Malvasia's "Guido Reni" translated and annotated

Carlo Cesare Malvasia
Felsina Pittrice. Lives of the Bolognese Painters. Volume IX: Life of Guido Reni. Critical edition, translation and essay by Lorenzo Pericolo, notes by Lorenzo Pericolo with Elizabeth Cropper, Stefan Albl, Mattia Biffis and Elise Ferone.
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The Bolognese Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia's magnum opus, the *Felsina pittrice*, appeared in 1678. Its aim was to correct from the author's Bolognese perspective Giorgio Vasari's Tuscan-biased *Vite*. A true aristocratic man of letters *(fig. 1)* – lawyer, professor, church canon, poet, amateur artist and collector – Malvasia was also a dedicated scholar. He undertook the bold mission to research through published, archival and oral sources, along with concerted visual study, the lives and art of the Bolognese school, from the late medieval period until his day. The lengthy result, two volumes in notoriously difficult, idiomatic "baroque" prose, was republished with informative editorial notes in 1841–44, but only the lives of the Carracci and Guido Reni have ever been translated into English, the former in an exemplary edition by Anne Summerscale (2000) with extensive annotations, the latter by Catherine and Robert Enggass (1980), albeit neither publication includes the Italian text nor is illustrated.

Through the initiative of Elizabeth Cropper, former Dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Center's sponsorship, an ambitious project has been undertaken to publish Malvasia's complete text with English translation and detailed historical commentary, complemented by an annotated, although not translated, edition of Malvasia's extensive and often informative preparatory notes, the so-called *Scritti originali.* His life of Guido Reni, translated and edited by Lorenzo Pericolo together with an equipe of art historians at CASVA, is the fourth publication in the series, in two very weighty volumes handsomely produced by Harvey Miller (2019), in the projected sixteen-volume series (the final volume will be dedicated to Malvasia's posthumous *Il Claustro di San Michele in Bosco*, 1694).

Malvasia (1616–1693) probably met Reni (1575–1642) in Bologna around 1635, when the famous painter was sixty years old and he was only nineteen. Malvasia left for Rome four years later and did not return to Bologna during Reni's last years. The biographer nonetheless had extensive first-hand knowledge of the painter and gathered an extraordinary amount of information from documents and Reni's colleagues, especially from Francesco Albani. His *vita* of Reni was written in the later 1660s. While drawing on earlier publications – Malvasia was familiar with all of the main seventeenth-century sources, including Giulio Mancini's unpublished *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (around 1620), Giovanni Baglione's *Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti...* (1642), Franceso Scannelli's *Il microcosmo della pittura* (1657), and Giovan Pietro Bellori's *Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (1672) – his biography is incomparably thorough. It is not just the most important text on one of the greatest Italian baroque painters, but one of the most informative biographies of any early modern artist.

In her Preface to these volumes (I, xiii–xxi), Elizabeth Cropper provides a brief historiographic overview of the use and abuse of the *Felsina pittrice* in the Reni literature, which has been considerable in recent times, particularly in rebutting the notion that Malvasia forged documents and manipulated evidence to benefit his Bologna bias, his so-called *campanilismo*, a notion that has been well refuted, especially by Giovanna Perini Folesani (1990, among others). Lorenzo Pericolo's task in translating and editing the *Felsina pittrice* was formidable, given the length and complexity of Malvasia's text and the morass of paintings by and attributed to the artist, although there was a good foundation in the extensive Reni literature, notably the writings of Cesare Gnudi and Gian Carlo Cavalli (1955), Edi Baccheschi (1971), Catherine Johnston (1974), Stephen Pepper (1984), and this author (1997), as well as major exhibitions in Bologna in 1954 (Exh. Cat. Bologna 1954), Frankfurt in 1988 (Exh. Cat. Frankfurt 1988), and Bologna in 1988, Los Angeles and Fort Worth in 1989 (Exh. Cat. Bologna 1988).

TRANSLATION AND ANNOTATION

For his project, Pericolo did not need the Enggass translation of Reni's *vita*, which is not complete, is more free than literal, and is not always reliable, yet it is mainly adequate for the general reader. Pericolo's translation assuredly is more accurate and reads extremely well. Even so, the scholar using the English text will need to compare it with the Italian, for instance regarding Annibale Carracci's and Caravaggio's dual annoyance that Reni had left Bologna and moved to Rome: "Ma se non piacque ad Annibale, tanto più spiacque al Caravaggio che temette assai di una nuova maniera, totalmente alla sua opposta, ed altrettanto quanto la sua gradita." Pericolo translates this as, "But if Annibale disliked Guido's presence, how much more was it displeasing to Caravaggio, who greatly feared a new style that, totally contrary to his, was nonetheless held in high esteem" (I, 38–39). The Enggass translation reads: "But if Guido's presence displeased Annibale, how much more

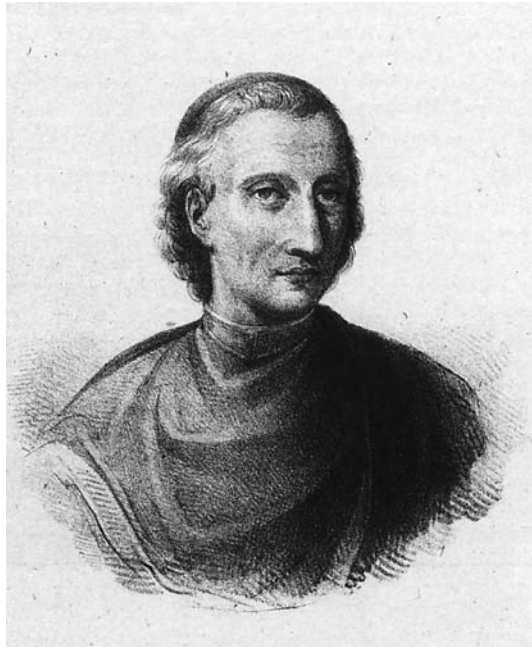

Fig. 1 Achille Frulli, Portrait of Carlo Cesare Malvasia, ca. 1830–50. Lithograph

was it displeasing to Caravaggio, who greatly feared this new manner, which was completely the opposite of his and was equally well received" (50). While the translations are very similar, only the Enggass version preserves the comparative *quanto la sua gradita*, Malvasia's understanding of what Caravaggio particularly begrudged: that Guido's art was being received as well as his own. A similar example is a passage where Malvasia relates that Ludovico Carracci was asking 200 scudi for a painting of the *Birth of St. John the Baptist*, "a fee deemed exorbitant at that time", in Pericolo's translation (I, 32–33). The Italian reads, "dimanda stimata a que' tempi spropositata non che rigorosa". Only the Enggass translation retains the complaint that, for the commission, the fee was *spropositata*: "a price that in those days was considered not only steep but disproportionate" (46).

Pericolo faults Malvasia for failing to recognize that Caravaggio had a "deep and persistent impact" on Reni, notably "Guido's emphasis on tight framing of the human body and his unvarying preference for the half-figure format" (II, 63). Malvasia could have replied that Guido's framing of the human body is no tighter than in paintings of many other artists of the period, and especially that Guido's preference for half-figures basically arose

around 1620, some fifteen years after contending with Caravaggio's style. He could have added that the half-figure format emerged not because of Caravaggio, but in response to a new market demand for collectible gallery pictures. And that Guido's signature half-lengths are distinctly uncaravaggesque.

Elizabeth Cropper writes that "our edition of Malvasia's life of Guido Reni cannot be a catalogue raisonnée [sic], and yet it cannot stand as a purely literary critical effort" (I, xviii). What the volumes offer, the reader is told, is "the most thorough treatment to date of the artist's work". Of these three alternatives, the "literary critical effort" is the book's strength. Pericolo is particularly at home when discussing texts, whether ancient sources, Renaissance theory or seicento poets. His notes, in all, are astonishingly detailed and informative, not just on literary matters but on collectors, provenance, and Reni's pupils, even if frequently they can seem excessive, all the more so when other scholars' views on attributions, chronology, etc., are slighted.

The notes are five times as long as Malvasia's already-long text, risking that whatever might be new in them gets buried in the protracted, often disproportionate commentaries. An example of the latter is Pericolo's discussion of one of Malvasia's numerous topoi. The biographer wrote in one sentence that it was Reni, who, like a "generous eagle (so to speak) took sublime flight to the spheres and, deriving his celestial ideas from there, brought back to earth a heavenly craft" (I, 14–15). The simile draws on Platonic aesthetics and implies that Reni developed an *idea del bello* by imagining celestial forms. It evokes Pheidias' creativity, which Philostratos connected to the sculptor's "going to heaven" to copy godly forms, thereby placing Reni in the most exalted company (Spear 1997, 15). Malvasia unlikely meant much more than this, yet Pericolo's note on the passage reads like an article on "the theme of the eagle as a metaphor of the soul", with discussion of Dante, Cristoforo Landino, Michelangelo, Tasso, Ludovicus van Leuven, and Daniel de La Feuille (I, 215–16, and Fn. 18).

LITERARY ENCOMIA

Such digressions aside, the aim of these volumes, investigation and assessment of Malvasia as historian and critic, is admirably fulfilled through a wide and profound contextualization of his ideas and writing, including philological analysis of the making of the *Felsina pittrice*. Along the way, great attention is paid to the encomia penned in praise of Reni's paintings, but not without peril. Long ago, after acknowledging Elizabeth Cropper's (1992) "very sensitive analysis of Reni's *Massacre of the Innocents* *(fig. 2)*, I remarked, "I do not think that Reni's brush should be equated with Marino's pen as artistic polemic in the way suggested [by her], because images and artists rarely can be likened so closely to texts and authors, let alone to someone as unbookish as Reni" (Spear 1997, 329 and Fn. 82). Malvasia relates that Reni studied little, read less, had bad handwriting, wrote incorrectly – so much so that "I cannot bring myself to reproduce here many of the letters by him that, among others, I possess". Reni "loved the company of half-wits, simpletons, and jesters, gossips and gamblers" more than the company of learned men, who could have enlightened him, and he "abhorred poetic eulogies" (I, 172–73, 120–21, 138–39).

At the time, I could not foresee Carlo Caruso's discovery and publication (2009) of Marino's earlier, autograph draft of his poem dedicated to Reni's *Massacre of the Innocents*. As Caruso notes in his masterly study, Marino's madrigal often has been cited and analyzed with the "assumption that it ought to be possible for us to determine a straight correspondence of expressive means between formal features of a seventeenth-century painting and the rhetorical organization of a poem from the same period". In this regard, "Elizabeth Cropper in particular has focused her attention on the poem in question, claiming that Marino succeeded in providing a subtle and insightful interpretation of the painting's specific characteristics, as well as showing himself able to grasp its stylistic novelty" (Caruso 2009, 106 and 102, respectively).

A similar approach to the poems in praise of Reni's paintings is adopted in these volumes, even though Pericolo was aware of Caruso's "surprising"

Marino's draft of his madrigal, datable 1614–17, reads:

"Ah, Paggi, e perch. 'l fai?
La man, che forme angeliche dipigne,
Tratta or opre sanguigne?
Non vedi tu, che mentre il sanguinoso
Stuol de' fanciulli ravivando vai,
Nova morte gli dai?
O ne la crudeltate anco pietoso
Fabro gentil, ben sai
Ch'ancor tragico caso è caro oggetto,
E che non va l'orror senza il diletto."

The final version, published in Marino's Galeria (1620), reads:

"Che fai, GUIDO, che fai?
La man, che forme angeliche dipigne,
Tratta hor opre sanguigne?
Non vedi tu, che mentre il sanguinoso
Stuol de fanciulli ravivando vai,
Nova morte gli dai?
O nela crudeltate anco pietoso
Fabro gentil, ben sai,
Ch'ancor Tragico caso è caro oggetto,
E che spesso l'horror va col diletto."

discovery. More than a surprise, it sounded a warning that to analyze such encomia as significant links between word and image requires caution (see text box above). Minor differences aside, the two versions are identical, except for two consequential words at the beginning: Paggi and Guido. They reveal that Marino was neither fascinated with nor addressing Guido's painting whatsoever when writing his poem, but instead was extolling an utterly different (now badly mutilated), tumultuous, battle-like representation of the *Massacre of the Innocents (fig. 3)* by the Genoese artist Giovanni Battista Paggi (whose painting, Caruso notes, already had been "celebrated in Ligurian literary circles"; my thanks go to Carlo Caruso for providing the photograph of Paggi's painting reproduced here). Nonetheless, Pericolo avows, "it is no coincidence that the poet of the marvelous, Giovan Battista Marino, quickly reacted to Guido's wonderous synthesis of opposites in his eulogy of the *Massacre of the Innocents*" (II, 90), disregarding that Marino's conceit of opposing horror (*orror*) with pleasure (*diletto*) was written about Paggi's, not Guido's, painting. What is more, while Marino would have known Paggi's painting in Genoa, there is no evidence that he ever had the occasion to see Guido's.

This lesson of Marino's recycling a poem for a different painting and painter (in Marino's *La Sampogna*, Reni's name again was inserted only in a revised version [Caruso 2009, 114]) should be borne in mind when reading Pericolo's extensive notes on every poet mentioned by Malvasia who wrote encomia addressed to Reni's *Abduction of Helen* (Louvre, Paris). As a member of multiple literary academies in Bologna and Rome, Malvasia had a personal interest in literature. Pericolo recognizes that it is "unclear how and when the contributors" to the gathering of their poems on the *Abduction* could have seen the original painting or even Giacinto Campana's copy of it in the Galleria Spada, Rome (I, 314–15 and Fn. 267). Most likely, many of the poets had seen neither one of them but were partaking in a long tradition of ekphrastic poetry that was word rather than specific-image motivated. The "literary critical effort" continues in Pericolo's lengthy analysis of literary theory in order to explain Malvasia's understanding and definition of Guido's "divine manner", in his extended discussion of the "poetics of the supernatural body", and in the section of his essay titled "Sweet and the Sublime: Francesco Patrizi, Matteo Peregrini, and Emanuele Tesauro" (II, 81–88), a long discussion of the literary theory of those three writers, none of whom is even mentioned by Malvasia but are considered as reflective of his culture.

GAMBLING, ART PRICES, SEXUALITY

The titles of two other rich sections of his essay, "The Legacy of Perfection: Malvasia's Third Age of Painting" (II, 50–53) and "The 'Four Evangelists' of the Fourth Age of Painting" (II, 53–56), refer to the Carracci as the culmination of the third age, and to Guido, Domenichino, Albani and Guercino as pioneers of the fourth age (Scannelli already had dubbed those painters the "Four Evangelists" before Malvasia). According to Pericolo, "Guido was struggling with the most difficult task of all: to

propel art beyond the Carracci perfection, that is, to become in earnest the 'father and promoter' of the fourth age of painting" (II, 92). As thus formulated, Reni's improbably self-conscious task was to fulfill Malvasia's conception of art's development.

While the scholarship behind these volumes is exceptional in analyzing Malvasia the historian, it is difficult to agree that they constitute "the most thorough treatment to date of the artist's work". The scope of inquiry is narrow and conventional, and notably fails to benefit from the development and value of socially-inflected art-historical inquiry. Missing, for instance, is due consideration of Reni's piety and the religious efficacy of his paintings and why they became paradigmatic of Catholic imagery. Nor is there adequate consideration of Malvasia's reports on Reni's pathological gambling and its consequences. Malvasia thought that its most deleterious effects were at the end of the artist's career. Because of gambling, Reni "almost completely lost his affection for the art and the reputation he treasured so dearly. Reduced to extreme necessity by excessive losses, which exceeded his financial means, Guido, in order to pay his debts, took to painting half-figures and heads *alla prima* [and] thoughtlessly dashed off history paintings" (I, 104–05). Apparently, neither Malvasia nor Pericolo knew that Reni's addiction had begun much earlier, at least by 1612, when a lawyer involved in a civil case brought against cardsharps who had cheated Reni out of 200 scudi declared that the artist "faceva male a giochare; et che lì non haverebbe mai vinto", that is, "he was wrong to gamble; and that he would never win at it" (Cavazzini 2011, 143).

In another, especially long section of Pericolo's essay, titled "The Money Machine" (II, 92–110), it is said that, by having set high per-figure prices on his paintings, "many others followed Guido's example, beginning with Guercino". The evidence suggests otherwise (Spear 1994 and Spear 1997, 210–24). A few documents do refer to Guido's practice of charging per figure, but Malvasia makes abundantly clear that Reni abhorred considering prices, no doubt because he thought they denigrated his art by equating it with merchandise, as per-figure pricing does. Instead, Reni preferred to let patrons decide its worth and offer an honorarium or gift, a strategy that elevated its merit and potential gain. His attitude was unlike Guercino's methodical application of a *prix-fixe* and surely was not its model. While Reni's patrons and collectors might have thought about the value of paintings according to the number of figures (and size) – a consistent, objective way that linked evaluation to labor expended (Spear and Sohm 2010, *passim*) – their mindsets should not be confused with Reni's aversion to the market and his concerted efforts to distance himself from it. Malvasia lauded Reni's influence on increasing the value of painting, a trend begun locally by Ludovico Carracci, but he remained profoundly disturbed that Reni gambled away his fortune, less as a moral indictment than because it wiped out the sign of his elevated socio-economic achievement as Bologna's greatest living painter.

Malvasia was interested in other aspects of Reni's behavior as well. He writes that Reni "was commonly held to be a virgin" and always appeared "like marble in the presence and contemplation of the many beautiful girls who served him as models, and never wanting to be left alone or hidden away while portraying them" (I, 164–65). Such behavior must have been out of the ordinary to have caught Malvasia's attention. It flags an aspect of Reni's sexuality that wants consideration, all the more so in light of Reni's inclination to portray suicidal women with desexualized, incorporeal bodies (Spear 1997, 77–100). Yet, Pericolo's commentary on Malvasia's text only narrowly discusses the use of female models in Bologna with a fleeting remark that, "no doubt, some of Guido's attitudes toward women described by Malvasia qualify as some sort of gynophobia" (I, 381, Fn. 465). In an otherwise thorough commentary (I, 365, Fn. 410) on Reni's commission for a lost mural depicting *St. Benedict Receiving Gifts from the Peasants* at San Michele in Bosco *(fig. 4)*, Pericolo again avoids the issue of Reni's sexuality by dodging the question of why, in a

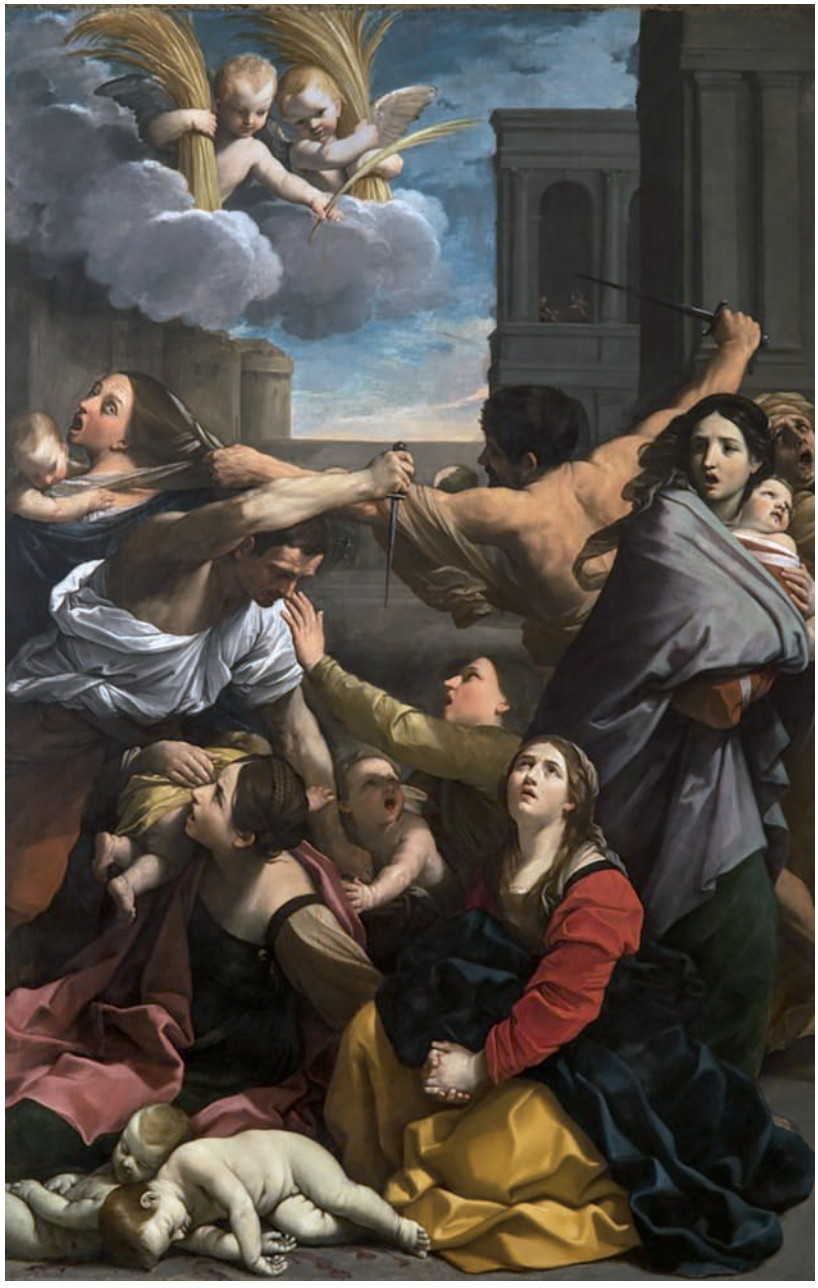

Fig. 2 Guido Reni, Massacre of the Innocents, 1611. Oil on canvas, 268 x 170 cm. Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale (https://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/en/content_page/item/2822-massacre-of-the-innocents)

turbaned figure in the middle of the composition who carries a basket of eggs, Reni portrayed himself as a woman, as on multiple occasions he told Malvasia he had done ("com'anche diss'egli più volte", I, 134).

HISTORY PAINTING, BREADTH, ATTRIBUTIONS

Malvasia relates that when Ludovico Carracci saw *St. Benedict Receiving Gifts from the Peasants*, he remained speechless and that other painters present were no less enthusiastic. Regardless of Guido's success with this action-packed, narrative scene, and with his fresco cycles and many altarpieces, the painter was criticized for his inadequacy in conceptualizing and depicting narrative action, that is, for his failure as a history painter in the way that Domenichino excelled. Malvasia remarked that, while Guido was outstanding in depicting the parts, he "neglected to become proficient in felicitously harmonizing the whole within a lively and rich composition, filled with spirit" (I, 120–21). Under the heading "*Diffetti di Guido*" in the *Scritti originali*, Malvasia listed among the painter's weaknesses that he "Fu poco intelligente delle favole, cosa che gli diede grave danno nell'istoriare" (he was "poorly acquainted with mythology, which hurt him a lot as a history painter", I, 501). "Guido himself acknowledged that in later years he had lost the ability to arrange figures together to make a pictorial narrative" (I, 118–20). Reversing Caravaggio's development, Reni started out designing numerous multi-figured history paintings but later produced fewer of them,

Fig. 3 Giovanni Battista Paggi, Massacre of the Innocents, 1604 or earlier. Oil on canvas, location unknown

in part because he did not want to work in fresco, in part in response to the market demand for his gallery pictures. In fact, about half of all of the paintings illustrated in these volumes contain just one, or primarily one figure. But even if many of the paintings are narratively barren and appear conceptually uncomplicated, that does not mean that they lack drama and are void of iconographic interest. Perhaps Malvasia thought as much, but in any "thorough treatment" of Reni, iconography should not be neglected.

Mirroring the book's limited focus, the Index of Persons, Works, and Concepts has no place for piety, education, gambling, witchcraft, misogyny, prices, money, etc. (ironically, the index of the original *Felsina pittrice* is much more inclusive). Its usefulness is further compromised by the citation of paintings according to the owners mentioned by Malvasia rather than by current locations as well. As a consequence, if one wants to look up a specific work, for example, one of thirteen indexed *Magdalenes*, one must wade through endless notes to figure out which is the corresponding version (cross-references to illustrations in the index would have helped). A second index of Cities and Sites likewise refers only to early, not to current locations.

Elizabeth Cropper's observation that this publication is not a catalogue raisonné certainly is true, which alone indicates that it cannot be "the most thorough treatment to date of the artist's work". Its generous illustrations (376), many of which were newly commissioned, are almost all in color and generally excellent. They constitute the most complete visual corpus of Reni's paintings, arranged in a proposed chronological order that does not stray significantly from Stephen Pepper's (1984). The illustrations do not, however, also constitute a reliable corpus of Reni's autograph work. One could disregard the many shortcomings in discussing Reni's œuvre because the focus is on Malvasia, were attributions not presented with such authority. Despite its severe limitations, Pepper's monograph and catalogue is the better guide to which are Reni's autograph paintings. To mention just two examples, Pepper could see that the *Sibyl* in the Spencer Museum of Art *(fig. 5)* published by Pericolo as by Reni, is not by him (it is closer to Giovanni Andrea Sirani), and that the *Education of the Virgin* in the Hermitage is a studio product. To the contrary, Pericolo writes about the latter that "its quality [...] suggests Guido's exclusive authorship", but then he adds, "only new laboratory analyses [...] would allow us to ascertain whether the painting was entirely executed by Guido or retouched by a member of his studio" (I, 352–53 and Fn. 378), thereby abandoning connoisseurship for a misplaced reliance on what could be determined in a laboratory. The pigments used by Reni and his assistants in the studio were not different. If infrared examination were to reveal *pentimenti* near the surface, or by x-ray deeper in, that could not indicate whether Reni or

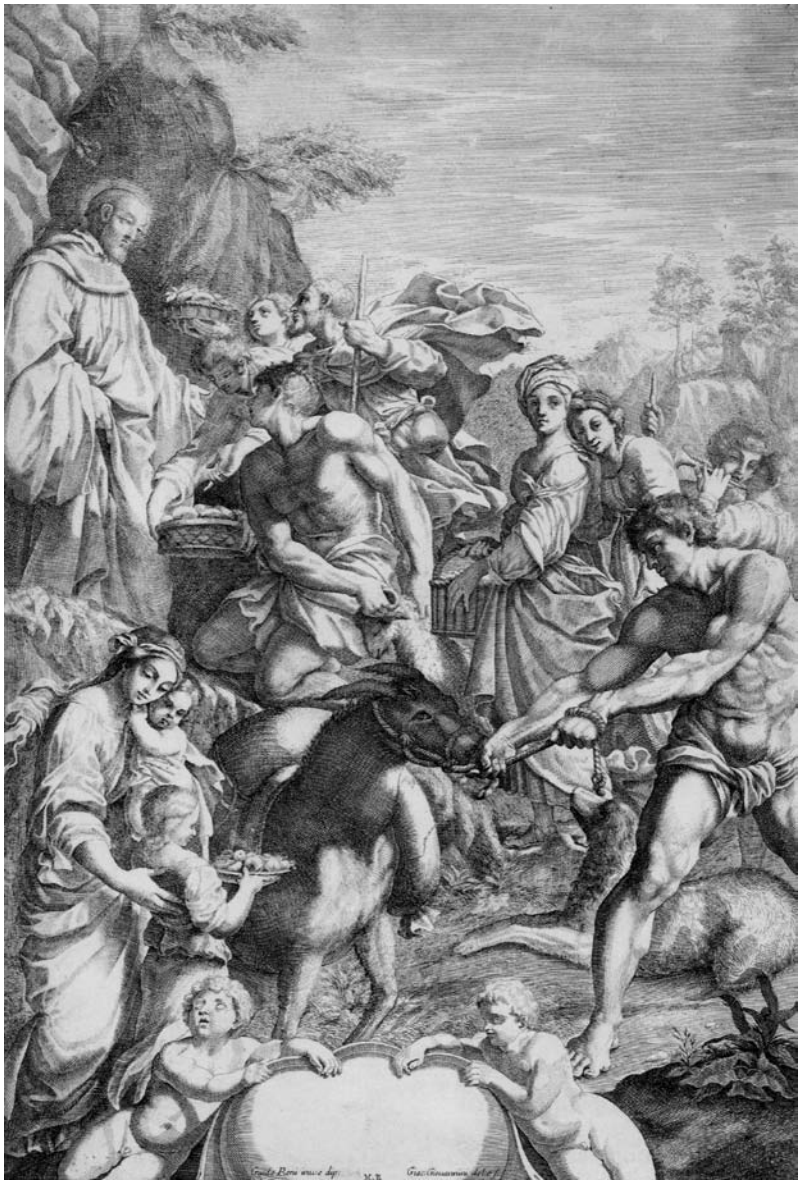

Fig. 4 Giacomo Maria Giovannini, 1694. Engraving after Guido Reni, St. Benedict Receiving Gifts from the Peasants. Bologna, San Michele in Bosco, destroyed (https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1154391/st-benedict-print-giovannini-giacomo-maria/)

someone else in the studio made the adjustments.

The underlying problem is that paintings are simply said to be by Reni of a certain date, without adequate stylistic analysis, comparisons, or consideration of the opinions of scholars who have long studied Reni from a connoisseurial perspective. A case in point is Pericolo's view that the fresco of the *Glory of Angels* in the Oratory of Santa Silvia, San Gregorio Magno, is "certainly" not by Reni but by Lanfranco, even though it has been accepted as Reni's by many Reni scholars. Additionally, Eric Schleier, the leading authority on Lanfranco, rejects the fresco as Lanfranco's (2004), as he does Pericolo's attribution to Lanfranco of *Moses* and the *Annunciation to Joachim* in the Annunciation Chapel in the Quirinal Palace (personal communication). In a similar way, Stéphane Loire's closely-argued proposal that a *Madonna and Child* in the Louvre *(fig. 6)* is probably by Francesco Gessi (Loire 1996, 222–25) is dismissed out of hand as an "erroneous" attribution and, without hesitation, the painting is assigned to Reni.

OTHER LACUNAE

A further example concerns chronology and the overall tendency to pay little attention to divergent opinions. From the time of Cesare Gnudi and Gian Carlo Cavalli in their groundbreaking monograph on Reni (1955) to Pepper's and Loire's catalogues to many scholarly entries written when the painting was exhibited, Reni's *David with the Head of Goliath* in Paris *(fig. 7)* has been dated around 1605 and understood as a pivotal example of Reni's response to Caravaggio. But here, without acknowledging that scholarly consensus, regardless of whether it be right or wrong, or considering the

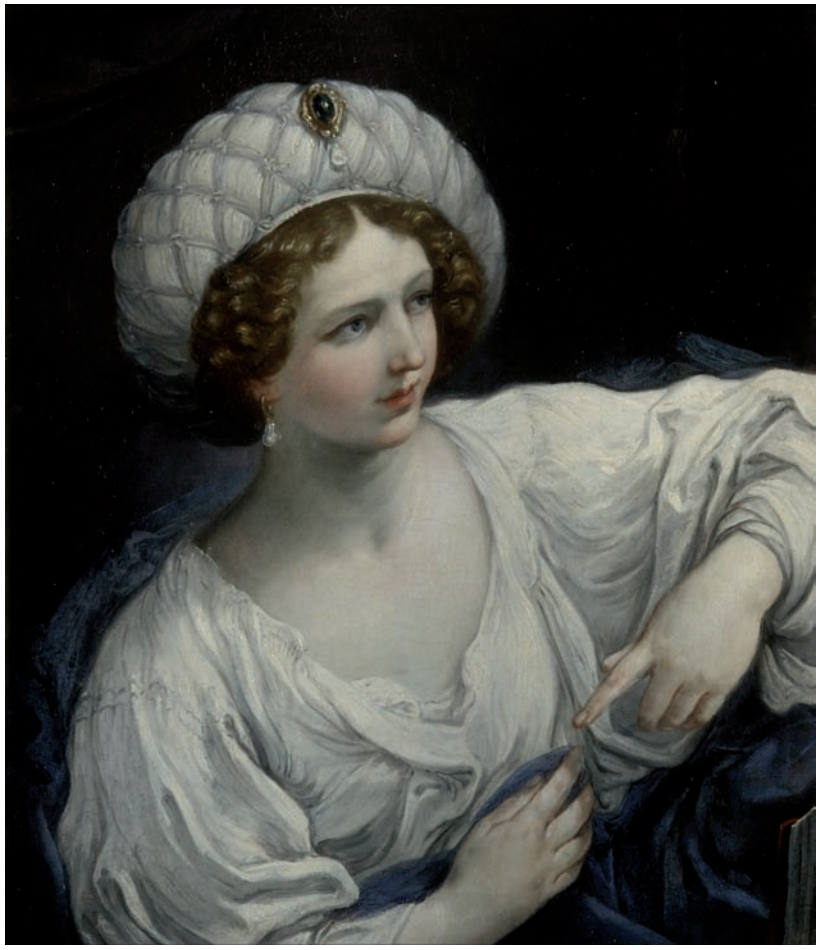

Fig. 5 Circle of Guido Reni, Sibyl, ca. 1640. Oil on canvas, 75 x 63.5 cm., Lawrence, Kansas, Spencer Museum of Art (https://spencerart.ku.edu/node/1642)

implications for understanding Reni's development, the painting is dated to ca. 1613–15.

Yet more consequential for a "thorough treatment" of Reni is the omission of the most comprehensive study and catalogue of Reni's drawings, Catherine Johnston's outstanding dissertation (1974), which is available in libraries in Rome (Hertziana), Florence (Kunsthistorisches Institut) and London (British Library and the Courtauld). It is ignored in all discussion of Reni's drawings and is not even cited in the bibliography. Numerous other contributions to the Reni literature are disregarded, despite two hundred and fifty pages of footnotes. Cropper's overview of the literature omits *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (Spear 1997), a lengthy study that draws heavily on Malvasia's life of Reni as a reliable and essential source. To cite one more example, in Pericolo's consideration of Reni's problematic "white manner" (II, 36–45), there is no reference to Philip Sohm's provocative discussion of Scannelli's "medicalized" interpretation of Reni's late palette in comparison with Malvasia's explanation, which disregards age as a factor (Sohm 2007, 161–66).

Malvasia was acutely aware that what looks like an autograph Reni might be a retouched work, a *ritocco*, of which he had seen many, or one of endless copies. He also knew that original paintings were copied with tracings, "filling the whole world with a thousand copies, often completed even before the originals" (I, 102–03 and 293–94, Fn. 213). While there is a long note on the *ritocchi* and an informative discussion of Reni's pupils and studio, there is no accompanying effort to deal with Malvasia's important observations. Nor is there discussion of Malvasia's remark that Cardinal Gessi sensed that Reni "could not bring himself to make precise replicas [*repliche precise*]" (I, 72–73). Instead, numerous replicas (meaning precise repetitions rather than variations) that have been rejected by Reni scholars as studio works or copies – of the *Allegory of the Four Seasons, Atalanta and Hippomenes, David with the Head of Goliath, St. Sebastian, Christ Appearing to the Virgin, The Meeting of David and Abigail, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife, Cleopatra, Madonna Adoring the Child, The Fight of Cupids and Little Bacchants, The Head of*

Christ Crowned with Thorns – are published *tout court* as by the artist's own hand. By my count, some two dozen of the illustrated paintings are problematic. For the range of paintings that I believe need careful consideration before they are accepted as autograph (leaving aside the numerous works that are said to be autograph but are not illustrated), see, as examples, Figures 100, 127, 129, 148, 152, 158, 159, 161, 163, 165, 166, 237, 248, 265, 266, and 270.

The question inevitably arises, for whom are these weighty volumes, a fraction of the Malvasia project, intended? The time and expense involved must be staggering. Ownership, even by libraries, undoubtedly is restricted due to the high price and their readership correspondingly small. But for the limited number of specialists engaged with Bolognese painting or the history and language of early critical writing on Italian art, they will be a rich source of information.

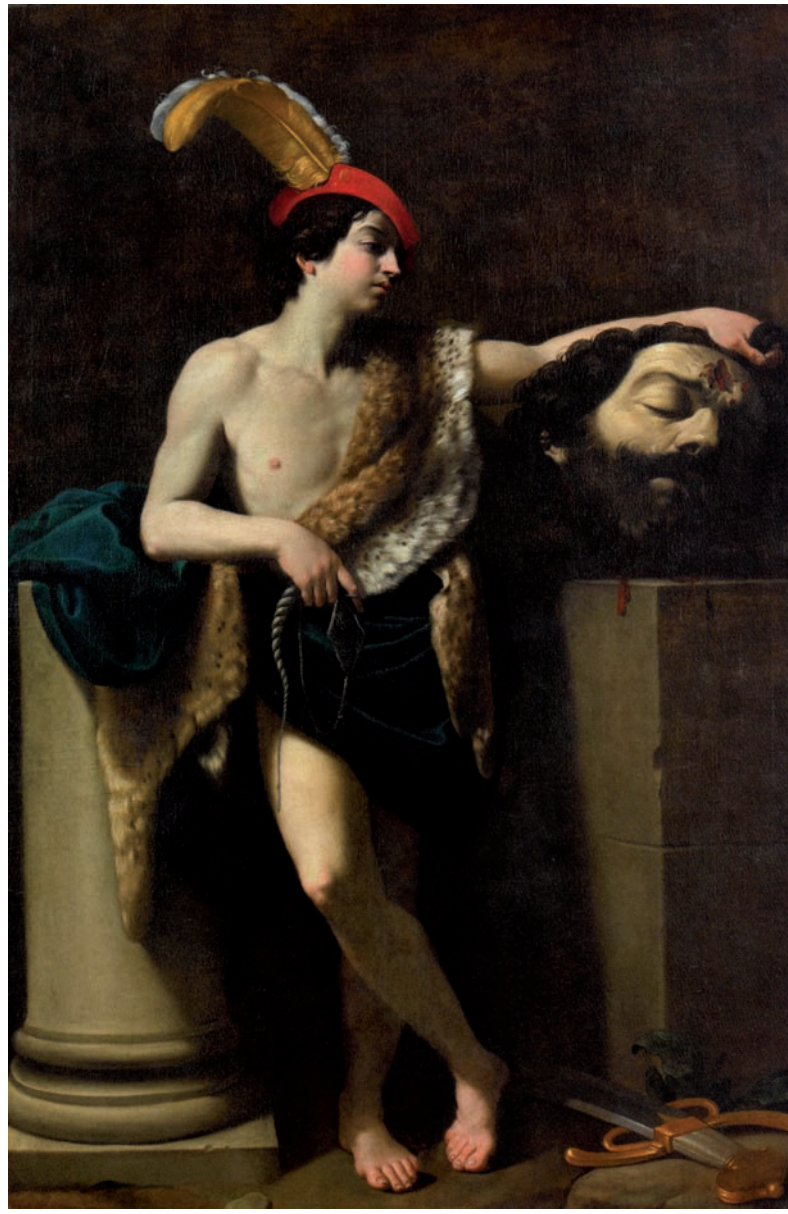

Fig. 7 Guido Reni, David with the Head of Goliath, ca. 1605. Oil on canvas, 220 x 160 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_-_David_with_the_Head_of_Goliath_-_WGA19279.jpg)

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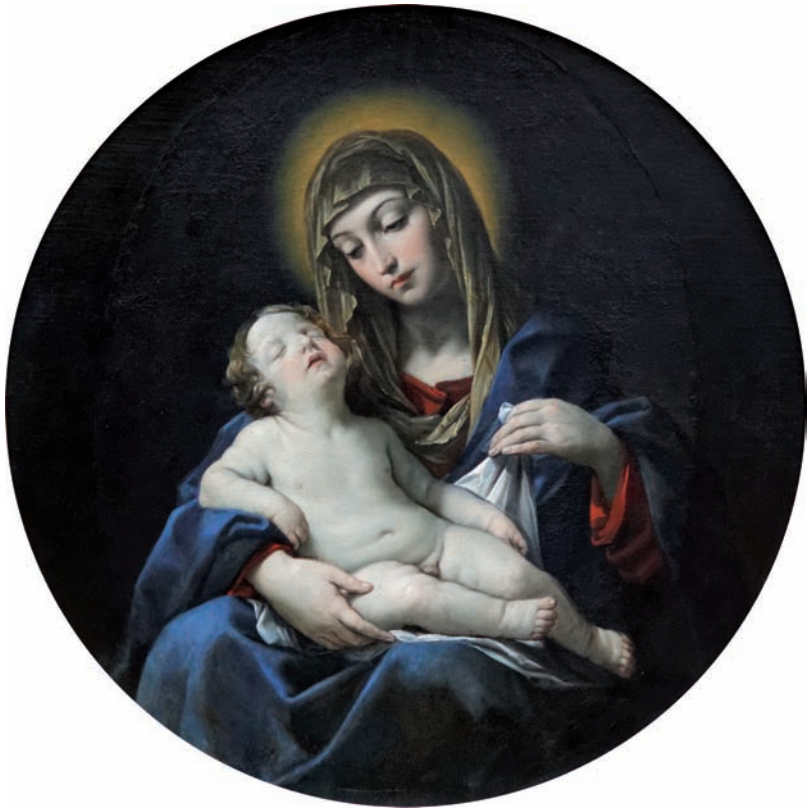

Fig. 6 Attributed to Francesco Gessi, Madonna and Child, ca. 1624. Oil on canvas, diameter 115 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Vierge_à_l'Enfant,_Gessi_(Louvre_INV_523)_04.png)

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