LORENZO LOTTO AND THE SURGEON'S PAINTING:
A PRIVATE COMMISSION IN THE VENETIAN
PROVINCES
By
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ABSTRACT

Lorenzo Lotto’s Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is a private devotional work, originally in the possession of a surgeon in Bergamo. In this thesis, the painting is looked at as a work that incorporates the associations of a traditional form and charges it with iconographically rich layering to suit its particular commission. A critical historiography of the artist and of the painting introduces my work into the context of the received tradition. I look at the patron of the painting, Battista Cucchi, and at the social and political situation in Bergamo in order to establish the contemporary context of the image.

The painting is unusual in its composition, with formal and iconographic innovations giving a disconcerting quality to what is at the foundation a traditional Venetian type - the half-length Madonna and Child with saints. Chapter Two discusses the fifteenth-century half-length tradition in Venice, and Chapter Three deals with the new trends in the sixteenth century that transform private devotional painting in the period of Lotto’s Bergamo career.
Chapter Six explores the complex iconography of the image. Although the resonances of the prototype — miraculous imagery and the Venetian pedigree suited to Lotto’s Bergamo patronage — are preserved, the hieratic aspect and traditional form of the Venetian half-length are transformed. Stylistic dissonances and iconographic innovations both underline particular meanings that are stressed. The two plague saints Roch and Sebastian are common in Venetian works and signal a healing context. Their ecstatic expressions and aggressive participation however are unique in this format. They extend their bracket of healing to participate in the devotional iconography of Christ, Roch by echoing the gesture of Christ and Sebastian by stepping forward in a role as alter christus. The prominent and unusual device of the slab conveys the altar/tomb connotations of the conventional parapet in a more overt way, and by seating the Madonna and Child above it, Lotto emphasizes the theme of triumph over death. Simple on the surface, the painting communicates traditional devotional messages of salvation and intercession that are tempered to apply to the surgeon patron.
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CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SCOPE OF THE THESIS

"To know the sixteenth century well, it is almost more important to study Lotto than Titian. Titian only embodies in art-forms what we already know about the ripe Renaissance, but Lotto supplements and even modifies our idea of this period."

Bernard Berenson, Lorenzo Lotto (1895)

In 1980 - the five hundredth anniversary of Lorenzo Lotto's birth - exhibitions and convegni were held in the major sites of the artist's activity - the Marche, Asolo (representing the Veneto), and Bergamo. Corresponding to this signal date, an output of articles, books, and dedicatory numbers of periodicals appeared as if a major river had appeared from a hitherto hidden spring. A celebratory date alone however does not account for this kind of scholarly activity. The problems brought out in Lotto research, rather, seem to encompass many of the contemporary concerns in Renaissance studies.

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The critical stance developed toward Lotto in the sixteenth century is now only slowly undergoing revision. In the sixteenth century, Lotto had already been classified as outside the mainstream by both major camps - the Florentine Vasari on the one side and Venetian Dolce and Aretino on the other. The critical constructions based on an urban art - particularly a Florentine urban art indicative of a high class patronage - that were formed by these writers held a formidable power over art historical tradition. The art historical 'story' of the Renaissance was more or less sealed within this tradition. By providing a categorical summation, Wölfflin's construction of 'Classic Art' encapsulated this 'story' for the modern period. Lotto, a Venetian who spent much of his career in the provinces, did not fit into the pattern of the 'disegno' progression from Giotto to Michelangelo or into a Venetian 'colore' progression from Titian to Tintoretto. He was patronized by the middle class as well as the petty aristocracy, and he worked outside what we have come to see as actually a small corner of the Renaissance cosmos - outside of the pomp expressed by Titian and Veronese, or of Michelangelo, and outside a papally dominated religious focus.

Modern scholarship has shown such a lively interest in Lotto because of his exclusion, and because of the richness of his career outside of the confines of 'Classic' culture.
What can be seen in the current literature, and what makes Lotto a pertinent problem, is a breakup of the Renaissance 'story' and an expanding interest in art outside the major urban centres of Florence, Rome, and Venice and in artists peripheral to the accepted tradition. The problems that concern the subject of this thesis continue the expanded directions of current lines of research: a provincial context, a middle class patron, a specific medical function, and the context of a popular private piety that was showing the effects of new devotional currents.

Lotto appeared in the second edition of Vasari's *Lives*, when 'Lives' of selected Venetian artists were added to the original text. Lotto was not one of the Venetian artists singled out for special notice. He was treated along with Palma il Vecchio, briefly but sympathetically. As none of Lotto's works in Bergamo were mentioned by Vasari, presumably he did not see any. Vasari knew of Lotto's final years at the Santa Casa in Loreto and summed up his 'Life' not with Lotto's achievements as an artist, but with the appreciation of his religious nature - an unsatisfying end to a scanty artistic biography and one that has been repeated ad infinitum since:

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Lorenzo died, a good Christian as he had lived. His last years were happy and very peaceful, probably winning for him eternal life. He might not have obtained this had he always been immersed in the affairs of the world, which do not permit men to raise their minds to the true benefits of the other life, and to the highest happiness and joy.

Vasari characterized Lotto’s religious nature in apparently laudatory terms. In a highly controversial letter of 1548 addressed to Lotto, Aretino twisted the merits of the artist’s Christian goodness into a caustic sting:

Ma lo essere superato nel mestiero del dipingere, non si accosta punto al non vedersi agguagliare ne l’ufficio de la religione. Talchè il cielo vi restorà d’una gloria che passa del mondo la laude. (But holding second place in the art of painting is nothing compared with holding first place in the duties of religion. For heaven will reward you with glory that surpasses praise of this world)
If it can be read without sarcasm, the rest of Aretino’s letter to Lotto contains many words of esteem.\(^6\)

It is also evident that Lotto had close ties to the Venetian humanistic circle of aristocratic patronage of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino\(^7\). However, it was in Lotto’s own

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\(^6\)There seems to be very little consensus on the matter of the Aretino letter. It is either considered as evidence of true esteem, as sarcastic throughout and thus completely damning to Lotto’s position within Venetian circles or as frankly realistic, mixing sting with praise. Below is the body of the letter as reproduced by Caroli (1980), 316:

“O Lotto, come la bontà buono e come la virtù vertuoso, Tiziano, sin d’Augusta e in mezo la grazia di tutti i favori del mondo, vi saluta e abbraccia, con il testimonio de la lettra che due di sono mandommi. Egli, secondo il dir suo, raddoppirebbe il piacere che sente ne la sodisfazione che mostra lo imperadore de l’opere che egli fa, se il vostro giudizio gli desse d’inganno e parlassene. E di nulla il pittor grave s’inganna, imperoché il consiglio di voi è approvato dagli anni, da la natura e da l’arte; con il consenso de quella amorevolezza sincera, che sentenzia le fatture altrui, né più né meno che se fusser le sue. Onde può dire, chi vi pone inanzi i propri quadri e ritratti, che a se stesso gli mostri, e di lui medesimo chiegga il parere. Non è invidia nel vostro petto, anzi godete di vedere nei professori del disegno alcune parti che non vi pare di conoscere nel pennello; che pur fa di quei miracoli che non escono facilmente de lo stile di molti, che solo nel far loro si compiacciono. Ma lo essere superato nel mestiero del dipingere, non si accosta punto al non vedersi agguagliare ne l’offizio de la religione. Talché il cielo vi restorà d’una gloria che passa del mondo la laude.”

\(^7\)Mascherpa attempts to clarify Lotto’s acceptance in the circles in which Aretino operated. In this regard he quotes an excerpt from a letter by Aretino to the wealthy collector Monsignor dei Martini which testifies to Lotto’s casual inclusion in the high art circles of Venice. It (Footnote Continued)
time that lines were drawn separating him from the dominant culture (read Titian) primarily through Aretino’s self-designated mouthpiece, Dolce. Behind Aretino’s acrid phrase "lo essere superato nel mestiere del dipingere" is praise of Titian against whom Lotto is critically compared. Titian’s success with the aristocratic patronage was supported by a critical backing provided by Aretino. It was Dolce however, who codified the lines between Titian and Lotto forming a polarity that still lingers today.

Vasari primarily having lionized Florentine artists, Dolce’s "Aretino" was conceived as the Venetian rejoinder to the Lives. In order to praise Titian above all artists,

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(Footnote Continued)
gives evidence of a studio visit in which Lotto was present in the esteemed company: "...quello di ieri, cavaliere magnifico, reputato per giorno felice. Da che la benninità della ventura si contentò che lì, dove il Danese scultore intaglia, trovassi voi e il Querini e il Sansovino e il Lotto: facendoci memorando ispettacolo lo esempio in marmo de lo immortalissimo Bembo, mentre il ragionamento de le sculture si concluse non meno in gloria de le moderne che de le antiche..."

Mascherpa does not find Aretino’s censure in the letter of 1548 surprising, coming from Titian’s "press agent", but he points out that Lotto was in fact respected for his achievements. Lotto’s patronage was, according to Mascherpa, that of "i nobili e i borghesi più progressisti." Mascherpa writes that Lotto’s beginnings were in the same milieu as those of Titian, but his choice – in line with his difficult ‘temperament’ – was to ‘drop out’ or more likely ‘drop in’ to another patronage context. Giorgio Mascherpa, Invito a Lorenzo Lotto (Milan: Rusconi, 1980), 5-8.

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Dolce’s Dialogo della pittura ... intitolato l’Aretino is reproduced in Italian and English translation in: Mark Roskill, Dolce’s "Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the

(Footnote Continued)
Dolce attributes to him superiority in an area of competency that he contrasts to the achievements of the Florentine artists most praised by Vasari. It is to Dolce that we owe the codification of the colourism/diseqno paragone between Venetian and Florentine artists. Dolce pays Lotto only passing notice, giving Lotto's altarpiece for the church of the Carmine as an example of "cattive tinte". By condemning Lotto for his poor colouring, Dolce compares him unfavourably to Titian and places him outside the parameters of "good art" and outside the dominant aristocratic culture as he has defined it.

Dolce having excluded Lotto from the Venetian mainstream, it is not surprising that as early as 1590 Lomazzo began a strange period in the history of Lotto research by eliminating Lotto completely from the patrimony of Venice and claiming him as a Lombard. The result is

(Footnote Continued)

(Footnote Continued)


9 Roskill (1968), 38-49.

10 "Di queste cattive tinte parmi, che si vegga assai notabile esempio in una tavola di Lorenzo Lotto, che è qui in Venegia nella Chiesa de’ Carmini." in Roskill (1968), 154.

11 At the turn of the nineteenth century Lanzi and Federici recognize Lotto again as a Venetian. Lomazzo gives Lotto a more favourable reading than Dolce and does so by singling out the very work that Dolce condemned:

(Footnote Continued)
that Lotto is treated with more respect in his misplaced patria than he was as a Venetian. Tassi in the eighteenth century feels free to claim Lotto for Bergamo and to present him as a local luminary:

... in quel tempo, in cui Tiziano in Venezia, Raffaello in Roma, il Coreggio a Modena, il Mazzuoli a Parma, Michel'agnolo a Firenze, ed altri molti l'arte nobilissima della pittura in altre città illustrarano, Lorenzo Lotto in Bergamo, al pari d'ogn'altro uno de' primi posti occupando diffondeva d'ogn'intorno lucidissimi raggi di gloria.  

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century however, that Lotto became the object of serious attention and methodical study. In this period, a new breed of connoisseurs strove to achieve exhaustiveness in cataloguing

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(Footnote Continued)

"In Venezia, oltre molte opere tutte eccellenti, è chiara la Chiesa dei Carmini per la gran tavola di Lorenzo Lotto, singolar maestro anch'egli di dar il lume. Nella quale, s'io non erro, è St. Nicolao e due Santi sopra le nubi et al basso St. Giorgio a cavallo che uccide il drago con la lancia e la donzella che fugge per un paese' oscurato dal tempo; il qual particolarmente è giudicato di singolar eccelenza da molti pittori, si come tale anco è riputata la Ascensione della Vergine coi discepoli al basso, ch'egli già dipinse in Santa Maria di Celania nella Valle di St. Martino."


lesser masters, being particularly interested in the Italian 'primitives'. Nineteenth century connoisseurship entertained the notion that it was bringing 'scientific' methodology to the study of art history.\textsuperscript{13} Giovanni Morelli, for example was employed by the Italian government to catalogue its patrimony, and for the task he developed a meticulous, 'objective' system based on the comparison of minor details in paintings such as ears and hair. The first-hand experience of works, the language of careful description and the inclusiveness of their field was new. This inclusiveness, this desire for thoroughness, admitted artists who had been seen as minor to be treated with the same high seriousness accorded to a Titian or a Raphael. A chink had been wedged between Giotto and Raphael, and the neglected artists began to fall through. It was in this critical atmosphere that Lotto was 'discovered' in the modern sense.

It is in this new aim for thoroughness that Crowe and Cavalcaselle's \textit{A History of Painting in North Italy} was written in 1871. Although Crowe and Cavalcaselle argue erroneously for Lotto's Bergamask origins and consider him a "second-rate" in the league of Renaissance painters, they

give him a very positive evaluation, and begin the period's solid attempts at establishing a critical biography of the artist. In response to Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Morelli treated Lotto with analytic detachment, reestablishing Lotto's roots in Venice and criticizing the earlier writers for their discussion of Lotto as a compendium of artistic


"It has been said, with some show of truth, that Lotto was more worthy of a biography than any of the second-rates of the North Italian provinces. There is no doubt that, amongst the second-rates, he holds an eminent place, and claims to rank aesthetically as high as Bazzi.... It is easy to be enthusiastic about Lotto's talent. He had a very fine feeling for colour, he became a master of foreshortening and modelling, he studied action in its most varied forms, and rendered it with unaccustomed daring; expression in every mood - expression roguish, tender, earnest, solemn - he could depict them all. But there was one thing wanting in his pictorial organism: he lacked the pure originality of genius and independent power." (391)

Where modern critics most often depict Lotto's Venetian period as less than successful, Crowe and Cavalcaselle depict this period in very positive terms: "but Lotto's talent was then not inferior to that of any second-rate in the northern schools, and hence the rapidity with which he extended his practice at Venice. It was not long before he received important commissions for altarpieces from the wealthiest religious communities, and for easel pictures from the richest collectors." (417)

In portraiture, Crowe and Cavalcaselle concede that Lotto rivals Titian himself, if still holding second place. (425)
"influences" - a critical tendency that still characterizes Lotto connoisseurship.\textsuperscript{15}

It was out of this constellation of nineteenth century connoissuership that Berenson began his work. To Morellian technique and the fervour of first-hand experience Berenson added the aesthetic appreciation of a Pater in his creation of the ‘artistic personality.’\textsuperscript{16} The publication of Berenson’s first monograph on Lotto in 1895 was the result of this process and established the modern construct of the artist.\textsuperscript{17} By pulling what was formerly considered a minor character out of the artistic constellation of the Renaissance, and giving him a rich, independent treatment, Berenson dealt with a significant problem in modern research.

What is forgotten when one reads the later 1955 edition is how much of the first edition was devoted actually to Alvise Vivarini and to constructing around him a Venetian school of which Lotto was a part. By setting up the

\textsuperscript{15}Giovanni Morelli, \textit{Italian Painters. The Galleries of Munich and Dresden} (London: John Murray, 1893), 48-49. Morelli considers Lotto most kindred to Correggio.

\textsuperscript{16}Brown (1979), 33-40.

\textsuperscript{17}I use the revised edition of 1901. Bernard Berenson, \textit{Lorenzo Lotto: An Essay in Constructive Art History} (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901).
conjecture of an Alvise 'school', Berenson opened up a breathing space in a picture of the Venetian Renaissance dominated by Bellini and Titian into which the possibility of an 'alternative culture' could be entertained. For Berenson, Lotto opened the window to the 'other side' of the Renaissance where the "real Renaissance, with all its blithe promise, seemed over and gone." One gets the feeling in Berenson's construction of Lotto of the 'back roads' of early sixteenth century Italy where a sincere renovation of religious feeling was occurring, and where people showed their character rather than their position. Berenson still considered Lotto as one of the better 'second-rates', thus admitting an adherence to the preexistent schema of dominant culture, but by constructing an independent critical context he effected an act of 'removal' that allowed him to begin the development of a new picture of the artist.

The new picture of the artist involved the recreation of a personality that was not formed on the culturally elite model of a Titian or a Raphael. Berenson was acquainted with Lotto's will of 1546, and he was aware of the newly rediscovered account book of 1538-1554, published by Venturi in 1895 as the *Libro dei conti*. The evidence of these documents supplemented his construction of the artist as a

\[18\text{ Berenson (1901), 252.}\]
sensitive, and psychologically intense personality. The picture of the alienated artist, troubled, restless, and intense has formed a part of the Lotto image up to the present day. While Berenson himself did not stress the more dramatic aspects of this figure, it is certain that he laid the basis for the subsequent construct. When a new interest in the alienated artistic personality brought Mannerism into scholarly focus in the 1950's and 1960's, this construct of Lotto was seized upon with new interest.

Berenson sets up an image of the artist as a 'psychologist' which is then taken up by Caroli in 1980 to a surprisingly literal degree. Flavio Caroli, *Lorenzo Lotto e la nascita della psicologia moderna* (Milan: Fabbri, 1980).

"To the end Lotto remains a psychologist, using psychology not for its own sake, but as an instrument with which to give a finer interpretation of character than was given by any of his contemporaries; as a means of drawing closer to people, and of looking deeper down into their natures; as a guiding power for the recreation in painting of the most symbolic events of sacred story. These, as we have seen, he interprets with earnest piety and profound sincerity at a time when Titian was painting Jesuitical pictures which met with the exact approval of his Spanish patrons, and when even Tintoretto was mingling with all his sublime inspiration a strong dose of apologetic sophistry. Where Tintoretto sought to explain, and Titian to comply, Lotto sought only to interpret the beliefs which had permeated and coloured his whole personality."

Berenson (1901), 277.

Subsequent to the major *mostra* of Lotto's works in 1953, Berenson published a new edition of his *Lorenzo Lotto*. In the revised 1955 edition, Berenson largely discredited his earlier construction of the Alvise school. The picture he constructed of the oeuvre and the artistic personality of Lotto however, changed little. When Berenson described Lotto's religious attitudes, he described another side of the sixteenth century from the traditional Renaissance 'story'. He established Lotto within currents of Catholic reform which belonged to a society outside of a more urban, 'public' humanism or papal imagery. In his 1955 edition, 

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21 Berenson did change or add some attributions and paid more attention to Lotto’s portraiture, strengthened in his belief that "Lotto was perhaps the most interesting portraitist of his time." Bernard Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto* (London: Phaidon, 1956), xi.

22 Berenson relates Lotto to the currents of reform within the Catholic Church that were most 'Protestanizing'. Call picks up on this particular line (see below) and has explicitly referred to Berenson as her precursor in this. Berenson makes his connections based on his construction of Lotto's personality - the evidence of a highly 'personal', 'evangelical' religion, which dovetails with Berenson's larger construction of Lotto as a sensitive, psychological artist.

"It will be remembered that not only those Italians who hoped to reconcile Protestantism with the Church by returning to a more evangelical form of Christianity were to a great extent Venetian subjects, or living and working in Venice, but also that the Theatines, the Somascan Order, and the Jesuits themselves, either had their roots or took their final shape there. The accounts of the early Theatine movement, the letters of Contarini or Pole, convey exactly the same impression of (Footnote Continued)
Berenson focused with greater intensity on Lotto's portraiture, and in this context, a picture of an alternate patronage came through more clearly: 23 "It almost would seem

(Footnote Continued)

charity, of large humanity, and evangelical feeling, that is conveyed by the pictures Lotto was painting at the same time."

Berenson (1901), 269.

"A brave Italian band trusted that they would be able to make religion personal once more without becoming Protestants. We all know of the sad failure of Contarini and Sadolet. Lotto had the same temper of mind, and he remained as unappreciated as they, for Titian and Tintoretto swept him into oblivion, as Caraffa and Loyola effaced the protestantizing cardinals."

Berenson (1901), 253.
Also see: Berenson (1901), 252-3.

23 In his first edition, Berenson had contrasted Lotto's personality, religion, and style to Titian and his world, hinting at the idea of an 'alternate culture.' "Lorenzo Lotto was, then, a psychological painter in an age which ended by esteeming little but force and display, a personal painter at a time when personality was fast getting to be of less account than conformity, evangelical at heart in a country upon which a rigid and soulless Catholicism was daily strengthening its hold. Even the circumstances of his life, no less than his character, were against his acquiring a reputation. Restless and a wanderer, he left but few pictures in Venice, his native town, so that the sixteenth-century amateurs, from whom we have derived our current notions about the art of that time, did not find there enough of Lotto's work to carry away enthusiastic accounts of it. But even if circumstances had been more favourable, it is probable that Lotto's reputation would have paled before that of his great rival, who gained and kept, through a long lifetime, the attention of the public. Achievements so brilliant and so well advertised as Titian's could leave but scant room for the European fame of a painter, the appreciation of whose peculiar merits required a

(Footnote Continued)
as if he had acquired the reputation of being the artist able to portray the kind of individual who, for personal, social or financial reasons, did not want to employ — or could not afford to employ — a Titian or a Tintoretto."\textsuperscript{24}

In a study entitled "Quesiti caravaggeschi: I precedenti" (1929) Roberto Longhi made a significant contribution to the opening up of the Renaissance context.\textsuperscript{25} Longhi wrested the provincial artists of Lombardy — particularly of Brescia and Bergamo — from their critical subordination to the Renaissance 'greats' and recreated an independent and lively artistic context. Longhi broke the fetters that still clung to Crowe and Cavalcaselle and even to Berenson — an inherent comparison to the traditional Renaissance matrix, the preestablished notions of progression to a 'Classic Art'. He found particularly unhelpful the tendency to see artists such as Moretto as a "Tizianucci di contado".\textsuperscript{26} Longhi pointed out that local

\textsuperscript{24}Berenson (1956), xiii.

\textsuperscript{25}Roberto Longhi, "Quesiti caravaggeschi: i precedenti," in \textit{Da Cimabue a Morandi} (Vicenza: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1974), 735-800. Longhi reports that the thesis of the article was originally formulated in 1911. Longhi (1974), 736.

\textsuperscript{26}Longhi (1974), 752.
characteristics of painting were sometimes antithetic to the 'High Renaissance' aesthetic. He characterized as particularly Lombard a realism that was not epic, but transitory, partaking of everyday events expressed in idiosyncratic emotional response, vagrant effects of light, and a preference for landscape as an independent vehicle. Treating Lotto as an active participant in this cultural milieu made it possible to see the provinces as a positive context.

Pietro Zampetti has played a key role in modern Lotto studies. In 1950 he organized a major exhibition "Pittura veneta nelle Marche" which 'opened up' an important regional area of Lotto's activity as Longhi had 'opened up' Lombardy. Three years later Zampetti arranged the first major mostra of Lotto's works in Venice. His central role in the modern development of Lotto studies was established with this commitment. With the 1953 exhibition, for the first

27 Mostra di Lorenzo Lotto (Venice: Arte Veneta, 1953).

28 Zampetti has made a valuable contribution to modern Lotto studies with the synthetic overviews he has written on the field. In the catalogue to the Asolo convegno internazionale and the Marche catalogue from the major mostra of the same year, Zampetti provides brief but helpful critical historiographies on Lotto research. Lorenzo Lotto, Convegno internazionale di studi (Asolo, 1980), 13-20 [hereafter referred to as Asolo]; Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche, Il suo tempo, il suo influsso. (Florence: Centro Di, 1981), 17-27.

see also: Rudolfo Pallucchini and Giordana Mariani (Footnote Continued)
time, important works from disparate locations of Lotto's production could be seen together as a unit. Lotto was given recognition and legitimacy — after Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Giovanni Bellini, and Tiepolo had been given similar exhibitions. In response to this event new studies and monographs on the artist were produced.

These studies carried and expanded on work done by both Berenson and Longhi. The definition of Lotto's 'anomalous' personality is fleshed out, and beginnings are made to establish a context of an alternative spirituality linked to currents of Catholic reform — a theme, along with work on private piety, that will be picked up and elaborated on by several scholars in the 1980's. The Marche exhibition of 1950, and Longhi's work previous to it, set the ground for more serious attention to the provincial context — attention which continues to develop up to the present.

Anna Maria Brizio in "Il percorso dell'arte di Lorenzo Lotto" (1953) follows up where Longhi left off, establishing Lotto within the context of the "grande tradizione lombarda dell'affresco...d'un fondo più popolare." She contributes

(Footnote Continued)

29 Anna Maria Brizio, "Il percorso dell'arte di Lorenzo Lotto," Arte Veneta, VII (1953), 22.
new terms by suggesting the fruitfulness of a direct connection with Gaudenzio Ferrara, significantly filling out a picture of this area of Lombard activity. Brizio also considers that Lotto sustained an active contact with central Italian Mannerism. According to Brizio, Lotto was effected by Mannerism but failed to become a Mannerist because temperamentally he was removed from "ogni intellettualismo", from "superba e aristocratica autocoscienza, o tormentosa ricerca di evasione".\textsuperscript{30}

Expanding on Berenson's intuitions, in Brizio's script Lotto's responses were too personal, too idiosyncratic, and in the end too tormented to be accepted by a Venetian public with a taste for the ceremonial art of Titian.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} Brizio (1953), 21.

\textsuperscript{31} Brizio constructs a picture of Lotto \textit{fuori dall'arte dominante} upon his return to Venice:

"Era molto cambiato il mondo dell'arte intorno a lui. Michelangelo e Tiziano dominavano, rivolti entrambi, se pur per strade diverse, ad una superba visione di grandiosità, da cui era aliena la sua sensibilità. Egli, che in giovinezza aveva creato alcune delle più alte e nuove espressioni della scuola veneziana all'apertura del '500, e poco dopo era stato dei primi ad avvertire ed elaborare spunti di manierismo in congiunzione colle scuole dell'Italia Centrale, ed era pervenuto poi, a contatto colla scuola lombarda, a soluzioni così personale, si retrova, tornato a Venezia, tagliato fuori dalle forme d'arte ivi dominanti."

Brizio (1953), 23.
Anna Banti's *Lorenzo Lotto* (1953) covers many of the major problems current in Lotto studies: the influence of Northern works, of Rome and Raphael, the Lombard artistic situation as reconstructed by Longhi, and the question of religion - which she answers by placing Lotto in the context of early sixteenth century Catholic reform. Her reading of Lotto's artistic catalogue is remarkably sensitive and evocative. In her text, however, Lotto is inevitably compared to the received tradition - in competition and in process of definition against first Bellini and then Titian. The question that she poses is one at the contemporary centre of Lotto studies. How does one define an artistic personality outside of the received tradition of the High Renaissance? Banti (as does Brizio) answers this question much as Wolfflin did in order to define Baroque against the Renaissance - by setting up polarities. Where Bellini is

32 Banti's interpretation of Lotto's religious attitudes comes out of her interpretation of Lotto "tormentato": "Fu già indicata ed è ormai accettata comunemente la particolar posizione del Lotto nei confronti della riforma: in Italia egli fu il solo grande artista che dimostra di essersene, senza tradire i propria vocazione, almeno tormentato. Uno scrutinare, secondo le sue possibilità di uomo semplice, i testi e le tradizioni sacre; un elaborare il temo devoto appassionatament, un cercar con affanno i motivi più umani di fedeltà di esprimersi con immagini che rinnovano così il mondo pittorico come quelle morale..."

Anna Banti, *Rivelazione di Lorenzo Lotto* (Florence: Sansoni, 1981), 69-70. This text was originally published as "Lorenzo Lotto" in the *Biblioteca di Proporzione* (1953) with catalogue and notes by Antonio Boschetto.
"normative" Lotto is "anormative"; to the Renaissance concord is juxtaposed discordans; in comparison to the High Renaissance scale of idealized calm or divine terribilità, Lotto's personality is defined as troubled, errant, sensitive, tormented, or even slightly demented. If Berenson's 1895 monograph presented for the first time many of the major themes of the modern image of Lotto, in the signal year of 1953, in a period of definition spurred by the 'baptism' of a major exhibition, the modern myth of Lotto was being disseminated.

Luigi Coletti (Lotto, 1953) continues this construction of the artist as "inquiete della mente", tormented in his questioning of religion in a time of reform within the Church, and tormented in his work. As did Longhi, Coletti

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33 Banti describes Lotto's character as: "il più complesso e moderno per un artista dei suoi tempi e non di suoi tempi soltanto. Uomo tormentato, ripiegato su se stesso, rassegnato sempre." Banti (1981), 58. And again: "Per uomo pieno di scrupoli, affatto accomodante, fantastico, quasi lunatico, doveva esser conosciuto universalmente, ma non c'era, a Venezia, un Vasari che prendesse nota di queste sottigliezze per interpretarle, sia pur colla malizia toscana, come segni del genio." Banti (1981), 78.

34 "Sempre in cerca di una quiete che non trova mai, di una fortuna che sempre gli sfugge, sempre in affanno, senza famiglia, senza una stanza sua propria; spesso in povertà, ma forse, più, in distrette, sempre, per la paura della povertà." Luigi Coletti, Lotto (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arte grafiche, 1953), 7.

"Soprattutto è in lui una insoddisfazione perenne, acuita da una sensibilità che lo tormenta tutta la vita." (Footnote Continued)
defines the two realities of the age in terms of Lotto's presentation of the transient and fugitive detail in contrast to the Renaissance reality of a large and seamless harmony. The most unique and least accepted of the contributions to the definition of Lotto's personality is Coletti's reading of Lotto's humour - not at all the wit that would be acceptable within the parameters of a sophisticated Renaissance reference but a quaint if not crude propensity for visual gags.\(^3^6\)

(Footnote Continued)
Coletti (1953), 8.
"Non lo sospetteremo - come pure è stato fatto - a cagion di contatti con tedeschi e del Ritratto di Martin Luther e di sua moglie, non lo sospetteremo de condiscendenze luterane, ma non è difficile intravedere anche in questo gelosissimo, secreto settore del suo spirito complicazione, agitazioni, tormento." Coletti (1953), 8.

\(^3^5\)"L'amore delle piccole cose e l'amore dei tenui sentimenti, l'osservazione intimistica della realtà e la ricerca delle sfumature psicologiche. Dalla labilità del sentimento lottesco, consegue l'istantaneità della sua visone, il frazionarsi della sua attenzione, il posarsi dei suoi interessi sugli infiniti attimi della vita, sugli atomi innumerevoli della realtà." Coletti (1953), 12.

\(^3^6\)Coletti finds in Lotto's paintings a range from subtle wit to crude humour:
"Quella sottile vena di "umore", ch'è dopo tutto, il lieto, o almeno pacifico fine di tutto il travaglio sentimentale del pittore, si esprime in toni comici, che hanno una squisita levità di tocco, ma sono pur sempre avvertibili nella invenzione lottesca. Una comicità leggera e garbata che trapassa per vari gradi: da una sfumatura delicatissima che vela quasi ogni sua composizione, ad un accento perfino, nelle situazioni più scoperte, grottesco: dalla grazia un po' birichina, dalla candida civitteria delle sue figure angeliche o verginali, alla goffaggine deliziosa dei putti, alla stravaganza barbologia."

(Footnote Continued)
A gap between the major exhibitions of 1950/53 and 1980 was punctuated by the publication of Lotto's letters by Luigi Chiodi, and the acceleration of work by local scholars in Bergamo and in the Marche. In 1962 Chiodi published his first edition of Lotto's letters to the "Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore" of Bergamo during the period 1524-1532 which he revised and expanded in a second edition of 1968.\footnote{Luigi Chiodi, 
*Lettere inedite di Lorenzo Lotto* (Bergamo: Secomandi, 1968).} Chiodi's work in the archives in Bergamo has provided an invaluable documentary basis for Lotto studies and has prepared a fertile ground for intense activity in that city. Beyond the letters themselves, Chiodi made considered contributions to the interpretation of material they contain. He dealt blows to some already cherished possessions of the Lotto myth. On the evidence of the letters, Chiodi was able to discredit the myth of Lotto's 'vagabond' nature by demonstrating that Lotto's moves were made in the case of necessity, only with reluctance, and avoided if possible.\footnote{Chiodi (1968), 14-15.} Greatly interested in the question of Lotto's origins, Chiodi disparaged the plethora of 'influences' attributed to the artist and went on quite solidly to conjecture that - from the evidence of Lotto's

\footnote{Coletti (1953), 14.}

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(Footnote Continued)
dei vecchi Santi lunatici."
business attitudes - the artist's training most likely took place not at all in a major Venetian workshop but in the workshop of a small artisan. He helped to flesh out Lotto's period in Bergamo by dealing with the artist's relationship with his patrons there, and attempted to identify Lotto's residences.

A great deal of activity in Bergamo characterized the years leading up to the 1980 anniversary year. In 1975 Bolis published a lavish and invaluable set on I pittori bergamaschi. Many of the important works in Bergamo by Lotto were cleaned and restored in anticipation of the anniversary year. The pala Martinengo, Lotto's first commission in Bergamo, is an important piece, being his introduction to the city as well as the largest and richest altarpiece he painted there. Restored and cleaned, it became the focus of intense local attention, resulting in a collection of essays devoted to the altarpiece published in

39 Chiodi (1969), 4-6; 17-20.
40 See also: Luigi Chiodi, "Le Abitazioni del Lotto a Bergamo," in Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (Bergamo: Centro Culturale St. Bartolome, 1980), 13-16.
42 Rosalba Tardito, "Restauro di alcune opere di Lorenzo Lotto in Bergamo," in Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (1980), 53-64.
1978.\textsuperscript{43} In 1980 the exhibition held at the Accademia Carrara "Omaggio a Lorenzo Lotto" presented an overview of the sixteenth century holdings of the museum. In conjunction with the 1980 commemorative year Bergamo held its own convegno on Lotto, publishing the acts under the title of: "Lorenzo Lotto: Riflessioni Lombarde".\textsuperscript{44} Francesca Cortesi Bosco, who had been contributing work on Lotto's religious attitudes and the role of contemporary devotional currents in his work, devoted an important study of Lotto's fresco cycle for the Suardi oratory just outside of Bergamo, which was published as Gli affreschi dell'oratorio Suardi. Lorenzo Lotto nella crisi della Riforma in 1980.\textsuperscript{45} This book deals with the cycle as an entire context - in terms of the larger social and religious climate, the patron, and the levels of meaning from popular to arcane.

\textsuperscript{43}La pala Martinengo di Lorenzo Lotto: Studi e ricerche, in occasione del restauro (Bergamo: Centro Culturale St. Bartolomeo, 1978).

\textsuperscript{44}The catalogue of the exhibition and the acts of the convegno are combined in: Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (1980).

\textsuperscript{45}Francesca Cortesi Bosco, Gli affreschi dell'oratorio Suardi. Lorenzo Lotto nella crisi della Riforma (Bergamo: Bolis, 1980).

In the Marche a major exhibition and convegno in 1980 dedicated to "Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche" flourished on the ground prepared by the exhibition of Venetian artists in the Marche in 1950. This occasion gave the region the opportunity to catalogue and collect important works for restoration and gave the impetus to reevaluate the patrimony of the area and the entire context of sixteenth century painting in the Marche. The question of Lorenzo Lotto in the Marche is really one of a definition of the local culture: was the Marche culture one of reception/importation to which Lotto contributed, or can it be better defined as an vital entity, in which an artist such as Lotto participated?

The major study that cut through the representative lines of Lotto research in the year 1980 was the publication of the acts of the Asolo convegno internazionale. Work on style (attribution and 'influence') and iconography are balanced by studies on Lotto's religion and biography, his

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47 "Bisognava, alla fine, affrontare l'argomento dell'arte locale, se esista, in altri termini una cultura figurativa autonoma del territorio o piuttosto le Marche debbono considerarsi zona d'influenza, non altro; come sembravo creder il Serra, dando al suo ben noto libro, volutamente, il titolo 'L'arte nelle Marche' e non 'L'arte delle Marche.'" Pietro Zampetti in *Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche...* (1981), 17.
portraiture, social context, and patronage.\textsuperscript{48} One of the most provocative aspects of this collection appears as a coda to the acts as published. Essays by Maurizio Bonicatti and Alberto Panza challenge the traditionalist methodologies of Lotto studies.\textsuperscript{49} Their method is deconstructive. Their argument is the fundamental one of the possibility of reconstructing a history of an artist when scholars are really so little equipped to confront the full context. The essays are a negation of the "\textit{giuoco}" of Lotto played by the large number of scholars recently attracted to the problems in Lotto research.\textsuperscript{50} In the catalogue as printed, \hfill

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\textbf{\textsuperscript{48}}Vittorio Sgarbi gives a competent summary of the convegno which seems to conform to the structure applied to the texts as printed. The first day and part of the second had "un taglio strettamente filologico"; the next sessions had "un impianto eminentemente ideologico" with papers on the "posizione, filosofica, ideale e religiosa, del Lotto rispetto alla cultura del suo tempo e al grande movimento della Riforma"; the last day was dedicated to interpretive papers, mostly iconological "con il vivace apporto di Augusto Gentili e della sua scuola, rappresentata da Ilma Reho." Vittorio Sgarbi, "Le anime del Lotto," \textit{Asolo}, 489-492.

\textbf{\textsuperscript{49}}Maurizio Bonicatti-Alberto Panza, "Il giuoco del Lotto," \textit{Asolo}, 467-477.

\textbf{\textsuperscript{50}}Panza's epigraph from Wittgenstein's \textit{Tractatus logico-philosophicus} is a cutting if not catty homiletic directed, one understands, to his colleagues in general: "Quello che può dirsi si può dir chiaro; e su ciò di cui non si può parlare, si deve tacere." Bonicatti-Panza, \textit{Asolo}, 467.
one scholar confronted the challenge as presented and set out to define his method - Augusto Gentili. 51

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The problem at this point in Lotto studies goes beyond expanding the cast of characters of traditional Renaissance history. The challenge within Lotto studies is now to expand the traditional methods in order to answer questions of context and function. This thesis, dealing with a private devotional work, at the outset encounters a sketchy problem. In Lotto studies, the question of the shape of private devotion in the Venetian territories and among Lotto’s patrons has become a central focus of research and debate. Private devotion being outside institutional parameters, this research dovetails with the discussion of Lotto’s relation to the currents of religious reform, whether orthodox Catholic or grounded in the ideas of Luther, in northern Italy.

51 Gentili refused to act in a position of mediation but rose to the challenge to define his method. He described it as a "tentativo di spostamente dell’analisi iconologica sui terreni del materialismo storico e della dialettica negativa" or a enlargement of the equipment of iconology with tools from other disciplines - particularly anthropology and the history of religion. Augusto Gentili, "Virtus e voluptas nell’opera di Lorenzo Lotto", Asolo, 415-416.
Working in the Venetian territories in the north of Italy in the early part of the sixteenth century, Lotto’s career encompassed a period of unsettled religious questions. Prior to the Council of Trent, the dynamics and shape of the exchange of religious reform within Italy and north of the Alps were in flux. The interpretations of Lotto’s religion are some of the most polarized and hotly debated arguments in present research. The arguments range from the picture of Lotto as the orthodox defender of the Catholic faith to that of Lotto as the sympathizer of heterodox currents from the North, with of course positions of mediation in between.

Cortesi Bosco’s book on the Suardi frescoes give the most forceful interpretation of Lotto as the orthodox defender of Catholicism. The main frescoed wall of the oratory opposite the entrance depicts Christ as the vine of life. The tendrils of the vine grow from Christ’s extended fingers and create roundels in which are depicted prophets and sybils. At the corners of this wall historical heretics, in the attempt to climb ladders up to the vine of Christ, fall precipitously as if violently expelled. Cortesi Bosco interprets these heretics as clear references to the heretical threat from north of the Alps. She records

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52 Francesca Cortesi Bosco, Gli affreschi... (1980).
that Trescore, the location of the frescoes, was on a through road for foreign troops and thus particularly exposed to the importation of the new views from the North. The date the decorations were completed – 1524 – was targeted for disaster in contemporary millenial predictions. The author provides documentary evidence that these predictions of divine retribution were considered by some sixteenth century Italians to have been both cause and result of the heresy of Luther. Cortesi Bosco expands her interpretation of Lotto's religious orthodoxy with an interpretation of the artist's sacred works based on the reading of current devotional literature.

Cortesi Bosco gives as an example the report of the ambassador of the marchese of Mantua to the Venetian Collegio February 21 1524 as reported by Sanudo. The ambassador tells of the disasters reported to him by his master from Trent, and directly correlates the natural catastrophes as the result of the spread of Lutheran heresies:

"In altri lochi - informava fra l'altro il marchese - sono aperti monti et ruinati et coperte molte ville et castelle, et non obstantibus his signis et prodigiis, la opinion luteriana persevera et accresce. Li helvetii et le città franche sono obstinantissime in tal heresia, et conducono molet terre de principe alle loro opinione, ita che iudico per operation humana sia quasi imposibile ad extirpar tal heretica pravità; ma missier Domine punirà cum il suo flagello tal delicto, come già l'ha comenzato."

Cortesi Bosco, Gli affreschi... (1980), 4.

Augusto Gentili similarly mines the popular devotional literature for his interpretations of Lotto's religious paintings.\textsuperscript{55} In \textit{I giardini di contemplazione: Lorenzo Lotto, 1503/1512}, Gentili utilizes devotional literature to reconstruct the new climate of personal religion and to identify the themes present in Lotto's early works.\textsuperscript{56} The investigation of the popular printed devotional literature as material for devotional painting opens up an avenue for discussing imagery generated for lay piety.

Private devotional reading, although disseminated outside of the institution of the church, is interpreted by Cortesi Bosco and Gentili as orthodox Catholicism in its word; in fact, the books were accepted as such at the time. The same literature is interpreted by Maria Call as heterodox or heretical in its principles - those same principles which form, in the interpretation of Cortesi Bosco and Gentili, the orthodox basis of popular Catholic

\textsuperscript{55}Mascherpa too

\textsuperscript{56}Augusto Gentili, \textit{I giardini di contemplazione: Lorenzo Lotto, 1503/1512} (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985). This book is actually a collection of essays which treats Lotto's early period in terms of sets of particular problems which regard his works, patrons, devotional attitude and common 'misconceptions' or controversies in Lotto studies.
reform: the principles particularly of humility and *imitatio christi*. 57

The question of Lotto's orthodoxy has been sparked most provocatively by some passages in Lotto documents. The most pressing of these is a notice in the *Libro di spese* that in 1540 Lotto provided a friend with two portraits of Luther and his wife to present as gifts. 58 A further focal point for the debate on Lotto's orthodoxy was provided by Giovanni Romano. 59 In 1976 he published an article attributing the frontispiece of a printed bible to Lotto. The bible was

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57 Maria Cali, "La 'religione' di Lorenzo Lotto," *Asolo*, 243-278.

58 Preparing for a rebuttal, Cortesi Bosco lists the four most cited instances used as 'evidence' of Lotto's heterodoxy. In addition to the cited portraits of Luther and his wife these are: 1) Lotto's declaration in a letter dated July 18, 1526 and addressed to the notary of the MIA of Bergamo that he was "de natura et religion christiana et chi se ingana suo dano" and in the same letter, the reference to a disagreement with *frate* Damiano, *intarsiatore* whom Lotto calls "ignorante et di poca religione," Lotto having left his residence with the dominicans of Santi Giovanni e Paolo on his account; 2) the firm defence of Lotto's freedom of artistic invention in the illustration of the bible to the president of the MIA, against the cavils of the priest Gerolamo whose *invenzioni* for the bible, in the judgement of not only the painter, but "homeni da ben, valenti theologi et predicatori" contained errors (in a letter dated February 10, 1528); 3) the *inquietudine* that constrained Lotto to change his residence so often, Romano pointing out as particularly suspicious Lotto's break with his nephew D'Armano and his move to Treviso in October 1542. Cortesi Bosco, "A proposito del frontespizio..." *Bergomum*, LXX (1976), 28.

published in Venice by Luc'Antonio Giunta in 1532. It was translated into volgare by Antonio Brucioli. Romano pointed out the implications of Lutheran reform ideas in the use of the translated bible and based an argument of Lotto’s involvement with heterodox circles on this new evidence. Cortesi Bosco - while supporting the attribution - countered Romano’s argument in an article published the same year.  

Renzo Fontana makes a strong and reasoned argument for Lotto’s ‘heterodoxy’, while Bernard Aikema takes a controversial, and perhaps even more reasoned position that may be termed mediante, a word used carefully by Gentili  


Bernard Aikema, "Lorenzo Lotto and the ospitale de san Zuane Polo," in Interpretazioni veneziane: studi di storia dell’arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro (Venice: Arsenale, 1984), 343-350. Aikema argues that Lotto’s Madrid St. Jerome was commissioned by the controversial reform group known as the Barnabites for the chapel of the ospedaletto at SS Giovanni e Paolo (see Chapter Five). He suggests that Lotto was attracted "by a spirituality which was often on the edge of heresy." (348) Aikema identifies the Madrid St. Jerome which displays the motive of the saint actually imitating the posture of Christ on the cross as being particularly relevant to the spirituality of the early sixteenth century Catholic reform. Lotto’s position in this reform Aikema leaves as necessarily ambiguous, suggesting (Footnote Continued)
for Lotto's religious position. The question, then, becomes not so much one of Lotto's involvement in contemporary currents of reform but whether to interpret that reform as a dynamic of early sixteenth century Catholicism or as the inspiration of Lutheran heresy infiltrating Italy at that time. The study of Lotto, both in his works and documents is a fruitful vehicle for approaching the question of religion in the Venetian territories of early sixteenth century Italy.

(Footnote Continued)

that the artist may have left Venice because of a 'disillusionment' when the Barnabites were put "under fierce attack from within the ranks of the governors of the hospital." (348) See also: Aikema, "Il San Girolamo di Lorenzo Lotto a Madrid," in Il St. Girolamo di Lorenzo Lotto a Castel St. Angelo (Rome: Romano Societa, 1983), 117-118.

In all these arguments the word and the idea of 'reform' become ambiguous and beleaguered. Responding to this problem, Gentili suggests the word "riformistica" rather than "riformata" or "riformatrice" (the latter suggesting a militant conversion to the ideas of Luther): "I temi di Lorenzo Lotto, non nuovi perché largamente praticati dalla pittura veneta del secondo '400, provengono dalle correnti spiritualistiche, evangelizzanti, talvolta riformistiche (e non per questi necessariamente preriformatici in senso protestante) che percorrono ordini monastici, comunità ascetiche e tanta privata devozione...." Augusto Gentili, "Per Lorenzo Lotto e i suoi contesti storici: due episodi ri-documentati, tra polemica e progetto," Artibus et Historiae, n. 8, IV (1983), 91. He also uses the word riformista in the same sense as riformistiche: "Riformista da sempre - devo ripeterlo - perché attento ad una religione individuale, intimistica, meditativa, non trovò mai la convinzione, o il coraggio, della scelta dichiaratamente riformata, o più probabilmente non vi si riconobbe, perché avevve a vivere e lavorare dentro le istituzioni, e propenso a modificarle piuttosto che a sovvertirle." (93)
The acceleration of activity on the question of devotion in Lotto studies is part of a current trend toward treating Lotto's works in terms of their context and function. Cortesi Bosco's book on the Suardi frescoes, in which she tackles the specific context and function of a cycle of frescoes in situ and relatively intact, is an example of this new generation of research. Relatively few studies however have taken a single work out of Lotto's oeuvre and methodically reconstructed its context and the function taking into consideration the patron, locale, iconography and tradition. Bernard Aikema attempted to reconstruct the context and function of the Madrid St. Jerome; Cortesi Bosco dealt with the pala Martinengo in terms of the myth of Venice in the politics of Bergamo. In an exemplary article Angelo Mazza established Lotto's altarpiece of the Elemosine di S. Antonio for SS Giovanni e Paolo as a public statement propagandizing the new Venetian state policies toward charity. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to this line of research, dealing with the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian as a product of


64 Angelo Mazza, "La pala dell'Elemosina di Sant'Antonino nel dibattito cinquecentesco sul pauperismo," Asolo, 347-364.
its context and function and as a clue to the greater context of early sixteenth century private devotion.

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The *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* is a painting of the highest quality, from perhaps Lotto’s finest period. As the subject of an in-depth study, however, the painting poses many difficulties. It is signed, but not dated. It is a private devotional work, thus less accessible by means of documentation than a public work either as regards the commission or the function. Its exact location or original placement within a room is virtually impossible to reconstruct. It is known, however to have been painted in Lotto's Bergamo period and is generally dated c1521. Very little attention has been paid to the painting either in the criticism of contemporaries or in critical research since. This thesis proceeds on the foundations of recent work done on private devotion in the period and the publication of a convincing identification of the patron by Cortesi Bosco. In view of these foundations, the relative silence on the subject of this painting and the lacunae in the information surrounding it make this study more, rather than less pressing.

The obscurity of the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* is almost complete until the end of the nineteenth
century when Crowe and Cavalcaselle and Berenson give it attention in their catalogues of Lotto's works. The first notice we have of the painting in the art literature is in 1648 when Ridolfi registers its presence in the convent of Santa Grata in Bergamo: "Nelle monache di Santa Grata, ovvi altra pittura lasciato sotto fideicommisso con la Vergine e Nostro Signore bambinetto e li Santi Rocco e Sebastiano." 65

Tassi, in his *Vita de'pittori, scultori e architetti Bergamaschi* (1793) records the painting still in the convent of Santa Grata, and adds the information that the painting is brought out and shown in the church of Santa Grata every year on the first of May: "Nel monistero di Santa Grata v'ha una sua [Lotto's] pittura con la Vergine il bambino, e li Santi Rocco, e Sebastiano, quale vien esposta in Chiesa ogn'anno nel primo giorno di Maggio." 66


66 Francesco Maria Tassi, *Vita de'pittori, scultori e architetti bergamaschi* (Milan: Labor, 1969), I, 124. The painting seems to have been held in some esteem by the nuns, because May 1 was the the day the patron saint of the church - Sta. Grata - was venerated. In the eighteenth century Mario Mutio records that this was the day of the saint's solemn translation to her resting place of the church of Sta. Grata in Columnellis: "La città amara, & longamente pianse la morte della sua benignissime Signora, anzi Maestra, & Madre, il cui Sacrato Corpo fu con gran pompa nella Chiesa da lei nell'Ospitale fabbricata sepellito, che poi fu detta Santa Grata inter Vites, ove riposò longo tempo, finche ad Ambrosio Martinengo Cittadino & Vescovo di Bergamo, a preghiere delle Reverende Monache di Santa Maria (Footnote Continued)
The scant notices about the painting is not surprising considering that it did not enter into a public collection until 1976, when it was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada. From the research done by Francesca Cortesi Bosco in Bergamo, we know that it was painted for the surgeon Cucchi, who then willed it to a cloistered nun, making provisions that it remain in the convent church. As has been noted, the painting first entered the literature of art

(Footnote Continued)

Vecchia, ora di Santa Grata in Columnellis, fù nella loro Chiesa trasportato l’anno mille e ventisette il primo di Maggio" Mario Mutio, Sacra Istoria di Bergamo (Milan: Francesco Vigone e fratelli, 1719), 103.

Ronchetti relates that the first of May was also the day of the saint’s death, a special day of veneration:

"E da credere adunque, che il Vescovo ed il collegio de’Canonici, i qualli prima della traslazione solevano concorre all’anticissima Basilica di St. Grata ora detta inter Vites, ove riposava il corpo d’essa Santa nel di appunto della sua preziosa morte, siccome costumavano portarsi anche all’altare capelle della Città e de’ Borghi nelle solennità titolari, dopo la traslazione continuassero a radunarsi lo stesso giorno, cioè il primo Maggio alla Chiesa di quel monastero, in cui ora si venerano le sacre sue spoglie nella guisa, che fino a nostri giorni veniva praticato ad ossequio di questa Santissima nostra Matrona."


The Biblioteca Sanctorum has it that May the first was the day of the depositio of the saint rather than the translatio. Pietro Bertocchi, "Grata di Bergamo," in Biblioteca Sanctorum (Rome: Città Nuova: 1966), 153.

See below. The research by Cortesi Bosco and what is known about the context of the patron will be further developed in Chapter Four.
in 1648 when Ridolfi reported seeing it in the convent. 68

In 1798, shortly before the suppression of the convent it was sold to Giovanni Ghidini. In 1864 it was bought from the Ghidini family and entered the Piccinelli collection in the Bergamask town of Seriate, where it was seen by Crowe and Cavalcaselle and recorded in the first edition of Berenson. 69 It was not until around 1930 that the painting entered the Florentine collection of Contini-Bonacossi. Contini-Bonacossi was the last owner before the painting entered the open market and was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada. 70

68 See above.

69 "The painting in the possession of the Nuns of Santa Grata was sold by them for a low price to the priest, Giovanni Ghidini, a short time before the extinction of their Order in 1798. On this day, February 2, 1864, I have acquired it from the Ghidini brothers sons of the late Nicola and of whom the said priest Giovanni was a great-uncle. It is in excellent condition signed by the artist and one of his finest works..." from a marginal note made by Antonio Piccinelli di Seriate in the text of Tassi’s Vite dei pittori scultori e architetti bergamaschi as quoted in: Piero Bianconi, All the Paintings of Lorenzo Lotto, trans. Paul Colacicchi (London: Oldbourne, 1963), I, 48.

70 From the files on the painting in the National Gallery of Canada. Access was granted to me with the kind permission of Dr. Myron Laskin. The painting is in excellent condition. It is apparent that it has not been cut down. There is a very contemporary copy of the painting now in the Castel St. Angelo in Rome which repeats the unusual composition of the original. A short notice by A. Locatelli Milesi throws some confusion on the matter of this copy. It is worth quoting the greater part of this notice here: "il famoso quadro del Lotto rappresentante la Madonna col Bambino e i S.S. Rocco e Sebastiano già nel Monastero di St. Grata, poi nella raccolta Piccinelli, era passato nella (Footnote Continued)
Modern art historians who make note of the painting, often notice the striking colouring and the unusual composition of the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian*, but they find no consistent meeting-point in which to describe or explain it. Crowe and Cavalcaselle give the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* as an example of the "small canvases and easel-pictures with which Lotto "occasionally spent his hours of relaxation" in Bergamo. They consider that this painting demonstrates the "Lombard and Correggesque" style which "captivated and preserved the favour of the Bergamasks."\(^{71}\) They describe the painting "in Lotto's broad manner, reminiscent of Correggio and Palma." The striking colours are "clear, gay, and juicy."\(^{72}\)

(Footnote Continued)

Galleria di un collezionista romano. Ora i giornali annunziano, e io lo registro con piacere, che il collezionista in parola, Conte Alessandro Contini, ha fatto munifico dono allo Stato di opere d'arte di altissimo pregio per ammobiliare l'appartamento di Paolo III a Castel St. Angelo, e che fra queste opere d'arte è il detto quadro del Lotto, che fu collocato nella Sala del Trono." Locatelli Milesi, "Il quadro del Lotto già a St. Grata donato allo Stato," *Bergomum*, XXII (1928), 120-121.

It is evident that the writer had confused the original which ended up on the market and the copy, which was donated to the state. It seems however, that they were both in the Contini Bonacossi collection, but how much more of their provenance was actually shared is not possible to tell from this article, being informed by a mistaken conflation.

\(^{71}\) Crowe and Cavalcaselle (1912), 406-7.

\(^{72}\) Crowe and Cavalcaselle (1912), n.1, 407.
Berenson, whose description of the painting changed very little from his early edition to the later, described the tone as "exceptionally blond." Berenson places it in the period of 1521 by comparing the type of the figures to the Dresden Madonna and Child and the Santo Spirito altarpiece in Bergamo. He explains the strange appearance of the composition by the foreshortening of the Madonna being placed some distance above the saints and the worshippers below. According to Berenson St. Roch, "leaning over with his right hand held out, as if pitying the worshippers and interceding for them" is "one of Lotto’s tenderest and least-affected figures."  

Brizio cites the painting as the "mirabile quadretto" and an example of "spunti leonardeschi" dating the work earlier than is generally conceded - around 1517. In the catalogue of the 1953 exhibition, Zampetti confirms the painting's dating of c1521 "che vide nascere tante belle

73 "The Madonna, her amber-brown hair entwined with pearls, sinks down upon two heavy cushions with her feet drawn up and her head bending over the Child who sits back in her lap, looking out of the picture and blessing. To the right and almost nude, a very blonde and curly-haired St. Sebastian, and to the left, St Roch leaning over with his right hand held out, as if pitying the worshippers and interceding for them. The arrangement of the picture implies these worshippers being placed at some distance below and looking up at the Madonna whose fore-shortening is thus explained." Berenson (1956), 53-4.

74 Brizio, "Il percorso..." (1953), 20.
composizioni dell'arte lottesca." Zampetti is very taken by
the unusual colours of the painting and comments on them in
length: "In quest'opera tutta l'orchestrazione cromatica è
sentita con una originalità assoluta...I colori accesi,
 quasi violenti, danno un tono vivace alle vesti della
Madonna, cosse ed azzurre: ma le carni divengono quasi
diafane, bagnate come sono dalle luce, che suscita ovunque
diffuse armonie."75

Sidney Freedberg looks to Mannerism - the concept of
Mannerism having adopted anomaly as tradition - as a
yardstick against which to measure Lotto’s anomalous status
in the Renaissance story. Freedberg gives a very sensitive
reading of the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian,
however, bringing an awareness of the provincial context
into his analysis. He gives a great deal of space to the
painting as an example of one of Lotto’s "two styles."
These two strains are in his estimation "opposite aspects of
what is, ultimately, the same intense non-rational emotion."
One aspect "tends to an expressive turbulence in which the
roughness and immediacy of forms and feeling are dominant
and in which types and manner of deportment are popolano,
unstylized and unidealized as they had been long before in
Lotto’s art and as they were in the contemporary Pordenone."

75 Mostra di Lorenzo Lotto (1953), 78-79.
The other style, of which the Ottawa painting is a prime example "is a deduction made from the classical moment achieved in 1521." This "strain, no less irrationally inspired, seeks to translate pathos into an extreme of grace, conveying the rapture of religious feeling by an artificial beauty given to appearances and forms."  

Freedberg's analysis of the painting is unique in the intensity of the description and for this is worth quoting at some length here:

The figures are in states that approach ecstasy, strongly moved in body as well as in mind. Their response is as exquisite as it is intense, and types, attitude, dress, and gesture all convey an extreme of refinement. The quality of relationship among the actors is given not only illustratively but by a rhythmic patterning that winds them in an arabesque. More than in the S. Spirito altar, the colour takes on an effect of artifice, high-keyed and luminous, and it is as acute as the emotion. Intensifying sharpness and purity, the colour diminishes in warmth, turning towards the silvered tones of the Lombard tradition rather than the sensuousness of the Venetian mode, and by this too an effect of artificiality is suggested." 

The lessons of Lotto's "classical moment" according to Freedberg were here translated to unclassical ends, 

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producing a qualified Mannerism comparing Lotto to Parmigianino.

Putting these [the lessons of grace and unity of form] to the service of a mode of feeling that exceeded classical restraints, and - characteristically for a provincial - exaggerating the grace of the social as well as the formal manner of classicism, Lotto has extrapolated a classical bella maniera into what, at least in this painting, may be called Mannerism....But there is an element in Lotto’s art, even in this refined strain, that resists its easy assimilation into Mannerism. His insistence - still, in him a persistence of old-fashioned habit - on verity of appearances attaches him, more than the early Mannerists, to described reality. The Mannerizing character of pictures in this vein is most pronounced in the earlier 1520's...

Freedberg’s analysis brings up the question of the disturbing appearance of the painting. In Freedberg’s analysis, this unusual painting is the fruit of a battle that Lotto synthesizes - the disjuncture of a sophisticated painter and provincial demands. What Freedberg touches on in stylistic analysis of the painting it is the function of this study to elaborate: the commission, the provincial context, and the function.

It is thanks to the work done on the specific context of the patron, as well as on the broader contexts of private devotional imagery and on painting in the medical context,

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78Freedberg (1970), 203.
that I am able to construct a study on the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian. Articles that have been published in these three major areas form the basis from which I can go on to reconstruct the context, function, and traditions of this painting.

The most important of these is the article by Francesca Cortesi Bosco "Un amico bergamasco di Lorenzo Lotto," published in Archivio storico bergamasco in 1981 with a companion article by Giulio Bravi. In this article, Cortesi Bosco establishes the patron of the painting as Battista Cucchi, a Bergamask surgeon and friend of Lotto. The article following it by Bravi, "Medici e chirurghi a Bergamo al tempo di Battista Cucchi" supplements Cortesi Bosco’s investigations into Cucchi’s existence by interpreting the register left by the surgeon and supporting it by invaluable information on the role of the surgeon at that time.

Once the local work has been done on the patron of the work and his social context, studies by other scholars on


the wider contexts of healing and private devotion are fundamental to this thesis. The first major exhibition to treat the plague as a social reality in Venice, "Venezia e la Peste", was held in 1979. The catalogue published a contribution by Stefania Mason Rinaldi on "Le immagini della peste nella cultura figurativa veneziana" in which some of the very numerous examples of imagery associated with plague illustrate the roles of imagery in the reaction to and the treatment of plague in Venice. The inclusion of Lotto’s Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian in the textual accompaniment to this exhibition gave the initial opportunity to situate this painting within the wider social context of medical aid. Richard Palmer’s work on the relation of religion and healing helps to define the function of devotional imagery in this role, while the pioneering work done by Andrée Hayum on the Isenheim altarpiece examines the role of a specific painting in a medical context, setting down the groundwork for the

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interpretation of works with healing associations. On the foundations established by Hayum, Laurinda Dixon follows with a medical 'case study' of the St. Anthony triptych by Bosch.

The context of private devotional imagery has been opened up by Sixten Ringbom's fundamental study on the evolution of the half-length image in the fifteenth century. Rona Goffen has drawn on the work done by Ringbom in her work on the role of the half-length image in the oeuvre of Giovanni Bellini. Following on these earlier studies, Goffen published an article which treated a private half-length image of the Madonna and Child with saints by Lotto. Although the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is not under discussion in this article, the paintings treated are of a very similar compositional type (two-thirds length Madonna and Child with two flanking

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saints) and were painted in the same period—possibly in the same year—in Bergamo. Although she does not spend the time in this article to consolidate her evidence carefully—some of which had been treated in her earlier article—she explores the layers of meaning, both overt and covert, that Lotto developed in his small devotional panels. This treatment breaks the ground for considering the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian within a category of iconographical density no less in evidence in Lotto’s private works than in his full-scale altarpieces. Waiting to be incorporated are the investigations of both Gentili and Cortesi Bosco in contemporary devotional literature. These contributions provide new material with which to determine the iconography of the private devotional painting.

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On the foundations of the work done by the local Bergamask scholars, and on the studies of private devotional painting and the healing context, this thesis will attempt to expand the focus of the single work—the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian—in the directions of its relevant contexts: the devotional type, the patron and social situation, the iconography of the painting in its function as an object of devotion in a healing context.
In Chapter Two I will be discussing of the fifteenth century Venetian half-length Madonna and Child with saints as the active tradition from which Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* comes. Chapter Three will explore the formal changes that occur to the type in the sixteenth century and the social and religious pressures that effect these changes. The social and political situation of Bergamo in this period of annexations and war and its relationship with Venice will be examined in Chapter Four. Lotto's position as a Venetian trained painter in his circle of patronage in Bergamo will also be discussed here. The specific patron Battista Cucchi will be elaborated on - his profession, position in Bergamask society and relationship to Lotto - in order to establish the probable function of the painting. Chapter Five will deal with the use of devotional painting in medical contexts. In Chapter Six I will attempt to draw together the threads of this work. I will try to show that the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* transforms the parameters of a traditional private devotional type in order to 'customize' the painting for a particular patron - the surgeon Cucchi in Bergamo. I consider this painting as fulfilling these functions in terms of an iconographic density that is both overt and covert, explicit and complex.
CHAPTER TWO

THE VENETIAN HALF-LENGTH MADONNA AND CHILD
AND MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PRIVATE
DEVOTIONAL TYPE

The development of the Venetian half-length Madonna and Child and of the extended half-length Madonna and Child with saints produced a strikingly indigenous form of private devotional painting (Figs. 2, 3).¹ The Venetian half-length was very popular, and the great family workshops of Venetian artists were organized to 'mass produce' versions of the

¹Sixten Ringbom, Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Paintings, 2nd ed. (Beukenlaan: Davaco, 1984), 30-39. The half-length of this type was found in the home. The exceptions to this rule were the few cases in which the type would be commissioned for a chapel, the extended Madonna and Child with Saints sometimes used as a cheaper alternative to the full-length sacra conversazione. For the purpose of defining the function and the type, however, in this chapter the half-length Madonna images will be considered in their most characteristic configuration - as popular private images made for the home to fill common devotional needs. The copious production of these paintings at this time could be linked with the increase in palazzo building in Venice which created a rise in the demand for paintings to put in them. Deborah Howard, The Architectural History of Venice (London: B.T. Batsford, 1980), 85.
type for the private devotional market. Its popularity in Venice was due to a constellation of social and religious factors. The half-length Venetian Madonna and Child with saints - the 'extended' type - was durable because it incorporated very potent cultural symbols associated with the single half-length Madonna and Child - the revered icon, the miraculous image, and the Madonna as civic symbol.

The period of the greatest popularity of the half-length Madonna type coincided with the careers of Giovanni Bellini and Cima da Conegliano (c1460-1510), two of

2The bulk of the half-length Madonna paintings were made to be sold on the market, thus without a specific patron or location in mind. In the shops of Bellini and Cima da Conegliano where these paintings were produced in great numbers, modelli or simile were used as shop aids. In the Bellini shop the modello or simile was often a collaboration between master and assistant. It was then assigned to that assistant who reproduced it several times. The Cima shop made us of both painted and drawn modelli, but instead of becoming the assignment of a particular assistant - as in the Bellini shop - these prototypes would become general shop stock passed around, reused, and recombined. see: Felton Gibbons, "Practices in Giovanni Bellini's Workshop," Pantheon, 23 (1965), 146-155; Peter Humfrey, Cima da Conegliano (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 3ff; Hans Tietze, "Master and Workshop in the Venetian Renaissance," Parnassus, 11 (Dec. 1937), 34-35, 45; E. Tietze-Conrat, "An Unpublished Madonna by Giovanni Bellini and the Problem of Replicas in his Shop," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 33 (1948), 379-382; H. and E. Tietze-Conrat, The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1970), I, 5-28.
the greatest suppliers of private devotional half-lengths.  

Characteristic of the Venetian type is the half-length format. The parapet distinguishing the front plane of the painting is a Venetian device although an optional one in the type. The cloth of honour which acts as a backdrop for the Madonna is also a characteristic, but optional element (Fig. 13). The figure plane is non-naturalistically compressed into a constricted foreground space (Fig. 4). The background may be ambiguous or an open sky, but when a landscape is depicted the panoramic view is sharply distinguished from the compressed frontal figure plane denying any reading of a logically continuous space. There is an overriding austerity to the presentation - the figures

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3 The two texts that deal with the question of the Venetian half-length are: Rona Goffen, "Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas," *Art Bulletin*, 57 (1975), 487-518; and Ringbom, 1984. Goffen concentrates on the single Madonna and Child in Bellini's oeuvre. She covers in a systematic manner many of the important resonances of the type. Ringbom's look at the half-length image is not specific to Bellini nor to the single Madonna and Child type. He asks the question of how the half-length iconic image is transformed by its interaction with narrative content. This chapter builds on the grounds laid by these two pioneering studies and expands on them by focusing on the 'extended' type with saints and on the reasons for the popularity of these images in terms of the Venetian context of social life and current devotional practices.

4 The half-length cropping is not in fact completely rigid, as the type may appear in a more expanded format, perhaps to two-thirds length.

5 On the iconography of the parapet see Goffen (1975), 499-505.
give the sense of a hieratic reading and there is little or no emotional or anecdotal relationship between figures, particularly between saints and the Madonna in the extended type (Fig. 14). The figures are placed in stark symmetry in relation to the picture plane. Only the Christ child might be represented in vigorous movement (Fig. 5). The presentation is non-narrative.

Elsewhere in Italy the small private devotional paintings of the same period show different characteristics. Compared with the hieratic treatment of Giovanni Bellini's Contarini Madonna in the Accademia, c1480 (Fig. 6), Leonardo's Benois Madonna, c1478 (Fig. 7), displays a lively interaction between the figures. The emotional logic that motivates the figures is accompanied by a spatial logic. The Madonna is turned obliquely in order to give a reading into depth. A greater portion of the figure is shown and the Madonna and Child are shown in a logically constructed space that allows the figures air to breathe and gives a plausible narrative matrix for their existence.

6 The Christ Child as the focus of the figural configuration is the most narrative. The whole message of his mission can be alluded to in his movements - either his death (sleeping Child), his Resurrection (striding Child), his role as King of the World or in the Last Judgement (Pantocrator), the pietà, birth, or blessing. See below.
The same trend is seen in the extended Madonna and Child with saints. The extended type lends itself to greater possibilities of narrative interaction than the single Madonna and Child. Thus, the contrast is greater between the hieratic fifteenth-century Venetian half-length and the more spatially and emotionally integrated compositions that are found outside Venice in the same period or that develop by the early sixteenth century in Venice itself. In Cima’s Madonna and Child with SS John the Baptist and Paul (c1504-5) for example, the saints are lined up along a single plane flanking the Madonna as if in a silent sacra conversazione (Fig. 3). In a Florentine work such as the Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist by the Botticelli workshop (c1490’s) however, the Madonna is placed obliquely and there is some attempt made at a spatial logic (Fig. 8). The Madonna is shown seated on a comfortable arm chair in direct interaction with the child. Although John the Baptist does not interact with the group as is common in Leonardesque works or in the works of Raphael, or of Titian in the sixteenth century, here the saint in prayer mirrors the interaction of the viewer with the work. He is placed behind the Madonna’s chair and thus defines the physical space of the depicted room which he shares with the Madonna and Child.

In her work on Bellini’s half-length Madonna and Child paintings, Rona Goffen has discussed the social significance
of the Byzantine icon for Venice. As a symbol of Venice’s eastern affiliations, the icon held an important place in the city’s civic image. Goffen interpreted the austerity of the Belliniesque half-length style as a direct reference to the Byzantine icon, giving the fifteenth century half-length a topical significance and popularity in Venice (Figs. 6, 9). The localization of this style to Venice reinforces her argument. The Venetian half-length was not however, a Byzantine emulation. When Venetians wanted to emulate Byzantine style, they did. The iconic half-length must have served the demands of private devotion in addition to its civic relevance to have been popular.

The half-length Madonna and Child with saints has an ambiguous relationship to the full-length Italian sacra conversazione altarpiece (Figs. 15, 16). The particular characteristics that constitute the private type can be defined in a comparison with its public counterpart. The figures in the half-length format are read in a similar

7 Goffen, "Icon and Vision..." (1975), 487-518.
8 Goffen (1975), 487-490.
manner - the saints stand flanking the Madonna who is seated and thus understood as raised. Recalling the altarpiece in form bolsters the effectiveness of the saints by eliciting the authority of the ecclesia. At the same time the private image is quite different in approach. The setting of the church was the appropriate place for the saints and the Madonna and Child to stand and breathe. In the altarpiece form the depicted architecture is an extension of the church just as the sacra conversazione expresses an amplification of liturgy and doctrine. In the private painting, however, the parapet signifies the break between the space of the home and the space of the sacred personages, as if the painting were a window onto the sacred world. The hieratic representation of the half-length form reinforces the figures' potential as 'symbolic form'. The saints are closely juxtaposed with the Madonna and Child, in the same compressed forward plane and reaching almost the same


11 The iconography of the window in the half-length Madonna paintings referring to Mary as fenstra coeli is discussed by Goffen (1975), 505 and by Ringbom (1984), 42-48. Ringbom develops the window imagery as an adaptation of conventions of royal portraiture to depictions of Christ and as a metaphor for the "not fully visible but not wholly invisible" divinity.

12 Ringbom (1984), 40.
height. The saints in the half-length type are deployed not so much as figures that accompany the Madonna and Child in the sacred space of the church but as elaborations on a theme — the theme of the Madonna, or more to the point, of Christ. 13

The hieratic form of the Venetian half-length types suggests similarities to the icon type in function and spiritual approach. Due to the cropped presentation of the figures, the lack of perspectival logic and the lack of emotional interaction or individuation of character, the Venetian half-length type encourages a reading that is less literal than symbolic — a mode of devotion that

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13 The Christ-like attributes of Mary as co-redemptrice, while debated topics, were — as Petrocchi argues — popularly accepted concepts in the Quattrocento:
"e si acuìra da parte cattolica — in opposizione alle teoriche riformate — la polemica sul problema che lega la Redenzione di Christo agli attributi della Madonna. Motivo questo essenziale per comprendere quello che i cattolici intendono riaffermare, contro le eresie cinquecentesche, sulla Redenzione. La definizione degli attributi di Maria è, negli scritti di pietà del Cinquecento italiano, strettamente legata al aspetto del cristocentrismo. Ma in realtà, per lo meno in Italia, già nel Quattrocento, su un piano teorico-teologico e su un piano devozionale, Immacolata Concezione e Assunzione sono difese con richezza di motivi da san Bernardino da Siena."
characterizes eastern attitudes to the icon. Unlike the Byzantine image, however, which expressed fixed prototypes in which the entire Christian cosmology was manifested, Italian devotional imagery used physical attitudes and iconographical clues to indicate temporal images, or hidden narrative meaning. Inherent in the imagery of the Madonna and Child is a historical sequencing which foreshadows the later life of Christ - the Passion, the sacrifice and the Resurrection expressing the messages of suffering, salvation

14 Irving Lavin describes a western adaptation of what is essentially a Byzantine conception of the truncated image in his interpretation of the intent of the Renaissance portrait bust. He establishes the "amputation" effect of the Renaissance bust in comparison to the antique type which is perceived as an artifact. The Renaissance bust, he concludes, has more in common with the icon which accepts the partial knowledge of God "because it refers to more than meets the eye." The idea of an unseen totality is exploited in the humanist idea of the portrait of the "totus homo", the "whole man" because "both embody a notion of man's nature as a totality which can be reached only by implication and illusion." Irving Lavin, "On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust" Art Quarterly, 33 (1970), 207-226.

15 By hiding the narrative within an iconic image, the half-length Venetian image participates both in western tradition and eastern spiritual concepts. The component that dissolves one into the other is the ascetic tradition. "Among Eastern mystics general, no such stress was laid as was commonly laid in the West on the imitation of the earthly life of Jesus. What we have to do, it was taught, is not to imitate the example of Jesus, but to share, so far as may be, the divine radiance which illuminated Him, by following the path of prayer and contemplation." "The Desert Fathers form a notable exception to this. It was the motive of their extreme asceticism to participate in the sufferings of Christ." Sidney Spencer, Mysticism in World Religion (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1963), 226 & n. 5.
and the eucharist. In the extended half-length type the addition of flanking saints elaborate the iconography of the central Madonna and Child and extend the reference to the religious narrative.

The Venetian half-length, then, stood between two impulses, symbolic and narrative. The hieratic, icon-like form indicates the dominance of symbolic reading, of austerity, and of removal. In the sixteenth century, the balance appears to tip, with the narrative becoming a dominant characteristic. When this happens, the enterable space which was appropriate for the church altarpiece in the fifteenth century, would become appropriate also for the home. The 'window' signalled by the half-length's parapet will become, so to speak, a door. The growth of private

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16 This discussion will be developed in Chapter Six below.

17 In Venice, the lived narrative of the life of Christ was part of a common public life of civic ceremony. Muir describes the ceremonial year from All Saints Day to the Pentecost and Corpus Christi as celebrations of the great feasts devoted to the life and ministry of Christ. On the great feasts of Easter, the state in the person of the doge associated itself ceremonially with the passion of Christ. "on Palm Sunday he [the doge] and other magistrates carried gold-leaf palm branches around Piazza San Marco in a re-enactment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and during the week there were several ducal processions to receive indulgences or to view holy relics. At each stage in the dramatization of Christ's last days the doge himself impersonated Christ." Edward Muir, Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), 212-219.
devotion outside the walls of the church and into the home, aided by the spread of devotional literature, helps account for this change. These developments in private piety, however, were already beginning in the fifteenth century.

In the fifteenth century private piety was developing a more independent role. Developing currents of private devotion were aided by the new technology of printing, which put devotional reading more easily into the hands of private readers. In this period the trends in private devotion which found a matrix in devotional literature shared themes which have been ascribed to currents of reform within Catholicism. The institution of the Church was under increasing attack as reform factions questioned the corruption of the institution from its true mission.\textsuperscript{18} Pierre Francastel identified this period of inner crisis in Catholicism as a period of 'heresies.'\textsuperscript{19} Private devotion

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{18} Ginzburg succinctly traces the development of private devotion away from the traditional matrix of the Church. In Ginzburg's view, this new devotion was motivated by the needs of the mercantile society and expressed "un'accentuazione dell'interiorità, dell'importanza dell'esperienza religiosa individuale." Carlo Ginzburg, "Folklore, magia, religion," in \textit{Storia d'Italia} (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1972), 619-642. Ginzburg considers the diffusion of printed devotional literature an important catalyst in the development of the new private piety (619-636).

\footnote{19} Francastel considers the spiritual reforming trends within Catholicism as gaining ground laid by Franciscanism, which he terms the "religious movement closest to heresy" (Footnote Continued)
like reform movements is outside the direct guidance of
church ritual and with the wider dissemination of printed
books, both had access to similar pious literature as
guidance.

Venice was particularly sympathetic ground for new
currents in piety. Venice's politic attitude toward the
papacy had traditionally been what may be termed as
respectfully defiant. Venice had her own tightly

(Footnote Continued)

"Western civilization...can be considered the
daughter of heresy. Numerous heresies had of
course existed in both Eastern and Western
Christian worlds before the 14th century, but
these heresies had engendered only timid
representational forms. Above all, they had not
penetrated the social structure to the point of
obliging the Church to reach a compromise with the
heretic body rather than condemn it outright. The
whole history of the visual arts in the West
springs from the fact that in the 13th century
heresy took the form not of intellectual
opposition but of a sentimental and spiritual
claim."

Pierre Francastel "Space and Time," Encyclopedia of

(Footnote Continued)

20 Sinding Larsen considers that S. Marco functioned as
"an autonomous government church" in every respect but
liturgy and dogma. As a government statement, in its
eastern cast and in its aggrandizement of the claims that
Venice held for the patriarchy of S. Mark as an apostolic
lineage equaling the papacy, the Church of S. Marco stood as
a Venetian claim against the papacy. Staale Sinding Larsen,
Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious
Iconography of the Venetian Republic (Rome: L'Erma, 1974),
182-3. Venice's claim as an equal to the papacy was
historically confirmed by the reconciliation of pope
Alexander III and the emperor in 1177. This event took on
focal importance in civic symbolism and in the 'myth of
(Footnote Continued)
organized structure of social and religious institutions; its successful social structure fostered an attitude of self-reliance and pride. Scuole and confraternities directed the social and religious life of Venetian citizens. The most pervasive civic authority was the state, which guided the entire religious year through civic ceremony and ritual. The dual forces of the atmosphere of religious independence and the influence of Venetian civic institutions in all aspects of life shaped the popular devotion in Venice that was providing a great demand for the half-length images. The social importance of the Byzantine icon model at the base of the half-length style held a strong influence on private devotion because of the pervasiveness of the public social structure in Venetian life. It is also possible that the strong institutional matrix of Venetian society retarded the development of an

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(Footnote Continued)
Venice'. The insignia used in the investiture ceremony of the doge represented this claim as it was reputedly the insignia given to the Venetians by Alexander III in recognition of "saving" the papacy. "The insignia had subsequently become predominantly political symbols of Venice's autonomy, reminders of the papacy's indebtedness to Venice and of how a pope had once conferred insignia upon the republic that marked it out among other states." Sinding Larsen (158). For the repetition of the historical Alexandrian cycles in the Maggior Concilio see: Patricia Brown, "Painting and History in Renaissance Venice," Art History, 7(Sept. 1984), 263-277.

independent private piety that would let the religious figures 'into the house' in the narrative images of the sixteenth century. At the same time new devotional emphases appeared in the popular themes of the half-length Madonna and Child with saints.

The most pervasive reforms to have effected urban devotions were the reforms of the mendicant orders. The example of a reform emphasizing asceticism, humility, and Christliness was formulated into an extremely affecting example in the person of Francis, the poor saint who was able to attain to imitatio christi in the most physically evident manner, by receiving the stigmata. The mendicant spiritualities offered the urban citizen an emotionally fulfilling and accessible piety. The devotional currents of the late fifteenth century built on this type of reform, but the dynamics were different as pious literature spread


22 "In the thirteenth century, writings on the passion were elaborated further through the development of programs of systematic meditation. Credit for this development belongs chiefly to the Franciscans, who made devotion to Christ the cornerstone of their spirituality. In theoretical writings, allegorical treatises, para-liturgical texts and explicit guides to meditation, the Franciscans defined and extolled the contemplation of the passion, and provided the faithful with appropriate aids." James H. Marrow, Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance (Belgium: Van Geemert, 1979), 192.
within a developing private sphere. The piety that developed out of these origins expressed an emphasis on asceticism, renunciation, poverty, and an intense christological emphasis that can be found in the popular devotional literature (which, like pseudo-Bonaventure's Meditations on the Life of Christ, was often originally written for a monastic audience).  

The pervasiveness of these emphases in the north of Italy is evident in the popularity at this time of such images as the Man of Sorrows and the penitent St. Jerome. The image of the Man of Sorrows is a meditational object that focuses on the suffering Christ, the Christ of the sacrifice (Figs. 10, 11). The penitent St. Jerome confirms this type of devotion by representing the saint as an example of *imitatio christi* through the means of the hermit life, renunciation, asceticism, and repentance (Fig. 12).  

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23 The importance of these characteristics in the new currents of private piety developing in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century is discussed by Ginzburg (1972), 619-642; and Augusto Gentili, *I giardini di contemplazione*, Lorenzo Lotto, 1503-1512, 209-233.

The recurrence of certain saints and their mode of presentation confirms the christological focus and amplifies the current devotional emphases - on suffering, asceticism, renunciation, and penitence. A survey of the half-length extended type reveals four saints whose frequent recurrence suggests a representative popularity. Excluding from the sampling the images representing donors and thus specifically commissioned, the most recurrent saints are ones most likely to be generic best sellers, and will reveal the most prominent devotional modes. Of these four saints two are women and two men: SS John the Baptist, Jerome, Catherine of Alexandria, and the Magdalene (Figs. 16, 17, 18).

Some common characteristics are those of asceticism or renunciation, and some kind of religious transformation - miraculous conversion or in the case of John the Baptist, the conversion of the Old into the New. All these saints represent a particularly close relationship to Christ, either in terms of imitating the example of Christ - Jerome, John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene undergoing hermit penitential experience, and all four renouncing material goods and secular life - or a close historical relationship
such as John the Baptist who was paired with Jesus from the womb. The women, it is interesting to note, both had close love relationships with Christ and in this way paralleled Mary as Bride of Christ.

John the Baptist as the 'ante' christus is the ideal exemplar both of the intercessor, as Christ's messenger to humanity, and as an alter christus, the closest man to Christ in the gospels. He was the first example of the ascetic for Christianity and lived without sin, thus paralleling Mary as well as Christ.

Jerome was a very important saint for the fifteenth century in his role as penitent ascetic. He is associated with the sufferings of Christ because martyrdom was granted to him for the sufferings he underwent, as if he lived the passion of martyrdom in his life. In this role he was

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25 "And when she [Elizabeth] heard the salutation of Mary, Saint John, already filled with the Holy Ghost, and being aware of the approach of the Son of God, leaped for joy in his mother's womb, as though to greet by his movements Him Whom he could not yet greet by words." According to the the Golden Legend, Mary was Elizabeth's midwife, and John the Baptist was first held in Mary's arms. Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno, 1969), 323.

26 It is reasonable to see the flanking male and female saints as exemplars directed respectively to male and female audiences.

27 Marco Lattanzi describes the importance given to (Footnote Continued)
embraced as a patron and exemplar for new reform societies. He was revered for his translation of scriptures and appealed to the current pious passion for getting closer to living the word of God. He was the reform Christian's answer to the humanists because he gave

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Jerome's sufferings:
"Le tre lettere apocrife [narrating the post-mortem miracles of S. Jerome], raccolte poi in un unico volumetto dal titolo Hieronymus vita et transitus, hanno, fra is 1475 e il 1500, un'enorme diffusione editoriale con parecchie versioni in volgare. In realtà il testo delle lettere è una miscellanea di episodi tratti dalla vita dei santi Francesco e Domenico, che l'ignoto autore mostra di conoscere assai bene. In questo modo la vita del santo si arricchisce di elementi devozionale largamente conosciuti e facilmente divulgabili. Nelle lettere poi viene assegnata a Girolamo, divenuto un vero e proprio exemplum di fede, anche la palma del martirio per le sofferenze e le privazioni che il santo ha dovuto subire nella macerazione della vita eremitica. Così Girolamo ottiene anche il più alto valore di conformazione spirituale a Cristo divenendo primo nella schiera degli spiriti beati."
Marco Lattanzi, "Il temo del San Girolamo nell'eremo e Lorenzo Lotto," in Il San Girolamo di Lorenzo Lotto... (1983), 57.


29 Jerome's own writings were very popular with fifteenth century readers. He was extremely popular in volgare and his Epistolae — instructions on ascetic life — were the most popular of his works, having been printed four times in Venice before the end of the century. Leonardas V. Gerulaitis, Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), 95-6; 120-121.
up pagan learning in order to devote his attention to Christian study and life.\textsuperscript{30}

The renunciation of worldly pleasures, be it lust or learning was especially stressed for the women saints. The Magdalene and Catherine were both from wealthy families and renounced their worldly standing. Both were very close to Christ. The Magdalene was the most beloved of Christ in his lifetime, as Catherine was wedded to him by means of the Mystic Marriage. Thus, in their own ways they are both equated with the Virgin Mary in their relationship to Christ.

Augusto Gentili portrays Catherine as the perfect housewife's saint - she renounces worldly knowledge, an excellence of learning, and the marketing value of her beauty (she was offered her life for her submission to the emperor) for a life of humility and perfect obedience to her husband (Christ).\textsuperscript{31} She was thus the most developed and

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\textsuperscript{30} In the period of the Counter Reformation in the latter part of the sixteenth century the depiction of S. Jerome changes. The penitent ascetic of the fifteenth century gives way in popularity to the saint in his study. The Counter Reformation emphasis was on Jerome’s translation of the bible as a response to the Protestants and an authorization of the historicism of Catholic Writ.

most popularly disseminated paragon of the chaste wife. In this way Catherine may be seen as representative of the current moral values - renunciation, penitence, asceticism - as applicable to the contemporary woman's role. The popularity of the image of the mystic marriage for wedding presents made her in fact a popular household saint and connubial exemplar.

The Madonna and Child not only comprise the central theme of the extended type with saints but lend to the type the significance and authority carried by the single half-length Madonna and Child image. The austerity of the extended type continues the austerity of the single Madonna and Child version and in this sense - through style - subsumes the latter's references to the culturally poignant associations of the iconic image. The extended type with saints was in fact less popular in the late fifteenth century than the single Madonna and Child. The single half-length Madonna and Child carried with it the power and authentication of venerable sources in the public or shared culture of Venice - the revered icon, Venetia Virgo, and the miraculous Madonna.

The half-length Madonna and Child, by embracing associations with revered images and Byzantine icons, partook of both a public and private life in Venetian culture. At least since 1204, when Venice conquered
Constantinople and claimed itself the inheritor of the Eastern Empire, Byzantine relics and icons had become part of the public life of Venice, and Byzantine culture became part of the fabric of the Venetian myth. The power of these images as objects enhanced the glory they gave to Venice in her self-image as inheritor not only of the Byzantine Empire but of the Eastern Church. The revered paintings were a source of public pride and had an active part in the life of the city. They were revered as public treasures and treated as relics. They were exhibited, paraded, and supplicated to. They became common civic patrimony and were incorporated into civic ceremony.

32 "...the dominant idea in the decoration of the state church [San Marco] reflects the main preoccupation of contemporary political thought of the Venetians: to arrogate themselves the privileges derived from their self-appointed role as the divinely proclaimed guardians of the Apostle's relics and as the successors of the Eastern Empire whose miserable remains they had just succeeded in eliminating from the map." the aim of the wholesale imitation of Early Christian works in Venice "was to proclaim Venice as the legitimate successor of the Eastern Empire, and as one of the original Apostolic Sees. The models of this renovatio of Christian antiquity were Constantinople and Alexandria, and its heroes Justinian and St. Mark." Hugo Buchtal, Historia Troiana: Studies in the History of Medieval Secular Illustration (London: Warburg Inst., 1971), 58; 54. See also: Goffen (1975), 487-490; Wilk (1978), 119-143.


34 Wilk (1978), 114-5; 125.
Civic pride and revered images intertwined in the adoption of Venetia Virgo as a symbol of the state. The role of the Madonna as patroness of the city was popularly supported when the dual power of the miraculous images and the special protection of the Madonna was called upon in times of need. There are instances when the people of Venice demanded the parading of revered Madonna paintings publicly in order that they might intercede in times of war or plague. In creating a civic symbol of the Madonna, the

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35 Venice claimed special patronage of the Virgin in a period when elsewhere in Italy the Madonna was losing the favour she had held as a civic symbol in the commune period in Italy. Venice substantiated its special affinity to the Virgin by promoting the myth of the city's institution on the day of the Annunciation. Rosand (1984), 180-188; Wilk (1978), 108-119; Sinding Larsen (1974), 144.

36 Muir describes such popular manifestations: "In several processions designed to influence the weather during spring and early summer 1528, supplicants carried a miraculous image of the Madonna, which by August, Sanudo reported, had worked a miracle. Occasionally, popular fears outstripped official efforts to assuage them, and penitents organized their own processions (some involving Scuole Grandi members) in which little children appeared dressed as angels and banners and relics were displayed; or, as happened in 1511, the populace themselves demanded that the government entreat the Virgin's aid by parading her image. Unlike the more political ceremonies, which emphasized social distinctions, group-crisis rites bound the community together as one: various specialized sources of ritual protection and mystical power, whether a venerated painting of Mary or children as representatives of social innocence, were summoned for extraordinary service to supplement the efforts of the institutionalized ritual protectors - the priest who celebrated"

(Footnote Continued)
state borrowed some of the sacral power of iconic images just as the iconic images partook of the prestige of the civic symbol. By having *Venetia Virgo* in one's home one to some degree displayed a pride of place, partook of public culture and enlisted the authority of the city's patron.

The miraculous legendry surrounding the Byzantine icons was actively promoted and incorporated into the Venetian myth. The effectiveness of the Venetian half-length devotional painting was enhanced by its incorporation of the authority of the miraculous Madonna. The extension of the myth of the miraculous image into the home dovetailed with

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(Footnote Continued)

masses, the monks and confraternity members who prayed, and the magistrates who formed processions."


The Virgin's aid was also sought in times of celebration, as Sanudo reports the public reaction in Venice to the repossession of Verona January 1517: "And then the Senate assembled at 2 o'clock in the morning, and everywhere all were dressed in scarlet with braided sleeves. And an order was issued for lights to be lit in the Campanile and around the Piazza, and 25 cartloads of wood to be burned in the Piazza, which made a huge fire, and six torches to be lit in front of *la Nostra Donna* (presumably an image of the Virgin). Everywhere church bells rang out, and fires were lit throughout the land. There were crowds of people in the Piazza, despite the rain." quoted in: Deborah Howard, "Giorgiones's *Tempesta* and Titian's *Assunta* in the Context of the Cambrai Wars," *Art History*, 8 (Sept. 1985), 282.

37 Ringbom develops the concept of the power invested in the image itself in theology and in the practice of indulgence imagery. He presents this attitude as applicable in a particular way to half-length imagery. Ringbom (1984), 11-30.
an indigenous popular culture. The *Madonna del soccorso* or the image of the Madonna that miraculously comes to the aid of simple people was the yeast of a recurrent and endlessly adapted folktale (Fig. 19). When books began to

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38 Goffen (1975) argues that the half-length image was especially associated with miraculous vision (498-99). This is confirmed by a remarkable image in the lower church of S. Francesco in Assisi which attests to the commonly conceived notion of the miraculous half-length as it appears in the legend of S. Catherine. Catherine implores a devotee hermit to show her to the Madonna and Child, to introduce her so that she might see the holy personages. On the left of the fresco the saint adores a half-length image of the Madonna and Child that the hermit offers to her. On the right, in the confines of Catherine's chamber, we see the image come to life in the form of a vision as the Christ Child engages Catherine in the mystic marriage. [Andrea da Bologna rep. in Luigi Coletti, *Gli affreschi della basilica di Assisi* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'arti grafiche, 1949), pl. 190, 196, 197.]

In the Assisi fresco, the half-length type is demonstrated as having a special association with miraculous intervention. The popular legend of the role of the image in the miraculous bonding of Catherine and Christ would have given authority to the intercessional power of S. Catherine, as well as a hope that a devotee in his or her home would be honoured by the Madonna and Child through the medium of the image as well.

While the Venetians seem to give favoured predominance to the Virgin, Ursula Schlegel has outlined the significance of a tradition of the miraculous Christ Child. The *Santo Bambino* in Rome is the prototypical example. She has noted (9, n67) that the feet of the Rome Bambino are slightly displaced, which has given rise to miraculous legends. In the half-length Venetian Madonna images it must be considered that the striding version of the Christchild could have had the same connotations of miraculous 'emergence' and aid. This is emphasized when the Christ Child crosses onto or over the 'barrier' of the parapet. Ursula Schlegel, "The Christchild as Devotional Image in Medieval Italian Sculpture: A Contribution to Ambrogio Lorenzetti Studies," *Art Bulletin*, 52 (1970), 1-10.

39 The popularity of the legend of the miraculous Madonna is also attested to by its appearance in images.
be printed in Venice in the latter half of the fifteenth century these tales were popular titles. The stories are generally written in rustic vernacular and contain homey details of miracles being granted to simple people.

Adapting an iconic image in the creation of a modern type enjoyed a great success on the private market because of the authority it inherited from civic symbolism, and from a shared culture of religious attitudes and legend. The association of the half-length Madonna and Child with the public culture of revered images endowed it with a special desirability for the home. On a day-to-day basis the efficacy of the devotional image was enhanced to the degree that it partook of a publicly endowed authority. The promise of intercessory effectiveness was bolstered by the

(Footnote Continued)
Images of miracle working Madonnas appear in woodblock form, popularly distributed. The most familiar example in this medium are images in which the Madonna reaches out to save the painter from falling from his scaffold. This particular category of miraculous Madonnas is telling in that it is a self-authorization of the artist’s ability to make physical a magical image. [see an example in Gentili (1985), pl. 133]

*Gerulaitis (1976), 121. Because in the early years of printing capital for publishing had not been established, the earliest printed titles were ones that the publisher could rely on as ‘sure bets’. Thus the recurrence of a certain type of book in the fifteenth century is a good gauge for its already established popularity. Gerulaitis (1976), 7.*

*Two examples of this type of story are published in Gentili (1985), 232-233.*
identification of the type with the civically powerful Madonna, the revered icon and the miraculous image.

We can thus see the Venetian half-length operating on several levels. The austerity and the hieratic quality of the half-length Madonna and Child with Saints constituted a model that was recognizably Venetian. By incorporating the half-length 'miraculous' Madonna and Child image into the extended type many references to a shared or civic culture were engaged. The half-length Madonna and Child with saints incorporated beneath the symbolic reading suggested by the hieratic format a narrative matrix that was inherently Italian. The themes of the christological narrative 'hidden' in the imagery of the Madonna and Child were expanded by the addition of the flanking saints. The pairing of the saints in the expanded type provided elaborations on the central theme, and indicated the popular devotional ideals of renunciation, asceticism and christological reference.

The popular appeal of Bellini's images is attested to by the long-lived survival of the type in the provinces. The legends of the Madonna del soccorso lived on in popular folk-myth and late in the sixteenth century and Armenini reports with some disdain of the traditional Byzantine style
Madonnas hanging in the homes of northern Italy. This popular type however did not survive in the high Venetian art circles of Titian.

\[^{42}\text{Ringbom (1984), 34-35.}\]
CHAPTER THREE

PRINTING, PIETY AND WAR: PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL PAINTING IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In the sixteenth century new directions in private piety were developing out of a basis of institutional reform and into the hands of a more independent laity, a laity now served by the rising publication of devotional literature. Devotional themes of christocentricism, suffering, and penitence developed away from the austerity of the mendicant context and into a more passionate empathetic involvement. At the same time the power of the Byzantine example declined noticeably. In private devotional imagery, the change in attitude was one from 'spiritual imagination' to 'local imagination', from the icon-type popular in the fifteenth century to the physically, emotionally, and spatially concrete - the narrative.  

The change from icon to narrative was charted by Ringbom in his excellent study of the half-length devotional image. His investigations were based on the transformations in the half-length type that resulted in the internalization of narrative matter. This chapter regards the change from icon to narrative as an essential one in the devotional imagery of sixteenth-century Venice which results in a definitive move away from the half-length type in Venice, thus taking Ringbom's thesis one step further in its development. Sixten Ringbom, Icon to Narrative: The Rise of

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After the first decade of the sixteenth century, half-lengths swiftly became less popular. The single Madonna and Child paintings fell drastically in favour. The extended type of the Madonna and Child with saints lengthened into three-quarter length and soon was almost exclusively presented in full-length (Figs. 20, 21, 22). The hieratic austerity of the Bellini type incorporating a reference to the Byzantine icon lost its popularity in favour of a more involved emotional exchange between the figures and a more integrated space. The compositional configuration and the tone of private devotional Madonna and Child with saints paintings became narrative in character.

The saints surveyed in Chapter Two still appear but the manner in which they are chosen to be depicted changes in a telling way. John the Baptist is more often presented as the babe in order to compose a family group with the Madonna and Child (Figs. 24, 25). St. Catherine is often involved in the Mystic Marriage with Christ. Mary Magdalene is more often depicted in a single portrait-type image, transformed from the Early Christian virgin to the penitent

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the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Paintings, 2nd. ed. (Beukenlaan: Davaco, 1984)
whore lost in a quasi-erotic ecstasy of devotion (Fig. 27). The grouping of the Madonna and Child with saints favours a pastoral setting, and it is configured into familiar compositions corresponding to themes such as the Adoration of the Magi, the Rest on the Flight to Egypt, the Holy Family, or the Mystic Marriage, in order to give the image a narrative matrix (Figs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26).

In comparison to Bellini’s and Cima’s images, Titian’s paintings are more opulent, emotional, narrative, and integrated in space. Already in the early teens of the sixteenth century, the Dresden Madonna and Child with Four Saints (c1516), while retaining the cropped format of the established Venetian type, introduces a greater sense of setting and interaction between the figures (Figs. 21, 14). In the representation of S. Jerome, the *imitatio christi*


theme is no longer metaphorical, but physical and passionate in degree.  

As one would expect, these changes in approach are consonant with changes in popular devotion. The intensification of a piety that was passionately christocentric of "great emotionality and immediacy" in the early part of the sixteenth century is noted both by Augusto Gentili and Carlo Ginzburg. This change was supported by the diffusion of devotional literature resulting from the flourishing printing trade in Venice. The releasing of

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printed books to the new public that was developing for their consumption had profound effects on late fifteenth and early sixteenth century society. In the sphere of private devotion, the movement toward an increasing independence from institutional direction felt in the fifteenth century was accelerated by the new devotional structure provided by private reading. The diffusion of the new devotional literature was both cause and effect of devotional change. The themes of asceticism, renunciation, and *imitatio christi* emphasized in the literature were already cultivated by reforming currents in Catholicism in the fifteenth century, thus defined tastes for certain types of devotional literature were already established. At the same time the individual involvement entailed in private devotional reading may have encouraged the increased focus on empathy

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Eisenstein gives an eloquent case for the historical significance of the "unacknowledged revolution" of printing in early modern Europe in her scholarly treatment of the subject. Eisenstein (1979), I, 3-42.

Ginzburg (1972), 614-643.
and participation that these themes took on in the sixteenth century. 10

In 1469, the first books were published from Venetian presses, after which Venice quickly became by far the largest centre for printing in Italy. Leonardas Gerulaitis in his book Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice analyzes the content of books printed in the early

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10 The democratization of reading, or the "new popularizing trends", is traced by Eisenstein. Eisenstein emphasizes the wide spectrum of possible readers in the urban population: "The proliferation of literate merchants in fourteenth-century Italian cities is not less notable than the presence of an illiterate army commander in late sixteenth-century France."

Eisenstein (1979), 62.

The results of the new industry of printing was the spread of books to new and less aristocratic consumers, made possible by a change in approach from the scribe tradition of books as luxury items to a more democratic and less decorative production:

"The revival of learning created another public, different in character form the princely collectors - a public eager for knowledge, no longer fastidious as to the garb in which it presented itself, and by the very facts of the case debarred from the selfish pleasure of unique proprietorship. The demand now was for cheap books, and books in abundance. This movement towards the cheapening and universal diffusion of books manifested itself quite early in the history of the art in Venice. The decline in the quality of the workmanship was extraordinarily rapid; and by the year 1480, books infinitely inferior to anything produced in 1470 were not only common, but the rule, although the great printers still continued to publish éditions de luxe for the use of their more wealthy patrons."

Brown (1891), 35.
period of the Venetian industry. It is a confusing mix, but in the vernacular - more likely to be read by the lay public - half the books published before 1500 were devotional literature, and another twenty percent were lives of the saints. The most popular books were not contemporary, but medieval. Venice favoured the Christian mystics, and in lay devotional books titles of the meditations on the Passion and books on private prayer and contemplation were most popular. The most popular tract was a book by the fourteenth century author Domenico Cavalca Specchio de la croce which focused with hallucinatory intensity on the blood and Passion of Christ. The Garden of Oration illustrates a common characteristic of many of these books - the call to the reader to exercise "local imagination", the contemplation of the life of Christ in the most vividly concrete manner.

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12 Gerulaitis (1976), 119.


14 The Giardino de oratione fructuos provide the most lucid instructions for the exercise of "local imagination". Francesa Cortesi Bosco, "La letteratura religiosa devozionale e l'iconografia di alcuni
these types of books began to peak in the last years of the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth century. From this period Augusto Gentili excerpts as

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(Footnote Continued) dipinti di Lotto," Bergomum, LXX (1976), 11.

The method of 'local imagination' is set out clearly for the reader of the Giardino:

"The better to impress the story of the Passion on your mind, and to memorise each action of it more easily, it is helpful and necessary to fix the places and people in your mind: a city, for example, which will be the city of Jerusalem - taking for this purpose a city that is well known to you. In this city find the principal places in which all the episodes of the Passion would have taken place - for instance, a palace with the supper-room where Christ had the Last supper with the Disciples, and the house of Anne, and that of Caiaphas, with the place where Jesus was taken in the night, and the room where He was brought before Caiaphas and mocked and beaten. Also the residence of Pilate where he spoke with the Jews, and in it the room where Jesus was bound to the Column. Also the site of Mount Calvary, where he was put on the Cross; and other like places....

And then too you must shape in your mind some people, people well-known to you, to represent for you the people involved in the Passion - the person of Jesus Himself, of the Virgin, Saint Peter, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Mary Magdalene, Anne, Caiaphas, Pilate, Judas and the others, every one of whom you will fashion in your mind. When you have done all this, putting all your imagination into it, then go into your chamber. Alone and solitary, excluding every external thought from your mind, start thinking of the beginning of the Passion, starting with how Jesus entered Jerusalem on the ass. Moving slowly from episode to episode, meditate on each one, dwelling on each single stage and step of the story. And if at any point you feel a sensation of piety, stop: do not pass on as long as that sweet and devout sentiment lasts...."

From an edition printed in Venice 1494, translated and quoted in: Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), 46. See also Gentili (1985), 228; Cortesi Bosco (1976), 14; Ginzburg (1972), 631-633.
representative editions that strikingly promote worship of the blood and suffering body of Christ, and a transformative meditation based on empathy and the emulation of the suffering and Passion of Christ.  

The most revealing indication of the change in the demands of lay devotion comes to light in a textual comparison by Carlo Ginzburg of chronologically separated examples of the popular Meditations on the Life of Christ by the pseudo-Bonaventura. Ginzburg chooses a point in the book describing the lamentation over the crucified Christ and notes the changes that can be seen in three redactions of the text: a Latin text, a vernacular printed edition of 1495, and a later printed edition from the early Cinquecento.

In the Latin version the scene was presented simply this way: "Alii circumstant et omnes faciunt planctum magnum super eum: omnes enim plangunt eum amarissime, quasi unigenitum". [Some stood around and all wailed greatly

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16 Ginzburg (1972) is the only source I have used that has made the crucial distinction between the editions of this popular devotional tract.

17 Ginzburg (1972), 637
over him: all the people indeed lamented over him most bitterly, as if he were the only born son (Son of God)).

This same passage was transformed strikingly in the 1495 vernacular edition:

...tanto amaro pianto facevano che pareva ben verificato el prophetico decto di Hieremia: Lugebam unigenitum: fac tibi planctum amarum. Ma sopra tucte l'addolorata madre faceva piatoso lamento. O con quanta affetione riceveva et pigliava le pendente braccia del suo charo figluolo [...]. Et apena poteva pel dolore alchune parole proferire, ma sforzata dal materno amore con pia voce gridava come poteva, dicendo: "Che hai commesso, o dolcissimo figluolo, che in tanta acerba morte se' stato condennato? Che farà da hora innanzi la tristissima et mestissima madre tua? Oimè, amantissimo figluolo mio Gesu, in quante amaritudini mi sono convertite, le dolceze che solevo da te havere"...etc. etc." [...so bitterly did they cry that it seemed to well justify the prophetic saying of Jerome: "I mourned the only born son (Son of God): make ye bitter lamentations." But above all this the grief-stricken mother lamented most bitterly. O with what affection she received and took the pendant arms of her dear son [...]. And distressed she could utter few words out of her grief, but compelled out of her maternal love with pious (compassionate) voice she cried as she could, saying: What crime have you committed, o sweetest son that you are condemned to such a premature death? What will your most sad and melancholy mother do with the hours to come? O, most beloved son of mine Jesus, in what bitterness has been converted in me the sweetness that arose from having you"...etc. etc.].

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18 The English translations of this and the following passage are my own.

19 Ginzburg (1972), 637.
What was a simple, unembellished statement was transformed strikingly in order to answer the demands of late fifteenth century piety. What is most evident in the 1495 edition is the gripping narrative emotionality, the addition of the human interest of the histrionic mother, the pull on the emotions, the call to a passionate empathetic response.

In the early sixteenth century edition the text was embellished by verses from the mystical Franciscan poet Jacopone, whose poems were written in the early years of the fourteenth century. His style was somewhat simple and rustic and expressed the emotive imagery of the passion story in a manner that was quite consonant with the new type of passionate piety. John Fleming describes Jacopone's

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passionate style: "in the studied and pathetic colloquialism of the language Jacopone has...fully developed the visceral power to make sacred history quake and weep..."\textsuperscript{21}

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\begin{quote}
Risguarda la trista de Maria
L'anima già se parte via
Dal mio corpo amaricato
etc. etc."
\end{quote}

Excerpted from an early Cinquecento edition of the \textit{Meditationes} in Ginzburg (1972), 637-638.

\textsuperscript{21} John V. Fleming, \textit{An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages} (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 186.

In this early phase of printing older literature reached some audiences for the first time, for others it was simply newly presented and in any case it was assimilated by the reading public not as historical material but as if it were contemporary. What Ginzburg’s final example shows so strikingly is the adaptation of medieval or older material into a ‘modern’ context insomuch as it suited contemporary needs.

"Questa pietà cristocentrica, dalle tonalità appassionate e sentimentali, era, nell’Italia del primo Cinquecento, comune agli ambienti più vari, da quelli ortodosamente cattolici a quelli ereticali. Era una pietà che erompeva fuori dai quadri tradizionali, perciò quasi inesprimibile – e di fatto espressa, per una scelta stilistica che era anche una scelta religiosa, con un ricorso, ora deliberato ora spontaneo, all’arcaismo. Ciò fu reso possibile dalla diffusione della stampa. Tra la fine del Quattrocento e il principio del Cinquecento il pubblico dei lettori si trovò improvvisamente a poter disporre di una quantità di testi religiosi – raccolte di preghiere, scritti di pietà, commenti scritturali – risalenti a cinquanta, cento, trecento anni prima. Non c’è dubbio che per il lettore comune questi testi, per il loro carattere, e per il fatto di essere stati dati alle stampe, erano avvertiti come testi contemporanei."

Ginzburg (1972), 636.
The parallel between the development in devotional text and image at this time is remarkable. The Meditations on the Life of Christ for example was born out of the monastic context. It is made up of chapters that follow episodes in the life of Christ. It is structurally a regimented meditational programme that in the early stages of printing was transformed into the gripping reading that appealed to the newly extended public.

In imagery, the austere, half-length figures were replaced by compositions of more integrated space, emotional interaction and narrative matrix. An abrupt change in style of devotional images was most keenly felt in the urban centre of Venice. This manifestation is best seen in the context of a constellation of social changes in Venice at the beginning of the sixteenth century of which the new culture of the printed book forms an integral - but not singular - part. 22

22 It is interesting that in Florence in the latter half of the fifteenth century - where the characteristics of integrated space and narrative logic began to appear in private devotional paintings when in Venice the half-length type prevailed - books in the vernacular ('popular' reading) made up a much greater percentage of books in print than in Venice of the same period. Gerulaitis (1976), 136. It is difficult, though, to directly collate these two factors - another important factor is that Florence did not share the resonances of the Byzantine icon that influenced the popularity of the half-length type in Venice.
The change in sensibility from icon to narrative was not restricted to devotional images and the attitudes engendered through devotional reading. This change in sensibility was intrinsic to a greater cultural fabric in Venice and can be found manifested in different forms. The fifteenth century attitude may be termed an 'icon' sensibility. It is telling that in Venetian civic devotion, the tradition of parading relics during the public celebration of religious feasts in the fifteenth century turned by the early sixteenth century to the display of narrative *tableaux vivants* in the same situation. In other words, by the early sixteenth century, religious narrative was preferred even publicly to the display of sacred relics.

Theologically, the two types of devotional images in question represent two types of reality. The iconic image repeats a prototype which is accepted as a manifestation of a greater, largely ineffable divine structure. The

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23 Part of the 'icon sensibility' was a belief in the miraculous power of the image. One of the points in Patricia Brown's work on Venetian narrative is the power the image held in fifteenth century Venice - as a historical document the image was considered equal to or even greater than the spoken word. Patricia Brown, "Painting and History in Renaissance Venice," *Art History*, 7 (Sept. 1984), 263-277.

narrative image confirms divinity by grounded it in fleeting reality - the reality of earthly time and social life.

Bringing social reality into devotion was a task begun by the mendicant orders, in response to new urban demands. Intrinsc to the concept of the ineffable reality, on the other hand, is a reality that is beyond the verification of the ordinary person. It would seem to imply the support of a larger structure of authority.\textsuperscript{25} The preference for the

\textsuperscript{25} Francastel treats the change in imagery from the Byzantine icon to the Renaissance narrative style of the thirteenth century in terms of a revolution in spiritual thought:

"It was not without reason that the name 'Spiritual' was given to all the monastic partisans of the doctrines that rejected the concepts of a human order strictly determined by a complete and final revelation that can only be respected and deeply meditated, substituting it for the concept of a partial, fragmentary revelation which is constantly in the process of fulfillment and which demands from each individual not mere devotional submission but an effort of will, an active and constantly questioned adherence of his whole being. Once it has been admitted that the whole history of mankind consists not in the renewal of a collective act of thanksgiving and faith but in individual adhesion - which is necessary to the ever-indispensable realization of the creative act - belief, conduct, and the forms of representation all change. The aim of art is then no longer the repetition of a prototype; it becomes the instrument with which a group of individuals attribute devotional values to acts which no longer figure in the fixed tradition of Holy Writ but which seem, to some at least, to give actuality to the doctrinal teachings in the existing social context."

narrative type occurred at a time when private piety was
developing a structure that was growing more independent of
the authority of church ritual, supported by private
devotional reading.

The dramatic change in imagery that we have been
charting occurred along a historical faultline that
determinately changed the internal structure of Venice - the
Cambrai wars. The defeat of Venice in the League of
Cambrai and the ensuing wars (1509-1516) had a traumatic
effect on the social fabric of the city. These events
formed the background of the shift in Venetian private
devotional imagery from one style to another. It would seem
reasonable in this investigation to look at changes caused
by the Cambrai wars and to ask what new demands these
dynamics placed on the consumption of religious imagery.

In the formation of the League of Cambrai, the European
states united against Venice and defeated her on the
mainland where for a short time she lost all her holdings.
This resulted in physical threats to Venice’s self-image as
an invincible republic. After regaining much of her

26The traumatic effects of the Cambrai wars in Venice
have recently been taken up as a factor in imagery in the
early sixteenth century. See Deborah Howard, "Giorgione’s
Tempesta and Titian’s Assunta in the Context of the Cambrai
territories through diplomacy and war, 1515 marked the beginning of concerted literary efforts to concretize the Venetian myth and to directly improve Venice’s historical image (and to cover up her bared weaknesses). This ‘campaign’ was carried out in the hands of several humanists working individually, the most famous of which was Gasparo Contarini. As a result of the recent wars the new myth-makers favoured more aggressive analogies to Roman fortitude and to the Roman Republic. The myth of Venice

27 "The Venetian writers of the early sixteenth century had become keenly aware of the unique and precarious nature of their historical position in an Italy dominated by monarchical and foreign governments, and the works of Navagero and Contarini were among the first attempts by the Venetians to justify themselves and their society in the face of an increasingly hostile and dangerous environment." Lester J. Libby Jr., "Venetian History and Political Thought after 1509," Studies in the Renaissance, XX (1973), 25. According to Muir the myth of Venice grew "in an inverse proportion to the decline of Venice’s actual political power" Muir (1981), 27; 25-34. Also see Felix Gilbert, "Venice in the Crisis of the League of Cambrai," in Renaissance Venice, ed. J.R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 274-292.

28 Libby singles out Andrea Navagero, Gasparo Contarini, Giambattista Egnazio, and Andrea Mocenigo. Libby (1973), 7-45.

29 Ackerman recognizes the enhanced Roman references in Venetian architecture after the League of Cambrai. However he assumes that Venice emerged from a hiatus in building and in culture caused by the wars to find that its prominent architects had picked up a new style in Rome which it then abruptly adopted. It seems rather that the tensions of the Cambrai wars provided the demand for a more aggrandizing style with Roman imperial references. Ackerman (1982), 42-45. See also: Muir (1981), 23-34. Gilbert (1973), 287-8; 290. In Andrea Mocenigo’s history of the Wars of Cambrai (1525) he relates Venice’s successful defense of
as inheritor of Byzantium did not die, but the emphasis had changed. Venetian preoccupations with the East were turning to problems within Italy. Its economic dependence on the East was declining rapidly causing Venetians to look more eagerly to the resources of the mainland. The immigration of the Greek population that had helped to tip taste toward the Byzantine style after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 was supplanted by a new immigration of deposed citizens from the terraferma. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, the peaceful self image of Venice as the inheritor of the East was shattered. Byzantine-inspired imagery fell out of favour at the same time.

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Padua in which account Leonardo Loredan comes out as a hero who "appeals to the Senators to emulate the patriotism of the Romans during the war with Hannibal so that the state may survive this crisis also." Libby (1973), 32.

30The great age of Venice as a maritime republic effectively ended at the end of the fifteenth century as a result of the wars with the Turks in the east and the discovery of a trade route around Africa. Davis cites this turn in Venetian economy as one of the major factors in the increasing poverty of the Venetian nobility. Davis, 34-53. Ackerman notes the movement of the Venetian nobility toward buying land on the terraferma. Ackerman (1982), 45-46.

31Gilbert (1973), 281.

32"By the early decades of the sixteenth century, the language of humanism had transformed the traditional myth of a holy city protected by Saint Mark, independent from all foreign powers, into a coherent political ideology that was classical in its derivation." Muir (1981), 25-6.
The icon, as a revered relic, had a public life in Venice, and thus part of a shared civic culture. As the miraculous Madonna, the Virgin of the icon was popularized in folk legends and in the public arena of civic devotion. As part of a common public patrimony, the Venetian half-length Madonna and Child functioned in the sphere of popular imagery and was consolidated into high culture at a single moment of civic peace and strength. The hardships of the Cambrai wars however drove a growing wedge into class distinctions, only the very rich being able to evade the taxations that crippled the less affluent.  

When lists of names of those who were delinquent in paying their taxes were published in the Great Council during the time of the wars, some of the most prominent and wealthiest of the ruling group in Venice were listed. Gilbert (1973), 288-290.

Muir notes evidence of growing class distinctions in sixteenth century Venice: "As one surveys the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, most obvious is the sharpening of class distinctions. Nobles, cittadini, and plebians were separated in rituals, and the first two groups were classified according to an elaborate hierarchy of official precedences. The Venetian republic was becoming more aristocratic, more concerned with class privilege, more socially rigid, and less a communis of free citizens." Muir (1981), 302.

"After the War of the League of Cambrai, particularly under the influence of Doge Andrea Gritti, Venetian civic rituals were reformed in accordance with the authoritarian priorities of the oligarchy. Transformed under the influences of humanism and neoclassicism and often at the hands of refugees and expatriots from Tuscany and Rome, the important feast days became more and more the occasion for pageantry display. What had been open public space used for many purposes became, if not exclusively, then more frequently, a via sacra for civic rituals." Muir (1981), 301.
class that emerged. His images were more cultured in their appeal, more visually opulent. A telling detail is the use of the cloth of honour - a flat and solemn backdrop characteristic in Bellini's or Cima's half-length paintings was transformed by Titian into a rich theatrical repoussoir (Figs. 2, 3, 21).

The change in devotional imagery in the second and third decade of the sixteenth century was a result of a complex of changes in the Venetian scene: changes in private devotion, the new dynamics of a reading public produced by the diffusion of printed devotional literature, and the effects of the Cambrai wars on de-charging the importance of Byzantium in the Venetian image and on changing the profile of the public who were to patronize the most popular painter of the new century - Titian.

In Bergamo, newly recovered by Venice at the time that Lotto painted the Madonna and Child with SS. Roch and Sebastian, the cultural dynamics were different. The 'archaic' forms of popular fifteenth century types lived longer in the provinces. In Bergamo itself in the early sixteenth century provincial tastes were enhanced by an eagerness for contemporary painters trained in Venice. The devotional changes that were felt in Venice were also a part of the developments in sixteenth century provincial devotion, perhaps even felt with a particular intensity.
Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* draws on the tradition of the Venetian half-length type, but charged with a new dramatic intensity, it is at the same time a new type - transformed by the demands of new currents of piety, and shaped for the particular patron.
CHAPTER FOUR
LOTTO IN BERGAMO: DIFFICULT TIMES
AND NEW PATRONAGE

"Soprattutto, si rischia di non sottolineare con la dovuta forza che l'intervento del Lotto a Bergamo rappresenta non la continuità, ma un frattura radicale: e che la pala di S. Bartolomeo è, prima ancora che un fatto artistico, un atto politico."

Francesco Rossi in *Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto* (1980).¹

"la preparazione infatti di un'operazione chirurgica parte dall'invocazione a Dio per passare all'esame sull'età e le condizioni fisiche del malato, nonché sulla fase lunare più favorevole all'intervento."

Giulio Orazio Bravi, "Medici e chirurghi a Bergamo..." (1981)²

Lotto's period of activity in Bergamo (c1512-1525) has been critically regarded as his best, his most fruitful, his happiest. Mascherpa calls the artist's Bergamo period "la..."
splendida estate"³, Berenson considers it the time "when the
tide of life is highest in him",⁴ while Banti regards it as
the artist's "periodo più felice."⁵ Lotto's Madonna and
Child with SS Roch and S. Sebastian is generally considered
to have been painted in the midst of this period in 1521,
the year two of his major altarpieces were completed - the
paintings for the churches of S. Bernardino and for S.
Spirito (Figs. 58, 41). Lotto's stay in Bergamo was an
active one in which many significant works were produced for
both public and private commissions. The period of Lotto's
stay in Bergamo was one of grave difficulties for the city;

³Mascherpa entitles his chapter on Lotto's Bergamo
period "la splendida estate" Giorgio Mascherpa, Invito a
Lorenzo Lotto (Milan: Rusconi, 1980), 41.

⁴Bernard Berenson, Lorenzo Lotto (London: Phaidon,
1956), 266. "His pictures of this time, particularly those
still preserved at Bergamo, have an exuberance, a buoyancy,
and a rush of life which find utterance in quick movements,
in an impatience of architectonic restraint, in bold
foreshortenings, and in brilliant, joyous colouring." Berenson (1956), 262.

Berenson prefaces his 1956 edition with a poignant
autobiographical note:
"Sixty and more years ago I was attracted by
Lorenzo Lotto. I had seen his paintings in the
National Gallery, the landscape of the little St
Jerome in the Louvre charmed me and I admired the
Brera portraits, but it was at Bergamo that I fell
under the spell of his art. The altarpieces, the
canvases, the frescoes, the intarsias, that abound
in that majestic town and its surroundings,
enthralled me. I kept returning to them, and
before not too long I felt I must write about
their author."

⁵Anna Banti, Rivelazione di Lorenzo Lotto (Florence:
a victim of warring foreign and Venetian factions in the wake of the League of Cambrai, the city was continually surrounded by foreign troops and threatened by plague and hardship that accompanied war. Out of this crisis situation, dominant citizens in Bergamo turned their political alliances toward Venice. Lotto entered Bergamo as the most successful of a circle of Venetian-trained artists who represented the new patronage of this pro-Venetian group. Within this patronage situation, Lotto's patrons represented a diverse range of classes: provincial aristocracy, wealthy merchants, the middle class.

Lorenzo Lotto was born c1480 in Venice. The date comes down to us from a testament of 1546 when he states that he is 'around 66.' His place of birth comes from references to the artist by himself and others as de Venetiis. As there is no documentary evidence to reveal Lotto's apprenticeship this question of 'origins' and early 'influences' has been the subject of lively debate. The

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6 In this document Lotto defines himself as: "Laurentio Loto pictor veneziano de circha anni 66." Rudolfo Pallucchini and Giordana Mariana Canova, L'opera completa del Lotto (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975), 83.

7 He was described in this way in a deed of 1505 in Treviso. Flavio Caroli, Lorenzo Lotto e la nascita della psicologia moderna (Milan: Fabbri, 1980), 59; Luigi Chiodi, Lettere inedite di Lorenzo Lotto (Bergamo: B. Secomandi, 1968), "Il Lotto non è di Bergamo," 10.
first notices of the painter’s activity is in 1503 in Treviso where we hear of him by 1505 already as "pictoris celeberrimi." One of the controversial questions in Lotto studies concerns the attribution to the artist of the fresco decoration on the tomb of Trevisan humanist Onigo. Augusto Gentili has discussed the importance of this question as a matter of patronage - discounting the attribution to Lotto on the basis of the rift between the patronage circles of the wealthy humanist Onigo and that of the ‘reforming’ bishop Bernardo de’Rossi who is known to have patronized Lotto in Treviso.  

By 1506 Lotto was in the Marche according to documents for a commission for the Dominican church in Recanati of San Domenico (Fig. 28). Lotto must have established strong ties in the Marche because he returned there repeatedly for the rest of his life. There he began a pattern of Dominican patronage that characterized a major portion of his ecclesiastical commissions. In the documents for the San Domenico commission it is specified that the new pala would be "de milioribus picturis que sint iste que inspiciuntur facte in iuventute vel potius adolescentia sua" suggesting

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8 Caroli (1980), 59.

that Lotto had in fact executed works in the Marche at a previous date as an 'adolescent.'\(^\text{10}\) An early residence in the Marche would have had to have been at some time between 1495 and 1503, when the artist was first recorded in Treviso.\(^\text{11}\)

By 1509 Lotto was in Rome, working in the Vatican. Documents record payment to "magister Laurentius Lottus de Treviso" in May 1509 for "laborerii picturarum faciendarum in cameris superioribus prope libreriam superiorem."\(^\text{12}\) At this date Raphael too was beginning work in the Vatican in the Stanza della Segnatura. It is not known however, what location Lotto’s assignment "in cameris superioribus prope libreriam superiorem" referred to - if it was a room nearby the stanze where Raphael was working or if Lotto actually worked in the same rooms. If the rooms were the same, there is no evidence to determine whether Lotto worked with Raphael or if in fact Lotto’s work was destroyed in order to

\(^{10}\) Pietro Zampetti, "Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche: I periodo (1506-1512)," in Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche. Il suo tempo, il suo influesso (Florence, Centro Di, 1981), 194.

\(^{11}\) The implications of this document has led to some hypothesizing about the possibility of an apprenticeship in the Marche. By Coletti (1939; 1953), and Zampetti (1953; 1969). Rudolfo Pallucchini and Giordana Mariana Canova, L'opera completa del Lotto (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975), 83.

\(^{12}\) Pallucchini and Canova (1975), 83.
make room Raphael’s project. Understandably this point in Lotto’s career is an intriguing one, encouraging scholars to find evidence of Raphael’s influence on Lotto, to speculate on traces of Lotto’s possible activity in the stanze or, in a reverse move, to suggest how Lotto may have influenced Raphael. In any case, in this period Lotto was exposed to

13 It is usually assumed that Lotto’s early work in the Vatican was destroyed but that does not preclude hypotheses of his participation in Raphael’s stanze frescoes. Zampetti supports the proposition, initiated by Longhi, that Lotto’s participation can be discerned in the stanze, particularly in the kneeling figures to the right of the Miracle of Bolsena. Longhi also suggests Lotto’s possible participation in the Sistine Madonna, and Brizio in the Farnesina Galatea. Pietro Zampetti, "Introduzione. Lorenzo Lotto: il suo e il nostro tempo," in Lorenzo Lotto nelle Marche. Il suo tempo, il suo influsso (Florence: Centro Di, 1981), 20-21.

14 The change in Raphael’s style from the Stanza della Segnatura to the Eliodoro has been attributed to the influence of Sebastiano del Piombo. Zampetti suggests that Lotto may have had some effect in this change, a suggestion echoed by others, including Mascherpa. Mascherpa (1980), 18.

"La presenza del Lotto a Roma - durata forse fino a tutto il 1511 - non fu senza conseguenze su Raffaello, il cui gusto muta sensibilmente col passaggio dalla prima alla seconda 'Stanza', dove il colore diventa più intenso, quasi veneto....Non c'è dubbio che quel modo di sentire il colore, quella partecipazione emotiva allo stato d'animo dei personaggi sono un modo 'diverso' di fare pittura per Raffaello, una strada già percorso dal Lotto." Zampetti, Lotto nelle Marche (1981), 20.

For Lotto’s part, the Marche Deposition and Transfiguration have been seen as overly ‘Raphaellesque’, to the point of nearly setting Lotto off-balance. Berenson (1901), 104-106. "Raphael...encouraged Lotto’s own inherent tendencies, and even made them go a trifle too far on his, Raphael’s, own road, so that Lotto soon recoiled, ceasing to be so golden in tone as he is in the works of 1512. Hence the works of about this year have in them an obvious element of unnaturalness, as if while painting them the artist was
artists from all over Italy who had come to work for Julius II on the greatest papal projects up to that point in the Renaissance. Certainly the prestige of this type of ‘job experience’ held some authority in the competition for what was to be his first major commission in Bergamo - the pala Martinengo.

There is as yet no documentation of Lotto’s activity from 1510 to the signed and dated Jesi Deposition of 1512 (Fig. 29). In 1513 Lotto was in Bergamo, and by 1525 Lotto was back in Venice where he stayed until 1549. In this period he spent time in Treviso (1542-45) and completed commissions in the Marche. Three major altarpieces destined for the Marche were completed in the 1530’s - the Monte San Giusto Crucifixion (1531), the long-awaited St. Lucy altarpiece for Jesi (1532), and the Cingoli Madonna of the Rosary (1539). He did not in fact sever his professional relationship with Bergamo right away. He continued to send designs for the tarsie of the choir of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo until 1532 as he continued to complete commissions for churches in the surrounds of Bergamo in

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(Footnote Continued) not quite himself, and had tried to take hold of more than he could carry." Berenson (1901), 105. See also Anna Banti, Rivelazione di Lorenzo Lotto (Florence: Sansoni, 1981), 19-20; Zampetti, Lotto nelle Marche (1981), 21.
105

absentia.\textsuperscript{15} By 1549 Lotto was back in the Marche in Ancona. In 1552 he moved to Loreto, dedicating himself as an oblate of the Santa Casa two years later and dying there in 1556.

One of the most important documents in the formation of a modern understanding of the artist is the Libro di Spese, a book of accounts kept by Lotto from 1538 until his death.\textsuperscript{16} In this book are recorded Lotto's later years, his frequent moves, his problems with his many apprentices, his close ties with the Dominican order, the disastrous "lotto" of his works in 1550 in Ancona. The Libro di Spese and Lotto's will of 1546 provide biographical notices that have led to a construction of the artist as peevish, disappointed, and failed. Scholars have found a rationale for this interpretation in Lotto's own words; often quoted is Lotto's confession in the 1546 testament to being "inquiete della mente."

Unfortunately, the 'libro' that Lotto himself mentioned for the years previous to 1538 no longer exists to document

\textsuperscript{15}In 1527 Lotto completed the Celana Assumption and the polyptych in Poteranica. As late as 1542 he supplied an altarpiece of the Madonna in Glory for Sedrina. The letters published by Chiodi (1968) demonstrate the continued relationship of Lotto with the MIA of Bergamo for the commission of the tarsie.

\textsuperscript{16}First published by Adolfo Venturi as the Libro dei conti in 1895, it was republished with additional documents by Pietro Zampetti as the Libro di spese diverse in 1969.
the "splendida estate" of the artist’s Bergamo years. The gap is being filled by an active group of scholars in Bergamo. Luigi Chiodi’s work in the Biblioteca Civica, for example, has made a significant contribution — unearthing and publishing the collection of Lotto’s letters written to the Misericordia of Bergamo in connection with the commission of the tarsie for Sta. Maria Maggiore. Chiodi also worked on the problem of Lotto’s introduction to Bergamo.

The first notice we have of Lotto’s presence in Bergamo is the bozza (the rough draft) of the contract for the pala Martinengo in 1513. The altarpiece was originally commissioned for the high altar of the Dominican church.

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17 Lotto mentions keeping notes on the Sta. Maria Maggiore commission in Bergamo in a ‘libro mio’ in a letter dating 1532. Luigi Chiodi, Lettere inedite di Lorenzo Lotto (Bergamo: B. Secomandi, 1968), 159.

18 Luigi Chiodi, Lettere inedite di Lorenzo Lotto (Bergamo: B. Secomandi, 1968).


20 The final copy of the legal document is lost, or perhaps never existed. Cortesi Bosco discusses the bozza and publishes the document as an appendix to her article: Francesca Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi del mito di Venezia nella pala Martinengo di Lorenzo Lotto," Archivio storico bergamasco n.2, 5 (Nov. 1983), 239-249.
Santi Stefano e Domenico (Fig. 30). The original church was destroyed in 1561 to make way for the construction of the Venetian city walls. The altarpiece was moved and now decorates the high altar of S. Bartolomeo in Bergamo basso.\footnote{The altarpiece and its lost frame were subject to various relocations. See Rosalba Amerio Tardito "Storia e vicissitudini della pala," in La Pala Martinengo di Lorenzo Lotto. Studi e ricerche in occasione del restauro (Bergamo: Centro Culturale San Bartolomeo, 1978), 54-59.}

The painting was a major commission - the largest in Bergamo at that time. The patron was Alessandro Martinengo Colleoni, generous protector of the church of Santo Stefano, who was granted the patronage of the cappella maggiore in 1504 along with the right to be buried there.\footnote{Francesca Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi del mito di Venezia nella pala Martinengo di Lorenzo Lotto," Archivio storico bergamasco, 5, 2 (Nov. 1983), 215 and n. 17, 230-31.}

For this prestigious project Martinengo held a general competition open to 'undequacumque complures egregii pictores',\footnote{Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi..." (1983), 214.} (many exceptional painters from whatever place). It was to be "magnificam et singularem palam seu anconam omni arte ingenioque humano possibili"\footnote{Pallucchini and Canova (1975), 93.} for which payment was to be 500 gold ducats.

Lotto was thus chosen for this commission from among the best painters available. Scholars have speculated that...
an artist such as Previtali for example would have been a formidable contestant as he had been working successfully in the city since 1512 for many of the same patrons who were to employ Lotto. Francesco Rossi has reconstructed a group of artists including Previtali and Cariani, patronized by the pro-Venetian patrons who also commissioned Lotto. The question remains why was Lotto chosen - how was he made known of the competition, through what channels was he recommended to the patron, and when exactly did he arrive in Bergamo?

Chiodi argues that Lotto probably arrived in Bergamo previous to the Martinengo commission, by the end of 1512. Chiodi suggests two sources that may have recommended Lotto for this project - the first mercantile and the second religious. Bergamo and Venice had active trade ties with the Marche. It is known that for instance Giovanni Casotti, a man who was to become a supportive patron of Lotto in Bergamo, worked as a merchant in the Marche and there would have had a chance to become familiar with the artist's work. Lotto's close ties with the Dominican order in his

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25See below.


27Casotti is known to have been a "mercante di biade in
activity in the Marche has been noted by many scholars. It is quite possible that he was supported by Dominican recommendations to the church of SS. Stefano e Domenicano. Whichever the scenario, at that point in time, fresh from the papal projects in Rome, Lotto would have had much to recommend him to the Berqamaschi - prestige, success, and the politically favourable asset of a Venetian training.

In 1513 when the pala Martinengo was commissioned, Bergamo was in a period of great political crisis, caught between foreign occupations and Venetian domination. Bergamo's history as a part of the Venetian state began in 1428, when it was incorporated as the farthest reach of Venice's westward territorial expansion. Having control of the lands of the terraferma assured Venice access to the important overland trade routes to the north, and Bergamo, being on the route to the mountain pass through Switzerland, was strategically important. In the sixteenth century the terraferma became increasingly important to Venice as the state was rapidly losing its dominance in sea trade.28

(Footnote Continued)

Pesaro". Giorgio Mascherpa, Invito a Lorenzo Lotto (Milan: Rusconi, 1980), 41. Mascherpa also suggests that "I Casotti erano forse gli unici collezionisti d'arte della città, seppur palesamente, con funzioni rappresentative." Mascherpa (1980), n. 4, 63.

28 In 1453 Constantinople was lost to the Turks. In 1499 a graver blow was dealt to Venetian sea power. A fleet of the Ottoman sultan defeated the Venetians in the Ionian
Venice considered its territorial expansion and consolidation necessary to its changing economic picture and to its new commercial interests. By the early years of the sixteenth century, however, the other Italian states began to view Venice’s new position of power as a threat.

Upon the death of the last Visconti of Milan Venice came forward as the greatest single power in Italy, vying only with the papal states. When Venice made a play for the Borgia Romagna territory, traditionally considered under papal influence, Julius II instigated what was to become the greatest alliance of forces against a single republic in the history of Italian power politics. Hatred and fear of the Venetian Republic had already been stirred up by Ludovico Sforza and his supporters, so that by 1509 Florence, Milan, France, Spain, and the Emperor joined the papal states in

(Footnote Continued)
Sea. Subsequently, the combined force of the Turkish army and navy captured "nearly all the Venetian strongholds in Greece, including Modon and Coron, which since 1204 had been considered the 'two eyes of the republic.'" Frederic Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ., 1973), 242. Lane presents this defeats as powerful keys in a constellation of factors that turned Venetian policy around so that "Unlike Venice's leaders of earlier centuries, the dominant statesmen of 1500 were thinking more in terms of territory than of sea power." Lane (1973), 242.
forming the League of Cambrai with the sole purpose of crushing the overambitious Venice.\footnote{29}

In the battles that followed, Bergamo was a victim of the violent shifts of power that characterized the Cambrai wars. In the first major battle of the wars of Cambrai, Venetian troops lost to the French at Agnadello in 1509, and shortly after all of Lombardy was lost. According to the terms of the treaty Bergamo, in 1509, fell to the French.\footnote{30}

In the ensuing years of war Bergamo was subjected to a

\begin{itemize}
\item Lane stresses the importance of Julius II’s actions in the formation of the League. Lane (1973), 242-5. Salvatorelli relates that in 1509 Julius joined a league already existent between Maximilian and Louis XII. Salvatorelli, A Concise History of Italy, trans. Bernard Miall (New York: Oxford Univ., 1940).
\item Nicolai Rubinstein argues that much of the ‘odio universale’ of Venice in this period was ‘engineered’ by Sforza and his supporters, whose claims to Milan were seriously threatened by Venetian expansion. "the fate of Francesco Sforza’s claims to the succession of the duchy of Milan on the ground of his marriage to Filippo Maria’s daughter, depended largely on the attitude of the Venetian government. Francesco Sforza and his able envoys, foremost among them Nicodemo Tranchedini from Pontremoli, sought to counter Venice’s opposition to Sforza’s claims by persuading her Florentine ally that her real aim was the acquisition of the duchy and thus of control over Lombardy, and that her ultimate objective was rule over Italy." Nicolai Rubinstein, "Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion in the Fifteenth Century," In Renaissance Venice, ed. J.R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 201.
\item According to the treaty agreements Venetian territory would be carved up in this way: the pope would get Romagna; the emperor would have Friuli and the Veneto, including Treviso and Padua; the King of Hungary would have Dalmatia; the Duke of Savoy, Cyprus; the King of France, Lombardy; the King of Spain, Apulia; and Mantua and Ferrara took "tidbits." Lane (1973), 243.
\end{itemize}
dizzying succession of foreign occupations punctuated by recuperations by Venice. Venice tried to break up the block against her by alarming the other Italian states against foreign intervention. In 1511 Venice succeeded in breaking up the League by forming a ‘Holy League’ with the pope and Spain. By February 1512 Bergamo was back in the hands of Venice only to return to the French and back to Venice again within the year. In March 1513 Venice reversed her alliances and signed a pact with the French at Blois, which enabled her to deal for her former Lombard territories. Under these circumstances Bergamo went back to Venice but only for a short time - in the years 1513 and 1514 Bergamo had to be captured and recaptured from the Spanish. In September 1515 the Spanish were routed by the French and Bergamo was returned to Venice. In 1516 again Bergamo was ravaged by Imperial troops. Bergamo returned to Venice in the same year, and although foreign troops surrounded the area for the next ten years, this was the last conquest: Bergamo remained under Venetian domination.

The years of war were a severe test on Bergamo’s loyalties. During the previous years of Venetian rule, a strong Ghibelline faction in Bergamo held on to alliances with Milan. The vicissitudes of Bergamo’s fate in the years of war aggravated internecine clashes among the populace. Tired and beleaguered in 1516 the city even exercised a brief attempt at becoming an independent commune. During
these conflicts Bergamask politics experienced what amounted to a reversal of alliances. The traditional alliances to Milan were reversed by a strong pro-Venetian group of citizens who owed their wealth and political allegiances to the Serenissima.\textsuperscript{31} The turning point occurred in 1512 when Bergamo joined with Brescia in an attempt to stage a revolt against the French (whose troops were then occupied in Bologna) with the purpose of returning the cities to Venice. The French troops, however, quickly returned to violently crush the revolt in Brescia. Bergamo escaped a similar fate only by paying a high tribute.\textsuperscript{32}

In May of 1513, when the Martinengo altarpiece was commissioned, Bergamo had recently been returned to Venice. The patron, Alessandro Martinengo Colleoni, had fought for Venice and was faithful in his continuing support of the Serenissima.\textsuperscript{33} Cortesi Bosco has interpreted this altarpiece as a statement of political moment - the support of the return of Bergamo to Venice at a time when statements

\begin{itemize}
\item Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi..." (1983), 215.
\end{itemize}
of political alliance were crucial. The fact that the altarpiece was commissioned in 1513 but completed in 1516, when Bergamo was returned again definitively to Venice, supports the argument.

In Cortesi Bosco's interpretation, many of the elements in this altarpiece refer to Venice and to the recent wars. According to Cortesi Bosco, St. Alessandro, the patron saint both of Bergamo and of the patron Martinengo, stands with his foot on a helmet symbolizing peace. Above him is the banner of St. Mark, who is himself depicted twice in the altarpiece—once in attendance on the Virgin and once represented in a tondo that completes the vertical line from S. Alessandro (Bergamo) upwards to the Venetian banner and on to the patron of Venice (Mark) above his head. According to Cortesi Bosco, the yoke and the balance hanging from the cupola above the saints symbolize Good Government and even the decorative motifs of the architecture—dolphins and tridents refer to Venezia as Regina del mare.

As the successful contestant for this project, Lotto entered Bergamo not only as a celebrated painter but as an artist who with his Venetian training expressed the

35 Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi..." (1983), 219-220.
political alliances of a tightly-knit group of Bergamask patrons defined by their Venetian alliances - Alessandro Martinengo Colleoni cavaliere, Nicolò Bonghi mercante, Giovanni Cassoti mercante, Giovan Davide Brembati conte e cavaliere, among others. Francesco Rossi asserts that the new 'Venetian line' taken by Bergamask patronage, bringing Lotto to the city, appeared with the suddenness of a blow - "una vera svolta culturale." Previous to Lotto's arrival the dominant artistic style had been provincial and Lombard, the programme volontà di rompere i legami culturali con Milano e riaffermare l'omogeneità di Bergamo con Venezia; e tale volontà si incarna nella personalità di Alessandro Martinengo Colleoni, di Nicolò Bonghi, dei Cassotti, dei Brembati, ben individuati protagonisti del riavvicinamento politico ed economico di Bergamo alla Serenissima, che si concluderà nel 1517 ma ha la sua chiave di volta proprio nel 1512." Francesco Rossi, "Lorenzo Lotto e la cultura pittorica bergamasca del '500," in Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (Bergamo: Centro Culturale S. Bartolomeo, 1980), 39-58.

Cortesi Bosco investigated Francesco Bottagisi, Lotto's guarantor in the contract for the Martinengo altarpiece, and found that his name was frequently found with many patrons of Lotto - Martinengo Colleoni, Domenico Tassi, Giovanni Cassoti, Balsarino Marchetti Angelini - in the notarial acts of Giacomo Petrobelli. This is evidence, at least, that these patrons had shared ties and likely travelled in the same circles. Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi..." (1983), 241.

Rossi has contributed two articles that establish this patronage situation in Bergamo in the period surrounding Lotto's residence there: Francesco Rossi, "Lorenzo Lotto e la cultura pittorica bergamasca del '500," in Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (1980), 39-52; and "Pittura a Bergamo intorno al 1500..." Atti dell'Ateneo di scienze lettere ed arti di Bergamo (1981), 75-96. The latter is especially helpful because Rossi lists the works that were known to have been commissioned in that period, arranged by geographical location.
with little resonance achieved in the local culture by the brief activity of Bramante. The suddenness of the intrusion that Lotto represents conforms to the exigencies of political crisis in Bergamo. Within the parameters of the same period in time, artists such as Previtali, Cariani, and Palma il Giovane - Bergamask painters with Venetian training - were actively patronized in Bergamo, making up a real cultural fabric of Venetian origin. Rossi argues that, of this group, Lotto was the spearhead of a rent in the indigenous fabric of Bergamask artistic culture - not

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38 Rossi isolates the importation of Venetian work previous to the period of Lotto's participation to certain areas only - of Giovanni Bellini in Val Seriana and of Bartolomeo Vivarini in Val Seriana. These pockets of Venetian importation however, were without consequence in Bergamo. According to Rossi: "l'incidenza di questa 'scuola' sul tessuto culturale bergamasco va riconosciuta nulla. Tali opere non costituiscono un precedente, non potevano insegnare nulla a un Lotto o un Previtali, non formano un humus culturale di nessun genere. Si tratta in definitiva di presenze estranee." Rossi (1981), 81.

Bergamo rather - consonant with its political affiliations prior to Lotto's arrival - supported a lively culture of Milanese artists best represented by Antonio Boselli, and the circle influenced by Zenale and Foppa. Rossi (1981), 81-83.

39 Of Previtali and Cariani Rossi says: "il loro operato non va quindi inteso come frutto locale di un nuovo corso di cultura, ma esattamente come il contrario, come un apporto cioè venuto dall'esterno per soppiere ad una lacuna, per portare avanti una linea culturale che dal sostrato bergamasco non poteva essere espressa. Non a caso i loro documentati committenti - e lo ha notato la Cortesi Bosco - sono gli stessi del Lotto: è una classe nuova di potere che sceglie la sua linea, vicina a Venezia, e per concretizzarla si rivolge, coerentemente, a Venezia." Rossi (1980), 42.
really a revolution, as the implications of his style were not picked up by followers - but a deliberate importation.40

 Among Lotto's Bergamask patrons were wealthy merchants, doctors, and minor aristocracy. Battista Cucchi, the patron of the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian*, is particularly interesting because he belongs to a type of patronage well represented by Lotto. Middle class, but by no means wealthy, Cucchi is interesting because he was not the type of patron who supported the art of an artist such as Titian.41

 By picking up clues from archival material, Cortesi Bosco reconstructs a picture of "Baptista de Chuchis de Martinengo" as a citizen of Bergamo and as the patron of the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian*. In his will, Battista de Cuchis (Battista Cucchi) the surgeon made the Misericordia of Bergamo his universal heir. He made special arrangements however, for a painting "cum imaginibus beate Marie cum filio in gremio et beatorum Sebastiani et Rochi" to be left to the nun Lucretia de Tirabuschis in the

40 Rossi (1980), 44-49.

monastery of Santa Grata. He requested that after the death of the nun that the painting be deposited with the church attached to the convent ("remaneat prefate ecclesie sancte Grate").

Battista Cucchi’s surgeon’s register or account book was found in the archives of the Biblioteca Civica by Luigi Chiodi. At the end of the accounts was a statement attesting to Lotto’s settlement of payment to his former landlord Nicolò Bonghi by means of a painting. Lotto’s letters on the other hand contain several references to Battista dalì organi in terms of affection and respect, referring to him as a friend and an ally in his dealings with the Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore. The identification of Battista dalì organi and Battista chirurqu (surgeon) is confirmed by documents of the Misericordia made in the matter of settling Cucchi’s accounts after his demise, naming "Baptista de Chuchis de Martinengo” both "chirurqu“ and "de organis". Cortesi Bosco settles the confusion of the double occupation by establishing Cucchi’s first occupation as organist for Santa

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43 Cortesi Bosco, "Un amico...,” (1981), 68, 80; Chiodi, Lettere inedite... (1968), 12.
Maria Maggiore in Bergamo which he then forsook in order to pursue his growing profession as a surgeon.  

That Cucchi was involved with other of Lotto's patrons and at least may not be considered an 'outsider' is hinted at in his witnessing the settling of accounts between Lotto and the rich merchant Nicolò Bonghi - Lotto's landlord and patron - by means of a private devotional painting of the Mystic Marriage of S. Catherine. Nicolò Bonghi cherished the painting he owned by Lotto (Fig. 31). He cherished it enough to go to great lengths to hide the painting (unsuccessfully) from French troops that were besieging Bergamo, fearing it would be stolen because of its great beauty.  

There is evidence that Cucchi too had special affection for the painting Lotto had done for him - the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian. As has been noted, when Cucchi left his estate to the Misericordia of Bergamo he also made exceptional provisions, one of which concerned certain special arrangements for the Lotto painting, willing it to the nun "Lucretie de Tirabuschis" in the convent of Sta. Grata.  

Nothing is known about

46 Cortesi Bosco, "Un amico...," (1981), 68-70.

47 The painting was not stolen, but the landscape that would have appeared above the heads of the figures was cut out. Mascherpa, Invito a Lorenzo Lotto (1980), 52.

48 Cortesi Bosco, "Un amico..." (1981), 82-3.
sister Lucretia or of her relationship to Cucchi. However, the church of Santa Grata, where he requested the painting to remain after the nun's death, was also the church in which Cucchi requested to be buried.

From Cucchi's register we know that the patients he treated ranged from artisans and shop owners to the provincial aristocracy. He was a respected citizen, with close ties to the Misericordia Maggiore of Bergamo whom he made his universal heir. He seems to have been a close friend to Lotto. The letters we have from Lotto to Cucchi are worded in the friendliest of terms. In a touching example of 1531 Lotto writes to the elderly Cucchi (he is 74 at the time) that he is "desideroso vedervi in Venezia gaiardo et sano ... et dignareti alozar in compagnie da carissimo fratello mazor."  

The following are selected excerpts from Cucchi's register indicating the professions of some of his patients: Matio Maffei, libraro; the notaio Ceresolo; the calzolaro Girolamo [Bravi (1981), 89]; Antonio Olmo, dottore e membro della aristocrazia cittadina [Bravi, 90]; a soldato [Bravi, 93-94]. Chiodi notes from the register: "I pazienti son del ceto mercantile e nobile di Bergamo: c'era da sperare che, se il Lotto avesse avuto bisogno di cure, sarebbe comparso su quelle pagine. O forse fu curato gratis, perché amico del chirurgo..." Chiodi, "Le abitazioni del Lotto a Bergamo," in Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto (1980), 16.

Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* may have been painted for Cucchi as a friend, but it served the needs of Cucchi the surgeon. The work done by Giulio Bravi has made the clarification of the role of the surgeon possible. In the sixteenth century there was a sharp distinction in the medical profession between surgeons and physicians. The difference can be reduced to that between mechanical craftsmen and practitioners of the liberal arts. Physicians were required to undergo a university education - in Bergamo the requirement was six years study at the University of Padua followed by an examination.\(^{51}\) Their medical education was purely theoretical, based on classical sources such as Galen. They dealt with diagnosis, and prescription for serious ailments, but never did the actual application on a patient - that was a 'manual job' and thus the domain of the surgeon.\(^{52}\)

Physicians in Bergamo had their own *Collegio* in Bergamo from 1446.\(^{53}\) This *Collegio* determined the standards physicians were to meet in their training, regulated the division of labour between physicians and surgeons, and

\(^{51}\) Bravi (1981), 87.
\(^{52}\) Bravi (1981), 86.
\(^{53}\) Bravi (1981), 86.
policed unqualified practicing. The ***Collegio*** added legitimacy and prestige to the office of the physician. Educated, and with hands unsullied from physical contact, the physician was an honoured man in the community which reflected the remuneration he could command for his services. The distinction of his occupation conferred on him the privileges of rank, which in reality was only a reinforcement of the practitioner's place in society as it was rare for anyone not in the upper classes to receive the required education.

Surgeons on the other hand were manual labourers. Their knowledge came not from what they read, but from experience. Their skill was acquired through apprenticeship to either a *barbitonsore*, a barber, or a *ciroico*, another surgeon. Cucchi, who practised surgery from 1486 to 1533 learned his craft from his father, a *ciroico*. From his register we know that Cucchi treated many ailments from cuts to boils, wounds from weapons and the new disease of syphilis which did not conform to illnesses with which the

54 Bravi (1981), 86.
55 In Bergamo physicians made approximately six times the wages a surgeon made. Bravi (1981), 96.
physicians, in their classical learning, were familiar. The surgeon would be called upon to treat anything that could be treated on the surface. The physician would be called on in any case that was deemed life-threatening. He would diagnose, prescribe changes in habits, food or medication according to the Galenic theory of humours - hot remedies for cold illnesses, wet for dry, perhaps a change of air - and the assisting surgeon would apply all medicines and complete any direct treatment on the patient such as lancing or the use of plasters.

The manual aspect of their work, and the practical nature of the training put the surgeons in another class from the physician he often assisted. He was considered on the level of an artisan and was paid accordingly. It is telling that a Collegio for surgeons was only established in

57"Battista Cucchi è chiamato spesso a medicare ferite, lesioni, traumi, escoriazioni, che cura con l'applicazione di punti di sutura o con fasciature o consigliando l'uso di unguenti che forse lui stesso prepara." Bravi (1981), 91.


60"Cucchi non ha una cultura accademica e, anche socialmente, egli è più vicino agli altri lavoratori artigianali che ai ceti colti delle professioni intelletuali, anche se per motivi di lavoro egli ha con i medici fisici un rapporto quasi quotidiano." Bravi (1981), 89.
Bergamo in 1585. 61 When Cucchi was practicing, then, there was no institutional matrix for the surgeon. Cucchi was busy and respected, treating patients not only in Bergamo but from the valleys around the town. 62 His remuneration however, put him in the wage bracket of a good artisan, a master bricklayer or a book-seller. 63

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Because of the inclusion of two saints commonly invoked against plague, Lotto’s Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian saints is a devotional painting that is particularly fitting for the home of a surgeon. In Cucchi’s time epidemics were a constant threat due to the influx of foreign troops around Bergamo and the effects of war and famine. Cucchi himself lost two children to plague in 1529. In 1524, when plague raged with particular fury in Bergamo, Cucchi made up his will. 64 Bravi writes of the debilitating

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62 Bravi (1981), 94.
63 Bravi (1981), 94.
64 Cortesi Bosco "Un amico di..." (1981), 70. Bergamo had also suffered a severe epidemic of the plague in 1513 and again in 1514. Cortesi Bosco, "Riflessi..." (1983), n. 52, 237. Zampetti records the affliction of the town with ‘pestilenza’ again in 1522 "evidentemente dovuta al passaggio di tante truppe e alle difficili condizioni che si erano determinate." Pietro Zampetti, "Lorenzo Lotto a (Footnote Continued)
situation of Bergamo at the end of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth:

"Questi stessi decenni sono tra l'altro particularmente tormentati per la città di Bergamo, se pensiamo che al continuo passaggio sul suo territorio di truppe imperiali e veneziane, che compiono ripetute violenze e devastazioni, sopraggiungono nel 1528 la peste e la carestia seminando tale miseria e desolazione da far scrivere al consigliere cittadino Marco Beretta di assistere a totale calamità e destruzione. Questa particolare situazione di precarietà delle condizioni alimentari, ambientali e igieniche è dunque un elemento favorevole al propagarsi così intenso per tutto il territorio bergamasco di infezioni ed epidemie."

In view of this constant threat, the choice of two plague saints seems a natural one for a devotional painting in Bergamo at this time; it seems unnecessary to look for a specific incident of the plague to justify its commission. Cortesi Bosco, in identifying Cucchi as the patron, considers both the pervasiveness of plague and Cucchi’s profession as a surgeon sufficient explanation for the commission of a painting of a Madonna and Child with two popular plague saints. In her words, "non parrà strano, semmai ovvio, che in quanto chirurgo il Cucchi desiderasse fossero raffigurati due santi protettori dalle epidemie e

(Footnote Continued)

The specific function of the painting, however, can not be established with complete security. In the next chapter "case studies" of paintings in established hospital contexts will be examined. One altarpiece by Lotto will be discussed in the following chapter - the St. Jerome for the ospedale dei Derelitti in Venice (c1545). It has some similarities to the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian in that it is small, and takes the format of a popular type for private painting - the penitent St. Jerome. The context of small devotional panels in medical situations is not well known - it is possible that with these two paintings Lotto could be established as something of an specialist in this genre.  

Knowing the modus operandi of the surgeon, it is not likely that a painting in the personal possession of a surgeon would have been used in as formal a relationship

66 Cortesi Bosco, "Un amico..." (1981), 72.

67 Mascherpa finds it worthy of note how many medical men there were among Lotto's friends and acquaintances. Mascherpa, Invito a Lorenzo Lotto (Milan: Rusconi, 1980), 52. The portrait of Giovanni Agostino della Torre (London. National Gallery, 1515), a great Bergamask physician, and his son Nicolò, with whom Lotto had a warm friendship, documents an example of Lotto's associations with men of medicine.
with patients as the hospital context called for. It is probable that the painting was strictly private in its function rather than professional, although it is possible that it could have been seen by patients. The format takes as its basis the private devotional Venetian half-length type. The bedroom was one place private devotional paintings, particularly the half-length type, were often found. Two paintings by Carpaccio depict bedrooms with private devotional paintings in them, both from the St. Ursula series, and now in the Accademia in Venice: The English Ambassador Received by the King (c1493), and the Dream of St. Ursula (c1495).

The Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian functioned as a devotional painting; devotional imagery, moreover, would have had a special function in the life of a sixteenth century medical worker. The surgeon's job in fact was only partially achieved through science - the other part was achieved through devotion. As Bravi relates in the epigraph to this chapter, the preparation made by a surgeon for any operation may have included the examination of the

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age and physical condition of the patient, but it began with an invocation to God. Although popularly paired, it is possible that Saints Roch and Sebastian had a special meaning for surgeons, and this will be suggested in the next chapter. What Lotto has provided in the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian, and what will be explored more fully in Chapter Six, is a private devotional painting that was 'customized' to speak more directly to its patron, the surgeon Cucchi.
CHAPTER FIVE

DEVOTIONAL PAINTING AS A MEDICAL TOOL

Veronica to Volusian: "'As Jesus was always travelling about to preach, and I could not always enjoy His presence, I was once on my way to a painter to have the master's portrait drawn on a cloth which I bore with me. And the Lord met me in the way, and learning what I was about, pressed the cloth against His face, and left His image upon it. And if thy master but looks upon this image, he shall straightaway be cured.' And Volusian asked: 'Can this image be bought for gold or silver?' 'No,' said Veronica, 'but sincere piety will obtain its blessings...'"

Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend

Both St. Roch and St. Sebastian were popular saints in Venice and the north of Italy where plague was recurrent from the fourteenth century through to the seventeenth century. Their presence accompanying the Madonna and Child in Lotto's painting indicates that this image is part of the greater category of plague/healing images. Cortesi Bosco's identification of the patron of this work as the surgeon Cucchi gives it a special relevance to the medical context.

As a healing work, it functioned within the sphere of Cucchi’s professional life.

In Italy the plague saints Roch and Sebastian were represented in several ways for different functions. Chapter Six will explore more thoroughly the types and significance of imagery of these two saints. These saints were used in both public and private works. In a public work they were included as prominent members of the sacra conversazione altarpiece or were given their own space in the polyptych format. The function of the saints was often either prophylactic or ex voto. In the latter case the altarpiece was commissioned as a result of a promise given in exchange for survival of an epidemic or of a specific danger. In the former, the plague saints acted as special intercessors to the Virgin, as protectors of the worshipper, the patron, the congregation, or the state against disease.

The plague saints as state protectors form a separate category, one that was especially relevant to Venice. Being a commercial port, Venice was subjected to constant and virulent outbreaks of the plague. It was the first state to institute a sophisticated state-run organization of health.²

²Richard Palmer felt that it was telling of the duality of the Venetian state's protection of public health that the "year 1485 in the Venetian calendar saw both the decision to
The painting by Titian of St. Mark enthroned between Saints Roch and Sebastian on one side and Saints Cosmas and Damian, the physician saints, on the other is perhaps the clearest statement of the state as protector of health (Fig. 32).  

In the private context, the use of plague saints is similar to that of the public sphere. The representations of Roch and Sebastian in a private context are likely to be either protective or ex voto as well, but restricted to a smaller sphere of influence. The specific motivation for the commission of the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is not known. With the constant threat of epidemic in Bergamo, it is not unlikely that Cucchi requested a painting with the two saints as either a protection against the plague or as a memorial. However, the effectiveness of the two saints as intercessors against sickness and suffering puts a special gloss on their meaning. The popularity of these two saints in both public

(Footnote Continued)


"nel culto dei santi specificamente protettori contro la peste si inserisce, attraverso l'immagine di san Marco, la presenza dello Stato, che pare in questo modo ribadire, pubblicizzandolo, il carico della difesa della sanità che si era precedentemente assunto in concreto con la creazione dei lazzaretti (1423 e 1468) e con l'istituzione del Magistrato alla Sanità (1486)." Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Le immagini della peste nella cultura figurativa veneziana," in Venezia e la peste 1348/1797 (Venice: Marsilio, 1979), 217-18.
and private spheres provides evidence for a conjecture that their symbolization exceeds specific action related to a particular instance of affliction. Associating St. Sebastian and St. Roch with a more universal context of illness and healing also associates them with more universal questions - the questions of death, of sin, and of the devotional answer to these - redemption.

The plague in the sixteenth century was still beyond man's ability to control or cure. The very virulence of the disease, the fury with which it could hit and man's ineffectuality in combating it made the plague, more than any other affliction, appeared to be God's divine will.4

4The plague was considered the 'flail of God.' "On the whole the physicians were quite helpless in the face of the plague....They therefore restricted themselves mainly to prophylactic measures, and agreed with the Church that the best and most efficacious preventive means was the fear of God, 'for by this the venomous astral arrows may be averted.'" Johannes Nohl, The Black Death. A Chronicle of the Plague, trans. C.H. Clarke (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926), 72.

The comprehension of the horror of the outbreak of plague as the punishment of God called for public action to expiate the cause of God's wrath.

"The church had its own ideas of plague and what should be done about it. If endemic disease was thought 'sometimes' to be a punishment for sin, epidemics were always so regarded. To prevent plague the church urged piety, charity, devotion to the saints and their relics. The Italian states took this seriously. In Venice it was part of the government's rationale for its suppression of blasphemy, heresy and sodomy; for its enforcement of the sumptuary laws; for its collection of relics or its regular grants of alms" (Footnote Continued)
The ever-present threat of plague, as it recurred without any apparent plan, contributed to the conceptualization of the plague as the reminder of the vulnerability of man's mortality. It may be assumed that the popularity of St. Roch and St. Sebastian as intercessors against the plague brought them into this wider frame of symbolic reference.

In Bergamo when the Colleqio of physicians was established it was not Roch and Sebastian they named as patron saints but Cosmas and Damian. As early physicians, Cosmas and Damian were appropriate saints to represent the

(Footnote Continued)

to monasteries and charitable institutions. If plague once broke out calls for repentance, penitential processions, devotion to the plague saints - especially Saint Sebastian and Saint Roche - and vows, often to erect a new chapel or church, were a fundamental resource. Richard Palmer, "The control of Plague in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in The Church and Healing, ed. W.J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 95.

The more macabre aspects of the contemplation of death appeared with the greatest frequency in the wake of the Black Death in 1348. In this period c1350-1450, images of the Dance of Death reached their greatest popularity. Similar to these were images of the story of the 'Meeting of the Three Living and the Three Dead,' and the popular Ars Moriendi tracts. Rinaldi (1979), 209-212. Rinaldi registers a change in the attitude towards death and the plague by the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth - a more positive one of the possibility of redemption rather than the wrathful, macabre perceptions caused by the Black Death. Rinaldi (1979), 210. Also see Millard Meiss, Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1951).

profession of the physician and in this sense were more specific in their symbolization. Cosmas and Damian were, in fact, much less frequently represented than Roch and Sebastian who had taken on a wider symbolization - of sickness, even of mortality and salvation - and a more popular appeal. This popularity makes Roch and Sebastian more suitable saints to represent the surgeon, like Cucchi, who treated all levels of the social strata and who neither belonged to an institutionalized profession nor held the particular pretension to social standing that the physician claimed. As popular saints in a social sense, it may be that the saints Roch and Sebastian were regarded in an unofficial way as the surgeon's saints just as Cosmas and Damian represented the physicians in a formal way.

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7 They are reputed to have lived around the end of the third century, in the age of Diocletian. They studied medicine in Syria and out of Christian piety they treated their patients for free. In imagery they are often portrayed with instruments of their profession - urine jars, medicine boxes, mortars. John Gerlitt, "Cosmas and Damian, the Patron Saints of Physicians," Ciba Symposia, I, 4 (July 1939), 119-121.

8 Gerlitt tells that Cosmas and Damian were chosen as patron saints for the Surgeon's Guild of Paris by 1226. The fact that the surgeons of Paris were organized into a guild which received the name of a "College" indicates that they possessed a professional consciousness in the same way as the physicians of Bergamo did in the fifteenth century. In this way Cosmas and Damian would still have been perceived as patron saints not broadly of healing but of the profession of medicine. Gerlitt (1939), 121.
The role of the devotional painting in a medical context is dependent on the perceived role of divine causes in illness and health. In the sixteenth century scientific reasoning coexisted with religious explanations of sickness, held sometimes in conflict but most often in tandem. Accordingly, treatment of illness consisted of elements from both science and devotion. A woodcut from Boethius' *De Consolazione Philosophiae*, although issued in Augsburg, and somewhat later than the time Lotto painted the work under examination, well illustrates this duality in contemporary medicine (Fig. 33). On the right, two physicians consult about the evidence of a urine sample — scientific diagnosis. On the left, the sick woman is attended by a healing saint who applies miraculous cures — divine healing.

This duality of science and devotion appeared in public life. In time of epidemics public prayer, religious

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Pestblatter, or printed devotional plague sheets common in Italy and the northern countries of Flanders, the Netherlands, and Germany in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries exhibit the same duality of scientific and devotional healing: "Sometimes the religious element [common to these sheets] is supplemented by an exposition of hygienic precautions or of remedial measures. Thus a devotional cut comes to be blended with injunctions, usually in verse, as to how to stave off pestilence by isolation, fumigation, washing, or dietary; or how to cure it by such measures as bleeding, or plasters to hasten maturation of the buboes." Raymond Crawfurd, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), 141-42.
processions, the display of relics, and a general call for repentance was coupled with quarantines, hospitalization, and sterilization. Hospitals employed physicians and surgeons but were often run by monastic orders and generally incorporated with a church. Although the balance was gradually changing, devotional healing still had the strongest claim. Illness was understood as the wrath of God. Hence, no mundane cure could be effected until the patient was purged of his sins and had made his supplication to God.

10 Palmer suggests that in this period there was sometimes conflict between the two types of measures not yet so much in philosophy, but in practice, as when the church prescribed processions and preaching for the control of epidemics at the same time as the health office prescribed general quarantine. Palmer (1982), 94-6.

11 Laurinda Dixon explores the context of the Antonine monastery hospital as the context for Bosch's St. Anthony triptych:

"Antonine monasteries served as lay charity hospitals that housed and cared for the victims of ignis sacer until their deaths. As such, they continued the ecclesiastical domination of medical practice established in the thirteenth century. Hence, the purpose of the Antonines was reflected in the physical organization of their monasteries, where church and hospital were unified. The staff consisted of a prior (usually a clergyman), the lay nursing staff, apothecaries, and doctors. Antonine infirmaries employed the most-renowned physicians and surgeons, many of whom had received their training at Salerno, Padua, or Montpellier."


12 Nohl reports that in "a little anonymous primer for doctors" in the period of the Black Death, it is stated that (Footnote Continued)
The ecclesiastical prescription for the purgation of sin was confession, and as such it formed a powerful component of healing. In the hospitals, a patient was required to confess prior to be granted medical attention. Richard Palmer, who has done fundamental work on the role of devotion and healing, relates that at "the general hospital of Verona, the Santo di Pietà, statutes from the mid-fifteenth century required the patient to be told on admission that unless he first took care of his spiritual state there would be no medical treatment. The hospital chaplain must first hear his confession."\textsuperscript{13} And as late as 1566 a papal bull reinforced a statute that had been in effect since 1215 which "obliged physicians to persuade their patients to call in priests, the doctors of the soul."\textsuperscript{14}

In her pioneering work on the Isenheim Altarpiece in the hospital context, Andrée Hayum revealed that in Antonine monastery hospitals - concerned primarily with the treatment

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(Footnote Continued) "it was the first duty of the physician on entering the house to ask the relations of the patient if he had confessed and received the holy sacrament, as upon this in the first instance his salvation depended." Nohl (1926), 73.

\textsuperscript{13}Palmer (1982), 85.

\textsuperscript{14}Palmer (1982), 85.
of those afflicted with St. Anthony's fire - prayer, communion, and the contemplation of relics were intimate parts of the life of the patients. The worship of holy relics, particularly relics of healing saints was recommended. Wine that had been poured over the bones of St. Anthony was reputed to be an especially effective cure. This fixation on the holy relic was not unrelated to the popular belief in amulets and precious stones.

Hayum consults existing documents for the Antonite hospital at Beaune:
"For both the patients and physicians in such a hospital the structure of each day would have been provided by the church, by the sound of the church bells and through the organized sequence of prayers and devotion. The reforms of 1478 of the Antonite order advocate prayer and entry into the church as a steady routine for the patients. 'May each patient be required for every canonical hour to say twelve Our Fathers and as many Ave Marias, and in the church if it is possible.' The actual assembling of patients before the holy objects of a monastery is called for in these reforms, demanding that new patients eventually be led 'before the brothers for the holy wine and before the relics as is the custom.' In the Beaune documents Rolin calls for thirty beds to be erected in a hall continuous with the chapel so that Roger van der Weyden's triptych could be viewed even by those too infirm to approach the altar."

Hayum (1977), 505.

Hayum (1977), 512. This sanctified wine was known as "holy vintage". It was only offered on the Feast of the Ascension, and was reputed to hold great healing powers. The rich paid dearly for small quantities; the poor could receive some as charity. Dixon relates: "Those poor victims chosen to receive the elixir free of cost took only a few precious drops in a pseudocommunion ritual while they gazed at an image of Saint Anthony and murmured a prayer..." Dixon (1984), 121.
Amulets and precious stones, like relics had powerful, semi-magical properties. Amulets and precious stones were invested with special powers through God, and the holy relics were a medium through which the devotee partook of the healing powers God had invested in His saints. Both were powered by the belief in miraculous cures and the dynamics of both were not essentially different.

There would have been no contradiction for a surgeon such as Battista Cucchi between the practical cures he applied and the element of divine intercession necessary to healing. The devotional image served the needs of devotional healing. Andrée Hayum discerned several layers of meaning in Grunewald’s polyptych which made it effective in the Antonine hospital context. Many of these layers of meaning which concern the function of the patron saint and the message of Christ in the healing context can be applied to Lotto’s painting for the surgeon Cucchi. In Hayum’s exploration of the different states of the altarpiece—open, closed, and intermediate—two major principles are revealed that have particular applicability to Lotto’s work—that of identification with the sick, and of salvation.

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17 Hayum (1977), 512-514.
In the open state of the altarpiece a scene shows St. Anthony being piteously tormented by demons (Fig. 34). One strikingly deformed demon lies in the front plane, in the corner (Fig. 35). Hayum has identified this demon as graphically representing the terrible effects of St. Anthony's fire. St. Anthony in torment also depicts the agonizing torture of the afflicted. The closed state depicts the Crucifixion and the Lamentation, flanked by St. Anthony and St. Sebastian (Fig.36). In the middle position is the Resurrection, the Annunciation, the Angelic Court, and the Madonna and Child (Fig. 37).

These states correspond to the religious attitudes toward the afflicted. According to Palmer, sixteenth century attitudes were ambiguous. Affliction, seen as the flail of God is the punishment sent by God for the sins of the stricken. At the same time, in his suffering, the afflicted person experiences the suffering that Christ and his martyrs suffered. In this sense the afflicted is

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18 These negative views of sickness were the most visible, in which case cures were based on repentance. The advent of the disease of syphilis added to this conception in Palmer’s estimation because syphilis was early on recognized as a venereal disease, and perceived as the punishment of sexual immorality. Palmer (82-3).

19 This attitude would seem to be very much in tune with the ascetic ideals characterized by S. Jerome, whose ritual flagellation or castigation of the flesh helped him renounce the bonds of the material world and brought him (Footnote Continued)
truly blessed by God, granted material suffering in this world that will cut short his period of suffering in the next.\(^\text{20}\) In the Isenheim altarpiece, both attitudes are portrayed. In the scene of the Temptation of St. Anthony the sick devotee identifies with the sufferings of the saint and with the gruesome demon in the foreground.\(^\text{21}\) The understanding is that, in suffering with the saint one is closer to the imitation of Christ’s sufferings.

\(^{20}\) “A...theme in the Middle Ages regarded the leper as specially chosen by God for salvation, privileged to suffer purgatory in this world in order to find comfort in the next. God, according to the physician Guy de Chauliac [14th C], loved the leper more than others. This was built upon the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, who became the patron saint of leprosy, and whose sufferings in this world were compensated for in the next.” Palmer (1982), 84.

The passage from the bible is this one (Luke 16: 19-25):

“And there was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:/ And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,/ And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores./ And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;/ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom./ And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame./ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

\(^{21}\) Hayum (1977), 507.
suffering also martyrdom. The supreme message of martyrdom is expressed in the scene of the crucifixion in the closed state, where death and suffering identifies the afflicted with the sufferings of Christ. The middle position is the sphere of the positive, that helps the sick person make that leap of understanding, that, suffering as a sinner, it is the sacrifice of Christ that is his answer to salvation, the promise in the gruesome death he faces. The Madonna and Child and the angelic court are both intercessory means and the promise of heavenly rewards. The Resurrection of Christ, appearing like a hallucinatory vision, is Christ's answer to his sacrifice - salvation for mankind.

The religious image, then, may answer the needs of the sufferers on many levels. The supplicant, in his suffering, may appeal to the holy personages for intercession. The image offers a model of behaviour for the sufferers in the examples of the saints and in Christ. And it offers the

22 "...the viability of the Crucifixion as image and symbol lies in permitting vast numbers of people to find community in pain and suffering. In the hospital, the identification with the images of the closed state of the altarpiece would have been all the more intense. The patients at Isenheim certainly shared the idea of man as sinner since disease was often considered a manifestation or punishment of sin. But through Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross man was redeemed. These worshippers must have approached the closed altarpiece with special gratitude, for it dramatizes this supremely magnanimous act." Hayum (1977), 509.

23 Hayum (1977), 515-16.
answer to the contemplation of death - the answer of salvation in Christ’s sacrifice.

Hayum and Dixon have dealt with larger altarpieces in medical contexts. The smaller altarpiece, in a less formal medical context is another category, and one that has been associated with Lotto. Bernard Aikema has recently identified the original context of Lotto’s Madrid St. Jerome (mid 1540’s) as the hospital of the Derelitti, near the Church of SS Giovanni and Paolo in Venice (Fig. 38). The hospital was run by a reforming order of regular clerks - the order of St. Paul. Its purpose was to house and care for the infirm, the poor, and homeless young girls. Identifying the Derelitti as the original location of the

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25 "The purpose of this order was to ‘reform both clergy and laity, and to raise their moral standards.’ In Venice, the Paulines immediately attracted a circle of patricians and noblewomen who ‘devoted themselves enthusiastically to good works and religious observances’ under their direction. No doubt during these early years - and especially during the mid-1540’s - the hospital of Santi Giovanni e Paolo was one of the most lively centres of the Catholic Reform in Venice." Aikema (1984), 343.
St. Jerome gives it a context that is both nominally medical and indicative of new directions in devotion.

According to Aikema, the St. Jerome was made for the altar of the small chapel of the hospital. As the hospital by its own decree was affiliated with no specific church, so the altar of the chapel was not to be dedicated to any particular saint.\(^{26}\) The choice of St. Jerome for the altarpiece then must express the principles of the Clerks Regular of St. Paul who administered the ospedaletto and to some extent of Lotto as well, as he was one of the directors of the hospital.\(^{27}\)

Lotto's St. Jerome for the hospital of the Derelitti differs from most other contemporary depictions of the subject in one aspect. In this painting, Jerome is neither beating his breast in penitence in front of the crucifix,

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\(^{26}\)The original statutes of the hospital in 1537 state that the institution had to remain "senza alcuna Autorità Ecclesiastica, at alcun titolo de Santo over chiesa alcuna." Aikema (1983), 117.

\(^{27}\)Aikema establishes evidence of Lotto’s close association with the Derelitti up to the year of his departure in 1549. Aikema (1984), 343. Mario Manzelli argues that Lotto was not just closely related to the hospital, but acted as governor. Manzelli found documents that state Lotto was a governor of the hospital in 1548. The records however only begin in 1547, making the artist's earlier involvement as governor probable, but circumstantial. Mario Manzelli, "Lorenzo Lotto governatore dell’ospedale di S. maria dei Derelitti in Venezia," Arte Veneta, 35 (1981), 202-3.
nor is he immersed in his solitary study. Instead, he openly imitates Christ, his arms outstretched in an exaggerated arch bent over the crucifix which lies on the ground before him. The answer offered to the worshippers in this image is the imitation of Christ, of total involvement in his sacrifice.28

Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian addresses the demands of the healing work demonstrated by Andrée Hayum in the example of the Isenheim altarpiece - intercession, the example of martyrdom and the answer of salvation. To these demands Lotto adds the gloss of another message - that of imitatio christi, an identification with the sacrifice of Christ that characterizes new devotional attitudes.

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28 Aikema elaborates on the importance of Jerome and the principles of imitatio christi for the reforming Catholics of the early sixteenth century. The statutes of the clerks of S. Paul mention the importance of the practice of "oratione mentale". Aikema extends this practice to the use of devotional manuals such as De imitatione Christi which Lotto owned a copy of. The reformers of this period wished to "improve the moral standards and intensify the religious life of the believers. One way of reaching this goal was a renewed spirituality, which found its expression particularly through contemplation of the Passion of Christ as the foremost weapon to overcome the desires of the flesh and to gain spiritual grace." The founder of the Regular Clerks of St. Paul, Antonio Maria Zaccaria wrote to Paola Negri, leading member of the Angeliche, the female offshoot of the order who also held an important place in the hospital of the Derelitti that the worshipper should become like S. Paul, who "voleva essere in realtà una copia viva di Gesù sofferente." Aikema (1984), 344.
CHAPTER SIX

THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SS ROCHE AND SEBASTIAN: THE CHARGED HALF-LENGTH FOR A BERGAMO SURGEON

In queste et simigliante cogitatione le quale sono intorno a costumi, intorno a l'opere de la natura et a le maraviglie de le creature, et intorno a li honorevoli misterij de Christo, essendo lo intellecto amaestrato, sotto la disciplina de la sapientia et sotto il magisterio de l'humanato verbo s'adatta et fasse habile a pocho a pocho ad investigare et contemplare cose più alte et facto capace de misterij spirituali è menato per lo ragio de la contemplatione sopra l'altezza del cielo, tanto più chiaramente, più dolcemente et più spesso quanto nel splendore de la sapientia più copiosamente se dilecta, essendo in sé purgata et dilongata da le cose esteriore[...]. L'amore cresce, l'affecto s'accende, et la charità incomincia a bulire de fuori, la quale prima humilmente se riposava nel cuore dentro[...]. Alhora la voce tace, le labre non se muovono[...].

Ralegramoci dico nella croce del signor nostro Ihesu Christo, ralegramoci per amore de Christo nelle tribulatione, nelle tentatione, nella infirmitade, nella necessitate.

Lorenzo Giustinian, De la vita religiosa (Venice, 1494)"}

Lorenzo Lotto’s Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is a work in which the dramatic juxtaposition of

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the saints and the tension of subtle dualities within its presentation seem to have been chosen to create a disturbing, disorienting effect (Fig. 1). Art historians have seen Lotto's work as 'unclassical' - not completely definable within the Cinquecento traditions of central Italy or of Venice. Many scholars have discussed Lotto in terms of Mannerism, yet Lotto scholars allow the definition of Mannerism to alight only briefly because, upon close examination, Lotto's work has little to do with it. Mannerism is the yardstick of an aristocratic urban or courtly culture rather than the one Lotto worked in. Although initially using the lens of Mannerism to examine the Madonna and Child with SS. Roch and Sebastian, Sidney Freedberg realized that Mannerism did not describe it. What he discerned was that the painting's unusualness, its indefinable, disturbing character was the result of the coexistence of dualities - the duality particularly of sophistication and provincial tastes - in Freedberg's analysis, a "roughness and immediacy", but also a conservative preference for more outdated forms.\(^2\)

The key to understanding the work is the world it was made for. Bergamo, as has been discussed in Chapter Four,

\(^2\)S.J. Freedberg, Painting in Italy 1500-1600 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 202; discussed in Chapter One, above.
was a provincial city, with aspirations to the power of Venetian connections. Lotto, a Venetian by birth and a provincial by choice, served both sides of the Bergamask's self-image. In the scheme of the development of the Venetian private devotional painting as it has been discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* takes the half-length type as its major frame of reference and gives the figures dynamic movement that is more characteristic of the contemporary narrative type. The half-length brings with it the Venetian pedigree and tradition that held a special resonance within Lotto's patronage situation in Bergamo. The miraculous connotations of the half-length discussed in Chapter Two are retained. Like the *Madonna del Soccorso* who brings miraculous aid to her supplicants, the promise of miraculous intervention has a special function for a medical context. The half-length, however, is transformed: it is 'charged', with new movement and new meanings. Lotto takes the traditional form and 'customizes' it, taking traditional iconography and developing it in ways that make it relevant for the needs of the Bergamo surgeon.

As in many of Lotto's other works - both religious images and secular portraiture - the disturbing quality of the painting signals a layering of meaning. The habit of reading religious works in meaningful layers was a traditional mode of biblical exegesis. The habit of
'symbolic thinking' extended from scholarly writing to popular religious thinking, where events of the gospel and the religious year were explained in their didactic symbolism. Rich symbolic explanations have been applied to the ritual of the Mass, where actions and objects have been interpreted both as narrative enactment and as symbolic statement. This kind of layering, inherent in religious thinking, has been taken in specific directions in Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian*.

In the half-lengths of Bellini and Cima, the accompanying saints do not violate their narrow lateral space. In Lotto's painting, however, the jutting-forward of Sebastian and Roch's recession alongside the Madonna and Child makes them appear to encircle the holy figures. The saints have become active participants. The trance-like expression of their faces gives an emotional charge to Roch and Sebastian that has the resonance of drama. At the same time, Roch and Sebastian are given a very separate existence. The quattrocentesque colour scheme of the field of the Madonna and Child is contrasted to the neutral hues of the saints, and the serene fullness of the Virgin and

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3 Peter Burke argues that a faculty for 'reading in', or symbolic thinking, was developed in the Renaissance on both religious and secular fronts, and that a certain complexity was even expected of religious works. Peter Burke, *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy 1420-1540* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1972), "Latent Content," 158-167.
Child is contrasted to the dramatically-cropped, ecstatic Roch and Sebastian. The painting is energized by dramatic tension, but interaction between the figures is not completed, and the component parts remain discrete. In the discussion that follows, I will discuss each component part in order to establish how the layering is developed and how the work functions in its totality.

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The format of the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is based on the half-length formula: the saints, flanking the Virgin, are seen only from above the knee, and the space is restricted to a narrow figure plane (compare Figs. 3, 4). Within this format, however, the Virgin draws her feet up in order to be seen full-length – at the same time a Madonna of Humility type and enthroned. The Madonna of Humility first became popular in the Trecento, which by the early sixteenth century when Lotto painted this image, would have been an antiquated type. Meiss has classified and defined this class of Madonnas. Although often shown suckling the Child, and sometimes with the attributes of the

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Woman of the Apocalypse, being seated on the ground is the essential characteristic of the Madonna of Humility (Fig. 39). The motif of the Virgin of Humility is taken from the Annunciation, and from the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) where Mary declares herself as the Lord's "handmaiden." Although Meiss has noted the frequency with which the early Madonna of Humility images appeared in Dominican contexts, it has been argued that the notion of the 'humble' Virgin came from the popularity of Franciscan notions of poverty and humility. Seated on the ground with the Child in her lap, the Madonna of Humility has references to the pietà (Figs. 43, 44); Gertrud Schiller considers the telescoping of time to the Passion of Christ inherent in the iconography of the Madonna of Humility, that the "lowliness expressed by Mary's

5 Meiss (1951), 132, and n.1.

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,/ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour./ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Luke 1:46-48.

Mary's 'estate' was first declared at the Annunciation: "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word..." Luke 1:38.

7 Meiss (1951), 144.

8 This is the argument of Marina Warner, Alone of All her Sex. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary (New York: Vintage, 1976), "Let it Be," 177-191; also see Georgina Goddard King, "The Virgin of Humility," Art Bulletin, 17 (1935), 474-491.
sitting position on ground or stool is an allusion to the sufferings of her Son.”

The image of the Madonna seated on the ground does not disappear in the early sixteenth century, but appears with even greater frequency in another form. "Pastoral" Madonnas seated on the ground and accompanied by saints were becoming very popular in this period. These groupings exhibit the unified space, the emotional interaction and the narrative tone that characterize the change in private devotional imagery in the sixteenth century, as discussed in Chapter Three. For example, Titian’s Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and a Rabbit (Fig. 22) has the narrative sense of a tender story, of a ‘moment in the life’. This is, however, not the shape taken by Lotto’s Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian. Unlike Titian’s painting, there is not the sense of a fable or a story to be told, but of resonances of meaning to be uncovered. In Lotto’s painting, while the Virgin’s pose recalls the lowly pose of the Madonna of Humility, she is seated not on the ground but on a curiously draped slab. The slab is placed at the lower edge of the painting and thus technically on the ground line, but in fact the Madonna’s relationship to the saints puts her in an elevated position. Her placement is not

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comfortably explained as a bit of narrative reality.
Adorned with pearls and seated on pillows, her humility is tempered by her noble status as queen and bride, and seated on the slab she shares with the Christ Child its resonances of altar and tomb, death and resurrection. An examination of the several layers of reference that come together in the Virgin will serve as an introduction to the layered structure of the painting as a whole.

Simply and modestly dressed, the only ornamentation worn by the Virgin in Lotto's painting is the pearls entwined in her hair. Looking at Titian's *Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and a Rabbit*, it is not the Madonna, but St. Catherine who wears pearls entwined in her hair. In fact, in Lotto's paintings St. Catherine almost invariably wears pearls in her hair, so that this device becomes, in effect, one of the attributes of that saint (Figs. 40, 41, 60). The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine is a very popular theme in the period, one that Lotto painted several times (Fig. 31). It is this aspect of St. Catherine that Titian refers to in the *Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and a Rabbit*. Borrowed from the imagery of St. Catherine, the pearls entwined in the Madonna's hair carry the nuptial symbolism announcing the Virgin as sponsa Dei, the Bride of

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Christ. The nuptial significance of pearls in fact was still alive in the Renaissance, when it was tradition for brides to wear pearls entwined in their hair.

The Christian interpretations of the Song of Songs, the Old Testament love poem attributed to Solomon, establishes the iconography of the Virgin as the Bride of Christ. St. Bernard of Clairvaux dedicated eighty six sermons to this

11 The association of pearls with childbirth and marriage is a primeval concept, surviving in the most primitive cultures. The pearl, in primitive symbolism, has been associated, along with shells, with the principles of generation, the water, moon, and woman. Because of these associations, pearls have also been valued for their regenerative medical powers. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), "Observations on the Symbolism of Shells," 125-150.

Eliade stresses that Christianity had incorporated these ancient 'universal' symbols, giving them a new resonance. The mystery of the pearl, which was 'born' miraculously without father in the oyster was the origin of its mythic properties, and in Christianity it was translated as a metaphor for the Immaculate Conception. Eliade (1969), 131-2, 148-50, and "Archetypal Images and Christian Symbolism," 160-172.


13 Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: the Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 121-133. de Voragine communicated the Marial interpretations of the Song of Songs in "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary": "Jesus Himself began and said: 'Come, My chosen one, and I shall place thee upon My throne, for I have desired thy beauty!' And she answered: 'My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready!'...Then Christ, singing more fairly than all, intoned: 'Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned!'" de Voragine (1969), 451.
subject, personifying the bride of the psalms as Mary, as the Church, and as the Christian soul. Mary the Bride of Christ is metaphorically the Church, which Jesus joined in union. Because Christ left the chamber of her womb "as a bridegroom goes forth in triumph from his richly adorned bridal chamber," leaving her intact, Mary’s motherhood has also been equated with her role as Bride. For the same reason, Mary’s womb is likened to the tomb of Christ which he passed through without breaking the seal, thus giving Mary a special significance for the duality of birth and death, sacrifice and resurrection, which, as will be

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15 From Sedelius’ psalm of the birth night – the Carmen paschale: "What new light goes not up over the world, what shining over all Heaven, when Christ in shimmering splendour issues from Mary’s womb, as a bridegroom goes forth in triumph from his richly adorned bridal chamber, more beautiful than any child of men, and with grace and comeliness outpoured over His shining countenance." Hirn (1957), 347.

Albert the Great also utilized the metaphor of Christ emerging from the womb like a bridegroom "not violating her as a mother, but consecrating her like a spouse without stain or wrinkle." Hilda Graef, Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 277.

The Incarnation was regarded as a marriage relationship. "Mary’s womb it was said, was a bride-chamber in which God united Himself to mankind." Hirn (1957), 347.
discussed later, is germane to the iconography of the image.\textsuperscript{16}

The preciousness of the pearl expressed both earthly and transcendent worth.\textsuperscript{17} In the medieval English romance the Pearl, the pearl symbolized the perfection of earthly beauty, mirrored by the greater perfection of its heavenly counterpart, or the heavenly pearl, which was the Soul

\textsuperscript{16}"... His Resurrection was miraculous, for he rose from the sealed grave. Just as He came from the sealed womb of His mother and came to the disciples through closed doors, so He was able to go out of the sealed tomb." de Voragine (1969), "The Resurrection of Our Lord," 218.

In St. Alfonso Liguori's Glories of Mary Mary compared herself to the grave, blessing the stone where Christ was laid, saying: "O happy stone that dost now enclose the holy body which for nine months was hidden in my womb, I bless thee and envy thee. I leave in thy care my son, who is all my wealth and all my love." Hirn (1957), 338.

From the Works of Ephraim Syrius, also quoted in Hirn (1957), 339: "Thou didst show, O Lord, by Thy resurrection from the grave, the miracle of Thy birth, for each was closed and each was sealed, both the grave and the womb. Thou wast pure in the womb and living in the grave, and Mary's womb, like the grave, bore an unbroken seal."

This symbolism appears, not surprisingly, in the celebration of Christ's death. Hirn quotes an Easter hymn that was attributed to Ambrose:

\begin{verbatim}
Qui natus olim ex virgine
Nunc e sepulcro nasceris.
"Thou who wast born before of a virgin, art born now of the grave." Hirn (1957), 337.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{17}One of Mary's epithets is 'Star of the Sea'. The pearl likely symbolizes this aspect of Mary, as the precious, luminous gem born semi-magically in the body of the sea shell. Mary is invoked by this name in the prayer "Ave Maris Stella." Hirn (1957), 465-66. St. Bernard, too, refers to her in this way. Graef (1963), 238.
united with God. The precedent for this metaphor is found in the gospels (Matt. 13:45-46): "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."  

The pearls of earthly nobility and heavenly perfection adorn the Madonna as Queen of Heaven. Her nobility is due to the untainted luminosity of her human nature, and to the place she takes beside Christ in Heaven on the merits of her sublime humility. In the twelfth century mosaic in Sta. 


\[19\] Eliade has noted the transcendent nature of pearl symbolism:  
"[the pearl's] appearance in this phenomenal world is miraculous, its presence among fallen beings is paradoxical. The pearl signifies the mystery of the transcendent revealed to the senses, the manifestation of God in the Cosmos. Thanks to Gnosticism and to Christian theology, this ancient symbol of Reality and of Life-without-Death acquired new valences; the immortal soul, the "Saviour saved," the Christ-King." Eliade (1969), 150.

In the earthly realm of Renaissance Venice the pearl had great monetary value and was a symbol of wealth and nobility. Throughout the sixteenth century sumptuary laws battled against the display of sumptuous jewels, while indulgences made for necklaces of pearls put them at the centre of more subtle legislation. Levi Pisetzky (1966), III, 118. Pearls, then, were very much in vogue with wealthy ladies. Levi Pisetzky indicates that the use of pearls was prohibited to the courtiers, the cortigiane, thus reinforcing the association of these gems with nobility. Levi Pisetzky (1966), III, 118.
Maria in Trastevere, in Rome, the Virgin is presented as both Queen and Bride (Fig. 42). Enthroned beside Christ, she holds a quotation from the Song of Songs: "His left hand should be under my head; and his right hand should embrace me". Christ displays a quotation from Psalm 45: "Come my chosen one I shall place thee on my throne." In this depiction, the Virgin's diadem is hung with pearls, and she is supported by a prominent cushion, a motif that serves to further emphasize her royal status.

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In the Assumptio Beatae Mariae Virginis, St. Bernard alludes to the three states of Mary which are also referred to in the Lotto; mother, queen, and bride.

"With what a tranquil face, with what an unclouded expression, with what joyous embraces was she taken up by her son!...Happy indeed were the kisses he pressed on her lips when she was nursing and as a mother delighted in the child in her virgin's lap. But surely will we not deem much happier those kisses which in blessed greeting she receives today from the mouth of him who sits on the right hand of the Father, when she ascends to the throne of glory, singing a nuptial hymn and saying: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.'"

Quoted in Warner (1976), 130.

21 Warner (1976), 122.

The way in which the slab is used in Lotto's image comes out of the Venetian half-length tradition of the parapet. Like the parapet, but more graphically, the slab indicates the iconography of tomb stone and altar, upon which the drama of Christ is played out in the symbolism of the Mass. The interpretations of the Mass as the enactment of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ began in the eastern church, and by the ninth century the writings of Amalarius of Metz established this type of interpretation in the West. These interpretations explained each movement of the Mass ritual as the enactment of the 'sacred drama' of Christ's Passion. The ritual objects of the Mass were transformed into the 'props' of the narrative, as the deacons and the celebrant 'acted out' the sacred story. This can be clearly seen in the fifth century eastern homily attributed to Narsai:

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24 The *anamnesis* (remembrance) prayer which followed the Consecration in the liturgy of both the eastern and western Church, makes this interpretation of the Mass clear. It begins: "Therefore being mindful of His blessed Passion, His Resurrection from below, and His glorious Ascension into heaven we offer..." *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), IX, "Mass," 414.
"put away all anger and hatred and...see Jesus who is being led to death on our account. On the paten and in the cup He goes forth with the deacon to suffer. The bread on the paten and the wine in the cup are symbols of His death. A symbol of His death these [deacons] bear on their hands and when they have set it on the altar and covered it, they typify His burial: not that these bear the image of the Jews, but rather of the watchers [i.e., the angels] who were ministering to the passion of the Son. He was ministered to by the angels in His passion and the deacons attend the image of our Lord in that hour. All the priests in the sanctuary bear the image of the Apostles who met together at the sepulchre. The altar is a symbol of our Lord's tomb, and the bread and wine are the Body of the Lord which was embalmed and buried.

In the West, St. Gregory, whose Sacramentary established the basis for the Roman rite that still exists today also laid the basis for the multileveled interpretation of the Mass on three levels of symbolic exegesis: allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. Gregory writes of the Mass: "let us meditate...what manner of sacrifice this is, ordained for us, which for our absolution doth always represent the passion of the only Son of God: for what right believing Christian can doubt that in the very hour of the sacrifice, at the words of the Priest, the heavens be opened, and the quires of Angels are present in that mystery of Jesus Christ; that high things are accomplished with low, and earthly joined to heavenly, and

\[25\] O.B. Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 36-37, n.5.
that one thing is made of visible and invisible." Ambrose echoes an understanding of the "hidden narrative" within the act and the message of Mass: "Each time that the sacrifice of Christ is offered, the Death of the Lord, His Resurrection, His Ascension and the remission of sins are signified."  

The *Imitation of Christ*, written in the fourteenth century by Thomas à Kempis was a very popular devotional book in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is known that Lotto owned a copy. The following passage from the *Imitation of Christ* testifies to the survival of this symbolic understanding of the meaning of the Mass: "And as often as thou celebratest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new and delightful, as if Christ, that very day first descending into the Virgin's womb, was made man, or, hanging on the Cross, suffered and died for man's salvation."  

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26 Hardison (1965), 36.
27 Danielou (1956), 136-37.
In the interpretations of the Mass, the altar takes on different meanings. In the context of the Mass, the symbolism of altar and tomb are conflated. The altar is the table upon which the eucharist is presented - a sacramental surface. In the symbolic narrative of the Mass rite, however, the altar is also the grave in which Christ is buried. The funerary symbolism of the altar is elaborated by Theodore of Mopsuestia in a Syrian text of the fourth century:

And when they have brought it in, it is on the holy altar that the angels place the oblation for the perfect carrying out of the Passion. For this reason also we believe that it is in a sort of tomb that Christ is placed on the altar and that He has already undergone the Passion. That is why some of the deacons, who lay out the cloths on the altar, show by this action the likeness of the burial cloths, and those deacons who, when the offering has been laid on the cloths, take their places on each side and fan the air above the sacred body are figures of angels who, all the while that Christ was in the tomb, remained there in His honor, until they had seen the Resurrection.  

In The Sacred Shrine, Yrjo Hirn elaborated on the identification of the altar with the grave. The altar, which is consecrated by carrying sacred relics, becomes itself a reliquary. It is, by the same token, a tomb in

\[30\] Danielou (1956), 132.

which the remains of saints are 'buried' and preserved. When there are no relics contained in the altar, the altar may contain the consecrated host, at which point it becomes the tomb of the body of Christ. These meanings go hand in hand with the narrative interpretation of the Mass ritual, but especially so at Easter when the significance of the altar as grave is stressed.

The altar was a kind of stage the drama of Christ was acted out upon. The dead Christ rising out of the altar is the central theme in the story of the Mass of St. Gregory.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{32}}\text{If the altar is associated with the grave, Mary, whose womb was likened to the tomb, is also likened to the altar as a tabernacle holding the sacred relics. Hirn in fact devotes half of his study to the symbolism of Mary as the "Sacred Shrine." In the following sermon by Bonaventure for the feast of the Annunciation, Mary's priestly role is appended to the attributes of mother and queen discussed above:}

"Therefore the Creator of all things reposed in the tabernacle of the virginal womb, for there he made for himself a nuptial chamber, so that he might become our brother; he prepared a royal throne, so that he should be our Ruler; he assumed priestly vestments, so that he should be our High Priest. By reason of the nuptials the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God; because of the royal throne she is the Queen of Heaven; because of the priestly vestments she is the advocate of the human race."

Graef (1963), 286.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{33}}\text{In the story, St. Gregory prays for a miracle to convert the heart of a person who could not believe that the eucharist was the true body of Christ. In fulfillment of the prayer, the eucharist turns into the body of Christ as he appeared after the Passion, and the non-believer is converted.}\]
In Durer's print of the **Mass of St. Gregory** (c1511-1520), the tomb and the altar are one (Fig. 53). The instruments of the Passion are displayed around the risen Christ. The officiating priest, the hovering angels and the Christ of the Passion on the altar/tomb in the Durer image convey the Amalarian interpretation of the Mass as the enactment of the drama of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. Durer's print testifies to the survival of these interpretations in the imagery of the sixteenth century.

As an accompaniment to the liturgy of the Mass, the Virgin and Child in a church altarpiece expresses its narrative meanings. The Christ Child in the Virgin's lap refers to the transubstantiated host on the altar below and to the grown Christ of the Passion in the telescoped chronology of implicit narrative. Implicit meaning is often made explicit in the altarpiece. When an altarpiece is a **sacra conversazione**, most often the **cimasa** will represent a **pietà**, or a Man of Sorrows, literally superimposing the image of the martyred Christ over the Child (Figs. 28, 45). In the **Sacra Conversazione** by Fra Angelico (Fig. 46), the altarpiece is inset with the image of the Crucifixion, and the Madonna of Domenico Veneziano's **St. Lucy Altarpiece** sheds a tear (Fig. 47). The tear signifies a simultaneity of time references - the existence concurrently of the devotional image of the Child - the literal presentation to
the eyes - and the whole history of Christ's death in a hidden narrative.

As discussed in Chapter Two, similar narrative reference is present in private half-lengths of the Madonna and Child with saints, where the accompanying saints amplify the message of Christ. From the altarpiece, private paintings borrow eucharistic references, as the mystery that reenacts Christ's drama. Rona Goffen has discussed the parapet in the half-length images by Giovanni Bellini in these terms. The parapet formally separates the image-space from the worshipper's space, acting as a 'window frame' onto the holy space. When the Child is placed on the stone parapet, however, the parapet takes on the attributes of two other stone resting-places of Christ - the tomb, and its liturgical counterpart, the altar. The funereal/sacrificial meaning of the stone of the parapet is made particularly clear in paintings in which the Christ Child sleeps on the ledge. In Giovanni Bellini's Madonna and Child in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Fig. 48), the blue tinge of the ledge reflects on the sleeping Child's skin; at the same time, the blue colouring of the Christ

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Child's skin appears to be the chill of death coming over the lifeless body. Bellini has used the device of the slab to inject an ambiguity between sleep and death. In Bellini's *Madonna and Child* in Washington, dark clouds gather over the Madonna and Child, a sign of foreboding that emphasizes the element of tragedy (Fig. 49). The implication of the 'hidden' Passion narrative in the imagery of the half-length Madonna and Child is made perfectly clear in images by Carlo Crivelli and Bartolomeo Vivarini. In the Vivarini *Madonna and Child*, the meaning is spelled out by little angels who hold the symbols of the Passion, making a frame within a frame around the Madonna and Child (Fig. 51). In the Crivelli, the little angels with the Passion instruments appear on the parapet, signalling it, like the altar in the Mass, as the scene for the Passion drama (Fig. 50).

The equation of parapet with both altar and tomb is further reinforced in a painting by Gentile (?) Bellini in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, where the Christ of the Passion rises out of an extended 'parapet' (Fig. 52). The appearance of the dead Christ confirms that the stone ledge

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35 Zanetti reports that the cartiglio on the parapet was signed "IOHANES BELLINVS", now illegible. Most scholars, however, doubt the attribution to Giovanni, ascribing the work to Gentile, or to both. Renato Ghiotto and Terisio Pignatti, *L'opera completa di Giovanni Bellini* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1969), 93.
is to be read as the grave, while the candlesticks that are placed to either side of the body of Christ, by furnishing the ledge as if it were an altar, signify that this is the place of the miracle of the Mass.

In Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian*, the parapet, with its tradition of sacrificial meanings, gives way to the motif of the stone slab. Within the tradition of the iconography of the altar/tomb in the half-length Madonna and Child images, Lotto's unusual construction is a more literal representation of those sacred surfaces. The ceremonial placement of Mary and Christ on the raised slab, with the overtones of royalty heightened by the cushions, makes the placement also an enthronement.

Cima da Conegliano preceded Lotto in moving toward more explicit references to tomb/altar iconography and in making the Madonna and Child a more dynamic part of the slab/parapet presentation. In his *Madonna and Child* paintings the conventional parapet is often supplemented with a stone block upon which the Madonna sits with the Child (Figs. 54, 55, 56, 57). The stone is either finished with a molding or foursquare, resembling a small sarcophagus or altar. In Lotto's *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* the block is read as raised from the floor, and rectangular in shape, extending laterally. It is within the
imagination to see Lotto's slab as extending the length of a full-grown man as the tomb of Christ. The raised backdrop could well refer in a less literal way to the raised lid of the tomb at the Resurrection - alluded to by the Christ Child's gestures - while the green cloth flung over the whole has references to both the liturgical cloth which covers the altar and the winding-sheet which accompanied Christ to the tomb (Fig. 29). This cloth is tucked up at

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36 As a liturgical reference, the green cloth most closely resembles the altarcloth, which covers the altar like a tablecloth. The smaller cloth with which the Madonna holds the Child carries the resonances of the corporal, which is placed under the bread and wine before consecration, and later covers the blessed bread and wine. G. Sill, A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art (New York: MacMillan, 1975), 165. Goffen interprets the cloth under Christ in the Boston Madonna and Child with Saints as the corporal. She discusses the conflation of the meanings of eucharistic cloth, swaddling cloth (birth), and winding sheet (death). Goffen, "A Madonna...," (1978), 38. In his discussion of Botticelli's "Adoration", Rab Hatfield discusses the veils worn by the Magi as eucharistic cloths, used to touch the sacred object "out of respect for its sanctity." Rab Hatfield, Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration". A Study in Pictorial Content (Princeton: Princeton Univ., 1976), 37-40. The cloth that the Madonna holds around the Child in Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian acts as a liturgical corporal as Goffen describes it. This cloth adds to the Child not only in the imagery of birth and death, but the role of a sacred offering.

The striking colour of the green background cloth may have a liturgical meaning. Liturgical colours had possessed symbolic meaning since the 4th century. Each Office had its colour, and the vestments of the clergy and the drapery of the altar corresponded to it. By the sixteenth century, four colours were commonly used, and two others, blue and yellow, were used for special occasions. It is very difficult to say with certainty the meaning of a particular colour because liturgical colours were still far from standardized, and there were local differences and peculiarities. Green, however, was often used for most (Footnote Continued)
the corner, giving a glimpse of the slab beneath. Lotto used this technique of 'slow-reveal' many times, notably in the Martinengo and San Bernardino altarpieces (Figs. 30, 58). In the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian, it indicates the importance of that piece of furniture, bringing attention to the 'covert' meanings that lie underneath the concealing cover.

Rona Goffen has pursued a reading of altar/tomb symbolism in Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Jerome and Anthony of Padua in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. 37 This painting may be the original model for a composition by Lotto in the National Gallery of London which is dated 1521, the year ascribed to the painting discussed in this thesis (Fig. 59). It is a private painting, and like the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian the figures are three-quarter length, and two saints flank the Virgin and Child. In the Boston painting the Madonna sits half-propped on a solid table. Rona Goffen has identified this table as a reference to the altar table. The dual symbolism of the table is spelled out. On the table sits a small wooden box. There is no doubt, as Goffen suggests, that this is indeed a

(Footnote Continued)
non-feast days. In colour symbolism, being the colour of plants and trees it "bespeaks of the hope of life eternal." The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Appleton, 1908), IV, 134-5.

child’s coffin. With this device, the usually covert iconography of altar/tomb becomes overt, reinforcing the possibility of reading the slab in Lotto’s *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* in similar terms. Even in the explicit Boston painting, however, Lotto still uses the technique of the drawn cloth to emphasize the ‘reveal’ of the central element of the coffin/box.

In Lotto’s *Holy Family with St. Catherine* of 1529, the Child is laid out on a slab (Fig. 60). He is sleeping, but the limp limbs and the slightly opened eyes signify that this is Jesus dead. In this painting, the slab, like the parapet in Bellini’s Metropolitan Museum *Madonna and Child*, doubles as the funereal stone of the dead Christ, and by extension, as the altar table where his death is recreated. Lotto’s technique of ‘revealing’ is here utilized as the central element by Joseph lifting up the cloth to ‘reveal’ the Child — and His destiny — to Catherine.

Mary Ann Graeve has demonstrated that there are two sources for the slab in the iconography of Christ’s life: the stone that was rolled across the tomb and the stone of unction upon which Christ was laid after his death in preparation for burial. She also asserts that these

\[\text{Footnote Continued}\]
meanings become conflated in the imagery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly through northern influence. In its anonymity, the slab in Lotto’s *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* conveys this conflated imagery. The stone of unction and the grave stone are images of death, and the iconography of the Mass table adds its own connotations of the narrative of Christ’s Passion. But as the Saviour, Christ atop the tomb stone or on the Mass table as the eucharist also signals redemption, a basic Christian concept. The slab has been made to carry the weight of all these messages in artistic traditions that would have been familiar to Lotto.

Mantegna’s *Dead Christ* depicts Christ lying on the stone of unction (Fig. 61). The theme is tragic - a meditation on the death of Christ. A painting by Francesco Bonsignori in the Castelvecchio in Verona (1483) shows the same motif, but this time it is the Child, not the Man on the slab, confirming the convention of telescoping the same tragic iconography in the imagery of the Child (Fig. 62). In Alvise Vivarini’s painting of the *Resurrection*, a slab appears underneath the Saviour’s feet (Fig. 63). Although the appearance of the stone is similar to the one in Mantegna’s painting, this slab is no longer the stone of

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(Footnote Continued)
unction, but the stone that was rolled over the grave, and the theme is not tragic but redemptive. This is the moment when Christ appears triumphant on top of the tomb. This too, is the moment of transubstantiation, for when the eucharist is transformed into the body of Christ, it is the miracle of salvation, of redemption and of continual resurrection that is being performed.

This conflation of the tragic and the triumphant in the iconography of the slab is made overt in Byzantine Epitaphioi in which the tragic, funereal meaning of the Christ on the stone of unction is intimately fused with the positive meaning of the sacrament of the eucharist.\(^{39}\) Being a Venetian, there is reason to believe that Lotto might have been acquainted with this iconography, particularly as an example Graeve chooses to discuss is in the treasury of S. Marco. The Epitaphioi represent Christ on a rectangular unction stone, with two angels holding candles. As we have seen, the two candles signal the altar-space. However, in the Epitaphios, the liturgical connection is more explicit because it is an image traditionally used for decorating ritualistic cloths "like the covering of the ceremonial bier

\(^{39}\)Graeve (1958), 229; pl. 7.
of Christ for Good Friday or the chalice veil for the altar." 40

The two sides of meaning in the iconography of the slab - the funerary (tomb/stone of unction) and the redemptive (eucharistic) - are both evident in the Man of Sorrows from the workshop of Cima da Conegliano (Fig. 64). Two angels stand on the slab, supporting the dead Christ - one wailing in grief and the other smiling a sweet smile of peaceful fulfillment. In the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian both these meanings add resonance to the slab iconography. By using a slab as a 'throne', Lotto has emphasized the imagery of triumph over death. Lotto has made the slab prominent and man-sized and by doing this he does not divert from the conventional meanings of the half-length type, but emphasizes the messages of resurrection and triumph over death in a concrete way, addressing the surgeon whose daily profession is to fight death. The direction of the painting to a medical context becomes explicit when we turn to the saints.

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40 Graeve, 229.
As we have seen in Chapter Two, in the fifteenth century type of the Madonna and Child with saints, the accompanying saints extend the central message of the Madonna and Child group. Lotto gives us as accompanying saints in this work Roch and Sebastian, traditionally associated with medical functions. Lotto's saints differ from the fifteenth century type in their formal aggressiveness. It is as if the dramatic possibilities of the narrative type have been utilized to charge Roch and Sebastian with a greater possibility to participate in not only the meaning, but in the narrative of Christ as well. The greater dramatic accent brings the saints out of the austerity of the fifteenth century type and into a more dynamic disposition. Their aggressive participation in the space of the Virgin and Child brings the healing roles established in their biographies into more intimate interplay with the central message of the Madonna and Child iconography: death and redemption. In this way their roles are given greater weight than the paired saints of the fifteenth century type, and their medical associations define the 'customized' message of the painting.

Saint Roch, a nobleman from France on a pilgrimage to Rome, tended the plague stricken in Italy during the Black Death in 1348. Eventually he succumbed to the plague himself, which he overcame through the miraculous aid of an angel and of a small dog who brought him bread in the
w Wilderness where he had gone to die. Sebastian was a Roman soldier who was sentenced to death for his faith. He survived his 'execution' by arrows, only to be killed by stoning. He was revered as an intercessor against the plague because, since ancient times, pestilence had been visioned as arrows flung down on unsuspecting people by God. Pierced by arrows and still living, Sebastian was regarded as a kind of shield against the arrows of pestilence.

What is common to both saints, and what may be termed their credentials as intercessors against the plague, is that they both survived the plague - Roch actually, and Sebastian allegorically. They both share the same category: they are both saints, and thus exemplars and intercessors, and they both have roles in healing, as plague saints. They are, however, not interchangeable, but complementary - two sides of a coin, two complementary aspects of healing. As a pair they were traditionally very popular saints for devotional imagery. Roch, who lived his life devoted to healing, is the medic. He represents the active, the offensive, the therapeutic side of healing. Sebastian on the other hand is a symbol, a metaphor, a shield, and perhaps in the heroic possibilities of the symbol, even stronger than Roch. He represents the passive, the
defensive, the prophylactic side of healing. In Lotto's painting Roch's role as the worker in the world and pilgrim among men is the less obtrusive one, while Sebastian, literally stepping forward and bathed in white light, stands out, taking a key role as a devotional metaphor. He will be focused on with greater intensity in this chapter.

Sebastian and Roch were focal saints for the Veneto because of the continual threat of plague. In 1485, Venice scored a great coup by stealing the relics of St. Roch from France. The relics were received with much public rejoicing, and placed in the Church of S. Rocco. In 1515, a building campaign was begun for a new building for the Scuola of San Rocco. In order to raise money for this campaign, Titian was commissioned to make a woodcut of the saint (Fig. 65). The print acted as publicity for the Scuola and as propaganda for the importance and efficacy of the plague saint whose relics were entrusted to the Scuola dedicated to his name. Being in an affordable format, it may be assumed that this print would have been quite

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41 Stefania Rinaldi has pointed out the distinction between the prophylactic and therapeutic roles of the two saints. Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Le immagini della peste nella cultura figurativa veneziana," in Venezia e la peste 1348/1797 (Venice: Marsilio, 1979), 215.

42 On Titian's woodcut see: Michelangelo Muraro and David Rosand, Tiziano e la silografia veneziana del Cinquecento, 88; Stefania Mason Rinaldi (1979), 240-241.
popular. Because of its function, the image would have had to appeal to all sectors of the public. The woodcut is, in fact, a compendium of many of the ways a plague saint might have been imaged in the private context. For this reason, it is useful to analyze it as a 'sampler', both of popular types of imagery and of sources of meaning for the plague saint.

The St. Roch woodcut was made to look as if it were an altarpiece. It's 'frame', however, is divided into separate images showing the life of the saints with explanatory captions, as if it were a kind of 'comic strip' version of the Golden Legend. Below the image on the ledge is an alms box with the legend "limosina per la fabricha", stating the fund-raising function of the print in word and picture. Next to this is the bust of a little boy and a tiny ex voto painting. The bust of the boy probably also signifies an ex voto function, and both testify to the special power of the plague saint to heal upon request. The tiny ex voto picture follows the format of ex votos until today. The sick man, raised up in bed, with hands folded in prayer, has his wish for recovery granted by the miraculous intercession of the saint. The formula of the miraculous apparition in a cloudy form above the supplicant is duplicated in the print above the head of the central image of St. Roch. In this cloud however appears the image of the Mocking of Christ,
replicating the painting by Titian (?) that was in the Church of San Rocco.

The painting of the Mocking of Christ attributed variously to Giorgione, Titian or both, already had a reputation as a miracle-working image. Including this image in the print was a shrewd decision. Reinforcing an association between the famous painting and the Scuola utilized the painting’s fame and legendary powers as a ‘marketing tool’ in the service of the building project. The miraculous image also functions as a sign in the iconography of the print. The image within an image appears beyond the fictitious cornice of the ‘altarpiece’ and thus - miraculously - outside the picture space. An angel directs Roch’s attention to this apparition. Like the apostles, the plague saint is granted through Christ the miraculous power to heal - the evidence is in the ex votos below. The gesture of the angel associates the power of the miracle-working image with Roch, a kind of assertion to the buyer of the print of its efficacy. The cloudy image is Christ undergoing trials, and this too is a comment on the saint. The heroic larger-than-life image of Roch in the

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43 Jaynie Anderson, "'Christ Carrying the Cross' in San Rocco: Its Commission and Miraculous History," Arte Veneta, 31 (1977), 186-188. Anderson cites an undated ‘souvenir’ pamphlet that celebrates the painting and encourages pilgrims with incurable diseases to visit the church.
central 'portrait' is not only associated with Christ, but with the suffering Christ. Roch lifts his cloak to reveal the mark of his plague buboe, showing his affliction. The moral lesson of Roch's suffering is pointed out clearly by the angel; it is the emulation of Christ the Sufferer who patiently and stoically suffered in order to save mankind. The healing saint acts not only as the intercessor and miracle worker for the supplicant, but as Christian exemplar and teacher, whose saintliness is his proximity to Christliness.

The association with Christ, and particularly with the suffering Christ - the imitatio christi of the saint that is hinted at in Titian's woodcut - is an intimate part of Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian. In Lotto's work, it is not Roch, however, who best presents this message, but Sebastian.

The involvement in Christ is a theme that runs through much of the contemporary devotional literature. Through the technology of printing, devotional literature was becoming available on a wider popular scale. As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, new currents of private piety were developing which made use of these materials. The new currents in lay piety have been described in terms of a Catholic reform, with general characteristics of an emotional, pious involvement centred
on Christ, and a return to more simple and personal roots of Christianity. Aikema associated Lotto with the reformist group in the ospedale, and identified the St. Jerome as their altarpiece precisely because of its stress on imitatio christi. Gentili identified the theme of imitatio christi, and the matrix of devotional literature as leitmotifs of Lotto's works from his earliest commissions.\(^4^4\) He pointed out that not all his patrons were sympathetic to the same themes - that when Lotto painted in the traditionally pro-papist Marche, different themes were stressed.\(^4^5\) Cortesi Bosco - who is echoed in this opinion by Giorgio Mascherpa - considers that Lotto's works in Bergamo most clearly show the influence of new devotional currents, implying that Lotto's patrons there were sympathetic to these directions in piety.\(^4^6\) She singles out works that seem to take devotional literature as their text. One - the Leave-Taking of Christ (now in Berlin) - shows the scene going on around the Bergamask patron, Elisabetta Rota, who kneels in the foreground reading a book. Cortesi Bosco's interpretation of this image as an illustration of the mental recreation of the pious scene recommended by

\(^{44}\)Augusto Gentili, I Giardini... (1985).

\(^{45}\)Gentili (1985), 222.

devotional books such as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and the *Giardino de oratione* seems sound.\(^{47}\)

The recommendations of intense involvement in Christ and his suffering can be found in much of the popular literature. In the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, the pseudo-Bona venture spends six chapters describing the Passion of Christ with great human detail, exhorting his reader to concentrate on those meditations and they will "lead the meditator to a (new) state."\(^{48}\) The *De la perfectione de la vita contemplativa* by Isaac of Syria printed in Venice in 1500, provides an intense meditation on the wounds of Christ, asking that He "Sana le passioni mie con le tue passioni."\(^{49}\) Lorenzo Giustinian in *De la vita religiosa* is explicit: "niuna cosa tanto fructuosa al non experto novicio si può dare a meditare, quanto la vita de Christo et singularmente la gloriosa passione di quello."\(^{50}\) The *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, preaches denial both of self and worldly learning, and complete commitment to Christ:

\(^{47}\) Cortesi Bosco, "La letteratura religiosa..." (1976), 11-16.

\(^{48}\) Pseudo-Bona venture (1961), 317.

\(^{49}\) Gentili (1985), 231.

\(^{50}\) Gentili (1985), 229.
Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into Me.

As the desiring nothing exteriorly bringeth peace, so doth the relinquishing thyself interiorly unite thee unto God.

I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself, according to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me: I am the way, the truth, and the life...

...If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself
If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life.
If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world
If thou wilt reign with me, bear the Cross with Me.\textsuperscript{51}

The disciple answers: "I have received, I have received from Thy hand, the Cross; I will bear it, and bear it even unto death, as Thou hast laid it upon me."\textsuperscript{52}

In a fresco (1525) by Lotto for an outside chapel in Credaro in the vicinity of Bergamo, Roch and Sebastian are given prominent roles (Fig. 71). The main fresco of the chapel shows a Nativity with Joseph and Mary as principal participants. Roch and Sebastian attend the Nativity, flanking the central event. Mary’s pose is the conventional kneeling worship of the Christ Child. Joseph, however, looks not at Christ but at St. Roch, ‘demonstrating’ the Child to him. At the same time as Joseph points to the

\textsuperscript{51} Thomas à Kempis (1960), 177.

\textsuperscript{52} Thomas à Kempis (1960), 178.
Christ Child, he lifts the cloth of St. Sebastian’s garment showing that what is revealed in the Christ Child is also revealed in St. Sebastian. Joseph’s gesture of lifting the cloth of St. Sebastian echoes Roch’s traditional gesture of lifting his garment to reveal the attribute of his sainthood, the plague wound. In this way, Joseph spells out the saints’ roles in clear signs. By connecting Sebastian and Christ with his gestures, he shows the special relationship of the saint to Christ. By echoing the gesture of Roch, we come to understand that Sebastian’s role too, has to do with suffering. Here too, we realize that Sebastian is the example of the suffering Christ, the future time in the drama. His special status is signaled by his physical inclusion in the holy group by Joseph’s linking gesture, while Roch remains outside, excluded by the barrier of Mary’s turned back. The ox and ass acknowledge the important role of the saints as an amplification of this message, because, instead of announcing Christ, they turn and acknowledge Roch and Sebastian. While the ox, dark and silent, turns to Roch, the ass, brilliant in the light, looks at Sebastian and opens his mouth as if announcing the Christ in the saint. If Sebastian in this image is the alter christus, the message of the adult Christ, then Roch too is being given a mission, and an urgent one by Joseph. Dressed in his pilgrim’s garb, it looks as if he, like the apostles, is being sent out with the message into the world.
In the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian many of the elements are similar, and the Credaro fresco helps us to understand the implications of the saints' roles. As in the sphere of medical attitudes, so on other levels Roch and Sebastian act as complements. Sebastian—as he is in the Credaro fresco—is linked by various devices with the Madonna and Child group, continuing a physical line through Christ. Sebastian’s example is fervent, but passive; it is the example of imitatio christi, an impassioned involvement in Christ, and in his sacrifice. Roch’s example is, on the other hand, active. He is the worker in the world, a pilgrim, the healer. In this way he resembles the example of the apostles, an aspect of Roch noted by Male.\footnote{Tradition has it that St. Roch’s portrait was preserved at Piacenza until the seventeenth century. By all accounts, Lotto’s depiction conforms to Roch’s ‘true features.’ According to Male the portrait showed a man short of stature but gentle and gracious of face. His hair falling in long curls, his slightly reddish beard gave him the air of an apostle; his hands, which had tended so many of the suffering, were delicately shaped....It was believed that such exalted charity would put its mark on the features and make men resemble Jesus or at least His apostles. Saint Roch was therefore made to resemble Saint James both as to features and dress; he was given hat, coat, staff, and scrip—everything that stood for journeyings and adventures, for exposure to storms and the heat of the sun.} Roch as the healer, the tender of the

\footnote{Emile Male, Religious Art. From the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century (Noonday Press, 1949), 131-2. Berenson, on the other hand, saw in Lotto’s St. Roch (SS Roch, Christopher, and Sebastian. c1532-34) at Loreto, a}
afflicted, points to his wound - his 'credentials' - with one hand and with the other echoes the blessing gesture of Christ. Significantly, Roch's healing is not found in the sign of the medical flask, like Cosmas and Damian, but in this gesture, in faith.

In Lotto's painting Sebastian is linked to Christ in many ways and like the Credaro fresco, he acts out the role of the adult suffering Christ. Sebastian has a traceable role as an alter christus, like St. Francis, who had received the honour of stigmatization. In a woodcut by Titian after the composition of an altarpiece in St. Nicolò dei Frari in Venice, Sebastian is paired with St. Francis, as a group apart, set off by the amount of uninked white in

(Footnote Continued)

kind of 'character portrait' of the artist:
"Long familiarity with the work of an artist often ends by creating a visual image which rises invariably before the mind at the mention of his name.... It is curious that the figure among Lotto's works which answer to such a description should be at Loreto, and it is a stranger coincidence still that it should represent St. Roch, the restless and compassionate wanderer, whom Lotto, it is hardly fantastic to imagine, may have looked upon as his special patron. The St. Roch, although he has a certain resemblance to the print given by Ridolfi as Lotto's portrait, can scarcely be an actual likeness of the painter by himself, for it represents a man of about forty, and Lotto must have been over fifty when he painted it; yet it contains all that refinement, all that unworldliness, and all that wistful unrest which were at the very foundation of his nature."

their figures (Fig. 66). The other saints look in all directions, causing the effect of confusion. St. Francis holds the cross, imploring the other saints. Sebastian stands, strong as the column that lies at his feet, almost nude, his head uplifted to the heavens.\textsuperscript{54}

In the San Giobbe altarpiece by Bellini, Sebastian is paired with Francis again (Fig. 15). In this altarpiece, Francis displays his stigmata, echoing the gesture of the Child Christ, while Sebastian, as a complementary bracket to Francis, echoes the pearly whiteness of the Christ Child’s nakedness. In Venetian \textit{sacre conversazioni} Sebastian often holds a special place, on the corner, and up front, closest to the worshipper; like the Christ Child he is nearly naked. In this way Sebastian is singled out as a special intercessor. His special status is that of \textit{alter christus}; he acts as an amplification of Christ, or in the telescopied time of the \textit{sacra conversazione}, he is the adult Christ.

This is made clear in an altarpiece by Alvise Vivarini (Fig. 67). Here, John the Baptist points his finger, introducing Christ -"ecco agnus dei" - but where he is pointing is ambiguous; it could be either at the Christ Child, or just as plausibly, at Sebastian.

\textsuperscript{54}In the altarpiece as painted, the Madonna and Child in glory are above the heads of the saints.
The iconography of Sebastian is, in fact, 'borrowed' from that of Christ. The marked similarity between the common depiction of Sebastian and representations of the Flagellation cannot be ignored. In this period Sebastian is almost invariably depicted semi-nude. It is common in Venetian sacre conversazioni to depict Sebastian with his hands tied behind his back. He is often shown tied either to a tree stump or a column; in Venetian altarpieces of the Madonna and Child with saints Sebastian is often placed so that he is visually bonded to the architectural support of the ecclesiastical space. In the iconography of the Flagellation most of these elements are present. For example, in the Flagellation by Palma il Vecchio, Christ, against the pillar, is nearly nude, his hands tied behind his back (Fig. 68). In the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian, there is no pillar visible, but Sebastian's hands are tied behind his back and he is again semi-nude. In an engraving of the Flagellation attributed to the school of Mantegna, Christ is viewed obliquely, one shoulder strongly to the fore, an attitude that is unusually stressed

55 The image of Sebastian stuck full of arrows also has a contemporary medical counterpart. The 'wound man' was a popular type of medical illustration, showing a man with projectiles protruding from many parts of his body, presumably to demonstrate the different types of wounds a person may be subjected to. Rinaldi gives an example from an edition of Ketham's Fasciculus medicinae printed in Venice in 1593. Rinaldi (1979), 229, 230. See also: Peter Murray Jones, Medieval Medical Miniatures (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1984), 113-115, fig. 51.
in Lotto's Sebastian (Fig. 69). The 'portrait' of Christ of the Flagellation by a follower of Titian also bears a resemblance to Lotto's St. Sebastian (Fig. 70). Like the Sebastian in Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian, Christ's shoulder juts forward, he wears a beard and long curly hair and in a look of ecstasy, his mouth falls slightly open.

The iconography of Sebastian, then, is taken from a moment in the narrative of Christ. Extracted from the narrative and isolated, the iconography of the suffering Christ is subsumed as an 'attribute' of the saint. In Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian, he plays the role of the Christ of the Flagellation, extending the hidden narrative of with a visible sign. Like Roch in Titian's woodcut, Sebastian is identified with the suffering Christ, but unlike the woodcut, in Lotto's painting Sebastian is visually linked to Christ not through the agency of a pointing angel, but through composition.

The first signal of Sebastian's special bond to Christ is the saint's unusual position. In the traditional half-length format the saints do not break beyond the frontal plane established by the Virgin and Child. Only John the Baptist sometimes breaks this rule in his role as the introducer of Christ. In Lotto's painting, Sebastian's position in front of the Madonna and Child immediately
signals an importance. The Madonna, Child, and Sebastian are contained as a unit by the green cloth that outlines them all. Sebastian, inclining toward Christ, creates a diagonal that connects through Sebastian to Christ in a glance continued by the Child to the worshipper below. In the latent iconography of telescoped time, Sebastian is the adult Christ. Showing his wounds, he is the suffering Christ, the Christ of the Passion. As a saint, and an example to the worshipper, he is the perfect sign of imitatio christi, and the example of a Christ-like endurance of suffering.\footnote{The centrality of the attitude of imitatio christi to contemporary devotional trends and to Lotto's devotional outlook is stressed by Aikema in his articles on Lotto's St. Jerome (see Chapter Five) and by the writings of Francesca Cortesi Bosco and Augusto Gentili on the artist. In her discussion of the Martinengo altarpiece, Cortesi Bosco also singles out the Sebastian in that work as a prime exemplar of imitatio christi: \begin{quote} "Castità penitenza e martirio, secondo Lotto, sono la via dell'imitatio Christi. San Sebastiano, che non a caso il pittore presenta rivolto ai fedeli sicché essi sentono guardati da lui (il che ne accentua il valore apotropaico), è di fatto il modello eloquente in cui ciascuno potrebbe rispecchiarsi, quando avesse a sua volta scelto tale via. Il corpo ignudo, legato, trafitto, del santo, è il ricordo più esplicito della sua immedesimazione nella passione di Cristo, che la croce accanto a lui puntualmente richiama. La luminosità delle carni, la posa e lo sguardo isolano la sua figura dal resto del gruppo, avvicinandola maggiormente ai fedeli, ai quali Lotto sembra proporla come l'esempio più eletto, manifestando una particolare predilezione per questo santo, che nella sua pittura assurge ad exemplum, insieme a s. Caterina d'Alessandria di cui Lotto spesso raffigura le 'nozze mistiche', \end{quote}}
Like Lotto's *St. Jerome* (Fig. 38), which was probably painted for the Ospedale dei Derelitti in the 1540's, St. Sebastian in the painting under discussion is an example of *imitatio christi* - involvement in Christ. Like the *St. Jerome* and like the miraculous Christ appearing in the St. Roch woodcut by Titian, St. Sebastian participates in Christ by participating in his suffering. It is this theme of suffering that gives a special message for the sick.

The appearance of the saints in ecstasy adds an important gloss to the painting, creating a bridge between the messages of devotion and those of physical suffering 'specific' to the context of the surgeon's painting. Their expressions - eyes almost closed, mouth slightly open - can be interpreted in two ways: either as the expressions of mystical trance or the faces of the dying - the saints experiencing their martyrdom. And in fact, the two are intertwined. Religious transport is described as a kind of mystical death. The goal of complete mystical involvement is recommended and described in the devotional literature.

(Footnote Continued)

della vita mistica contemplativa ed unitiva
dell'anima."

57 See discussion in Chapter Five.
The pseudo-Bonaventure develops the ideal of the good 'death' of spiritual purification:

God willing, I may often fall into this death, so that I may escape the noose of death, that I may not feel the mortal enticements of the life of luxury and not be stupified at the sentiment of lust, the heat of avarice, the stimuli of anger and impatience, the anguish of solicitudes, and the troubles of cares. May the soul die the death of the just, so that is may not be ensnared by any unjust thing or delighted by any iniquity. It is a good death that does not remove life but carries it beyond and improves it. It is good, for now the body falls but the soul is lifted. But this is good, and my soul (dying), if one may say so, the death of angels, so that it passes beyond the memory of present things, of infernal and corporal things, divests itself not only of desires but similitudes and has pure conversation with those similar to it in purity. This thing, as I think, is called either excess or highest contemplation.

The ability of ecstatic devotion to transform the features was also described in devotional literature. Roch and Sebastian's expressions could have been recognized as spiritual transformations, and even as recommendations for devotion. The mystical writer Isaac of Syria in de la perfectione de la vita contemplativa (published Venice, 1500), describes the radical psychological and physiological changes that accompany intense contemplation:

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58 Pseudo-Bonaventura (1961), 258.
Molte volte si trova l’homo ingenochiato in oratione co’ le mani levate ad cielo et guardando la facia di Christo nella croce et racogliendosi tutto a Dio in orazione et orando lui con lacrime et compuntione in quel hora subitamente discorre nel cuor suo una fonte che rampolla dilecto, et dissolvonsi le membra sue, et gli ochi suoi si velano, et cade in terra colla faccia, et diventano alterate le cogitationi sue in tal maniera che non può fare genuflexioni per 18 grande gaudio che è in tutto ’l corpo suo.

Roch and Sebastian’s physiognomical expressions can also be interpreted quite literally as physical suffering. The ambiguity works in favour of the painting’s ‘special message’—the application for the surgeon patron. Reading the expressions of Roch and Sebastian in Lotto’s painting as the expressions of the dying conveys a more direct healing message. As in the Isenheim altarpiece where the patients of the hospital identify with the torments of St. Anthony and with the gruesomely transformed demon (see Chapter Five), in Lotto’s painting sufferers can identify with the attitudes of the ‘dying’ saints. However, unlike Grunewald’s altarpiece, Lotto’s painting was probably not always used for direct therapeutic purposes, if at all. It was a private devotional piece for a medical worker. Roch and Sebastian suffer from no specific disease; their message is broader.

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If Roch and Sebastian's expressions recall physical death, the spiritual answer — mystical death, or ecstasy — is positive. It even appears as if the Madonna and Child — their crisp, saturated colouring contrasting them with the neutral tones of the saints — have appeared as the manifestation of the saints' ecstasy. The lives of Roch and Sebastian both link them to the positive themes of Resurrection and triumph over death, because both lived beyond their 'deaths' — Sebastian recovered from his arrow wounds and Roch recovered from the plague. Giving special attention to Sebastian, Titian's Resurrection altarpiece in Brescia makes this iconography clear (Figs. 72, 73). In the altarpiece, the risen Christ flies into the air opening up his arm and directing his glance to encompass the magnificent St. Sebastian in the side panel. Both are almost nude, heroic, and dramatically lit. The linkage of the two could not be clearer. St. Sebastian in this painting 'acts out' a past time, where the Passion, or the suffering represented by Sebastian is succeeded by the liberation demonstrated by the Resurrection of the triumphant Christ.

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Within the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian are many of the elements recurrent in healing contexts. Raymond Crawfurd has described the main themes used in
pictorial plague sheets popular in this period, images that also correspond to the prominent gonfalon used in plague processions. There were three recurrent types: Christ as the suffering Redeemer on the Cross; intercession by the Virgin or by Christ; memorials of the martyrdom of special plague saints, in particular Sebastian, Roch, and Anthony. Lotto's Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian provides the basic messages of these three types: the intercession of the Madonna and her blessing Son, the special protection of the plague saints, and the message of the suffering Christ, implicit in the telescoped narrative indicated by the slab, and embodied in the suffering Christ of the Flagellation in the iconography of Sebastian.

Gonfalon, plague sheets, and altarpieces in hospitals such as the ones examined in Chapter Five, all express themes basic to devotional works. Their contexts — in healing situations — dictate the special needs asked of the devotional images. The Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian is first a private devotional painting; its medical context is that of its patron's occupation, that makes healing a part of his daily life. In the Meditations on the Life of Christ, the Pseudo-Bonaventure warns the healer of the sick that he has a special supplication to

60 Raymond Crawfurd, Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), 141.
make, because his power to heal comes from Christ, who holds the power to liberate body and soul.\textsuperscript{61} The gospels and the devotional literature give a special role to Christ's healing and to Christian suffering. In Christ's role as the Physician, sickness is equated with sin and cure with redemption. Physical suffering has a dual meaning: the punishment of sin and the sacrifice of Christ. Cucchi may have been aware that his occupation of healing had a higher purpose in the life of Christ, and in this light, Lotto's painting may have been a spiritual reminder to the surgeon of the sacred role of Christ as the Physician.

Christ appears many times in the gospel as a healer. After each of his many miraculous cures he says "Thy faith has healed thee." Christ's healing expands beyond the act of physical healing itself and becomes a larger metaphor for sin and salvation.\textsuperscript{62} This extended metaphor is clearly

\textsuperscript{61} Martha, seriously ill, was cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment, who replied, "Your faith has made you well." pseudo-Bonaventura continues:

"Thus he who has attained the state of knowing that he is granted by the Lord the healing of the infirm, and other miracles, should not for this rise in pride and claim it for himself, for it is not in him, but it is the Lord who performs it. Here it happened that Martha touched the hem, having faith in thus being liberated. This did not occur because of the hem, but the virtue of liberation came from the Lord."


\textsuperscript{62} Francesco Bronda, in a short article, pointed out the
developed in the devotional literature. Christ the Physician is at the same time Christ the Saviour, and the medicines he sends to man to cure and to stave off his maladies are faith, prayer, penitence, and the sacraments.

Pseudo-Bonaventure, in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* puts his spiritual coaching on purging the soul of sin into the form of an extended metaphor of medical healing:

The physician comes to the wounds as the Spirit to the soul. The one He finds wounded by the knife of the devil...needs first to have the infection or ulcer that perhaps has grown in the wound cut before all other things. And thus the iron of sharp compunction cuts the ulcer of inveterate customs, but since the pain is bitter it is anointed with the unction of devotion, which is none other than the conceived cheer of hope of indulgence. The faculty of continence and the victory over sin produce this....Then there will be placed the medicament of the apostle, the plaster of penitence, that is, of fasting, vigils, prayer, and other exercises of penitents. When one is in affliction, one must feed on the sustenance of good deeds, so that one will not faint....Having taken food and drink, what is left but for the sick man to rest and lie in the quiet of contemplation after the sweat of action? Sleeping in contemplation, he dreams of the Lord through a mirror...

(Footnote Continued)

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(Footnote Continued)

63 This passage is from the pseudo-Bonaventure’s (Footnote Continued)
Thomas à Kempis in the *Imitation of Christ* describes the eucharist as a cure which Christ has left for mankind:

> Without Thee I cannot exist: and without Thy visitation I am unable to live.
> Therefore must I often come to Thee, and receive Thee as the medicine of my salvation, lest perhaps I faint in the way, should I be deprived of this heavenly food.
> For so Thou, O most merciful Jesus, when Thou hadst been preaching to the people and curing their various maladies, didst once say: I will not send them fasting to their home, lest they faint by the way.\(^\text{64}\)

As Richard Palmer has elaborated (see Chapter Five), suffering and sickness had a dual significance in the sixteenth century. As punishment for sin, sickness was perceived negatively, requiring the healing cures of the Saviour. This attitude manifests itself in medical treatment – the practice of contemporary hospitals to

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(Footnote Continued)
discourse on the active and contemplative lives, which he describes as having three stages: the first stage is active, where a soul purges and perfects himself; the second is contemplative, where the soul steeps himself in God; and the third is active, where the soul reaches out to help others. If this medical metaphor can be extended to encompass Lotto’s devotional painting, the first stage would refer to the ‘afflicted’ worshipper in need of healing, the second, to the example of Sebastian, of *imitatio christi*, and the third, the example of Roch, as the active helper of others. The above quote describes the first and second stages. Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. and ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie Green (Princeton: Princeton Univ., 1961), 251.

\(^{64}\) Thomas à Kempis (1960), 195.
require confession before medical treatment confirms the existence of this belief. But, on the other hand, mortal suffering was ennobled by Christ's suffering for mankind, and the suffering of the sick in this sense has a positive connotation, aping Christ's Passion. The example of the suffering of Christ was pointed out in Titian's *St. Roch* woodcut, and it is integral to the example of both Lotto's *Ospedale St. Jerome* and Sebastian, who poses as the Christ of the Flagellation - all in contexts with medical or healing associations. These two aspects of suffering are also developed in devotional literature.

Francesco Bronda noticed two medical prints in a Spanish edition of Domenico Cavalca's *Specchio di Croce*, one of a person in his sickbed.65 These images are literal illustrations of the medical metaphor of Christ's suffering developed in the text.66 According to Cavalca, Christ's suffering was the bitter medicine He took on our behalf. Christ suffered great pains, because the maladies he had to

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65 Bronda (1968), 91-97.


Cavalca, although a medieval writer (1220-1342), is relevant here because in the early years of printing in Venice he was extremely popular, the most published author in fifteenth century Venice. Leonadas V. Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), 123.
cure were so great. By likening Christ's Passion to the painful remedies of medieval medicine, Cavalca not only portrayed Christ as the Physician, but at the same time identified him with the afflicted.

Jacopone da Todi - whose Laude were used to embellish the printed edition of the Meditations on the Life of Christ found by Carlo Ginzburg - dedicates a lauda to the recitation of horrible illnesses and tormented death. The poem begins however, with the words "O Signor, per cortesia - mandame la malsania!", "O Lord, please send me illness!". He recites all possible types and origins of illnesses in order to address the reader and make him identify the suffering of his own discomforts with the message of the poem. For Jacopone, the suffering of these torments is revealed in as the participation in the torments of Christ in the Passion, and he welcomes it with gratitude and in penitence.

In the surgeon's painting, the repeated Christian themes of sin and salvation that function in the devotional painting are seen through the lens of sickness and health, appropriate to the outlook of the surgeon. Sebastian's

example of *imitatio christi* comes from the iconography of Christ of the Flagellation, the example of the suffering Christ. The message of resurrection and the eucharist in the image of the Madonna and Child on the slab is an example of the 'spiritual cure' provided by Christ and his sacraments. In the ecstasy of the saints, Lotto intermixes the faces of physical suffering and the 'good death' of the soul, or devotional contemplation.

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The elements that make the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* particularly suited to its commission are layered under a seemingly simple exterior. Taking the Venetian half-length tradition as its base confers not only a Venetian pedigree important in the context of early sixteenth century Bergamo, but conveys the connotations of miraculous intercession which is associated with the popular type. It is miraculous intercession that constituted the 'other side' of medicine in the sixteenth century. The major themes of this type of devotional painting - of salvation and of the inherent narrative of the Passion of Christ - are expressed.

As a painting for a medical context, the *Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian* deals with a confrontation with death. Christ was buried as a man, but as the Saviour
he rose. The resurrection of the dead Christ expresses the Christian promise of life after death. In fact, Lotto’s Child most resembles the Christ of the Resurrection—getting to His feet, with the rays of the crucifix shining from His head, He raises His hand not in judgement but in benediction. By conflating the Deposition and Resurrection of Christ, and adding to the equation through the device of the slab the eucharistic message of redemption, Lotto communicates positive Christian answers to death. The Madonna shares in the symbolism of Christ’s Passion, and the lowly position of the Madonna of Humility may suggest this connection; at the same time she shares in the triumphant aspect of the Resurrected Christ in her celebratory roles as Bride and Queen. By placing both Mary and Christ ‘enthroned’ as it were on the slab and on their royal cushions, Lotto adapts the traditional iconography in a way that makes it appropriate for the surgeon—it becomes a triumph over death.

Unlike the conventional half-length that could be ‘mass produced’ varying only the accompanying saints, Lotto’s version is an adaptation for a particular purpose, its stylistic and iconographic innovations underlining meanings that make it appropriate to its commission: themes of suffering and triumph over death suited to the concerns of the surgeon. It is given the topicality of new currents in devotion by the intense examples of the ecstatic saints. In
the Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian the density of meaning is folded into the configuration of unusual elements - elements that signal the special message underneath, like the cloth that Lotto peels back to reveal the slab on which he signs his name.
Fig. 1. Lorenzo Lotto. Madonna and Child with SS Roch and Sebastian. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. c1521.
Fig. 2. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna degli Alberetti. Venice, Accademia. 1487.

Fig. 3. Cima da Conegliano. Virgin and Child with John the Baptist and St. Paul. Venice, Accademia. c1504-5.
Fig. 4. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child with SS Catherine and Magdalene. Venice, Accademia. c1488-89.

Fig. 5. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child. Bergamo, Accademia Carrara. c1470.
Fig. 6. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child. Venice, Accademia. c1475-80.

Fig. 7. Leonardo da Vinci. ‘Benois’ Madonna. Leningrad, Hermitage. c1478.
Fig. 8. Botticelli workshop. Madonna and Child with John the Baptist. Dresden, Museum of Dresden.

Fig. 9. Icon of the Virgin and Child (Our Lady of Pimen). Tretyakov Gallery. Second half of the fourteenth century.
Fig. 10. Titian. Man of Sorrows. Venice, Scuola di San Rocco. c1510.

Fig. 11. Giovanni Bellini. Dead Christ Between Two Angels. London, National Gallery. c1470.
Fig. 12. Cima da Conegliano. St. Jerome. Washington, National Gallery. c1500-05.

Fig. 13. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child. Milan, Brera. c1470.
Fig. 14. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child with SS Paul and George. Venice, Accademia. c1490?

Fig. 15. Giovanni Bellini. S. Giobbe Altarpiece. Venice, Accademia. c1487.
Fig. 16. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child with SS Jerome and Magdalene. Munich, Alte Pinakothek. c1495-8.

Fig. 17. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child with St. Jerome and John the Baptist. Washington, National Gallery. c1492-95.
Fig. 18. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child with John the Baptist and St. Catherine. New York, J. Pierpoint Morgan Library. c1513-16.

Fig. 19. Woodcut from Vite de Sancti Padri. Venice, 1501.
Fig. 20. Titian. Madonna and Child with John the Baptist and St. Anthony. Florence, Uffizi. c1520.

Fig. 21. Titian. Madonna and Child with John the Baptist, SS Paul, Gerome, and Mary Magdalene. Dresden, Gemaldegalerie. c1520.
Fig. 22. Titian. Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and a Rabbit. Paris, Louvre. c1530.

Fig. 23. Palma il Vecchio. Sacra Conversazione. Hampton Court. c1512-13.
Fig. 24. Titian. Madonna and Child with St. Agnes and Infant Baptist. Dijon, Musée des Beaux Arts. c1535.

Fig. 25. Titian. Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and Infant Baptist in a Landscape. London, National Gallery. c1530.
Fig. 26. Palma il Vecchio. Sacra Conversazione. Vaduz, coll. Liechtenstein. c1510.

Fig. 27. Titian. Mary Magdalene in Penance. Florence, Pitti Gallery. c1530-35.
Fig. 28. Lorenzo Lotto. San Domenico polyptych. Recanati, Pinacoteca Comunale. 1508.

Fig. 29. Lorenzo Lotto. Deposition. Jesi, Pinacoteca Civica. 1512.
Fig. 30. Lorenzo Lotto. Sacra Conversazione (Martinengo altarpiece). Bergamo, San Bartolomeo. 1516.

Fig. 31. Lorenzo Lotto. Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine. Bergamo, Accademia Carrara. 1523.
Fig. 32. Titian. St. Mark Enthroned. Venice, S. Maria della Salute. c1511-1512.

Fig. 33. Woodcut from Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae. Augsburg, 1537.
Fig. 34. Matthias Grunewald. Isenheim Altarpiece (open). Colmar, Musée Unterlinden. c1510-15.

Fig. 35. Matthias Grunewald. Isenheim Altarpiece. Temptation of St. Anthony (detail). Colmar, Musée Unterlinden. c1510-15.
Fig. 36. Matthias Grunewald. Isenheim Altarpiece (closed). Colmar, Musée Unterlinden. c1510-15.

Fig. 37. Matthias Grunewald. Isenheim Altarpiece (middle state - reconstructed). Colmar, Musée Unterlinden. c1510-15.
Fig. 38. Lorenzo Lotto. St. Jerome. Madrid, Prado. c1545.

Fig. 39. Domenico di Bartolo. Madonna of Humility. Siena, Pinacoteca. 1433.
Fig. 40. Lorenzo Lotto. Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Washington, National Gallery. 1522.

Fig. 41. Lorenzo Lotto. Sacra Conversazione. Bergamo, Santo Spirito. 1521.
Fig. 42. Apse mosaic. Rome, Sta. Maria in Trastevere. 12th century.

Fig. 43. Giovanni Bellini. The Madonna of the Meadow. London, National Gallery. c1501-4.
Fig. 44. Giovanni Bellini. Pietà. Venice, Accademia. c1505.

Fig. 45. Lorenzo Lotto. Sacra Conversazione. Sta. Cristina al Tiverone, 1505-6.
Fig. 46. Fra Angelico. Sacra Conversazione. Florence, Museo di S. Marco. c1443-45.

Fig. 47. Domenico Veneziano. Madonna and Child with Saints (St. Lucy Altarpiece). Florence, Uffizi. c1445.
Fig. 48. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child. New York, Metropolitan Museum. c1450-55.

Fig. 49. Giovanni Bellini. Madonna and Child. Washington, National Gallery. c1485-90.
Fig. 50. Carlo Crivelli. Madonna of the Passion. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio. c1460.

Fig. 51. Bartolomeo Vivarini. Madonna and Child. Berlin-Dahlem, State Museum. c1450-55.
Fig. 52. Gentile? Bellini. Pietà. Venice, Palazzo Ducale. 1472.

Fig. 53. Albrecht Durer. The Mass of St. Gregory. c1511.
Fig. 54. Cima da Conegliano (workshop). Madonna and Child. Rouen, Galerie Huisse. c1500?

Fig. 55. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child. Cardiff, National Museum of Wales. c1500-03.
Fig. 56. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child. London, National Gallery. c1499-1502.

Fig. 57. Cima da Conegliano. Madonna and Child. London, National Gallery. c1505-6.
Fig. 58. Lorenzo Lotto. Madonna and Child with Saints. Bergamo, S. Bernardino in Pignolo. 1521.

Fig. 59. Lorenzo Lotto. Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Anthony of Padua. London, National Gallery. 1521.
Fig. 60. Lorenzo Lotto. Holy Family with St. Catherine. Bergamo, Accademia Carrara. 1533.

Fig. 61. Mantegna. Dead Christ. Milan, Brera. c1480.
Fig. 62. Francesco Bonsignori. Madonna Adoring the Child. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio. 1483.

Fig. 63. Alvise Vivarini. The Resurrection. Venice, S. Giovanni in Bragora. 1498.
Fig. 64. Cima da Conegliano (workshop). Dead Christ with Two Angels. whereabouts unknown. c1490?

Fig. 65. Titian. St. Roch and the Story of His Life. c1517.
Fig. 66. Titian. Six Saints. 1520's?

Fig. 67. Alvise Vivarini. Madonna and Child with Saints. East Berlin, Staatliche Museen. c1498-99.
Fig. 68. Palma il Vecchio?
Flagellation. Rovigo, Pinacoteca dei Concordi.

Fig. 69. Mantegna (workshop).
Fig. 70. Titian? Flagellation. Rome, Villa Borghese. mid-sixteenth century.

Fig. 71. Lorenzo Lotto. Nativity with Saints Roch and Sebastian. Credaro, S. Giorgio. 1525.
Fig. 72. Titian. Resurrection Altarpiece. Brescia, SS Nazaro e Celso. 1522.

Fig. 73. Titian. Detail of fig. 72.


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