Borea, 'Per la fortuna dei primitivi: la *Istoria pratica* di Stefano Mulinari e la *Venezia pittrice* di Gian Maria Sasso', in *Hommage à Michel Laclotte. Études sur la peinture du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*, Paris 1994, pp. 508, 514.

⁵⁶ MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*, fol. 3: 'Restano pure di questo autore alcuni disegni in Casa Cornaro della Ca' Grande'; see also Borea, 'Per la fortuna dei primitivi', pp. 507-8.

⁵⁷ MS Cicogna 3042/40: *Annotazioni scritte da Sasso*, fol. 4: 'Essendo detta operain gran rovina, ne feci trarreil disegno, e diedi alle stampe il contenuto.'

⁵⁸ Epistolario Moschini: 'Giovanni Battista Nalesso', letter 123, Nalesso to Sasso, undated: 'Mi vengono esibiti i seguenti libri di pittura:

[Lione] Pascoli, *Vite de pittori, scult. Architetti, moderni*. Si aggiunge le *Vite de pit. scult. archit. perugini*, Roma L. 40.

Gori Gio., *Notizie istoriche degli intagliatori Siena* ? L. 21.

[Carlo Cesare] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice. Vite de pit. Bolognesi* (ivi) 1675, L. 40.

[Filippo] Baldinucci, *Notizie de professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua in Firenze 1765*, L.56.

Opera postuma fogl. Firenze ? L. 16.

[Giampietro Zanotti], *Storia dell' accad. Clementina di Bologna*, L. 40.

[Bernardo de] Dominici, *Vita de pit. scult. arch. napol. (ivi)*, 1742, L. 26.

[Rafaello] Soprano, *Vite pit. scul. archit genovesi*, 1754, L. 36.

[Giovanni Battista] Zaist, *Notizie istoriche de pittori scultori archit. cremonesi*, 1774, L. 16.

[Lione] Pascoli, *Vite de pitt.scult. archit perugini*, Roma 1732, L. 19.

Io non conosco se questi prezzi convenghino a questi libri o no, se convengono e che vi servino o tutti, o in parte scriveremelo?.

See also *ibid.*, letter 4, Nalesso to Sasso, 17 September 1788, Padua: 'Acquistai i libri del Quattrocento da Lei veduti appresso di me, sicche se ella applicasse all' Esopo del 1474, ed al Valerio Massimo del 1480 potremo trattare con lettera ed io discenderei a fare tutto ciò che fosse onesto, giacche del Plinio del 1491 e del Catullo libro e Propertio pure del 1491, ella mostrò di non applicare. Della cronica del [Galeazzo] Gatari, e dei sermoni di F. Bernardo del...1400, ella mi esibi L. 22, ed io risolvo di darglieli per lei l. 26 se così le piace.'

informed Hume, who had previously asked him to procure for him a copy of *Le meraviglie dell'arte*, that:

Ridolfi is more expensive in Venice than elsewhere because all the copies have been exported, and here a foreigner pays up to twelve zechini for the book – a terrible price. Anyway, I found a copy at 3 zecchini for Mr Hoare last year. But now I am behind with the printing of the *Storia pittorica veneta*, which everyone is longing to have published, so that it will be used like Ridolfi and something more, since I leave out all the annoying poetic touches of this man, and there will be many more interesting things on art.⁵⁹

In this letter, Sasso touches on two major points: first of all, that there was a demand from the English collectors for Ridolfi's book; and, secondly, that he himself was planning to publish a treatise on Venetian art, more complex than that of Ridolfi, which would provide collectors with a knowledgeable source on Venetian art.⁶⁰ As we have seen, Sasso had been working on the *Venezia pittrice* as early as the mid-1780s,⁶¹ and the letter to Hume confirms that his project was still ongoing at the end of the decade.

Among the 'standard' publications Sasso drew on for his treatise were works by Sansovino, Ridolfi and Boschini; but he also used eighteenth-century century ones including Flaminio Corner's *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia, e di Torcello tratte dalle chiese veneziane e torcelliane*, published in Padua in 1758, and Giambattista Verci's *Notizie intorno alla vita e alle opera de' pittori, scultori e intagliatori della città di Bassano*, published in Venice in 1775.⁶² His only reference to Verci's book was in connection with Guariento's art,

⁵⁹ NGA 8/1/47, Hume to Sasso, 12 October 1789: 'Ridolfi su la scuola veneziana è un libro assai difficile a trovar in Londra. Se potrebbe comprarme un esempio a Venezia inviatelomi, ma non voglio accettare quello che vi possediate'; and NGA 8/1/48, Sasso to Hume, 30 October 1789: 'Il Ridolfi è molto più caro a Venezia che oltre i monti poiche sono stati esportati fuori tutti li esemplari e qui fu pagato Ridolfi da un forestiero sino dodici zechini, prezzo terribile- ad ogni modo l'anno passato l'ho trovato per Mr Hoare per tre zechini, ma ora io sono dietro a stampare la Storia pittorica veneta che tutti la brama stampata così; servirà come il Ridolfi e qualche cosa più poiche lascio fuori tutte le secature poetiche di quest'huomo e vi sarà molte cose più interessanti a l'arte.'

⁶⁰ See Borean, *Lettere artistiche*, p. 10. Even though Sasso informs Hume that he is in the process of printing his book, he was, in fact, still working on the project.

⁶¹ See Orso, 'Giovanni Maria Sasso', p. 52.

⁶² For a complete list of writings mentioned by Sasso and arranged in chronological order, see Appendix V in vol. II of this dissertation.

especially a painted crucifix originally located in the church of San Francesco (fig. 41).⁶³ Sasso cited Corner's *Notizie* several times, particularly in relation to a painting by Jacobello del Fiore which was only mentioned and reproduced in this work.⁶⁴ We know, moreover, that he possessed a copy of this book, which was given to him in 1778 by one of Flaminio's sons, Pietro Corner, a Camaldolese monk at San Michele in Murano.⁶⁵ When discussing the painters who worked in Murano, including the Vivarini family, Sasso referred to Matteo Fanello's *Notizie storico geografiche di Murano*, which was published in Venice in 1797,⁶⁶ which shows that these lives were added somewhere between 1797 and 12 May 1802, when Sasso stopped working on the manuscript.⁶⁷

Sasso's draft of *Venezia pittrice* includes a summary of the first chapter, with notes on the artists and their works which would have received a broader presentation in the book itself. His notes, although in a telegraphic form, are of great importance for us, since they indicate how he planned and organized his material and what sources he was intending to use. At the same time, they provide a unique insight into the connoisseur's approach to art history. They show that Sasso's intention was to begin his history of Venetian painting with the earliest examples of art such as the mosaics in St Mark's basilica and other surviving fragments of paintings by anonymous artists. The first chapter would include the lives and works of artists from Lorenzo Veneziano to Antonello da Messina;⁶⁸ for the descriptions, Sasso was going to gather information from various writings by Allegretto Allegretti,⁶⁹ Marin Sanudo, Scipione Maffei,⁷⁰ Giorgio Vasari, Carlo Ridolfi, Marco Boschini

⁶³ For the use of Verci's book in Sasso's writing, see R. Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte padovana del Rinascimento*, Udine 1998, p. 304: 'Il Verci nelle sue Pitture Bassanesi annovera molte opera di tale autore [Guariento], e fra l'altre un Crocifisso... Questo monumento ornava...il maggiore altare della chiesa di San Francesco.'

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309: 'Il chiarissimo e benemerito nostro senatore Flaminio Corner ce ne ha dato la Stampa nella sua sacra ed eruditissima opera delle chiese di Venezia, ma l'incisore Pietro Monaco gli diede il gusto moderno non conservando niente dell'antico carattere.'

⁶⁵ In the copy held in the Warburg Institute Library, London (classmark: CNH 2025), there is a page in Sasso's handwriting stating that the book was given to him by Pietro Cornaro in 1779; see Flaminio Cornaro, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia, e di Torcello tratte dalle chiese veneziane e torcelliane*, Padua 1758: 'Donatami da S. E. il Padre Pietro Cornaro, monaco camaldolese in S. Michiel di Murano l'anno 1778 à 15 Ottobre. Giovanni Maria Sasso.'

⁶⁶ See Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 313: 'Il signor don Matteo Fanello prete muranese che scrisse le memorie de' pittori muranesi, e che afferma nel suo manoscritto di aver estratto molte notizie da antichi manoscritti conservati negli archivi di Murano, non ci dice nulla di più di quello aveva scritto il Ridolfi e il Zanetti.'

⁶⁷ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 323: 'Venezia, 12 maggio 1802.'

⁶⁸ In the work itself, however, Sasso does not mention Antonello da Messina.

⁶⁹ Sasso refers to Allegretti's *Diario delle cose senesi* on two occasions when he discusses the works of Jacobello del Fiore: see Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 297: 'Memorie tratte da manoscritti di Allegretto Allegretti nel diario delle cose senesi riportate dal Muratori nel suo Rerum Italicarum Scriptores', and p. 309: 'Qui però è da

and Antonio Maria Zanetti. He had also planned to include paintings from private collections with which he was well acquainted.

There is, however a discrepancy between these notes and the actual content of Sasso's manuscript, since many of the painters whom he intended to include were left out. These were, for the most part, non-Venetian, originally from northern Italian cities near Venice such as Padua, Verona and Treviso: Altichiero (1330-1390), Sebeto da Verona (active 1377), Matteo Pozzo, Dario da Treviso (1440-1498), Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), Girolamo dai Libri il Vecchio (1450-1503), Girolamo dai Libri il Giovane (1474-1555), Matteo Pasta, Pisanello (1395-1455), Librale da Verona(1445-1526/29), Giovanni Carotto (1480-1555), Niccolò Giolfino (1470-1555), but also Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), Vittore Carpaccio (1450-1525), Cima da Conegliano (1459-1517), Andrea Previtali (1470-1528), Marco Marziale (1492-1507), Benedetto Diana (1460-1525), Il Cordella, Giovanni Buonconsiglio (1465-1535/7), Girolamo Mocetto (1470-1531) and Antonello da Messina (1430-1479). For each of these artists, Sasso not only planned to discuss works displayed both publicly and privately, but also to produce prints after their works.⁷¹

In the treatise itself, Sasso's biographies of artists have gained consistency, and each of them is presented separately under the short title of *Memorie di* and the name of the artist. He sets out the context in which a painting was made, its commissioner (about whom he also provides details selected from primary sources), the price paid for it, a review of other writers' descriptions of the work and, finally, his own assessment of it.⁷² Such detailed analyses make Sasso's manuscript treatise stand out from most previous writings on art, especially because it was also designed to contain illustrations.⁷³ The prints are now kept in

osservare che San Bernardino non fu ascritto nel numero de' beati nel 1458 ma bensì nel 1450, come abbamo da Alegretto Alegretti nel suo Diaro delle cose senesi che nota...

⁷⁰ Sasso refers to Maffei's *Verona Illustrata* on four occasions; see Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, pp. 297, 299, 301 and 302.

⁷¹ E.g., Callegari, the modern editor of Sasso's manuscript, informs us that he produced, among many others, a print after a work by Girolamo dai Libri il Giovane found in the collection of John Strange; see Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 299. Sasso made prints after most of the works owned by Strange; these are illustrated in S. d'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'art par les monuments*, 6 vols, Paris 1810-1823; see also Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 294.

⁷² See, e.g., the description of Lorenzo Veneziano's *Lion Altarpiece* commissioned by Domenico Lion, where Sasso cites Zanetti; see Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 301.

⁷³ For a study of the context in which the prints were produced, as well as their possible attributions, see Borea, 'Per la fortuna dei primitivi', pp. 503-21, and C. Lloyd, *Art and its Images. An Exhibition of Printed Books Containing Engraved Illustrations after Italian Painting*, Oxford 1975, pp. 75-6. The prints and drawings produced after the paintings of Mantegna and other artists are much discussed in the Lazzara-Sasso correspondence; see Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, pp. 344-55, and Epistolario Moschini, 'Giovanni de Lazzara', letter to Giovanni Maria Sasso, 24 May 1802: 'All'abate Nalesso ho consegnato sino da Sabato mattina il Disegno di Andrea

three volumes;⁷⁴ and at the beginning of one of the albums, there is a list of all the prints, together with the year in which the paintings were made.⁷⁵

The first account is of Lorenzo Veneziano, whose *Lion Altarpiece* in Sant'Antonio Sasso describes in great detail, telling the reader about its subject, commissioner and price. Since the substantial sum of 300 zecchini was paid for the altarpiece, Sasso considered Lorenzo to be one of the most highly regarded painters of that period.⁷⁶ In his preliminary notes on Guariento, Sasso mentioned only his fresco in the Palazzo Ducale; but he added two more works in the manuscript treatise itself: a crucifix and a painting with St Michael, which was bought by the English resident, John Strange. Interestingly, Sasso writes that he had a print made after the painting acquired by Strange (fig. 42) in order to preserve the memory of the work before it was transported to Britain.⁷⁷

Sasso also ranked painters and made comparisons between them, as we can see in his discussion of Giusto de Menabuoi's cupola in the baptistery of Padua (fig. 43), which he considered superior to works by Guariento and even to Giotto since it was 'painted with good colouring, with most beautiful heads and beautiful folds, with softness and expression'.⁷⁸ For an eighteenth-century collector or reader who was familiar with earlier writings on art, it would, no doubt, have been surprising that Sasso thought Giusto de' Menabuoi had surpassed Giotto. This, however, was not the only striking observation made

Mantegna del bel quadro della Vittoria di Mantova ch'ella ha mostrato [?] di fare incidere per unirlo alle altre opera d quel [?] pittore che adoreranno la Storia tanto desiderata dell'antica Veneta Pittura'; see Appendix VI in vol. II of this dissertation.

⁷⁴ See n. 5 above. For the illustrations, I have chosen volume B 15 bis, which contains impressions of 44 plates; see Lloyd, *Art and its Images*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, C2: *Nota delle stampe de' pittori antichi veneti fatte incidere dal Gio Maria Sasso per l'opera Venezia pittrice*.

⁷⁶ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 301: 'Bisogna credere che Lorenzo fosse in allora uno de' migliori pittori, se si riguarda al luogo ove fu chiamato, il personaggio che lo chiamò, ed il prezzo che gli fù dato, che fu appunto 300 ducato d'oro, o zucchini, prezzo grandissimo per quei tempi, come lo dimostra Zanetti.' For the price of the altarpiece, see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 9: 'prezzo di trecento ducati d'oro'. Here, Zanetti quotes an inventory from 1368 of all the art works in the church of Sant'Antonio; see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 9, n. (**): 'Si fa esso prezzo per un originale inventario de' mobili di questo monastero, fatto nell'anno 1368'; see also C. Guarnieri, *Lorenzo Veneziano*, Milan 2006, p. 181.

⁷⁷ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 304: 'Una tavola che trovasi in detta cappella rappresentante San Michele arcangelo dipinta a tempera fu acquistata dal fu professor Luigi Calza, che alla sua morte non conoscendone gli eredi il pregio capitò alle mani di S. E. Giovanni Strange ministro britannico il quale la trasportò in Inghilterra, avendone prima io stesso cavato un contorno per conservarne la memoria.'

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 305: 'L'opera sua per altro più ragionevole, e che merita ancora l'attenzione de' dilettranti è quella delle pitture del Battisterio vicino al Duomo, essendovene ancora molte di conservate, ed in particolare quelle della cupola con la Gloria del Paradiso, ove si vede quantità di angeli e di beati, dipinta di buon colore, con bellissime teste e bei andamenti di pieghe, con morbidezza ed espressione superiore forse allo stesso Guariento, ed anche allo stesso Giotto.'

by Sasso. In his discussion of Francesco and Jacobello del Fiore, Sasso states that Jacobello's style was inferior to his father's. Sasso, in fact, is the only writer on Venetian art to discuss Francesco del Fiore's works at all, mentioning a little painted altarpiece of the Virgin and Child with St Jerome and St John the Baptist, dated 1412, which belonged to John Strange; he also reproduced the work in print (fig. 44). He describes it as 'most beautiful for those days; the heads of the saints are full of devout gravity, the folds are rich and soft, and the whole ensemble is well composed'.⁷⁹ Sasso also made prints after Francesco del Fiore's tomb and its inscription (figs 45, 46).

Sasso not only took inspiration from the earlier writers on art for his *Venezia pittrice*, but also challenged some of their assessments. Writing about Jacobello del Fiore, for instance, Sasso considered his paintings to be very dry, influenced by the Greek or Byzantine manner, giving as an example a painting of the *Virgin and Child* in the collection of Girolamo Manfrin (fig. 47);⁸⁰ and, on the basis of his examination of Jacobello's works, he concluded that Ridolfi, Boschini and Zanetti had overrated his paintings.⁸¹ In his account of Alvise Vivarini, he considered his *St Jerome* in the Scuola di San Girolamo to be equal to the painting of Giovanni Bellini and superior to that of Vittore Carpaccio in the same church,⁸² praising the 'beautiful and elegant church' and the 'ingenious and well-situated figures'.⁸³ The church and the figures had been singled out by past critics, but none of them had claimed that Alvise Vivarini was superior to painters of the calibre of Bellini and Carpaccio. The specific principles or criteria used by Sasso in rating Alvise so high are not clear: in discussing other paintings by the artist, for instance, the altarpiece of the *Virgin and Child with St Bernardino, St Francis, and St Louis* in San Francesco in Treviso (fig. 48),

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 307: 'Il cavalier Giovanni Strange fece acquisto di un piccolo capitello con i suoi portelli nel quale era dipinto la Beata Vergine che abbraccia il Bambino, con San Girolamo e San Giovanni Battista alle parti, ed abbassi in ginocchio un monaco certosino e nel pedale vi era l'anno 1412... L'opera per que' tempi è bellissima, le teste de' santi piene di divota gravità, le pieghe ricche e morbide, e tutto l'assieme ben disegnato e composto.'

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 309: 'Nella raccolta delle eccellenti pitture del signor Girolamo Manfrin ritrovasi un'antica tavola con fondo dorato in cui è espresso la Vergine che abbraccia il Bambino. Non posso esprimere quanto senta del Greco stile quest'opera.'

⁸¹ E.g., Sasso disagreed with Ridolfi's assessment of Jacobello's paintings; see *ibid.*, p. 308: 'Bisogna perdonar se tanto lodava questo Jacobello per tale pittura, la quale dice che fu in allora molto stimata da' veneziani.'

⁸² Ibid., p. 310: 'Certo è che Luigi Vivarini dipinse in concorrenza di Giovanni Bellino e del Carpaccio nella Scuola di San Girolamo vicina alla chiesa di detto santo... Veramente Luigi in quest'opera non si mostra punto inferior a Giovanni Bellini, e forse porta la palma sopra Carpaccio.' The paintings by both Bellini and Carpaccio in the Scuola were of *St Jerome*.

⁸³ Ibid.: 'In lontano è dipinta una bella chiesa lucidissima che fa campo alle più vicine figure molto ben inventate e situate.' This work is now lost; see J. Steer, *Alvise Vivarini: His Art and Influence*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 174-5.

Sasso merely states that it was one of his best works and was very well preserved.⁸⁴ He noted that the attribution of a painting of St Vincent in SS Giovanni e Paolo had long been debated, with some writers regarding it as a work by Bartolomeo Vivarini, others assigning it to Carpaccio. He himself insisted that it was by Alvise, and his main argument against the attribution to Bartolomeo was that his manner was too hard, as well as too affected, for this painting to be one of his.⁸⁵ The painting, however, is now attributed to Giovanni Bellini.⁸⁶ From this misattribution, nevertheless, we learn that Sasso did not particularly like Bartolomeo's style and that his tastes and preferences were occasionally distorted by erroneous attributions.

Another indication of Sasso's somewhat unusual approach to Venetian art was his opinion of Andrea da Murano. While Zanetti considered Andrea to be an important figure in the evolution of Venetian art history,⁸⁷ Sasso was more reserved in his assessment: even though the artist could draw with intelligence, and his paintings were better than Jacobello's, his style was still far from elegant and noble. He then went on to question whether any of the painters of this time had displayed these qualities in their works.⁸⁸

Sasso also showed great interest in tracing the history of some of the paintings he discussed and the collections which they entered, as well as mentioning art works which had belonged to the artists whom he discussed. For instance, he recorded an ancient image representing the death of Ephrem the Syrian (fig. 49) in the collection of Francesco Squarcione, which might possibly have influenced him and which was later acquired by abbot Facciolati, who offered it as a gift to Cardinal Livizzani and Pope Benedict XIV.⁸⁹ He

⁸⁴ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 312: 'Io esaminai attentamente quest'opera conservatissima e che credo una delle sue migliori posso dire che rappresenta Beata Vergine col Bambino i Santi Bernardino, Francesco, Luigi ed altri della religione francescana, ed ha nel piedestallo della sedia della Vergine il nome dell'autore.'

⁸⁵ Ibid.: 'non avendo nulla della durezza di Bartolommeo, che era affettato ne' muscoli, e sempre dipingeva in quella maniera'.

⁸⁶ See Gamba, *Bellini*, pp. 69-70.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 4, n. 55 above.

⁸⁸ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 310: 'Sapea disegnare con intelligenza...ma lo trovo poi lontano dall'eleganza e dalla nobiltà; ma quali pittori in que' tempi si potevano vantare di aver questi pregi?'

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 320-1: 'Non è da omettere che fra le cose acquistate dallo Squarcione vi era una tavola antica greca con la morte e li funerali di Sant'Eufrem siro, la quale dopo molti giri e ragiri pervenne alle mani dell'ultimo signor abate Facciolati, che un dono ne fece al eminentissimo cardinal Livizzani dopo la morte del quale passò in potere di S. S. Benedetto XIV.' Cardinal Giuseppe Livizzani (1688-1754) was named cardinal in 1753 by Pope Benedict XIV; see C. Berton, *Dictionnaire des cardinaux: contenant des notions générales sur le cardinalat*, Farnborough 1969, p. 1139; M. Becker and C. Weber, eds, *Genealogien zur Papstgeschichte*, 2 vols, Stuttgart 1999, II, pp. 566-7, and

<http://www2.fiu.edu/~mirandas/bios1753.htm#Livizzani>.

also informed readers that a print after this image had been used on the title-page of the third volume of the *Roma Sotterranea* published in 1754.⁹⁰ Moreover, Sasso preferred Squarcione's paintings to those of Mantegna, stating that even though the folds were painted with 'durezza', the flesh tones were soft and that Squarcione had managed to distinguish himself from other painters of his generation.⁹¹ In order to illustrate Squarcione's stylistic qualities, Sasso gave as an example his painting of the *Virgin and Child* in the Manfrin collection and made a print of it 'in order to preserve its memory of such a praiseworthy artist' (fig. 50).⁹² Sasso also included a section on Squarcione's pupils such as Dario da Treviso, Girolamo Schiavone and Marco Zoppo; and he, likewise, produced prints after their works (figs 51, 52, 53).

The last painter discussed by Sasso in the manuscript was Sebastiano Zuccato, mentioning his painting of St Sebastian with a kneeling figure in a private collection (that of Pietro Pellegrini), but without giving his opinion (fig. 54).

Because Sasso's treatise was designed to contain very good quality illustrations of the works he discussed, it fits into a tradition of illustrated Venetian writings on art, including Valentin Le Fevre's *Opera selectiora* (1682), Carla Catterina Patina's *Pitture scelte e dichiarate* (1691), Domenico Lovisa's *Il gran teatro delle pitture e prospettive di Venezia* (1720), Correr's *Notizie* (1758) and Zanetti's *Varie pitture* (1760).⁹³

Regarding the fate of Sasso's manuscript after his death, a number of documents allow us to trace its history. The first owner was Giovanni de Lazara, who, as he states in a

Also, Livizzani's nephew, cardinal Carlo Livizzani (1785-1802) dedicated his *De gloriosissima Christi Domini Ascensione oratio*, Rome 1744, to Benedict XIV (1675-1758), on whom, see M. Rosa, 'Benedetto XIV', in *DBI*, VIII, pp. 393-408.

⁹⁰ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 321: 'la di cui incisione serve di frontispizio al tomo 3 della Roma sotterranea stampato in quella città l'anno 1754'. Sasso refers here to Giovanni Gaetano Bottari's *Sculture e pitture sagre estratte dai cimiteri di Roma*, 3 vols, Rome 1737-1754, III, pp. 219-36, frontispiece. The inscription at the bottom of the engraving reads: 'MORTE DI S. EFREM SIRO TRATTA DA UN QUADRO ANTICO DIPINTO A OLIO. A SUA EMINENZA SIG. CARDINALE GIUSEPPE LIVIZZANI POSSESSORE DI QUESTA PITTURA. IN SEGNO D'UMILISSIMO OSSEQUIO. V. LA PREFAZ. DEL TOM. III. DELLA ROMA SOTTERRANEA. DA G. B.' In the appendix containing an explanatory text about the engraving, Bottari states that the ancient painting was preserved 'with great diligence and care' in the collection of the most eminent cardinal Livizzani: *ibid.*, *Sculture e pitture sagre*, III, p. 219: 'un'antica sacra pittura, che presso l'Eminentissimo Sig. Cardinal Livizzani si conserva con gran diligenza, e cura'. For the imagery of St Ephrem the Syrian, see J. R. Martin, 'The Death of Ephraim in Byzantine and Early Italian Painting', *The Art Bulletin*, 3, 1951, pp. 217-55, at p. 217.

⁹¹ Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 321: 'è più morbida nelle carni dello stesso Mantegna, le pieghe tengono ancora qualche durezza; ma si conosce quanto egli si distingueva dagli altri'.

⁹² *Ibid.*: 'perchè non resti perduta affatto la memoria di un così benemerito maestro lo feci indifere in rami'; see also Borea, 'Per la fortuna dei primitivi', p. 517.

⁹³ See Orso, 'Giovanni Maria Sasso', p. 53.

letter of 1801 to Sasso, ‘had stolen’ the manuscript for two hours in order to transcribe it.⁹⁴ Six years later, Lazara wrote to Giannantonio Moschini informing him that Giacomo della Lena owned Sasso’s *Venezia pittrice*, a manuscript which, as Lazara states, could be helpful to Moschini’s own work, *Guida per l’isola di Murano*.⁹⁵ Moreover, in an undated but presumably much later note, Lazara wrote that the abbott Daniele Francesconi owned Sasso’s prints for *Venezia pittrice*, which he wanted to publish.⁹⁶ Among them, Lazara recounted, were reproductions after works by painters from Murano including the *Crucifixion with Mary and John* by Andrea da Murano for the Isola da Certosa (fig. 55), the *Blessing Christ* by Quirico da Murano (fig. 56), the *Virgin and Child* by Alvise Vivarini (fig. 57) and the *Virgin and Child with Sts Peter, Andrew, John and Dominic* by Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 58).⁹⁷ Fortunato Federici, deputy librarian in Padua and biographer of Francesconi, also mentioned that the abbott had bought Sasso’s manuscript and prints in Venice, with the intention of publishing them, together with a work of his own entitled *Padova pittrice*.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ See Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, letter from Lazzara to Sasso, 1801, p. 344: ‘è tale il mio impegno per l’opera ch’ella ha fra le mani della storia pittorica della scuola veneziana, tanto desiderata da tutti gli amatori delle belle arti, che io ho rubato due ore a’ miei affari per trascriverle.’

⁹⁵ Epistolario Moschini, ‘Giovanni de Lazzara’, letter 1, Lazzara to Moschini, 16 May 1807: ‘ma perche nulla mancasse a questa sua interessante operetta vorrei desiderarlo che non fosse omessa nessuno delle opere di quei suoi antichi Pittori raccolte e descritte con tanto merito ne scritti del Sasso, posseduti da Don Giacomo della Lena ch’ella certo ha vedute’.

⁹⁶ Epistolario Moschini, ‘Giovanni de Lazzara’, letter 57, Lazzara to Moschini: ‘L’Abbate Francesconi acquistò i rami della *Venezia Pittrice*, ed ha intenzione di pubblicarli con una illustrazione subito che li occupazioni della Cattedra gli lo permettesse’; see Appendix VII in vol. II of this dissertation.

⁹⁷ Epistolario Moschini, ‘Giovanni de Lazzara’, letter 57: ‘Tra questi si ritrovano di artefici Muranesi. Il Cristo in Croce con a piedi M V e S. Gio. in atto di dolore nell’ Isola della Certosa di Andrea da Murano. Il Quadro in tavola reppresentante il Salvatore in atto di benedire una pia Donna in ginocchioni a mani giunte de in mi. Nel pedale delle sedia sta scritto “Quiricus da Murano P”. La B. V. con Bambino che con aria ridente sta graziosamente guardandola e sotto vi è scritto in un cartellino – Alvise Vivarin P – Quadro passato dalla Galleria Corer de S. Gio. Decolato in quella del Sig. Girolamo Manfrin. Tavola del Capitolo dell’Isola della Certosa in cinque comparti, in quello di mezzo vi è la V. con le mani giunte adorando il Bambin Gesù dormiente sulle sue ginocchia e dalle parti vi sono li SS Gio Battista, Pietro, Andrea e Domenico, e sotto la Vergine sta scritto Opus Bartholomei Vivarini de Murano 1464.’

⁹⁸ See Fortunato Federici, *Notizie intorno la vita e gli studi dell’abate Daniele Francesconi...*, Venice 1836, pp. 29-30: ‘Un altro acquisto importante avea egli fatto in Venezia da Giammaria Sasso, e fu di molti disegni incise in rame a contorni, e rappresentanti vari dipinti a fresco in Padova, e per opera di Giotto, e principalmente per opera di Andrea Mantegna, nella intenzione di unirli ad altri, ch’egli nello stesso modo fece incidere in seguito (Vedi Moschini, *Guida di Padova, Venezia*, 1817, in 8, faccia 92) al fine di pubblicarli coll’opera che avea in animo di scrivere la *Padova pittrice*.’

Notizie de' pittori moderni or the 'Silence' of the Works of Art

Francesconi also owned a manuscript of Sasso's biographies of modern artists, which he sold to a merchant called Rizzoli; it was then acquired in 1862 by Vincenzo Lazari (1823-1864), who made a transcription, which he offered as a gift to Emmanuele Cicogna.⁹⁹ The sixteen folios contain biographies of seven contemporary painters: Giovanni Fazioli (1729-1797), together with his portrait in pencil made by Sasso (fig. 58);¹⁰⁰ Giambettino Cignaroli (1706-1770/2); Giovanni Segala (1663-1720); Girolamo Ferabosco (1605-1679); Bartolomeo Nazzari (1699-1758); Giuseppe Nogari (1699-1763); and Gregorio Lazzarini (1655-1730). In writing the biographies – except for those of Fazioli, Cignaroli and Ferabosco – Sasso drew on Zanetti's *Della pittura veneziana*.¹⁰¹ The type of information provided and the style of writing are different, however, from Sasso's *Venezia pittrice*. For instance, the individual biographies of modern artists are longer than those of earlier ones, and he does not necessarily focus on describing individual paintings, but rather provides general comments on the painters' styles.¹⁰² Furthermore, he knew most of these painters or had heard of them from his father and, therefore, was able to insert personal remarks or anecdotes; for example, discussing the life of Lazzarini, Sasso recalls that 'he was one of his father's dearest pupils';¹⁰³ and, in his biography of Giovanni Fazioli, Sasso mentions that he owned two of his paintings, which were 'as beautiful as those by Bassano'.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ In a dedicatory note to Cicogna, Lazari writes: 'V. Lazari prega il suo ch. amico cav. Cicogna di accettare questi fascicoli manoscritti concernente soggetti artistiche, che ritiene opera lavoro di Giammaria Sasso. Egli li ebbe a Padova dal negoziante Rizzoli nel gennaio 1862, e sospetta fossero già in mano del prof. Francesconi'; see Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, MS Cicogna 2941: *Notizie de' pittori moderni*, fols 1^r-18^r, at fol. 1^r, and Appendix VIII in vol II of this dissertation, for a transcription.

¹⁰⁰ This drawing in graphite has been bound together with the folios of the transcription. There are multiple examples of portraits from Sasso's hand, mostly in pen, on the back of the letters which he received from various correspondents including those from the art dealer Giovanni Battista Armano; see Tormen, ed., *L'epistolario*, pp. 383, 408, 440, 475, 484 and 497.

¹⁰¹ The influence of Zanetti is evident in Sasso's biographies as his name often crops up; see Appendix VIII, pp. 261-70. In the case of Segala, for instance, besides mentioning Zanetti's name in his description, Sasso also preserves, partially, the order in which Zanetti listed the churches containing the painter's works; see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, pp. 414-15 and Appendix VIII, p. 267. For Nazzari, see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, p. 400 and Appendix VIII, p. 268; for Nogari, see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, pp. 435-6 and Appendix VIII, p. 268, and for Lazzarini, see Zanetti, *Della pittura*, pp. 416-22 and Appendix VIII, pp. 268-70.

¹⁰² See, e.g., the lives of Giovanni Fazioli and Giambettino Cignaroli in MS Cicogna 2941: *Notizie*, fols 1^r-3^r, and 4^r-7^r.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, fol. 14^r, 'Mi ricordo ancora avere inteso da mio padre, che fu per molti anni alla sua scuola ed uno de' suoi più cari.'

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 3^r: 'due quadri grandi bislungi rappresentanti due Cucine con figure, animali, e masserizie, dove si ammira la bravura, e maestria del Pittore, con artificio e giuoco tale di lumi, che forma tutto il magico della bell'arte imitatrice: tutto in somma e natura, e verità; tanto belli son questi quadri, come di Bassano, e a me

In assessing the styles of the modern painters, he discusses colouring, proportions, light and shading;¹⁰⁵ and, in doing so, he introduces new criteria, one of which is the ‘silence’ in a work of art. Referring to Giambattista Cignaroli, for instance, Sasso notes that it was difficult for him to ‘bring silence into his paintings, as recommended by Annibale Carracci’.¹⁰⁶ He then explains that bringing silence into a work of art means the ability of a painter to arrange the figures appropriately and harmoniously within the composition, not inserting more than twelve figures at once. Veronese, however, had ignored this principle, yet was still, in Sasso’s opinion, one of the most praiseworthy artists.¹⁰⁷

Sasso acknowledged a decline in the art of the eighteenth century,¹⁰⁸ and he highlighted the less favourable aspects of works by contemporary painters.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, he promoted their stylistic innovations, characterized by beautiful colouring and luminosity,¹¹⁰ and their attempt to leave behind the *maniera tenebrosa*.¹¹¹

Sasso expressed his ideas on Venetian art in his engaging letters and his more formal writings, which, as we have seen, are at times surprisingly original. A possible explanation for his striking choices and comparisons between artists, especially in his

piacciono ancor di vantaggio.’ There is no reference to paintings by Fazioli in the inventory of Sasso’s possessions.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., he gives an interesting definition of *chiaroscuro*; see *ibid.*, fol. 6^r: ‘l’oscuro maggiore; che è quello appunto che da un bravo pittore si dee cercare nel colorire una tela; altrimenti non raccogliendo il lume e lasciandolo qua e poi disperso, apparisce, con sommo disgusto dell’occhio erudito, languido, smorto e delavato’.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 5: ‘In somma si affaticò molto per portare quell silenzio su’ quadri tanto raccomandato da Annibale Carracci il quale pensava che non si potessero mettere su d’una tavola più di 12 figure senza perderlo.’ I have not been able to identify Sasso’s source for the idea of ‘silence’ in painting; however, in the same biography, Sasso makes a reference to Pier Zagata’s chronicle explaining that Cignaroli wrote a series of biographies of Veronese artists. In the section on the Veronese painters of Zagata’s work, and, more precisely, in the life of Alessandro Turchi or Orbetto – a painter otherwise mentioned by Sasso as Cignaroli’s master – there is another expression attributed to Annibale Carracci, this time referring to the manner in which the painter depicted the flesh; see Pier Zagata, ‘Supplementi alla cronica di Pier Zagata dedicati a sua eccellenza il sig. Gianpietro Dolce’ in *Cronica della città di Verona*, 2 vols, Verona 1749, II, p. 214: ‘E giacchè di questa opera insigne prendemmo à far parole, s’osservino quelle mani e piedi, che più veri più disegnati certo far non si possono. E pare (per usar l’espressione d’Annibale Carracci) che il nostro Alessandro abbia macinato carne umana; mentre l’occhio stesso s’inganna, e par che veda il sangue scorrere per le vene, essendo sparso su le carni un color vivo, un non so che di pingue tinta, che direi che quasi fumanti, e al tutto pastose le rende.’

¹⁰⁷ MS Cicogna 2941: *Notizie*, fol. 5^r: ‘in che è da ammirarsi sommamente il Veronese, che seppe serbare questo raccomandato silenzio sebbene portò su suoi quadri prodigiosa quantità di figure’.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 14^r: ‘In questi torbidi tempi, pregiudicievoli all’arte.’

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 13^r: ‘ma per loro capriccio fecero qualche cosa istoriata di merito mediocre’.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 10^r: ‘Si fece una maniera sua tutta nuova, gustosa nel colorito con bell’impasto vaghezza e felicità di pennello.’

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 15^r: ‘Il Lazzarini...ed ha il merito di avere aperto gli occhi a’nostri artefici, di aver del tutto cacciata la maniera tenebrosa, e adottata una natura più vera, e più scelta.’

Venetia pittrice, could be that he was writing on commission about paintings in a private collection – that of his friend and client, John Strange – and, therefore, his mission was to promote and describe paintings in a way that would please Strange. It is difficult, consequently, to determine Sasso's own preferences. The same problem arises in interpreting his correspondence with Hume, in which Sasso's role was that of a connoisseur, who needed to maintain his reputation as a respectable art dealer on the Venetian art market by suggesting a variety of high quality works for acquisition. Occasionally, he recommended paintings by Renaissance artists which his clients did not particularly favour, despite Sasso's repeated attempts to convince them that they deserved to be collected for their beauty and on account of the artist's reputation. Both in his correspondence and in his treatise, he refers constantly to previous writers on Venetian painting, which provides further evidence of the close connection between art literature and the activity of collecting.

Preliminary Conclusions

The first part of this dissertation, dealing with Venetian artistic literature between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, has produced some interesting preliminary conclusions about attitudes towards the art of the past. The starting-point of my investigation was to identify the main questions which needed to be addressed in approaching these texts. In this regard, I was interested in the type of information the Venetian writers provided about late medieval and early Renaissance paintings, whether they were selective, critical or laudatory, and whether their views helped to encourage a preference and desire for collecting such paintings. Another concern of my research was to observe whether attitudes towards particular artists and their works changed from one writer to the other and, if so, how each view influenced and contributed to a growing interest in early Renaissance art before the nineteenth century.

The first signs in the sixteenth century that there was an interest in discussing earlier paintings appear in Francesco Sansovino's writings. By making a distinction between 'ancient' and 'modern' works of art, Sansovino began to carve out a path to the recovery of the artistic past. True, his accounts were not very substantial; but his aim was to document lost works by Venetian painters of previous generations and to draw attention to a number of stylistic features in works by those artists he most valued, including Marco Basaiti, Cima da Conegliano, Giovanni Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio. Sansovino singled out for praise the beauty of the paintings, the charming and graceful figures, the colours and the harmonious compositions.

The alterations made to Sansovino's writing by later editors included significant additions of earlier paintings which had been omitted from the original. The second edition of Sansovino's book contained an amplified description of the basilica of San Marco and records of various works, by earlier painters such as Lazzaro Sebastiani, Giovanni Bellini, Cima da Conegliano and Vincenzo Catena, as well as by more recent ones including Sante Peranda, Tintoretto and Veronese. The third edition is distinguished by its more elaborate accounts, which allow us to extract a richer array of information on earlier paintings and their reception. Even though Sansovino's book and its subsequent editions were not exclusively focused on earlier art – the nature of these writings invites a more general and

comprehensive approach – they raised an awareness towards paintings by earlier artists, and some of the accounts allow us to detect preferences for some of the paintings described.

As new guidebooks and biographies were published and republished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,¹ descriptions of paintings began to gain in consistency, a new artistic terminology developed and the criteria for assessing the works of art were defined more clearly. Three main lines of interpretation of late Trecento and Quattrocento Venetian paintings evolved. Judgements, firstly, could be based on historical grounds. This was the case for some of the early anonymous Venetian paintings and some of the lost paintings of the Palazzo Ducale. The main representative of this approach was Sansovino. Secondly, judgements were made on artistic grounds. Marco Boschini and especially Antonio Maria Zanetti employed a specific artistic vocabulary and referred to aesthetic qualities in their evaluations of paintings. Thirdly, there were religious grounds. Carlo Ridolfi, for instance, at times suggested that early paintings were highly esteemed for their ability to arouse devotion in viewers.

It has also emerged that the opinions of seventeenth-century Venetian writers on art were standardised. Both Ridolfi and Boschini appreciated more or less the same paintings and painters, pointing out various aspects which they considered most worthy of praise. Among the Trecento artists most frequently praised for their contribution to the development of Venetian painting and the course of art history, despite the ‘hard’ appearance of their works, were Guariento, Lorenzo Veneziano and Jacobello del Fiore. Among Quattrocento artists, the leading figures were Luigi and Bartolomeo Vivarini, Carpaccio, Giovanni Bellini, Cima da Conegliano, Marco Basaiti and Girolamo Mansueti. It was generally agreed that Giovanni Bellini was the pioneering figure for the early history of Venetian painting: Bellini was considered to be the painter with whom Venetian painting began properly. Ridolfi, for instance, pointed out that Bellini distinguished himself from his predecessors through his softer, more mature style and his pious figures. Boschini also ranked Bellini’s paintings very highly and considered him a better painter than Raphael. In the writings of both Ridolfi and Boschini, we can observe, in line with Vasari’s view, a *crescendo*, an evolution of style. They both aimed to present paintings which were on public or, very rarely, on private display, occasionally accompanied by critical assessments, which

¹ For an overview of the Venetian guidebooks in the seventeenth century, see Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 531-2.

were intended to shape the taste of art lovers. The comparisons between different painters were made in order to rank them and to indicate the models to be valued and emulated by later painters. It is not always evident whether Ridolfi and Boschini are expressing their own personal taste and preferences or, instead, carrying on a growing tradition of interpreting Venetian painting. They do, however, point out criteria for judging paintings and state why some painters deserved more attention and praise than others.

It was not, however, until the eighteenth century that views on early Venetian painting began to crystalize, and the appreciation for past art was expressed more coherently. The author who had the most comprehensive and coherent view of the art of the past was Zanetti. Careful to select only those painters whose works corresponded to the criteria which he set out in his writings, Zanetti explicitly justified his classifications of artists of the past. He divided them into four groups according to their style, based on his strict criteria of evaluation. A good painter, in his opinion, was one whose compositions embodied appropriateness, naturalness, charm and gracefulness. Within each category of artist, Zanetti identified the key figures and the elements which rendered their works outstanding. The novelties found in his writings are primarily his fresh judgements on early Renaissance paintings and his structured, clear and rigorous aesthetic principles, which were meant to function as guidelines for his readers. His writings were the first to exert a significant influence on the course of Venetian artistic historiography and on the history of taste.

Naturally, there were different levels of interest in early paintings; nevertheless, we have seen that these works of art were continually discussed and assessed, even if this was just as a way of expressing local pride or antiquarianism (which developed more towards the end of the eighteenth century) rather than a concerted attempt on the part of writers on art to cultivate a taste for earlier works among readers.

I have also considered collectors and connoisseurs, in order to see whether their purchases were influenced by the arguments conveyed in these works. Here the key Venetian figure, both in his own writings and in his acquisitions, was Giovanni Maria Sasso. An art dealer who sent enthusiastic letters to English collectors in which he used quotations from Venetian writers on art to encourage his clients to make particular purchases, Sasso was also interested in the Venetian art writings from a scholarly point of view. Alessandro Longhi's portrait of Sasso, made in 1790 (fig. 35), depicts him in a sober and official pose,

wearing an elegant buttoned coat with flowing drapery over his shoulders, holding a writing instrument in his right hand and, with his left hand, supporting a volume containing prints. The volume alludes to Sasso's *Venezia pittrice*, and the sitter's pose indicates that he was an intellectual. In addition to the large number of books on art which he intended to purchase or already owned, Sasso also produced and emended new editions of such works, whether on commission or for his own use. Moreover, his *Venezia pittrice* drew heavily on his predecessors, especially Zanetti, if only to distance himself from some of their judgements.

That Sasso sought to promote a taste for early Renaissance paintings is apparent from the way he planned and compiled his material for *Venezia pittrice*. His biographies, which were written at different stages and can be dated according to the publications on which he drew, included only painters who lived between approximately 1350 and 1530. One reason for this limited choice of painters and restricted timeframe is that the work was commissioned by the private collector John Strange and was intended to publicize his collection of early paintings and that of other Venetian collectors. While in previous books on Venetian art, such as those by Ridolfi and Zanetti, the main emphasis was on publicly displayed paintings, in Sasso's biographies there is a shift towards privately owned works. He, for instance, mentions fifteen paintings which belonged to private collections, none of which were referred to by Ridolfi in his accounts of the same artists. Clearly, Sasso did not intend to write a guide for visitors to Venice; instead, his work provided information on the history of collecting early paintings, with details on the provenance and ownership of these works.

Strange's collection, though particularly strong in Quattrocento paintings, ranged from works by Guariento to the Italian *vedutisti* of the eighteenth century.² His chronological display of these paintings reflected eighteenth-century tendencies in collecting,³ enabling viewers to see an evolution in style over time and served as an illustrated historical overview of Venetian painting. One of the earliest and most famous collectors from northern Italy was Padre Carlo Lodoli (1690-1761). A monk, patron of the

² Dorigato, 'Storie di collezionisti a Venezia', p. 127. From the Christie's sale of Strange's collection on 5 February 1856, we know that he owned 256 objects in total, of which 42 were paintings and 16 were drawings; see F. Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques*, 4 vols, Hague 1938-1987, II, no. 22828.

³ The collections of Carlo Lodoli, Jacopo Facciolati and Farsetti were also displayed in this way; see Callegari, *Scritti sull'arte*, p. 291. Another significant case was Francesco Algarotti, who also adopted a historical view on displaying works of art and based his analyses and choice of works mainly on stylistic grounds; see Haskell, 'Francesco Algarotti', in *Patrons and Painters*, pp. 347-60.

arts and mathematician, whose theories on architecture were transmitted through his pupil, Andrea Memmo,⁴ Lodoli possessed an impressive collection of Italian (Venetian, Florentine, Roman and Bolognese), German and Flemish works of art.⁵ His method of displaying his collection was based two criteria: chronology and schools.⁶ These principles show a historical approach and a good understanding of the development of painting and its progress.

Another important collector who applied the same criteria of display was Sasso's client and neighbour, Girolamo Manfrin.⁷ A wealthy businessman who earned his fortune by holding a monopoly of tobacco plantations in Dalmatia,⁸ Manfrin assembled a collection of 400 paintings.⁹ He took advice from connoisseurs and painters like Pietro Edwards,¹⁰ Giovanni Battista Mingardi and Sasso, giving them strict instructions regarding the acquisition of his paintings.¹¹ He insisted on having the best pieces in his collection which were acquired after a rigorous process of selection carried out by his advisers.¹² Such an environment inspired Sasso and led him to encourage other collectors such as Strange to adopt similar principles. Sasso's chronological presentation of early painters, highlighting works from Strange's collection, both enhanced the Englishman's reputation as a collector and gave Sasso the opportunity to demonstrate his expertise as a connoisseur and advisor on art. He turned to reference books in order to document each work of art. From

⁴ Andrea Memmo, *Elementi di architettura lodoliana, ossia l'arte del fabbricare con solidità scientifica e con eleganza non capricciosa*, Rome 1786; for more information on Lodoli's life, see Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, pp. 300-21, and S. Kaufman, *Francesco Algarotti: The Elegant Arbiter of Enlightenment Architecture*, 2 vols, London 1998, I, pp. 161-5 ('The Life of Carlo Lodoli [1690-1761]').

⁵ Previtali, *La fortuna*, pp. 220-1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁷ Manfrin's residence on the Canareggio was bought in 1787 of the Vernier family; see Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p. 379.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For an inventory of Manfrin's collection of paintings following the order in which they were displayed in each room, see F. Zanotto, *Nuovissima guida di Venezia e delle isole della sua laguna*, Venice 1856, pp. 340-7. Besides paintings, Manfrin's collection also included prints, precious gems and *naturalia*; see Borean, 'Il caso Manfrin', in *Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia. Il Settecento*, ed. L. Borean and S. Mason, Venice 2009, pp. 193-217.

¹⁰ Born to a family of Catholic English emigrants in Italy, Pietro Edwards (1744-1821) was a painter, restorer and member of the Venetian Academy. He was in charge of the restoration of the ceiling of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Palazzo Ducale in 1777; see S. Rinaldi, 'Pietro Edwards', in *DBI*, XLII, pp. 296-8.

¹¹ For other examples of collectors of early Renaissance works of art from the Veneto including the Marchese Tommaso degli Obizzi (1750-1803) with whom Sasso was also in contact, Teodoro Correr (1750-1830) and Girolamo Ascanio Molin (1738-1814), see Tormen, 'Tommaso degli Obizzi', in *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d'arte*, pp. 329-33, L. Caburlotto, 'Teodor Correr' in *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d'arte*, pp. 355-6, and Caburlotto, 'Girolamo Ascanio Molin', in *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d'arte*, pp. 373-6

¹² In a letter of 3 December 1793 to Edwards, Manfrin gave clear instructions about the works of art he wanted in his collection: 'io voglio che non entrino nella mia collezione che opere di reale merito ed assoluto'; see Haskell, 'Appendix 7', in his *Patrons and Painters*, p. 395.

Strange's collection, he chose to describe paintings by Guariento, Francesco del Fiore and Carlo Crivelli. He also included other early works in the collections of Lodovico Maffei, Filippo Ercolani and Girolamo Manfrin, all of which were well documented.

The manuscript of *Venezia pittrice* provides further evidence of Sasso's interest in early paintings. He devoted particular attention to those early works which were not on public display, either because they belonged to a private collector or because they had ended up in a collection outside Venice and he wanted to preserve their memory for future generations by producing prints. Like Ridolfi, Sasso identified a number of elements in early paintings which he most appreciated such as the 'devout gravity' and expressiveness of the figures, the beautiful rendition of heads and the harmoniously arranged compositions. Yet Sasso's aim was to surpass Ridolfi; and, in attempting to do so, he mentioned works which had been omitted by his predecessor and by other writers, as well as promoting private collections and demonstrating his authority by suggesting his own rankings of artists and his own assessments of their works. The correspondence documenting the history of Sasso's manuscript after his death shows that he succeeded in producing a reference work, even though it was not published.

Finally, Sasso looked back at previous Venetian writers on art in order to challenge their assessments, to make corrections and to suggest new attributions. Within the framework of a continuing interest in the paintings of earlier generations, Sasso, to a certain extent, altered the canons established by his predecessors in his new ranking of artists and in the way in which he assessed their paintings. As we have seen, he suggested surprising comparisons between works of art and between the styles of painters, indicating that he wanted to distance himself from his predecessors and rewrite the history of Venetian art. Neither Boschini nor Zanetti would have claimed that a work by Giusto de' Menabuoi was more valuable than one by Giotto or that some of Alvise Vivarini's paintings were equal or superior to those of Giovanni Bellini or Carpaccio. Even though Sasso's attempts to convince English collectors to purchase early Venetian paintings were backed up with solid arguments taken from his predecessors, he sometimes failed to persuade them. This was probably due to the preferences of his clientele. Hume, for instance, greatly valued his expertise; nevertheless, his own taste was for more recent paintings, and he sought Sasso's advice mainly in relation to such works.

It is noteworthy that Sasso's attitude towards early Italian art in his correspondence with English collectors and in the manuscript of *Venezia pittrice* remained consistent, even though he was writing for different purposes: on the one hand, to sell and promote specific paintings on the art market; and, on the other, to carry out, in a well-documented and scholarly manner, a private commission. Sasso's artistic views and knowledge were built on a tradition which went back to the earliest Venetian writings on art and to which he added an original touch, complemented by his expertise in art dealing and collecting.

The art literature produced in Venice from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which has been surveyed in the first part of this dissertation, reflects a largely consistent assessment of early Renaissance art. Earlier paintings did not cease to arouse the interest of writers on art, whether for their devotional power or for their artistic qualities. There seems to have been a consensus among Venetian writers, with the exception of Sasso, that the most excellent early Venetian painters were Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio and Marco Basaiti. What changed, however, were the criteria on which their works were assessed and the reasons for which particular works were favoured over others. The Venetian art writings examined here were a significant source for the development of views and attitudes towards early Renaissance painting and also show that there was no gap between the theoretical appreciation of art and the practical activity of collecting.

PART TWO: FLORENTINE ART WRITINGS

Introduction

... e di vero spirano tutte le sue pitture santità e divozione.¹

Like Venice, Florence produced a wide spectrum of writings on art, ranging from guidebooks and biographies of artists to chronicles.² Some of the earliest accounts of the history of Florence, dating from the fourteenth century, contained sections on artists, as well as politics and literature; and this tradition continued into the following centuries. Among the most representative works of this type were Filippo Villani's *De origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus* of 1364,³ Cristoforo Landino's 'proemio' to his *Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri* (1481)⁴ and Ugolino Verino's *De illustratione urbis Florentiae* (1583).⁵

Filippo Villani's section on art in his cronicale, for instance, starts with a paragraph about the beginnings of painting and continues with a short discussion of five artists: Cimabue (1240-1302), Giotto (1266/67-1337), Giottino (1324-1369), Stefano Fiorentino (1301-1350) and Taddeo Gaddi (1300-1366?).⁶ In each case, Villani makes brief general comments about their fame and achievements: he praises the early artists starting with Cimabue for 'reviving the art',⁷ Giotto for taking it to perfection,⁸ Giottino for painting

¹ Francesco Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Fiorenza*, Florence 1591, ed. J. Shearman, Farnborough 1971, p. 8; see also Francesco Bocchi, *The Beauties of the City of Florence. A Guidebook of 1591*, ed. and transl. by T. Frangenberg and R. Williams, London 2006, p. 28: 'Indeed, all his paintings breathe sanctity and devotion.'

² For a complete bibliography of the most important Tuscan writings on art, see Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 585-93. For a study centred on biographies of artists before the publication of Vasari's *Le vite*, see G. Tanturli, 'Le biografie d'artisti prima del Vasari', in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista. Atti del Congresso internazionale nel IV centenario della morte, Arezzo-Firenze, 2-8 settembre 1974*, Florence 1976, pp. 275-98. Tanturli discusses sources which refer to both Florentine and non-Florentine artists, including Filippo Villani, *De origine civitatis*, Michele Savonarola, *Libellus de magnificis ornamentis*, Bartolomeo Fazio, *De viris illustribus liber* and Antonio Manetti, *Vita di Filippo di ser Brunellesco*.

³ Filippo Villani, *Liber de civitatis Florentiae*, ed. G. Galletti, Florence 1867.

⁴ Cristoforo Landino, *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. P. Procaccioli, 4 vols, Rome 2001.

⁵ Ugolino Verino, *De illustratione urbis Florentiae* (Paris 1583), 2 vols, Paris 1780. The 1583 edition of Verino's poem was published posthumously. The work circulated in manuscript form much earlier; see A. Lazzari, *Ugolino e Michele Verino. Studii biografici e critici*, Turin 1897, pp. 185-9.

⁶ Villani, *Liber de civitatis*, pp. 35-6 ('De picturibus').

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35: 'egregios pictores Florentinos...qui artem...suscitaverunt'.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 'in pristinam dignitatem nomenque maximum picturam restituit'. This passage on Giotto is the longest and the only one in which Villani mentions specific works: a mosaic representing the *Navicella* in San Pietro in Rome and the portrait of Dante in the Chapel of the Palazzo del Podestà; see *ibid.*: 'in foribus ecclesiae Sancti

with ‘marvellous and incredible beauty’,⁹ Stefano for imitating nature and for his ability to render human anatomy,¹⁰ and Gaddi for painting buildings with great skill.¹¹

Landino, in a short section on art from the ‘proemio’ to his Dante commentary, surveys Florentine painters and sculptors. In the introduction, he discusses the origins of painting from the Egyptians to the Greeks and the Romans. This is followed by accounts of artists from Giotto to Antonio (1427-1478/1481) and Bernardo Rossellino (1409-1464).¹² While those on Cimabue, Giotto and his followers are taken directly from Villani, the ones about more recent artists are by Landino himself.¹³ Rather than expressing his own taste, however, he merely points out the different features for which each of the artists was admired. For instance, he draws attention to Masaccio’s life-like compositions, without embellishment,¹⁴ ‘the compositions and variety, colour, relief and ornaments of every sort’ in Filippo Lippi’s works,¹⁵ and Fra Angelico’s facility in producing works of ‘charm, devoutness and much embellishment’.¹⁶ Among the characteristics which Landino highlights in Florentine architects and sculptors were the understanding of perspective, order, variety and grace, as found in the works of Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Desiderio da Settignano, Antonio and Bernardo Rossellino.¹⁷

In Ugolino Verino’s celebratory poem about Florence, only a few verses are devoted to local art from Giotto to Filippo Brunelleschi. Interestingly, however, Verino

Petri trans Tiberim, musaico periclitantes navi Apostolos’, and p. 36: ‘Pinxit...Dantem, in tabula altaris Capellae Palatti Potestatis.’

⁹ Ibid., p. 36: ‘pinxit mirabili et incredibili venustate’.

¹⁰ Ibid.: ‘Stephanus, dictus *naturae simia*, tanta ejus imitatione valuit, ut etiam, *physicis* in figuratis per eum corporibus humanis, arteriae, venae, nervi, et quaeque minutissima liniamenta proprie colligantur.’

¹¹ Ibid.: ‘Thaddeus insuper aedificia tanta arte depinxit.’ Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, pp. 66-78 (‘Filippo Villani and the Pattern of Progress’), at pp. 74-5, discusses Villani’s ‘humanist art-criticism’, analysing the vocabulary and categories he applied when referring to Trecento artists. Baxandall observed that terms such as *naturae simia*, *ars*, *exemplaria*, *ingenium* and *natura* were characteristic of the humanist literature and that Villani had borrowed them from Giovanni Boccaccio and Coluccio Salutati.

¹² Landino, *Comento*, I, pp. 240-2.

¹³ See B. Wierda, ‘The True Identity of the Anonimo Magliabechiano’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 53, 2009, pp. 157-68, at p. 157, n. 2.

¹⁴ Landino, *Comento*, I, p. 242: ‘Fu Masaccio ottimo imitatore di natura...sanza ornato.’ For an analysis of Landino’s five artistic terms used to describe Masaccio’s works and style (*imitatore della natura*, *rilievo*, *puro sanza ornato*, *facilità* and *prospettivo*), see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, pp. 109-52 (‘Pictures and Categories’), at pp. 118-28.

¹⁵ Landino, *Comento*, I, p. 242: ‘Philippo gratioso et ornato et artificioso sopra modo: valse molte nelle compositioni et varietà, nel colorire, nel rilievo, ne gl’ornamenti d’ogni sorte’; see Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, pp. 128-39.

¹⁶ Landino, *Comento*, I, p. 242: ‘Fra Giovanni Angelico et vezoso et divoto et ornato molto con grandissima facilità’; see Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, pp. 147-50.

¹⁷ Landino, *Comento*, I, p. 242.

compares various early artists to ancient ones: Botticelli to Zeuxis,¹⁸ Andrea del Verocchio to Lysippus and Perugino to Apelles.¹⁹

These works, while not focused directly on Florentine art, are nevertheless important for the development of the views expressed in later texts. They laid the foundation for a group of writings aimed at promoting, and shaping attitudes towards, Florentine art: Lorenzo Ghiberti's *I commentarii*,²⁰ *Il libro di Antonio Billi* and the *Anonimo Magliabechiano*,²¹ Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite* (1550 and 1568), Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* (1584)²² and Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie de' professori del disegno* (1681-1728).²³ These texts are written in the form of biographies or, in the case of the first two, lists of works of art, with pre-eminence given to Florentine artists in an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of local art over that of other Italian cities. Some writers included paintings by Florentine artists in towns outside Florence or Tuscany, as well as biographies of non-Italian artists who were active in Florence.

The second of Ghiberti's four *Commentarii* is devoted to 'modern' art.²⁴ It contains short biographical notes on artists from Giotto to Ghiberti himself, who are arranged chronologically and divided into groups. He begins with Florentine painters: Giotto and his followers (Stefano, Taddeo Gaddi, Maso, Buffalmacco), Andrea Orcagna and continues with the Roman artist Pietro Cavallini. These are then followed by Siennese painters: Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini and Duccio. Ghiberti also includes sculptors: Andrea Orcagna, Giovanni and Andrea Pisano and the Master of Cologne. He concludes with his own autobiography, the only account of a living artist in the *Commentarii*.²⁵ That Ghiberti decided to concentrate on artists of the past is significant from a historical point of view, and his assessment of Trecento art brings a new dimension to the Florentine tradition of

¹⁸ Verino, *De illustratione*, I, p. 130: 'Nec Zeuxi inferior pictura Sander habetur.'

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 132: 'Nec tibi Lysippe ist Thuscus Verrochio impar'; 'Tu quoque Appelleos nosti Perusine colores/Fingere, et in tabulis vivos ostendere vultus.'

²⁰ Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I commentarii*, ed. L. Bartoli, Florence 1998; see also Schlosser, *Le letteratura*, pp. 101-6.

²¹ Antonio Billi, *Il libro*, ed. F. Benedettucci, Anzio 1991, and *L'anonimo magliabechiano*, ed. A. Ficarra, Naples 1968.

²² Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, Florence 1584.

²³ Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 7 vols, (Florence 1681-1728), ed. V. Batelli, 5 vols, Florence 1845-1847; see also Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 586.

²⁴ See Ghiberti, *I commentarii* (II), pp. 83-97. In the first commentary, Ghiberti deals with ancient art (ibid., pp. 45-82); the third and the fourth commentaries are more theoretical, presenting Ghiberti's views on optics, anatomy and proportions (ibid., pp. 101-35); see also P. Murray, 'Ghiberti e il suo secondo *Commentario*', in *Lorenzo Ghiberti nel suo tempo: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi*, 2 vols, Florence 1980, I, pp. 283-92.

²⁵ See Bartoli, 'Introduzione' to Ghiberti, *I commentarii*, pp. 5-42, at p. 31

writing on art. In his notes, Ghiberti is concise, but careful to mention as many works as possible by each artist. He indicates that many of the works discussed deserve consideration and praise; and in referring to them or to an artist's style, he employs phrases such as 'perfectissima',²⁶ 'con grandissima diligentia',²⁷ 'molto egregiamente'²⁸ and 'eccellentemente e doctamente'.²⁹ He even makes one comparison between artists: he says that, in his opinion, Simone Martini was surpassed by Ambrogio Lorenzetti.³⁰ In his notes, Ghiberti does not suggest that he perceived a stylistic progression over the course of the fourteenth century; nor can we be certain that his positive assessments of works of art are an indication of his own artistic preferences or taste.³¹ Nonetheless, they offer a systematic, well-documented and rich presentation of Trecento art, which inspired later Florentine writings.³²

Il libro of Antonio Billi, which contains lists of works by artists from Giotto to Michelangelo, was an important source for the promotion of Florentine artists.³³ Based on

²⁶ In discussing Giotto's works in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Ghiberti mentions a crucifix and a painting which he describes as 'most perfect'; see Ghiberti, *I commentarii* (II), p. 84: 'ne' frati Predicatori è uno crocifixo et una tavola perfectissima di sua mano'. The crucifix is by Giotto, but the painting is Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna*; see J. I. Miller and L. Taylor-Mitchell, 'The *Ognissanti* Madonna and the Humiliati Order in Florence', in *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, ed. A. Derbes and M. Sandona, Cambridge 2004, pp. 157-75, at p. 173.

²⁷ This is a reference to Andrea Orcagna's tabernacle in Orsanmichele in Florence; *ibid.*, p. 87: 'Fece il tabernacolo di marmo d'Orto San Michele, è cosa eccellentissima e singulare cosa, fatto con grandissima diligentia.'

²⁸ Ghiberti uses this term in connection with: Giotto's works; *ibid.*, p. 84: 'Molto egregiamente dipinse la sala del re Umberto de' huomini famosi, in Napoli... Nella Badia di Firenze, sopra all'entrare della porta in un arco, una meza Nostra Donna con due figure dallato molto egregiamente'; Stefano's painting of St Thomas Aquinas; see *ibid.*, p. 85: 'È ne' frati Predicatori, allato alla porta va nel cimiterio, uno sancto Tommaso d'Aquino fatto molto egregiamente'; and Pietro Cavallini's mosaics in Santa Maria in Trastevere in Rome; see *ibid.*, p. 87: 'fece istorie sono in santa Maria in Trastevere di musayco molto egregiamente.'

²⁹ See his account of Duccio's *Maestà*; *ibid.*, p. 90: 'Questa tavola fu fatta molto eccellentemente e doctamente.'

³⁰ Ghiberti, *I commentarii* (II), p. 89: 'Maestro Simone fu nobilissimo pictore e molto famoso. Tengono e' pictori sanesi fosse el migliore, a me parve molto migliore Ambrugio Lorenzetti et altrimenti dotto che nessuno degli altri.'

³¹ Ghiberti's artistic terminology is based on Alberti's: e. g. *lineamenti* (Alberti, *De statua*, ed. O. Morisani, Catania 1961, p. 28), *misura* (Alberti, *Della pittura*, p. 253), *arte* (*ibid.*, p. 169), and *disegno* (*ibid.*, pp. 173-4); see R. Krautheimer, *Lorenzo Ghiberti*, 2 vols, Princeton 1970, I, pp. 306-14 ('Ghiberti the Writer'), at p. 310. For an extended discussion of *lineamenti*, see B. Mitrović, *Serene Gaze of the Eye. Leon Battista Alberti and the Philosophical Foundations of Renaissance Architectural Theory*, Berlin 2005, pp. 29-47 ('*Lineamenta*: a Survey of the Debate') and 49-61 ('*Lineamenta*, Shapes and Forms').

³² Among these are the *Anonimo Magliabechiano*, Giovanni Battista Gelli's *Vite d'artisti*, ed. G. Mancini, *Archivio storico italiano*, XVII, 1996, pp. 32-62, and Vasari's *Lives*; see Bartoli, 'Introduzione' to Ghiberti, *I commentarii*, pp. 11-12; see also M. Spagnolo, 'Ragionare e cicalare d'arte a Firenze nel Cinquecento: tracce di un dibattito fra artisti e letterati', in *Officine del nuovo: sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma. Atti del simposio internazionale, Utrecht 8-10 Novembre 2007*, ed. H. Handrix and P. Procaccioli, Utrecht 2007, pp. 1-27, at p. 3.

³³ The work is datable to between 1516 and 1530; see Billi, *Il libro* ('Introduzione'), pp. 9-22, at p. 15.

the short accounts of Villani and Landino for the earliest biographies,³⁴ those in Billi's *Libro* have the character of brief notes, mentioning the essential works of each artist, but with scant judgements on their artistic quality. Nevertheless, the book was the foundation for the more detailed biographies of artists by later writers such as Vasari. The *Anonimo Magliabechiano* was structured similarly to *Il libro* and includes the whole of Billi's text, prefacing, however, the early Renaissance biographies with information about ancient artists from Pliny the Elder, which were taken over from Ghiberti's first commentary.³⁵

In what follows, I shall examine Florentine writings on art, including guidebooks and biographies of artists, written from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, showing how this tradition became richer with each new text and how views on Florentine art gradually crystallized over the centuries. This study will also allow me to compare the evolution of Florentine and Venetian attitudes towards the art of the past and to see whether interest in early Florentine painting was driven by taste or, instead, by a desire to perpetuate and consolidate the historiographical tradition of Florence.

³⁴ Billi, *Il libro* ('Introduzione'), pp. 9-22, at p. 12.

³⁵ For more information, see Ficarra, 'Introduzione', in *L'anonimo magliabechiano*, pp. XI-XVI. According to Ficarra, p. XXV, the biographies of Florentine artists were influenced by earlier texts including Landino's *Comento*, *Il libro di Antonio Billi* and Ghiberti's *I Commentarii*.

CHAPTER 6

Florentine Guidebooks

Francesco Albertini's *Memoriale*

Francesco Albertini's *Memoriale di molte statue e pitture della città di Firenze*, published in 1510, was the earliest guidebook to Florentine art.¹ Despite its short length – only fourteen pages – the *Memoriale* gathered together for the first time information about Florentine works of art which had previously been recorded in individual texts and which, in some cases, had never been mentioned before.² As Albertini states, his work was composed during a visit to Florence,³ in consultation with his friend, the sculptor Baccio da Montelupo (1469-1523?), at whose request it was written. Following Baccio's advice, Albertini did not go into great detail when writing his entries:

My dear Bartolomeo, I know there are some things I have written that great painters will find superfluous, but you told me I should fill the page[s] with all that I had to say without going into too much detail.⁴

The *Memoriale* is divided into four parts, corresponding to the four quarters of Florence (San Giovanni, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce and Santo Spirito) and their surroundings. Each section consists of a presentation of the quarter and its most important church, followed by shorter accounts of the other churches and the works of art on display there. While these accounts contained technical information such as the height of churches and of bell towers, the works of art were merely listed, with no personal comments by Albertini,⁵

¹ For an overview, see Francesco Albertini, *Memorial of Many Statues and Paintings in the Illustrious City of Florence*, annotat. W. H. de Boer and ed. M. W. Kwakkelstein, Florence 2010, pp. 11-27.

² Albertini, *Memorial*, p. 11.

³ Albertini's visit to Florence was brief. He wrote the prefatory letter to Baccio da Montelupo on 30 August 1510, after he had already left Florence and returned to Rome, where he was working on other books; *ibid.*, pp. 17-21.

⁴ Francesco Albertini, *Memoriale* (1510), ed. O. Campa, Florence 1932, p. [11]: 'Bartholomeo mio, so ci sono alcune cose che alli gran pittori parrano superflue haverle scripte: ma tu dicesti, che io empiessi el foglio, et non guardassi così sottile'; translation in Albertini, *Memorial*, p. 100.

⁵ See, e.g., his account of the decoration of Santa Maria del Fiore, in Albertini, *Memoriale*, p. [5]: 'Lascio stare il Crucifixo del choro, et la testa marmorea di Iocto per mano di Bene. Maiani: et il cavallo del verde terra per mano di Pau. Uccel. Et il bianco di Andreino: et le croci et candelieri di argento et belli vasi, per mano di

though presumably his decisions as to what he included and excluded reflected his judgements.

Francesco Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Fiorenza* (1591)

Artistic judgements and attempts to promote local art and artists became increasingly apparent towards the end of the Cinquecento as more artistic literature was being published.⁶ Francesco Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Fiorenza* of 1591 was the first guidebook to give a complete, accurate and critical perspective on Florentine monuments and works of art, whether displayed publicly or privately.⁷ Bocchi's rich, graceful and elegant descriptions reflect his preferences for particular art works and artistic styles. His other publications included orations, letters, treatises and discourses, as well as a number of works concerning the arts.⁸

Francesco Bocchi (1548-1613) was born in Florence of a prestigious family and received a well-grounded education in Rome, where he studied literature. After completing

excellentissimi artisti', and translation in Albertini, *Memorial*, p. 95: 'I must also mention the crucifix in the choir, the marble head of Giotto by Benedetto da Maiano, the horse in terra verde by Paolo Uccello, and the white one by Andrea del Castagno, the crosses and the candlesticks of silver and the beautiful vases made by excellent artists.'

⁶ For a list of Florentine literature on art, see Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 585-9.

⁷ Bocchi's descriptions of works of art held in private collections are as detailed and complete as those referring to public commissions.

⁸ On Bocchi's biography and writings, see C. de Michelis, 'Francesco Bocchi', in *DBI*, XI, pp. 72-5; see also Frangenberg, 'Introduction' to Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 3-22, at pp. 11-14. Bocchi's other works on art include an oration in honour of Michelangelo (1564), an essay on Andrea del Sarto (1567) and a treatise on Donatello's sculpture *St George* (1571); see *ibid.*, pp. 12-13. Bocchi's earlier writings have been analysed by Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 187-230 ('Francesco Bocchi'), at pp. 189-2, who placed them in the context of classical treatises such as Aristotle's *Poetics* and sixteenth-century works on art by authors such as Lodovico Dolce, Benedetto Varchi and Vasari. In his discourse on Andrea del Sarto, for instance, Bocchi acknowledged that he derived the five elements of painting (*disegno, carattere, rilievo, colorito, dolcezza e facilità*) from five of Aristotle's six parts of tragedy (*logos, ethos, dianoina, lexis, melapoeia, canto*). Bocchi's treatise in praise of Donatello's San Giorgio also includes an extended discussion of the elements of painting. It is divided into three sections dedicated to three artistic concepts: character (*costume*), vivacity (*vivacità*) and beauty (*bellezza*). In Bocchi's opinion, *bellezza* is: 'a certain unity and measured correspondence, in regard to which, as to their end, all parts are devised and arranged with respect to the others, making themselves a pleasing sight and, ordered by it, act not without much honor, with which it is always in company'; see Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, p. 208, and Bocchi, 'Eccellenza del San Giorgio di Donatello', in P. Barocchi, ed. *Trattati d'arte del '500*, 3 vols, Bari 1962, III, pp. 127-94, at p. 169: 'Questa bellezza pare che sia una certa unità misurata convenevolezza, a cui, come a suo fine, ogni sua parte, ciascuna per rispetto dell'altra ottimamente divisata, fa di sè vista graziosa e, per quello ordinata, adopera non senza molto onore, che a lei è sempre in compagnia.' Bocchi's early writings helped to shape and define his artistic outlook, which influenced his later work, *Le bellezze*.

his studies, he returned to Florence, where he guided the education of young men from noble families and became the literary protégé of the art collector and patron Lorenzo Salviati.⁹ As a member of this circle of *litterati* and art lovers, he had access to private collections, which he drew on when composing his guidebook to Florence. During his long stay in Rome (1572-1582), Bocchi had become familiar with the local artistic literature,¹⁰ as well the most important historiographical writings from northern Italy such as Sansovino's *Tutte le cose notabili* and *Venezia città nobilissima*. These works might have helped him to formulate his own views and prompted him to support the art of his own city.¹¹ As Bocchi stated in the dedication of *Le bellezze* to Christina of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Florence, the purpose of his work was to praise the 'exterior beauty' of the city of Florence,¹² its beautiful palaces and marvellous paintings.

In analysing the content of Bocchi's guidebook, I shall attempt to determine how it fits into the corpus of Florentine writings on art and whether it puts forward innovative judgements on earlier paintings, which opened a pathway for later writers. I shall try to establish whether Bocchi echoed Vasari's views, which are discussed below,¹³ or instead came to his own conclusions about early Florentine painting. I shall also investigate whether there was any difference between his judgements on the art of the past and that of his own day.

Bocchi's guidebook is divided into nine parts, corresponding to the nine gates of Florence through which the visitors entered the city. It is then subdivided into five itineraries, following the course of the monuments along the streets of Florence.¹⁴ *Le bellezze* has two features which distinguish it from many other later guidebooks. In the first place, Bocchi's descriptions are so detailed and vivid that they allow readers to visualize images which are not before their eyes. His style is controlled: he masters the artistic vocabulary with precision, using literary techniques to enhance the visual effect of his descriptions and to arouse the reader's emotions. Secondly, *Le bellezze*, although aimed primarily at art lovers and connoisseurs, also addressed artists, indicating the aspects of art

⁹ Shearman, 'Introduction' to Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 1-3, at p. 1.

¹⁰ For a list of Roman writings on art before 1591, see Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 598-604.

¹¹ See Frangenberg, 'Introduction' to Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 3-22, at p. 14 and n. 19.

¹² Bocchi, 'Alla Serenissima Cristina di Loreno, Gran Duchessa di Toscana', in his *Le bellezze*, sigs 2^r-3^v, at sig. 3^r: 'le bellezze esteriori'.

¹³ See Chapter 7, pp. 150-157 below.

¹⁴ For a summary of all five itineraries, see Frangenberg, 'Introduction' to Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 3-22, at pp. 17-18.

works of the past to which they should pay particular attention and noting those which were admired by painters themselves.¹⁵

Bocchi begins his tour of Florence by describing a group of churches and private buildings which could be seen as one entered through the gate of San Gallo. A number of these had works of art dating from the late Trecento to the early Cinquecento. Starting with the convent of San Marco, Bocchi selects two artists whom he considers to be worthy of praise. The first is Fra Bartolommeo, three of whose paintings he describes as ‘singularly beautiful’.¹⁶ Bocchi often admires lifelike representations and says that they were appreciated by experts:¹⁷ for instance, he states that ‘two little angels playing musical instruments’ painted by Bartolommeo are ‘so natural that they appear to be alive’ and are considered ‘more wonderful than any other painting’.¹⁸

The second artist singled out by Bocchi is Fra Angelico (1395-1455). He emphasizes the influence of the artist’s spiritual life on his works,¹⁹ claiming that they inspired ‘sanctity and devotion’ in viewers.²⁰ This capacity to stir emotions, inspire meditation and induce a sense of piety and devotion in viewers was one of the features which Venetian writers on art especially valued in early works.²¹

Bocchi also notes the religious dimension of works of art by other early Florentine artists including Donatello’s sculpture of St Mark the Evangelist decorating the south façade of the church of Orsanmichele.²² While noting the holy air surrounding the figure of

¹⁵ Bocchi often reinforces his praise for a painting by stating that it was admired by practitioners; see, e.g., Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 100: ‘da gli artefici tenuto in pregio e amirato’.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 7: ‘di singular bellezza’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 28.

¹⁷ In many of Bocchi’s descriptions of early paintings, this is the main element which he admires, employing a range of expressions: e.g. Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 7: ‘paiono vivi’ (referring to a painting by Bartolommeo in San Marco); ibid., pp. 62-3: ‘vivezza’, ‘paiono veri’, ‘simile al naturale’ (referring to Pietro Perugino’s *Prayer in the Garden*, now in the Uffizi). For a discussion of ‘lifelikeness’ as a criterion of artistic quality in the Renaissance, see T. Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400-1800*, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Bocchi, *Le bellezze*, p. 7: ‘due angeletti, che suonano stromenti musicali, tanto naturali, che paiono vivi, tenuti sopra tutte le pitture maravigliosi’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 28. The painting identified as *The Mystical Marriage of St Catherine* is now in the Galleria Palatina of the Pitti Palace in Florence; see Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 28, n. 23, and S. Padovani, ed., *L’età di Savonarola: Fra Bartolomeo e la scuola di San Marco*, Venice 1996, pp. 94-8.

¹⁹ See J. L. de Jong, ‘Cultivating Piety. Religious Art and Artists After the Council of Trent’ in *Meditatio: Refashioning the Self. Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture*, ed. K. Emenkel and W. Melion, London 2011, pp. 367-89.

²⁰ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 8: ‘spirano tutte le sue pitture santità e divozione’.

²¹ See, e.g., Chapter 2, pp. 50-51 above.

²² See Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 30: ‘Spira il volto divozione e santità’; see also Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 45 and n. 109.

St Mark, Bocchi also remarks, drawing on Giovanni Battista Gelli, Benedetto Varchi and Vasari, that the statue was admired by Michelangelo for being ‘executed with so much knowledge and such profound judgement that the more one contemplates it, the more one discerns its astounding excellence’.²³ Bocchi devoted considerable attention to other works by Donatello, including a marble statue of St John in the house of Francesco Martelli:

Here is a youthful St John in marble by Donatello, a sculptor outstanding among all others; his importance is held to rival that of the artists of antiquity. This statue is famous for its workmanship and for the wonderful liveliness one discerns in it.²⁴

Bocchi’s account is significant for two reasons: first, he acknowledges Donatello’s importance; and, second, he specifies two of his aesthetic criteria: ‘workmanship’ and ‘liveliness’. It is also worth noting that Donatello is not compared to other Florentine sculptors of his day or to later ones such as Desiderio da Settignano, Benvenuto Cellini or Baccio Bandinelli, whose works might well have been known to readers or travellers, but instead to the sculptors of antiquity. In describing another of Donatello’s statues, *Lo Zuccone*, he goes even further, claiming that it is more highly rated than ancient works:

This statue is judged as beautiful not only in Florence, where this most precious work is common property and everybody simply enjoys looking at it quietly, but it is famous

²³ See Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591): p. 30: ‘fatto con tanto sapere, e con giudizio così profondo, che quanto più si considera, più in quello si conosce eccellenza, e maraviglia’, and Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 48, n. 110. See also Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 29: ‘fermatosi un giorno Michelagnolo Buonarroto a contemplar questa statua, che un suo amico a punto sopraggiunse, e il domandò come gli pareva belle: a cui rispose il Buonarroto: se tale fu il vivo, come stimare si dee, che fosse fermamente, gli si può credere tutto quello, che egli scrisse: peroche io non vidi mai alcuno, che più di questo avesse aria di huomo da bene’. Cf. Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 912: ‘un cittadino che lo trovò a Orto San Michele in Fiorenza, che s’era fermato a riguardare la statua del San Marco di Donato, e lo domandò quel che di figura li paresse, Michele Agnolo rispose che non vide mai figura che avesse più aria di uomo da bene di quella’; Gelli, *Vite d’artisti*, p. 59: ‘Michelangelo usava dire che non aveva mai visto chi avessi più aria d’uomo da vene che quella figura’; and Benedetto Varchi, *Orazione funerale...nell’essequie di Michelangelo*, Florence 1564, pp. 38-9: ‘Passando egli una volta da Horto San Michele, e guardando fisaente, e come stupito il San Marco di Donatello, lo sopraggiunse un suo amico, e gli disse: Michelagnolo questa Figura chente è? E tale (rispose incontamente Michelagnolo) che se l’esempio fu così fatto, quale è l’esemplato (com’io non dubito che egli fu) gli si può credere sicuramente tutto quello, che egli scrisse.’

²⁴ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 10-11: ‘dove è un San Giovanni di Marmo di giovenile età di mano di Donatello scultore oltre tutti singulare, e stimato tale, che gareggi col valore de gli antichi artefici. È famosa questa statua per l’artificio, e per la vivezza che si scorge in essa maravigliosa’; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 32-3.

everywhere; it is not inferior to the rarest beauties of the ancients, but is their equal, and as it happens, the most important experts think that it surpasses them greatly.²⁵

Bocchi was not the first to invoke this comparison. In the ‘proemio’ to his Dante commentary, Landino wrote that Donatello occupied a well-deserved place among the excellent artists of antiquity on account of his marvellous compositions and variety.²⁶ His judgement was repeated by the *Anonimo Magliabechiano* and by Antonio Billi, who also praised the vivacity of Donatello’s figures.²⁷

While it is evident that Bocchi drew on this earlier tradition of writing about Donatello, his account is more elaborate, containing both descriptive and interpretative elements. He touches on aspects such as the representation of figures, their features, the way they were perceived by experts and the feelings experienced by viewers standing before them. He writes, for example, of Donatello’s statue of Judith and Holofernes, which in his day stood in the Loggia dei Lanzi:²⁸

The Judith by Donatello, produced by the most accomplished of artists, was the first to be placed here. The artists who followed, contemplating the extreme beauty of this work, concentrated their efforts in such a way that their own workmanship was refined, and their understanding and judgement were improved, bringing them much praise. Each one is more noteworthy than the other in some respect, and is therefore greatly acclaimed by everybody.²⁹

²⁵ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 22: ‘questa non solo è giudicata bella in Firenze, dove nel possesso di così prezioso lavoro gode ciascuno tacitamente la vista senza più: ma è famosa per tutto, e non cede alle più rare bellezze de gli antichi; ma con quelle va di pari, e per avventura, come è, opinione de’ più intendenti, a gran ravione le avanza’; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 40. While the anecdote preceding the description of the painting, which consists of a fictitious exclamation Donatello addressed to the statue, is taken directly from Vasari: ‘Talk, go on, talk, may you shit blood’, the assessment of Donatello’s work itself is Bocchi’s; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), II, p. 405: ‘Favella, favella, che ti venga il cacasangue!’

²⁶ Landino, *Comento*, I, p. 242: ‘Donato scultore da essere connumerato fra gl’antichi, mirabile in compositione et varietà.’

²⁷ *L’Anonimo Magliabechiano*, p. 81: ‘degno fra li antichi eccellenti e rari uomini d’essere connumerato, mirabile fu in compositione e pronto in varietà’; Billi, *Il libro*, p. 46: ‘scultore da esser numerato tra li antichi, mirabile certo in compositione e in varietà, pronto e con grande vivacità nello ordine e nel situare le figure’.

²⁸ The statue is now in the Palazzo Vecchio; see Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 49, n. 116.

²⁹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 31: ‘Et per che la Giudita di Donatello si come per lo tempo prima che le altre venne in luce, procedente da mano di artefice più compiuto: così ne gli artefici, che seguirono mirando la somma bellezza di quella mise così gran cura che assotigliata l’industria si avanzarono poscia nel senno, nel giudizio con molta lode, onde è ciascuno in alcuna parte più dell’altro notabile, e ha per questo grande honore appresso tutti acquistato’; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 49.

Rather than comparing Donatello to the ancients, Bocchi here acknowledges the influence and impact of his art on future generations.³⁰ For Bocchi, Donatello appears to connect the reception and the continuity of antiquity in the early Renaissance to the transmission of new and refined artistic expressions in the works of the later artists.

The fact that Bocchi, at the end of the sixteenth century, was comparing works by Donatello to those by the masters of antiquity showed that his statues continued to be regarded as examples of artistic excellence which were relevant to contemporary artists. That writers a century earlier thought in those terms is not surprising; that Bocchi still did so is more interesting.

In his itinerary for travellers entering Florence through the Porta Romana, Bocchi advises visitors to the Jesuit church of San Giusto to take a close look at Pietro Perugino's *Prayer in the Garden* (fig. 60):

The Saviour is seen praying with exceeding emotion. Nearby the apostles are sleeping; they are so overwhelmed by fatigue and are motionless, and as they rest they display poses so apt that they appear alive.³¹

Bocchi's evocative description captures the atmosphere of Perugino's painting and is able to convey its artistic effect to those not standing in front of it. He also uses suggestive literary descriptions to draw attention to another painting by Perugino in the same church. Discussing the *Pietà* (fig. 61), he remarks on the artist's ability to create a contrast between 'the lifeless body of Christ' and his weeping mother:

On another panel the same artist painted the dead Christ on the lap of his mother, which is much admired by the artists. Here he represented the appearance of a lifeless body in an extraordinarily natural manner.³²

³⁰ Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 49, n. 117.

³¹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 62-3: 'il Salvatore con eccessivo affetto di fare orazione, e appresso gli Apostoli, che dormono, come stanchi di soverchio e risolti in languidezza, si riposano con attitudini così bene accomodate che paiono veri'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 77.

³² Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 62-3: 'un Cristo morto in grembo alla madre, ammirato molto da gli huomini dell'arte; nel quale imitò così bene l'effetto del corpo, quando l'anima da quello è spirata'; and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 77. This painting is now in the Uffizi.

Vasari, too, draws attention, in writing about the *Prayer in the Garden*, to Perugino's representation of the sleeping apostles, unaware of Christ's suffering.³³ As for the *Pietà*, Vasari remarks only that the figures are as good as others depicted by Perugino.³⁴ If we compare the accounts by the two writers, we are struck by Bocchi's attention to detail in contrast to Vasari's brevity. Bocchi's descriptions function almost as a substitute for the painting and help readers to appreciate specific elements when analysing a painting.³⁵ Discussing Masaccio's frescoes in Santa Maria delle Carmine, for instance, Bocchi praises the way in which the artist depicted the figure of St Peter with 'extreme diligence and infinite beauty' (fig. 62).³⁶ Here is his description of a particular scene:

One sees him engaged in resuscitating the dead, and healing the afflicted, natural in his gestures and poses. Artists cannot praise enough the liveliness of the Saint in the scene where he takes the coin out of the stomach of a fish to pay the tribute money, as Christ had ordered. The tax collector is equally vivid; he fixes a glance on the money he holds in his hand, and his features express an exceedingly intense lust for this gold.³⁷

Although his account of these frescoes is drawn largely from Vasari,³⁸ Bocchi's stylistic comments add a personal touch. Furthermore, he notes that 'men of great judgement' (*huomini di gran giudizio*) consider him to be 'a miracle in his art',³⁹ and states that Massaccio's noble style inspired, among many other painters, Michelangelo, Raphael and Andrea del

³³ Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), II, p. 573: 'gli Apostoli che dormono; ne' quali mostrò Pietro quanto vaglia il sonno contra gli affanni e dispiaceri'.

³⁴ Ibid.: 'e nell'altra fece una Pietà, cioè Cristo in grembo, alla Nostra Donna con quattro figure intorno non men buone che l'altre della maniera sua'.

³⁵ On his style of writing and his use of artistic terms, see Frangenberg, 'Introduction', to Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 3-22, at 19-22.

³⁶ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 80: 'con sommo studio sono stati espressi da questo mirabile artefice molti fatti miracolosi di S. Pietro con infinita bellezza'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 91.

³⁷ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 80-1: 'Si vede pronto quando risuscito i morti, risana gli attrati con vive movenze, e naturali attitudini. Non si saziano gli artefici in lodar la vivezza, che mostra questo santo, quando nel ventre del pesce comeda Christo gli è imposto, cava la moneta, onde dee pagare il tributo. E' pronto altresì chi risquote: il quale ne' danari, che tiene in mano, affissata la vista, mostra in suo sembiante un disiderio dell'oro oltra modo affettuoso'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 91.

³⁸ Cf. Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), II, p. 297-8: 'il San Piero massimamente, il quale affaticarsi a cavare i danari del ventre del pesce ha la testa focosa per lo stare chinato; e molto più quand'ei paga il tributo, dove si vede l'affetto del contare e la sete di colui che riscuote, che si guarda i danari in mano con grandissimo piacere.'

³⁹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 81: 'gli huomini di gran giudizio afferman...che è stato nell'arte sua un miracolo...'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 91.

Sarto.⁴⁰ While Vasari had provided a list of all the painters who visited the Brancacci chapel from Fra Angelico to Antonio Toto del Nunziata (1498-1554),⁴¹ Bocchi names only these three artists. This selection was not, however, arbitrary, since he refers to these artists constantly throughout his guidebook as excellent painters who displayed a perfect style. He also gives lengthy discussions of each of the three painters and points out the main elements which made their styles unique and distinguishable. He praises Raphael especially for his paintings, Michelangelo for his marvellous design and Andrea del Sarto for ‘obtaining the exact likeness of nature’.⁴² Bocchi does not attempt to establish which of the three painters was superior, but simply sets out the particular area in which each excelled, indicating which elements the reader should appreciate and pay attention to:

This is not to say that Andrea is greater than Raphael in the lovely charm of his colour or that his design is more profound than Michelangelo, but rather that, in the matter of forceful effects of relief, in the lifelikeness and naturalness expressed so marvellously in his figures, he is indisputably incomparable.⁴³

Once again, Bocchi invokes a set of artistic qualities which have become part of a standardized artistic vocabulary meant to shape the views of readers and train them to recognize excellent works of art.

In addition to making general comments on the styles of Michelangelo, Raphael and Andrea del Sarto, Bocchi also analyses specific paintings by each of them in various Florentine collections and churches. In describing the collection of Matteo and Giovanni

⁴⁰ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 81: ‘Da costui hanno apparato per non dir di altri, che sono di numero grandissimo, il divin Buonarotto, l’eccellentissimo Andrea del Sarto, Raffael da Urbino, tanto sovrano e tanto raro, quella maniera, che sopra tutte mirabile più di tutte ancora con honore è ricordata’, and Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 91: ‘the very many others, the Divine Michelangelo, the most excellent Andrea del Sarto and the supreme and rare Raphael of Urbino have all learnt from him that manner [of painting] which more than any other is admirable and appreciated today.’

⁴¹ See Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), II, p. 299: ‘Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, Fra Filippo, Filippino che la finì, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, Andrea del Verrocchio, Domenico del Grillandaio, Sandro di Botticello, Lionardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, fra’ Bartolomeo di San Marco, Mariotto Albertinelli, ed il divinissimo Michelangelo Buonarroti. Raffaello ancora da Urbino di quivi trasse il principio della bella maniera sua, il Granaccio, Lorenzo di Credi, Ridolfi del Grillandaio, Andrea del Sarto, il Rosso, il Franciabiagio, Baccio Bandinelli, Alonso Spagnolo, Iacopo da Pontormo, Pierino del Vaga e Toto del Nunziata.’

⁴² See Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 140: ‘Però che è mirabile Raffaello nel dipignere, sublime il Buonarotto nel disegno, miracoloso Andrea nel contrafar la natura’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 136.

⁴³ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 140: ‘Non è maggiore Andrea nel vago colorito, e allegro di Raffaello, ne più profondo del Buonarotto nel disegno: ma è senza dubbio incomparabile nel gran rilievo, nella vivezza, e nella natura, che da lui nelle sue figure si conosce espressa mirabilmente’, translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 136.

Battista Botti, he writes that the *Virgin and Child* by Andrea del Sarto is ‘executed with supreme style’,⁴⁴ ‘with that sweetness of colouring and that relief which make this unique artist superior to all’.⁴⁵ While this statement appears to contradict Bocchi’s earlier comment in which he avoided rankings, it is, I believe, formulated with the same intention – to point out particularities of style in the work of an artist which make him distinguishable from the others and, at the same time, to help the reader to identify and appreciate these features. Continuing to discuss paintings in the same collection, Bocchi draws attention to ‘a portrait of a beautiful and elegant young woman’ by Raphael, known as *La Donna velata*, ‘highly esteemed by artists’ (fig. 63).⁴⁶ He then praises Raphael as an ‘admirable painter’ and claims that the painting in the Botti collection is ‘noble and famous everywhere’.⁴⁷ In his description of the painting, Vasari had stated that the owner regarded it as a precious relic on account of his love for Raphael;⁴⁸ he thus placed the painting in a private context, as an object which the owner had the exclusive privilege of admiring and treasuring. Bocchi, by contrast, takes it out of this private context, stressing that the painting is widely known and appreciated.

In addition to his evident appreciation of late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento artists, justified on the basis of detailed stylistic analyses of their works, Bocchi also discusses the contribution made by these painters to the development of Florentine art. In writing about the church of Santa Trinita, he examines a panel representing *The Virgin and Child* by Cimabue (fig. 64)⁴⁹ which he says ‘is treated with reverence, since it is an ancient work, and since it was created by the painter who originated the beautiful manner [of painting] which flourishes today’.⁵⁰ Here, Bocchi expresses a view shared by some Venetian

⁴⁴ Shearman suggested that this painting could be the one in Hampton Court; see Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 93, n. 283, and J. Shearman, *The Early Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen*, Cambridge and New York 1983, pp. 9-11.

⁴⁵ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 83: ‘Ci è un quadro di N. Donna col figliuolo in collo di mano di Andrea del Sarto, fatto con somma industria...con quella dolcezza di colorito, e con quel rilievo, per cui è questo singulare artefice à gli altri superiore’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 93 and n. 283.

⁴⁶ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 83-4: ‘Ci è ancora un ritratto di una giovane di bel sembiante, e leggiadro dipinto da Raffael da Urbino: il quale è tenuto dagli artefici in grande stima’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 93-4, and n. 284.

⁴⁷ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 83: ‘il quale è tenuto dagli artefici in grande stima: e si come fu questo pittore ammirabile, così è l’opera nobile, e famosa appresso tutti’, and translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 94.

⁴⁸ Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), IV, p. 355: ‘tenuta da lui come reliquia per l’amore che egli porta all’arte e particolarmente a Raffaello’.

⁴⁹ This painting is now in the Uffizi; see Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 100, n. 308.

⁵⁰ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 92: ‘ma è tenuta in riverenza (come cosa antica, e che dal primo pittore procede, onde è nata la bella maniere, che oggi è in fiore)’; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 100.

authors of guidebooks and biographies, who also appreciated the continuity between early and later painters.⁵¹ Bocchi acknowledges Cimabue's importance for the history of Florentine painting, on the grounds that he laid down the principles on which later artists developed and perfected their style. Describing a panel by Cimabue in Santa Croce,⁵² he observes that although it has 'little value when compared to modern pictures, it still deserves remembrance and consideration as a reminder of what that artist who initiated the wonderful manner of painting in use today'.⁵³ Without drawing on earlier texts, Bocchi again pays tribute to the impact which Cimabue's stylistic innovations had on Florentine painting.⁵⁴ This comment also illustrates his belief that painters of his own day could not have reached stylistic maturity had it not been for the efforts of their predecessors, even though works by artists such as Cimabue were less valued than modern ones, because it paved the way for the development and progress of painting, while not attaining the perfect colouring and naturalist effects achieved by painters such as Andrea del Sarto and Raphael. Later guidebook writers such as Gaetano Cambiagi and Raffaello del Bruno also adopted Bocchi's view, encouraging readers to appreciate the works of Cimabue and Giotto on account of their antiquity.⁵⁵ In this connection, there is a similarity between the views of the Florentine and Venetian guidebooks writers, in that they promote both tendencies: respecting paintings for their antiquity and valuing them as works of art.

Continuing his guided tour of Florence, Bocchi proposes an itinerary which starts at the Porta del Prato d'Ognissanti for travellers arriving from Genoa, Lucca, Prato and

⁵¹ See, e.g., Chapter 3, p. 62 above, on Boschini.

⁵² Bocchi refers here to Cimabue's *Crucifix*, which is now in the Museo di Santa Croce; see Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 146, n. 456.

⁵³ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 153: 'Tavola di mano di Cimabue, la quale, come che comparata con le pitture moderne sia hoggi di poco pregio, tuttavia per memoria di questo artefice onde è nato il colorito maraviglioso, che hoggi è in uso, e degno di memoria e di considerazione'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 146.

⁵⁴ Bocchi distances himself from Vasari and expresses his own view on Cimabue's painting; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), I, p. 249: 'et in Santa Croce una tavola dentrovi una Nostra Donna, la quale fu et è ancora appoggiata in un pilastro a man destra intorno al coro.'

⁵⁵ Gaetano Cambiagi, *L'antiquario fiorentino: ossia Guida per osserrar con metodo le cose notabili della città di Firenze*, Florence 1781, pp. 92-3: 'se ne trovano in questa Chiesa e nel Convento alcune di Cimabue, e di Giotto, le quali quantunque siano dalle moderne pitture superate in bellezza, non è però, che non meritino di essere tenute in grande stima, per la venerazione che si dee a quei due primi Maestri e Restauratori della Pittura', and Raffaello del Bruno, *Il Ristretto delle cose più notabili della città di Firenze*, 6th ed., Florence 1757, p. 62: 'se ne trovano in questa chiesa alcune di Cimabue, e di Giotto, le quali, quantunque siano dalle moderne pitture superate in bellezza, non è però, che non meritino di esser tenute in grande stima, per la venerazione, che si dee a quei due primi Maestri, e Restauratori della Pittura.'

Pistoia.⁵⁶ On entering the church of Ognissanti, the first painting which invites us to a more careful inspection is *St Augustine* by Botticelli (fig. 65). Bocchi's description shows what a fine observer he is: 'The face of this Saint reveals his noble thoughts; it turns upwards, and his mind impresses dignity on his appearance. He seems to be free from earthly concerns, and to concentrate on divine matters alone.'⁵⁷ Unlike his other descriptions, where he usually concentrates on stylistic analysis, Bocchi here provides a sensitive interpretation of the picture's content and meaning, offering the reader or traveller an alternative way to look at the painting. His aim seems to be to prompt viewers to adopt a similar attitude to that of St Augustine, directing their thoughts towards 'divine matters'. Bocchi then draws an inspired parallel with a painting of *St Jerome* by Domenico Ghirlandaio (fig. 66), placed opposite Botticelli's *St Augustine*.⁵⁸ His interpretation follows the same lines: 'In the grave appearance [of St Jerome] one perceives dignity, and since his pose is very lively, and he concentrates on divine thoughts, he doubtlessly inspires reverence in the viewer.'⁵⁹ Between the two figures of the Church Fathers – one absorbed in meditation, the other slightly distracted – stands the viewer who completes the image of a triptych of contemplation. Just as Venetian writers on art placed emphasis on the capacity of early religious paintings to arouse the feelings of viewers and imbue them with piety and devotion, so, too, this attitude is found in Florentine artistic literature.

Bocchi's accounts of paintings in churches alternate with descriptions of streets and bridges which lead to *palazzi* and privately owned collections such as that belonging to Bishop Giuliano Ricasoli. Among ancient marble busts, sculptures and roundels decorated with reliefs, there were paintings, some of which Bocchi describes with great enthusiasm. One was a copy after a painting by Raphael of St John the Baptist, who 'was depicted with

⁵⁶ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 97: 'Chi fa il viaggio di Genova, di Lucca, di Prato e di Pistoia arriva à questa Porta.'

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100: 'Si mostra nel volto questo santo di Dio pieno di nobili pensieri e levato in alto con la mente esprime nel suo sembiante gravità, e diviso da terreni affari pare, che alle cose divine intenda senza più'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 106.

⁵⁸ Although Vasari had noted the parallel display of the two paintings, he had not given any interpretation of the two works; Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, p. 258: 'nella chiesa d'Ognisanti, a concorrenza di Sandro Botticelli, [Domenico Ghirlandaio] dipinse a fresco un San Girolamo'.

⁵⁹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 101: 'Si scorge nel grave sembiante maestà, e perche in viva attitudine molto e molto sta intento ne'divini avvisi, muove senza dubbio in chi contempla riverenza'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 107.

such alert diligence and such effort that it is unbelievably close to its model'.⁶⁰ Bocchi relates with some amusement that when Ricasoli was asked to return the original painting which he had borrowed from its owner, Giovan Maria Benintendi, he was in such a state of confusion that he needed expert advice to tell them apart.⁶¹ We can perhaps learn something about contemporary attitudes towards reproductions from Bocchi's praise for the painter's skill in emulating the original and from the fact that he tells us that Ricasoli displayed both the copy and the original by Raphael in adjacent rooms. When, however, discussing another painting of the Virgin and Child with Sts Elizabeth and John the Baptist, also by Raphael, displayed in another room, Bocchi commends the artist's understanding of composition and his perfect rendering of the figures, which seemed to be alive: 'one forgets that it is only a painting, and the beholder is filled with devotion and reverence'.⁶² So, even in the 'profane' context of a private *palazzo*, though one owned by a bishop, he stresses the piety and reverence induced by the painting. Raphael's representation is so powerful that it makes viewers oblivious of the space they occupy and forces them to concentrate exclusively on the different 'reality' which they can discover in the composition.

Bocchi next advises the traveller to visit the Strozzi chapel in Santa Maria Novella, with two paintings by Filippino Lippi: *St John Resuscitating Drusiana* (fig. 67) and *St Philip Driving the Dragon from the Temple of Hieropolis* (fig. 68). He praises both paintings and attempts to recreate the dynamic and lively atmosphere suggested by Lippi's images. In the painting of St John, Bocchi, like Vasari before him, draws attention to the graceful poses of the figures and the presence of a little boy fleeing a dog – a small detail which produces a realistic atmosphere. Likewise following Vasari, Bocchi notes the naturalism which characterised Lippi's painting of St Philip, displayed on the opposite wall. The hole from which the dragon had emerged, formed by a broken stone in one of the steps, seemed so 'real and natural', we are told, that one of Lippi's assistants tried to hide something in there;

⁶⁰ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 104: 'È fatta questa figura con diligenza così svegliata, e con tanto studio, che oltre ogni stima simile al principale, hanno pensato alcuni non senza ragione, che sia il proprio di Raffaello'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 108 and n. 157.

⁶¹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 104: 'Perche Guivan Maria Benintendi, padrone del quadro, che coresamente al Vescovo de' Ricasoli l'havea accommodato, quando fu chiamato per prendere il suo, come che con accuratezza ponesse mente, non potè discernere tuttavia qual fosse quel di Raffaello', translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 108.

⁶² Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 105: 'posto in oblio, che sia dipinto quello, che si contempla, appresso egli nasce divozione e riverenza'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 109.

and when he realised his mistake, declared the painting to be ‘noble and admirable’.⁶³ Even though Bocchi’s descriptions of both paintings are based extensively on Vasari, he makes a few comments of his own on Lippi’s style, drawing an analogy, for instance, between the *trompe l’oeil* in Lippi’s painting of St Philip and the classical anecdote in which the painter Zeuxis was deceived by his rival Parrhasius’s illusionistic curtain.⁶⁴

Bocchi goes on to give a detailed account of Domenico Ghirlandaio’s frescoes in Santa Maria Novella, which were commissioned by Giovanni Tornabuoni. Each scene is described, starting from the chapel vault and continuing downwards to the episodes from the lives of St John the Baptist and of the Virgin. Most of what he writes comes from Vasari.⁶⁵ He does, however, add that Ghirlandaio’s frescoes were painted with ‘beautiful skill and felicitous intelligence’ and with ‘great understanding and clear, lovely and magnificent order’.⁶⁶

Bocchi’s guided tour of Florence ends with two itineraries, one departing from Porta San Niccolò, the other from Porta di San Miniato. The traveller, coming from Arezzo enters the city through the gate of San Niccolò and comes to the church of the same name.⁶⁷ The paintings here are by artists from the second half of the sixteenth century, including Alessandro del Barbieri (1538/43-1592), Battista Naldini (1537-1591), Francesco Poppi (1544-1597); but Bocchi applies the same criteria which he uses for judging earlier

⁶³ Cf. Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, p. 472-3: ‘vi dipinse la rottura d’uno scaglione, tanto bene che volendo una sera uno de’ garzoni di Filippo riporre non so che cosa acciò non fosse veduta da uno che picchiava per entrare, corse alla buca così in fretta per appiattarvela dentro, e ne rimase inganatto’, with Bocchi, *Le bellezze*, pp. 114-15: ‘Perloche essendo picchiato un giorno alla porta del tavolato, che dinanzi al luogo si pone, come è usanza, dove si dipigne mentre che vuole un garzone di Filippo, prima che apra, nascondere alcuna cosa, che tiene in mano, corse in fretta alla buca dipinta, che gli pareva vera e come à Zeusi, pittor famoso avvenne, trovato inganatosi, confesso senza fallo, come questa pittura sopra tutto era nobile e mirabile’; see also Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 118, and n. 379.

⁶⁴ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 114-15: ‘corse in fretta alla buca dipinta, che gli pareva vere, e come à Zeusi, pittor famoso avvenne trovato ingannatosi’. See Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, ed. and transl. H. Rackham, 10 vols, London 1938-1963, IX, p. 310 (Book XXXV.36): ‘atque intellecto errore concederet palmam ingenuo pudore, quoniam ipse volucres fefellisset, Parrhasius autem se artificem’, and translation at p. 311: ‘and when he realized his mistake, with a modesty that did him honour he yielded up the prize, saying that whereas he had deceived birds Parrhasius had deceived him, an artist’.

⁶⁵ Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), III, pp. 262-8.

⁶⁶ Bocchi *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 117: ‘con sì bello artificio e con ingegno così felice’, and 118: ‘con molta intelligenza’, ‘ordine chiaro, vago e magnifico’; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 119-20, and see nn. 380, 382, 384 and 385.

⁶⁷ In this itinerary, the only attraction which Bocchi offers the traveller is the church of San Niccolò; see Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 124-6.

works, singling out for praise the poses of the figures, the colouring and representations which appear lifelike.⁶⁸

Bocchi's account of the monuments in the district of San Miniato is very long and detailed. Particularly noteworthy is his description of a fresco of the *Lamentation* by Pietro Perugino in San Pier Maggiore, which 'seems to have been painted very recently' because of its masterful rendition, giving the work an air of freshness.⁶⁹ This comment suggests that what he admired in Perugino's painting was its appearance of newness, so that it resembled those painted in Bocchi's own day.

He also discusses some Renaissance masters found in the house of Baccio Valori.⁷⁰ In a room on the first level, Bocchi remarks on a painting of the Madonna and Child by Botticelli which is now lost. He says that the figures of the Virgin and Christ child are noble and that the angels' expression is joyous and graceful. He regards the colouring as the key element which makes the painting look 'distinguished and precious'.⁷¹ Of the paintings in Valori's collection, he has most praise for Andrea del Sarto's *Birth of St John*: 'this work is admired and held in the highest regard, famous among experts, for, even though small, it clearly demonstrates Andrea's greatness'.⁷² Bocchi goes on to express appreciation for del Sarto, whom he regarded as a gifted and talented painter.⁷³

Bocchi's observations are sharp, precise and complex. He gives detailed information about the paintings, the artists and their styles, and his presentation of the material is systematic. What is innovative about *Le bellezze* is the way in which Bocchi combines description and interpretation.⁷⁴ Travellers following his five itineraries through Florence would have been encouraged to think about the paintings, to appreciate their different

⁶⁸ See n. 17 above.

⁶⁹ See Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 176-7: 'tuttavia si mantiene ancora in guisa, che par fatto di poco tempo, anzi mostra del tutto di esser fresco'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 171.

⁷⁰ Baccio Valori was a Florentine *literato* and art collector. He was also one of the four interlocutors in Raffaello Borghini's fictitious dialogue *Il Riposo* (1584); see M. Bury, 'Bernardo Vecchietti, Patron of Giambologna', *I Tatti Studies*, 1, 1985 (hereafter Bury, 'Bernardo Vecchietti'), pp. 13-56, at p. 14.

⁷¹ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 182: 'È di aria nobile la Vergine, e il figliuolo altresì; due Angeli in graziosa vista e lieta', 'il colorito nel tutto vago rende questa pittura nobile e rara'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 174.

⁷² Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 183: 'Ammirato adunque e tenuto in sommo pregio è famoso appresso gli huomini intendenti questo lavoro; il quale, quanto valesse Andrea ancora in sì picciolo spazio di luogo, mostra apertamente'; translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 174: 'Thus, this work is admired and held in the highest regard, famous among experts, for even though small, it clearly demonstrates Andrea's greatness.'

⁷³ Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), pp. 182-3: 'Et di vero egli pare, che pioversero le grazie ogni sua più rara virtù nelle mani di questo singolare artefice', translation in Bocchi, *The Beauties*, p. 174: 'Truly it seems that the Graces poured down all their most precious virtues into the hands of this singular artist.'

⁷⁴ R. Williams, 'A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi in Praise of Andrea del Sarto', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52, 1989, pp. 111-39, at p. 111.

elements such as colouring, drawing and relief and to develop their own preferences. Bocchi seems to have valued early Renaissance artists mainly for their contribution to the later development of Florentine painting. Although his descriptions were strongly influenced by Vasari, Bocchi nevertheless felt free to express his own opinions and to add interpretative depth to previous accounts. He admired the ability of Renaissance painters to represent figures in graceful poses and attitudes which inspired devotion and meditation. Among those he favoured most were Masaccio, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi and Sandro Botticelli, whose naturalistic compositions he especially admired. He also maintained that the style of Andrea del Sarto, Raphael and Michelangelo was perfect and that each excelled in a particular area.

It is striking, however, that Bocchi did not make a distinction between the three artistic periods about which Vasari wrote; nor is it clear from his descriptions how he thought the stylistic progression from early Trecento artists to Michelangelo and beyond had taken place. Also, Bocchi concentrated on earlier artists as much as he did on the contemporary ones and seems to imply that the tradition of Florentine painting largely ended with Raphael, Sarto and Michelangelo. By contrast, although Venetian writers generally took the view that the artistic tradition of their city had reached its height with Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, they nevertheless thought that it continued to develop afterwards.

Giovanni Cinelli's *Le bellezze della città di Fiorenza* (1677)

Like most guidebooks, Bocchi's went through a subsequent edition. In 1677, the Florentine physician Giovanni Cinelli decided to provide a new and amplified version of *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, in which he included information, clearly marked in italics, about works of art produced after the first edition of 1591.⁷⁵ In a lengthy preface,⁷⁶ Cinelli explains that, finding himself one day in the house of Antonio Magliabechi, he was asked by *literati* from outside Florence to give them some notes about the most important monuments in the

⁷⁵ Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, ed. Giovanni Cinelli, Florence 1677.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-32 ('Giovanni Cinelli All'amico, e cortese Lettore').

city.⁷⁷ To his embarrassment, he was unable to provide this information and, therefore, decided to gather together some material. The most obvious source was Bocchi's guidebook. After reading it, however, Cinelli was not entirely satisfied and came to the conclusion that he should update it.⁷⁸ In doing so, one of his principal aims was to defend some painters, both ancient and modern, who had been misjudged in previous writings. Cinelli listed all the errors which these painters had been accused of by non-specialists, adding his responses to each of the accusations. He rejected the claims, for instance, of those who found fault with Cimabue's *disegno* and underlined the artist's contributions to the development of painting.⁷⁹ He criticized others who judged Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno solely by their errors and failed to take account of their achievements.⁸⁰ He also made similar comments about the reproaches addressed to modern painters such as Rosso Fiorentino, Battista Naldini and Francesco Salviati.⁸¹ While Cinelli does not name the sources where he found these negative comments, he does say that they were not in line with the ideas found in works by Vasari, Raffaello Borghini, Arcangelo Giani, Tommaso Ferrini, Pierfrancesco Giambullari and Paolo Mini.⁸²

The additions which Cinelli made to Bocchi's text include historical data about churches and transcriptions of inscriptions, as well as personal comments on new works of art and on those previously described by Bocchi.⁸³ Cinelli's style of writing and the artistic

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 1: 'e...stato da diversi Letterati forestieri chieste alcune notizie intorno alle cose cospicue della nostra Città.' Cinelli, however, does not name them.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2: 'volsi legger le Bellezze di Firenze del Bocchi stampate nell'anno 1591, ma come che in quelle io non interamente soddisfatto restasi...di mente mi messi a fare alcune postille al medesimo libro'.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 4: 'così io non potro anche sentir biasimare il disegno di Cimabue benchè lontano dal vero, ma devesi egli molto nondimeno commendare per esser stato il rinuovatore della pittura stata per la cinque secoli avanti'.

⁸⁰ Among the authors he took issue with were Raffaello Borghini and Vasari; see *ibid.*, p. 5. 'Non meno lascerò di coprir quell'errore di Paolo Uccello, esagerato dal Borghini e Vasari nel cavallo dipinto nel Duomo.'

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 6. Looking at Cinelli's additions to Bocchi's text only, it appears that the term 'moderno', specifically used in an artistic context, occurs 14 times. It refers to the following artists: Ciro Ferri (1634-1689): Bocchi/Cinelli, *Le bellezze*, p. 166; Il Volteranno (1611-1689), Simone Pignoni (1611-1698), Sassoferrato (1609-1685), Carlo Dolci (1616-1686), Cesare Dandini (1596-1657): *ibid.*, p. 269; Francesco Furini (1600-1646): *ibid.*, p. 287; and Matteo Rosselli (1578-1650): *ibid.*, p. 335. Cinelli also uses the term in order to make a distinction between ancient and modern statues or heads of statues; see *ibid.*, pp. 221, 281 and 370. There is only one occasion where Cinelli refers to a sculptor as 'modern'; see *ibid.*, p. 169: 'molte statue antiche e moderne, e fra queste una statua di marmo rappresentante la Fortezza di mano del [Giovanni Battista] Caccini.' In the case of Bocchi's first edition of his guidebook, the term 'modern' occurs 11 times and does not refer to any artist or work in particular, with one exception where it refers to Michelangelo's *Bacchus*; see Bocchi, *Le bellezze* (1591), p. 47: 'Nel mezzo poi della Galleria sono due *Bacchi*, uno antico di somma bellezza, stimato rarissimo da gli artefici et uno che è moderno del Buonaroto.'

⁸² Bocchi/Cinelli, *Le bellezze*, p. 22: 'L'opere qui non nominate dalla loro autorità disgiunte non vanno, avendo per la minuta riscontrate col Vasari, Borghini, Giani, Ferrini, Giambullari, Mini'.

⁸³ Cinelli's additions caused Bocchi's guidebook to double in length.

terms he employed were modelled on Bocchi's in an attempt to maintain the same general lines.⁸⁴ Above all, the aim of Cinelli's revised edition, like that of Bocchi's original, was to promote Florentine art. This was achieved by describing the works of Florentine painters in detail and by praising early Renaissance artists along with more recent ones. Cinelli's contributions to Bocchi's original edition were not negligible: there are around seventy additional works of art before 1500, both on public display and in private collections, which Bocchi had omitted.⁸⁵ While, as expected, the number of works of art after 1591 which Cinelli included in his edition is considerably higher than that of the earlier works, it is, nevertheless, significant that he devoted so much attention to recording Trecento and Quattrocento art. Eighty-six years after the publication of Bocchi's guidebook, Cinelli felt that the original edition needed to be updated not only by mentioning newly produced art works but also by recovering earlier ones which had been omitted. While Cinelli only rarely praises pre-1500 works,⁸⁶ and his accounts do not reveal much about his personal taste,⁸⁷ his approach to early art was at least more rigorous and thoroughgoing than Bocchi's.

Paolo Mini's *Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze e de' Fiorentini* (1593)

In 1593, two years after the initial publication of Bocchi's *Le bellezze*, the Florentine physician and *litterato* Paolo Mini (1526-1599) published a new work on Florence entitled *Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze e de' Fiorentini*.⁸⁸ Like Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*, Mino's treatise is a *laudatio* of the city and its most famous citizens. It is divided into two parts: one

⁸⁴ Among the terms used by both authors are *industria*, *vivezza*, *artifizio* and *nobile*.

⁸⁵ These include works by painters and sculptors from Giotto to Botticelli: e.g., a crucifix by Giotto in San Marco (Bocchi/Cinelli, *Le bellezze*, p. 16), the tabernacle by Andrea Orcagna in Orsanmichele (*ibid.*, p. 15), a painting by Buffalmacco in San Michele (*ibid.*, p. 70), a painting of the Virgin and Child by Filippo Lippi in San' Apostolo (*ibid.*, p. 123) and a painting of the Virgin and Child by Botticelli in the Palazzo Pitti (*ibid.*, p. 146). There are also other works by Fra Angelico, Andrea Verrocchio, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Donatello, Jacopo della Quercia and Paolo Uccello. Cinelli does not often indicate the subject of the paintings which he includes in his guidebook.

⁸⁶ See, e.g., his description of Gaddo Gaddi's mosaic of the coronation of the Virgin in Santa Maria del Fiore in Bocchi/Cinelli, *Le bellezze*, p. 47: 'L'immagine di Maria. Vergine di mosaico, ch'è sopra la porta principale per di dentro è di Gaddo, stimata in que' tempi la più bell'opera che fusse di tal mestiero veduta per allora in Italia.'

⁸⁷ His comments consist merely of saying that a particular work is 'beautiful' or 'most beautiful'; see *ibid.*, p. 17: 'una bellissima tavola di mano di Andrea Verrocchio'.

⁸⁸ Paolo Mini, *Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze e de' Fiorentini*, Florence 1593. For more information about Mini's life and works, see F. Luti, 'Paolo Mini', in *DBI*, LXXIV, pp. 638-40.

about the history of Florence, the other about its major figures, who are grouped according to their professions. For artists, Mini dedicates two pages each to painters,⁸⁹ sculptors⁹⁰ and architects.⁹¹ The section on painters goes from Cimabue to Michelangelo, with Mini mentioning one or two characteristics of their styles. Giotto, he says, enriched Florentine painting by giving it vigour and energy;⁹² Dello Delli added grace;⁹³ Masaccio introduced movement and liveliness to his figures;⁹⁴ Benozzo Gozzoli invented original compositions;⁹⁵ Filippo Lippi draped his figures and arranged their hair in such a way as to make them seem unusual and rich;⁹⁶ Leonardo painted with perfection;⁹⁷ and Fra Bartolommeo's special gifts were beauty, clarity and colouring.⁹⁸ Then follows a longer account of Michelangelo, at the end of which Mini concludes that Florentine painting reached perfection with his works. Mini's section on painters is not detailed, and he does not mention or describe any works of art,⁹⁹ with the exception of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, which he mentions only very briefly.¹⁰⁰ His account of painters is hardly more than a chronological list of names; and the stylistic characteristics which he attributes to each of them have little meaning when they are not backed up with examples. In general, Mini does not give the impression that he was very familiar with art works or that he had much knowledge of the history of art and its development.

⁸⁹ Mini, *Discorso*, pp. 107-8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 107: 'le diede il polso e la lena'.

⁹³ *Ibid.*: 'Dello la grazia'. Vasari, in the second edition of his *Vite*, mentioned 'grace' in connection to Delli's representations of small figures, but only to distinguish them from his larger compositions; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), I, p. 257: 'figure piccole, nelle quali egli hebbe miglior grazia, che nelle grandi assai.' Mini apparently took Vasari's statement out of the context.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: 'Masaccio le movenze e la vivacità'.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: 'Benozzo Gozzoli l'invenzione'.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 'Filippo Lippi le pannature, e le acconciature di teste bizzarre e ricche'.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 'Leonardo da Vinci la perfezzione'.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 'la vaghezza, e la pulitezza del colorire'.

⁹⁹ Mini takes the same approach in his section dedicated to sculptors which begins with Andrea Orcagna and ends with Michelangelo. His section on architecture includes a list of the following artists: Andrea di Cione, Filippo Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti and Michelangelo, without examples of their works or biographical details.

¹⁰⁰ Mini, *Discorso*, p. 108: 'il suo stupendo Giudizio, che in Roma è nella cappella di Sisto'.

Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Guidebooks on Art

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more guidebooks to Florence were published.¹⁰¹ Among the most important were Leopoldo del Migliore's exhaustive *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata* of 1684, Raffaello del Bruno's *Ristretto delle cose più notabili della città di Firenze*, first published in 1689 and reprinted many times throughout the eighteenth century,¹⁰² and Gaetano Cambiagi's *L'antiquario fiorentino, ossia Guida per osservare con metodo le rarità della città di Firenze* of 1765, with numerous subsequent editions.¹⁰³ A feature which these Florentine guidebooks had in common was the methodical arrangement of information: Cambiagi and del Migliore proposed itineraries starting at each of the nine gates, while del Bruno structured his presentation as a series of fictitious journeys taking place over a number of days, with each day corresponding to a different route.¹⁰⁴ In either case, they adhered to a pattern which added a practical dimension to their works. Furthermore, following in the footsteps of Bocchi, some of these writers underlined the importance of Florentine painters of the early Renaissance. Del Bruno, for instance, pointed out that Cimabue and Giotto deserved to be esteemed as the first masters and restorers of art, even though their paintings were not as beautiful as those by modern painters. In his opinion, Cimabue and Giotto were the 'ancient' painters who merited recognition and praise for their efforts to 'restore' painting,¹⁰⁵ and their works had to be appreciated particularly for their historical value. Del Bruno was not, however, consistent in promoting these ideas: describing a number of works in Santa Maria delle Carmine, he deliberately omits a few ancient paintings which he considers 'insignificant',¹⁰⁶ and he fails to mention Fra Angelico's works in San Marco, which Landino and Bocchi had praised.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ For a chronological list of guidebooks to Florence between the 16th and 18th centuries, see J. Boutier, 'Visiter Florence à la fin du XVII^e siècle. *Le Ristretto delle cose più notabili* de Raffaello del Bruno (1689)', in *Villes et représentations urbaines dans l'Europe méditerranéenne (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle). Mélanges offerts à Henri Michel*, ed. J. Fouilleron and R. Andréani, Montpellier 2011, pp. 51-8, at 57-8; see also Frangenberg, 'Introduction' to Bocchi, *The Beauties*, pp. 3-22, at p. 18.

¹⁰² It was republished six times: 1698, 1719, 1733, 1745, 1757 and 1767. Del Bruno was a member of the Florentine Academy and of the Accademia degli Apatisti; see Boutier, 'Visiter Florence', p. 54.

¹⁰³ New editions, with the same title, followed in 1771, 1778 and 1781. It was reprinted under the title *Guida al forestiero per osservare con metodo le rarità e bellezze della città di Firenze* and published in 1790, 1793, 1798, 1804 and 1805; see Boutier, 'Visiter Florence', p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ Del Bruno's guidebook was divided into three parts, corresponding to a three-day journey to Florence; for the itineraries, see Boutier, 'Visiter Florence', p. 55.

¹⁰⁵ Del Bruno, *Il Ristretto*, p. 83: 'Paolo, detto degli Uccelli, Pittore antico'.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142: 'Tralasciando alcune Tavole antiche, e di pregio minore'.

¹⁰⁷ See 'Introduction' to 'Part Two: Florentine Art Writings', n. 16 and Chapter 6, n. 20 above.

Del Bruno does sometimes take over elements from previous travel writings (like Bocchi, he commends Masaccio for paving the way to the development of the modern style,¹⁰⁸ and he celebrates Donatello's sculptures,¹⁰⁹ but he does not reveal any specific criteria of selection of his own and often does not justify his inclusion or omission of art works.

Gaetano Cambiagi's guidebook offered readers a tour of the Florentine churches, palaces and villas, and indicated which works of art they could admire in each place. His accounts appear to be more enthusiastic than del Bruno's: Cambiagi, for instance, invites travellers to visit San Marco, among other churches, for the 'most revered' works of Fra Angelico, and for Fra Bartolommeo's *Presentation of Christ into the Temple*, which was of 'extraordinary beauty'.¹¹⁰ There are, however, no elaborate descriptions of works of art which might indicate Cambiagi's own taste or preferences for earlier art or that of his contemporaries. Instead, like del Bruno and his predecessors, Cambiagi embraced and supported the idea that the works of Cimabue and Giotto had a historical value and that they deserved admiration for the innovative elements which had led towards artistic progress.¹¹¹

The most comprehensive work in this category was Leopoldo del Migliore's *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata*. As Sansovino had done for Venice, del Migliore provided an extensive account of Florence, its origins,¹¹² government and monuments. An element of novelty in this type of literature was the inclusion of architectural prints of the exterior views of buildings such as Santa Maria del Fiore, SS Annunziata, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi and the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova. Another detail which made this Florentine guidebook stand out from previous ones was the structure of del Migliore's accounts. When describing the chapels of the churches, he always numbers them, allowing readers, in this way, to visualize the order of the chapels, as well as helping visitors to organize their

¹⁰⁸ Del Bruno, *Il Ristretto*, p. 142: 'fu il primo che aprisse la strada alla buona, e moderna maniera di dipignere'.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114: 'e Donatello ne fece tre di marmo, le quali son tenute in gran pregio, come opere veramente meravigliose'.

¹¹⁰ Gaetano Cambiagi, *L'antiquario fiorentino, ossia Guida per osservar con metodo le rarità della città di Firenze*, Florence 1765, p. 34: 'venerabilissime immagini del B. Gio. Angelico'; 'Tavola di straordinaria bellezza e opera di Fr. Bartolommeo nella quale vi ha espressa la Presentazione di Gesù Bambino'.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3: 'oltre a tante Pitture di singolare perfezione, di già descritte, se ne trovano in questa Chiesa e nel convento alcune di Cimabue, e di Giotto, le quali quantunque siano dalle moderne pitture superate in bellezze, non e pero, che non meritino di essere tenute in grande stima, per la venerazione che si dee a quei due primi Maestri e Restauratori della Pittura.'

¹¹² Leopoldo del Migliore, *Firenze città nobilissima*, Florence 1684, sigs 3^v-9^v ('Origine de Firenze e sue qualità').

tour of the church.¹¹³ His accounts are lengthy and dense, comprising information gathered from both earlier and contemporary sources, which was meant to offer a complete documentation on the history of the churches described, the events related to them and the works of art which they contained. Del Migliore very rarely expresses any artistic judgements on works of art;¹¹⁴ and such comments as he does make are not very detailed. His main purpose was apparently to offer readers a well-documented history of Florence, written in the form of an extended guidebook.

With the exception of Bocchi, later Florentine guidebook writers tended to re-evaluate the art of the past from a historical point of view and to promote the monuments of Florence, together with their works of art, as examples of artistic development. Unlike the Venetian literature, in which the authors' views on art works were often expressed, the Florentine texts emphasized the historical recovery of the city's artistic past and the origins of Florentine art.

¹¹³ See, e.g., the description of two chapels in San Lorenzo: *ibid.*, p. 163:

'1. Cappella de' Medici. La Tavola, in cui si rappresenta la Natività di Cristo, è di mano di Raffaellin del Garbo. Gregorio XIII nel 1576. Lo fece Altar Privilegiato.'

2. Cappella de' Ginori, di quelli che portano per aggiunta nell'arme un Giglio d'oro in azzurro, stante il Privilegio fatto a Antonio di Giuliano Ginori dal re Rinieri l'anno 1442. La Tavola è bellissima, rappresentante lo Sposalizio di nostra Donna, dipinto dal Rosso, quegli, il quale essendo stato in grado d'eccessiva benevolenza con Francesco I Rè di Francia...'

3. Cappella dell'Inghirami, chiamati della penna d'argento, qual portan nell'Arme in un Listra azzurra e sghembo. La Tavola è antica, dipinta in sù l'asse con un S. Lorenzo alla Greca.'

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211: 'la Vergine Maria con alcuni santi attorno, Tavola bellissima, e di F. Bartolommeo famoso pittore'.

CHAPTER 7

Florentine Biographies of Artists

Giorgio Vasari's Lives of Early Italian Artists

In his *La fortuna dei primitivi*, Giovanni Previtali stated it was not possible to understand the history of art before Raphael, from the perspective of posterity, without a reassessment of Vasari's *Lives*.¹ In this section, I shall attempt to establish the extent to which Vasari himself appreciated early Renaissance art and the way in which later writers embraced his views and developed them further.²

In the first edition of his *Lives*, published in 1550, Vasari included ninety-three biographies of artists prior to Raphael. As Charles Hope has shown, he relied on earlier written sources in order to compose his biographies, especially those of Trecento artists; among his sources were Albertini's *Memoriale*, *Il libro di Antonio Billi*, Ghiberti's second commentary and Giovanni Villani's *Cronica*.³ These writings laid the foundation for Vasari's biographies, which he then expanded by adding new material. In identifying and analysing a selection of passages in praise of artists from Parts 1 and 2 of the *Lives* (from Cimabue to Lorenzo di Bicci and from Jacopo della Quercia to Pietro Perugino), I shall attempt to determine what they tell us in terms of appreciation for early Renaissance art and how they shaped and influenced the views of Vasari's followers.

Generally, Vasari's biographies are in the form of descriptive and informative accounts about the artists and their works, for which he usually mentions the subject and the location. With regard to the biographies of artists from Part 1, it emerges that there are fewer accounts which contain detailed descriptions and assessments of works than ones which include simple lists of works and locations, without any further comments or

¹ Previtali, *La fortuna*, pp. 3-40 ('Il Cinquecento'), at p. 3.

² In discussing passages from Parts 1 and 2 of the *Lives* in this chapter, I do not consider the problem of authorship, nor do I attempt to distinguish between those sections which were written by Vasari himself and those which may have been written by his collaborators; on this issue, see Chapter 1, n. 49 above.

³ C. Hope, 'The Lives of the Trecento Artists in Vasari's First Edition', in K. Burzer, C. Davis, S. Feser, A. Nova, eds, *Le vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione*, Venice 2010, pp. 33-9, at p. 34. For an earlier discussion of Vasari's sources, see W. Kallab, *Vasaristudien*, Vienna 1908, pp. 151-211.

evaluations. Among the latter type are the biographies of Margaritone, Ugolino, Taddeo Gaddi, Duccio, Spinello Aretino and Lorenzo di Bicci. For example, in his life of Margaritone, Vasari writes:

He made throughout the whole city an infinity of pictures, and at Sargiano, a convent of the Frati de' Zoccoli, a St Francis portrayed from nature on a panel... Next, he made a large crucifix on wood, painted after the Greek manner... And at Ganghereto, a place above Terra Nuova in Valdarno, he made a St Francis.⁴

At the other end of the scale are biographies which contain fuller accounts and extended descriptions of works of art. In the life of Giotto, for instance, we find a lengthy passage about the frescoed stories of Beata Michelina in San Francesco at Rimini, which at the time were attributed to him.⁵ In his description, Vasari is appreciative of the excellent manner with which Giotto rendered the beautiful stories and of the gracious and life-like figures. He then dwells on two of the scenes, drawing attention to the expressions and emotions of the figures:

there is a young woman...as beautiful as ever a woman can be, who, in order to clear herself from the false charge of adultery, is taking oath over a book in a most wonderful attitude, holding her eyes fixed on those of her husband, who was making her take the oath by reason of mistrust in a black son born from her, whom he could in no way bring himself to believe to be his. She, even as the husband is showing disdain and distrust in his face, is making clear with the purity of her brow and of her eyes, to those who are most intently gazing on her, her innocence and simplicity, and the wrong that he is doing to her in making her take oath and in proclaiming her wrongly as harlot.

⁴ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 115: 'Fece per tutta la città pitture infinite, e fuori della città similmente a Sargiano, convento de' Frati del Zoccolo, et in una tavola un San Francesco ritratto di naturale, et in questa opera scrisse il suo nome, parendogli più del solito aver bene operato. Fece in legno un Crocifisso grande lavorato a la greca... Et a Ganghereto, luogo sopra Terranuova in Valdarno, un'altra tavola di San Francesco; see also Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, transl. G. du C. de Vere, 10 vols, London 1912-1915, I, p. 64. Although I have used de Vere's translation, I have occasionally made alterations, which are marked in square brackets.

⁵ See Previtali, *La fortuna*, p. 6, and Hope, 'Lives of the Trecento Artists', p. 36

In like manner, [this ingenious artist expressed] very great feeling in a sick man stricken with certain sores, seeing that all the women who are round him, overcome by the stench, are making certain grimaces of disgust, the most gracious in the world.⁶

This description appears to be based on a close and direct observation of these two scenes in the painting. It is evocative and specific, providing details about the attitudes and feelings of the figures. Vasari does not, however, speculate about the effect which the paintings might have had on viewers, nor does he explain why he chose to describe only these two scenes. The account is purely descriptive, without any explicit critical assessment, though Vasari presumably decided to pay so much attention to these particular scenes because he admired them.

In the life of Giotto, Vasari gives a similarly thorough description of the San Remigio *Deposition* (fig. 69), concentrating on the artist's skillful rendering of the emotions and expressions of the mourners gathered around the dead Christ:

In this panel, which is placed in the tramezzo of the church, on the right hand, is a dead Christ with the Maries and Nicodemus, accompanied by other figures, who are bewailing his death with bitterness and with very sweet and affectionate movements, wringing their hands with diverse gestures, and beating themselves in [such] a manner that in the air of the faces their sharp sorrow at the...great cost of our sins [is shown very clearly]. And it is something marvellous to consider, not that he penetrated with his genius to such a height of imagination, but that he could express it so well with the brush. [Consequently], this work is consummately worthy of praise, not so much [on account] of the subject and of the invention, as because in it the craftsman has shown, in some heads that are weeping, that although the lineaments of those that are weeping are distorted in the brows, in the eyes, in the nose, and in the mouth, this, however, neither spoils nor alters a certain beauty

⁶ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 124: 'egli è cosa singularissima una giovane che v'è, bellissima quanto più esser si possa, la quale per liberarsi da la calumnia dello adulterio giura sopra di un libro, con gli occhi fissi negli occhi del proprio marito che giurar la faceva per diffidenza d'un figliuol nero partorito da lei, il quale in nissun modo che suo fusse poteva credere; costei, così come il marito mostra lo sdegno e la diffidenza nel viso, fa conoscere con la pietà della fronte e degli occhi, a coloro che intentissimamente la contemplano, la innocenzia e la simplicità sua et il torto che se la faceva in farla giurare e nel publicarla a torto per meretrice. Medesimamente grandissimo affetto fu quel ch'espresse questo ingegnossissimo artefice in un infermo che certe piaghe, dove tutte le femmine che vi sono dattorno, offese dal puzzo, fanno certi torcimenti schifosi i più graziati del mondo', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, I, pp. 83-4.

which is wont to suffer much in weeping when the painters do not know well how to avail themselves of the good methods of art.⁷

In this passage, Vasari adds to his detailed description a critical assessment of the work and of the artist's style, praising Giottino's *invenzione* and execution of the panel, which lent an air of solemnity to the composition.

In these two examples, Vasari chose to focus on the emotions which the painted figures were experiencing rather than those of the viewers standing in front of them.⁸ The passages, however, show that Vasari was familiar with the works which he described; and his careful and detailed comments reveal an interest in the way in which two early artists rendered a large spectrum of emotions and gestures.

There are other shorter observations in the biographies from Part 1 about the style of artists, the innovations which they brought to painting and the works which Vasari considered to be especially worthy of praise. In his biographies of Cimabue and Giotto, for example, Vasari discusses the origins of Florentine painting and how these two artists contributed to its progress. He says of Cimabue's style: 'although he still had the Greek manner, [we see that he was] approaching in part to the line and method of the modern'.⁹ Discussing the primacy of Florentine art, Vasari claims that Cimabue 'gave the first light to the art of painting',¹⁰ and that Giotto 'alone, although born among inept craftsmen, by the gift of God revived that art, which had come to a grievous pass, and brought it to such a form as could be called good'.¹¹ Also in relation to the progress and advancement of art, Vasari singles out Stefano's frescoes in Santo Spirito: 'he showed so great art and so great invention and proportion...and so great diversity from the other masters in his method of

⁷ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 171-2: 'Questa tavola e posta nel tramezzo di detta chiesa a man destra, et evvi dentro un Cristo morto con le Marie intorno e co' Niccodemi, accompagnati di altre figure le quali con amaritudine et atti dolcissimi et affettuosi piangono quella morte, torcendosi con diversi gesti di mani e battendosi di maniera che nella aria del viso si dimostra assai chiaramente l'aspro dolore del costar tanto i peccati nostri: et e cosa meravigliosa a considerare che e' penetrasse mai con lo ingegno in si alta imaginazione. Questa opera è sommamente degna di lode non tanto per il soggetto della invenzione, quanto per avere egli mostrato in alcune teste che piangono, che ancora che il lineamento si storca nelle ciglia, negli occhi, nel naso e nella bocca di chi piagne, e non guasta pero ne altera una certa bellezza, che suol molto patire nel pianto da chi non sa valersi de l'arte', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, I, p. 207.

⁸ Hope, 'Lives of the Trecento Artists', p. 36.

⁹ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 105-6: 'ancora che egli avesse la vecchia maniera, tuttavolta si vede che e'tenne il modo et il lineamento della moderna'.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103: 'per dare i primi lumi all'arte della pittura', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, I, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115: 'egli solo, ancora che nato fra artefici inetti, con celeste dono, quella ch'era per mala via, resuscitò, e redusse ad una forma da chiamar buona', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, I, p. 71.

working, that [it does not appear to me inappropriate to confer on him the title of knowledgeable investigator of the new] manner of the moderns'.¹²

These examples from Part 1 indicate that Vasari's approach to early Renaissance art was essentially that of an historian, acknowledging the importance of artists who belonged to the Tuscan tradition and who paved the way for later artistic developments. As for Vasari's attitude towards Trecento art, his observations are positive when compared to what he says about pre-1300 art, and he singles out elements from some works of art for praise.

Turning now to the lives of Quattrocento artists, presented in Part 2 of the *Lives*: many passages continue to display the descriptive character found in Part 1, but Vasari provides more in the way of assessment in Part 2. For instance, in his presentation of the frescoes begun by Masolino in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, Vasari not only discusses the scenes in great detail but also examines them critically:

He painted there the shipwreck of the Apostles in the tempest, and the scene when St Peter is delivering his daughter Petronilla from sickness; and in the same scene [he and St John go] to the Temple, where, in front of the portico, there is the lame beggar asking for alms, and St Peter, not being able to give him either gold or silver, is delivering with the sign of the Cross. Throughout all that work the figures are made with very good grace, and they show grandeur in the manner, softness and harmony in the colouring, and relief and force in the draughtsmanship; the work was much esteemed [on account of] its novelty and [attention to detail].¹³

Similar descriptions are found in the biographies of other Quattrocento artists, including Masaccio,¹⁴ Paolo Uccello¹⁵ and Parri Spinelli.¹⁶ In each case, Vasari makes

¹² Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 131: 'quivi con giudicio straordinario modernamente operando, d'arte, d'invenzione, di proporzione e di giudizio...si dimostrò talmente eccellente e dagli altri maestri diverso, che mi pare che non se gli disconvenga il titolo d'accorto e di savio investigatore della nuova maniera moderna', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, I, p. 110

¹³ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 261-2: 'fecevi il tempestoso naufragio degli apostoli, e quando San Pietro libera da'l male Petronella sua figliuola e nella medesima storia quando egli e giovanni vanno al tempio, dove innanzi al portico e quel povero infermo che gli chiede la limosina, al quale non potendo dare ne oro, ne argento, col segno della croce lo libera; fatte le figure per tutta quell'opera con molta buona grazia, e datoli grandezza nella maniera, morbidezza et unione nel colorire e rilievo e forza nel disegno. La quale opera fu stimata molto per la novita sua e per l'osservanza di molti parti', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, II, p. 166; see also Previtali, *La fortuna*, pp. 3-7 ('Il Vasari e l'arte del passato: conoscenze e metodo'), at p. 6.

¹⁴ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 271-2, for Masaccio's frescoes in Santa Maria del Carmine.

comments about the artist's style, the use of colours and the attitudes of the figures depicted. These seem largely to be standard observations which do not necessarily reflect his own experience of the work or his artistic preferences.¹⁷ Nevertheless, they indicate the features which he felt his readers should look out for when viewing a Quattrocento painting.

One of the most relevant passages for our purposes comes in the biography of Filippo Lippi. Here, Vasari discusses the cycle of frescoes with stories from the life of St Stephen and St John the Baptist in Prato cathedral. Referring to the scene of the martyrdom and the funeral of St Stephen, Vasari remarks that 'in those who are burying St Stephen, [Lippi] made gestures so dolorous, and some faces so afflicted and broken with weeping that it is scarcely possible to look at them without being moved'.¹⁸ In contrast to the biographies from Part 1, where, as we have seen, Vasari described the emotions and attitudes of the painted figures without suggesting how viewers might respond to such compositions, in this case he anticipates the effect of the painting on viewers. This provides a hint that among the elements of Quattrocento religious paintings which Vasari appreciated was their ability to arouse feelings of piety and empathy in viewers – a notion which would later appear more explicitly in the Venetian writers Ridolfi and Boschini.

In his biographies of early Renaissance artists, Vasari offers more or less detailed accounts of their works, which he sometimes assesses critically, especially in Part 2. Occasionally, he expresses admiration for particular works; but rather than representing his own taste, most of his observations on earlier works of art refer to the beginnings of Italian painting and its later progress. One indicator of artistic progress in this period was the extent to which art works stirred religious feeling. An assessment of the colouring, draughtsmanship and manner in which artists depicted religious figures and subjects, rendered gestures, attitudes and facial expressions helped to determine the impact these

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 238-9, for Uccello's frescoes in Santa Maria Novella.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 263-4, for Spinelli's works in Arezzo.

¹⁷ We can assume this because we know that Vasari did not always have access to the works of art he included in his book. For instance, he wrote appreciatively about Giotto's frescoes in Assisi, singling out the *ordine, proporzione, vivezza* and *facilità*, even though he never saw them; see Hope, 'Lives of the Trecento Artists', p. 35 and n.1, and Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 121.

¹⁸ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 379: 'da far conoscere altrui quanto vaglia la invenzione del sapere esprimere gli affetti nelle pitture; il che si bene osservo costui, che in coloro che sotterrano Santo Stefano fece attitudini sì dolenti et alune teste si afflitte e dirotte al pianto, che e non è appena possibile di guardarle senza commuoversi?', and translation in Vasari, *Lives*, III, p. 85.

works had on the viewers and to identify the contribution of each early artist to advances in painting. So, while Venetian writers on art were keen to demonstrate the superiority of the city's artists by praising their achievements, Vasari's perspective was essentially historiographical,¹⁹ attempting to trace the origins and development of painting in Italy. The question of how much Vasari himself appreciated early Renaissance artists and how much he copied from earlier written sources is a complex and controversial one. Some scholars have suggested that Vasari relied heavily on such accounts, together with information provided by his contemporaries, which he then built on and expanded.²⁰ It is not always clear, moreover, whether the passages in praise of Trecento and early Quattrocento artists reflect Vasari's own view of their works or instead follow a pattern already established by his predecessors. As we have seen in the passages analysed above, there is a rich array of artistic terms associated with the works discussed in Vasari's book.²¹ Furthermore, in the third 'proemio' of his *Le vite*, Vasari introduces five qualities which he associates with architecture and painting: *regola*, *ordine*, *misura*, *disegno*²² and *maniera*²³ – which together constituted the *perfetta regola dell'arte*.²⁴ These five key concepts are not, however, explicitly

¹⁹ On Vasari's conception of history, see Kallab, *Vasaristudien*; Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 315-22 ('Visione storica generale del Vasari'); E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Chicago 1955, pp. 169-235 ('The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's "Libro": A Study on the Gothic Style in the Judgement of the Italian Renaissance'), at p. 169; Gombrich *Norm and Form*, pp. 1-10 ('The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress and its Consequences'); P. Barocchi, *Studi vasariani*, Turin 1984, pp. 157-70 ('L'antibiografia del secondo Vasari'); P. L. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven and London 1995. According to Z. Wazbinski, 'L'idée de l'histoire dans la première et la seconde édition des *Vies* de Vasari', in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, pp. 1-21, at p. 1, n. 1, Vasari envisaged three historical periods, corresponding to the development of the arts, which he imagined in terms of a biological metaphor: the incipient stage (between 1250 and 1400); the developmental period (from 1400 to 1500); and the apogee (between 1500 and 1550).

²⁰ See Hope, 'The Lives of the Trecento Artists'; see also Kallab, *Vasaristudien*, pp. 146, 436-7.

²¹ For an extensive discussion of Vasari's artistic vocabulary, including terms such as *unione*, *chiaro scuro*, *lume*, *morbido*, *imitazione*, *bizzarro*, *capriccioso*, see R. Le Mollè, *Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire*, Grenoble 1988. See also J. M. M. Garcia, *Giorgio Vasari y la formulación de un vocabulario artístico*, Málaga 2002.

²² See Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, pp. 29-72 ('Vasari's Concept of *Disegno*'). For Vasari's definition of *disegno*, see Vasari/Milanesi, I, ('Introduzione'). p. 168-9: 'Perchè il disegno, padre delle arti nostre, Architettura, Scultura e Pittura, procedendo dall'intelletto cava di molte cose un giudizio universale; simile a una forma ovvero idea di tutte le cose della natura, la quale è singolarissima nelle sue misure; di qui è che non solo nei corpi umani e degli animali, ma nelle piante ancora, e nelle fabbriche e sculture e pitture, conosce la proporzione che ha il tutto con le parti, e che hanno le parti fra loro e col tutto insieme.' Vasari then connects *disegno* to two other artistic expressions, *buona grazia* and *buona maniera*, which often crop up in his assessments of works of arts; see *ibid.*, pp. 172-3: 'i contorni delle figure; le quali dintornate come elle debbono, mostrano buona grazia e bella maniera.' See also S. Alpers, 'Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23, 1960, pp. 190-215, at p. 205.

²³ Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 539-44 ('Proemio alla terza parte delle *Vite*'), at p. 539: 'regola, ordine, misura, disegno e maniera'; these five terms come from Vitruvius; see Alpers, 'Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*', pp. 190 and 192; see also, D. Cast, 'Speaking of Architecture: The Evolution of a Vocabulary in Vasari, Jones and Sir John Vanbrugh', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 52, 1993, pp. 179-88.

²⁴ Vasari/Milanesi, IV, pp. 7-15 ('Proemio alla terza parte'), at p. 7: 'a giudicare con la perfetta regola dell'arte'.

used to assess any individual work of art mentioned in the book and only appear in combination in this ‘proemio’.²⁵ While twentieth-century art historians attached great importance to Vasari’s ‘aesthetic vision’ and the contribution of the artistic vocabulary in *Le vite* to the development of art criticism,²⁶ we do not know whether earlier readers of Vasari’s work interpreted it in this way.²⁷

In the following sections, I shall explore how Vasari’s followers and editors read the *Lives* and how they dealt with his views: did they, like him, focus on telling the history of Italian painting or, instead, expressed more of their own judgements and taste?

Vasari’s Editors (1647-1794)

During the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, four new editions of Vasari’s *Lives* appeared.²⁸ The first was edited by Carlo Manolessi and published in 1647 in Bologna.²⁹ This was followed by three later ones: Giovanni Bottari’s Roman edition of 1759;³⁰ Tommaso Gentili’s edition published from 1767 to 1772 in Livorno and dedicated to Peter Leopold of Hungary and Bohemia;³¹ and, finally, the edition of Guglielmo della Valle, published in Siena between 1791 and 1794.³² It is worth noting that these editions

²⁵ See n. 23 above.

²⁶ On Vasari’s ‘aesthetic vision’, see V. de Ruvo, ‘La concezione estetica di Giorgio Vasari’, in *Studi vasariani: Studi vasariani: atti del convegno internazionale per il IV centenario della prima edizione delle ‘Vite’ del Vasari*, Florence 1952, pp. 47-56; Schlosser, *La letteratura*, pp. 323-46 (‘Il punto di vista estetico e critico del Vasari’), and T. S. R. Boase, ‘The Critic’, in his *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book*, Princeton 1979, pp. 119-48, esp. 123-9, where he discusses Vasari’s use of terms such as *grazia*, *vaghezza*, *leggiadria*, *morbidezza*, *terribilità*, *fierezza* and *maniera*.

²⁷ That the third ‘Proemio’ in which Vasari discusses the five ‘concepts’ was omitted entirely from Tommaso Gentili’s edition of the *Vite* and replaced by the editor’s own ‘Prefazione’ in Guglielmo della Valle’s edition indicates that it was not always considered to be significant; see Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Guglielmo della Valle, 11 vols, V, Siena 1791-1794, pp. 1-20 (‘Prefazione’). I thank Professor Charles Hope for drawing my attention to this point.

²⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, I have decided to focus on these four editions. For other emendations to Vasari’s *Le vite* by authors such as Leopoldo del Migliore and Giulio Mancini, see P. Barocchi, ‘Le postille di Del Migliore alle Vite vasariane’, in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista: atti del Congresso Internazionale nel IV centenario della morte, Arezzo-Firenze, 2-8 settembre 1974*, Florence 1976, pp. 439-47, and E. Carrara, ‘Spigolature vasariane. Per un riesame delle “Vite” e della loro fortuna nella Roma di primo Seicento’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 54, 2010-2012, pp. 155-84.

²⁹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Carlo Manolessi, 4 vols, Bologna 1647.

³⁰ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Giovanni Bottari, 3 vols, Rome 1759-1760.

³¹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Tommaso Gentili, 7 vols, Livorno, 1767-1772.

³² See n. 27 above.

were all published outside Florence, which indicates that from the late seventeenth century onwards Italian publishers beyond the city also took an interest in disseminating the content of Vasari's *Lives*.

In my analysis of these editions, I shall attempt to identify the reasons for the proliferation of new editions of the *Lives*, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, considering, in particular, the innovations which they contained and asking whether these changes altered the original text and how they might have affected the way readers reacted to early Renaissance works of art. I shall concentrate on the notes which the editors added to the lives of artists from Cimabue to Raphael.

Carlo Manolessi's Edition (1647)

Seventy-nine years after the publication of the second edition of Vasari's *Lives*, a new edition appeared, which, however, received criticism from later editors.³³ It was edited by Carlo Manolessi and dedicated to Ferdinand II of Tuscany. Manolessi was born in Ancona and began his editorial activity in 1636.³⁴ His tasks included writing dedications and prefaces to readers, as well as inserting his own comments and additions into the books which he re-edited. Some of the most significant projects he was entrusted with included the reprinting of Ulisse Aldrovandi's works and the publication of scientific treatises by Galileo Galilei (fig. 70) and Luca Valerio (fig. 71).³⁵

The new edition of Vasari's *Lives* appears to be the only artistic work which Manolessi edited. As he announced in the preface, there was a great demand from the

³³ Manolessi's edition was considered to be inferior to Vasari's 1568 edition because of the poor quality of the paper, the portraits and the printing; see Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, I.1, p. 2: 'Questa edizione riuscita inferiore a quella de' Giunti, anche per la carta, e pel carattere, non ebbe la medesima riputazione'; and Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. 6: 'I ritratti deteriorati, la divisione dei tomi diversa da quella fatta e lodata da Giorgio nostro, e le postile indicanti soltanto nel margine cio che quegli dice nel testo, la carta inferiore a quella dei Giunti e il carattere da peggior madre derivato bastano a dichiararla con tutta ragione indegna del confronto.' Manolessi's edition nevertheless served as model for Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice* in terms of its structure and illustrations; see E. Cropper, 'A Plea for Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice*', in Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: Lives of the Bolognese Painters*, I: *Early Bolognese Painting*, ed. and transl. E. Cropper and L. Pericolo, London 2012, pp. 1-47, at p. 4.

³⁴ See D. Ruggerini, 'Carlo Manolessi', in *DBI*, LXIX, pp. 138-40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139: Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Ornithologiae hoc est de avibus historiae libri XII*, Bologna 1681; Galileo Galilei, *Opere*, 2 vols, Bologna 1656; and Luca Valerio, *De centro gravitatis solidorum*, Bologna 1661.

‘Università de’ Virtuosi’ for a reprint of Vasari’s book.³⁶ Therefore, in taking charge of the project, Manolesi’s main concern was to preserve the original form of the book together with the illustrations.³⁷ He published the *Lives* in three volumes (figs 72-74): the original volume one was divided into two separate volumes, the first containing Parts 1, 2 and some of Part 3, and the second the remainder of Part 3. While he did not alter the original text,³⁸ Manolesi added notes in the margins, summarizing the content of important passages.³⁹ He also supplied illustrations for the artists whose portraits Vasari had not provided such as Benvenuto Garofalo, Pietro Cavallini, Antonio da Coreggio and Giulio Clovio.⁴⁰ In the 1568 edition, Part 3 of Vasari’s *Lives* had taken up two of the three volumes, which were of unequal length and were divided into ‘vol. 2i’ and ‘vol. 2ii’; Manolesi equalized the length but retained the same sequence of the lives as in the 1568 edition, so that Part 3 still began with Leonardo.

The main novelty claimed by Manolesi was new and better indexes, in which various lists appeared continuously at the end of the third volume, rather than separately as in the second edition.⁴¹ The first was an alphabetical list of the names of all the artists mentioned by Vasari, as well as the new ones added by Manolesi.⁴² The second was an index of places, grouping together all the works found in each location.⁴³ Finally, he

³⁶ Vasari/Manolesi, *Le vite* (‘Carlo Manolesi a lettori’), pp. [vi-ix], at p. [vii]: ‘Son restato assicurato dalla molta dimanda, che se n’è fatta fin’ora dall’Università de’ Virtuosi.’ The Accademia degli Apatisti, formerly known as ‘Comunità di Virtuosi e Letterati’, was founded in 1631 in Florence.

³⁷Ibid.: ‘il disiderio di publicar queste Vite nella stessa forma in tutto col primo Originale, cioè co’ Ritratti medesimi e ornamenti, con cui furon stampate in Firenze da i Giunti l’anno 15[-]7.’

³⁸ Vasari/Manolesi, *Le vite*, pp. [vii-ix] (‘Carlo Manolesi a lettori’), at p. [vii]: ‘La frase; e ortografia è in tutto la stessa del Vasari.’

³⁹ Ibid.: ‘Hò procurato per maggior commodità, d’aggiungere le postile in margini, perche possa ciascheduno rinvenire più facilmente le cose notabili’. For a few examples of Manolesi’s annotations to the life of Cimabue, see *ibid.*, p. 4: ‘Lascia un lavoro imperfetto’, ‘Dipingo con molto disegno in Firenze nel chiostro di S. Spirito’, ‘Manda alcuni lavori ad Empoli’, ‘Lavora a tempera di un Christo in Croce in S. Francesco di Pisa’, ‘Morte di Cim. Lascia molti discipoli’. His annotations to the other biographies are of the same type.

⁴⁰ Ibid.: ‘ho aggiunti i Ritratti di Benvenuto Garofalo, Pietro Cavallini, Antonio da Correggio, D. Giulio Clovio, e altri che non capitano già mai al Vasari’.

⁴¹ Ibid.: ‘Ma la mia maggior fatica, e la più accurata diligenza si è stata intorno alle Tavole. Le ho primieramente unite tutte.’

⁴² Ibid., p. [viii]: ‘ho posto distintamente la parte, e la pagina, in cui dell’artefice si fa menzione, e questa è la prima, alla quale si sono aggiunti alcuni nomi trascurati nella passata edizione’.

⁴³ Ibid.: ‘Seconda Tavola, ch’è de luoghi ove si trovano l’opere de maestri’. In the original index, as Manolesi tells us, this was not done methodically; see *ibid.*: ‘Con avvertenza di procedere ordinatissimamente ponendo tutte le opere d’una chiesa sotto il suo titolo, il che non è stato osservato ne’ primi, ove si mettevano alcune Pitture d’un luogo, poi si parlava d’un’altro, e poscia al primiero si ritornava.’

reorganized the list of the notable matters in order to make it easier for the readers to consult.⁴⁴

Manolesi's main editorial effort thus consisted in supplying marginal notes, rearranging the organization of the volumes and improving the indexes. He did not add information about works of art; nor is there any evidence that he had first-hand knowledge of those discussed by Vasari. Apart from supplying the demand for a new printing of the *Lives*, the primary purpose of the edition seems to have been to pay tribute to 'the generosity and magnanimity of the house of the Medici under whose auspices the book was published'.⁴⁵

Giovanni Bottari's Edition (1759-1760)

It was more than one hundred years before another edition of Vasari's *Lives* was published. It was edited by the Florentine scholar, antiquarian and theologian Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (1689-1775) (fig. 75). Beginning his editorial activity in 1716, he was put in charge of the grand-ducal printing press in Florence and brought out many works such as Benedetto Averani's *Florentini Dissertationes* (1716-1717) and Galilei's *Opere* (1718).⁴⁶ He also supervised the publication of books about art, including the second edition of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* in 1730,⁴⁷ on which he collaborated with the Florentine collector and connoisseur Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri.⁴⁸

The importance of Bottari's new edition of Vasari's *Lives* was first acknowledged by modern scholarship in 1964, when Giovanni Previtali described 'Bottari as the first in modern times who felt the urge to restore the Vasarian foundations by editing and annotating the *Lives*'.⁴⁹ More recently, Paula Findlen has associated Bottari's enterprise with

⁴⁴ Ibid.: 'nè mi è stato grave replicar le stesse cose sotto diverse lettere per riuscire più ispedito, e più commodo al disiderio di chi ricerca'.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. [ix]: 'quella del Serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana, la magnanimità de' cui Antenati, e propria non ha già mai perdonato à spese eccessive per rendersi adorna di sì rare fatiche, e per pubblicare al secolo che la Serenissima Casa de Medici giustamente gode il famoso titolo di Vero Mecenate di queste nobilissime professioni'.

⁴⁶ G. Pignatelli, 'Giovanni Gaetano Bottari', in *DBI*, XIII, pp. 409-16, at p. 409.

⁴⁷ The first edition of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* was published in Florence in 1584.

⁴⁸ On Gabburri, see Chapter 8 below.

⁴⁹ See G. Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi*, p. 73: 'il Bottari abbia sentito il bisogno, primo nell'età moderna, di recuperare, come primo passo di quest'opera riscoperta, la base di partenza vasariana, facendosi editore ed annotatore delle *Vite*', and Frangenberg, 'The Limits of a Genre: Giovanni Bottari's Edition of Vasari's *Lives*

other eighteenth-century practices of recovering the artistic past, its history and origins.⁵⁰ His attempt to recuperate the past through Vasari's *Lives* grew out of the belief that the Renaissance of the arts in Florence had been conditioned by the art which preceded it.⁵¹ This was why he and his contemporaries supported the opening of a Christian museum adjacent to the Vatican Library under the patronage of Pope Benedict XIV.⁵² Both Lodovico Muratori and Scipione Maffei were advocates of this project, which materialized in 1757,⁵³ the year in which Giovanni Lami wrote his essay on the pre-1300 art.⁵⁴ It is against this background that we need to consider Bottari's edition of Vasari, which came out two years later.

Vasari's text was issued in three parts between 1759 and 1760 by the publishers Niccolò and Marco Pagliarini (figs 76-78). Each volume had a different dedicatee: the first to Charles Emmanuel, King of Sardinia (1751-1819), the second to Victor Amadeus, Duke of Savoy (1726-1796) and the third to Benedetto Maria Maurizio, Duke of Chablais (1741-1808). In the first dedication, Bottari (1689-1775) announced that in the edition he was presenting to King Charles Emmanuel he had corrected 'innumerable errors' and supplied the text 'with suitable annotations, needed to clarify matters in many places and to amplify the information'.⁵⁵

In this preface, Bottari goes through the previous editions of Vasari's *Lives*, pointing out their improvements as well as their drawbacks, before justifying his own editorial work.⁵⁶ He begins with a short account of the 1550 edition, mentioning that it was published in two volumes in Florence by Lorenzo Torrentino, in a beautiful font, but that it was less detailed than the second edition, having no illustrations and containing fewer and

(1759-1760)', in K. Burzer, C. Davis, S. Feser and A. Nova, eds, *Le vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione*, Venice 2010, pp. 293-300, at p. 293.

⁵⁰ P. Findlen, 'The 2012 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Eighteenth-Century Invention of the Renaissance: Lessons from the Uffizi', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 66, 2013, pp. 1-34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵² Bottari mentioned this idea in the preface to his anthology of texts, *Sculture e pitture*, III, p. XVII: 'sarebbe una delle più insigni meraviglie del Mondo'; see C. Gauna, *La storia pittorica di Luigi Lanzi: arti, storia e musei nel Settecento*, Florence 2003, p. 20, and p. 45, on the notion of a 'museo sacro'.

⁵³ Findlen, 'Lessons from the Uffizi', p. 15.

⁵⁴ Giovanni Lami, *Dissertazione...relativa ai pittori e scultori che fiorirono dal 1000 al 1300*, Florence 1792; for a detailed discussion on Lami's text and an English translation, see B. Cole, 'Art Historians and Art Critics – X: Giovanni Lami's *Dissertazione*', *The Burlington Magazine*, 115, 1973, pp. 452-7.

⁵⁵ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, p. IV: 'per presentarle umilmente un'Opera tanto celebre e stimata, ora corretta da me, per quanto ho potuto, da innumerabili errori, e corredata di Annotazioni opportune, e necessarie per ischiarirla in molti luoghi, e per ampliarne le notizie'.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. IX-XVII ('L'autore di questa edizione a'cortesi lettori').

shorter biographies.⁵⁷ Moving on to the 1568 edition, Bottari writes that it was published in three volumes, contained illustrations and was much fuller.⁵⁸ Later on he says that because the two editions were no longer available for purchase in the seventeenth century, a new editor, Carlo Manolessi decided to produce a revised edition. The changes made by Manolessi consisted of a new division of the volumes and the addition of marginal comments. Bottari, however, judges that this edition was inferior to the second one, since it was marred by mistakes and in some places lacked entire pages.⁵⁹

Bottari's views on Vasari's work were informed by Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice*, Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie dell'arte*, Giovanni Baglione's *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti*,⁶⁰ Cinelli's edition of Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, Giuseppe Richa's *Notizie istoriche delle chiese di Firenze*,⁶¹ Filippo Titi's *Ammaestramento utile e curioso di pittura, scultura e architettura nelle chiese di Roma*⁶² and Antonio Massini's *Bologna perlustrata*,⁶³ as he states in the preface.⁶⁴ He also lists all the innovative features of his edition. In the first place, he decided to commission new illustrations which required a different technique: instead of woodcuts, he preferred copperplate engravings.⁶⁵ The reason for this change, he explained, was that in the absence of a modern equivalent of earlier engravers such as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Ugo da Carpi (c. 1480-1520/1532), Antonio da Trento (1508-1550), Andrea Andreani (1558/1559-1629) and Bartolomeo Coriolano (1590/1599-1676), the only way to match the quality of the original illustrations was to resort to copperplate engravings and to find two Italian printmakers whose work would best fulfil his intentions.⁶⁶ Thus, while the same portraits

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. IX-X: 'queste sue Vite in due tomi in Firenze l'anno 1550, senza nome di stampatore...vedendosi chiaramente dalla bellezza, e forma de' caratteri, essere stato il *Torrentino*. Questa edizione fu più scarsa di quella, che ne fece dopo, essendovi meno Vite, e le Vite per lo più essendovi più brevi, e mancandovi i ritratti che si veggono nella seconda.'

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. X: 'la seconda, la quale fu fatta pure in Firenze l'anno 1568 da Giunti in tre tomi, ornata de' detti ritratti, e più copiosa.'

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 'sono i molti errori, che scorsero nell'edizione de' *Giunti*, e molto più in quella del *Manolessi*, dove qualche volta si è trovato mancare una pagina intera.'

⁶⁰ Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, e architetti*, Rome 1642.

⁶¹ Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese di Firenze*, 4 vols, Florence 1754.

⁶² Filippo Titi, *Ammaestramento utile e curioso di pittura, scultura et architettura nelle chiese di Roma*, 12 vols, Rome 1686.

⁶³ Antonio Masini, *Bologna perlustrata*, Bologna 1650. See

⁶⁴ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, p. XII: 'A questo fine mi sono servito del Malvasia, del Ridolfi, del Baglioni &c. e del Cinelli, e dell'erudito, e diligente P. Richa, del Titi, del Masini &c.'

⁶⁵ The prints were made by Francesco Bartolozzi and Antonio Capellani; see C. M. Goguel, 'Revival Vasariano', in K. Burzer, C. Davis, S. Feser and A. Nova, eds, *Le vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione*, Venice 2010, pp. 301-16, at p. 307.

⁶⁶ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, pp. XIV-XV: 'i ritratti non intagliati in legno ma bensì in rame, e da due de' buoni professori, che ora si trovino in Italia...tanto più che ora non ci è un *Alberto Duro*, un *Ugo da Carpi*, un *Antonio*

were kept, they were reproduced in a larger scale.⁶⁷ Another advantage, as Bottari informs us, of the new illustrations was that they were printed on folios which were separate from the text and could therefore circulate independently of the book.⁶⁸ This change enhanced the function of the prints, making them collectable and the visual equivalent of writings on famous men.⁶⁹

In the last part of the preface, Bottari defends Vasari from the attacks of non-Florentine writers. Rebutting their complaints about this Florentine *campanilismo*, he maintains that Vasari praised not just Florence but the whole of Tuscany, promoting the features on account of which this region surpassed all others in terms of artistic achievement.⁷⁰

Like Manolessi, Bottari, too, redid Vasari's indexes. His edition had four lists: notable matters (incorporating Vasari's index of notable places), the names of the artists, the names of everyone mentioned in the book and works of art.⁷¹ Most of his annotations involved adding information about works of art which were lost or had been moved to new locations and about their condition after restoration or reproduction in the form of prints. This can be seen in the first volume, which includes biographies from Cimabue to Luca Signorelli (the same as the first volume of the 1568 edition). In the life of Cimabue, for instance, Bottari adds notes stating that the artist's representation of St Francis was still in good condition in his day,⁷² and that the crucifix in San Francesco in Pisa appeared as if it

da Trento, un Andrea Andreasso da Mantova, un Bartolommeo Coriolano Bolognese, e simili intagliatori. Although Bottari does not identify the engravers who printed the artists' portraits, the one of Vasari has the name of the engraver printed on the left: 'Antonius Gregori'; there is no indication, however, in the other portraits of the second engraver.

⁶⁷ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, p. XV: 'si sono ingranditi in maniera'.

⁶⁸ Ibid.: 'chi vorrà provvedersi di questi ritratti senza il libro, il potrà fare, e lo stampatore è pronto a dargli a chi gli vorrà'. They were grouped under the title of *Nuova raccolta di ritratti dei pittori*; see Goguel, 'Revival Vasariano', p. 307

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Giovanni Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (Paris 1520), ed. L. Brewer Hall, Gainesville 1962; Francesco Petrarca, *De viris illustribus*, ed. C. Malta, Messina 2008; and Paolo Giovio, *Elogi degli uomini illustri* (1546), ed. F. Minonzo, Turin 2006; see also S. Gregory, *Vasari and the Renaissance Print*, Farnham 2012, pp. 63-131, esp. pp. 83-6.

⁷⁰ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, p. XVII: 'Parebbe convenevole il difendere il Vasari dai morsi molto fieri, d'alcuni Scrittori non Toscani, che l' hanno tacciato almeno almeno d'appassionato, e passando anche innanzi d'invidioso, e di maligno, perchè ha narrato molte più Vite, e opere di Fiorentini, che di forestieri.'

⁷¹ Ibid., p. XVI: 'È vero, ch'egli inoltre fa la tavola de' luoghi, dove sono le opere qui descritte, ma questa sarà compresa nell'Indice delle cose notabili.'

⁷² Ibid., p. 2, n. 1: 'Questo ritratto è anche oggi ben conservato, ed è posto sull'altare della cappella di S. Francesco.'

had just been painted.⁷³ In a note about Andrea Tafi's *Christ on the Cross* in San Giovanni, Bottari writes that while Cinelli criticized the way in which Tafi rendered the hands of Christ, Baldinucci praised the work.⁷⁴ He thus makes it clear that two contemporary writers, who were both promoting Florentine art, had different perceptions of the same work.⁷⁵ Bottari does not, however, tell readers what he himself thinks about Tafi's painting; and most of the time he does not venture to make attributions. Even though he was a very knowledgeable amateur of art, he chose to offer readers the opinions of other writers rather than his own.⁷⁶

One of Bottari's main concerns was reporting on matters of conservation and restoration. In his notes to the life of Giotto, for example, he assesses of the colouring of his frescoes, as well as indicating which of his works are no longer extant.⁷⁷ On many occasions, he expresses regret at the loss of several works, including some by Masaccio⁷⁸ and Andrea del Castagno.⁷⁹ He also laments and criticizes the fact that many of these works have not been reproduced in the form of prints in order to allow posterity to appreciate

⁷³ Ibid., p. 2, n. 4: 'Questo crocifisso più grande del naturale appeso pendente sopra la porta interiore della chiesa par dipinto pochi anni fa.'

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 31, n. 1: 'Questo Cristo fu criticato dal Cinelli nelle Bellezze di Firenze a c. 30 per avergli Andrea fatto le braccia, e le mani aperte, ma la mano destra col dito grosso dalla parte di sopra, e la sinistra dalla parte di sotto della mano. Ma il Baldinucci Dec 1. a c. 31. lo difende benissimo'; see Bocchi/Cinelli, *Le bellezze*, p. 30: 'Fece poi egli solo il Cristo d'altezza di sette braccia, che è sopra la cappella maggiore, nella qual opera fece quel magnifico spropositone, d'effigiargli una mano a rovescio: ma si vede nondimeno compatire, perchè il disegno era alor rozzo, e rinascete di fresco, e non aveva ancora ripreso il vigore d'oggi giorno', and Baldinucci, *Notizie*, I, pp 75-6: 'Fin qui l'autore, il quale nell'affermar tal cosa molto s'ingannò, perchè qualunque professore di quest'arti, che osserverà quella mano, chiaramente riconoscerà non esser ella altrimenti stata fatta a rovescio, ma a dritto; ani con molto ingegnoso avvedimento dell'artefice... Che poi la mano sinistra, che è quella che dall'autore è stata creduta a rovescio, sia fatta vedere dalla parte di fuori, la destra dalla parte di dentro, il conosce il professore dell'arte; perchè, dove la destra ha il pollice dalla parte di sopra il muscolo o monte del pollice eminente su la palma, la quale chiaramente si vede incavata, le piegature degli articoli inclinate all'indietro; la mano sinistra ha il pollice dalla parte di sotto, che non ha muscolo o monte, ma sta appiccato al carpo della mano in veduta dalla parte di fuori; e questa parte di fuori non è incavata, ma gonfia; nè si vedono le piegature dele dita, ma le nocca.' The painting is not mentioned by Bocchi in the original edition of *Le bellezze*.

⁷⁵ One explanation for the difference of opinion between the two writers is that while Baldinucci sought to defend Vasari, as well as to promote earlier artists, Cinelli, in his attempt to update Bocchi's guidebook, was more critical attitude towards earlier artists; see Chapter 6, pp. 143-5 above.

⁷⁶ See A. Gambuti, 'La quarta edizione delle Vite', in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, pp. 83-91, at p. 86.

⁷⁷ Seven out of the nine notes to Giotto's biography deal with such matters; see Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, p. 42, n. 2, and n. 3; p. 43, n. 1; p. 44, n. 1; p. 47, n. 1; p. 48, n. 1, n. 2 and n. 3; p. 59, n. 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 237, n. 1: 'L'un danno non abbastanza deplorabile, che quasi tutte le pitture di Masaccio qui addietro numerate sieno perdute.'

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 360, n. 3: 'Questa pittura nel 1693 fu gettata a terra, come narra il Baldinucci Dec. 3. part 1 del sec 5 a c. 92 facendone gran lamenti, ma vani, perchè chi non intende e crede d'intendere il pregio delle belle opere, non cura questi lamenti, e tira avanti a guastare e demolire e far ritoccare.'

‘the progress of art’.⁸⁰ This statement reflects his awareness of the importance of prints as a means of documenting and recovering lost works, as well as his understanding of the way painting had developed over the centuries.⁸¹ Approximately 400 of his notes concern prints, which were based on his access to a vast amount of visual material: he was librarian of the Corsini library in Rome and assembled the Corsini collection of 300 volumes of prints.⁸² As Ingrid R. Vermeulen has pointed out,⁸³ Bottari’s unfulfilled project was to illustrate the artistic past and the progress of the arts through prints representing at least one work after every artist from Cimabue to Raphael.⁸⁴ That he chose Raphael as the last artist whose works he intended to illustrate is particularly significant: he wanted to illustrate artistic advances from the earliest attempts to the perfection obtained by Raphael. If this project had been carried forward, it would have added a new dimension to Vasari’s *Lives*, merging two traditions, the textual and the visual, which dealt with the history and progress of art.⁸⁵

Bottari often writes about the Settecento as a period of artistic regression, describing the works produced at that time as ‘monstrous’.⁸⁶ His reasons for taking this view, however, were not the same as Zanetti’s for Venice.⁸⁷ The cause of the decline, according to Bottari, was not a lack of talented artists, but rather that they practised an incorrect method of studying, which consisted in copying the drawings and paintings of their masters and which, he believed, did not allow artists to make any innovations or

⁸⁰ Bottari also refers to works by Domenico Ghirlandaio and to those by Simone Martini in Santa Maria Novella; see *ibid.*, p. 433, n. 1: ‘È propriamente un danno, che tutte queste storie non sieno state intagliate, si per vedere il progresso di quest’arte’, and p. 102, n. 2: ‘Sarebbe stato desirabile, che fossero state intagliate in rame diligentemente queste, ed altre pitture secolo per secolo delle più celebri, e meglio conservate, perchè si vedesse il progresso, che fece la pittura.’ As Frangenberg argues, Bottari’s concern with printed reproductions of works of art was in line with other eighteenth-century enterprises, including his own work for Cardinal Neri Corsini; see Frangenberg, ‘The Limits of a Genre’, p. 297.

⁸¹ See Gambuti, ‘La quarta edizione’, p. 86.

⁸² For more information about the print collection of the Corsini family, see G. Mariani and E. Antetomaso, eds, *La collezione del principe: da Leonardo a Goya: disegni e stampe della raccolta Corsini*, Rome 2004.

⁸³ I. R. Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History: The Rise of the Illustrated History of Art in the Eighteenth Century*, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 19-91 (‘Unfulfilled Projects to Illustrate Vasari. Bottari, Corsini’s Print Collection and the Rise of Art-Historical Illustration’), at p. 20. She suggests that Bottari could have consulted Corsini’s collection of prints in order to pursue his project.

⁸⁴ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, I, p. 182, n. 1: ‘Sicchè sarebbe un’opera utilissima, e immortale chi facesse intagliare d’ogni pittore una figura, o un’istoria delle più conservate, e più notabili, de’quali il Vasari qui scrive la vita, o fa particolar menzione, cominciando da Cimabue. Non dico di tutti, ma di quelli, che andarono migliorando l’arte fino a Raffaello.’

⁸⁵ Vermeulen gives a number of examples of the ‘visualisation of artistic progress’ in Italian, French and English collections of prints; see Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History*, pp. 22-7.

⁸⁶ Bottari, *Dialoghi sopra le tre arti del disegno* (Lucca 1754), Parma 1845, p. 51: ‘tante opere mostruose’; see also Gambuti, ‘La quarta edizione’, p. 91. Bottari also discusses the theme of artistic decline in his preface to Borghini’s *Il Riposo*.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 4, pp. 78-9 above.

stylistic progress.⁸⁸ This idea, originally articulated by Vasari,⁸⁹ was embraced and expanded by Bottari.

Bottari presented Vasari's work in a new light. His antiquarian approach led him, like Vasari, to discuss the origins of Florentine art; and, in an attempt to recuperate the art of the past, he touched on issues such as the conservation and restoration of early works of art, raising awareness of the importance both of their preservation and their reproduction in prints. He consolidated and updated the information through bibliographical references and well-documented notes. In compiling his careful and knowledgeable descriptions of the condition of the works of art discussed by Vasari, Bottari had help, he tells us, from the Florentine painter Ignazio Hugford, who offered him notes about Florentine artists.⁹⁰

Tommaso Gentili's Edition (1767-1772)

Another new and updated edition of Vasari's *Lives* was published in Livorno from 1767 to 1772 in seven volumes (fig. 79). The editor was a Florentine painter, Tommaso Gentili (1704-1784),⁹¹ whose aim was to provide a carefully revised and corrected text along with portraits of good quality.⁹² He was aided in this enterprise by the Aretine scholar, Giovanni Francesco de' Giudici (1711-1769), who provided information, particularly on artists and

⁸⁸ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, III, p. 318, n. 1: 'la cagione, perché la pittura e la scultura sieno al presente in tanta decadenza. Non è la cagione come credono alcuni, la mancanza de' Mecenati...né la mancanza dei talenti...né altra causa simile; ma il modo d'insegnare de' moderni, i quali fanno studiare i loro scolari sui disegni, e le opere proprie, cioè se gli fanno andar dietro; e però non passano mai loro avanti'; see also Gambuti, 'La quarta edizione', p. 89, n. 23.

⁸⁹ See the life of Mino da Fiesole, in Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 422: 'Quando gli artefici nostri non cercano altro nelle opere ch'è fanno che imitare la maniera del loro maestro o d'altro eccellente...non possono arrivare con questo solo a la perfezzione dell'arte, avvengachè manifestissimamente si vede che rare volte si passi a chi si camina dietro.'

⁹⁰ Vasari/Bottari, *Le vite*, III, pp. IX-X ('Proemio dell'editore'): 'Varie cose circa l'opere de' nostri artefici Fiorentini, che non mi sovvenivano per essere da più trenta anni, che manco da Firenze, me le ha suggerite il signor Ignazio Hugford, accreditato pittore di quella città, nella quale è acclamato per uno de' primi nella sua professione.'

⁹¹ I have not been able to find any information about Gentili's life or activity as a painter. He signs the introduction to his edition of Vasari's *Lives* as 'Pittore e Maestro di disegno delle Nobili Guardie Marine di S.A.R.' and 'curatore dell'edizione'; see Giovanni Francesco de' Giudici, *Estratto delle vite de' pittori di Giorgio Vasari per ciò che concerne Arezzo*, ed. M. Melani, Florence 2005, pp. 9-20, ('Giovanni Francesco de' Giudici), at p. 19, esp. n. 43.

⁹² Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, I.1, p. VII: 'Debbo inoltre avvertire che questa edizione è stata da me riveduta con tutta l'attenzione ed esattezza possibile, ed è corredata di Ritratti ben'intagliati.' The portraits were etched by Tommaso Piroli, who also engraved d'Agincourt's *Histoire de l'art*; see Vermeulen, 'From Print Collecting into Art-Historical Illustration', in *Picturing Art History*, pp. 59-90, at p. 59.

monuments from Arezzo.⁹³ De' Giudici was brought up in a Jesuit convent under the guidance of the Latinist friar Girolamo Lagomarsini.⁹⁴ From 1747, he was in charge of the archive of the Cathedral of Arezzo, recording all the documents and ordering them chronologically.⁹⁵ He also frequented the literary circle of the Accademia dei Forzati in Arezzo, of which he became a member before 1750, and was acquainted with *litterati* who were in contact with Giovanni Bottari and Lodovico Muratori.⁹⁶ De' Giudici's publications include letters and annotated editions, for instance, of Giovanni Rondinelli's *Relazione sopra lo stato antico e moderno della città di Arezzo l'anno MDLXXXIII* and of Vasari's *Ragionamenti*.⁹⁷ He left two unpublished manuscripts: *Memorie della città di Arezzo* and *Alcune memorie della città di Arezzo*. Given his knowledge of the history of Arezzo and his previous editorial experience, especially on Vasari, de' Giudici was an obvious choice to collaborate with Gentili on his new edition of Vasari's *Lives*.⁹⁸

The first part of volume I includes biographies from Cimabue to Andrea Tafi. The new material in this volume is not as extensive as in Bottari's. For instance, there is only one addition to the life of Cimabue, in which Gentili informs us that an altarpiece depicting the Virgin and Child in San Pancrazio had been moved from the choir into the monastery after its restoration.⁹⁹ The few notes which Gentili added to the subsequent biographies mostly contain historical information. So, for example, in the life of Arnolfo di Cambio, he inserted notes on the history of the Palazzo del Comune, the campanile and the main cathedral in Arezzo;¹⁰⁰ and in two notes in the lives of Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano, he

⁹³ Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, I.1, p. VII: 'Ell'è finalmente arricchita di più e varie note comunicate dal Sig. Cav. Gio. Francesco de' Giudici d'Arezzo, soggetto molto erudito e benemerito della sua Patria'; see also Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 334.

⁹⁴ See Melani, *Estratto delle vite*, pp. 9-20 ('Giovanni Francesco de' Giudici'), at p. 12.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹⁷ Vasari, *Ragionamenti sopra le invenzioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel Palazzo delle loro altezze serenissime etc. insieme con la invenzione della pittura da lui cominciata nella cupola etc.*, second edition, Arezzo 1762.

⁹⁸ Schlosser suggested that the Florentine painter and collector Ignazio Hugford (1703-1778) also contributed to Gentili's edition: Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 334; however, he did not substantiate this claim, and Hugford's name does not crop up in the edition. Margherita Melani drew attention to Hugford's role as a painter, collector and merchant, as well as to his contributions on Florentine painters to Bottari's edition of Vasari's *Lives*: Melani, *Estratto delle vite*, p. 20, and esp. n. 48. Nevertheless, since Gentili took over Bottari's preface and notes, which he always distinguished from his own (fig. 80), Hugford presumably had some indirect input into Gentili's edition.

⁹⁹ Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, I.1, p. 236, n.1: 'Ancora per la Chiesa de' Vallombrosiani di S. Pancrazio fece una tavola rappresentante Nostra Signora col Bambino in collo...servita anticamente per la Tavola dell'altar maggiore: Questo quadro dopo la moderna restraurazione di detta Chiesa, fu rimosso dal Coro, e collocata dentro nel Monastero.'

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 246, n. 2; p. 249, n. 3 and p. 253, n. 2.

provided descriptions of the main altar in the cathedral of Arezzo.¹⁰¹ Gentili's notes also contain quotations and inscriptions taken from works such as Lodovico Muratori's *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*¹⁰² and Giovanni Rondinelli's *Note alla descrizione d'Arezzo*.¹⁰³ As Margherita Melani has shown, the notes in the first volume concerning the history of monuments in Arezzo were predominantly based on the two unpublished manuscripts by de' Giudici.¹⁰⁴ She has also shown that de' Giudici sent his comments to Gentili between 1765 and 1768 and that they did not refer to artists after Luca Signorelli,¹⁰⁵ which suggests that Gentili himself added the notes to later biographies. While de' Giudici's notes mainly record inscriptions and contain historical information about buildings and monuments, those by Gentili are more oriented towards the artists and their works.

The second part of volume I continues with biographies from Gaddo Gaddi to Lorenzo di Bicci; and here again the notes concerning Arezzo, based on information from de' Giudici, provide instructive historical information.¹⁰⁶ There are also notes referring to works of art which are no longer extant,¹⁰⁷ or have been replaced by modern ones,¹⁰⁸ Even though his notes are not as abundant as Bottari's,¹⁰⁹ Gentili's additions are an important attempt to make readers aware of lost works from the past. The recording of dates and inscriptions was part of this process of recovery.

On rare occasions in these volumes, Gentili comments in his notes on the artistic quality of paintings, but only with regard to those by late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento painters.¹¹⁰ For instance, he describes Filippo Lippi's paintings as beautiful and

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 269, n. 2 and p. 273, n. 2.

¹⁰² Lodovico Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, V, Milan 1724.

¹⁰³ Giovanni Rondinelli, *Relazione sopra lo stato antico e moderno della città di Arezzo*, 8 vols, Arezzo 1755.

¹⁰⁴ Melani, *Estrato delle vite*, pp. 9-20, at p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., the notes on Aretine churches in the lives of Margaritone and Giotto: Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, I.2, p. 294, n. 2; p. 297, n. 4; p. 307, n. 2; p. 321, n. 2.

¹⁰⁷ See the notes to the life of Spinello Aretino: *ibid.*, I.2, p. 485, n. 2, p. 490, n. 1, and p. 494, n. 2.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Simone Martini's frescoes in the Palazzo della Signoria in Siena: *ibid.*, I.2, p. 406, n. 1: 'Le pitture di questo Capitolo non esistono, essendo stato modernato.' Another example is Taddeo Gaddi's stories of the life of St Sebastian in San Agostino in Arezzo; *ibid.*, I.2, p. 425, n. 1: 'Queste opere egregie in S. Agostino in Arezzo furono già ricoperte di bianco.'

¹⁰⁹ E.g., in the biographies of Lorenzo Monaco, Taddeo Bartoli and Lorenzo di Bicci, Gentili made no updates at all; *ibid.*, I.2, pp. 509-25.

¹¹⁰ These praises are also found in his notes to volume III: see, e.g., life of Fra Bartolomeo in Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, III, pp. 107-9, n. 2: 'Questo veramente bellissimo quadro è ora passato nella galleria dell'Eminentissimo Sig. Card. Corsini, dove è una gran raccolta di superbissime pitture. Rappresenta una Madonna ginocchioni, che tiene il bambino Gesu, che accarezza S. Giovannino, ed evvi s. Giuseppe appoggiato in atto di osservare le carezze, che si fanno questi due Santi Fanciulli. È stupendo il profilo della ss. Vergine, e il suo panneggiamento nobile, e ampio, e che termina con una naturalezza indicibile. Un velo,

well preserved;¹¹¹ and he says that Carpaccio's stories of St Ursula are 'so beautiful that they seemed to be made by Giorgione'.¹¹² Such annotations are, however, far outweighed by the majority of notes, which treat works of art from a historical point of view.

Guglielmo della Valle's Edition (1791-1794)

At the beginning of his studies on Sieneese art, *Lettere senesi*,¹¹³ the Franciscan friar Guglielmo della Valle (1745-1805) announced his intentions to produce a new edition of Vasari's *Lives*. Della Valle was brought up in an ecclesiastical environment and held important offices in Rome, including that of superior priest in the church of Santi Apostoli in Rome.¹¹⁴ During his travels through various cities in Italy, he became acquainted with other writers on art such as Alessandro da Morona and Luigi Lanzi,¹¹⁵ whose works he drew on for his own research. Although he did not claim to be able to offer a better alternative, della Valle nevertheless regarded a new and improved edition as necessary.¹¹⁶ He was critical of the Florentines Baldinucci and Bottari for their *campanilismo*,¹¹⁷ as well as for distorting the facts;¹¹⁸ but della Valle also held strong views about other writers: 'Leonardo is profound, Lomazzo enlightens, Borghini sends readers to sleep, Bellori is interesting and Zanetti is convincing.'¹¹⁹ He may have found Borghini unsatisfactory because he simply rehearsed, in briefer form, what Vasari had said without necessarily arguing against it, while the authors about whom he is more positive were polemical, challenging and disagreeing with Vasari's

che copre la testa e le spalle, e d'una delicatezza, e trasparenza tale, che non pare, che l'arte possa arrivare a tanto.'

¹¹¹ Vasari/Gentili, *Le vite*, II.2, p. 488, n.1: 'Questa tavola bellissima e benissimo conservata...'

¹¹² Ibid., p. 549, n. 1: 'tanto belli che paiono di Giorgione'.

¹¹³ Guglielmo della Valle, *Lettere senesi sopra le belle arti*, 3 vols, Venice 1782-1786, containing notes, letters and biographies of Sieneese artists from Duccio to Bernardino Mei.

¹¹⁴ G. Previtali, 'Guglielmo della Valle', *Paragone*, 1956, pp. 3-12, at p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Della Valle, *Lettere senesi*, II, p. 23: 'non impreda io a farne una edizione migliore'.

¹¹⁷ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, pp. I-LXII ('Prefazione dell'edizione sanese'), at p. XIX: 'Il Baldinucci patisce del male di soverchio filopatrismo'.

¹¹⁸ Della Valle, *Lettere senesi*, II, p. 23: 'Baldinucci, Bottari e gli altri che scrissero sopra Vasari non fecero, che maggiormente imbrogliare le cose'.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: 'Leonardo e profondo, Lomazzo erudisce, Borghini addormenta, Bellori interessa, e Zanetti convince.' He refers to Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura*, Paris 1651; Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Idea del tempio della pittura*, Bologna 1600; Raffaello Borghini, *Il riposo*, Florence 1584; Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, Rome 1672; and Zanetti, *Descrizione or Della pittura*.

views on the Florentine origins of Italian painting.¹²⁰ Della Valle, too, belonged to this category of polemical writers and, as we shall see, his edition of Vasari's *Lives* provides a good illustration of this phenomenon.

Della Valle's edition was published from 1791 to 1794 in eleven volumes (fig. 81). Taking the 1568 edition as his starting-point, della Valle, in a lengthy preface, outlines various improvements he has made. In the first instance, unlike Vasari, he has decided to number each volume individually.¹²¹ Furthermore, while maintaining the initial order of the biographies, he has paid tribute to Vasari by placing his biography before all the other lives;¹²² but instead of writing a *laudatio*, della Valle decided to begin Vasari's biography with a specially commissioned print by Giovanni Battista Leonetti after a design by Giuseppe Cades, representing a bust of him, placed on a plinth with a putto on its right side (fig. 82).¹²³ Della Valle also replaced the initial portraits of the artists with a new set of prints, which in his view were 'better and fresher'.¹²⁴ These new portraits have a more stylized appearance than the originals and are no longer inscribed within an oval, but surrounded by decorative ribbons and grotesques and surmounted by fantastic creatures (figs 83-6).

Della Valle then discusses previous editions of Vasari's *Lives*, pointing out errors committed by their editors.¹²⁵ He, for instance, says that Bottari was wrong to claim that the publisher's name does not appear on the original edition and corrects other writers who attributed the 1550 edition to Giunti and the 1568 edition to Torrentino or who assigned the prints to the wrong printmaker.¹²⁶ These are not very substantial criticisms and suggest that della Valle was looking for faults to justify his own efforts.

¹²⁰ E.g., Bellori, *Le vite*, ed. Borea, p. 6, took a different position from Vasari and his followers: 'e quelli stessi che riprendono Giorgio Vasari per avere accumulato e con eccessive lodi inalzato li Fiorentini e Toscani, cadono anch'essi nell'errore', in In Venice, too, writers such as Boschini and especially Zanetti adopted a critical attitude towards some of their predecessors: see Chapters 3 and 4 above.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. III: 'Noi numereremo ogni volume da per se.'

¹²² Ibid., p. IV: 'Lascieremo al luogo loro le vite, toltane quella del Vasari a cui se il modesto Autore diede l'ultimo luogo, noi interpretando i voti del pubblico e della fama, gli assegneremo il primo, e senza ripetere le stesse cosa terra il luogo di elogio dell'Autore, di cui presentiamo il bel ritratto nel frontespizio.' Vasari's biography is at pp. 1-61.

¹²³ Ibid., p. IV: 'e senza ripetere le stesse cose terrà il luogo di elogio dell'Autore, di cui presentiamo il bel ritratto nel frontespizio'.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. VIII: 'li daremo anche migliori de' precedenti e più freschi'.

¹²⁵ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I ('Prefazione dell'edizione sanese'), pp. I-LXII.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. I: 'Errò in conseguenza Mgr Bottari nel proemio alla sua edizione scrivendo che "il Vasari diede da prima alla luce queste sue vite in due tomi in Firenze l'anno 1550 senza nome di stampatore". E in più grande errore cade chi in una nota al museo Fiorentino de' Ritratti de' pittori (Firenze 1752, tom I) asserisce che le vite furono stampate in tre volumi per i Giunti nel 1568, ristampate poi con aggiunta dal Torrentino in due volumi in 4 senza i ritratti. Un altro errore è da correggersi nel catalogo della Slusiana (Rom. 1690, p. 644), in

Della Valla also comments on Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie*, as well as the annotations to it by Domenico Maria Manni and Pietro Giovanni Piacenza.¹²⁷ One of the criticisms which he levels against Baldinucci is that he 'suffered from excessive patriotism'.¹²⁸ Elsewhere he claims that Bottari shared a similar prejudice; and he suggests that, rather than indulging his Florentine *campanilismo*, he should have acknowledged the importance of other schools of painting from Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy.¹²⁹ Della Valle also objects to the high price of 15 *scudi* for Bottari's edition,¹³⁰ despite the good quality of the paper and printing. Against Vasari's view of the pre-eminence of Florentine art (supported by Borghini, Baldinucci, Marco Lastrì¹³¹ and Bottari), della Valle presents Pisa and Siena as alternative centres, which also produced artists who managed to 'revive' painting; and he supports this opinion by referring to Ranieri Tempesti's *Discorso accademico sull'istoria letteraria pisana* and Alessandro da Morrona's *Pisa illustrata*, both published in 1787.¹³² According to della Valle, the Pisan school was a model for the Siennese one, which in turn shaped the style of Florentine painters.¹³³

At the end of his preface, della Valle presents two accounts: one of the Siennese and Pisan schools of painting and the other of the Florentine school. In the first, he lists five reasons why he decided to treat Pisa, Siena and Florence separately: their different types of government, their rivalry, their artistic differences, the distinctive contributions of Siennese

cui questa prima edizione del Vasari dicesi fatta nel 1556. E finalmente da notarsi lo sbaglio del Sig Tommaso Temanza a Mgr Bottari (Lett Pitt tom 4, p. 296), scrivendo che i ritratti esistenti in detta edizione sono stati disegnati la maggior parte da Van Calcker; sbaglio dal medesimo sig Temanza avvertito poi e coretto [ivi p. 302]. Questi avvertimenti preventivamente fatti dal Ch. Sig. Ab. Comolli [Bibliogr. Vol. 2 p. 5 e 6] servirono a guardare dall'inganno coloro, che delle stampe rare si pregiavano, con non lieve dispendio ornandone le loro biblioteche.'

¹²⁷ Filippo Baldinucci, *Cominciamento, e progresso dell'arte dell'intagliare in rame, colle vite di molti de' più eccellenti maestri della stessa professione*, ed. Domenico Maria Manni, second edition, 4 vols, Florence 1767-1774, and his *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in quà*, ed. Pietro Giovanni Piacenza, third edition, 4 vols, Turin 1768-1820.

¹²⁸ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. XIX: 'Il Baldinucci patisce del male di soverchio filopatrisimo.'

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XXIV: 'avvertendo che l'amore della patria non e buona scusa per uno scrittore, che imprendendo a scrivere le vite degli antichi di ogni Nazione, taccia non solo molte di quelli dell'altre città che pure meriterebbero lode.'

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Buon pro faccia a lui a chi puo spendere quindici scudi a caso per fare acquisto della sua edizione.'

¹³¹ Marco Lastrì, *L'Etruria pittrice ovvero Storia della pittura toscana, dedotta dai suoi monumenti che si esibiscono in stampa dal secolo X fino al presente*, 2 vols, Florence 1791-1795.

¹³² Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. XXXIV: 'è da vedersi il discorso accademico sull'istoria letteraria Pisana del Ch. Sig Ab. Tempesti, Pisa, 1787...e finalmente la Pisa Illustrata dal Ch. sig. Alessandro da Morrona, Pisa, 1787, tom 1'; see Ranieri Tempesti, *Discorso Accademico sull'istoria letteraria pisana*, Pisa 1787, and Alessandro da Morrona, *Pisa illustrata nelle arti del disegno* (1787-1793), 3 vols, Livorno 1812.

¹³³ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. XXXV: 'Che poi la scuola Sanese derivi dalla Pisana...come è certo, che ne deriva la Fiorentina.'

painting and, finally, its unique characteristics,¹³⁴ in particular, its ‘invention and expression’.¹³⁵ In the second account, he states that the history of Florentine painting should start with Giotto, as Cimabue’s contributions were negligible.¹³⁶ One of his aims in producing a new edition of the *Lives* was to reaffirm the view, advanced in his *Lettere senesi*, that Florentine painters were dependent on their Pisan and Sienese counterparts.¹³⁷ He thus claims that, while neither Vasari nor Lastri was able to establish where both Giotto and Cimabue were trained, both artists were, in fact, influenced by the Pisan painter Giunta, citing a perceived parallel between Giotto and Giunta’s works in Assisi;¹³⁸ and he also names Nicola Pisano in connection with Giotto’s training as an architect.¹³⁹ Della Valle concludes his discussion by summarizing his theory that painting was first revived in Pisa, then in Siena and, finally, in Florence.¹⁴⁰

Of all the editors of Vasari examined so far seen, della Valla was the most dismissive of his predecessors and the most eager to promote his own views on art, which were clearly inclined towards the promotion of the Pisan and Sienese schools. Challenging and opposing the assumptions of Florentine writers who followed in Vasari’s footsteps, he gave pre-eminence to painters from Pisa and Siena over artists from Florence.¹⁴¹ Coming

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. LIV-LVI.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. LVI: ‘I caratteri distintivi della scuola Sanese sono l’invenzione e l’espressione.’

¹³⁶ Della Valle’s underestimation of Cimabue is also apparent in his notes to the artist’s life; see *ibid.*, pp. 233-46. One of the only contributions to painting of Cimabue which della Valle was prepared to admit was that he had discovered Giotto; see p. LVII: ‘Si potrebbe senza farle il menomo torto, incominciare da Giotto; poichè Cimabue non le fece nè bene nè male. Però se vogliamo col Vasari incominciarla da Cimabue, non mi oppongo: merita considerazione l’aver egli scoperto in Giotto pastorello un’artefice formato dalla natura, e dalla patria capanna guidandolo a Firenze, indirizzatolo a coltivare le arti del disegno.’

¹³⁷ He also argued in favour of this theory in two of his other works (also published in 1787); see G. Ercoli, ‘L’edizione delle *Vite* di Guglielmo della Valle’, in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, pp. 93-100, at 99; see also della Valle, *Lettere senesi*, II (‘Al Chiarissimo Signore Abbate Lanzi. Confronto dell’arte sanese con la fiorentina’), pp. 265-79, at p. 267: ‘Poichè prima di Giotto non troviamo il nome di alcuno Scultore, o Pittore Fiorentino sotto alle sue opere; e quello di pochi artefici sotto l’altre, che si fecer poi; mentre incominciando dal Secolo XIII, insino al XVI, abbiamo nella Scuola Sanese una serie di Maestri col nome loro segnato chiaramente sotto l’opere insieme all’anno, in cui esse furono fatte. La qual cosa, quanto per una parte ci lascia nell’incertezza riguardo all’origine della Scuola Fiorentina, e all’opere di Cimabue, altrettanto ci guida per mano a pronunziare con sicurezza della Sanese.’

¹³⁸ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. LVII: ‘Anche nella prima opera di Giotto vedo la maniera e il fare di Giunta Pisano, massimamente in Assisi.’

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. LVIII: ‘e finalmente nè il Vasari nè Lastri ci sapranno indicare da chi Giotto abbia appreso la scultura e l’architettura, ma dirò ben io, che egli fu anche in Orvieto, dove Arnolfo e Lapo seguirono il loro maestro Niccolò da Pisa, facendovi sotto la sua direzione varie opere’; see Ercoli, ‘L’edizione delle *Vite*’, p. 99.

¹⁴⁰ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. LXII: ‘Sarà sempre vero che il primo vanto nella Storia dell’arte risorgente in Toscana si deve ai Pisani, il secondo ai Sanesi e l’ultimo ai Fiorentini.’

¹⁴¹ Della Valle, *Lettere senesi*, II, p. 266: ‘per quanto cari vi siano Vasari, e Leon Battista, Cimabue e Giotto, so che più cara tenete la verità, e che senza aspettare, che venga di là dai monti il di lei lume, avete il coraggio di sacrificarle i pregiudizi, e gli errori.’

from a non-Tuscan writer,¹⁴² who was also a critic of *campanilismo*, this was an important development in the historiography of Florentine art.

After the biography of Vasari, della Valle reprinted Bottari's preface, with his own annotations,¹⁴³ which are marked with an asterisk. In one of his first notes to Bottari's preface, he says that some emendations by earlier editors had no basis or were incomplete and that therefore his own aim was to provide a more interesting edition, which would shed light on the history of art and contribute to the field of art criticism.¹⁴⁴ Another shortcoming of Bottari's edition was that so many of his notes were unclear.¹⁴⁵

Della Valle's critical attitude towards Vasari's views on early Florentine painting is apparent in his notes on the lives of individual artists. In the first volume, which contains biographies from Cimabue to Margaritone, he begins with a comment which reflects his preference for Tuscan painters from Pisa and Siena, rather than Florence, stating that artistic progress in Italy would not have taken place 'even after Cimabue's day, if there had not been better painters than him in Pisa, in Siena and elsewhere at that time'.¹⁴⁶ He then argues against Vasari's view that, in comparison to earlier artists, Cimabue brought painting to a state of perfection.¹⁴⁷ Della Valle instead characterizes Cimabue's style as rather clumsy, unlike that of other thirteenth-century painters, including 'Giunta, Guido da Siena and Giacomo da Torrita',¹⁴⁸ and reformulates his argument that good Italian painters existed even before Cimabue, whom he refers to sarcastically as 'the Archimandrite of the Florentine school'.¹⁴⁹ He does, however, admit that in his frescoes in San Francesco in

¹⁴² On della Valle's Piedmontese origins, see Previtali, 'Guglielmo della Valle', p. 3.

¹⁴³ All the annotations from the editions of Bottari and Gentili are taken over by della Valle, who always indicates the source of each note.

¹⁴⁴ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. 64, n. (*): 'poichè molte notizie del Vasari già sono state da vari Scrittori dimostrate insussistenti, e altre hanno bisogno di essere un pò meglio connesse e vagliate. In ciò principalmente consisterà il pregio di quest'edizione, che speriamo più interessante delle antecedenti, per i nuovi lumi aggiunti alla Storia dell'arte, dalle più accurate ricerche fattesi negli Archivi, e per il moderno uso della critica, più purgata di quello fosse in questa parte ai tempi del Vasari.'

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66, n. (*): 'tante note di cose non abbastanza chiare.'

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233, n. (*): 'L'Italia sarebbe stata veramente misera anche dopo che Cimabue era imbarbogito, se non avesse a que'tempi avuto in Pisa, in Siena e in altre parti de' pittori migliori di esso.'

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 235 : 'E perchè, sebbene imitò que' Greci, aggiunse molta perfezione all'arte', and della Valle's note: p. 235, n. (**): 'questa molta perfezione aggiunta da Cimabue all'arte, per quanta notomia abbia fatta delle sue pitture, non l'ho veduta mai.'

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 235, n. (**): 'ho veduto bensì in essa più di maniera goffa che non ne vedessi in quella di Giunta pisano, di Guido da Siena, di Fra Giacomo da Torrita, ed altri del secolo XIII.'

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 238, n. (*): 'In Italia, prima di Cimabue non solamente si dipingeva; ma si dipingeva meglio di questo archimandrita della Scuola Fiorentina.'

Assisi Cimabue surpasses Giunta.¹⁵⁰ His annotations to the life of Cimabue are particularly revealing of his opposition to Vasari's Florentine *campanilismo* and his rejection of the idea that the 'renaissance' of Tuscan painting was due exclusively to Cimabue and his Florentine followers.

Della Valle also used his annotations for other purposes. In the biography of Arnolfo di Cambio,¹⁵¹ for instance, he included a number of works which Vasari had omitted, but which he considered to be beautiful and worthy of mention such as the tomb of Cardinal de Braye in San Domenico in Orvieto (fig. 87) and the ciborium in San Paolo fuori le Mura (fig. 88), which he praises for the way in which the attitudes of the figures are rendered.¹⁵²

Della Valle also refers to works of art which had been reproduced separately or as prints in albums. On such album was the *Stampe del Duomo di Orvieto*, which was published under his own direction and intended to accompany his *Storia del Duomo di Orvieto*.¹⁵³ Containing 38 etched and engraved plates by different hands,¹⁵⁴ it contained exterior and interior views of the cathedral, including its decoration. In his notes, della Valle cites the reproductions of some prints after Niccolò Pisano's bas-relief of the Resurrection and Luca Signorelli's frescoes in the Chapel of San Brizio.¹⁵⁵ The circulation of illustrated writings on Trecento and early Quattrocento works was intended to exert an impact on readers and collectors, encouraging them to appreciate the art of this period: it was the practical counterpart to his theoretical programme. As Giuliano Ercoli has argued,¹⁵⁶ one of della Valle's achievements in the first volume of his edition of Vasari was to challenge the general opinion that painters before Giotto were to be recorded only for documentary

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 239, n. (*): 'in queste pitture Cimabue a mio parere superò Giunta Pisano.'

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 247-67.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 266, n. (*): 'Tralle opere belle e degne di memoria che fece Arnolfo, una fu il deposito del Cardinal de Braye nella chiesa di S. Domenico di Orvieto... L'altra fu la Tribuna di marmo, che fece per la Confessione di S. Paolo nella Basilica di questo Apostolo fuor delle mura di Roma, in cui ci sono delle figure benissimo atteggiare.'

¹⁵³ See della Valle, *Stampe del Duomo di Orvieto*, Rome 1791, and his *Storia del Duomo di Orvieto*, Rome 1791.

¹⁵⁴ The prints were made by Domenico Pronti (active 1780), Girolamo Frezza (1671-after 1748), Giovanni Battista Leonetti (d. 1830), Giuseppe Pozzi (1732-1811), Giovanni Ottaviani (1735-1808), Pietro Leone Bombelli (1737-1809), Luigi Cunego (1727-1803), Alessandro Mochetti (active 1801-1828), Francesco Morelli (c. 1768-1830) and Hubert Vincent (active 1680-1730).

¹⁵⁵ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, I, p. 266: 'la storia della risurrezione de' Morti che fece in bassorilievo nella facciata del Duomo di Orvieto di cui parla con lode il Vasari nella vita di Niccola da Pisa e di cui daremo la stampa in rame pubblicando la storia di detto Duomo', and pp. 269-70, n. (*): 'nelle pareti della gran Cappella della B. V. detta di S Brizio in Orvieto; come si vedrà nei rami che stanno per uscire alla luce con la storia del Duomo di detta città'.

¹⁵⁶ Ercoli, 'L'edizione delle *Vite*', p. 93.

purposes. Instead, he suggested that their works deserved to be appreciated for their artistic qualities. This was an important stage in the history of the reception of early Renaissance art.

The second volume starts with a letter by Giovanni Battista Adriani, which served as the preface and which offers an account of the art of the Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquity.¹⁵⁷ For the subsequent volumes of his edition, della Valle supplied prefaces of his own, which, like Adriani's letter, dealt with general artistic topics.

Other aspects of the second volume, which starts with the life of Giotto, are also of interest. Della Valle, for example, inserted a note on the frescoes in the Baroncelli Chapel in Santa Croce, stating that he had reflected on these paintings numerous times and considered them to be the best of Giotto's works. On the basis of a stylistic analysis of the frescoes, he suggested that Simone Martini, Lucca di Tommè and the Lorenzetti brothers all trained together with Giotto in the workshop of the Siense painter Jacopo di Torrita.¹⁵⁸ Such statements reveal della Valle's determination to establish the Siense origins of the revival of painting, even if this sometimes entailed presenting the facts in a distorted manner.¹⁵⁹ His strong preference for Siense art is also apparent in his belief that Simone Martini surpassed Giotto in his rendering of figures and inventions.¹⁶⁰ Finally, in a note to the biography of Duccio, he divides Siense painters into two categories: those who followed the 'modern and brilliant' style of Jacopo da Torrita (e.g., Simone Martini, Lippo Memmi and Luca di Tommè) and those who continued to adopt the 'old style, called Greek of the dark days' which characterized the work of Guido da Siena (e.g., Ugolino da Siena, Duccio and the Lorenzetti brothers).¹⁶¹ In order to promote Siense art and, perhaps, in

¹⁵⁷ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, II, pp. 3-71 ('Lettera di M. Gio. Battista di Messer Marcello Adriani a Messer Giorgio Vasari').

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 78, n. (*): 'dopo averla centinaia di volte meditato sopra le pitture di Giotto che in S. Croce di Firenze si conservano, e sono delle migliori di esso, ho dei motivi a opinare che Giotto insieme con Simone, Luca di Tommè e i Lorenzetti di Siena sia stato alla scuola di Fr. Jacopo da Torrita'. While della Valle's claims were surprising and daring, since they broke with traditional views, they were nevertheless acknowledged by later critics; see Ercoli, *L'edizione delle Vite*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁹ Previtali provided a list of 11 misattributions made by della Valle and claimed that these were the basis for his arguments against the preeminence of Florentine art; see Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi*, pp. 110-128 ('Erudizione locale a Siena, Assisi, Pisa: Della Valle, Ranghiasi, Da Morrone'), at pp. 113-14.

¹⁶⁰ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, II, p. 208, n. (*): 'lo stile di Simone supera quello di Giotto nel fare grandioso delle figure e nella fecondità dell'invenzioni?'

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 285-6, n. (*): 'La scuola sanese fin dal primo secolo si divise l'arte in due modi notabilmente differenti. Alcuni, come Simone, Lippo, Luca di Tomme, e altri si attennero a quel più moderno e più brillante di Fr. Giacomo da Torrita; altri poi, come Ugolino, Duccio, i Lorenzetti, ec. seguirono quello di Guido da Siena, che conservava del vecchiume detto greco de' bassi tempi.' Despite stating in the life of Giotto that the

imitation of Bottari's project, della Valle put forward the idea of an illustrated history of Sieneſe painting from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century in the form of prints. This project, however, like Bottari's, remained unfulfilled.¹⁶²

The third volume begins with Vasari's 'Proemio' to the second part, followed by the biographies of Quattrocento artists. Della Valle adds only a few notes reflecting his personal artistic views or analysing the style of art works to the lives in this volume. In a note to the biography of Jacopo della Quercia, for instance, he observes that while the works of earlier sculptors such as Niccolò Pisano were appreciated for their 'expression, design and grace' (fig. 89), they were, nevertheless lacking in the softness (*morbidezza*) which characterized della Quercia's sculptures (fig. 90).¹⁶³ Della Valle also inserts a couple of annotations about Masaccio's paintings. In one, he recalls 'a portrait of an old woman spinning, whose natural expression left such a powerful impression on me that twelve years after I saw it, it still seems present and visible to me'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, while commenting on the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, della Valle claims that Masaccio deserves to be called 'the first master of Italian painting'.¹⁶⁵

Della Valle placed his account of the art of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Italians at the beginning of the fourth volume,¹⁶⁶ followed by the biographies. Referring to Giovanni Bellini's *Virgin and Child in Ca' Pesaro*, which he describes as 'charming',¹⁶⁷ he

Lorenzetti brothers were trained in the workshop of Torrita, here he assigns them to the school of Guido da Siena.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 286-7, n. (*): 'Pertanto chiuderò questa nota, avvertendo che S.E. il sig. Principe D. Sigismondo Chigi fece incidere questa tavola, la quale sebbene sia sfuggita alle ricerche del Vasari... Sarebbe desiderabile che il detto Signore continuasse sino al fine l'incisione dei capi d'opera della scuola Sanese, che durò più di cinque secoli'; see also Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History*, pp. 59-90, p. 79, and esp. n. 192.

¹⁶³ Vasari/della Valle, *Le vite*, III, p. 18, n. (*): 'Nelle sculture di Niccolò Pisano e degli altri maestri prima di Jacopo si vede espressione, disegno e grazia, che pare superiore a que' tempi e all'opinione quasi universale e svantaggiosa di essi; quei marmi pero sono privi della morbidezza, che meritamente si lode nelle opere di Jacopo.'

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 117, n. (*): 'Fra queste e notabile una vecchia che fila e che mi fece tanta impressione con la sua naturale espressione, che dopo dodici anni dacchè la vidi, parmi ancora di averla presente e vederla.' I have not been able to identify this work.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 124, n. (*): 'il primo gran maestro dell'arte italiana'.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., IV, pp. 5-20 ('Ragionamento sullo stato ed eccellenza delle belle arti presso gli antichi greci, latini e italiani'), at p. 5, n. (*): 'Si è creduto che opportunamente potesse tener luogo di prefazione a questo quarto tomo della presente edizione del Vasari.'

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 108, n. (*): 'vaga pittura'.

states that ‘there are no other paintings which invite us to contemplate them more than Venetian ones’, whether on account of their colouring or their life-like representations.¹⁶⁸

The three eighteenth-century editions of Vasari’s *Lives* each have a different character and develop the work in different ways. Bottari was concerned with the conservation and restoration of works of art and stressed the importance of preserving those from the early Renaissance and reproducing them as prints as a means of tracing the progress of art. At the same time, his deep knowledge of artistic literature, evident from his bibliographical notes, also helped to consolidate and enrich the understanding of readers. Gentili, on the other hand, was more of an antiquarian, preoccupied with the historical recovery of works of art and the context in which they were produced and displayed. His main contribution was to include information about various artists and monuments from Arezzo, which he obtained from his collaborator de’ Giudici. Finally, della Valle’s enterprise differed from the other two in that he took the liberty of challenging the views of Vasari and his followers. He used Vasari’s *Lives* as a starting-point for presenting his own ideas and developing his theory about the origins of Italian painting. He maintained that noteworthy art was produced even before Cimabue and Giotto and emphasized the importance of Siennese and Pisan ‘primitives’.

The one seventeenth- and three eighteenth-century editions of the *Lives* examined in this chapter all brought new elements which enhanced their readers’ understanding of artists and their works. Importantly, later editors reproduced all the notes from previous editions, in order to present a complete and updated view of the evolution of art over time, in which different elements were highlighted. Another important aspect was the emphasis which all the editors placed on the artists’ portraits, for which they commissioned new prints. While faithful to the originals, the new prints added a new touch, in line with the taste of the day. *Campanilismo* played a part in the editions of Vasari’s *Lives* published in the second half of the eighteenth century, leading editors to present either Florentine painters or those from other Tuscan schools as the key figures in the artistic revival which took place from the Trecento to the early Cinquecento.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid: ‘Io non trovo pitture che più delle veneziane invitino a contemplarle; ossia che si guardi il colorito, che è tanto vicino al vero della natura, ossia che uno porti lo sguardo in quelle copiose assemblee di uomini illustri ritratti dal vivo felicissimamente.’

Illustrating the Artistic Past in Eighteenth-Century Florence

Both Bottari and della Valle welcomed the idea of illustrating the artistic past by means of reproductive prints; however, as we have seen, their plans were never realized. The writer who actually embraced Bottari's plan and executed the project was Marco Lastri.¹⁶⁹ His *Etruria pittrice*, published in two large volumes between 1791 and 1795, included 120 prints after Tuscan works of art covering a period of eight centuries (from the tenth to the eighteenth century). The elegant volume, published by Niccolò Pagni and Giuseppe Bardi, came out in Italian with a parallel translation in French made by Barthélemy Renard.¹⁷⁰ As the publishers stated in their foreword,¹⁷¹ the translation was meant to make the book available to a wider public, as well as to establish a link with the French tradition of art-historical illustration.¹⁷² While Lastri did not refer to the previous examples of Italian illustrated art books by Zanetti and Stefano Mulinari,¹⁷³ he did mention Bottari's ambitious project and Girolamo Tiraboschi's suggestion for a small-scale catalogue which would include only reproductions after works of art dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁷⁴ Tiraboschi believed that the illustrations would help to clarify the contradictory

¹⁶⁹ For more information on Marco Lastri and other illustrated writings on art such as d'Agincourt's *Histoire* discussed in connection with collecting in Tuscany and museum displays of paintings by the 'primitives', see C. de Benedictis, "'Etruria Pittrice": All'origine del collezionismo di primitivi in Toscana', in *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d'arte*, pp. 67-77.

¹⁷⁰ See K. Krause, 'Marco Lastri, *L'Etruria pittrice ovvero Storia della pittura toscana*', in *Bilderlust und Lesefrüchte: das illustrierte Kunstbuch von 1750 bis 1920*, ed. K. Krause, K. Niehr and E. M. Hanebutt-Benz, Leipzig 2005, pp. 81-3, at p. 81

¹⁷¹ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, p. [vi]: 'degli articoli in lingua Italiana, trasportati poi nella Francese dal Sig. Bart. Renard, pubblico Maestro di detta lingua; il che abbiam pensato di fare per estenderne la cognizione presso i Forestieri.'

¹⁷² See, e.g., Pierre Jean Marriette, *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus beaux tableaux et d'après les plus beaux desseins qui sont en France dans le cabinet du Roy, dans celui de Monseigneur le Duc d'Orleans et dans d'autres cabinets. Divisé suivant les différentes écoles; avec un abrégé de la Vie des peintres et une Description Historique de chaque Tableau*, 2 vols, Paris 1729-1742; see also G. Bickendorf, 'Zu Einer "Storia dell'Arte" I: Das Modell der "Storia" und die Kennerschaft', in *Die Historisierung der Italienischen Kurnstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1998, pp. at p. 274-313, at pp. 289-95.

¹⁷³ On Zanetti's *Varie pitture a fresco*, see Chapter 4, n. 1 above. See also Stefano Mulinari, *Istoria pratica dell'incominciamento, e progressi della Pittura, o sia Raccolta di cinquanta stampe estratte da ugual numero di disegni originali esistenti nella Real Galleria di Firenze*, Florence 1778; and Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History*, pp. 83-4.

¹⁷⁴ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, p. [iv]: 'Il primo a proporlo, perquanto si sappia, fu Monsig. Bottari...Pocchia il celebre Sig. Abate Cav. Tiraboschi torno ad insinuarlo nella sua Storia della Letteratura Italiana; limitandolo però solamente ad una semplice raccolta di stampe tratte da Pitture del Secolo XII e XIII.'

discussions concerning the origins of Italian painting and to determine whether Cimabue was the first artist to make a significant contribution to Florentine painting.¹⁷⁵

The purpose of the *Etruria pittrice*, as indicated by the publishers who quoted from Baldinucci's preface to his *Notizie*,¹⁷⁶ was to offer a better understanding of the progress of the arts through a chronological selection of prints after miniatures, frescoes and paintings in Tuscany.¹⁷⁷ The selection was based on two criteria: the original works had to be authentic and the artists selected had to be recognized as important by previous writers on art.¹⁷⁸ Each illustration was accompanied by an entry in which Lastri's main focus was to analyse the work and point out its distinguishing elements. He considered the biographical information on the artists to be of secondary importance and insisted that his book presented the history of painting and not that of painters.¹⁷⁹ As Vermeulen has argued,¹⁸⁰ Lastri's views brought a significant change to the way in which the writings on art evolved from this point. Even though *Etruria pittrice* incorporated and perpetuated the tradition of artists' biographies,¹⁸¹ its role decreased and was replaced by what stood at the centre of Lastri's book: the works of art. Lastri also had different views on the origins of Italian painting from those of della Valle, Malvasia and Ridolfi,¹⁸² whose judgements were

¹⁷⁵ Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 9 vols, Modena 1787-1794, IV, p. 502: 'Ma non potrebbero i Fiorentini rispondere che l'invidia accieca i loro avversari, e li conduce a riprendere Cimabue, solo perche fu fiorentino? A decidere giustamente una tal contesa, che forse non avra fine giammai, converrebbe che una società d'uomini intendenti delle bell'arti, e insieme imparziali, prendesse a ricercare diligentemente tutte le pitture che del XII e del XIII secolo abbiamo in Italia, quelle cioè delle quali e certo il tempo in cui furono fatte ed e conosciuto l'artefice; quindi a ritrarle con somma esattezza in rami e colorirli ancora, imitando, quanto e possibile, le stesse pitture. Una serie di quadri cosi formata, ci darebbe una giusta idea della pittura di que' tempi, e ci farebbe conoscere qual fosse l'arte prima di Cimabue, qual fosse dopo, e se a lui possa convenir veramente l'onorevole nome di ristoratore della pittura. aspettiam dunque che si faccia questo confronto; e guardiamo frattanto fra'l caldo de' contrari partiti.'

¹⁷⁶ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, p. [iv]: 'Parve a me, egli scrive nella Prefazione, che questi cosi fatti disegni ordinati per la successione de' tempi, fussero per avere un non so che della Storia; mentre senza lettura, ma con la sola vista si sarebbon potuti riconoscere non solo i progressi di quest'Arte; ma quello che e più, col testimonio indubitato della propria mano di ciascheduno degli Artefici, si sarebbe potuto venire in cognizione, per mezzo di chi ella avesse tal miglioramento ricevuto'; see also Baldinucci, *Notizie*, I, pp. [iii-iv] ('L'autore a chi legge').

¹⁷⁷ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, p. [iv]: 'La nostra intrapresa e diretta allo scopo medesimo.'

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. [v]: 'Quanto alla scelta degli originali, abbiám preferito sempre quelli, i quali mostrano per evidenti contrassegni d'essere i più autentici, e che anno dalla parte loro l'autorità de più accreditati Scrittori.'

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.: 'noi facciam l'istoria della Pittura, non già dei Pittori.'

¹⁸⁰ Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History*, p. 84.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. The entries for each artist included short biographical accounts, as well as medallions with a portrait.

¹⁸² Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, pp. [xxxviii-xxxix]: 'La questione adunque circa il primato in quest'arte, nell'aspetto in cui la porta il P. della Valle a favor dei Pisani, e dei Senesi; il Malvasia pei Bolognesi, ed il Cav. Ridolfi pei Veneziani; e affatto ozia ed inconcludente.'

influenced by *campanilismo*. In Lastri's opinion, the only way to establish with accuracy the origins of painting was to identify the artist who first restored painting to the right path.¹⁸³

Lastri's clear views on artistic progress, which were influenced by Bottari, led him to apply the latter's principles when selecting works for reproduction. Lastri chose one work for each artist (with the exception of Antonio Pollaiuolo for whom he chose two).¹⁸⁴ The first volume begins with illustrations of miniatures dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, which Lastri criticizes for their lack of proportion, attitude, shadows and perspective,¹⁸⁵ and it ends with a print after Santi di Tito.¹⁸⁶ The second volume includes prints after works by artists from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, starting from Ventura Salimbeni and ending with Giuseppe Grisoni. The catalogue form of the *Etruria pittrice* allowed Lastri to discuss each work individually and to express his own judgement, occasionally offering the reader the possibility of comparing illustrations (e.g., Benozzo Gozzoli's *Drunkenness of Noah* with Paolo Uccello's painting of the same subject).¹⁸⁷

In Lastri's opinion, each of the painters had contributed to the progress of Tuscan art. He recognized artistic improvements in Cimabue's *Madonna* and Giotto's *Death of the Virgin*, both of which he praised, drawing on Vasari and Baldinucci.¹⁸⁸ He also remarked on Uccello's rendering of perspective and his exceptionally well executed figure of the drunken

¹⁸³ Ibid.: 'Non si tratta già di chi vanti il Pittore più antico innanzi Cimabue; ma di chi fosse il primo tra tutti gli altri, il quale rimettesse la Pittura nel buon sentiero, le facesse fare una vera crise, o in altre parole, non di chi ne fosse l'inventore, ma il restauratore.'

¹⁸⁴ See Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, plates XIV and XV.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. [xi]: 'figure senza proporzione, senz'attitudine, e senz'ombre, e senza prospettiva'; see also Vermeulen, 'From Print Collecting into Art-Historical Illustration', in *Picturing Art History*, pp. 59-90, at p. 86.

¹⁸⁶ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, 'Catalogo de' pittori di questo primo volume dal secolo X fino alla meta del secolo XVI', pp. [vii-viii].

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. [lxxviii]: 'una delle dette storie e l'ebrietà di Noe, la quale abbiamo preferita a tutte le altre dello stesso Autore, per metterla in confronto con quella di Paolo Uccello, e perche si veggia come due pittori contemporanei anno trattato diversamente lo stesso soggetto', and plates XIV and XVIII.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. [xlii]: 'Abbiamo sotto gli occhi un pezzo celebre, si per la memoria che ne a conservata il Vasari; si ancora per la sua intrinseca bellezza, che fece già, la maraviglia del Buonarroto, e modernamente quella del cav. Mengs. La pittura è delle più piccole, ma in questo genere appunto, dice il Baldinucci, si rese Giotto più che in altro mirabile'; see also Vasari, *Le vite* (1568), I, p. 397: 'una tavolina a tempera stata dipinta da Giotto con infinita diligenza, dentro la quale era la morte di Nostra Donna con gl'Apostoli intorno e con un Cristo che in braccio l'anima di lei riceveva. Questa opera dagl'artefici pittori era molto lodata e particolarmente da Michelangelo Buonarroto, il quale affermava, come si disse altra volta, la proprietà di questa istoria dipinta non potesse essere più simile al vero di quello ch'ell'era', and Baldinucci, *Notizie*, I, p. 50: 'Nella Chiesa d'Ognisanti di Firenze, che fu già de' Frati Umiliati, era dipinta di mano di Giotto una Cappella, e quattro tavole, e fra le quali una ve n'era dov'egli aveva rappresentato la Morte di Maria Vergine con gli Apostoli intorno, e Cristo suo Figliuolo in atto di riever l'anima di lei, opera che non solo era da tutti gli Artefici molto lodata, ma fino li stesso Michelagnolo Buonarroto affermava la proprietà di quella storia dipinta non poter essere più simile al vero di quel ch'ella era.'

Noah.¹⁸⁹ Masaccio's works, however, were the finest example of artistic development. According to Lastri, Masaccio introduced 'grace, relief, movement and liveliness' into his works, marking the transition to a new era in the evolution of Tuscan painting.¹⁹⁰ Among the artists after Masaccio, Lastri praised Antonio Pollaiuolo for his manner of rendering action and naturalness in his *Martyrdom of St Sebastian*,¹⁹¹ Domenico Ghirlandaio for the beautiful architecture, rendition of light and expressive figures shown in his *Death of St Francis*,¹⁹² and Sandro Botticelli for his *Virgin and Child with Saints*, which was depicted with 'much skill and taste'.¹⁹³

Lastri's project brings together the two main traditions which dominated Florentine art writings: artistic biographies, in which writers adopted a historical and chronological approach, and artistic guidebooks, in which writers paid more attention to works of art. The two types of writing have demonstrated that, with a few exceptions – especially Bocchi's *Le bellezze* – the focus of Florentine authors was more on historiography and issues such as the origins of painting rather than on the evaluation and appreciation of early works of art. Lastri's *Etruria pittrice* shows, however, that historiography and appreciation reached a meeting point in eighteenth-century Florence and that artistic progress could be illustrated through a chronological presentation of reproductive prints which were selected according to clearly established principles.

¹⁸⁹ Lastri, *Etruria pittrice*, p. [lxiii]: 'è da notarsi lo scorto della figura di Noe'.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. [lxxxvii]: 'da grazia, rilievo, movimento e vivacità alle figure'. In Masaccio's case, Lastri chose to illustrate the *Tribute Money*, which was engraved by Carlo Lasinio, after a design by Giuseppe Calendi; see *ibid.*, plate XIX.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. [cv]: 'quanta naturalezza nella positura! Quanta azione!'; see *ibid.*, plate XXIII.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. [cxx]: 'ricchezza della composizione dell'espressione delle figure, e della nobiltà de'campi ripieni di bella architettura, e di lumi opportunamente dati'; see *ibid.*, plate XXVII.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. [cxiii]: 'con tanta maestria e gusto'; see *ibid.*, plate XXV.

CHAPTER 8

Views on Early Renaissance Art in Eighteenth-Century Florence: Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri's *Le Vite*

In this section I shall examine the writings of an important figure of the eighteenth century, the collector Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri (1675-1742) (fig. 91), in order to determine what his artistic views were and how he contributed to the reception of early Renaissance art in eighteenth-century Florence. Following in the footsteps of Baldinucci, Gabburri was a prolific writer and publisher, as well as a collector and artistic adviser to Duke Leopoldo de' Medici. Moreover, he had regular exchanges of letters with artists, collectors and connoisseurs both inside and outside Italy.¹

By studying Gabburri's unpublished *Le vite*,² based on Pellegrino Orlandi's *Abecedario pittorico*, and its context, I shall attempt to place him within the general lines of artistic historiography established by his predecessors and to uncover his intentions and personal views from a work which he edited and expanded considerably. I shall consider the reasoning behind his decision to enlarge Orlandi's text and the contributions which he made to it, the type of audience to which it was addressed, the sources which he cited and the possible connections between his collection of works of art and his biographies of artists.³ Guidebook writers such as Raffaello del Bruno acknowledged the importance of Gabburri's collection of 'most outstanding paintings, prints and drawings' in their own writings, recommending it as a possible attraction for the visitors of Florence.⁴ While the French collector, connoisseur and art dealer of early prints and drawings Pierre-Jean Mariette (1649-1774) emphasized the quantity of Gabburri's collection of prints and

¹ For the corpus of Gabburri's letters, most of them sent to him, see Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, pp. 97-405. For more information on collecting practices in Florence and Tuscany, and especially on Eighteenth-century collectors including, among others, Francesco Raimondo Adami (1711-1792), Sebastiano Zucchetti (1723-1801/1802), Giuseppe Ciaccheri (1724-1804), Luigi de Angelis (1761-1833), Angelo Maria Bandini (1726-1803) who were interested in the acquisition of works of art by early Renaissance artists, see S. Chiodo [et al.], 'Collezionismo a Firenze e in Toscana', in *La fortuna dei primitivi. Tesori d'arte*, pp. 227-325.

² A transcription of the entire manuscript, together with online reproductions of the manuscript, is available at <http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/Gabburri.consultazione.html>; in quoting from Gabburri's *Le vite*, I have maintained the pagination in the transcription.

³ An inventory of Gabburri's collection, now in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze (Ms A.XVIII, N.33) was first published, though only partially, in G. Campori, 'Descrizione dei disegni della Galleria Gabburri di Firenze (1722)', in his *Raccolta di cataloghi ed inventari inediti di quadri, statue, disegni*, Modena 1870, pp. 523-96. It is also available for online consultation at:

http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/COLLEZIONE_GABBURRI.pdf

⁴ Del Bruno, *Il ristretto*, p. 48: 'abitazione de' Gabburri, ove sono pitture, stampe, e disegni singolarissimi?.'

drawings rather than its artistic value,⁵ my aim is to establish whether his practice as a collector was consistent with his artistic judgements.

Like Sasso in Venice, Gabburri is a good example of a writer, connoisseur and collector who had the authority to influence not only views in Florence, but also the acquisition of particular works of art. The approach adopted by Gabburri in his four-volume manuscript, moreover, seems to be in line with similar enterprises of his day. The publication of encyclopedias and specialized dictionaries,⁶ including, for instance, Francesco Milizia's dictionary of architects of 1768,⁷ as well as the influence of academies in which Gabburri was an active participant, make him a significant representative of the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, a period when a thriving network of collectors, scholars and artists developed.

The first comprehensive biography of Gabburri was written in Latin by Gaetano Veraci in 1742, the year of his death, and was published in Giovanni Lami's *Memorabilia Italarum eruditione praestantium quibus vertens saeculum gloriatur*.⁸ It contained information about Gabburri's origins, education, interests and the positions which he held at the Medici court, together with a short list of his writings. Veraci tells us that Gabburri was born into a noble Florentine family which was active in the literary and artistic circles of the day.⁹ He received a very thorough training in music and poetry and studied painting with Onofrio Marinari (1625-1715), a Florentine painter who also worked in Rome and who painted 'with good taste and adopted a finished and correct manner in his drawing', as Gabburri reports in the biography of his teacher.¹⁰ According to Veraci, the opportunity to study under such a great

⁵ P. de Chennevières and A. de Montaignon, eds, *L'Abecedario de P. J. Mariette et autres notes inédites*, in *Archives de l'art français*, 6 vols, Paris 1854-1856, II, p. 275: 'sa collection se trouva à sa mort plus nombreuse que belle'.

⁶ On encyclopedism in the eighteenth century, see R. Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions. Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture*, Cambridge 2001; F. Tilkin, ed., *L'encyclopédisme au XVIII^e siècle. Actes du Colloque organisé par le Groupe d'étude du XVIII^e siècle de l'Université de Liège*, Geneva 2008; K. Lohsträter, F. Schock, eds, *Die gesammelte Welt. Studien zu Zedlers Universal-Lexicon*, Wiesbaden 2013.

⁷ Francesco Milizia, *Vite de' più celebri architetti d'ogni nazione e d'ogni tempo*, Rome 1768; see also Schlosser, *La letteratura*, p. 485.

⁸ Giovanni Lami, *Memorabilia Italarum eruditione praestantium quibus vertens saeculum gloriatur*, 2 vols, Florence, 1742, I, pp. 305-13.

⁹ Ibid., p. 305; on Gabburri's entourage, see also N. Turner, 'The Gabburri/Rogers Series of Drawn Self-Portraits and Portraits of Artists', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 5, 1993, pp. 176-216, at p. 180, and F. Borroni Salvadori, 'Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri e gli artisti contemporanei', *Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa*, 4, 1974, pp. 1504-64.

¹⁰ Lami, *Memorabilia*, I, p. 307: 'Pictura scilicet, cuius egregia artis elementa didicit ab Honorio Marinario'; see also G. Perini, 'Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri', in *DBI*, LI, pp. 8-10; see also Gabburri, *Le vite*, IV, p. 2011-IV-C_129R: 'dipinse con buon gusto e con maniera assai finita e corretta nel disegno'.

master enabled Gabburri to learn art criticism and ‘to judge and understand’ works of art.¹¹ Among his circle of friends, Gabburri was considered to have had ‘the finest taste and to know how to distinguish himself from those who commend and praise to the skies a work of little value and lie and perjure themselves a thousand times that it is by Titian, Correggio and Raphael’.¹² This statement already gives us an indication of Gabburri’s status as a respected and cautious connoisseur and also suggests that he was in line with previous writers regarding the canon of painters who were unanimously accepted as a point of reference in assessing modern works of art.

As an adolescent, Gabburri was ‘among the youths enrolled to serve the rulers of Florence’, including Cosimo III and Leopoldo de’ Medici. Later in 1734, he was named *luogotenente* of the Accademia del Disegno, where he supported new publications, as well as producing some of his own, awarded prizes and organized exhibitions, for which he also lent works from his own collection.¹³ Among Gabburri’s writings, Veraci lists two orations in defence of Michelangelo, which no longer survive,¹⁴ a number of poems and, most importantly, his ‘huge work’: the *Abecedarium pictorum* or *Le vite di pittori*.¹⁵ While Veraci does not provide further details about his orations and poems, he does tell us that Gabburri’s recorded the names of artists, listed and illustrated their works, correcting many errors and including art works which others had left out.¹⁶

¹¹ Lami, *Memorabilia*, I, pp. 307-8: ‘sub tanto artifice, critice in arte adeo exquisitam adeptus est, ut in diiudicandis et cognoscendis pictorum operibus nullus fortasse’.

¹² See letter of Antonio Maria Zanetti to Gabburri, Venice, April 1723, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, p. 132: ‘Ella pero che è d’un finissimo gusto, sopra guardarsi da questi che comendano ed esaltano sino alle stelle una cosa che vale due baiocchi, e con mille giuramenti e mille spergiuri vogliono farla diventare di Tiziano, del Correggio e di Raffaele.’

¹³ On the exhibitions organized by the Accademia del Disegno and Gabburri’s contribution in his capacity as *luogotenente*, see Borroni Salvadori, ‘Le esposizioni d’arte a Firenze dal 1674 al 1767’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 18, 1974, pp. 1-166, esp. pp. 20, 38-44.

¹⁴ According to Perini, ‘Gabburri’, p. 9, these lost orations were directed against de Piles’s criticism of Michelangelo.

¹⁵ Lami, *Memorabilia*, I, p. 311: ‘opus magnae molis’. See Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, *Le vite di pittori*, 4 vols: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MS Palatino E. B. 9. 5, I-IV. An complete online transcription of the text is available at the website of the Fondazione Memofonte; see <http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/Gabburri/consultazione.html>

Gabburri was also involved in the publication of new editions of Florentine texts on art such as the last volume of Baldinucci’s *Notizie* in 1728 and the second edition of Borghini’s *Il Riposo* in 1730, on which he collaborated with his friend Giovanni Gaetano Bottari. Gabburri’s role was to decide on the ornamental prints which decorated the frontispiece and the end-pages of each of the first three books of Borghini’s work, as well as providing a selection of prints from his own collection and supervising their execution. See Chennevières and Montaiglon, *L’Abecedario*, II, p. 275; Borghini/Bottari, *Il Riposo*, p. IV; Turner, ‘The Gabburri/Rogers Series’, p. 182; and Frangenberg, ‘The Limits of a Genre’, p. 293.

¹⁶ Lami, *Memorabilia*, I, p. 311.

Pellegrino Orlandi's *Abecedario pittorico* as a Source of Inspiration for Gabburri's *Le vite*

*Questi sono libri che subito terminati sono imperfetti.*¹⁷

*Il Riposo*¹⁸ was not the only project in which Gabburri displayed his interest in writings on art and his familiarity with private and public art collections. By incorporating new and updated material from an impressive number of Italian and non-Italian sources, he planned to produce a new and expanded edition of Pellegrino Orlandi's *Abecedario pittorico*, published in Bologna in 1704. Structured as a biographical dictionary, Orlandi's book recorded, in an abbreviated form and in alphabetical order arranged by first name rather than surname, the most important artists of the past and the present. As Nicholas Turner has noted, it was not unusual for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers to organize biographies in alphabetical order by the first name of artists rather than chronologically: the table of contents in Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672) and in Leone Pascoli's *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni* (1730) served as precedents for this arrangement.¹⁹

Orlando's dictionary of artists was written for *dilettanti* and *connoisseurs* and was meant to be consulted as a reference book. It also contained five tables inserted at the end of the book, with names of all the artists discussed, a bibliography of their lives and works, a list of books about architecture and perspective and another of books on drawing and, finally, printers' marks.²⁰ As Alessia Cecconi has pointed out, the format of Orlandi's *Abecedario* made it a useful, one-volume guide to artists and their works, with the

¹⁷ See Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, p. 186, letter CXXXI, Orlandi to Anton Francesco Marmi, 26 November 1748.

¹⁸ Raffaello Borghini's first edition of 'Il Riposo' was published in 1584. It is a fictitious dialogue, divided into four sections, between four gentlemen. In the first two sections, where they discuss matters of decorum, style and religious art, Borghini draws on writings from the Counter-Reformation period. The last two sections contain biographies of ancient and modern artists; see S. Orienti, 'Su *Il Riposo* di Raffaele Borghini', *Rivista d'Arte*, XXVII, 1951-1952, pp. 221-6; Frangenberg, 'The Art of Talking about Sculpture'; L. Popoviciu, 'Who Inspired Book Four of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo*', in *Di suo' maniera e di suo' aria. Studii în onoarea Ancăi Oroveanu*, eds R. Demetrescu, I. Cărăbaș, I. Măgureanu, Bucharest 2012, pp. 38-57.

¹⁹ See Turner, 'The Gabburri/Rogers Series', p. 188, n. 21.

²⁰ See Pellegrino Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, Bologna 1704, sigs a^e-m5^v ('Abecedario pittorico in cui sono comprese cinque tavole').

alphabetical arrangement facilitating the search for specific artists. Furthermore, the five tables enabled some readers to use it for personal research, others for solving attribution issues.²¹

The correspondence between Orlandi and the Florentine *erudito* Anton Francesco Marmi (1665-1736) sheds light on the preparation of the first and the second edition of the *Abecedario*. From their letters, we learn about the difficulties posed by such a project and the changes which were made between one edition and the other.²² We can also see how Orlandi collected his material, usually calling on friends, including Marmi, to send him biographical notes about living French and Florentine artists. For instance, in a letter of 1714, he sent Marmi a list of Florentine painters – Alessandro Gherardini (1655-1723), Anton Domenico Gabbiani (1652-1726), Bartolomeo Bimbi (1648-1730), Michelangelo Palloni (1637-1712), Andrea Scacciati (1642-1704), Antonio Giusti (1624-1705), Domenico Tempesta (1611-1689) and Antonio Franchi (1638-1709) – asking him to confirm their dates and whether they were still alive, so that he could introduce updated information in his revised edition of 1719.²³ He, however, had to reduce some of the material provided by Marmi in order to fit the entries into the allocated space.²⁴ Another concern of Orlandi in his new edition, which contained 500 new biographies, was to include as many non-Italian artists as possible. This attempt, however, proved to be difficult as most of books about these artists were published in foreign languages, which meant that he had to depend on friends to translate these works for him or else leave some of these artists out.²⁵

²¹ See Cecconi, 'Nella presente aggiunta', p. 4.

²² See Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, pp. 179-90; there are 13 letters sent by Orlandi to Marmi between 1714 and 1719; see also Cecconi, 'Nella presente aggiunta'.

²³ Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, letter CCXII, Bologna, Orlandi to Marmi, 8 July 1714, p. 180: 'che V. S. Ill.ma si voglia degnare dirmi se sono vivi o quando sono morti, I seguenti Pittori Fiorentini...?'

²⁴ Ibid., letter CCXIV, Bologna, Orlandi to Marmi, 15 September, pp. 180-81: 'mi spiace solo che bisogna ridurle al compendio come sono tutte le altre per seguire l'ordine del libro.'

²⁵ Ibid., letter CCXVIII, Bologna, Orlandi to Marmi, 9 August 1718: 'questa fu una delle cagioni che fui sforzato a tacere molti... M'avvisa ancora da Parigi in questo ordinario Monsu di Crosat esservi pochi Olandesi, Inglesi e Spagnuoli, rispondo che Butron ha stampato in lingua spagnuola i suoi, Rickesen in lingua fiamminga i nazionali, e Houbraken Pittore in Amsterdam altri, ma quei diavoli di linguaggi m' hanno fatto battere la testa per i muri.' Pierre Crozat was one of the friends who helped Orlandi to gather information about Dutch, Spanish and English artists by sending him lists and biographical information which he had translated from works written in foreign languages such as Juan de Butrón's *Discursos apologeticos, en que se defiende la ingenuidad del arte de la pintura*, Madrid 1606, and Arnold Houbraken's *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, Amsterdam 3 vols, 1718-1721. 'Rickesen' is probably a garbled reference to Jonathan Richardson, a contemporary of Houbraken; see his *Two Discourses: I. An Essay on the Art Criticism as It Relates to Painting, II. An Argument on Behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur*, 8 vols, London 1719. See Cecconi, 'Nella presente aggiunta', p. 4. Joachim von Sandrart's *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste* was, however, available in Latin, and Gabburri quotes from the Latin edition; see Joachim von

Orlandi's letters also illustrate his working methods in compiling the new edition of his biographical dictionary of artists and show how he extracted information from other texts circulating at the time. He refers, for instance, to the treatise of the English connoisseur Jonathan Richardson (1665-1745), *An Essay on the Art Criticism as It Relates to Painting*,²⁶ which he received from the author and in which the entries on painters at the end were based on the *Abecedario pittorico*.²⁷ In addition, we learn from his correspondence about the difficulties which he had to face in carrying out a project which required constant revision and correction.²⁸ Despite these difficulties, Orlandi's encyclopedic effort to incorporate as much information about artists as possible inspired other writers, including Gabburri, to embark on similar enterprises.

The *Abecedario pittorico* proved to be a popular reference book. Many editions were published, not only in Florence, but also in Venice and Naples; it also appeared in an English translation.²⁹ Each of the new editions was enriched with additional information and contained different dedications, either to a connoisseur (Pierre Crozat in the Bolognese edition of 1719), a painter (Francesco Mura in the Florentine edition of 1731) or a ruler (Frederic August III of Poland in the Venetian edition of 1753). Mariette first attempted to have the work translated into French around 1733; but, as appears from a letter he sent to Gabburri, he postponed the idea on account of the difficulties posed by such a large work.³⁰ The plan to bring out a French version of Orlandi's work was taken up again much later by Mariette and finally published in six volumes between 1851 and 1860 by Philippe Chennevières and Anatole de Montaiglon. A frequent correspondent and friend of Gabburri, Mariette encouraged his project to produce a new edition of Orlandi's book and

Sandart's *Academia nobilissimae artis pictoriae. Sive de veris et genuinis huiusdem proprietatibus, theorematibus, secretis atque requisitis aliis ...*, Nuremberg 1683.

²⁶ See n. 25 above.

²⁷ Campori, ed., *Lettere artistiche*, letter CCXIII, Bologna, Orlandi to Marmi, 19 November 1718, p. 186: 'Il Sig. Richardson di Londra famosissimo Ritrattista mi ha favorito del suo libro stampato in Londra nel 1715 intitolato Saggio sopra la Teorica della Pittura... Nel fine poi del libro ha compilato dal mio Abecedario, e descritti secolo per secolo i Pittori che fiorirono in quelli.'

²⁸ Ibid., letter CCXXI, Bologna, Orlandi to Marmi, 26 November 1718, p. 186: 'io so quanto sia laborioso il mio lavoro di tutto il giorno a vedere, rivedere, leggere e rileggere'.

²⁹ Orlandi's book was reprinted in Bologna in 1719, in Florence in 1731, 1776 and 1788, in Naples in 1731, 1733 and 1769 and in Venice in 1753; see Cecconi, 'Nella presente aggiunta', p. 7. The English translation, published in London in 1730, was issued under the title: *Repertorium Sculptile-Typicum: or a Complete Collection and Explanation of the Several Marks and Cyfers by which the Prints of the Best Engravers are Distinguished. With an Alphabetical Index of their Names, Places of Abode, and Times in which they Lived, translated from the Abecedario Pittorico of Pellegrino Orlandi*.

³⁰ See letter CXI, Paris, Mariette to Gabburri, 1 June 1733, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, pp. 398-400: 'Io avevo disegnato di tradurlo in francese, ma la difficoltà di questo lavoro me n'ha fatta passar la voglia.'

supplied him, as did many of Gabburri's regular correspondents from Italy and abroad, with documentation. Gabburri based his text on the edition published in Naples in 1731, which included entries on Florentine, Roman and Neapolitan artists, along with foreign ones. In the next section, I shall consider why Gabburri decided to expand the *Abecedario pittorico*, given that many revised editions of Orlandi's work had already been published and were constantly being updated. I shall also try to clarify why he chose to use the Neapolitan edition of the *Abecedario* rather than the Florentine one, even though both were published in 1731. Finally, I shall place Gabburri's *Le vite* in the context of eighteenth-century artistic literature.

Gabburri's *Le vite*

In a letter of 1732, Gabburri asked Mariette to send him brief notes about painters, sculptors, architects and printmakers who lived in France, so that he could include the information in a work that he intended to produce, based on Orlandi's *Abecedario*, which had recently been published in Naples.³¹ Responding to this request, Mariette welcomed Gabburri's initiative, adding: 'even though it is a useful book, Orlandi's *Abecedario* is so full of errors that no one can use it without having to resort to the original books which he quotes'.³² Furthermore, he agreed to offer his help by providing notes on French artists. This exchange between the two scholars shows that, as early as 1732, Gabburri was planning to gather material for a new, enlarged and more accurate edition of the *Abecedario pittorico* and that the plan had Mariette's support. It also shows that previous attempts to update Orlandi's work were considered unsatisfactory by expert readers like Mariette. There is no record that Gabburri travelled around Italy in search of documentation; however, it is

³¹ See letter XCIX, Florence, Gabburri to Mariette, 4 October 1732, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, p. 370: 'se non e un abusarsi della vostra gentilezza, mi avanzerei a pregarvi che mi faceste il favore di farmi una nota dei pittori, scultori architetti e intagliatori in rame, che ora vivono in Francia, indicando la nascita e il loro valore, con quelle particolarità che a voi parranno più proprie, ma nel medesimo tempo con la maggior brevità che sia possibile, pensando io di far ristampare l'Abecedario Pittorico del padre Orlandi, con tutto che sia stato ristampato adesso in Napoli con delle aggiunte.'

³² See letter CXI, Paris, Mariette to Gabburri, 1 June 1733, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, p. 400: 'questo è un libro utile, ma che è tanto pieno di sbagli, che non se ne puo fare uso nessuno, se non si hanno i libri originali che egli cita. Gli estratti che egli ne da sono per la maggior parte infedeli e tronchi; e inoltre vi manca un'infinità di cose... Io vi esorto a intraprendere questa fatica, che in verità è degna di voi. Se io posso dal canto, mio aiutarvi per quel che riguarda la scuola di Francia, lo farò con tutto il cuore.'

evident that he had called on his correspondents to supply him with information not only about non-Italian artists, particularly Dutch ones,³³ but also about Italian painters who worked outside of Florence.³⁴ Gabburri also asked for advice concerning works of art in private collections, so that his entries would be complete and accurate.

While most editors of Orlandi's *Abecedario* put emphasis on a particular aspect of the book when they made new additions – for instance, the 1719 edition, dedicated to Crozat, contained new material predominantly related to French artists – the Neapolitan edition on which Gabburri drew and which was emended and enlarged by Antonio Roviglione, had a much broader aim.³⁵ In addition to including Neapolitan artists, Roviglione sought to add entries on both Roman and Florentine artists, as well as non-Italian ones. His *Aggiunta* to Orlandi's text included only biographies of artists who were not mentioned in the original. Roviglione extracted his new information from Baldinucci's *Notizie* and from works by Lione Pascoli for Roman artists, Ippolito Zanelli for the Bolognese artist Carlo Cignani, and Antonio Campi for Cremonese artists.³⁶ 'A perfect painter and poet', as his compatriot and the main biographer of Neapolitan artists, Bernardo De Dominici, described him in *Le vite*, first published in 1742,³⁷ Roviglione was an important figure in the intellectual circles of eighteenth-century Naples and was known

³³ The Rome-based collector Padre Sebastiano Resta (1635-1714) and the Danish traveller Frederic Louis Norden (1708-1742) are among those who supplied information for Gabburri's project and provided him with notes on non-Italian artists; see letter XLV, Rome, 8 March 1704, Resta to Gabburri, in *ibid.*, pp. 109-13, and *Zibaldone Gabburriano. Miscellanea di lettere e appunti conservata presso la Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze*: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MS Palatino 1195, fasc. 1359, I. 11, letter of Frederic Louis Norden to Gabburri, 29 May 1736;

For the online transcription, see Gabburri, *Zibaldone Gabburriano*, ed. B. M. Tomasello, *Studi di Memofonte*, 1, 2008, pp. 1-21, at

http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/ZIBALDONE_GABBURRIANO.pdf

³⁴ For most of Gabburri's correspondence containing notes on artists sent to him by his network of friends across Europe, see *Zibaldone Gabburriano* in MS Palatino 1195 and 1198.

³⁵ See Cecconi, 'Nella presente aggiunta', pp. 1-23, at p. 8, and O. Morisani, 'L'edizione napoletana dell'Abecedario dell'Orlandi e l'aggiunta di Antonio Roviglione', *Rassegna storica napoletana*, 1-2, 1941, pp. 19-56.

³⁶ *L'abecedario pittorico dall'autore ristampato, corretto ed accresciuto di molti professori e di altre notizie spettanti alla pittura ed in questa ultima impressione con nuova e copiosa aggiunta di alti professori, al Signor Francesco Mura eccellente e magnifico pittore napoletano, in Bologna, ed in Napoli per Angelo Vocola a Fontana Medina*, Naples 1731; see also p. 431: 'Aggiunta dell'Abecedario d'altri pittori, e scultori non scritti dall'Autore. Ricavati dal Baldinucci, e da altri Scrittori, per opera, e diligenza del Signor D. Antonio Roviglione Napolitano'; see also Morisani, 'L'edizione napoletana', pp. 19 and 21; Lione Pascoli, *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni*, 2 vols, Rome 1790-1796; Ippolito Zanelli, *Vita del gran Pittore Carlo Cignani*, Bologna 1722; and Antonio Campi, *Cremona fedelissima città illustrata*, Bologna 1585.

³⁷ See Bernardo De Dominici, *Vite dei pittori, scultori ed architetti napoletani*, second edition, IV, Naples 1844, p. 531: 'perfetto pittore e poeta'.

as a collector of prints and drawings and as a connoisseur.³⁸ Even though there is no evidence that Gabburri knew him personally, his reasons for deciding to use Roviglione's edition of the *Abecedario* as the basis for his own work are evident: a text which incorporated such varied and comprehensive information added by an eminent connoisseur, would lend credibility to Gabburri's edition and also correspond well to his desire to produce something on a larger scale, which included more artists, together with portrait drawings of almost all of them.³⁹ The Veronese painter Antonio Balestra writes in a letter of 1733 which he sent to Gabburri that the planned additions would double the size of the text.⁴⁰ This gives us an idea of the ambition of Gabburri's project and of his intention to produce an encyclopedic work on art.

While Gabburri relied on collectors and connoisseurs with whom he was on friendly terms, as well as on artists of his day, in preparing the biographical notes for his *Vite*, his information mainly came from written texts, either published or in manuscript. A list of all the sources cited by Gabburri, arranged alphabetically, has recently been made available online by the Fondazione Memofonte.⁴¹ The list reveals Gabburri's erudition and the wide variety of works on which he drew: there are nearly 300 titles,⁴² ranging from guidebooks to art treatises and biographies of artists, and from catalogues of prints to letters, archival documents and literary works in Italian, Latin, French, Dutch, English, Spanish and German.⁴³ His attempt to produce a 'compilation' of writings on art, published and unpublished, up to his own day and to incorporate these into his own work shows that he belonged to an environment which was open to influences from outside Italy and to a culture which promoted the circulation and use of art literature which was of particular interest to scholars, collectors and connoisseurs.

³⁸ See Morisani, 'L'edizione napoletana', p. 20.

³⁹ On the portrait drawings, see Turner, 'The Gabburri/Rogers Series', pp. 182-5.

⁴⁰ See letter CVII, Venice, 16 April 1733, Antonio Balestra to Gabburri, in Bottari and Ticozzi, *Raccolta*, II, pp. 385-7: 'Vedo poi le copiose aggiunte che V. S. illustrissima ha fatto per l'Abecedario pittorico, che se si ristampa vuol accrescer il volume doppio mentre dice che sono più di duemila nomi d'autori gli aggiunti.'

⁴¹ See A. Cecconi, V. Gelli, M. Nastasi and R. Viale, eds, 'Bibliografia Gabburriana: Fonti citati nelle *Vite di Pittori* di Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri', *Studi di Memofonte*, 1, 2008, pp. 1-21; http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/biblio_gabburriana_I_2008.pdf

⁴² Of these titles, 156 were owned by Gabburri.

⁴³ See 'Ne seguono adesso i libri trattanti di scultura, pittura ed architettura o altre materie ad esse appartenenti', in *Descrizione dei disegni della Galleria Gabburri in Firenze*, A. XVIII. 33 BNCF, Florence, pp. 297-325, online at http://www.memofonte.it/home.files/pdf/COLLEZIONE_GABBURRI.pdf. For his collection of drawings, see Campori, 'Descrizione dei disegni della Galleria Gabburri?'

There was no contemporary enterprise in Venice of the magnitude of Gabburri's proposed volume: even Sasso's much later project, though a similar type of work, was on a significantly smaller scale than *Le vite* and was limited to local artists. There were both Italian and non-Italian writings at the time, either devoted to art or to other topics, which must have inspired and prompted Gabburri's plan for such a vast work. For instance, among Gabburri's sources was a collection of Dutch biographies: Jacob Campo Weyerman's *De levens-beschryvingen der nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen*, published in four volumes in 1729.⁴⁴ Also, Domenico Maria Manni's *Osservazioni istoriche* was intended to be published in thirty volumes, seven of which were available for consultation during Gabburri's day.⁴⁵ These are just two of the many examples of encyclopedic projects which began to emerge in the eighteenth century in a common attempt to establish a new direction in writing, based on the compilation of a large quantity of material in multiple volumes to serve as reference books and authoritative sources. Gabburri made effective use of these written sources by providing citations at the end of each entry and indicating when they contained additional biographical details or information about the artist's works and their location or reproductions in the form of prints.

Starting with Orlandi and continuing with Gabburri, a shift occurred in the approach taken in Italian literature on art. The emphasis was no longer placed on local artists, as it had been with Bocchi, Cinelli and even Baldinucci – though not with non-Italian writers on art such as Van Mander, Sandrart or de Piles. Gabburri, following Orlandi, approached art history from a much broader perspective, both as collector with a wide network of international correspondents and as a scholar with wide-ranging knowledge and an interest in antiquarianism.

How, then, does Gabburri's enterprise compare to the established tradition of local Florentine writings, and why did he not feel the need to affirm the preeminence of Florentine artists? Gabburri may have thought that the Florentine writers before him had already shown a close attachment to their local art and that, rather than developing this line further, he wanted to lay the foundations for a universal history of art, built on a large corpus of artistic literature. Whereas in Venice writers on art were somewhat isolated and

⁴⁴ Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen der nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen, met een uytbreijding over de schilder-konst der ouden*, The Hague 1729. For further information on Gabburri's use of Weyerman's work, see Gelli, 'Osservazioni', pp. 6-8.

⁴⁵ See Cecconi, Gelli, Nastasi and Viale, eds, 'Bibliografia Gabburriana', p. 13, n. 25.

preoccupied mainly with promoting local art and artists, Florence in the eighteenth century seems to have been more open to cultural exchanges and influences, both in terms of collecting, which in Florence, especially by the Medici, had never been confined to local artists, and in the approach to writing on art.

The Biographies of Early Painters

...e sospiravano le chiese, i palagi ed i mercanti le opere sue...⁴⁶

The nature of Gabburri's manuscript of *Le vite* presents difficulties and challenges for an analysis of his biographies of early Renaissance painters. The large size of the work and the alphabetical ordering of the artists (by first name) indicate that it was meant to be used as a reference book.⁴⁷ Gabburri included both Italian and non-Italian artists, of all types (e.g., painters, sculptors, architects and miniaturists); and this encyclopedic approach did not lend itself to the expression of artistic judgements. According to Giovanna Perini, Gabburri tended to make personal remarks only in connection with his artist friends or their protectors.⁴⁸ As we have seen, this was not an uncommon practice: Sasso also praised artists and works found in the collection of his clients and collector friends,⁴⁹ which makes it difficult to distinguish between his own artistic preferences and his role as a connoisseur and adviser who wished to please his clients.

As the compiler of a biographical dictionary, Gabburri's principal aim was to present the essential information about each artist and his work and to cite the relevant bibliography.⁵⁰ His entry on Andrea del Castagno,⁵¹ for instance, contains no information

⁴⁶ Gabburri, the life of Andrea del Sarto, in *Le vite*, I, p. 180-1-C_0099V.

⁴⁷ Gabburri's unfinished manuscript entered the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze after 1803 and was divided into four volumes; see Borroni Salvadori, 'Gabburri e gli artisti', p. 1554.

⁴⁸ Perini, 'Gabburri', p. 10.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., the discussion of John Strange in Chapter 5, pp. 102-13 above.

⁵⁰ For more information on Gabburri's use of written sources, both Italian and non-Italian, see Gelli, 'Osservazioni', p. 1-16, and, for a list of all the references quoted, see Cecconi, Gelli, Nastasi and Viale, eds, 'Bibliografia gabburriana', pp. 2-19.

⁵¹ See Gabburri, *Le vite*, I, p. 177-I-C_98R: 'Andrea del Castagno fiorentino, così detto per essere nato in una piccola villetta detta il Castagno nel Mugello, contado fiorentino, detto ancora Andrea degl'Impiccati, perché

about Andrea del Castagno's works, but it does reveal Gabburri's knowledge of the written sources and his capacity for synthesis. I want now to investigate how he incorporated the earlier tradition of writing on art in his own work, asking whether he sought to distinguish himself from his predecessors or, instead, to preserve and accentuate previous attitudes towards the art of the early Renaissance.

The first significant entry, for our purposes, is the one on Cimabue. Gabburri states that he 'deserves more attention than Orlandi gave him'⁵² and that, therefore, he had decided to extend the entry considerably. Like his Florentine predecessors, including Vasari, Borghini and Baldinucci, as well as the guidebook writers, Gabburri endorses the idea that Cimabue was the 'restorer of painting',⁵³ which he took to a different level – from the 'deep shadows in which it had been buried by the previous painters' to a more advanced stage,

l'anno 1478 dipinse al naturale, in vari scorci, appesi tutti i capi della congiura contro Giuliano e Lorenzo fratelli de' Medici. Fu uomo fiero. Uccise con diabolica sceleratezza e con ingratitudine mostruosa Domenico Veneziano, che cortesemente gli aveva insegnato il dipingere a olio, per l'invidia di sentire tanto lodare le opere di quello. Visse anni 71. Vasari, parte II, a 394 nella sua Vita. Monsù de Piles nel Compendio delle vite dei pittori, edizione II, libro II, a 145. Francesco Albertini, prete fiorentino, nel suo Memoriale ecc. Stampato in Firenze nel 1510, a 4 tergo e in altri luoghi lo chiama sempre Andreino. Filibien, libro I, da 130 a 134. Florent Le Comte nel suo libro intitolato Gabinetto di quadri, statue e stampe ecc., libro I, a 85.' For the works cited by Gabburri, see Cecconi, Gelli, Nastasi, Viale, eds, 'Bibliografia Gabburriana', pp. 1-21, and Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), p. 394; Roger de Piles, *Abbrégé de la vie des peintres, avec des réflexions sur leurs ouvrages, et un traité du peintre parfait, de la connaissance des dessins et de l'utilité des estampes*, second edition, Paris 1715, pp. 145-7; Albertini, *Memoriale*, pp. [vi-ix]; André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes*, 5 vols, Paris 1666-1688, I, p. 146; Florent Lecomte, *Cabinet des singularitez d'architecture, peinture, sculpture, et graveure, ou Introduction à la connoissance des plus beaux arts figurés sous les tableaux, les statues et les estampes*, 3 vols, Brussels 1702, I, pp. 85-6. For Orlandi's shorter entry on Andrea del Castagno, which Gabburri included and expanded on, see his *Abecedario pittorico*, (1731), p. 55: 'Andrea del Castagno Fiorentino, detto Andrea dagl'impicatti, perchè l'anno 1478. Dipinse al naturale in vari scorci appesi tutti I capi della congiura contro Giuliano, e Lorenzo fratelli dei Medici: fu Uomo fiero; uccise Domenico Veneziano, che gli fu Maestro, per l'invidia di sentire tanto lodare l'opere di quegli: visse 71 anni. Vasari p. 2. fol. 300.' The amount of information provided by Gabburri varies considerably from one artist to another, regardless of the epoch: e.g., Gabburri tells us very little about Altobello (Gabburri, *Le vite*, I, p. 168 – I – C_093V), Andrea del Castagno (ibid., p. 177 – I – C_098R) and Bartolommeo Montagna (ibid., p. 394 – I – C_221V), while going into much more detail in the biographies of Primaticcio (ibid., pp. 139 – I – C_069R - 140.3 – I – C_071R), Altichiero dal Zevio (ibid., pp. 154 – I – C_086V - 155 – I – C_087R) and Andrea Mantegna (ibid., pp. 184 – I – C_101V - 185 – I – C_102R).

⁵² Gabburri, *Le vite*, II, p. 553 – II – C_028R: 'Merita certamente Cimabue una memoria più distinta di quella che ne ha lasciato il padre maestro Orlandi.' Orlandi's entry was limited to basic information, without mentioning any of his works or the specific contributions he made to Florentine painting; see Pellegrino Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, Florence 1753, pp. 123: 'Cimabue Pittore Fiorentino, di nome Giovanni, per istinto naturale, che aveva alla pittura, imparò dai pittori Greci, chiamati a Firenze per restaurare gli antichi mosaici: principiò a vestire le figure e ad accostarsi al naturale, sicche in quei tempi fece stupire Pisa, e Firenze con le tavole d'Altare, che dipingeva sopra incrostatura d'oro, ajutando l'espressioni delle figure con motti, e lettere. Visse 60 anni, e morì nel 1300. Vasari par. 1. Fol. 1.; see Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 103-8.

⁵³ Gabburri, *Le vite*, II, p. 553 – II – C_028R: 'primo restauratore della pittura'.

laying the foundations for a new era.⁵⁴ Gabburri acknowledged the importance of early painters for the development of Italian painting, singling out Giotto and Cimabue for Florence and Francesco and Iacobello del Fiore for Venice.⁵⁵

The next artists generally believed to have been influential in the evolution of Italian painting were Giovanni Bellini in Venice and Masaccio in Florence. Gabburri's treatment of Giovanni Bellini is rather surprising: instead of presenting the painter's achievements or expanding on Orlandi's entry,⁵⁶ as he usually does, he simply lists the available artistic literature on him.⁵⁷ He does the same in his entries on Andrea Mantegna⁵⁸ and Antonello da Messina.⁵⁹ His entry on Massaccio, however, is more extensive and contains important views on the progress of the art. Gabburri saw in Masaccio an excellent painter who exerted a major influence during his own lifetime and in the following centuries and who

⁵⁴ Ibid.: 'e aprisse ai pittori dopo di lui una nuova strada per poter incamminarsi a una total perfezione, alla quale tanti e tanti vi son giunti, che per avventura sarebbero restati in quelle profonde tenebre sino al presente se Cimabue non avesse fatto conoscer loro che collo studio si può giugnere più oltre di quello che non hanno saputo conoscere gli antecessori.'

⁵⁵ Like Ridolfi and Boschini in Chapter 2, n. 20, and Chapter 4, n. 12 above, Gabburri preferred the style of Francesco and Iacobello del Fiore to the dryness and hardness of their predecessors, and he praised their intelligent and correct manner of painting; see Gabburri, *Le vite*, II, p. 901-II-C_204R: 'Francesco Flore veneziano e Iacobello suo figliuolo, posero in reputazione la pittura e riformarono l'arte nella durezza e nella seccaggine, sebbene il tempo ha consumato le fatiche di Francesco, si scopre però in quelle di Iacobello, conservate sino al tempo d'oggi in Venezia, un lume di soda intelligenza e maniera gastigata e corretta.'

⁵⁶ Orlandi, *Abecedario* (1753), pp. 486-7: 'Zan Bellino Cittadino Veneziano figlio, e scolaro di Jacopo, e fratello di Gentile, tutti Pittori superati dalla di lui gentile, pastosa e più elegante maniera, col metodo di dipingere a olio (segreto, che riportò da Antonello da Messina, con la finzione di farsi ritrarre.) Per gloria di questo grand' Uomo basta dire, che fu unico Maestro del famoso Ziziano: a cagione della morte sopravvenutagli in età di 90. Anni nel 1514 non potendo terminare la Baccheide, che dipingeva per Alfonso I. Duca d Ferrara, fu terminata dallo stesso Tiziano, ed ora il quadro sta in Casa Aldobrandini. *Ridolfi par.* 1. Fol 47'; see Ridolfi *Le meraviglie*, I, pp. 63-75. Orlandi does not include Giovanni Bellini in the Florentine edition of his *Abecedario*.

⁵⁷ Gabburri, *Le vite*, III, p. 1311 – III – C_150R: 'Di questo celebre autore, che dal padre maestro Orlandi viene detto Zan Bellino, ne vien fatta commemorazione nella ristampa delle *Ricche minere della pittura* del Boschini del 1733, a 18. Lomazzo libro VI, a 393. Vincenzio Carducci, *Dialogo primo*, a 17 tergo. Torre, a 370. Vedi Zan Bellino nel padre maestro Orlandi. Fu maestro di Tiziano e fratello di Gentile. Viveva nel 1414. Sono se opere in Venezia, in Ferrara, in Firenze e in molte gallerie dell'Europa. Fu professore molto stimato nei suoi tempi, a segno che meritò di esser lodato dall'Ariosto nel suo poema. Vasari, parte II, a 429, nella sua Vita. Sandart, parte II, libro II, capitolo VI, a 116, dove dice che morì di 90 anni. Pinarolo, tomo II, a 71. Vedi Zambellino nel fine del padre maestro Orlandi.' For the 1733 edition of Boschini's *Le ricche minere*, see Zanetti, *Descrizione*, pp. 19-20. For the other sources cited, see Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura*, Milan 1584, p. 393; Vincente Carducho, *Dialogos de la pintura, su defenza, origen, definicion, modos y diferencias*, Madrid 1633, fol. 17^v; Carlo, Torre, *Il ritratto di Milano, diviso in tre libri, colorito da Carlo Torre, canonico dell'insigne basilica degli Appostoli, ... Nel quale vengono descritte tutte le antichità, e modernità, che vedevansi, e che si vedono nella città di Milano*, Milan 1674, pp. 392-3; Vasari, *Le vite* (1550), pp. 431-9; Sandart, *Academia nobilissimae artis pictoriae*, p. 116; Giacomo Pinarolo *L'antichità di Roma con le cose più memorabili che in essa di presente antiche, e moderne si trovano*, 2 vols, Rome 1703, I, p. 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, pp. 184 – I – C_101V - 185 – I – C_102R.

⁵⁹ Ibid., I, p. 204 – I – C_119V.

had reached a level of perfection in his art.⁶⁰ Among the most admired of Masaccio's works, he mentions the frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, which served as a model of excellence for later generations of artists.⁶¹ So far, Gabburri's views are traditional; he embraces the opinions of the writers he cites without challenging them. The examples of works of art which he mentions and presents as most worthy of praise are those usually found in other writings on art. This is also true of his entry on Domenico Ghirlandaio, in which he says that the frescoes in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita and in Santa Maria Novella were painted with 'appropriateness, decorum and truthfulness'.⁶² If we compare some of Gabburri's views with those expressed by Venetian writers such as Boschini and Zanetti, we find similar patterns and vocabulary employed in referring to Renaissance paintings.⁶³ Gabburri also maintained that the works of Masaccio and Ghirlandaio reflected the 'pure truth', had inspired an artist such as Raphael,⁶⁴ and avoided the mannerist 'distortions', of which he seemed to have disapproved, comparing the current state of painting to 'a miserable shipwreck'.⁶⁵

One of Gabburri's longest and most complex biographies is that of the 'divine' Raphael, in which he cites around fifty titles, both Italian and non-Italian, including poems and sonnets written in his honour. This illustrates Gabburri's desire to produce a comprehensive reference work and to show that he had taken account of the artistic literature which preceded him. Raphael is presented as a painter who looked back to the art of antiquity for inspiration, but who was as inferior to ancient artists as modern ones were to him.⁶⁶

The lengthy and laudatory entry on Fra Bartolommeo suggests that he was one of Gabburri's favourite artists: he also owned a large number of his drawings (more than

⁶⁰ Ibid., IV, p. 1804 – IV – C_017V: 'ridusse nonostante la pittura in così alto grado di perfezione'.

⁶¹ Ibid.: 'Fu veramente Masaccio uno dei primi lumi nella pittura, non solo nei suoi tempi ma eziandio nei secoli posteriori...ridusse la pittura in così alto grado di perfezione.'

⁶² Ibid., II, p. 677 – II – C_090R: 'con proprietà, decoro e verità'.

⁶³ See Chapter 3, n. 35, and Chapter 4, n. 15 above.

⁶⁴ Gabburri, *Le vite*, II, p. 677 – II – C_090R: 'lontani dall'ammanierato, seguitano il buon costume e il vero stile degli antichi e, forzati dalla pura verità, hanno detto che in Domenico Grillandaio e in Masaccio si ritrovano i veri maestri di Raffaello e si riconosce ciò che dicono gli scrittori.'

⁶⁵ See his life of Filippo Lippi, in *ibid.*, II, p. 865 – II – C_184R: 'vanno a fare un miserabile naufragio molti pittori moderni'. Gabburri's views about the decline of modern art are similar to those of Bottari, for instance: see Chapter 7, n. 86 above.

⁶⁶ Ibid., IV, p. 2204 – IV – C_227V: 'dallo studio delle statue antiche ne ricavò...quella bella naturale armonia e semplicità, che poi diede alle figure'; 'Raffaello era tanto inferiore agli artefici antichi, quanto gli artefici moderni sono inferiori a lui'. For the views of earlier writers on Raphael, see Chapter 6, nn. 42-3 above.

500), which he kept in two volumes.⁶⁷ Discussing his painting of the *Resurrected Christ* (fig. 92) in San Marco, Gabburri says that it is superior to an early painting by Raphael. He immediately supports this claim by mentioning that Florentine, Roman and north Italian *professori* had unanimously agreed that Bartolommeo's painting was superior because Raphael had not yet reached his third and more perfect style.⁶⁸ He even ventures to call Fra Bartolommeo 'the Raphael of the Florentines'.⁶⁹

Gabburri's biographies were mainly compilations of the views found in the most important earlier writings on art, especially Italian and French works.⁷⁰ As we have seen, Orlandi's *Abeceario* was available in a number of later editions, but there was still a perceived need, on the part of the international community of connoisseurs, for a more thorough and updated version; and this is what Gabburri aimed to provide by incorporating a vast amount of material in his *Vite*. The sheer bulk of information he added, together with the alphabetical arrangement of the work, makes it difficult to discern his view of artistic evolution over the centuries. Nor was Gabburri particularly interested in expressing his own artistic judgements and preferences. He was not an original writer, but a compiler. His dictionary of artists reveals his encyclopedic spirit, his engagement with connoisseurs, collectors and writers inside and outside of Italy who provided him with material and his strategy of drawing on a very wide range of sources to enrich his work and make it more appealing to a broad readership.

Nevertheless, we can say that Gabburri had the same esteem for early Renaissance painters as his predecessors. Moreover, even though the majority of art works which he himself owned were by artists of his own day, there were notable pieces from previous centuries, including drawings by Paolo Ucello, Jacopo Pontormo, Titian, Michelangelo,

⁶⁷ See C. Fischer, 'Fra Bartolommeo's Landscape Drawings', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 33, 1989, pp. 301-42, esp. pp. 301-2. The two volumes are in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam.

⁶⁸ Gabburri, *Le vite*, II, p. 873 – II – C_188R : 'che ben dimostrano quanto fosse grande il valore di questo sublime artefice, mentre il Cristo risorgente, stando collocato incontro al famoso padre di Raffaello, che era già nella pieve, ora cattedrale della città di Pescia, non solo non resta inferiore, ma gloriosamente combatte, ed è sentimento di professori eccellenti, non dirò fiorentini, ma della scuola di Roma e di Lombardia, che tra quei due quadri resti superiore nel pregio il Cristo risorgente del nostro Frate, atteso specialmente che il quadro di Raffaello non è della terza sua più perfetta maniera.' Gabburri goes on to say that the defining characteristic of the third manner, which Raphael achieved later, was the mastering of outlines with great artistry: 'Siccome la terza maniera di Raffaello non in altro consiste, che in certa maggiore grandiosità di contorni'.

⁶⁹ Ibid.: 'il Raffaello de' fiorentini'.

⁷⁰ Gabburri consulted 282 sources of which 225 were Italian, 29 French, 10 Dutch, 7 Spanish, 3 English, 5 German, 1 Danish and 1 Portuguese (most of the non-Italian ones were also available in Latin); see Cecconi, Gelli, Nastasi, Viale, eds, 'Bibliografia Gabburriana', pp. 1-19.

Andrea del Sarto and Albrecht Dürer and prints after Raphael's paintings.⁷¹ In his *Vite*, as in his collection, he seems to have tried to be as inclusive as possible; this was also one of main principles adopted by French collectors Mariette and Crozat.⁷² Furthermore, Gabburri's activity as a writer and a collector were complementary and followed the same general principles.

Although it remained unpublished, Gabburri's biographical dictionary of artists was a source of inspiration for other works of similar or even of greater ambition. Pietro Zani (1748-1821), for instance, states in the first of his eight encyclopedic volumes on the method of fine arts that, while he was in Parma, his great friend Filippo Piale sent him Gabburri's autograph manuscript to help him with his own work.⁷³ Zani's remark shows that the manuscript had some circulation and that it served as precedent for similarly large-scale projects, which continued throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁴

⁷¹ See the following entries: 11, 13, 16, 19, 23, 64, 71-72, 74, 422, 423, 427, 433, 498 for drawings and 69 for prints at http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/COLLEZIONE_GABBURRI.pdf

⁷² R. Bacou, *I grandi disegni italiani delle collezione Mariette al Louvre di Parigi*, Milan 1982, esp. pp. 5-80.

⁷³ P. Zani, *Enciclopedia metodica critico-ragionata delle belle arti*, 11 vols, Parma 1817-1819, I, p. 41: 'frattanto l'ottimo mio amico Filippo Piale mi annunziò d'aver fatto l'acquisto dell'Abbecedario autografo del cel. Cav. Gaburri. Avrei voluto poter volare a Firenze per osservarlo sull'istante; ma il cortese amico mi spedì ben presto il Gaburri in Parma ov'io erami trasferito nel mese di Settembre del 1803 per dare l'ultima mano alla presente opera, arricchendola di nuove osservazioni tratte de' libri di questa pubblica Biblioteca.'

⁷⁴ E.g., Luigi Lanzi, *Storia pittorica illustrata*, 3 vols, Bassano 1795-1796; Aubin Louis Millin, *Dictionnaire des beaux-arts*, 3 vols, Paris 1806; and d'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'art*.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

My purpose in this dissertation has been to illustrate the reception of early Renaissance works of art in Venice and Florence between 1550 and 1800 by examining a selection of writings from both cities. I sought to identify elements which contributed to the evaluation of the 'primitives', changes which occurred in attitudes towards these artists during this period and the motives which led to these developments. I also investigated whether these writings had any influence on the activity of collecting early Renaissance art works. My comparative analysis of primary sources from both cities has drawn attention to the continuities and changes which characterized writings on early Renaissance art in this period and to the different approaches to the art of the past adopted by exponents of the distinctive Venetian and Florentine traditions – whether authors of guidebooks and biographies of artists or connoisseurs and collectors.

An important feature which defines most of the works discussed in this dissertation is *campanilismo*. By looking at these texts in detail, I found that Venetian and Florentine writers promoted their local art in different ways: in Venice, there was more reliance on critical analysis and artistic appreciation of early works of art; in Florence, historiographical issues such as the origins of art in Italy and the role played by Florentine artists in that development were more central. My findings have also shown that, within both the Venetian and the Florentine traditions, some features remained unchanged throughout the period covered in this study and some underwent significant changes, which affected the perception of the art of the past. These changes were not always predictable and did not necessarily lead to a clear and straightforward path to the re-evaluation of the early Renaissance art.

My examination of Venetian guidebooks and biographies of artists has shown that there were differences of approach towards the art of the past and that, unsurprisingly, certain accounts were more elaborate or nuanced than others. Venetian authors considered three key aspects in their assessment of early Renaissance paintings: the religious, the historical and the artistic. Some, especially Carlo Ridolfi and Marco Boschini, were inclined to stress the religious element, praising the ability of paintings by artists such as Giovanni Bellini and Marco Basaiti to inspire devotion; while others, most notably Francesco

Sansovino, emphasized the historical value of art works and included ones which were no longer extant (for example, the frescoes in the Palazzo Ducale which were destroyed by fire) for documentary purposes. These two angles from which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venetian writers re-evaluated earlier art revealed little in terms of their personal preferences or taste. They did, however, enable writers to assess early art critically, to disseminate an established artistic vocabulary and to follow patterns which would continue to typify Venetian artistic literature throughout the centuries under investigation. For instance, it was generally acknowledged that the earliest examples of Venetian art such as the works of Guariento, Nicoletto Semitecolo and Jacobello del Fiore were characterized by simplicity and by a lack of softness in rendering the figures, which translated into a hard, dry and *greccheggiante* manner. Artists such as Bartolommeo Vivarini, Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, Cima da Conegliano and Marco Basaiti, on the other hand, were always admired, whether for the colouring, the gracious attitudes of the figures or their ability to inspire devotion.

A more complex evaluation of early Venetian works of art began to take shape in the eighteenth century, with noticeable changes coming especially from Antonio Maria Zanetti the Younger. Drawing on the legacy of Boschini, he set out clearer artistic criteria for judging and selecting the works to be treated in his writings. In comparison to his predecessors, Zanetti more frequently stated his own views on the art of the past, expressed preferences for certain works and even left out artists such as Guariento, Giorgio Veneziano, Gentile da Fabriano, Cristoforo Parmese, Bellin Bellino and Francesco Bissolo who did not measure up to his standards. These changes were also reflected in his use of a richer array of pictorial terms for describing paintings.

I have also uncovered some evidence that writings on early Venetian paintings had an impact on the art market, the activity of collecting and the methods of displaying collections between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. From the modest, but significant, collection of drawings owned by Ridolfi, which was intended to illustrate the evolution of artistic style from the Trecento to the Cinquecento, to the more complex attempts by Carlo Lodoli and Girolamo Manfrin in the eighteenth century to build up collections which were displayed chronologically. Furthermore, the collector and connoisseur Giovanni Maria Sasso drew on this art literature in his attempt to encourage his clients to buy early Renaissance works of art. Both his *Venezia pittrice* and his

correspondence have been analysed in this dissertation and have proved to be revealing of Sasso's concern to promote a taste for early Venetian painting, even though his choices of art works and his ranking of artists were at times unexpected and did not always correspond to those of his predecessors.

Florentine writers had a very different approach to the art of the past. Biographers of artists, starting with Giorgio Vasari, attached considerable importance to the context in which works of art were produced and offered a broader historical perspective on the evolution of artistic styles and individual artists. Less attention was paid than in Venetian art literature to the critical analysis of the works of art discussed. The exception is Francesco Bocchi, who included evocative accounts in his guidebook, expressed admiration for Fra Angelico's devotional and pious compositions, and maintained that Donatello and Masaccio were models of excellence who had inspired later artists such as Andrea del Sarto, Raphael and Michelangelo. While continuing to appreciate the artists praised by Bocchi, guidebook writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries centred their attention more on the historical value of earlier art works and emphasized the importance of Cimabue and Giotto for the advancement of art.

The publication of four editions of Vasari's *Lives* between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indicated that there was a growing interest in this work. Editors sometimes took the opportunity to add their own touches and to reinterpret Vasari's conception of art history. While Carlo Manolessi's interventions were discreet and did not affect the content of the *Lives*, Giovanni Gaetano Bottari's additions enriched Vasari's text with historical and artistic data about artists, as well as ideas about the conservation and restoration of early Tuscan works of art. He also advocated their reproduction in the form of prints as a means of preserving the artistic past and making it available to a wider audience. Even though Bottari's project of producing an illustrated history of art from Cimabue to Raphael was not brought to completion, other writers in eighteenth-century Florence welcomed this idea; and Marco Lastri executed it in the form of a two-volume album of prints accompanied by text entries containing biographical information about the artists, followed by descriptions and interpretations of their works. The emergence of such projects in Florence was an important step in the process of re-evaluating the art of the past, especially because they brought together the visual and the written traditions.

The third editor of Vasari's *Lives*, Tommaso Gentili, also sought to make his readers aware of the importance of early Tuscan artists and their works by adding instructive historical information, recording inscriptions and mentioning lost works of art. Vasari's last eighteenth-century editor, Guglielmo della Valle, mounted the most serious challenge to Vasari's views, above all, about the origins of art in Italy; instead of promoting Florentine art like his predecessors, he indulged in Pisan and Sienese *campanilismo*. This polemical position also led him to shift attention away from the Florentine 'primitives' and towards early artists from Pisa and Siena.

Vasari's *Lives* also inspired larger-scale projects such as Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri's unpublished *Le vite*. A compilation of biographies of artists written in the form of dictionary entries, Gabburri's work occupies a significant place within the tradition of Florentine writings on art in the eighteenth century. While his entries do not say much about his personal taste or preferences, they do tell us about his approach to the history of Italian art: abandoning the *campanilismo* of his predecessors, he instead offered a global view of art: seeking to be as inclusive as possible, he adopted an encyclopedic perspective, which incorporated and transmitted the written tradition of both Italian and non-Italian artistic literature.

This dissertation has explored the largely neglected history of the reception of Italian 'primitives' between 1550 and 1800 by focusing on art literature written in Venice and Florence. I have shown that the art of previous generations, and of the early Renaissance in particular, continued to be written about throughout the period 1550-1800. Venetian and Florentine writings on art, although taking different approaches, underwent significant changes in this period which had implications for the eighteenth century. Views of past art became more articulate and acquired greater clarity; and writers started to discuss not only the artistic qualities of works which were appreciated but also why others were not highly regarded or collected. The texts examined here reveal that much late medieval and early Renaissance art was prized by patrons and collectors throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This result shows that what was often referred to as 'ancient' painting was valued during this period and therefore challenges the notion, still accepted by many scholars, that the 'primitives' were not appreciated or collected before the nineteenth century.

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