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On Painted Portraiture
in Seventeenth-Century Rome:
Theory, Practice and Appreciation

Abstract

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Italy, portraiture was disparaged in most texts in which it was mentioned. It was regularly asserted that the genre required no special skill and no powers of invention, but only the patience to exactly reproduce a sitter's features. Less skilled painters were considered more proficient at achieving resemblance than better artists. In particular, Counter-Reformation writers and theoreticians were critical of portraiture. Going back to concepts found in Pliny the Elder, they stressed that a portrait should represent only a person worthy of admiration and never a common individual, because in the presence of a portrait viewers should be able to recollect the virtues of the sitter and be spurred to imitate his virtuous deeds. Having one's own portrait made was "as inane as praising oneself", especially if the image was displayed in a public space.

In practice, during the first half of the seventeenth century in particular, portraits, especially those representing the owner, were ubiquitous in palaces and houses in Rome. Noblemen were more attuned to the theologians' instructions than were commoners; if they still had their portraits painted they often exhibited them in private spaces rather than in public. Those of their ancestors instead decorated the entry-halls of many palaces, as the celebration of one's forbears' virtues was considered permissible. On the contrary, commoners, who gave little heed to moral instructions, displayed their portraits in the most prominent locations of their house in an evident gesture of self-celebration. They valued resemblance, especially when the task of a portrait was to commemorate a deceased member of the family. A painter could be sued and paid less than the agreed upon price if a likeness was not considered satisfactory.

In Italian art theory and literature, admiration for painted portraiture was often expressed in similar and repetitive terms. From the very beginnings of the genre in the Quattrocento, the representation of a person was said to be "alive" or almost so, and to be so accurate that people confused it with the sitter.[1] Portraits were called "*dal naturale*", that is from life, even though they could be copied from other pictures or even created from written or oral descriptions.[2] From the late sixteenth century on, in Rome and more generally in Italy, portraiture, in particular that of commoners, was spoken of disapprovingly in most of the texts that treated it. It was considered unchallenging for artists, and even somewhat unsuited for the best among them. "It is hardly worth discussing – claimed Giovan Battista Armenini in his treatise – as it can be mastered by any mediocre talent".[3] The failed painter turned writer believed that a successful portrait needed only the patience necessary to exactly reproduce every detail of someone's countenance and dress. Therefore in his opinion, better painters, "who are used to work more quickly", tend to produce portraits that do not resemble the sitter.[4] For Giorgio Vasari, excellent artists – who evidently did not stay so close to their model but strayed towards ideal representations – made perfect and artful images, but without resemblance.[5] Giovan Pietro Bellori echoed a similar creed when he stated that "makers" of portraits cannot add beauty or correct deformity, otherwise the representation would be more attractive but less alike.[6] That there was no invention but only imitation involved in painting portraits was repeated by the noble collector Vincenzo Giustiniani, who considered the genre inferior even to still-life.[7] Biographers were critical of painters who specialized in portraiture. According to Giovanni Baglione, Scipione Pulzone knew he could not be considered among the best as long as he painted only portraits.[8] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, wrote that Galanino – a cousin of Annibale Carracci whose real name was Baldassarre Aloisi – devoted himself to the easy task of portraiture because he could not make a living in Rome otherwise, and had only "limited abilities and no courage".[9]

To make matters worse, imitation in general was appreciated by the "multitude with its vulgar taste", but not by learned people who valued invention. The concept recurs both in Cardinal Federico Borromeo's words, and in those of Giovan Battista Agucchi, secretary to cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini.[10] In an often quoted passage, the latter states that accurate reproduction is an inferior form of art, much enjoyed by the uncultivated crowds "because they are cheered by finding what they know". Unfortunately, as the masses enjoyed the recognition of what was familiar to them, they also felt entitled to criticize the exactitude of the representation. Portraiture was the perfect field in which to express their disapproval. As we learn from Giovanni Battista Passeri, Giovanni Lanfranco believed that by painting portraits he would expose himself to dangerous censure, because the "ignorant masses" would feel authorized to discuss whether or not a portrait resembled the sitter.[11] He apparently did not fare much better with a cultivated patron such as Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto. While Lanfranco painted his portrait, the cardinal insisted on looking at a mirror and telling the painter exactly what to do. He was satisfied with the result at first, but when others told him that the portrait was not a good likeness, he complained to the painter.[12]

Moralists and theologians of the Counter-reformation were definitely against portraits of commoners. They held that a portrait, which by definition conferred honor on its subject, should represent only a person worthy of admiration, a concept derived from classical antiquity, and in particular from Pliny the Elder.[13] In a portrait's presence, a viewer should recollect the virtues of the sitter and so be spurred to righteous deeds. The Spanish Jesuit Francisco Arias, who wrote the treatise *Del profitto spirituale,* translated into Italian in 1596, twelve years after its publication, inveighed against portraits of unexceptional people.[14] Looking at them was at best a waste of time, a concept repeated by another Jesuit, Giovan Domenico Ottonelli. In his pedantic work on the "use and abuse" of painting, published in 1652 with Pietro da Cortona, Ottonelli relied

[1] Pommier 2003a, pp. 69, 73; Pommier 2003b, pp. 15-32; Castelnuovo 1973, pp. 3–30; Freedberg 1991, pp. 284, 291, 297, 316; Cieri Via 198, pp. 45–92.

[2] Woods-Marsden 2008, pp. 32–45, esp. p. 34.

[3] Armenini 1988, p. 214; Pommier 2003a, p. 156.

[4] See also Campbell 1990, p. 23f.

[5] Vasari 1976, p. 248; Syson 2008, p. 29; Pommier 2003a, p. 14, 32 for the contrast between accuracy and idealization in portraiture.

[6] Bellori 1976, p. 13.

[7] Giustiniani 1981, p. 42.

[8] Baglione 1995, p. 53.

[9] Leone/Vodret 2015, pp. 213–220; Terzaghi 2010, pp. 63–86. Malvasia 1841, p. 73.

[10] Borromeo 2010, p. 35; Mahon 1947, p. 243; Pommier 2003a, pp. 134, 156.

[11] Passeri 1995, p. 161; Pommier 2003a, p. 156.

[12] Passeri 1995, p. 142.

[13] Paleotti 1582, p. 153; Lomazzo 1585, pp. 430–432; Ottonelli/Da Cortona 1652, p. 96f.; Fletcher 2008, pp. 46–65; Pommier 2003a, p. 14f.; Rubin 2011, p. 12.

[14] Arias 1602, p. 403. The chapter devoted to images, and in particular to portraits, is titled "Di altri disordini della vista da mortificarsi".

extensively on Arias, and on archbishop Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane*, written soon after the conclusion of the Council of Trent. According to Paleotti, it was somewhat vain to commission one's own portrait, since it implied a belief that one was honorable, righteous and handsome, and was a behavior "as inane as praising oneself".[15] This was doubly true if the portrait was meant to be hung in a public room in a house where visitors would see it. To assuage any suspicion of vanity, the portraits of one's parents, assuming they were praiseworthy people, should be displayed in a part of a house accessible to guests only after the parents' death.[16]

Arias was even more severe than Paleotti.[17] He thought that portraits generated pride, in part because the skill of the artist and the liveliness of colors could produce a result more enticing than the sitter himself. He recommended removing portraits from the walls of a house and replacing them with images of saints, which were considered akin to portraits. Johannes Molanus and Cardinal Federico Borromeo believed that by copying prototypes in ancient churches and Byzantine illuminations the accurate features of a saint could be preserved – alternatively, they could be recreated from written sources.[18] Images of saints were assimilated to portraits because both were supposed to provoke the same reaction in the viewer, namely a recollection of the life of the person represented, followed by meditation and imitation. Portraying a person in the guise of a saint, or giving a saint the features of the posed model, was inappropriate.[19] Both Arias and Ottonelli were concerned about the placement of saints' images. These were not to be displayed in locations where living persons misbehaved, such as taverns or public baths; nor together with images of people who misbehaved – hence not with mythological or erotic pictures; nor with portraits of depraved or ridiculous persons.[20] Arias also discussed at length the inappropriateness of hanging pictures of saints and commoners together. In this case viewers might mistake a layman for a saint and pay their devotions to the wrong image. Even worse was the equivalence between

saints and laymen implied by such a display.[21] Reverence owed to rulers also suggested that their portraits best be kept separate from those of their subjects.[22]

Paleotti and Ottonelli were firm in the belief that portraits should be accurate and not idealized, while Agucchi praised painters who "helped nature with art."[23] Dissimulation was allowed to some extent – for instance by posing a subject in such a way that a defect would not be apparent – but falsehood was frowned upon. Archbishop Paleotti recommended "not to deviate in any point from the truth", and thought it ridiculous that some women wished to be prettified in their portraits, as by doing so they certainly would not themselves become more beautiful.[24]

Portraits obviously could be commemorative, and it was universally recognized that the representation of a loved one could mitigate the suffering for his or her absence.[25] But even this function of portraiture was not totally without its censors. Arias, in a passage later copied by Ottonelli, stated that sorrow for the death of a son, or any loved person, could bring a viewer to idolize the portrait, a worry that to us certainly seems far-fetched.[26] Perhaps more realistically, religious writers feared the power of lovers' portraits. Joanna Woods-Marsden has shown how Renaissance viewers could engage with portraits as surrogate of people's physical presence, for example sitting them at a table laid for dinner.[27] Clearly behaving in the same fashion were the youths described by Ottonelli who died embracing the portrait of a beloved, a conduct which hastened their demise according to the writer.[28] Paleotti, well aware that portraits could be seductive or erotic, planned to discuss them but never did so, while Ottonelli pondered them at length. He considered a painter guilty of a mortal sin if he represented a woman in the nude for her lover – and in this case he also ran the risk of falling in love himself.[29] If the sitter was clothed, the painter was not compelled to ask how the client intended to use the portrait. However if the artist was aware that the purpose of his work was to foment lasciviousness, he should refuse to satisfy the request. Doing so would be as

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Many editions of this treatise, highly recommended by Francesco de Sales, were published in Italy from 1596.

[15] PALEOTTI 1582, p. 154.

[16] PALEOTTI 1582, p. 160.

[17] ARIAS 1602, p. 403 f.

[18] MOLANUS 1996, pp. 56, 256, 258; BORROMEO 2010, pp. 103, 246, n. 118; OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 188; PALEOTTI 1582, p. 167 f. See also FREEDBERG 1971, pp. 229–245.

[19] OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 187; PALEOTTI 1582, p. 168.

[20] OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 188, pp. 314-317; PALEOTTI 1582, 168v. For Giulio Mancini's often repeated directions about locations of pictures, which he did not respect in his house, see NICOLACI 2014, pp. 59–78.

[21] PALEOTTI 1582, p. 150; ARIAS 1602, p. 405; MOLANUS 1996, p. 323; OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 314 f.; COMANINI 1962, p. 323.

[22] LOUGHMAN/MONTIAS 2000, p. 46.

[23] POMMIER 2003a, pp. 4–6; SYSON 2008, pp. 14–31; CAMPBELL 2008, p. 4 f; PALEOTTI 1582, 162v; OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 99; MAHON 1947, p. 243.

[24] PALEOTTI 1582, 162v.

[25] SYSON 2008, p. 14; FERRARI 2010, pp. 255–263; PALEOTTI 1582, p. 157.

[26] ARIAS 1602, p. 403; OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 97.

[27] WOODS MARSDEN 2013, pp. 152–158; FLETCHER 2008, pp. 47–49; SYSON 2008, p. 18. See also BROWN 2011, p. 43.

[28] OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, p. 381 f.

[29] OTTONELLI/DA CORTONA 1652, pp. 134–138.

bad as arming a killer with a sword, because the sight of the lover would "stoke the fire of dissolute affection".[30] Painters should also refuse to make sketches of women "alla macchia", that is without their knowing, at a lover's request. Typically this happened in church, where the painter would pretend to read in a missal while sketching in a small album.[31]

In Florence scathing criticism of commoners' portraits was offered by the biographer Filippo Baldinucci.[32] The latter claimed that since the fifteenth century people of all sorts had begun having their portraits painted, even individuals who worked at modest occupations or "who should hide out of shame". Moreover, such persons asked painters to portray them dressed like princes, "filled by the vain craving of honors that do not belong to them". According to Baldinucci, these images hung in taverns, baths and butchers shops, and the custom supported a multitude of "plebeian painters" who filled the world with representations of men "lowborn, of no talent and hideous to all for their misconduct."[33] Still, he appreciated the Florentine portrait painter Valore Casini who was particularly gifted in producing accurate portraits, though not all his customers were from the upper social tiers.[34] The writer also stresses Casini's ability to portray the dead as though they were alive, and tells us that he was particularly esteemed for this ability.[35] Another Florentine painter, Antonio Franchi, refused to make portraits of the dead due to the stench and the potential danger to his health. Interestingly he claimed that his portraits were more expensive than those of other painters because the resemblance was greater.[36]

How does this medley of statements on the theory and praxis of portraiture reflect what was trully practiced in Seicento Rome? If we examine the most important collections at the start of the century, it is clear that nobles owned many family portraits, often displayed together with those of popes, cardinals and rulers to whom they wished to express their allegiance. Although physical contiguity was considered to imply equal status, the representations of patron and protégée were often paired.[37] In Asdrubale Mattei's collection the portraits of his brother Cardinal Girolamo and Sixtus V were clearly pendants. Given identical frames, they were the only ones described as large, and covered by a red curtain.[38] The 1603 inventory of Cardinal nephew Pietro Aldobrandini mentions family portraits by "ordinary painters", perhaps a reflection of the belief that better painters produced portraits that were not good likenesses.[39] If this was the strategy, it seems not to have been functional, since the family inventories repeatedly comment that the pope's portraits bore him no resemblance.[40] But the Aldobrandini were certainly not unique in the use of second-rate painters for family portraits, as can still be observed today on the apartment stairs of Palazzo Colonna in piazza Santi Apostoli.[41]

Romano Alberti, in his treatise *Della nobiltà della pittura* published in 1604, repeated the well-known concept that "ancient Romans kept portraits of their forebears, painted or sculpted, in the atrium of their palaces … as an incitement to imitate their virtues".[42] This belief was reflected in the display of many public rooms in palaces and more modest houses in Rome.[43] Sculpted busts of one's ancestors, which decorated the entry halls of Florentine Renaissance palaces, were not displayed in this kind of room in Rome.[44] Popes, cardinals – and others on occasion – might commission their own sculpted portrait busts, but even many cardinals intended them for their funerary chapel, not for their palace. Commoners did not have their features reproduced in marble, so Gian Lorenzo Bernini's famous portrait of Costanza Bonarelli, "a petrified fragment of passion", is extraordinary also in this respect.[45] In the sixteenth century, entry halls of palaces in Rome could be frescoed with ancestors' deeds, real or imagined. In Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, the first to be built after the Sack of 1527, the *sala* was painted by Daniele da Volterra with the *gestae* of Quinto Fabio Massimo, from whom the family supposedly

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[30] See also ARIAS 1602, pp. 399, 405.

[31] PALEOTTI 1582, p. 161v.

[32] POMMIER 2003a, pp. 119–125, also for similar criticism by Pietro Aretino, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, Francisco de Hollanda. FUMAGALLI 2010, pp. 21–32.

[33] BALDINUCCI 1846, pp. 474-476.

[34] FUMAGALLI 2010, p. 23.

[35] FUMAGALLI 2010, p. 22; GOLDENBERG STOPPATO 2004, pp. 165–210.

[36] FUMAGALLI 2010, p. 29. See also NANNELLI, 1977, pp. 316–369.

[37] LOUGHMAN/MONTIAS 2000, p. 46, for the idea that rulers' portraits should be kept separate from their subjects. See also LOMAZZO 1585, p. 344.

[38] CAPPELLETTI/TESTA 1994, pp. 163, 167; GPI, I-1996, Asdrubale Mattei, 1613.

[39] D'ONOFRIO 1964 and GPI, I-268 with further bibliography.

[40] See also the Aldobrandini's inventory of 1638, GPI, I-1008.

[41] These portraits by Cristoforo dell'Altissimo have not been catalogued yet, but for similar works see BORGHESE 2015, catt. 266f., 283f. The Barberini employed Giovanni Ferri, see TESTA 1997.

[42] ALBERTI 1962, p. 216.

[43] See PANZANELLI 2008, p. 21 for a concise discussion of Renaissance and classical sources of ancestor's portraits in atria as "exemplum virtutis", and for the display of busts and death masks in Florentine palaces. MANCINI 1956–1957, vol. I, p. 143. Cfr. LOUGHMANN/MONTIAS 2000, pp. 43–45; SLUJITER, 2015, pp. 89–111, for the collecting of portraits in Holland. As is well known, in Rome antique busts pretending to be those of a family's forebears, could be placed in courtyards, as can be seen in palazzo Mattei di Giove.

descended. In the seventeenth century, frescoes were replaced by portraits on canvas. The Savelli, an ancient baronial family, kept many family portraits in the very public *sala* of their palace at Ariccia. Their inventory explicitly declared that these images assumed the function of a series of illustrious men, to be used as moral exempla by the viewer.[46] Alessandro Pallavicini, commander of the papal fleet, and a member of a lesser branch of the family, fudged his genealogy by exhibiting in his *sala* portraits of cardinals and generals that belonged to the more prestigious branch (1625).[47] In the *sala*, the most accessible room of the house, he also kept a large portrait of Paul V, who had appointed him. There is no mention of Alessandro's own portrait in the house, perhaps because he was wary of appearing too vain, as stated in Paleotti. The same concern seems reflected by the display in the Giustiniani palace, where the Marquis Vincenzo kept numerous family portraits, some in a room on the ground floor, some in the gallery, some in a chamber in his apartment devoted only to portraiture (1638).[48] His own three portraits were kept separate from those of the rest of the family, in his guardaroba, presumably a more private location. One was full-length and showed his youthful self dressed as an ancient Roman. Two others, respectively by Nicolas Regniér and Galanino, were half-length portraits.[49] The latter was of imperial size, and represented Vincenzo in his statue gallery, a collection he justifiably considered one of his major accomplishments. In the Giustiani's palace at Bassano over the doors of a small dining-room were set family portraits, none of which depicting Vincenzo.[50]

Many people of all social classes were less concerned about appearing vain, however, and had no qualms about putting their own painted portrait in a most prominent location. Cardinal del Monte kept his by Scipione Pulzone in the *sala* of the palace in via di Ripetta, where there was also a series of illustrious men (1625).[51] Muzio del Bufalo, a member of the Capitoline nobility and presumably not a true collector given the small number of pictures he owned, displayed in his *sala* only his own portrait at age 30 (1625).[52] It is tempting to imagine that the painting was full-length and faced the entrance so as to be immediately visible to visitors. Separately, in a room adjacent to the *sala* of Muzio's palace were hung portraits of recent popes, while his wife's portrait was in her bedroom, obviously a much more secluded space. This separation between rulers and a subject, rarely observed in houses and palaces in Rome, might here have been dictated by respect, as the physical closeness of the portraits implied the equivalence of the sitters. The distinction between portraits and saints' images auspicated by religious writers for the same reason, was also hardly ever followed in Rome.[53] Paired portraits of husbands and their wives could be found in the halls of some houses, but more often wives' portraits were kept in a more discreet location.[54] There seems to be no commentary on this practice in Italian theoretical treatises, while in Holland it was suggested that female portraits should not be subject to men's gazes – especially to Italian men's gazes. It was more appropriate to their modesty, and more prudent on their husbands' part, to keep them in bedrooms.[55]

Some inventories in Rome, especially in the early seventeenth century, specify that certain portraits were covered by a curtain. The ideas of keeping people of different sorts separate and of concealing a woman's beauty, might justify the presence of screens.[56] Moreover, because there existed a certain confusion between real people and their representations, curtains might have been used to shield not the viewer's, but the sitter's eyes from inappropriate sights, whether painted or real.[57] For example a Madonna in a dining room was kept covered probably in order that she not be witness to real people eating.[58]

44 RUBIN 2011, p. 11; CAGLIOTI 2011, cat. 47, pp. 166–168. For Roman palaces, DESMAS 2012, pp. 182–186; DESMAS/FREDDOLINI 2014, pp. 267–282, pp. 272–274.

45 HIBBARD 1990; MCPHEE 2012.

46 MAZZETTI DI PIETRALATA 2014, pp. 107–128, esp p. 116; SPEZZAFERRO 1985, pp. 50–74.

47 CAVAZZINI 2008, p. 92. ASR, Tribunale criminale del Governatore, atti di cancelleria, b. 231, year 1625.

48 GPI, I-2933; DANESI SQUARZINA 2003; SALERNO 1960a, pp. 21-27; SALERNO 1960b, pp. 93–105; SALERNO 1960c, pp. 135–159. See also POMMIER 2003a, p. 153.

49 No portrait of Vincenzo Giustiniani by Régnier matching the dimensions of those cited in his inventory has survived, see LEMOINE 2007, p. 66, cat. 32, p. 234f.

50 GPI, I-2933, items 595-597.

51 FROMMEL 1971, p. 31f.

52 CAVAZZINI 2014a, pp. 89–102, esp. 94, 324, n. 9, 326. GPI, I-592.

53 See note 21.

54 For example the glass-maker Paolo Cangiani paired his parents' portraits in his *sala*, ASR. Notai AC 4772, 20-3-1667, f. 415.

55 LOUGHMANN/MONTIAS 2000, p. 43 for Holland. For examples of women's portraits in more secluded locations, see the inventories of Muzio del Bufalo and Giovanni Baglione cited at notes 52 and 72. PRIMAROSA 2014, pp. 31–47, esp. 38. The lawyer Statilio Pacifici had his own portrait paired with that of king Henry IV, but does not seem to have owned a painted portrait of his wife, even though Ottavio Leoni drew her repeatedly.

56 ROLFI OZVALD 1998, pp. 38–53; POMMIER 2003a, p. 55.

57 WOODS MARSDEN 2013; SYSON 2008, p. 18, for the confusion between real persons and portraits.

58 CAVAZZINI 2014a, p. 91.

1 Giovan Battista Moroni, *Portait of a Tailor*, oil on canvas, 99,5 × 77 cm, ca. 1570. London, National Gallery, inv. NG697 (photo National Gallery, London)

As moralists feared and Baldinucci complained, people of all sorts were indeed interested in having their portrait painted. Éduard Pommier questioned whether the richly dressed tailor painted by Giovan Battista Moroni was a rare case of an artisan's portrait in the Italian Renaissance, but it certainly was not (fig. 1).[59] It is known from Lorenzo Lotto's account book and from some of his surviving works that he painted various portraits of middle-class people.[60] Carlo Cesare Malvasia tells us that in Seicento Rome Annibale Carracci portrayed barbers and shoe-makers, and Giulio Mancini records that Caravaggio depicted an inn-keeper who lodged him.[61] Ottavio Leoni's drawings portray a vast array of women from all social classes, some immediately recognizable as plebeian from their attire and loosely coiffed hairstyles, others more elegantly dressed, but whose humble profession is identified in the writing on the back of the sheet (fig. 2).[62] None of these women is explicitly labelled as a prostitute, but definitions such as "Censia tedesca" are somewhat suspicious given that name and provenance were often used as the way to define courtesans in court records. Some of Leoni's drawings were probably made for his own pleasure, but a few of his early painted portraits, presumably done on commission, evidently represent women of modest condition (fig. 3).[63] Throughout his stay in Rome, and especially at the beginning, Nicolas Régnier also painted portraits of men who were not members of the upper classes (fig. 4).[64]

From a study of inventories it is evident that in Rome by the very end of the Cinquecento, people from all ranks of life had begun to display paintings in their homes.[65] Their number, as well as the number of canvases they owned, increased exponentially in the next decades. At the very beginning of the phenomenon, people of the "middling sort" owned very few pictures, mostly of religious subjects, especially Madonnas and saints, but portraits began to appear in their households early and often.[66] All types of artisans, merchants, professionals and lower clerics commissioned their portrait and displayed it in their home, often in the *sala*. Courtesans did the same, presumably to advertise their beauty.[67] An obscure monsignor Vazio in 1582 possessed only his own portrait;[68] in 1605 Lorenzo de' Ottavi, a cloth merchant who had just seven pictures, kept his and his wife's portraits in the sala;[69] in 1606 a Baldassarre de Romanis owned only two Madonnas, a Magdalen and his own portrait;[70] a Silvestro Bellini, who lived in a single room, owned almost exclusively paintings of flowers, as well as his portrait (1644).[71]

Sometimes the portrait of the owner of the house was kept together with those of other members of the family, but often it was larger, even full-length, and more prominently displayed. For example the painter Giovanni Baglione kept portraits of various members of his family in a bedroom,

59 POMMIER 2003a, pp. 119–123; WOODS MARSDEN 2013.

60 LOTTO 1969, pp. 28, 153.

61 MALVASIA 1841, p. 331; MANCINI 1956–1957, p. 224.

62 RIZZO 1999, pp. 25–42, esp. 33; SOLINAS 2015, pp. 7-40, catt. 3, 4, 28, 34, 71, 82; SANI 2005, pp. 62-66; TORDELLA 2011; PRIMAROSA 2018, cat. 85, p. 318 and pp, 194-201.

63 SOLINAS 2015, p. 22; PRIMAROSA 2018, cat. 19, p. 674.

64 LEMOINE 2007, catt. 23-24, 49 and possibly catt. 1-4, 226-227, 211–212; COLLANGE-PERUGI 2017, cat. 15, pp. 129-131, for the tentative identification of the portrait here reproduced with the poet Giulio Strozzi.

65 CAVAZZINI 2014a, pp. 81–118.

66 SCHAMA 1987, p. 4 for the "middling sort".

67 See the inventories of Flavia de Baronis and Betta Ciocchetta, in STOREY 2008, pp. 194–202.

68 CAVAZZINI 2008, p. 100.

69 CAVAZZINI 2008, p. 162, for Lorenzo de' Ottavi.

70 ASR, 30 notai, uff. 19, b. 69, 11-2-1606, f. 284*v*.

2 Ottavio Leoni, *Portrait of Margherita Orzarola,* pastel on paper, 20,8 × 14,6 cm, c. 1605–1607. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. KdZ 17118 (photo Scala, Firenze)

3 Ottavio Leoni, *Portrait of a Woman*, oil on canvas, 59 × 46,5 cm, ca. 1608. Hannover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum (photo Landesmuseum Hannover-ARTOTHEK)

while his own portraits were displayed in two living-rooms.[72] An Anna Paini in 1631 exhibited her full-figure portrait, "in the guise of a nymph", thus presumably naked, in her living room, where it was the most expensive painting.[73] The puppeteer Alessandro Patriarca kept not one, but two large portraits of himself in his *sala*.[74] Often, as in the case of noblemen, the portrait of the owner of the house was shown together with that of the pope, or the cardinal nephew.[75] The valuations of these portraits, when present, tend to be from three to 15 scudi, or even more for a full-length figure; presumably cheaper ones existed but they were less likely to be valued in inventories. While it is difficult to judge without any visual evidence or statistical analysis, inventories of the last quarter of the century give the

impression that portraits of the owner of the house became less prominent, lost in a myriad of landscapes and still-lifes, and perhaps also less frequent.

Baldinucci remarked that humble persons wanted their portrait images dressed as princes, and indeed it can be observed that the hair of Leoni's "orzarola" (grain seller) is coiffed with an imitation of the high and curly pyramids typical of the women of the Imperial Flavian family (fig. 2).[76] Fillide Melandroni, the famous courtesan painted by Caravaggio, flaunted a more subdued version of the same hairstyle (fig. 5). Perhaps the "masquerading as princes" mentioned by Baldinucci is the reason why men of less than exalted stations in life cannot be recognized in Leoni's masculine portraits on canvas, even though the painter's name

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71 ASR, Notai AC 2203, 27-10-1644, f.131.

72 Aurigemma 1994, pp. 23-53, and in www.enbach.eu/owners (accessed 18.06.2018).

73 Cavazzini 2008, p. 106.

74 ASR, notai AC 5018, 31-8-1669, f. 420.

75 See for example, Giovanni Manciati, Captain, 1626, and Natale Guglielmi, artisan, 1622, in Cavazzini 2008, p. 163.

76 Solinas 2015, cat. 28, pp.136-138; Primarosa 2018, p. 195.

is occasionally mentioned in inventories of middle-class people.[77] A litigation over the payment of an altarpiece representing St Charles Borromeo with a kneeling donor shows that indeed people might want to be represented in fancier clothes than they owned.[78] In 1628 a Didacus from Cordoba, who had commissioned the altarpiece, borrowed clothes belonging to a gentleman of the Spanish ambassador in order to pose. He brought them to the painter Ludovico Stella's house, where he changed for the sitting. The inventory of Mario dei Fiori's shop also shows that people were not necessarily represented in their own clothes, as many canvases listed there consisted of headless busts. These were evidently ready-made objects ready to be completed when a customer came along[79]

The function of the owner's portrait prominently displayed in the living-room of a house was obviously self-congratulatory, but maintaining the memory of a deceased or absent person was also important to middle-class collectors. Both men and women commissioned portraits of their lovers. Artemisia Gentileschi portrayed a man for his fiancée, and he went to her house for the sittings.[80] The poet Giulio Strozzi had Caravaggio portray Fillide Melandroni, even though she ended up keeping the picture (fig. 5).[81] A police captain commissioned the portrait of his mistress, a courtesan with whom he had fathered a child, from Adriano Monteleone, a friend of Caravaggio's.[82] Ottonelli's concerns about the use of these images evidently had some basis in reality. In 1678 the famous portraitist Ferdinand Voet was exiled from Rome because his brush had become "a tool of licentiousness".[83] An extraordinary letter written by Artemisia Gentileschi to her absent lover rather explicitly invites him not to masturbate in front of the self-portrait she sent him.[84] Was she naked in this picture? And did it resemble the *Cleopatra* in the Etro collection in Milan, a realistic description of a sensuous female body with Artemisia's facial features?

It is well known that painted portraits of the dead did exist in the Italian Renaissance, but because the subjects were usually represented as alive, their recognition might be not so immediate.[85] For instance, the famous *Old Man with*

4 Nicolas Régnier, *Portrait of a Man with Guitar*, oil on canvas, 118 × 91 cm, ca. 1625. Grenoble, Musée des Beaux Arts (photo Ville de Grenoble/Musée de Grenoble-J-L. Lacroix)

his Grandson by Domenico Ghirlandaio in the Louvre was made after a drawing of his corpse.[86] In Northern Europe instead, the deceased were often represented with their eyes closed or lowered, and dead children as asleep, with a stillness that clearly indicates that they have passed away.[87] Not much is known about portraits of the dead in Seicento Rome.[88] In Lione Pascoli we read about Baldassarre Lauri portraying his son Francesco "before the corpse went out of the house" together with his other son Filippo.[89] A similar

[77] CAVAZZINI 2008, p.168, for Captain Geronimo Maggi's portrait by Ottavio Leoni, which was kept in the *sala*. See note 33 for Baldinucci.

[78] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Senatore, b. 2267, 4 maggio 1616, notaio Saraceni, pages not numbered.

[79] FREEMAN BAUER 1987, pp 93–109. See also RIZZO 1999, and ROBBIN 2000, pp. 84–93, for Leoni's inventory.

[80] MENZIO 1981, p. 123.

[81] MARINI 1989.

[82] ASR, Tribunale Criminale del Governatore, processi b. 23, 23 ottobre 1602, f. 83*v*.

[83] PETRUCCI 2005, p. 8.

[84] SOLINAS 2011, p.74; CAVAZZINI 2014b, pp.131–145 .

[85] SYSON 2008; GHIRARDI 2003; GOLDBERG STOPPATO 2004, p.183.

[86] FATHY 2012, cat. 43, pp.159–169.

[87] BEDAUX 1998, pp.86–114; PIGLER 1956.

[88] MELASECCHI, 1995, pp.34–49 for San Filippo's portraits after his death mask; CAMPBELL 2008, p.32f; LEONE/VODRET 2015. For Florence in the Seicento FUMAGALLI 2010, p.22.

[89] PASCOLI 1992, pp.521–531.

[90] FERRARI 2010.

story, still involving painters, can be read in Vasari about Luca Signorelli.[90] However three intriguing trials show that making portraits of the dead was a common custom. Once we know that sketches were often taken from corpses, we might wonder about the meaning of the "abbozzo of the deceased Nicolò Pousyn" that was listed in the room next to the *sala* where the body of the painter was still being shown to mourners.[91] While the citation might refer to an unfinished painting done by Poussin, it could instead indicate a painted sketch done immediately after his death to preserve his features.

In 1597 a "signor Lelio de Magistris" and an unknown painter, called Geronimo Batacchiola, were in litigation over a portrait of Lelio's father, Pompeo.[92] At Pompeo's death many years earlier, the painter's father, Antonio Batacchiola, had taken a sketch of his features. Geronimo had promised to paint a portrait from this sketch, for four scudi, but was sued because, "that painting is all the opposite and unlike the cavalier Pompeo". In 1627 a Portuguese spice-dealer, Emanuele Mendes, took legal action against a Giovanni Battista Benci who had painted a portrait of his late brother Don Diego, a priest. The portrait, taken from the corpse, did not resemble the deceased.[93] More touchingly, in 1628, Galanino was sued for having painted a portrait that was not a good likeness of a boy who had died at 20 months. Again the portrait was obtained from a sketch taken in the presence of the corpse.[94] It is never explained in these trial records whether the sketches were on paper or canvas, but clearly they were executed quickly in the body's presence.

In all three trials various witnesses were called to depose about the appearance of the deceased, and most of them affirmed to have seen the cadaver. The painter Batacchiola justified himself by saying that he had produced a portrait according to the sketch left by his father. If the results were disappointing, it was "because when one is dead he cannot be painted as well as when he is alive." Batacchiola believe that the painting was worth more than 12 scudi, while one of the witnesses declared: "I am not an expert in the art of painting, but as to the question whether a portrait of someone dead can be a good likeness as when one is alive, I can see that good and excellent painters can do that, at least in

5 Caravaggio, *Portrait of Fillide Melandroni*, oil on canvas, cm 66 × 53, previously Kaiser Fredrich Museum, Berlin, c. 1597, da MARINI 1987, p. 151

part, and I do not think that the portrait is worth three scudi … since I saw the picture, I always said it is not a good likeness, and I heard the same from many people who came there". In the trial involving Galanino, a witness claimed that "the sketch was not at all like the little boy, having I often seen him and held him in my arms".[95] To prove that the picture's value was less than Galanino's request, the customer called the famous painter Cavalier d'Arpino to evaluate it.[96] In all these cases the client desired to pay less because the portrait was not a good likeness. Thus at this time an explicit connection was made between the degree of resem-

[91] "…sette quadri senza cornice, che uno fu detto essere abbozzo di detto quondam Nicolò Pousyn", in BOYER 1928, pp. 143–153. Cf. the inventory of the fur-maker Pietro Antonio Vittori, ASR, notai AC 4772, 22-2-1667, f. 325, "un ritratto sbozzato di Pietro Antonio Vittori".

[92] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Senatore, b. 2267, 19-3-1597, pages not numbered.

[93] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, testimoni a difesa, 10 febbraio 1627. ASR, Tribunale Criminale del Governatore investigazioni 445, 1

dicembre 1626, f. 95v. For Benci, see VODRET 2011, pp. 59–60.

[94] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, testimoni a difesa b. 138, 31-7-1628, f. 565v, pro Giulio Cesare Convento contram Baldassarrem Aloysium. See n. 9 for Galanino.

[95] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, testimoni a difesa, b. 138, f. 565v.

[96] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, registrazioni di atti, b. 5 anno 1628, f. 680v, 786, 797, 802, 1042v, 1052, 1147.

blance and the value of the picture, confirming the painter Antonio Franchi's statement that his portraits were worth more because they were better likenesses.[97] In yet another trial, here regarding a portrait of an Antonio Merollo that had been misappropriated by a woman, we again hear the correlation made between accurate imitation and value. The portrait, which had been taken from life, was said to be indeed worth 12 scudi, "because it is a good likeness".[98]

Archbishop Paleotti had suggested that portraits could be used to prove blood relationships in court, and obviously they needed to be accurate to do that.[99] It is impossible to tell whether they were ever thus employed, but apparently they were used as identikits to capture fugitives, or as evidence in court.[100] For example, a portrait was used to establish who was the legitimate owner of an expensive leather collar, with the painter confirming that he had indeed reproduced it exactly in the picture.[101] For all the clerical writers' insistence on exactitude in portraiture, obviously many portraits were not faithful representations, and it is hard to imagine that the embellishment was unpleasant for the sitter. Cardinal Giori's portrait by Andrea Sacchi shows him with his hands intact, even though it is well known that a large part of one of them was missing.[102] The beautiful portraits of the famously unattractive Queen Christina of Sweden by Ferdinand Voet are certainly unlikely to have caused her complaints.[103]

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[97] For a similar episode in the fifteenth century, RUBIN 2000, p. 272.

[98] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, b. 159, 31-5-1652, f. 411v-413v. Giusepe di Geronimo Spada: "Domenico Barberino fece un ritratto bello grande del naturale di Antonio Merollo per esso quale era assai somigliante … per prezzo di scudi 12 di moneta quali certamente li vale per la somiglianza".

[99] PALEOTTI 1582, p. 157.

[100] POMMIER 2003a, pp. 97–99; FLETCHER 2008, p. 53f.; ARMENINI 1988, p. 101.

[101] ASR, Tribunale Civile del Governatore, investigazioni, 418, 12 maggio 1614, f. 78r–78v.

[102] SUTHERLAND HARRIS 1969.

[103] PETRUCCI 2005, catt. 22–24, pp. 144–145; NORDENFALK 1967, pp. 122–129.

Abbreviations

ASR   Archivio di Stato di Roma
GPI   Getty Provenance Index

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