UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Bellini Workshop:

Emancipations, Enterprises, and Cittadini Originari

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

by

Daniel Wallace Maze

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Bellini Workshop:
Emancipations, Enterprises, and Cittadini Originari

by

Daniel Wallace Maze
Doctor of Philosophy in Art History
University of California, Los Angeles, 2013
Professor Joanna Woods-Marsden, Chair

Despite the Bellini being the most influential and well-researched artistic family of fifteenth-century Venice, no comprehensive study of the Bellini workshop as an entrepreneurial venture has been published. The circumstances of the workshop's establishment, early expansion, transference from one generation to the next, as well as other basic issues remain largely unexplored. Many scholars presumably believe that the meager traces of relevant material provided by fifteenth-century sources cannot support an extensive inquiry into these and related topics. Indeed, the major research problems include enduring questions concerning the biological and legal relationships between the Bellini, a scarcity of extant paintings executed by the Bellini prior to 1460, and a dearth of documents describing the early Bellini workshop.

The dissertation demonstrates, however, that by employing cross-disciplinary methods and novel approaches, and by drawing upon a wide range of primary sources that include civil
laws, acts of magistracies, tax registers, home inventories, Scuole records, legal documents, and, of course, paintings and drawings by the Bellini and their contemporaries, it may indeed be possible not only to lay significant groundwork toward such a history of the Bellini workshop, but also to commence its construction. After establishing the biological and legal relationships between the Bellini and periodizing the development of the Cittadini Originari, the burgeoning social class to which the family belonged, the dissertation isolates and explores a number of decisive turning points in the life of the workshop and of its current master. These include the workshop's foundation, its early expansion, and its transference from Jacopo to Gentile, as well as Gentile's legal emancipation, ennoblements, rise to de facto official painter of Venice, and artistic "emancipation."

In the case of the Bellini, the dissertation argues that the exigencies of running a successful fifteenth-century painting workshop demanded business tactics that often exerted a discernible and sometimes commanding influence over the pictorial strategies in the art that the workshop produced. Acting both as Medieval artisan and emerging Renaissance artist, Jacopo Bellini integrated a fount of creative artistic spirit with an entrepreneurial pragmatism that was characteristically bold, oftentimes clever, and occasionally miscalculated. Because the history of the Bellini family of artists is so closely tied to that of painting in early Renaissance Venice, the dissertation reshapes our understanding of the importance of commercial concerns, legal issues, social identity, *fama* or civic reputation, marketplace competition, and the uneven demand for various types of paintings in the Bellini workshop, and by extension, on the development of Venetian Renaissance art.
The dissertation of Daniel Wallace Maze is approved.

Irene Bierman-McKinney

Steven Nelson

Geoffrey Symcox

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University of California, Los Angeles

2013
For Ann Lessin and Harry Lessin, my grandparents,

whom I miss and who would be proud
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PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

"The birth of Giovanni Bellini is one of the most ideological dates in the entire history of Italian art," declared the Mantegna specialist Giovanni Agosti in 1993.¹ For over a century numerous prominent scholars have proposed possible birth years for Bellini, who is often recognized as the greatest artist of fifteenth-century Venice.² Roberto Longhi (1890-1970) and Giuseppe Fiocco (1884-1971) placed Giovanni's birth in c. 1425; Luciano Bellosi (1936-2011) and others in c. 1430; and, more recently, Peter Humfrey, Keith Christiansen, and Mauro Lucco in c. 1435 or later.³ At stake in these often fiery disagreements are art historians' attempts not only to establish a chronology for Bellini's earlier works, which naturally would underpin an assessment of his early career, but also to determine whether Bellini was older or younger than the Padua-trained artist Andrea Mantegna (c.1431-1506)—and hence, the argument goes, whether Giovanni was principally either the originator, or the recipient, of pictorial ideas in their early artistic duologue.⁴ Ultimately, Agosti's statement registers the well-established and still

¹ Here and elsewhere in the dissertation, dates are not in more veneto (m.v.) unless otherwise noted. The Venetian year began 1 March: thus, a Venetian document dated 6 February 1428 (e.g., the first will of Jacopo Bellini’s wife, Anna) corresponds to 6 February 1429 on our calendar. The citations in the dissertation conform to the version of Chicago Style used by Renaissance Quarterly and other publications in the field.

² See chapter 1 for a discussion of Giovanni's year of birth. In 1871 Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1871, 1:117n1, can be said to have begun the discussion in modern scholarship by arguing that Giovanni was younger than Gentile, rather than older as Vasari had affirmed. Vasari-Barocchi, 3:435: “Onde egli vi lavorò molte storie in compagnia di Gentile più di lui giovane.”


⁴ Keith Christiansen, 2004a, 53, wrote, "Perhaps the greatest disservice to Bellini Scholarship has been the misguided notion, championed by Roberto Longhi, that by arbitrarily moving Bellini's birth date back a decade
essential need to discern the direction of the lines of influence running between these two major artistic figures prior to constructing a stylistic history of Early Renaissance art in Northern Italy. And rightly or wrongly, much weight has been placed on Giovanni Bellini's birthdate, which has become to a remarkable extent the lynchpin of the entire longstanding debate.

By employing interdisciplinary and unconventional approaches, the dissertation lays critical groundwork for a comprehensive study of the Bellini workshop (indeed, it might have been titled "Foundations for a History of the Bellini Workshop") and in the process advances a number of theoretical models that challenge our understanding of fifteenth-century Venetian art and society. For instance, the dissertation presents the case that Jacopo Bellini's business strategies set in motion the advent of the artistic Renaissance in Venice; that pivotal historic events led to the formation of a social class known as the Cittadini Originari to which the Bellini family belonged; that a twenty-first century acculturation to photographs has distorted a period understanding of Gentile Bellini's photographic-like monumental narratives; and that, when the early Bellini documents are analyzed under the relevant Venetian laws, Giovanni Bellini was not Jacopo Bellini's son but rather his half-brother, born between the late summer of 1424 and 13 September 1428 (which, as will be discussed, does not in itself demonstrate his artistic influence over the younger Mantegna).

Chapter 1 establishes the biological and legal relationships between the artists of the Bellini family. Chapter 2 periodizes the rise of the Cittadini Originari, the emergent social class that supported the workshop's early success. Chapter 3 investigates the foundation of the Bellini bottega and the strategies Jacopo used to expand his business. Chapter 4 considers the

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Giovanni could be liberated from the shadow of Mantegna that so conspicuously falls across his early production; that he could, indeed, be made the primary interlocutor in the dialogue between the two."
transference of the workshop from Jacopo to his son Gentile. And chapter 5 explores the
different character of the workshop under Gentile, who, with his *sansaria* or assured government
lifetime income, arguably had greater freedom than Jacopo to take on projects of personal
interest, and, lacking any recorded biological or adopted children, apparently was unconcerned
with the workshop's further expansion or later transference.

Despite the Bellini being the most influential and well-researched artistic family of
fifteenth-century Venice, no history of their workshop as a commercial as well as artistic
enterprise has been published. No book-length study or, to my knowledge, scholarly article has
explored the circumstances of the workshop's establishment, early expansion, or transference
from one generation to the next.\(^5\) Some Bellini scholars undoubtedly believe that the meager
traces of relevant material provided by fifteenth-century sources cannot support an extensive
study of these and related topics, which would account for their somewhat surprising general
absence from the vast Bellini literature. Indeed, the major research problems include enduring
questions concerning the biological and legal relationships among the Bellini artists, a scarcity of
extant paintings executed by the Bellini prior to 1460, and a dearth of documents describing the
early Bellini workshop. (Fifteenth-century Venetian archival records recounting aspects of the
lives of non-nobles are few and notoriously incomplete.) To some art historians, the effort to
embark on such a detailed history of the Bellini workshop might seem as problematic as writing
the historical biography of an individual whose only extant proof of existence was a short will
dictated to his notary—which in fact is much the case with Jacopo's Bellini's father, Nicolò (d.
1424/29), who is recorded as living in exactly one document, his testament of 1424, and, as a

\(^5\) Of course, various other aspects of the workshop have been considered, notably by Fletcher, 1998.
result, about whom little has been written beyond a few paragraphs concentrated on the analysis of his will.⁶

The dissertation demonstrates, however, that by employing cross-disciplinary methods and novel approaches, and by drawing upon a wide range of primary sources that include civil laws, acts of magistracies, tax registers, home inventories, Scuole records, legal documents, and, of course, paintings and drawings by the Bellini and their contemporaries, it may indeed be possible not only to lay significant groundwork toward such a history of the Bellini workshop, but also to commence its construction. Thus, after establishing the biological and legal relationships between the Bellini and periodizing the development of the Cittadini Originari, the emergent social class to which the family belonged, the dissertation isolates and explores a number of decisive turning points in the life of the workshop and of its current master. These include the workshop's foundation, its early expansion, and its transference from Jacopo to Gentile, as well as Gentile's legal emancipation, ennoblements, rise to de facto official painter of Venice, and artistic "emancipation." By investigating an array of issues associated with the management of the Bellini workshop, this dissertation casts new light on the family's role in the development of Venetian art and position in Venetian society; on the relationship between business, law and art in the Renaissance workshop; and on wider debates concerning social identity, social mobility, and social class formation in early modern Europe.

The dissertation focuses on the Bellini workshop founded by Jacopo, later run by Gentile, and which dissolved upon Gentile's death in 1507—that is, the workshop located in the Venetian

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⁶ ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10r–v, n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3. In later documents, Nicolò is mentioned only insofar as he is the deceased father of Jacopo Bellini, the first occurrence of which appears in Jacopo's dowry receipt of 23 July 1429 (ASV, CIN, b. 212, T. de Tomei, 23 luglio 1429): "I, Jacopo Bellini, painter, son of the deceased ser Nicoletto Bellini (ego Iacobus Belino pictor filius quondam ser Nicoleti Belino)." For a brief analysis of Nicolò's will, see Joost-Gaugier, 1974, 37n51.
parish of San Geminiano. It does not investigate directly Giovanni Bellini's split-off workshop in Santa Marina, which was probably established after Jacopo's death in 1470/71 but before 1482, the year the Signoria granted Giovanni exemption from the strict rules of the painter's guild, implying that he had already become a workshop master. Nor does the dissertation explore the bottega of Jacopo's nephew Leonardo Bellini, about which little is known. Accordingly, after the first chapter, Giovanni and Leonardo Bellini play minor roles in this study.

Sometime between 1424 and 1429 the Venetian-born Jacopo Bellini (c.1400-1470/71), the son of a tinsmith, became the patriarch of the Bellini family and founded a painting workshop in the parish of San Geminiano in Venice. By his own account, which is supported by stylistic analysis and ancillary evidence, Jacopo had been trained by the foremost International Gothic artist of his day, Gentile da Fabriano (d.1427), who had sojourned to Venice in c. 1408, remained to execute a number of commissions including narrative frescoes in the Great Council Hall of the Ducal Palace, and departed by January 1414 for Brescia. As a boy, Jacopo must have met and apprenticed with Gentile at some point during the artist's stay in Venice, and then more than likely accompanied Gentile to Brescia and eventually to Florence in c. 1420, as is suggested by two Florentine legal documents of 1423 and 1425 naming Gentile da Fabriano's assistant as "Jacopo of Venice." Gentile died in Rome in 1427, and Jacopo, in Venice by early 1429 if not a

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7 Barausse, 340, doc. 39. In 1459 Giovanni was documented as living in San Lio and possibly had some form of a workshop there (ibid., 334, doc. 16). It seems more likely, however, that while living in San Lio he principally remained a member of Jacopo's workshop. His relocation to Santa Marina prior to 9 May 1481 might have been prompted by his need for a larger, more suitable space for a workshop, which indeed would become among the largest painting workshops in Italy (ibid., 339-40, doc. 38).


9 Christiansen, 1982, 3-17.

10 Florentine court documents dated 28 November 1423 and 3 April 1425 record a brawl between Gentile da Fabriano's assistant, "Jacopo of Venice, painter and son of Piero," and a notary's son who had thrown rocks into
few years before, established the Bellini bottega, among the most influential artistic workshops of fifteenth-century Europe, which would introduce or make popular to a Venetian audience several groundbreaking artistic innovations, such as the art of drawing in linear perspective and employing classicizing elements in, for instance, four triptychs for the church of Santa Maria della Carità (1460-64), which were the first Renaissance-style altarpieces in Venice (fig. 1).11

Jacopo in turn trained members of his family to become artists. His son Gentile (1429/35-1507), apparently named after Jacopo's own master and often misleadingly described as the first official painter of Venice (which, as will be discussed, amounted to a de facto role later shared with Giovanni Bellini and others), would achieve lasting fame by journeying to Constantinople and painting the portrait of Sultan Mehmet II, of which the much-celebrated and over-painted original, or, perhaps more likely an early copy, is now in the National Gallery in London (fig. 2).12 Jacopo's nephew Leonardo (c.1423-c.1490), who at about age seven moved in with Jacopo

Gentile's courtyard where paintings and sculptures, perhaps polychromed, had presumably been laid out to dry (errant certa scultitia et picture maxime importantie). A Transcription of Archivio di Stato Firenze, Proversioni vol. 116, a. c. 8. Etc. 3 April 1425 was first published by Milanesi in Vasari, 1878, III, 149-150. Although the name of Jacopo Bellini's father was Nicolò rather than Piero, the court notary might have erred or been provided with an incorrect patrilineage—hence scholars are justly divided whether "Jacopo of Venice" was indeed Bellini and no firm conclusion may be made. For a discussion of the documents see Joost-Gaugier, 1974, 24-26 with the crucial proviso that she misdates a Venetian inventory of 1466 to 1421 and then uses the earlier year to place Jacopo Bellini in Venice, when he was more probably with Gentile da Fabriano in Florence. The speculative attribution to Jacopo of a Dossal (c. 1425), presumably from a design by Gentile da Fabriano and executed for the Florentine church of S. Niccolò sop'Arno, also implies, but likewise cannot firmly establish, Jacopo's presence in the city (Christiansen, 1982, 105-7).

11 The will of 6 February 1429 by Jacopo's wife, Anna, who is described as pregnant and living in San Geminiano in Venice, implies that Jacopo had already established his home-workshop in the parish by this date (Barausse, 330, doc. 4). For Jacopo's Carità triptychs, see Humfrey, 1993, 180-181. Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni Bellini had earlier become the first Venetians to execute a Renaissance-style altarpiece in Padua, which was the innovative Gattamelata triptych completed in 1460 (ibid., 177-80). It followed, however, other earlier Northern Italian Renaissance-style altarpieces executed in sculpture by Donatello (the Santo altarpiece of c.1446-48) and in paint by Mantegna (the S. Zeno altarpiece in Verona of c. 1456-59: ibid., 174-5).

after Leonardo's father died, became Venice's leading manuscript illuminator. And, of course, there was Giovanni Bellini (d.1516), long believed to have been Jacopo's biological son—a view challenged by this study—who, according to many art historians, became the greatest artist of fifteenth-century Venice, and, along with Mantegna, Northern Italy.

When Jacopo died in 1470/71, Gentile succeeded him as workshop master, and upon Gentile's death in 1507, the original Bellini workshop in San Geminiano apparently shut its doors. After Giovanni died in 1516, the era of the Bellini in Venetian art came to a close. There was no third generation of Bellini artists, although painters such as Mansueti and Vittore Belliniano referred to themselves as disciples of the Bellini. Giorgione and Titian, both of whom probably assisted in one or more of the Bellini's workshops, along with subsequent generations of Venetian artists, remained deeply indebted to the Bellini’s artistic accomplishments as well as their social triumphs that elevated the status of the artist in Venice. In several ways Titian—who, more than any other Venetian of his era, transcended Medieval social-class divisions to contribute to the modern notion of the artist—emulated Gentile Bellini by receiving a sansaria, becoming ennobled, employing his noble prerogatives to certify imperial notaries, and portraying himself arrayed in the gold chain of nobility, just as Gentile had earlier been represented in the heavy gold chain given to him by Sultan Mehmet II in his and Giovanni Bellini's *Preaching of Saint Mark in Alexandria* (1504-1507) (figs. 3, 4).

The central argument of this dissertation is that, in the case of the Bellini, the exigencies

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15 Ibid.

of running a successful fifteenth-century painting workshop demanded business tactics that often exerted a discernable and sometimes commanding influence over the pictorial strategies in the art that the workshop produced. By and large the Bellini were not isolated creative geniuses who executed masterpieces for an infinitely welcoming audience of patrons eager to purchase their every production. Rather, the dissertation presents the Bellini, and in particular Jacopo, as shrewd businessmen, operating in a highly competitive marketplace characterized by what seems to have been a surprisingly limited demand for both private and public commissions—until, perhaps, toward the end of the century when Giovanni Bellini’s excellence as a painter and growing regional fame, along with an escalation in the wealth and status of many Venetians, led to an unprecedented demand for his portraits, Madonnas, and altarpieces.17

During Jacopo's life, however, commissions for paintings were difficult to come by, and Jacopo employed numerous tactics to attract business and strategically position his burgeoning workshop. I argue that these strategies, which include Jacopo's later preparations for transferring the bottega to Gentile, established to a remarkable degree the terms and direction of the Bellini workshop, precipitated artistic innovations, and laid the groundwork for Gentile's later success. Because the history of the Bellini family of artists is so closely tied to that of painting in early Renaissance Venice, the dissertation reshapes our understanding of the importance of commercial concerns, legal issues, social identity, fama or civic reputation, marketplace competition, and the uneven demand for various types of paintings in the Bellini workshop, and by extension, on the development of Venetian Renaissance art.

17 Giovanni's pictorial freedom in his later years is registered in a famous letter from the humanist Pietro Bembo to Isabella Este in January 1506 in which Bembo cautions that although Bellini has agreed to the subject-matter, "[it] will have to be accommodated to the fantasia of the one making the work, and he does not like his hand to be held to overly assigned terms, as he is accustomed to wander at will in his paintings" (cited and translated by Nagel, 2011, 57).
The other argument running through the dissertation is that the Proto Cittadini Originari (as termed in chapter 2), the emergent class to which the Bellini belonged, played a vital role in the early success of the Bellini workshop, which in turn contributed to Gentile's later decision to become a prominent member of the developing class. At a crucial period in his mid-career, Jacopo succeeded in winning multi-year commissions to decorate large rooms in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, to which Jacopo belonged as a member, and in the Scuola Grande di San Marco, both of which were corporate institutions controlled by members of the Proto Cittadini Originari.\textsuperscript{18} These now-lost cycles of narrative paintings once formed the heart of Jacopo's oeuvre, and Giovanni and Gentile, first as youths and then as young men, almost certainly assisted Jacopo in executing these numerous narrative works—hence literally growing up among the Proto Cittadini Originari within the Scuole Grandi. Both Giovanni and Gentile later became members of the Scuola di San Marco, and Gentile rose in its administrative offices to the position of Vicario, or second-highest ranking board member, before his death in 1507 prevented him the opportunity of becoming Guardian Grande or head of the Scuola, the next position to which he would have been elected.\textsuperscript{19}

Above all this study focuses neither on a collection of art objects nor on the isolated creative genius, but rather on the artist who must act as business entrepreneur to guide his workshop through the vicissitudes of Renaissance life. The Bellini demonstrate the extent to which the greatest creative artists of Quattrocento Venice remained deeply mired in the affairs of the artisanal class and the struggles to make a workshop succeed financially. By foregrounding their real world concerns, the dissertation to some extent both affirms and stands on its head the

\textsuperscript{18} Fortini Brown, 1988, 266-68.

\textsuperscript{19} Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 117, doc. 63.
notion of the artist as a social category that emerged during the Renaissance: as the most renowned artists of fifteenth-century Venice, the Bellini nonetheless lived their daily lives under civic statutes, strove to gain *fama* or a good reputation, aligned themselves with more famous artists, sought to build clientele, contrived means of advertising, responded in their work to perceived demand, incorporated or invented artistic innovations, and endeavored to distinguish their art from that of competitors to set themselves apart in the minds of the commissioning public.20

Contextualizing the Bellini workshop within the pragmatic setting of a family enterprise, responsive to local demand and artistic competition, allows for new observations to be made, both generally about the Bellini’s artistic choices and specifically about individual works of art. One example is the discussion in chapter 4 of Gentile Bellini’s *Madonna with Donors* now in Berlin (fig. 5). I argue that its unusual composition is best understood from within the context of Jacopo’s preparations to transfer the workshop to Gentile: that is, as an exceedingly innovative multi-purpose picture, invented by Jacopo, assigned for execution to Gentile to stimulate interest in the relatively unknown artist, but which nonetheless failed to become popular among Venetian patrons—until its redesign and reintroduction decades later by Giovanni Bellini, in his *Madonna and Child with Saints and a Donor* (1490s) and numerous other works painted after 1500 (fig. 6-7).21

This and other reconstructed narratives presented throughout the dissertation venture to account for the available evidence as richly and cohesively as possible, but nevertheless must

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20 For the social status of the artist in the Renaissance see Woods-Marsden, 1998, 1-12.

21 For Giovanni’s *Madonna and Child with Donor*, see *Giovanni Bellini*, 2008, 270, cat. 43. For a brief discussion of the type, see Humfrey, 2011, 57.
remain to some degree speculative. The primary source evidence is modest and sometimes open to interpretation, and the theories offered here posit, as they do in fields such as theoretical physics, not an absolute provable truth but rather a model that accounts for the evidence and which may offer some predictive power. Indeed, in chapter 1, which proposes the biological relationships between the Bellini, an aspect of the argument holds that "Franceschina [Giovanni Bellini's proposed mother] had either died during or soon after Giovanni’s birth— in any event before 1440 — or else had surrendered Giovanni to be raised by the patriarchal side of his family." A recently discovered document by Anna Pizzatti and David Alan Brown, which has yet to be published, appears to confirm exactly this, lending support to chapter 1’s overall argument.22

**SOURCES AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

As mentioned, the secondary literature on the Bellini is large—as of 7 May 2013 the online German reference "Kubikat," which indexes printed books, book chapters, and journal articles, lists 480 bibliographic entries under the subject heading "Giovanni Bellini," 113 under "Jacopo Bellini," and 95 under "Gentile Bellini." The following paragraphs note the literature particularly helpful to this study and consider recent research on the Bellini workshop by Jennifer Fletcher.

Nearly all autograph paintings, illuminations, and drawings by the Bellini are located in museums, churches, and private collections in North America and Europe.23 Primary source documents concerning Jacopo, Gentile, Giovanni, and Leonardo Bellini include legal records,

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22 Communicated to the author by Anna Pizzatti by phone on 2 May 2013 and by David Alan Brown in an email of 10 May 2013.

23 A few reside outside, such as Giovanni Bellini's *Madonna with the Child*, 1487, Oil on panel, 75 x 59 cm, which is in the Museu de Arte, São Paulo.
letters, account books, diaries, and writings by contemporaries. Many of the documents are
dispersed across the buste or folders in the Archivio di Stato in Venice; some are in state
archives in Mantua, Modena, Padua, Vicenza, and elsewhere; others, especially manuscript and
diary entries, are in the Biblioteca Marciana, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, or the Archivio
storico del Patriarcato in Venice; still others reside outside of Italy, in the
Landesregierungsarchiv in Innsbruck for instance.  

From the mid-nineteenth century, scholars uncovered and began to cite these archival
sources, sometimes publishing them in full or partial transcriptions, which are now scattered
throughout the Bellini literature. The most complete compiled list of primary source documents
pertaining to: Jacopo Bellini is in Degenhart and Schmitt's *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen
1300-1450, II-5* (1990): 11-17; Gentile Bellini is in Jurg Meyer zur Capellen's *Gentile Bellini*
(1985): 105-122; Giovanni Bellini is in Manuela Barausse's "Giovanni Bellini. I documenti," in
*Giovanni Bellini* (2008): 327-359. The narrative cycles executed by the Bellini can be found in
Some of these document sections provide full or partial transcriptions, and most cite a
document's first publication, in which an earlier scholar such as Pompeo Molmenti (1852-1928),
Pietro Paoletti (d.1929), Gustav Ludwig (1854-1905), or Wilhelm Bode (1845-1929), might have
provided a transcription.  

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24 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 111.

25 It should be noted that human errors occasionally sneak into these helpful indices, and scholars are cautioned to
cross-reference citations and check transcriptions when possible. For instance, Eisler, 1989, 530, erroneously dates a
Jacopo-related entry in the records of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista to 1421 instead of 1466 and
the testament of Anna Rinversi to "1427 in the Venetian calendar" instead of 1428. A number of scholars have noted
the 1421 error, most recently Bätschmann, 2008, 221n55. For the correct dating of Anna's will, see chapter 1. Even
Barausse, who compiled and newly transcribed the most thorough collection of Giovanni Bellini-related documents,
omits a number of important archival sources (as discussed by Giovanni Agosti, 2009, pp. 101-2) and even, on the
rare occasion, errs: Giovanni's dowry receipt (Barausse, 314, doc. 42) is listed as lost but may in fact be found in
In the last few decades, a small number of Bellini-related documents have been discovered which are not included in the above compilations. For instance, the receipts for a Giovanni Bellini altarpiece were first published in 2005 by Jennifer Fletcher and Reinhold Mueller. Jacopo Bellini's dowry receipt was first cited by Luca Mola in his *La comunità dei Lucchesi a Venezia. Immigrazione e industria della seta nel tardo Medioevo* (1994) and will be published in transcription for the first time in my forthcoming article in *Renaissance Quarterly*. And, as mentioned, a recent discovery of a will indicating that Giovanni Bellini's biological mother might have died when he was very young will soon be published.

In early printed material prior to 1650, three authors consider in some depth one or more members of the Bellini family. The Augustinian monk Jacopo Filippo Foresti (1434–1520), in various editions of his *Supplementum Chronicarum* (later titled *Novissime hystoriarum omnium repercussiones* . . . ), most significantly in 1486 and 1503, includes a brief biography of Gentile Bellini centered around the artist's trip to Constantinople, published when Gentile was still alive. Giorgio Vasari's *vite* of 1550 and 1568 offer the first published study of the art of Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni Bellini, which includes biographical details, observations concerning the importance of the Bellini in Venetian art, and a wealth of information about individual works, some no longer extant. Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658) in his *Le maraviglie dell'arte, overo le vite*
de gl'illustri pittori veneti, e dello stato of 1648 relies heavily on Vasari but also includes new information about the Bellini, such as the subjects of Jacopo Bellini's seventeen narrative paintings (now lost) for the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista. Other important early printed sources include Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare descritta in XIXI libri* (Venice 1581), with additions by Giovanni Stringa (Venice 1604) and further additions by Giustiniano Martinioni (Venice 1663), which describes certain works by the Bellini then located in Venice.

Modern scholarship on the Bellini begins with Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *A History of Painting in North Italy* (1871), which offers a chapter each on Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni Bellini, cites primary sources, attempts to establish and date the artists' oeuvres, and evaluates influences on their artistic styles. Their study, along with Vasari's *vite*, became the models for subsequent monographs on the Bellini.

Jacopo Bellini is the subject of three major monographic studies, Corrado Ricci's *Jacopo Bellini e i suoi libri di disegni* (1908), Colin Eisler's *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini* (1989), which includes a helpful catalogue raisonné, and Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt's *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450, Teil II: Venedig, Jacopo Bellini* (1990), a masterful examination of Jacopo's drawings, the authors' compelling dating of which is employed in the dissertation. Two classically-organized monographs with catalogues raisonnés have been written about Gentile Bellini: Howard Collins' dissertation, "Gentile Bellini: A Monograph and Catalogue of Works" (1970) and Jurg Meyer zur Capellen's *Gentile Bellini* (1985), the document section of which is particularly helpful. The essays and catalog entries in *Bellini and the East*

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31 Ridolfi, 1:35–36. Translated in Molmenti and Ludwig, 1907, 3-4.

32 Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1871, 1:100-194.
(2005) are the finest recent source of information about Gentile's trip to the court of Sultan Mehmet II.

As in Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *A History of Painting in North Italy* (1871), a number of texts examine each member of the Bellini (except for Leonardo) chapter by chapter, typically offering observations on how they might have worked together or influenced one other. Fine studies of this type include Georg Gronau's *Die Künstlerfamilie Bellini* (1909) and Otto Pächt's *Venezianische Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts* (2002). Johannes Wilde's *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian* (1974), Peter Humfrey's *Painting in Renaissance Venice* (1995), and several similar works consider the role of the Bellini in a broader exploration of the development of Renaissance Venetian art. Buttressed by biographical data and discussions of patronage, these texts often are concerned with tracing the development of artistic ideas from the International Gothic style, to Jacopo Bellini, who was also influenced by Venetian, Paduan and, directly or indirectly, Central Italian artists, and then to Giovanni and Gentile, who established the Venetian school and laid the groundwork for the advent of Giorgione and Titian.

The dissertation also calls upon research from fields outside of art history, including Venetian and Renaissance law, Renaissance workshops, citizenship, confraternities, and immigration, among others. Particularly helpful was Roberto Cessi's *Gli statuti veneziani di Jacopo Tiepolo del 1242 e le loro glosse* (1938), a transcription of Venetian civic laws; Brian Pullan's *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State* (1971), a foundational study of the Scuole Grandi; Thomas Kuehn's *Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence* (1982) and *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (2002), which provide analyses of several legal concepts in Florentine late-Medieval law, since no similar studies exist for Venice; Donald Queller's *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality Versus Myth* (1986), which analyzes the struggles of the poor nobles, often in opposition to the Proto Cittadini Originari; Susan Connell's *The Employment of Sculptors and Stonemasons in Venice in the Fifteenth Century* (1988), among
the only works that considers in some depth the notion of legal emancipation in Venice; Andrea Zannini's *Burocrazia e burocrati a Venezia in età moderna: i cittadini originarii* (sec. XVI-XVIII) (1993), a foundational study of the Cittadini Originari in the sixteenth century and later; and Anna Bellavitis' *Identité, mariage, mobilité sociale. Citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVIe siècle* (2001), which also explores aspects of the Cittadini Originari in the sixteenth century and offers important insights on immigration. The dissertation also calls upon a large number of individual articles, book chapters, and dissertations, in particular the work of David Alan Brown, Stanley Chojnacki, Keith Christiansen, Blake de Maria, Stephen Ell, Felix Gilbert, James Grubb, Peter Humfrey, Julius Kirshner, Frederic Lane, Reinhold Mueller, Mary Frances Neff, Debra Pincus, Dennis Romano, Monika Schmitter, Philip Sohm, Giuseppe Trebbi, Joanna Woods-Marsden, and William Wurthmann, among others.

Perhaps more than any other Bellini specialist, Jennifer Fletcher has grappled with analyzing the Bellini workshop as a business entity, most notably in her short essay "I Bellini." Fletcher makes a series of observations, each typically derived directly from a primary source, which are then organized thematically. Her main subjects, explored individually in two or three paragraphs, include the Bellini workshops' artistic and literary contents, use of media and painting techniques, probable in-house design of picture frames, employment of outside assistants, application of workshop drawings, and so on. Fletcher makes a number of plausible

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33 Fletcher, 1998.

34 Hence, when Fletcher errs, it is typically the result of a misinterpretation of a single document and generally has little effect on the overall content of her essay. For instance, she states that the Bellini workshop was located in a procuratorial apartment in San Geminiano, when the document cited most likely refers to Gentile's temporary workspace in such an apartment, which was directly next door to the church of San Marco for which he was then executing large-scale organ doors (Fletcher, 2004, 15, perhaps from an ambitious reading of Schulz, 1982, 91).

35 Fletcher's observations occasionally omit plausible alternate interpretations. For instance, she states that Giovanni did not want to allow others to look at his paintings-in-progress so as not to divulge workshop secrets. Other
observations that deserve further study, such as that Giovanni Bellini's official exemption from the Venetian guild of painters in 1482 gave him a competitive business advantage by allowing him to expand his workshop with additional assistants beyond the number allowed by guild rules.\textsuperscript{36} Whereas Fletcher employs primary sources to explore the Bellini workshop briefly by topic, the dissertation, instead, uses them to construct a number of narrative models, which are intended to uncover underlying patterns of behavior that enlighten our understanding of the Bellini in their management of the \textit{bottega}.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter One analyzes the biological and legal relationships between the Bellini family by reevaluating Bellini-related legal documents in light of the relevant fifteenth-century Venetian civil laws. This methodological approach has not previously been taken, perhaps in part because few studies have comprehensively elucidated the recondite civil code of Renaissance Venice. A strong case can be made that Gentile and Giovanni, the famous Bellini brothers of Renaissance art, were in fact nephew and uncle, and that Gentile was several years younger than Giovanni, rather than older as is currently thought. As Jacopo’s primary heir, legitimate son, and workshop assistant, Gentile in all likelihood lived under his father’s paternal authority (\textit{in patris potestate}) until Jacopo’s death in 1470/71, while Giovanni, as Jacopo’s half-brother, did not. Thus, crucial questions concerning Gentile and Giovanni’s differing roles within the Bellini workshop may now be understood with regard to their legal status: why Gentile remained in the workshop until Jacopo’s death while Giovanni departed to establish his own household; why Gentile, upon

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\textsuperscript{36} Fletcher, 1998, 132.
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Jacopo’s death, inherited the workshop and all its implements while Giovanni apparently received nothing; and, as argued more extensively in Chapter Four, why Jacopo so carefully guided Gentile’s career rather than that of Giovanni.\footnote{In many ways, however, Jacopo treated Giovanni as a son—he raised him from a very young age, trained him to be an artist, and employed him in numerous commissions, including the Gattamelata altarpiece in Padua, the Carità triptychs, and, as mentioned, the great narrative cycles for the Scuole Grandi. One may speculate that Jacopo, a brilliant artist and intelligent man, recognized Giovanni’s extraordinary talents and the likelihood that Giovanni would have little difficulty becoming a successful artist in Venice, while Gentile instead would need extra help and attention.}

Chapter Two periodizes the development of the Cittadini Originari to lay the foundation for studying the Bellini’s relationship to the emergent class into which they were born. I build on the two monographs about the Cittadini Originari, by Zannini (1993) and Bellavitis (2001), both of which, however, concentrate on the fully-formed class in the sixteenth century or later rather than on the class’s development between the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. In contrast to the traditional historiographical view that the Venetian patriciate established the Cittadini Originari as an underclass of civil servants, I argue that pivotal historic events laid the requisite groundwork for the class’s centuries-long, desultory, and non-violent emergence. The Cittadini Originari did not exist when the Serrata, a series of laws from 1285-1323, prohibited non-nobles from holding high government office. Many disenfranchised non-noble families nevertheless became enriched, especially during social upheavals precipitated by the devastating War of Chioggia (1378-81). And both common concerns and polarizing issues, such as the government’s sweeping conferment of Venetian citizenship on wealthy émigrés from conquered terraferma cities, regularly set in opposition influential non-noble Venetians to the patriciate, naturalized citizens, and poorer Venetians, thus catalyzing class consciousness. I maintain that to fulfill their political and social aspirations and elevate the prominence of their families, these so-called
proto-Cittadini Originari gradually assumed control over the administration of four charitable confraternities, later called the Scuole Grandi.

Chapter Three argues that Jacopo Bellini, motivated to a significant degree by business concerns—his artistic self laboring alongside of, and oftentimes subordinated to, his practical self—sought to reinvent his own pictorial style in order to compete in the highly competitive artistic marketplace of fifteenth-century Venice. In doing so, he ushered in the Venetian Renaissance in art. Moreover, I argue that the Proto Cittadini Originari played a crucial role in the success of the Bellini workshop. I analyze the origins of the Bellini workshop, Jacopo's business strategies, and how Jacopo, who was born a non-noble cittadino orginario and became a member of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, reinvented himself as an avant-garde narrative artist at the same time that the Scuole Grandi began to decorate their great interiors with narrative cycles. Hence, the surging demand for narratives offered the struggling Bellini workshop unprecedented opportunities for art commissions. And it was in this environment that Jacopo's son Gentile Bellini—under Jacopo’s legal authority and guidance, and assisting Jacopo on decade-long commissions for the Scuole Grandi—received his artistic education and developed his identity as a member of the Proto Cittadini Originari.

Chapter Four considers the transference of the workshop to Gentile and the extent to which Jacopo was responsible for Gentile’s early triumphs. Indeed, the relatively young Gentile became Venice’s de facto official painter, arguably the most prized commission offered in the city during the fifteenth century because it entailed the execution of multiple large-scale narrative paintings, as well as portraits of doges, for the Great Council Hall, the seat of Venetian government, and rewarded the artist with a substantial annual income for life. I propose that Gentile’s reputation (fama) within Venetian society played a substantial role in his winning the
commission and that Jacopo was largely responsible for socially elevating Gentile, his legal and artistic heir. I demonstrate that Jacopo almost certainly purchased the Imperial title of Count Palatine on behalf of his son, secured Gentile’s early pivotal commission for the church of San Marco, and negotiated his membership in the Scuola di San Marco, thus positioning Gentile within the highest levels of Venetian society, indeed as high as a non-noble Venetian could hope to achieve.

Chapter Five explores the character of the workshop under Gentile by examining a number of pivotal events in his career that led to the execution of his magnum opus, Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco (fig. 8). (It also considers whether a modern viewer can suspend a life-long acculturation to photographic images in order to perceive Gentile's image as would a fifteenth-century Venetian who had never viewed a photograph.) I argue that Gentile's Procession allowed Venetian observers to participate in a miracle and to meditate on its meaning — within Christian theology, in relation to the viewer's professional and personal identity, and in reference to the social fabric of Venetian life. Gentile created the work most specifically for the elite members of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, and more generally, it will be suggested, for the Proto Cittadini Originari. Hence the painting represented both a miracle and the activities of the Scuola members in producing that miracle. At the same time it depicts the leveling of class hierarchy before the divine. From this point of view, then, it is among the earliest class-conscious works of art of Renaissance Venice, if not of the entire Renaissance.
Chapter 1

BLOOD AND LEGAL RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

“It is understood that Giovanni Bellini, the great painter, died this morning” wrote the Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo (1466–1536) on 29 November 1516: “he was aged . . .”1 Sanudo left a blank space that historians for five centuries have attempted to fill. Other questions have been raised about the early life of the Venetian artist, generally believed to have been the son of Jacopo Bellini (ca. 1400–70/71) and the younger brother of Gentile Bellini (1429/35–1507).2

Some scholars have sought to explain why Jacopo’s wife, Anna, did not mention him in her will of 25 November 1471, since under Venetian law this omission means that Giovanni could not have been Anna and Jacopo’s legitimate son.3 Others have wondered how the young Giovanni

1 Sanudo, I diarii, 23:256 (29 November 1516): “Se intese, questa matina esser morto Zuan Belin optimo pytor, havia anni . . . .”

2 For recent critical summaries of Giovanni’s life and career, see Lucco, 2008; Humfrey, 2004. Questions concerning Giovanni’s early years are unlikely to be resolved by future discoveries of primary source materials; most known documents related to the artist’s early career were published between 1868 and 1929. For dates of publication and transcriptions, see Barausse, 330–69.

3 Venice, Archivio di Stato (cited hereafter as ASV), Notarile. Testamenti (cited hereafter as NT), b. 361, Francesco Elmis, carta sciolta, n. 2; copy in reg. “Testamentorum,” c. 65’, n. 163 (abbreviations: b. = busta (folder); reg. = register); Barausse, 338, doc. 31. A vast bibliography exists concerning Giovanni’s possible illegitimacy (and possible birthdate). For instance, Lucco, 2008, 20–21, argues that Giovanni was illegitimate, the product of Jacopo’s extramarital relationship with an unknown woman, because: Giovanni was omitted from Anna Rinversi’s will of 1471; Vasari described Nicolosia, the daughter of Jacopo Bellini and wife of Mantegna, only as the “sister of Gentile” ( sorella di Gentile) rather than as both Gentile’s and Giovanni’s sister; and by 1459 Giovanni lived in San Lio, apart from his father and perhaps with his biological mother. Goffen, 1989, 3–4, argues that Giovanni was legitimate, dismissing the significance of his omission from Anna’s will, and observing, as a sign of his legitimate birth, that “he seems to have enjoyed all the benefits of the Bellini family’s status as members of the cittadinanza originaria, the class second only to the patriciate. . . . [He] was always identified as ‘our faithful citizen’ in state documents, and his son, Alvise, served in the chancellery, where employment was restricted to the citizen class.” Robertson, 11, leaning toward Giovanni’s legitimacy, observes that if Giovanni had been illegitimate, such a “gossipy detail” likely would have been recorded by Vasari or Ridolfi; he speculates that Giovanni was omitted from Anna’s last will because “he had already received his portion of the estate under Jacopo’s will, which has not come
could afford to establish his own household in 1459, in the parish of San Lio, while his presumed
brother Gentile stayed in his father Jacopo’s house, in the parish of San Geminiano. The most
consequential problem, one that Peter Humfrey has called “crucial for a proper understanding of
his early career,” remains Giovanni’s date of birth, which some have argued was as early as ca.
1425 and others as late as 1440, with ca. 1435 or later being favored by most contemporary
Bellini specialists.

This chapter answers these questions by reevaluating Bellini-related legal documents in
light of the relevant fifteenth-century Venetian civil laws. This methodological approach has not
previously been taken, perhaps in part because few studies have comprehensively elucidated the
recondite civil code of Renaissance Venice. The chapter can also serve as a case study
demonstrating several ways that valuable biographical information might be extracted from
primary-source legal documents when they are interpreted according to the applicable civil
statutes under which they were written. Hence this study will hopefully encourage reanalysis of
legal documents connected not only to Quattrocento Venetian artists, but also to any number of
historical figures who lived in Medieval or early modern Europe.

4 For Giovanni residing in San Lio in 1459, see ASV, NT, b. 727, Giuseppe Moisis, cc. 1–2v, n. 32; Barausse, 334, doc. 16.

Christiansen, 2004a, 53, in ca. 1435 or later; Fiocco, 6; and Longhi, 277–78, both in ca. 1425.

6 The argument presented by this chapter presumes that the Bellini family had complied, when necessary, with the
civil laws of Venice. One must realize with caution that these laws might not have always been followed to the
letter. For a history of Venetian civil law through Tiepolo’s Statutum novum of 1242 and Andrea Dandolo’s addition
of Liber sextus in 1346 (both in force until the end of the eighteenth century), see Zordan, 194–200. Tiepolo’s
statutes with glosses were published by Cessi, 1938; Dandolo’s by Griphio and in numerous other editions. For an
overview of Venetian civil law, see Crescenzi, 1997. Specific areas of Venetian civil legal practice have been
examined in several studies, including the following: Pansolli, 129–35; Connell, 36–53; Chojnacki, 2000, 95–112;
Ruggiero, 1982, 118n23.
When the Bellini legal documents are evaluated under the relevant civil laws, a strong case can be made that Gentile and Giovanni, the famous Bellini brothers of Renaissance art, were in fact nephew and uncle, and that Gentile was several years younger than Giovanni, rather than older as is currently thought. As Jacopo’s primary heir, legitimate son, and workshop assistant, Gentile in all likelihood lived under his father’s paternal authority (*in patris potestate*) until Jacopo’s death in 1470/71, while Giovanni, as Jacopo’s half-brother, did not. Thus, crucial questions concerning Gentile and Giovanni’s differing roles within the Bellini workshop may now be understood with regard to their legal status: why Gentile remained in the workshop until Jacopo’s death while Giovanni departed to establish his own household; why Gentile, upon Jacopo’s death, inherited the workshop and all its implements while Giovanni apparently received nothing; and, as argued in Chapter Four, why Jacopo so carefully guided Gentile’s career rather than that of Giovanni.

Moreover, the chapter makes a forceful argument that Giovanni Bellini was born legitimate between the late summer of 1424 and 13 September 1428. The proposed range of dates for Giovanni’s birth is much earlier than several recent estimates, but has two important precedents. First, it accords with the birth year indicated by Giorgio Vasari, who wrote that Giovanni died at age ninety (on 20 November 1516).7 Secondly, it concurs with a long-established theory, championed by a number of scholars, including Giuseppe Fiocco (1884–1971) and Roberto Longhi (1890–1970), that Giovanni was born in the mid- to late 1420s, a position supported by little documentary evidence until now.8

The proposed biological relationships between the Bellini and Giovanni's earlier birth

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7 Vasari-Barocchi, 3:441.
8 For other scholars in accord with Fiocco, see Gibbons, 1963, 54n4.
date are strongly implied by a number of features of Venetian law that will be examined individually, including the fraternal partnership and its division, the legitimacy of sons, the minimum legal age for autonomously entering into contracts, rights of inheritance, and adoption or legal guardianship.

DIVISION OF A FRATERNAL PARTNERSHIP

On 13 September 1440 the Venetian notary Vittore Pomino recorded in his register (protocollo) an act separating the property of two brothers, Giovanni and Jacopo Bellini, both sons of the deceased Nicolò Bellini and both residing in the Venetian parish of San Geminiano (fig. 9).9 First published in 1929, this document has been interpreted to mean that the fifteenth-century Venetian painter Jacopo Bellini had an illegitimate half-brother, the so-called Giovanni Bellini il Vecchio, with whom he once shared an artist’s workshop.10 A contextualized analysis of Pomino’s 1440 notarial act, however, reveals that it almost certainly did not refer to a conjectured Giovanni Bellini il Vecchio — who in all probability never in fact existed — but rather to the boy Giovanni Bellini, later to become the famous painter, who was therefore Jacopo Bellini’s half-brother.

Pomino’s act of 1440 was a common notarial instrument, executed on behalf of legitimately born brothers, known as a division or charter of division (divisio or carta divisionis) as its first line states: “The division to occur between the brothers is declared lawful, et cetera.”11

9 See Document 1 in Appendix A: “Giovanni Bellini and Jacopo Bellini of the parish of San Geminiano, brothers and sons of the deceased ser Nicolò.”

10 Paoletti, 1929, 68. For the document’s generally accepted interpretation see, for instance, Eisler, 1989, 33.

11 See Document 1 in Appendix A: “Licet divisio que sit inter fratres et cetera.” Connell, 45, also considers the document an example of a carta divisionis. Other divisiones in Pomino’s register begin similarly. Note that in a copy of the Bellini divisio, made by the notary Pomino and located in a different register within the same busta, the “et
Venetian civil law, which was codified in five books of statutes in 1242 during the dogate of Jacopo Tiepolo, decreed that when a father died, his legitimate, unemancipated sons were automatically thrust into a fraternal partnership (fraterna compagnia) through which they would jointly own all the property inherited from their father: “Chapter concerning the fraternal partnership. 4. We decree that, once the father is dead, the brothers remain in a fraternal partnership... unless they themselves make a division. However, if a father or any ancestor has bequeathed to a son or any descendent some specific thing, it will not be included in the fraternal partnership.”

In Venice, fraternal partnerships were the most prevalent form of business association among craftsmen and merchants: their members regularly remained in the family business, carrying on their partnership, until death. If the sons were not, however, in the same business, or if they did not wish to be bound legally to one another, or if they desired to enter into another type of business association, then Tiepolo’s statutes described how it might be terminated:

On dividing estates between brothers. 5. We decree that, although it has hitherto been customary in Venice that the older brother divided the father’s estate and that the younger brother or brothers received shares assigned by the older brother, henceforth we decree that, when dividing their father’s estate, all brothers are equal.

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12 Cessi, 1938, 3:4:124–25: “Capitulum de fraterna compagnia. IIII. Volumus quod, mortuo patre, fratres maneant in fraterna compagnia. . . . nisi et ipsi divisionem fecerint. Sed si pater vel aliquis de ascendentibus aliqua specialiter dimiserit filio vel aliqui de inferioribus, illud non erit in fraterna compagnia.” The members of a fraternal partnership not only communally shared the inheritance of their father’s (or grandfather’s) estate, but also all other property not specifically omitted from the partnership: Cessi, 1938, 3:4:124:19. Here Venetian law differed from Roman law, which required the brothers, after their father died, to enter voluntarily into a contract: Cessi, 1938, 3:4:124:20. For the fourteenth-century law eliminating the date of expiration of fraterne compagnie, see Griphio, 1606, 6:9:90–91.

For those who have an undivided estate and one of them desires to divide it and know his share. 6. We decree that, if several persons together own an undivided estate, and they are all present in Venice, and any one of them who has been in Venice desires to divide this estate and know his share, then he should call the other or others who also have a share in this estate and announce to the other or others that he wishes to divide the estate; and by this act they should divide this estate among themselves: but if they refuse or have been unable to agree among themselves, the judges must divide this estate and cast lots.\(^\text{14}\)

In other words, all brothers in a fraternal partnership, upon its dissolution, received an equal share of their father’s estate, unless the father’s will had assigned it otherwise. Any of the brothers could initiate a separation, and in amicable separations only a notary was required. The notary would employ a very common legal instrument, a division (\textit{divisio}), to dissolve the fraternal partnership, and thus assign to each legitimate son an equal share of his father’s estate and grant to each legal independence from his brothers.\(^\text{15}\)

As its first line declared and as its standard form indicates, Pomino’s notarial act of 13 September 1440 terminating Giovanni and Jacopo Bellini’s fraternal partnership was such a

\(^{14}\) Cessi, 1938, 3:5–6:125–6: “\textit{De possessionibus dividendis inter frates.} V. Decernimus quod, cum hactenus sit Veneciis consuetum quod maior frater possessionem patris dividebat et minor sive minores frates partes a maiori fratre designatas accipiebant, de cetero volumus quod omnes frates in dividendis paternis possessionibus sint equales, et sic de omnibus habentibus possessiones comunes undecumque. \textit{Pro illis, qui possessionem indivisam habuerint, et aliquis eorum eam dividere voluerit et cognoscere partem suam.} VI. Dicimus quod, si plures fuerint, qui possessionem indivisam habuerint, et fuerint omnes presentes in Veneciis, et aliquis illorum, qui fuerit Veneciis, voluerit dividere possessionem ipsam et cognoscere partem suam, debeat vocare eum vel omnes illos, qui habent partem in ipsa possessione, et denunciare ei vel eis quod possessionem ipsam velit dividere, et hoc facto debeant inter se possessionem illam dividere: quod si facere recusaverint vel non potuerint concordare inter se, iudices debeant possessionem ipsam dividere et sortes ponere.”

\(^{15}\) For the standard form of a \textit{divisio}, with examples, see Connell, 45–46.
charter of division. Eleven days later, on 24 September 1440, Jacopo Bellini engaged a different notary to draw up a contractual agreement between himself and the painter Donato Bragadin, with whom he intended to enter into a five-year business partnership. The partnership itself might never have become a reality; the contract was not witnessed and was crossed out without a date in the register of the notary. Nevertheless, it provides a plausible reason for the existence of the divisio of eleven days earlier: Jacopo needed to end the fraternal partnership with his brother, Giovanni, before entering into a business partnership with another party.

LEGITIMACY

The existence of the 1440 divisio between Jacopo and Giovanni Bellini informs us that both were legitimate sons of Nicolò. The Venetian civil statutes of 1242 followed the prevalent classical Roman and Medieval legal concept of paternal power (patria potestas), which granted the father or grandfather as patriarch of the family (paterfamilias) rights over all his legitimate male descendants along the male line, including his sons, grandsons, and great grandsons. A gloss to the Venetian civil statute concerning intestate inheritance explained: “You should call those legitimate who are born of legitimate marriage and free parents, but there is no provision in

16 ASV, CIN, b. 74–75. Francesco Elmis, reg. XX, c. 216; Barausse, 332, doc. 9.

17 The notary Francesco Elmis left a block of space directly after Jacopo and Donato’s partnership contract, presumably for the names of the witnesses, which were not subsequently entered. The other acts in the same register offer no such space: most were witnessed.

18 Connell, 50, interprets both documents likewise. Furthermore, on the copy of the 1440 divisio (ASV, CIN, b. 149, Vittore Pomino, reg. 1439–44, c. 11”), Pomino wrote in the margin that a duplicate had been made for Jacopo (“exemplata una carta pro ser Jacobo”), presumably to serve as proof for Donato Bragadin or for the notary Francesco Elmis, who drew up their contract.

19 Kuehn, 1982, 11.
Venetian statute regarding other sons. 20 When the Venetian law employed the term *filius* without further qualification, as in the above statutes describing fraternal partnerships, a legitimate son was intended.

Neither Giovanni nor his half-brother Jacopo could have been born illegitimate, because illegitimates were legally not sons of the family (*filiifamilias*) and could not enter into fraternal partnerships. 21 Illegitimate sons had no such rights of inheritance, as the following gloss to the Venetian statutes, describing various types of illegitimate sons, makes clear: “*Mancher*, properly speaking, is the name given to one born from a whore, that is, a public prostitute; *spurius* is one born from a concubine who is not retained in the home like a wife, or one born from a blood relative or a nun. *Nothus* is one born from adultery; just as we call a fever ‘*nothus*,’ which afflicts like a *quartan* fever but is not a true *quartan*, so do we call a person ‘*nothus*,’ who seems to be a son but is not. All such illegitimates are denied positions of honor and have no rights of succession; by no means should their parents even support them.”

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20 Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139: “*Dic legittimos, qui nati sunt de legittimo matrimonio et parentibus liberis, sed de aliis filii nichil cavetur in statuto Veneciarum.*”

21 In Roman legal practice, “[b]y the terms of civil law all illegitimate children were *sui iuris* — that is, not subject to *patria potestas*, which could issue only from marriage, or from judicial acts such as adoption and legitimation”: Kuehn, 2002, 34. In Renaissance Venice, however, adoption did not confer *patria potestas* to the adoptive father: Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139.

22 Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139: “*Mancher proprie dicitur de scorto natus, idest publica meretrice; spurius de concubina, que non retinetur in domo tanquam uxor, vel de consanguinea vel monacha. Nothus est de adulterio natus, sicut dicitur notha febris, que affligit, sicut quartana, et tamen non est vera quartana, sicut nothus, qui videtur esse filius et non est. Et omnes tales illegittimi ab honoribus repelluntur et in nullo succedunt, imo nec pasci a parentibus debent.*” Note that neither Jacopo nor Giovanni were natural sons (*naturales*), described in the same gloss as “born from concubines who are retained in the home in place of a wife; and these *naturales*, in terms of their father’s goods, succeed to two-twelfths of their father’s estate, if there are neither other sons nor a legitimate wife” (“*Naturales, qui ex concubinis nascuntur, que retinentur in domo loco uxoris, et tales in bonis patris succedunt in duas uncias paterne substantie, si ali non existant filii nec uxor legitima*”). For a discussion of types of illegitimates in Medieval law, see Kuehn, 2002, 36, 44, who observes that in Florence, *naturales* received only one-twelfth of their father’s estate in the absence of legitimate sons.
succeeded as co-members of the fraternal partnership that collectively owned the inherited estate of their deceased father, Nicolò, only as legitimate male offspring legally had the right to do.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{MINIMUM AGE FOR ENTERING INTO CONTRACTS}

To agree independently to a charter of division, Giovanni Bellini, the son of Nicolò, was required to be over the age of twelve\textsuperscript{24}: “Since nobody is considered able to act in contracts or judgments unless he or she is of legal age, we decree that it is suitable to define something about the age of mind. Therefore, we state that any person, either male or female, after he or she has turned twelve, should be considered of proper age.”\textsuperscript{25} Any contract entered into by Giovanni, if he was under twelve and his father deceased, required the undersignatures of two magistrates (\textit{iudices examinatorum}) from the Court of the Examiner (\textit{curia del esaminador}) in order for it to be valid.\textsuperscript{26} Since magistrates did not sign the division of 13 September 1440 between Jacopo and

\textsuperscript{23} In Nicolò’s will (ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10"", n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3), his adopted daughter was described as “filia mea adoptiva,” and Jacopo was described as Nicolò’s son from his prior marriage to Giovannina (Zanina).

\textsuperscript{24} It is unclear whether Venetian law strictly defined an age of majority; from the age of twelve, Venetians began to receive various legal rights and responsibilities: Crescenzi, 1997, 414–18; see also Ruggiero, 1982, 118n23; Guzzetti, 1998, 50. In Roman law, the age of majority was twenty-five, the year when those previously emancipated by a \textit{carta} or their father’s death were treated as full adults under the law. That age in Renaissance Florence was eighteen, in Pisa twenty, in Arezzo twenty-five, in Siena twenty-five, and in Pistoia nineteen: Kuehn, 1982, 36, 188n9.


\textsuperscript{26} When Nicolò died (prior to 23 July 1429), Giovanni’s condition would have been defined as that of an orphan; the 1242 statutes required orphans to be at least eighteen years of age to enter into contracts without the signatures of two magistrates from the \textit{curia del esaminador}; that age was then reduced to twelve years, as clarified in a fourteenth-century gloss, which noted that this was different from Roman law, under which guardians could sign contracts on behalf of underaged orphans and be held accountable: Cessi, 1938, 1:38:70:210–212.
Giovanni Bellini, Giovanni must have already reached the age of twelve.\textsuperscript{27} Thus Giovanni Bellini, Jacopo’s half-brother, must have been born before 13 September 1428, twelve years prior to 13 September 1440, the date of the division.

**RIGHTS OF INHERITANCE**

On 11 April 1424 Nicolò Bellini had a notary draw up a will on his behalf that designated Nicolò’s legitimate son Jacopo as an heir, but did not name Giovanni.\textsuperscript{28} In his will Nicolò bequeathed portions of his estate to his second wife, Franceschina; to his two children by his previous, deceased wife, Giovannina, namely, his son, the painter Jacopo Bellini, and his daughter, Elena; to Elena’s daughter, Caterina; and, if Caterina died and Elena had no other daughters, to Alixeta, the daughter of Nicolò’s own adopted daughter, Menega.\textsuperscript{29}

If Nicolò had had a living, legitimate son named Giovanni when his will was drawn up, Giovanni’s omission would have been not only surprising, but also unlawful.\textsuperscript{30} In Renaissance

\textsuperscript{27} The contract was witnessed by “ser Ludovico di Rigis, son of ser Jacopo, of the parish of Santa Giustina; ser Ercole, son of the deceased ser Jacobello del Fiore, painter of the parish of Sant’Agnese”: see Document 1 in Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{28} ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10\textsuperscript{v–w}, n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3.

\textsuperscript{29} Had Nicolò died intestate in 1424, his estate would have been left to Jacopo, his only legitimate son at that time, and neither to his wife, Franceschina, who would have retained rights to her own dowry, nor to his married daughter, Elena, who had already received a dowry as her portion of her father’s estate: Cessi, 1938, 4:24:205. Hence one may speculate that part of Nicolò’s purpose in drawing up his will was to shift his legacy from Jacopo to other members of his family, most specifically, to his wife, Franceschina, Jacopo’s stepmother, who was “to receive the major share.” Also noteworthy is that, when the will was written, Nicolò and Franceschina did not have biological children together. Since the prospect of offspring and the receipt of a dowry often motivated fifteenth-century Venetian men to marry, that Nicolò’s second (and perhaps young) wife, Franceschina, gave birth not long after the date of Nicolò’s will is rather unsurprising.

\textsuperscript{30} Tiepolo’s law of book 4, rubric 35 (Cessi, 1938, 4:35:213) is titled, “No one can disinherit his or her son.” Disinheritance was rare, aberrant, and predicated on the child committing at least one of fourteen grave transgressions, such as plotting against the life of his or her parents, enumerated in ibid., 4:35:213:207. Kuehn, 2002, 20–21, describes the disinheritance of legitimate sons under Medieval law: “Yet the pater was not free to act with regard to dos and patrimonium. . . . He was bound by social expectations, intestaey rules, rights of legitim, and
Venice fathers were required to identify their legitimate sons in their wills, even if their intent was to disinherit them. Otherwise, the will could be overturned.\(^{31}\) As an officer of the court, a fifteenth-century Venetian notary would not have allowed a will to have been drawn up that omitted a legitimate son.\(^{32}\) Therefore, Nicolò’s legitimate son Giovanni Bellini must not yet have been born when Nicolò composed his will of 1424.

Thus Giovanni Bellini, son of Nicolò, was born at least several months after 11 April 1424, the date of Nicolò’s will (in which Franceschina was understood as not being pregnant), and sometime before 13 September 1428, twelve years prior to the date of the division of 1440.\(^{33}\) That Giovanni was an adolescent between the ages of twelve and sixteen when he entered into the 1440 *divisio* is confirmed by the document itself: it was written entirely in standardized, unspecific language as if a formality. It neither describes the profession of the two Bellini brothers, nor stipulates which would receive ownership of the workshop, or other property, nor does it enumerate any particulars whatsoever, such as whether the wives’ dowries had been included in, or excluded from, the partnership. Such details were invariably itemized in divisions between adult brothers, such as that between Luca and Vito Bono, drawn up by the same notary.

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\(^{31}\) In Venice, “for the disinheritance to be valid, a legitimate reason must be included in the testament”: Kirshner, 135. Kuehn, 2002, 26, notes that, according to Medieval law, a legitimate son could only be disinherited by an included statement of cause in a father’s testament: “like any direct heir (*suus heres*), he had to be expressly disinherited.” Numerous jurists have commented on the legal difficulties of disinheriting a legitimate son: Kirshner.

\(^{32}\) On the legal obligations of Venetian notaries, see Cassandro, 1936, 112–44; Fabris, 3–16, 101–03.

\(^{33}\) Nicolò’s 1424 will (ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10\(^{10}\)\(^{\circ}\)\(^{3}\)r, n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3): “Asked about posthumous children, he responded that it is not necessary.” No child was expected and hence Franceschina was not considered pregnant at the time. (This statement appears beside a caret at the very end of the text, the other caret locating its position within the text itself: thus it might have been a later addition by the notary.) The unlikely scenario that Giovanni Bellini, the son of Nicolò, might have been born illegitimate — and hence went unnamed in Nicolò’s will of 1424, yet at some later date (but prior to 23 July 1429 when Nicolò was recorded as being deceased) became legitimized by Nicolò — should also be mentioned.
Vittore Pomino a few months before the division of Giovanni and Jacopo. In the Bono brothers’ *divisio*, Luca and Vito were described as furriers (*varotarii*), who had employed their wives’ dowries in their business, and who agreed to separate so that Luca would retain the shop on the street of furriers near the Rialto, while Vito would receive thirty-nine ducats in exchange. Unlike the *divisio* between Giovanni and Jacopo, that between Luca and Vito Bono methodically separated real property that had been shared between adults.

**LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP AND ADOPTION**

The will of 11 April 1424 is the last-known record of Giovanni Bellini’s father, Nicolò, as living. He was dead by the summer of 1429, for on 23 July of that year Jacopo Bellini engaged a notary to draw up a standard legal instrument (*carta securitatis et manifestacionis repromisse*) in which he acknowledged receiving his wife Anna’s dowry of 250 ducats and was described as “Jacopo Bellini, a pa[...]

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34 ASV, CIN, b. 149, Vittore Pomino, reg. 1439–1444, cc. 3v–4r. Also cf. any *divisio* from ASV, Cancelleria inferiore. Miscellanea, notai diversi, bb. 32–33.

35 ASV, CIN, b. 149, Vittore Pomino, reg. 1439–1444, cc. 3v–4r.

36 The unspecific text of the Bellini *divisio* may also be compared with the detailed terms separating the painters Ludovico and Francesco, sons of Mantegna, in their *divisio* of 27 January 1507: Signorini, 105n20.

37 See Document 2 in Appendix A: “Jacobus Belino pictor filius quondam ser Nicoleti Belino de confinio Sancti Geminiani.” Jacopo was married sometime before 6 February 1429, the date of Anna’s will, in which she was described as Jacopo’s wife and pregnant: ASV, NT, b. 946/c, Enrico Salomon, n. 313; Barausse, 330–31, doc. 4. Jacopo’s *carta securitatis* of 23 July 1429 was drawn up several months later, which was not unusual: Guzzetti, 2002, 444–45.
whose fathers were deceased.\textsuperscript{38} Guardians had fiduciary powers to negotiate for the minor and were entitled to one-fourth of monies gained, the remainder belonging to the minor.\textsuperscript{39} A Venetian civil court called the \textit{curia di petizion} would have assigned a guardian.\textsuperscript{40} Given the legal role of the father in Venetian law, Giovanni Bellini would have needed a legal guardian even if his mother had survived.\textsuperscript{41}

Nothing is known about Franceschina apart from her husband’s will of 1424. It is probable, however, that Franceschina had either died during or soon after Giovanni’s birth — in any event before 1440 — or else had surrendered Giovanni to be raised by the patriarchal side of his family, a not-uncommon occurrence in Renaissance Venice.\textsuperscript{42} First, no known documents apart from Nicolò’s will name Franceschina, and death may explain her absence from recorded history. Secondly, in the 1440 Bellini \textit{divisio}, both Giovanni and Jacopo were described as residing in San Geminiano, presumably in the same household, and not in the parish of San Salvatore, where Nicolò and Franceschina’s home had been, according to Nicolò’s will of

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{38} Cessi, 1938, 2:2:103: “Qualiter tutores creari debeant minoribus duodecim annorum.” Minors after reaching the age of fourteen could terminate guardianships: Griffo, 1606, 6:24:98; Crescenzi, 1997, 415. Giovanni might have been legally required to be at least age fourteen prior to signing the 1440 \textit{divisio} with Jacopo: if such was the case, then Giovanni would have been born between late summer 1424 and 13 September 1426 (rather than 13 September 1428).
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Cessi, 1938, 2:2:103. In Roman law, guardians who were negligent in overseeing the affairs or the estate of their wards were liable: Kuehn, 1982, 22, 181–82nn75–76.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} The procedure to appoint a guardian in Venice is outlined in Cessi, 1938, 2:2:103–04. For the role of the \textit{curia di petizion}, see da Mosto, 1:92; Cassandro, 1936 and 1937; Bellavitis, 2008, 81–85. In Florence the magistrate was called the \textit{Ufficio dei pupilli}: Morandini.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Bellavitis, 2008, 81–85.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} See ibid. for sixteenth-century Venetian examples of elder brothers being instated as guardians of their younger siblings. Note that a recently discovered document by Anna Pizzatti and David Alan Brown, which has yet to be published, appears to confirm that Giovanni Bellini’s biological mother indeed had died when Giovanni was very young, for apparently his mother’s sister acted much like a mother to him (Communicated to the author by Anna Pizzatti by phone on 2 May 2013 and by David Alan Brown in an email of 10 May 2013).
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Jacopo had lived in San Geminiano since at least 6 February 1429, the date his wife, Anna, drew up her first will, and continued to live in the parish for the rest of his life. Finally, if the Giovanni Bellini named in the 1440 Bellini *divisio* is indeed the famous painter, then the fact that the later recorded relationship between Jacopo and Giovanni was nearly indistinguishable from that between a father and son further suggests that Franceschina had died or departed soon after Giovanni’s birth.

It is therefore likely that Jacopo acted as his half-brother’s legal guardian (*tutor*). It is possible that Jacopo adopted his young half-brother. Legal adoption in Renaissance Venice is neither well studied nor well understood. Adoption of a male might occur in instances where the patriarch (*paterfamilias*) was aging and had no legitimate son for an heir, such as when the painter Jacobello del Fiore adopted Ercole (who was one of the witnesses to the 1440 Bellini *divisio*). In some cases the adopted child might have been treated like a servant, as when a woman named Lucia, in an early Quattrocento legal document, was described as the “servant or adopted daughter” of her adoptive father Bartolomeo. In some adoptive relationships, such as

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43 See Document 1 in Appendix A: “Iohannes Belino et Iacobus Belino fratres ac filii quondam ser Nicolai de confinio Sancti Iunianii.” Both Giovanni and Jacopo resided in the parish of San Geminiano, otherwise the parish of each would have been specified. ASV, NT. b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, n. 10”–”; Barausse, 330, doc. 3: “Nicoletus Belin batistagno de confinio Sancti Salvatoris.” According to Chojnacki, 100, “most widows remained in their marital residence for many years”; but cf. Guzzetti, 2002, 441, 461, who notes that only widows who swore not to remarry could remain in the homes of their deceased husbands.

44 ASV, NT, b. 946/c, Enrico Salomon, n. 313; Barausse, 330–31, doc. 4: “I, Anna, wife of Jacopo Bellini, painter in the parish of San Geminiano.”

45 Tiepolo’s book 2 statutes delineating guardianships were applicable to Jacopo and Giovanni’s circumstances. It is also possible, but less likely, that Franceschina, rather than Jacopo, became Giovanni’s guardian upon Nicolò’s death: see Bellavitis, 2008, 81–85.

46 For brief discussions of adoption in Renaissance Venice, see Romano, 1996, 99–101; Bellavitis, 2008, 42–44.

47 See Fogolari.
that of Lucia or the artist Mantegna when adopted by Squarcione, the adopted individual was
expected to provide labor, but, according to Venetian law, an adopted son remained outside the
paternal authority of the adoptive father, and therefore could depart from the adoptive family in
accordance with the terms of any legal contract that he might have signed pertaining to the
adoption. ⁴⁹ In still other cases the adopted child could be treated like a biological one. ⁵⁰ Whether
Jacopo was Giovanni’s adoptive father or simply his legal guardian, Giovanni was certainly
raised as if he were Jacopo’s child.

LEGAL EMANCIPATION

In 1459 Giovanni resided in the Venetian parish of San Lio rather than in Jacopo’s household in
San Geminiano, implying that he had previously been emancipated. ⁵¹ In fifteenth-century Venice
and elsewhere, the legal concept of emancipation broadly defined an individual’s entitlements
and his relationship to the family workshop, and thus requires some explanation. ⁵² Emancipation
derived from the classical Roman principle of sovereign paternal power (patria potestas), which,
as mentioned earlier, granted the patriarch of the family rights over all his legitimate male
descendants along the male line. Legitimately born children were legal dependents of their

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⁴⁸ Romano, 1996, 99. For similar examples, see ibid., 99–101. For the case of Anna Girardi — taken into Lucrezia
Bernardi Righi’s home at age four (evidently as a servant), and later becoming Lucrezia’s heir — see Ambrosini,
451n97.

⁴⁹ In Venice, paternal power over the adopted son did not pass to the adoptive father: Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139. The
painter Squarcione, capitalizing on what, arguably, were loopholes in labor laws, adopted apprentices — Mantegna
prior to 1445, Marco Zoppo in 1455, Giovanni Vendramini in 1466, and perhaps others — presumably because it
was less expensive to adopt one than to pay one. For a discussion, see Shaw and Boccia-Shaw, 53n66. For Zoppo,
see Armstrong, 3–6. In Venetian law such sons, adopted with their own consent, were termed arrogati and had
rights of succession without being under the paternal authority of the adoptive father: Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139.

⁵₀ Cessi, 1938, 4:24:201:139.

⁵¹ For San Lio in 1459, see ASV, NT, b. 727, Giuseppe Moisis, cc. 1⁵⁻⁻²⁷, n. 32; Baraussse, 334, doc. 16.

⁵² Emancipation in Renaissance Venice has not yet received an in-depth study as it has for Florence in Kuehn, 1982.
fathers until the children were emancipated, which did not occur when they reached a given age or were married, but rather only through a legal act of emancipation or by the death of the father (or in rare cases by adoption).53

In theory a father had the right to his unemancipated son’s movable property, to the usufruct from his son’s inherited immovable property, and to the income from his son’s labor.54 To make a binding contract in Renaissance Venice, an unemancipated son needed either power of attorney from his father or the permission and signatures of two magistrates from the Court of the Examiner.55 When writing a contract, Venetian notaries were careful to record whether the person’s father was dead (quondam), whether the person was emancipated (emancipatus a patre meo), or whether he had his father’s permission (de licentia dicti patris mei).56

A legal act of emancipation, or the death of the father, liberated the son, making him a homo sui iuris, possessed with full legal rights, and a paterfamilias (patriarch of his own family) under the law.57 In Venice, the contractual act of emancipation required a legal instrument called a charter of emancipation (carta emancipationis), consented to by the father, signed by witnesses, recorded by a notary or magistrate, and subsequently registered in the Cancelleria

53 Sons might remain unemancipated for the majority of their lives, and, as stated in the Glossa ordinaria, a man in his sixties could still very well be under the authority of his father: “etiam sexagenarius . . . in potestate est”: ibid., 177n8.

54 Cessi, 1938, 4:8:184–86. Although the earnings of an unemancipated son were the property of his father, many jurists allowed general exceptions to be made, and often the unemancipated son was allowed to keep payment for his labor: Kuehn, 1982, 20.

55 Cessi, 1938, 1:37:69, as discussed in Connell, 37–38, who notes that the rights of unemancipated sons were not uniform throughout Italy, and in certain areas and under certain conditions might include the authority to make contracts.

56 Connell, 41.

57 Kuehn, 1982, 12.
inferiore as a public record because it involved the ownership of property.\textsuperscript{58} Fathers had little incentive, however, to emancipate sons who labored in the family workshop; the father as patriarch signed the contracts, the sons were bound to the father, and the sons’ labor did not require payment. Instead, the legitimate sons would eventually inherit the workshop and other property that the father owned, as was their legal right.\textsuperscript{59}

Some historians have wondered how Giovanni Bellini was able to depart from Jacopo’s household by 1459.\textsuperscript{60} If Giovanni was indeed Nicolò’s legitimate son, however, then he legally had the right to do so, that is, to establish his own household and become patriarch of his own family, because he would have been emancipated when his father, Nicolò, died. (It is doubtful whether a charter of emancipation ever existed for either Giovanni or Gentile, and none has been found.)\textsuperscript{61} In contrast, Jacopo’s biological son Gentile continued to reside with his father, in all likelihood under paternal authority (\textit{in patris potestate}) until Jacopo’s death in 1470/71, at which

\textsuperscript{58} Connell, 38; cf. Kuehn, 1982, 15. When fathers did emancipate their sons in fifteenth-century Venice, the sons typically (but not always) were expected to make up the loss of income to their father. Otherwise the father might not consent to a charter of emancipation. Examples are found in Connell, 41–42.

\textsuperscript{59} Connell, 39: “Sons who remained in business with their fathers were unlikely to be emancipated from them.”

\textsuperscript{60} Lucco, 2008, 21, hypothesizes that Giovanni was living in San Lio in 1459 with his biological mother. Bätschmann, 2008, 19–22, writes that “[w]e are missing an important document related to Giovanni’s early independence, namely the notarial deed of emancipation that would have released him from his father’s custody” and that the San Lio residence “must have been part of a strategy developed by Jacopo Bellini . . . to establish a second workshop in order to compete successfully with their rivals,” i.e., the Vivarini. Fletcher, 2004, 25, speculates that Giovanni was illegitimate, which “must have precipitated his departure from home.” Both Goffen, 1989, 262, and Robertson, 11–12, view Giovanni’s living in San Lio, apart from Jacopo, as suggesting that he was already married by 1459.

\textsuperscript{61} No \textit{carta emancipationis} for either Giovanni or Gentile Bellini exists where one might expect to find it, that is, in ASV, Cancelleria inferiore. Miscellanea, notai diversi, bb. 32–33. The absence of a document from the Venetian archives, however, particularly one from the Quattrocento, should rarely, if ever, be employed as negative proof.
point Gentile became emancipated. Gentile then continued to live in San Geminiano, apparently in his father’s home workshop, for the duration of his life.\footnote{Aside from a period in 1464 when Gentile resided in an apartment in the Procuratie Vecchie, adjacent to the church and in his home parish of San Geminiano, probably while painting the organ doors for the Church of San Marco in Venice; ASV, NT, b. 46, Nicolò [de] Avanzo, n. 116, 29 February 1463 [m.v.]; published in Bode, Gronau, and Hadeln, 89. Cf. Bätschmann, 2008, 19; Fletcher, 2004, 15.}

Establishing a household was a major expense in Renaissance Venice, and was typically funded by a wife’s dowry.\footnote{Renaissance Venice was home to a superabundance of young men without adequate capital to establish independent households, a collective social problem ameliorated in part by the Scuole Grandi, Venice’s wealthiest social institutions, which dispensed as much as 30--35 percent of their charity, and sometimes even more, to maidens in the form of dowry trusts in order to “make marriage economically possible for persons who could not otherwise have afforded to set up house on their own”: Pullan, 1971, 183--84.} Yet according to extant documents, it is uncertain whether Giovanni Bellini was married prior to relocating to San Lio.\footnote{Lucco, 2008, 21, hypothesizes that he was living with his biological mother. Bätschmann, 2008, 20--22, writes that, to establish a “workshop in San Lio around 1459, Giovanni required paternal support, that is, the paying out of his inheritance.” Goffen, 1989, 262, and Robertson, 11--12, suggest that Giovanni was married by 1459 and thus already had received a dowry. Giovanni might have married more than once, but extant documents record exactly one wife, Ginevra Bocheta (d. 1489?): on 30 July 1485 Giovanni’s securitatis carta acknowledged that he had received at some unspecified date Ginevra’s dowry for 500 ducats (ASV, NT, b. 877, Lorenzo Stella, protocollo, c. 28; Barausse, 341, doc. 42), and on 23 September 1489 Ginevra, gravely ill, drew up a will and presumably died soon after: ibid., 341, doc. 45. In her testament Ginevra bequeaths much of her estate to her and Giovanni’s one child, Alvise, presumably already over the age of twenty given that she also left a bequest to her nephew, Sebastiano, which he was to receive upon reaching age twenty, a condition not stipulated for Alvise. In 1486 Alvise (d. December 1498/99) became a carrier of second ballots in the Venetian Chancellery; in 1487 his annual salary was increased from ten to twenty ducats to help support his studies; and the typical age for such a position was between twelve and twenty-two: Neff, 35, 42--43, 370. Thus Alvise was likely born 1464--69. Hence it is possible that Giovanni was married to Ginevra prior to 1459, as some scholars have suggested: Goffen, 1989, 282; Robertson, 11--12. Goffen, 1989, 262n5, proposes that Giovanni might have had a first wife named Marieta, who was married to a “Joannes pictor” living in San Geminiano in 1482, but Giovanni at this time was apparently already married to Ginevra; moreover he was documented as a resident of Santa Marina in 1481, 1484, and 1485: Barausse, 339--40, doc. 38, 341, doc. 42; Agosti, 2009, 102, 169n9.} As Nicolò’s legitimate son, however, he would have inherited half of his father’s estate, which was rather large, as indicated by Nicolò’s will of 1424 — and more sizeable still had the estate been successfully invested in the years since Nicolò’s death.\footnote{Giovanni’s birth annulled Nicolò’s will of 1424 (Griphio, 1606, “Rubriche delli decreti civili,” M.Cons.1418.29.Marzo, r. XII, 6), which was legally required to mention all legitimate sons, and hence Nicolò probably died intestate; if such was the case, then his two legitimate sons, Giovanni and Jacopo, would presumably have received half of his estate. A 1489 document also notes that “Giovanni Bellini, son of Nicolò, painter in San Geminiano,” was the bequestor of “the church of San Lio” (ASV, NT, b. 134, doc. 51). It is possible that Nicolò left this church to Giovanni before his death, or it is possible that the church was bequeathed to Giovanni by his widow, Ginevra. It is also possible that Giovanni was married to Ginevra before his father’s death, in which case Nicolò’s will would not have mentioned Giovanni as a legitimate son. Based on extant evidence, it is not clear whether Giovanni was married prior to 1459, as some scholars have suggested: Goffen, 1989, 262, 279, 282, 362; Griphio, 1606, “Rubriche delli decreti civili,” M.Cons.1418.29.Marzo, r. XII, 6. Some scholars have put forward other explanations for this evidence, such as that Giovanni might have had a first wife named Marieta, who was married to a “Joannes pictor” living in San Geminiano in 1482, but Giovanni at this time was apparently already married to Ginevra; moreover he was documented as a resident of Santa Marina in 1481, 1484, and 1485: Barausse, 339--40, doc. 38, 341, doc. 42; Agosti, 2009, 102, 169n9.} Giovanni might also have succeeded to his mother’s dowry, had she died...
young. Thus his inheritance alone, whether or not he received a wife’s dowry, likely provided Giovanni with more than sufficient funds to establish a residence.

Several historians have questioned why, in her will of 1471, Jacopo Bellini’s wife, Anna Rinversi bequeathed her estate to her sons Gentile and Nicolò without naming Giovanni. Since the discourse until now has assumed that Giovanni was the son of Jacopo, some have understood his absence from Anna’s will as demonstrating that he was not her son and thus illegitimate; others have argued that the omission alone does not prove illegitimacy. Instead, Giovanni as Nicolò’s son would have been Anna Rinversi’s brother-in-law, and not her son. Thus, she was not legally required to bequeath a legacy to Giovanni and, in her will, in fact named none of her affinal relatives, neither her sister-in-law, Elena, nor her nephew-by-marriage Leonardo (ca. 1424–ca. 1490), whom she and Jacopo had helped raise from when he was about six or eight years old.

have divided equally Nicolò’s estate, after taking into consideration Jacopo’s monetary debt to his father, mentioned in the 1424 will: Cessi, 1938, 3:5–6:125–6, 4:14:200–205. Joost-Gaugier, 1974, 37n51, notes that “Nicolò Bellini’s will shows that he must have been a man of considerable substance,” and analyzes the will in some depth. Had Jacopo as Giovanni’s legal guardian invested Giovanni’s inheritance as prudently as he had run his own workshop, Giovanni might have succeeded to a sizeable amount of capital.

66 The process of an underage son applying for his mother’s dowry is described in Guzzetti, 2002, 430, 457. See also Kuehn, 1982, 107.

67 Lucco, 2008, 30, interpreted Giovanni’s omission as evidence that he was not Anna’s son, and thus illegitimate; Humfrey, 2004, 5, does not believe the omission proves illegitimacy; Eisler, 1989, 532, writes that his “name is omitted for either his illegitimacy, or the unlikely possibility of his being the issue of an earlier, unknown marriage of Jacopo’s”; Robertson, 11, argues that the omission does not prove that Giovanni was not Anna’s son, and suggests that Giovanni “had already received his portion of the estate under Jacopo’s will, which has not come to light.” Goffen, 1989, 3, describes his absence merely as a “sin of omission” that does not necessarily mean that he was not her son; Fiocco, 6, implies that the omission meant that he was not Anna’s son, and, since Fiocco also believes that Giovanni was legitimate, he theorizes that Giovanni was the son of a previous wife of Jacopo’s, or a legitimated son from a previous liaison.

68 According to a contract dated 23 August 1443, some twelve years earlier in 1431 Jacopo Bellini had taken his nephew Leonardo (born ca. 1424) into his home and raised him: ASV, CIN, b. 74–75, Francesco Elmis, reg. XXIII, c. 202; Barausse, 332–33, doc. 11. Unlike Giovanni, however, Leonardo was never described or known as Jacopo’s son, presumably for several reasons, including that Leonardo’s mother Elena, Jacopo’s sister, was alive in 1443 when Leonardo reached adulthood: ibid. Jacopo’s wife, Anna, was not unusual in omitting affines from her will:
Since its publication in 1929, the Bellini notarial document of 13 September 1440 has generally been interpreted as a legal act dissolving a business co-owned by two adult brothers, Jacopo and Giovanni, sons of Nicolò Bellini, rather than as a divisio separating a fraterna compagnia as it is interpreted here. This brother, the so-called Giovanni Bellini il Vecchio, would have been Jacopo’s business associate, as well as half-brother, and born illegitimate because the 1424 will of their father, Nicolò, does not mention a son named Giovanni. As has been demonstrated here, however, the Giovanni Bellini named in the divisio must have been born legitimate between 1424 and 1428, and in 1440 was almost certainly living in Jacopo Bellini’s household. This Giovanni was not illegitimate, nor at that time could he have been a mature artist. The painter Giovanni Bellini il Vecchio, conjectured by some historians to account for the divisio of 1440, is a fiction.

Chojnacki, 298n40, notes in a study of fifty married Venetian women’s wills from 1305–1450 that only 5.6 percent of the 215 total bequests to relatives went to affines. The percentage would likely have been even lower in widows’ wills. Intriguingly, Anna in her will did not mention her own daughter, Nicolosia. Had Anna died intestate, Nicolosia, although married, would have been entitled to an equal share of her mother’s property. Emancipated and unemancipated sons also succeeded to their intestate mothers’ property: Cessi, 1938, 4:27:207–208, with glosses. Thus Nicolosia, Mantegna’s wife, might have died prior to Anna’s will of 25 November 1471, yet certainly after, or during, the birth of her son Ludovico in ca. 1470: Signorini, 103n3. For Nicolosia, see Iotta; Lightbown, 244, 248. It is most unlikely, though not entirely impossible, that Nicolosia was the daughter of Jacopo’s father, Nicolò, rather than of Jacopo and Anna; such would provide an alternative explanation for her absence from Anna’s will.

See Eisler, 1989, 33, for an example of the accepted interpretation.

The extant documentary evidence for the fifteenth-century painter referred to as Giovanni Bellini il Vecchio is meager, highly speculative, and open to interpretation: but cf. Billanovich, 359–60. Complicating matters is the documented existence of a Quattrocento painter working in the Veneto named Giovanni Pietro Bellini, the son of a Venetian named Stefano: Varanini, 7. It is unclear whether this is the same painter that, in 1621, Guarini, 359, called “Giovanni Bellino Ferrarese” and described as buried in S. Nicolò in Ferrara, or whether he is responsible for a painting of the Coronation of the Virgin (Osano), now in Ferrara (Pinacoteca Nazionale di Ferrara), which is signed, “Giovanni Bellini made me,” a signature that appears to be original: see Bentini, cat.45, 40–41. In Venice there seems to have been a Giovanni Bellini, priest of San Giovanni in Bragora, documented in the early 1440s: see Bode, Gronau, and Hadeln, 81. Bertoni, 101n2, notes that a “Zohan Bellini” transported wine from Ferrarese territory to Venice in 1436, but this cannot be the Giovanni Bellini named in the 1440 Bellini divisio, who would have been between the ages of eight and twelve at that time.
It is still possible that there were two Giovanni Bellinis, and that the son of Nicolò named in the *divisio* is not the same as the famous painter, who was otherwise first documented in 1459. But if they were not the same, then there were two boys named Giovanni Bellini, both under the age of sixteen in 1440, both living in the Venetian parish of San Geminiano, both lineal descendants of Nicolò Bellini and both closely connected to, and likely residing in, Jacopo Bellini’s household, one becoming a renowned painter, and the other, Jacopo’s half-brother, leaving not a single conclusive trace of his existence except for the *divisio* of 1440. It is far more likely that these two were one and the same.

**Relative Ages of Giovanni and Gentile**

If the hypothesis presented here is correct, then Giovanni was older than Gentile, who was born no earlier than 1429. In his 1550 edition of the *Vite*, Giorgio Vasari describes Gentile Bellini as younger than Giovanni. In both the 1550 and 1568 editions, Vasari writes that the Venetian Senate decided to send Gentile to the Ottoman court in Constantinople because Giovanni was too old. During the course of the nineteenth century, amid general questioning of Vasari as a reliable source, art historians both adduced the Renaissance Venetian humanist Francesco Negro’s account that Gentile was born first and began to reverse the order of their birth.

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71 ASV, NT, b. 727, Giuseppe Moisis, cc. 1”–2”, n. 32; Barausse, 334–35, doc. 16.


73 Ibid., 436: “Onde considerando il Senato che per essere Giovanni in età che male poteva sopportare disagi . . . si risolverono di mandarvi Gentile suo fratello.”

74 Note that in 1648, Ridolfi, 1:39, reversed their birth order by claiming that Gentile was born in 1421, following an apparent typographical error made by Vasari-Barocchi, 3:438, who stated that Gentile was near eighty when he died in 1501 rather than in 1507. Nineteenth-century scholars producing Negro’s statement that Giovanni was younger than Gentile include Morelli, 98–99n7; Mündler, 36–37; and Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1871, 1:117n1.
Gentile’s art seemed more archaic. Moreover, it was Gentile who inherited Jacopo’s drawings and control of Jacopo’s workshop in San Geminiano. Thus many scholars began to doubt and then discard Vasari’s claim, and suggested instead that Giovanni was younger than Gentile, a proposal that became widely accepted in the twentieth century.

The scholars who have argued that Giovanni was younger than Gentile Bellini (b. 1429 or later) have used a number of reasons to justify their proposals. First, as mentioned, a contemporary Venetian source, the humanist Francesco Negro, referred to Gentile as “maior natu,” or born first, when both Giovanni and Gentile were still alive. Second, Jacopo Bellini, in his Gattamelata altarpiece of 1460, signed the work with his own name followed by that of Gentile and finally Giovanni, who as a consequence has been presumed the younger. And third, in what has been identified by some scholars as a group portrait of the extended Bellini family of painters by Gentile Bellini, it has been suggested that the kneeling figures were depicted in order of descending age: Jacopo Bellini, Leonardo Bellini, Andrea Mantegna, Gentile Bellini, and finally Giovanni, presumably the youngest of the group (fig. 11).

Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1871, 1:117–18, 139–94, might also have believed that a revised birth order better reflected the chronology for Giovanni’s extant paintings that they were attempting to establish.

ASV, NT, b. 361, Notaio Francesco Elmis, carta sciolta, n. 2; Barausse, 338, doc. 31.

Gentile Bellini was born after 6 February 1429, the date his then-childless mother, Anna, drew up her will: ASV, NT, b. 946/c, Enrico Salomon, n. 313; Barausse, 330–31, doc. 4. For a summary of arguments for and against Giovanni having been the elder, see Gibbons, 1963.

Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Francesco Negro, Peri archon, MS. Lat. VI, 6 (=2753), 109: “And something far more wonderful is that, with of course their [the Venetian city fathers’] authorization, the elder Gentile, at the behest of the Turkish Sultan Mehmet, was dispatched all the way to Byzantium.” Fletcher, 1981, 453n1, notes that Negro apparently completed his manuscript before 1498; according to Agosti, 2007, 97n37, he completed it in 1493–94.


Gibbons, 1963, 55–58, refers to two inscribed late fifteenth-century medals by Vittore Gambello as the “most
Much of the above evidence for supposing that Gentile was older, however, may be interpreted otherwise or should be considered alongside contradictory information. First, Francesco Negro’s description of Gentile as *maior natu* must be weighed against that of Jacopo Filippo Foresti (1434–1520), who, in his regularly updated *Supplementum chronicarum*, described Gentile in 1503 as the younger brother (*Gentilis minimus frater*), also when both Giovanni and Gentile were still alive. Second, in signing Gentile’s name directly after his own in the Gattamelata altarpiece, Jacopo might have been displaying a natural familial preference for his son-by-blood and the future inheritor of his workshop, or perhaps was merely recording Gentile’s possibly more sizeable contribution to the altarpiece. And third, the argument that Gentile depicted the Bellini family — if that is who they are, which is questionable — according
to birth order presupposes that Giovanni was the youngest, when the arrangement more likely defies a simple algorithmic explanation. In short, there is no conclusive evidence that Gentile was the elder.

**FAMILY RELATIONS IN THE SOURCES**

The most significant challenges to the conclusions of this chapter would come from the many primary sources that described Giovanni Bellini as Jacopo’s son or Gentile’s brother or Mantegna’s brother-in-law. For instance, Giovanni Bellini witnessed a testament in 1459, “Giovanni, son of master Jacopo Bellini”; he was named in his *securitatis carta* of 1485, in which he acknowledged receipt of his wife’s dowry, as “Giovanni, son of the deceased Jacopo”; and he witnessed a contract in 1487 as “Giovanni Bellini, painter, son of the deceased master Jacopo.” Jacopo Bellini signed the Gattamelata altarpiece of 1460 as a work by him and his sons Gentile and Giovanni. In his will of 18 February 1507, Gentile described Giovanni as “my

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82 The figure second from left has also been identified as Nicolò Bellini, Gentile’s brother: see Brown, 1969, 372n1. While Lucco, 2008, 21, writes that these portraits are “almost always identified as members of the Bellini family,” some have disagreed. Fortini Brown, 1988, 252, 285, considers the portraits unlikely to have represented the Bellini family because only Jacopo had been a member of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, and he had died about thirty years prior to the painting’s execution. Instead, she suggests that Gentile might have depicted himself with the four top officers of the Scuola’s *banca*, two of whom were chancery officials who would normally wear red togas, as are depicted. Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 78–79, argues that the kneeling men were members of the Cornaro family, who had enjoyed a long relationship with the Scuola. The kneeling figures have also been identified as members of the Vendramin family: see Fortini Brown, 1988, 285.

83 The 1459 testament (ASV, NT, b. 727, Giuseppe Moisis, cc. 1v–2v, n. 32; Barausse, 334–35, doc. 16): “ser Iohannes filius magistri Iacobi Bellini Sancti Leonis.” The 1485 *securitatis carta* (ASV, NT, b. 877, Lorenzo Stella, protocollo, c. 28; Barausse, 341, doc. 42): “ioannes Bellino quondam domini Iacobi.” The 1487 contract (ibid., doc. 44): “Iohanne Bellino pictore quondam domini Iacobi.” In the 1459 testament, Giovanni’s name and that of his co-witness were crossed off and replaced with the names of two other witnesses; Barausse, 334, plausibly proposes that Giovanni had testified to a first version of the will drawn up on 30 January 1459, and to which several clauses were subsequently added on 2 April 1459, thus requiring the document to be witnessed a second time by attestors who happened not to have been the original two.

84 Although the altarpiece signature is lost, it was recorded in 1590 by Fra Valerio Polidoro: see Callegari, 30: “Jacobi Bellini Veneti patris ac Gentilis et Joannis natorum opus.”
dearest brother.”85 And several contemporary and later observers, including the aforementioned Foresti, Negro, and Vasari, as well as Sanudo and Isabella d’Este, among others, described Giovanni as either Gentile’s brother or Jacopo’s son or Mantegna’s brother-in-law.86

There are at least two reasons why Giovanni might have been considered Jacopo’s son and Gentile’s brother. First, as has been suggested, Jacopo Bellini might have adopted Giovanni. In legal documents in Renaissance Venice, notaries often referred to adopted sons simply as sons, and hence it is sometimes impossible to determine from them whether a child was adopted or biological. For instance, the 1440 Bellini divisive was witnessed by “Ercole, son of the deceased Jacobello de Fiore.”87 In another legal document Ercole likewise was described as “son of master Jacobello de Fiore.”88 Ercole was referred to as Jacobello’s “adopted son,” however, in Jacobello’s last will of 2 October 1439.89 When Ercole’s adopted status was integral to the legal document, it needed to be mentioned. Theoretically, adopted sons were always identified as such in their adoptive fathers’ testaments because, under the law, their inheritance rights differed from those of legitimate sons.90 Jacopo Bellini’s will would undoubtedly clarify his biological relationship to Giovanni and whether he had, in fact, adopted him, but unfortunately Jacopo’s will has not been found.

85 ASV, NT, b. 271, Bernardo Cavagnis, n. 307; Barausse, 354, doc. 105: “Iohannes frater meus carissimus.”

86 When Gentile Bellini was buried on 23 February 1507, Sanudo, I diarii, 6:552, wrote, “He is survived by his brother Giovanni Bellini”; when Giovanni died, Sanudo (ibid., 23:256) referred on 29 November 1516 to “Gentile Bellini his brother” (“Zentil Belin suo fradelo”); and on two other occasions, Sanudo, De origine, 34, 146, referred to Gentile and Giovanni as “brothers” (“fratelli”). Isabella d’Este’s letter of 18 October 1505 (Barausse, 351, doc. 94) to Giovanni: “Mantegna, your brother in law.”

87 See Document 1 in Appendix A: “ser Hercules quondam ser Iacobi de Flore.”

88 Fogolari, 49–50: “Herculi filio magistri Jacobelli de Flore.”

89 de Mas-Latrie, 199: “Herculi filio meo adoptivo.”

90 Unless, perhaps, if the adopted son had been legitimated.
The alternate, and perhaps more likely possibility — because if Jacopo had indeed been instated as Giovanni’s legal guardian, there might have been no compelling reason to adopt him — is that Jacopo had raised Giovanni as his son from a very young age, perhaps infancy, and in such a manner that Giovanni was accepted by family and community as Jacopo’s son without the formality of legal adoption. As demonstrated in the case of Jacobello’s adopted son Ercole, written or inscribed personal names in fifteenth-century Northern Italy, as elsewhere in Western Europe during the Renaissance, did not always convey biological fact. They might also project how a person was known, or desired to be known, by his community.91 For instance, a Renaissance Venetian painter named Vittore, son of Matteo, who had worked with Giovanni Bellini for a number of years, decided to call himself Vittore Belliniano, and was referred to as such, rather than as Matteo’s son, in legal documents that included his own will and even that of his mother.92 In the early fifteenth century, when most Venetians did not have surnames and when most births were not officially recorded, Renaissance Venetian notaries evidently were given a degree of latitude when identifying individuals in legal documents, when doing so did not conflict with the expressed purposes of the document itself.

After his father Nicolò’s death, Giovanni must have been taken into the household of his much older half-brother, Jacopo, where he was trained by him to be a painter, and in all probability was treated by the Bellini family and local community as Jacopo’s own son and

91 The bibliography on Renaissance communal and civic identity is large. For a recent consideration, see Martin, 1–20, 161–76. Examples of altering one’s name in Renaissance Venice are numerous, even among painters, and include Jacopo Bellini’s nephew, Leonardo di Paolo Remarius (Remarius: either a surname or his occupation, an oarmaker), who called himself Leonardo Bellini, and Girolamo Dente, who was attached to Titian’s workshop and called himself Girolamo di Tiziano, although he was not Titian’s son. For Leonardo Bellini, see Bauer-Eberhardt; for Girolamo di Tiziano, see Tagliaferro et al., 102–06.

92 Paoletti, 1894, 19–20. For Vittore Belliniano, see Rearick.
Gentile’s brother. Decades later, when Giovanni witnessed a will, acknowledged receipt of his wife’s dowry, and witnessed a contract, the notaries described him as Jacopo’s son, apparently recording his communal rather than biological identity, which in these cases (unlike the 1440 divisio) had no direct bearing on the legal function of the documents.

Jacopo’s inscription on the Gattamelata altarpiece naming Giovanni as his son does not prove that they were biologically father and son; rather, it registers that Jacopo had accepted Giovanni as his son, whether legally adopted or not. Contemporary or later observers, including Foresti, Negro, Sanudo, Isabella d’Este, Vasari, and others, were presumably only aware of Giovanni’s communal identity as Jacopo’s son, which of course meant that he was Gentile’s brother and Mantegna’s brother-in-law. Most of these observers surely imagined him to be Jacopo’s legitimate son. They never suggested that Giovanni was adopted or illegitimate (or not Jacopo’s son); yet Giovanni was almost certainly one of these because legitimate sons had to be mentioned in wills, and Anna’s last will omitted him. The aforementioned and other contemporary and near-contemporary observers accepted, or at least chose to record, Giovanni’s well-established communal identity.

In Gentile’s last testament (he was reported buried five days later on 23 February 1507), he referred affectionately to Giovanni as “dearest brother,” an appellation that would not have conflicted with the function of the document. The two had grown up as brothers, had considered each other brothers, and had been known throughout their lives, in and outside of Venice, as brothers — which represented a shared experience in excess of seventy-five years that Gentile could hardly be expected to set aside in order to privilege on his deathbed their strict biological
relationship, and thus refer to Giovanni as “my dearest uncle.”

**Ramifications of Giovanni’s proposed birth date**

Keith Christiansen has written, “The problem with opting for an early birth date — and to my mind it is an insurmountable one — is that it leaves a full decade of activity in the 1450s with hardly any works.” The problem of situating Giovanni’s birth year in 1424/28, however, is not insurmountable. Because of the nature of Venetian family workshops, a number of artists worked in relative obscurity during the first decade of their professional life. In 1916 Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), who dated Gentile’s birth to 1429 and Giovanni’s to ca. 1430, proposed that the artists’ “delayed maturity” and the “exceeding scarcity of their earlier works, were in each case due to the same cause, namely that they had had no independent career till they were middle-aged men, because they remained until then in their father’s employ as his assistants.” From the 1440s to the 1460s Jacopo completed a number of major commissions that required assistants: Giovanni and Gentile probably assisted him on a now-lost narrative cycle of seventeen scenes from the New Testament that had decorated the Sala Capitolare in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista; sometime after 1444 Jacopo executed a series of paintings, now destroyed, for the Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, presumably another multi-year project involving assistants; in 1460, as noted earlier, Jacopo signed the

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93 Another possibility is that the notary, in rendering Gentile’s (presumably voiced) last wishes into the legal language of a testament, appended to Giovanni’s name without outside prompting, “my dearest brother,” a formulaic apposition that occurs frequently in Renaissance Venetian wills.

94 Christiansen, 2004a, 53.

95 Berenson, 1916, 62 (italics in original). For Gentile’s and Giovanni’s dates of birth, see Berenson, 1901, 89–90.

96 According to Ridolfi, 1:35–36. See Fortini Brown, 269–70.
Gattamelata altarpiece with his own name followed by that of Gentile and Giovanni; 98 and Giovanni and Jacopo, perhaps with Gentile, executed four triptychs for Santa Maria della Carità from 1460–64, Giovanni himself completing much or all of the polyptych depicting Saint Sebastian on the central panel. 99

Other Venetian artists similarly worked for a long time in family workshops. Alvise Vivarini (ca. 1442/53–1503/05) was probably about thirty when he commenced his independent career in ca. 1476. He either spent his early years as his father Antonio’s assistant or else began his vocation late. 100 The sculptor Antonio Lombardo (ca. 1458–ca. 1516), who had moved to Venice as a boy, executed his first documented independent commission in 1500–04, apparently in his forties. “His earlier career,” wrote Sarah Blake McHam, “which probably spanned about fifteen years, had been spent in the family workshop collaborating on commissions awarded his father, Pietro.” 101 Gentile Bellini (1429/35–1507) has no extant works securely datable to the 1450s. He probably began his independent career in the early to mid-1460s at age thirty or slightly older. 102 Indeed, the birthdate of most Venetian artists in this period is unknown. 103 Hence the normative age at which a typical Venetian Quattrocento artist who was raised in his family’s workshop would commence an autonomous career remains unclear.

97 Fortini Brown, 268.
101 McHam, 39, 159n72. For the argument that Antonio was born in the late 1460s, see Maek-Gérard, 122–23.
102 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 11–12, 140.
103 Evidence provided by extant documents, even when integrated with other primary sources, remains insufficient to calculate exact years of birth for most Venetian Quattrocento artists, and instead often delimits a range that spans several years or even a decade or more.
apparent “delayed maturity” would seem to have been unexceptional in the Quattrocento Venetian artistic world, perhaps unlike that of Florence.

Despite Christiansen’s statement, a number of scholars have argued that Giovanni’s independent career had, in fact, commenced by the early 1450s. In 1949 Giuseppe Fiocco, recognizing the conflict between Giovanni’s omission from Anna Rinversi’s last testament and the artist’s apparent legitimate status, argued that he must therefore have been Jacopo’s offspring from a previous, unknown marriage (or a legitimated son from a previous liaison), and hence born ca. 1425 but certainly “before 1429, when Jacopo’s wife [Anna] was already pregnant with her first son, Gentile.”104 Roberto Longhi, accepting that birthdate, proceeded to date many of Giovanni’s early known works to the 1450s. Thus he placed the Amsterdam Madonna (fig. 12) between 1450 and 1455, a work that had been previously dated to ca. 1460 or slightly later.105

Longhi’s proposed chronology was informed by an ulterior motive: to reverse the lines of artistic influence that ran from Mantegna to Bellini, because, he declared, “today, for all of us, Giovanni Bellini stands higher as an example of independence of spirit than Mantegna and, a fortiori, than every other Venetian or Paduan contemporary.”106 Since most Bellini specialists

104 Fiocco, 6: “La nascita del pittore doveva quindi cadere intorno al 1425, e certamente prima del 1429, quando la moglie di Jacopo era già gravida del primo figlio Gentile.” Lucco, 2008, 21; Christiansen, 2004a, 53, interpret Fiocco’s argument as suggesting that Jacopo, on moral grounds, would not have engaged in an extramarital relationship. More probably, Fiocco was responding to the question of how Giovanni could have been Jacopo’s legitimate son but not Anna’s.

105 Longhi, 278–79, places in ca. 1450 the Barber Institute Saint Jerome (dated ca. 1459 by Lucco, 2008, 136–38, cat. 2); between 1450–55 the Amsterdam Madonna and the Davis Madonna (both dated ca. 1460 by Lucco, 2008, 140–42, cat. 3; 146, cat. 5), the Correr Crucifixion (dated ca. 1471 by Lucco, 2008, 182–84, cat. 15), and other works; and between 1455–60 the Correr Transfiguration (ca. 1464 by Lucco, 2008, 148–50, cat. 6), the National Gallery Blood of the Redeemer (ca. 1467–68 by Lucco, 2008, 152–54, cat. 7), the Louvre’s Sign of the Redeemer, the London National Gallery’s Agony in the Garden, and the Brera Pietà, among other works. For the Agony in the Garden, see Bätschmann, 2008, 43–47, who dated it to ca. 1460–65; and for the Brera Pietà, see Bätschmann, 2008, 96–100, who dated it to ca. 1465–70.

106 Longhi, 278.
believe that Mantegna was the leading participant in his early artistic duologue with Bellini, Longhi’s ideological stance may have made it easier to reject his proposed chronology. In any event, from the 1950s to the 1990s, most scholars assumed that Bellini was born later, in the early to mid-1430s. Rona Goffen (1944–2004), for instance, argued for a birth year of 1433/36, yet maintained that Giovanni’s independent career had commenced by the early 1450s, or even the late 1440s, but that his early works still had been strongly influenced by Mantegna.

In 1990, Mauro Lucco argued that Giovanni was born toward ca. 1440 and commenced his independent career in ca. 1459. He dated the Amsterdam Madonna, which Longi contended was executed in the early 1450s, to 1460 or soon thereafter. In the past decade many leading scholars have come to believe that such a chronology, or one similar, not only reflects the available visual and documentary evidence, but also provides the framework for a more plausible development of the artist’s style from the late 1450s into the 1460s. Lucco’s proposed chronology seemed more and more to be achieving consensus.

Thus it probably came as quite a surprise to these and likeminded scholars when the eminent art historian Luciano Bellosi (1936–2011), in an essay on the young Giovanni Bellini for the catalogue of the 2008 Mantegna exhibition at the Louvre, resituated many of Bellini’s works from the 1460s or later back to the 1450s. Bellosi argued that four miniatures in the Marcello manuscript of the life of St. Maurice (figs. 13–16), firmly dated to 1453, were early

107 Pallucchini, 9–10; Robertson, 11; Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 10; Tempestini, 1992, 305. In 1953 Coletti, lviii and n82, still favored Fiocco’s proposed date of ca. 1425.


110 Lucco, 2008, 140–42, cat. 3.

works by Giovanni, an attribution that had been proposed in 1968 by Giles Robertson, affirmed to some extent by Lightbown in 1986 and Eisler in 1989, but which in recent years had become less plausible as Bellini’s generally accepted birth year moved toward 1440.\textsuperscript{112} With the Marcello illuminations as his point of departure, Bellosi reconstructed Giovanni’s early stylistic development, dating the Amsterdam \textit{Madonna} to ca. 1456–57 and situating Bellini’s birth year in ca. 1430.\textsuperscript{113} In contrast to Longhi, however, Bellosi emphatically affirmed Mantegna’s influence over much of Giovanni’s production in the 1450s, while at the same time suggesting that Mantegna might also have benefited from a cross-fertilization of artistic ideas in his more Bellinesque works, such as the figure of \textit{Santa Giustina} in his \textit{San Luca Altarpiece}.\textsuperscript{114}

If the present chapter's proposed birth range of 1424/28 comes to be accepted, then specialists who have supported a later date for Bellini’s birth will need to reconsider, at least in some combination, whether Giovanni might have remained an assistant in Jacopo’s workshop for longer than they had imagined, his autonomous career perhaps commencing when the artist was in his mid- to late twenties or even early thirties (and thus conceivably in ca. 1458/59, as Lucco has maintained); and whether scholars such as Longhi, Goffen, and Bellosi were correct to date a number of Giovanni’s independent paintings to the 1450s, especially, of course, if one accepts the Marcello illuminations (1453) as autograph. It seems unlikely, however, that Longhi’s

\textsuperscript{112} Robertson, 17–20; Lightbown, 495; Eisler, 1989, 535. For other possible attributions, see Humfrey, 2011, 383n11.

\textsuperscript{113} Bellosi, 105, 120–21. Among the redatings in ibid., 104–05, are: the \textit{History of Drusiana} to 1453–55; the Johnson \textit{Madonna} and the Bergamo \textit{Pietà} to about the same time; the Correr Transfiguration slightly later; the drawing of the \textit{Crucifixion} in the British Museum, the Poldi-Pezzoli \textit{Pietà}, and the London National Gallery’s \textit{Agony in the Garden} to ca. 1456–57; the Louvre’s \textit{Sign of the Redeemer} and the Davis \textit{Madonna} soon after; the two miniatures in the \textit{Geographia} to a firmly dated 1459; the Brera \textit{Pietà} to about the same time; and so on with works into the 1460s.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 103 (cat. 25).
endeavor to exalt Giovanni to the position of primary determinant in his artistic association with Mantegna will ever be widely accepted, and Goffen and Bellosi have arguably demonstrated that, even by placing a number of Giovanni’s works a decade or so earlier, it need not be.

On the other end of Bellini’s life, it may be difficult for some to believe that the artist could have executed late works such as the National Gallery’s *Feast of the Gods* (1514) when he was well into his eighties, but thus it seems to be. After all, Titian (ca. 1485/90–1576) continued to execute masterpieces such as his final *Pietà* (ca. 1570–76) well into his eighties, and the numerous productive octogenarians in the history of the visual arts include Picasso, who was famously prolific during his last years until his death at ninety-one.115

**CONCLUSION**

Raised in Jacopo’s household, perhaps even from infancy, Giovanni grew up as Jacopo’s own son and Gentile’s brother. If the Bellini themselves, from Giovanni’s childhood, referred to Giovanni as a son or a brother, then there is no reason to imagine that anyone outside their family would have known otherwise. Inasmuch as their own contemporaries believed Giovanni and Gentile to be brothers, wrote of them in letters as brothers, described them in chronicles and extolled them in poetry as brothers, they have entered the history books incontrovertibly as brothers and as sons of Jacopo Bellini.

Nevertheless, Giovanni lived neither like Jacopo’s son nor like Gentile’s brother. While Jacopo was alive, Gentile remained in Jacopo’s home in the parish of San Geminiano, as expected from an unemancipated son, while Giovanni, as has been argued, was emancipated

115 For Titian’s late career, see Ferino-Pagden and Scirè; Humfrey, 2007, 196–217; Sohm, 2007, 83-104. For Picasso’s late career, see Gallwitz.
when his biological father, Nicolò, died, and thus was able to move out of the Bellini household by 1459 to establish his own residence while continuing ties with Jacopo’s workshop. Nor when Jacopo died was Giovanni treated as a biological son. Rather, it was Gentile who took over Jacopo’s workshop and inherited Jacopo’s notebooks and all his paintings, drawings, marbles, reliefs, and plaster casts, as well as all the tools and instruments pertaining to the workshop. Had Giovanni been Jacopo’s legitimate son, the law would have provided him with a share of Jacopo’s estate, but no evidence suggests that Giovanni inherited either such a share, or offsetting funds, or anything whatsoever from Jacopo. Only through the analysis of legal documents — and not through how the Bellini described each other or were described by their community — are their blood relationships able to be traced.

Chapter 2

THE RISE OF THE CITTADINI ORIGINARI

This chapter considers the early development of a social class of Venetians called the Cittadini Originari, which came to be officially defined as such only in the sixteenth century. A number of scholars have examined aspects of the class, but a monographic study of its formation has yet to appear. The following analysis explores the emergence of the Cittadini Originari so that later chapters can contextualize the social position of the Bellini family, who were born into this nascent class, and assess the influence of the emergent class on the success of the early Bellini workshop. The analysis also allows us to appreciate Gentile's aspirations to become, in his later years, a prominent member—indeed, a leader—of the Cittadini Originari.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND MISCONCEPTIONS

In his classic *Venice, a Maritime Republic* published in 1973, the eminent scholar Frederic Lane observed that, during the fourteenth century, a "middle class distinguished itself from the general populace and acquired the rank of 'citizens' (cittadini). They held themselves above manual employments considered merely 'mechanical.'"¹ In *Deconstructing Lane's Venice*, Eric Cochrane and Julius Kirshner objected that "Lane projects a law of 1569 back three centuries, which made non-manual occupations a prerequisite for new admissions to citizenship. He thus overlooks the fact that many of the new citizens for whom an occupation is recorded during the two preceding centuries actually worked with their hands."² Moreover, the authors take issue that:

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¹ Lane, 1973, 151.
² Cochrane and Kirshner, 1975, 328.
[The *cittadini*] in no sense corresponded to the "middle class" of modern industrial societies, as Lane supposes. Legally, the term *cittadini* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries referred to nobles as well as commoners and was never restricted to a particular group. In other words, the opposite of *cittadino* was not patrician or plebeian but what was defined as "foreign" by Venetian custom and statute. Above all, Lane is misled by his assumption that Giannotti’s three classes remained relatively constant and mutually isolated throughout the history of the Republic.3

A leader of Florence's brief Republic (1527-30) prior to the return of the Medici, Donato Giannotti had visited Venice several times and described in a manuscript, circulated by 1527 and published in 1540, a tripartite Venetian society composed of *gentilhomeni* (gentlemen or nobles), *cittadini* (citizens), and *popolari* (common people).4 Giannotti was not the first to observe these divisions. In the late fifteenth century, the Venetian nobleman and diarist Marin Sanudo had described Venice's "three kinds of inhabitants, gentlemen (*zentilhomeni*) who govern the state and the Republic . . . ; *cittadini*; and artisans or the lower class (*populo menudo)*.5 Yet, Giannotti had observed that his own tripartite model complicated earlier models of Venetian society set forward by the historian of Venice Marc Antonio Sabellico (c. 1436 – 1506) and others, who had instead described two principal social classes in Venice, nobles and non-nobles (*populare*), the latter of which included the *cittadini*.6

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3 Ibid., 328.
5 Sanudo, 1980, 22.
6 Giannotti, 1850, 29: "Io so che 'n questa divisione degli abitanti io sono di contraria opinione non solo al Sabellico (il quale de' due primi ne fa uno, e lo chiama popolare), ma ancora universalmente a molti altri, i quali non mettono gradi in quelli che non sono gentiluomini, ma tutti dicono essere popolari; sicome nel suo luogo meglio intenderete."
To further complicate matters, an anonymous sixteenth-century writer described two distinct classes of nobles: those who were eligible to vote on the Great Council and those who were not, the latter of whom he termed "private nobles (gentilhuomini privati)." And perhaps more confusingly, James Grubb observed that, of all the early modern writers who described Venice as either a bipartite system (Sabellico, Poggio Bracciolini, Gasparo Contarini, Paolo Paruta, Niccolò Machiavelli, Claude de Seyssel, Philippe de Commynes, et al) or a three-tiered order (Sanudo, Pruili, Gionnotti, et al), it was only the chancery secretary Antonio Milledonne in 1581 who first employed "the more technical term 'original citizens (cittadini originari),'" thus making a distinction between Venice's original and naturalized citizens (per privilegio).

Cochrane and Kirshner's response to Lane raises three problematic issues to which I've added a fourth. The first has been the tendency to project various characteristics of the Cittadini Originari, legally defined only in the sixteenth century, back to the fifteenth or fourteenth centuries. As Cochrane and Kirshner observe, the assumption that the class was constant and fully formed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is mistaken.

A second problem surfaces in the very act itself of dividing Venetian society into distinct social classes. Modern sociologists hardly agree on a universal definition of "social class" and neither Sabellico nor Sanudo nor Giannotti offered a strict definition of the term, nor did Lane when he referred to the cittadini as the middle class. Indeed, a sociologist influenced by Marx might argue that the Venetian nobility did not, in fact, represent a single unified class but perhaps two or more, as suggested by the above-mentioned anonymous sixteenth-century observer. In a Marxist-inspired analysis, an upper class of Venetian society might be comprised of Venice's

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7 Ventura, 1976, XXIX.

8 Grubb, 2000, 340 with further references. For Poggio and Sabellico, see Gilbert, 1968, 417n2-3.
wealthiest merchants, whether nobles or non-nobles. A lower class might then be formed by combining Venice's "poor nobles" with poorer non-noble Venetians—irrespective of the nobles' exclusive right to vote in government.

This alternate model demonstrates that there are several possible ways for modern historians to structure Venetian society into classes. Indeed, the noble/non-noble dichotomy sometimes seems to make little sense when evaluating particular examples. For instance, in 1499 the nobleman Andrea Contarini pleaded to the doge that he and his nine children lived on a mere sixteen ducats a year, that for sixteen years he had not secured a paid government post, and that the government magistracy of the cazute had recently sold his house to pay his sixty ducat debt to the government.9 In contrast, consider Andrea Surian, a Cittadino Originario who became Grand Chancellor in 1586, lived in the Michiel palace with a household of twelve servants, eight female and four male, along with his eight children and several other members of his family.10 Contarini had a vote on the Great Council but he was impoverished, as were many Venetian nobles. Surian was a non-noble cittadino originario, lacking membership on the Great Council but nonetheless enjoying great wealth. Surian had much in common with wealthy nobles, Contarini with poor non-noble cittadini. It is interesting to note that a Marxist-based redivision of Venetian society would provide a simple answer to a recent debate among Venetian art historians: whether the non-noble cittadini led or followed the nobility when it came to art

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9 Queller, 1986, 52.

patronage. If Venice's elite patrons were all viewed as members of the same social class, however, then it would be hard to distinguish either one as leading or following.\textsuperscript{11}

The third issue is the often indiscriminate use of the term \textit{cittadini}. As mentioned by Coltrane and Kirshner, in the middle ages and at least during most of the fifteenth century, the term legally meant \textit{all} Venetian citizens \textit{including} the nobility, as the letter to Borso d'Este, quoted below, demonstrates. Some historians and observers, however, have employed the term "\textit{cittadini}" as shorthand to mean Venice's non-noble citizens. It is often unclear whether this usage intends to include both non-noble \textit{cittadini originari} (native Venetians) and \textit{cittadini per privilegio} (naturalized citizens). In recent studies analyzing differences in patronage between "Venetian nobles and cittadini," the fact that the collecting ideologies of many naturalized Venetian citizens formed outside of Venice sometimes is swept under the rug. Did some of these studies intend, rather, to consider differences in patronage between wealthy Venetian nobles and wealthy non-noble \textit{cittadini originari}?\textsuperscript{12} In sum, the term "\textit{cittadini}" often needs clarification, because studying the Renaissance patronage of Venetian \textit{cittadini} is, strictly speaking, tantamount to studying Venetian patronage overall.

Finally, there is a long tradition of portraying the Cittadini Originari as a service class either created to assist the nobility or content in pretending that they themselves were nobles. The latter view may be traced to Gasparo Contarini in the mid-Cinquecento who described the Scoule Grandi as staging areas where the \textit{cittadini} appeased their aspirations by “imitating the

\textsuperscript{11} See Schmitter, 2004, 912 for a summation of the debate and an argument that the cittadini were, in fact, leaders. For a recent continuation of the debate, see Howard, 2013, 185-6, 195. One could, of course, compare the patronage of wealthy patricians with that of wealthy non-noble \textit{cittadini originari}.

\textsuperscript{12} Howard, 2013.
nobility."¹³ The former opinion dates back at least to a social history of Venice published in 1755 by the Venetian nobleman Vettor Sandi, who wrote that, toward the middle of the fifteenth century, the Venetian government "for its own dignity and great needs, separated from the mass of subjects living in Venice a body of civilians with the title of Cittadini Originari."¹⁴ Both of these narratives, and all of their anecdotal offspring, at best remove agency from the Proto Cittadini Originari and at worst infantilize a large group of powerful and wealthy Venetian men. As we shall see, the Venetian nobility hardly acted in unison as puppet masters over the Venetian lower classes. Rather, many nobles, especially the large subclass of "poor nobles," attempted to appropriate various long-established rights of the Proto Cittadini Originari—and I would suggest that in defending themselves against such incursions, the Proto Cittadini Originari became more strongly united and thus more conscious of their communal identity.

**TERMINOLOGY**

_cittadini originari/ Cittadini Originari_

From the middle ages, the Venetian term _cittadini originari_ (original citizens), written here in italicized lower case, referred generally to all native Venetian citizens (_per natione_), often in opposition to naturalized Venetian citizens (_per privilegio_). As mentioned, until the late fifteenth century, if not later, _cittadini originari_ included both noble and non-noble families. Many of these families traced their lineage back through centuries of Venetian history, and many must have felt that they, as descendants of early Venetian families, were the true Venetians.¹⁵

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¹⁴ Sandi, 1755, 345-6: "Giunse la metà del secolo XV. Ecco l'epoca, in cui pensò il Governo e per sua dignità, e per suo maggior servigio, di separare dalla mole de'sudditi abitanti in Venezia un corpo di civili persone con titolo di Cittadini originari."

¹⁵ Ventura, 1976, XXIX.
Cittadini Originari, capitalized and not italicized, is used in this study to denote a social class that emerged from the cittadini originari, but that did not include among its members the Venetian nobility and that received strict legal definition only in the mid-sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} In 1581, Venice's population of about 135,000 people was composed of approximately 4.6% nobles and 5.32% non-noble cittadini, which included Cittadini Originari and naturalized citizens combined.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, at certain points in Venetian history, there might have been fewer Cittadini Originari than there were nobles.

Neglecting to distinguish between these two terms, cittadini originari and Cittadini Originari, often causes confusion and error. The former term is best understood historically: from the early fourteenth century, Venetian law recognized and conferred differing rights upon three basic types of Venetians: cittadini originari, which included both nobles and non-nobles of native Venetian birth (\textit{per natione}); citizens at home and abroad (cittadini de intus et extra); and citizens at home (cittadini de intus). Both of the latter two types were naturalized Venetian citizens (\textit{per privilegio}). A somewhat rarer fourth type occurred when the government bestowed honorary citizenship (\textit{per grazia}) for reasons that might include currying the favor of foreign rulers or dignitaries.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Casini, 1992, 133n2, citing ASV, \textit{Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Angelus}, c.18r.

\textsuperscript{17} Zannini, 1993, 92. Note that these figures are rough estimates.

\textsuperscript{18} Ell, 1976, 51. By one count, from 1305-1500 the Venetian government granted more than 3600 citizenships of various types under de grazia, only 72 of which were novi cives originarii (new original citizens), and thirty-seven of these were created between 1382 and 1396, after the war of Chioggia, in order to recognize various persons' contribution to the war and post-war effort (Casini, 1992, 136. Mueller, 1981, 38-9). According to Ell, 1976, 29, "One man became an original citizen for forty-six years residence and another for marrying a Venetian noblewoman."
These four different types are succinctly enumerated in a letter of 1455 from the Venetian government to Marchese Borso d'Este that clarifies which Venetians should benefit from a treaty between Venice and Ferrara:

. . . by Venetians it is understood: the original citizens (cives originari); and also those who, according to our laws, have been made original citizens (cives originari crearentur); and those who were made citizens by privilege at home and abroad (cives de intus et extra); and in like manner those who were made citizens at home (cives de intus). . .

Note that in this letter the Signoria did not mention separately the nobility because, from the early thirteenth century to 1455, the year of the letter, and for decades later, the Venetian patriciate legally constituted part of the cittadini originari along with non-noble original citizens.

Proto Cittadini Originari

While it is unsettling to construct a term not in use during a given period of study, in this case such a hermeneutic contrivance may be necessary: the class of Cittadini Originari became defined in a strict legal sense only in 1569, yet its development, I shall argue, took centuries.

To a large extent, however, the general membership of this future class is discernable from the fifteenth century, and, to some degree, from the fourteenth century. Yet it appears that during the

19 ASV, Commemoriali, reg. 14, c. 143v [1455] (cited in Cozzi and Knapton, 1986, 133): "Illustris et excelsa fili nostre carissime . . . ab eo etiam seriose cognovimus optimam dispositionem nostram circa observantiam consuetudinum et pactorum nostrorum super quibus tamen quatuor dubia videbantur oriri primum videlicet qui essent illi homines Venetiariam et districtus qui gaudere deberent pactis et consuetudinibus antedictis . . . Intelligere consuetudines observatas ex quibus facti sumus certiores quod homines Venetiariam intelliguntur cives originarii ac illi etiam qui iuxta leges nostras cives originarii crearentur et qui per privilegium fient cives de intus et extra et similiter cives de intus tamen facti per privilegium qui cum eorum familiis continue habitarent . . . ."

20 Bellavitis, 2001, 67 arrived at a similar conclusion, at least for the first decades of the fifteenth century. Many such examples exist: for instance, in 1420 the Venetian Senate limited the dowry to a maximum of 1600 ducats for all citizens (omnium civium), which included nobles as well as non-noble citizens (ASV, Senato ‘Misti’. Reg. 53, fol. 70r as cited in Chojnacki, 1994, 350-1nn38-39.)

21 Casini, 1992, 133n2 citing ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Angelus, c.18r. See also Grubb, 2000, 344.
Quattrocento its members had no distinctive name for themselves: most could not have imagined that they or their offspring would eventually constitute a class officially recognized by the Venetian government. In the legal terminology of mid-fifteenth-century Venice, they might have been called non-noble original Venetian citizens (*cives originari popularium venetiarum*).  

Instead, for reasons of clarity and to emphasize their sense of unity prior to receiving legal recognition, I refer to this emergent class as the Proto Cittadini Originari.

**Class, Estate, or Social Group**

As discussed above, this study employs the modern term "social class" when describing the Cittadini Originari. Not all historians or sociologists would agree to this terminology.  

(Unfortunately, sociologists have not, to my knowledge, published comprehensive studies of the Cittadini Originari.) Regrettably, the term "social class" is fraught with associations that mislead when applied to Medieval and Renaissance Venice. For instance, in the United States an impoverished street beggar would not be a member of the Upper Class, although possibly a former member. In Venice, however, some nobles became so poor that they indeed resorted to begging, but legally still remained nobles with full voting rights. Nonetheless, in this study I believe "social class" is preferable to "caste," "estate," or "order," all of which also have undesired connotations, or to "social group," a term that usually implies a relatively small

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22 I have not located this particular construction, but a law of 1443 includes the phrase "spes plurimorum civium nostrorum popularium" (the hope of many of our non-noble citizens), which would include both original and naturalized citizens (ASV, Deliberazioni, reg. 22, *Ursa*, fol.144 as transcribed in Bellavitis, 2001, 325-6).

23 Schmitter, 2004, expresses a preference for the term "social group." Pullan, 1971, uses either "order" or "estate."

24 The noted sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox (1901-1974) referred to the *cittadini originari* as the "middle class, especially at its upper reaches" in his short chapter, "Venice the Progenitor" (Cox, 1959, 47), in which he advanced a Marxist-inspired argument that Venice had been the first capitalistic society. In his review of the book, Frederic Lane, 1960, 517-18, noted that Cox was not "a specialist on Italian history," and that his study relied on older, secondary accounts of the Venetian state used "rather indiscriminately."
number of people often voluntarily united. This study uses "social class" in a rigid sense to convey that Venetians were divided into social hierarchies from birth and to emphasize that most movements from a lower class to a higher class were nearly impossible under Venetian law. A foreigner to Venice might become a naturalized citizen of the highest level (*cittadino de intus et extra*) but never an original citizen unless an honorary one (*per grazia*); and non-noble citizens could never become nobles, unless invited to do so by the government, which happened rarely during the Renaissance. Please note, however, that the term "social class" used in this study is loosely descriptive and does not correspond precisely to similar terminology employed by sociologists.

**The Development of a Social Class**

Before the first *Serrata* (1200-1285)

In the Venetian commune of the thirteenth century, all Venetian citizens or original citizens (*civis venetus* or *civis originarius*) theoretically had the right to participate in government. In practice some 500 men representing about 100 families held a seat on the main body of government, the Great Council (both those elected directly and ex-officio members), with most of these men also serving on various other councils or in higher administrative posts.\(^\text{25}\) A large number of these original citizen families of the Great Council were also considered of noble heritage (*nobiles*) but some were described in chronicles of the time as long-established non-nobles (*populares veteres*).\(^\text{26}\) Even prior to the *Serrata* (discussed below), the Venetian

\(^{25}\) Lane, 1973, 100.

\(^{26}\) Rösch, 2000, 68.
Government in some sense already functioned as if a hereditary aristocracy, with some twenty to fifty of Venice's most powerful families largely in control.27

During this period the Venetian families who were considered noble did not enjoy any exclusive legal rights. In the mid-thirteenth century, Venetian law recognized exactly three types of people living in Venice: citizens (cives), inhabitants (habitatores), and foreigners (forinseci).28 Only citizens enjoyed the full rights afforded by the state. Citizenship was granted to those born to a cittadino father or, if born out of wedlock, to a cittadina mother, and thus might be inherited through either bloodline.29 In 1258 the Great Council declared that those who came and lived in Venice for 10 years would become Venetians (Veneti), but it is unclear whether these naturalized citizens shared in the full rights of Venetian citizens or were allowed to participate in government.30 (This law or a similar variant apparently was in effect until 1305.31)

The first Serrata (1285-1323) and new types of Venetian citizenship

The Serrata or closing, which today many scholars consider not as a single law of 1297 but rather as a series of legal resolutions from 1286-1323, created a closed caste system of government in Venice.32 Some argue that these resolutions, enacted across nearly two generations and which progressively arrogated the rights of those Venetian families not

27 Lane, 1973, 100. At this time, fifteen of the most powerful families accounted for 40% of the membership on the Great Council (Rösch, 2000, 68).


29 Ibid., 25n6.


31 Ell, 1976, 47.

32 See Rosch, 2000 with further references.
represented on the Great Council, had been initiated without malice aforethought: in the mid-late thirteenth century, several elected members of the Great Council began to criticize the Venetian electoral system and its mechanism of allowing outgoing members indirectly to select those who were incoming, which, they argued, promoted factionalism and the possibility of tyranny by permitting a small number of large families continually to reelect one another from year to year.\textsuperscript{33} Some Great Council members also objected that, because the composition of the Great Council changed not only every year but also within the year through various by-elections, its more senior members with invaluable government experience were often excluded in times of crisis, such as during the disastrous war against Genoa (1294-99) in which Venice lost perhaps 7000 men alone at Curzola in September of 1298.\textsuperscript{34} For these and perhaps other reasons, a law enacted in 1297, and which was finalized the week after the loss at Curzola, made membership in the Great Council permanent on the following conditions: that either a) one had been a member of the Great Council in the last 4 years; or b) one had been a member of the Council but had left the city and desired to return; or c) one had not been a member in the last 4 years but was nominated by a group of electors who themselves were nominated by the doge and the ducal councilors. One then needed a minimum of 12 votes from a magistrate called The Forty (the \textit{Quarantia}) to become a member of the Great Council indefinitely.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[33] Lane, 1971, 252-3. Another reason Lane mentions for the \textit{Serrata} was "the fear of foreigners as competitors for honours, jobs, and trade."
\item[34] Rösch 2000, 72. Lane, 1971, 254.
\item[35] Rösch, 2000, 73. Lane, 1971, 255 noted that the Trevisan chronicle described that the law was made final on 11 September 1298 "during the week after the disastrous defeat [at Curzola] . . . [T]his making permanent of membership in 1298 is what is called the 'Sera' or 'Serata' by Trevisan and later chroniclers who repeated his account."
\end{footnotes}
Permanent membership on the Great Council, though instated in part to ensure consistent leadership during times of war, led in rather unpredictable steps to the formation of a hereditary aristocracy that ruled Venice's government. After the law of 1297, and its finalization in 1298, numerous eligible men from noble and non-noble families alike naturally sought permanent admission to the Great Council, and membership drastically increased from 513 members in 1299 to 1,150 members in 1314.\textsuperscript{36} Many of these permanent members had been extended an invitation to join the Great Council and included dignitaries who were refugees from Acre, non-nobles (\textit{popolani}) who had distinguished themselves during the Second Genoese War (1294-99), and other non-nobles who had supported the government during the conspiracy of 1310.\textsuperscript{37}

The dramatic over-enrollment in the Great Council prompted its now-permanent members to attempt to limit new admissions, presumably because the centuries-old mechanisms of government were accustomed to operating under the superintendency of far fewer voting officials.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, qualifications for entry into the Great Council became more strict. In 1307 an applicant required not twelve but thirty votes in the Forty (\textit{Quarantia}) and at least six votes from the doge and his councilors. By 1311 an applicant required thirty votes in the Forty (\textit{Quarantia}) and two-thirds vote in the Great Council itself. Finally, a law of 1321 eliminated the system of electors that might invite new men to join the Council, and it was this law that officially closed the Council to new blood.\textsuperscript{39} Since those serving on the Great Council desired that their sons also be eligible for the Council, a law of 1323 stipulated, or more likely officially confirmed, that

\textsuperscript{36} Rösch, 2000, 70, 80. Note that this increase wasn't linear, but ebbed and flowed until it increased dramatically and remained high.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Lane, 1971, 258.

\textsuperscript{39} The changes to the selection process are described by Rösch, 2000, 74-75 with further references.
membership in the Great Council was hereditary and did not require any vote of approval; henceforth men of legitimate birth (legitimacy had been required in a law of 1277) who had ancestors on the Great Council would be granted a seat when they reached age 25, or if chosen by lot to fill vacancies, when they were as young as 18.  

The Serrata represented the crucial first step toward the future creation of the Cittadini Originari. Its laws set limits in perpetuum on the political aspirations of a majority of Venetians. No matter how wealthy or powerful, non-nobles could never realistically aspire to participate in the upper levels of Venetian government.

It is important to remember, however, that the men who served on the Great Council remained Venetian citizens under the law, bound to the Venetian statutes that had been codified by Tiepolo in 1242. Yet they now constituted a special category: those with the exclusive right to vote in government and to serve in high office. Thus, the closing of the Great Council also redefined what it meant to be a Venetian noble; a law of 1310 specified nobles as "those who are on the Great Council or could be" (Reliqui vero nobiles, qui erant de maiori consilio vel esse poterant), and chronicles of the late Trecento commonly described all members of the Great Council as nobles. Men from families considered non-noble prior to the Serrata and who became permanent members of the Great Council found themselves and their families suddenly ennobled. Henceforth, Venetian law now regularly made a new distinction among Venetians: those eligible to sit on the Great Council (nobiles) as opposed to those ineligible (popolani). (The Medieval and Renaissance observers who described Venice as a two-class system were reflecting

40 Lane, 1971, 254, 256 stated that by 1298 membership was already understood as hereditary who notes that a proposal for inclusion in the Great Council on the basis of ancestry had been defeated in 1286.

this new division.) From the disenfranchised group of the *popolani* would emerge the Cittadini Originari.

**Types of Citizenship**

A series of immigration laws enacted during the very same years of the *Serrata* also would shape the future identity of the Cittadini Originari. After 1302, when the end of the Genoese war allowed trade again to expand, the *Provveditori di Comun* or recently-established officials entrusted with overseeing customs fraud, needed to know exactly whom to consider Venetian citizens with full trading rights.\(^42\) Those enjoying full commercial rights provided by the state were called original Venetian citizens (*cittadini originari*).

During the same period, the government began to allow foreigners the opportunity to become naturalized citizens (*cittadini per privilego*) with diminished trading rights compared to those of the *cittadini originari*. The first immigration law, enacted 4 September 1305, stipulated that 15 years continued residence in the city, paying all necessary taxes, bearing one's share of communal responsibilities, and continuing afterward to live in Venice or one of its provinces, enabled a foreigner to become a *Veneti de intus* (Venetian at home) entitled to most trading rights within Venice itself.\(^43\) A term of 25 years of continued residence in the city, with the same requirements of paying all taxes and sharing in communal responsibilities, enabled one to become a *Veneti de intus et extra* (Venetian at home and abroad) and allowed a naturalized citizen to invest in foreign trade almost as if an original citizen (*cittadino originario*) but with the proviso that they make *prestiti* or forced loans to the Venetian government equivalent to, or

\(^42\) Lane, 1971, 258.

\(^43\) Zannini, 1992, 27n13, 28. Ell, 1976, 47, 211.
exceeding, the amount they intended to invest (as a law of 24 July 1316 made clear). This greatly limited the funds a naturalized citizen might invest in trade, diminishing possible gains (or losses), and at the same time helped to enrich the Venetian state.

No written laws yet strictly defined what it meant to be a *cittadino originario*. A requirement seemed to be birth from at least one parent who was a Venetian citizen. Statutes of 1313 and 1323 stated that persons born in Venice to foreign parents acquired *de intus* citizenship after twelve years of residence and *de intus et extra* citizenship after eighteen years, without the usual requirement that they make forced loans to the state; such citizens, born in Venice to parents who were not Venetian citizens, enjoyed trading rights nearly equivalent to those of the *cittadini originari*.

The numerous Venetian laws enacted during the period of the *Serrata* divided Venetian citizens in two important ways, distinctions that would remain in Venetian legal terminology for generations to come. First, laws might apply to nobles (*nobiles*) as opposed to non-nobles (*popolani*). Secondly, laws might apply to original citizens (*cittadini originari*), which included the nobles, as opposed to naturalized citizens (*cittadini per privilegio*). Thus, after the war of Chioggia, a law enacted by the deeply indebted Venetian state demanded the payment of taxes

44 Ell, 1976, 212.


46 For instance, a protectionist movement in the early Trecento led in 1324 to the establishment of the *Officiale de Navigantibus*, who were charged with "punishing by confiscation of merchandise any Venetian who imported from the Levant wares of a total value higher than the amount of his own wealth" (Lane, 1971, 259). Laws of 1363 and 1376 abolished the office itself and returned full commercial rights to Venice's original citizens (*cives originarii*), while naturalized citizens (*per privilegi*) could only trade up to the value of their loans to the state. The original laws pertained to all citizens, and so did their redaction (Cessi, 1952, 23ff. Zannini, 1992, 29). For an alternate reading of these laws, however, see Casini, 1992, 134n5. A law of 1385 stated that only *cittadini originari* were allowed to trade with the Germans in or outside of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a prerogative not generally extended to naturalized citizens, except to those born in Venice (Zanini, 1993, 33, but, again, cf. Casini, 1992, 134n5).
owed to it by its Venetian citizens and addressed itself to "all our Venetians, whether original (originari) or naturalized (per privilegium), whether nobles (nobiles) or non-nobles (popolares)," neatly demonstrating the two fundamental ways that Venetian law might divide its subjects. 47 Although the seeds had been planted for the future development of the Proto Cittadini Originari, during these years the group had not yet formed a cohesive identity.

After the Serrata (1324-1379)

Venice's vicissitudinous fourteenth century, punctuated by triumphs as well as calamities of state, had at least one important effect on the future creation of the Cittadini Originari: by the early 1380s a significant number of popolani families had become wealthy. 48 Venice waged war against Verona (1336-39), Genoa (1350-55), Hungary (1345-8, 1356-8, 1372-81) and Padua (1371). In 1348-50 the Black Death killed an estimated one- to two-thirds of its approximate 120,000 inhabitants (then perhaps the highest-populated city in Western Europe). 49 The city had the ignominy of repelling a coup d'etat attempt by the sitting doge, Marin Falier (1355); and in 1379, to finance the fourth and last of its wars against Genoa, it had drawn up an estimo or tax assessment of its wealthiest citizens—a document essential to our understanding of personal wealth in late fourteenth-century Venice. The estimo listed a total of 2128 Venetian men and women each valued at over 300 lire a grosso; of these 1211 or 56.9% were nobles (nobiles) and 917 or 43.1% were non-nobles (populares). 50 Of Venice's 126 most affluent citizens, each with a net worth valued between 10,000 and 150,000 ducats, there were 91 nobles and 26 non-nobles,

47 Ell, 1976, 60, 226.
48 We do not have statistics on the wealth of the richest popolani families at the beginning of the Trecento, however, so a strict comparison does not seem possible but is suggested by the prestiti of 1379.
49 Romano, 1987, 28, 165n55.
50 Luzzatto, 1929, 130. See also Romano, 1987, 32-36.
and of the moderately wealthy, with a net worth valued between 300 and 3000 ducats, there were 817 nobles and 755 non-nobles.

Since no estimo or similar document exists from the beginning or middle of the fourteenth century, it is not possible to demonstrate definitively that the upper echelons of the popolani had become enriched during the course of the fourteenth century. Such was likely the case, however, considering the structure of Venice's economy. Elsewhere in Medieval Europe, the landed aristocracy subsisted on comparatively stable rental income within a feudalistic system that bridled upward mobility. In Venice, rather, the nobility was defined not by landed interests but by eligibility for the Great Council. To a great extent, Venetian patricians at this time remained merchants, their success or failure in sea-borne commercial ventures depending heavily on ingenuity and luck. The same of course was true for non-noble original Venetian citizens who enjoyed commercial trading rights identical to those of the nobility, notwithstanding the patriciate's control of the Venetian government. Thus, the more astute merchants tended to become wealthy, regardless of their class. As the estimo of c.1379 demonstrates, some sixty years after the Serrata a number of industrious or fortuitous members of the popolani, whether as merchants or accomplished artisans, each had amassed a net wealth equal to that of all but the most affluent nobles, while the numbers of moderately wealthy nobles and popolani had leveled off, becoming nearly indistinguishable.

The laws and hegemony of the Venetian government had offered many non-nobles the invaluable opportunity to build a career, a family, and the security that wealth brings, but took from them any realistic chance to participate in Venetian rule. As a result, successful Venetian popolani of all sorts, from the power thirsty to those who genuinely desired to contribute to the welfare of their state, were forced to look toward other Venetian institutions in order to express
their political or social aspirations. And so, during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, a number of non-nobles, many presumably wealthy and whom I describe as the Proto Cittadini Originari, focused their attention on the administration of four Venetian confraternities that were later called the Scuole Grandi (and to which two others were added beginning in c. 1479).

**THE SCUOLE GRANDI**

In Venice, confraternities, which were groups of Christians brought together for a reason, were called *scuole* or schools. One of the earliest known confraternities in Venice dates to the 9th century and had as a central purpose the maintenance of the local Church of San Vito. The four Scuole Grandi, which eventually would influence the cultural life of Renaissance Venice arguably more than any other lay institutions, traced their origins not to Venice itself but to Central Italy.

In Perugia in the spring of 1260, amidst the vicious factional warfare that had transformed many Italian cities into battlegrounds, and after an outbreak of plague, a hermit named Ranieri Fasani, perhaps inspired by the eschatological theology of Jacopo del Fiore or by the Franciscan cult of the passion of Christ, took to the streets and publically flagellated himself. His ritual act of contrition, intended to emulate the torments inflicted on Christ, struck a chord among many locals who decided to join him. In a few months, processions of *battuti* or *disciplinati* scourged themselves with strips of leather or bundled sticks, in reparation for the world's sins, and marched both within Italian cities and from city to city. The flagellant

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movement spread rapidly across Northern Italy and into France, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, and many penitents formed local confraternities *dei battuti* to process within their home cities.\(^{53}\)

Established in Venice between December 1260 and March 1261 were three *scuole dei battuti*, the Scuola di Santa Maria della Carità, the Scuola di San Marco, and the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista; a fourth, the Scuola di Santa Maria del Valverde or della Misericordia, was founded in 1308 (by 1467 the four *scuole dei battuti* would be known as the Scuole Grandi whereas all other confraternities in Venice were called *scuole piccole*).\(^{54}\) Initially the *scuole dei battuti* were poor, owning no real estate and few assets; each relied on its association with a church, where meetings were held, sacraments were taken, and deceased brothers might be buried, and each therefore paid various ecclesiastic fees.\(^{55}\) As with any Venetian confraternity, the *scuole dei battuti* enjoyed juridical independence from both church and state (until they became overseen by the Council of Ten in the next century);\(^ {56}\) but in contrast to other Venetian confraternities, the *scuole dei battuti* organized frequent and elaborate public processions, which became their most conspicuous hallmark apart from self-flagellation, on each of the seven major religious holidays and, customarily, the first Sunday of every month.\(^ {57}\)

The Scuole Grandi, as I will henceforth refer to them, became tremendously popular. By the early fourteenth century, the Council of Ten had to establish upper limits on their maximum

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\(^{53}\) Henderson, 1978, 147-60.

\(^{54}\) Pullan, 1990, 274. The Scuola di San Rocco became the fifth Scuola Grande in c. 1489 (Worthmann, 1975, 122-24), and the Scuola di San Todoro became the sixth in 1552 (Pullan, 1971, 34).

\(^{55}\) The Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista initially was associated with the church of Sant'Aponal before moving in 1301 to the monastery of San Giovanni Evangelista; the Scuola della Misericordia was at first linked to the Frari, and in 1308 to the abbey of the Misericordia (Pulan, 1971, 38; Wurthmann, 1975, 40).

\(^{56}\) Founded in 1310, the Council of Ten within two years had begun overseeing the Scuole (Pullan, 1971, 45).

\(^{57}\) Wurthmann, 1975, 41n3.
membership, set at either 500 or 550 members depending on the Scuola.\textsuperscript{58} Too many Venetians desired to join them, which had evidently concerned the Council of Ten, a magistrate established to safeguard Venice from threats of insurgency and various forms of corruption. No evidence, however, suggests that the Scuole Grandi attracted dissidents or encouraged sedition, and the Council's decision to limit their membership might simply have been to ensure that the institutions kept to a manageable size.

The popularity of the Scuole Grandi probably derived from the perquisites they offered, which appealed to Venetians from all strata of society: the shared and regularly-endured physical torments doubtlessly promoted among \textit{battuti} a powerful sense of comradeship; the dispensation of charity to sick or impoverished brothers offered Scuola members an inchoate form of welfare and health insurance perhaps unique to Venice; and each member of a Scuola Grande was entitled to an honorable burial, paid for by the confraternity if the member was too poor, during which the other brothers would flagellate themselves and sing penitential songs, and after which twenty-five Masses were said to assist in the passage of the recently deceased's soul into heaven.\textsuperscript{59} This latter privilege was attractive to nobles—nearly 200 years later, in the fifteenth century, a number of patricians at the very end of their lives continued to seek entrance into the Scuole Grandi in order to benefit from the solemn funeral and ritualistic prayers that might facilitate their salvation.\textsuperscript{60}

Initially, the administrative structure of the Scuole Grandi reflected the functional

\textsuperscript{58} In 1318 a maximum for the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista was set at 550. The Scuola della Miseracordia was allowed 500 until 1390 when it was allowed to expand. For various reasons, Scuola membership often expanded beyond these figures (Worthmann, 1975, 54n2, 69).

\textsuperscript{59} Wurthmann, 1975, 42-45.

\textsuperscript{60} Pullan, 1971, 74.
requirements of assembling hundreds of members from all over the city of Venice into elaborate processions taking place regularly. Two men called deacons (*degani*) from each of Venice's six sestieri were responsible for overseeing the flagellants in their district, and a Guardian Grande oversaw the twelve degani as well as the scuola as a whole. As the Scuole Grandi increased in membership and began to receive sizeable endowments, often of real estate, and as the Scuole were able to offer more extensive social services to their members, the thirteen higher offices were increased by three: the Guardian da Matin, established in the early fourteenth century and so-named because he oversaw flagellant activities on Sunday mornings, functioned more generally as the Scuola's chief financial officer; the *scrivano* or secretary, added as a board member in 1359, was charged with supervising the growing amount of written documentation generated by the confraternity; and the *vicario* (vicar), established in the late fourteenth century, became responsible for various administrative duties once held by the Guardian Grande and operated as the Vice Chairman.⁶¹ These sixteen positions, each elected annually, comprised the *banca* or board of directors of a Scuola Grande until 1521, when the Council of Ten, in order to regulate the board's centralized power, established a *zonta* or group of 12 auditors elected from within the Scuola, each of whom were responsible for ensuring that the *banca* adhered to the confraternity's various laws.⁶²

Members of the *popolani* soon monopolized control of the Scuole Grandi. No study, to my knowledge, has examined in depth the causes for this, but several reasons seem likely. First, the Scuole Grandi principally benefited members of the *popolani*, rather than those of the nobility, and therefore non-nobles were willing to take more of an active interest in the

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⁶¹ The responsibilities of each of these positions are described in Wurthmann, 1975, 49-60.

⁶² Pullan, 1971, 70.
institutions' success. Particularly attractive to many *popolani* would have been the Scuole's offer of charity and the future possibility of receiving charity, which represented a sort of catastrophic health-and-poverty insurance policy within an economic environment where fortunes might suddenly rise and fall.

Secondly, no less compelling were the opportunities that the Scuole offered to build social networks which might lead to business associations, for Scuola members seeking various services could as easily employ a capable brother who might someday return the favor. In general, many *popolani* were willing to fill the unpaid, time-consuming positions on the *banche* for reasons that included the desire to extend their social and business networks, to assist a worthy institution, to hold a position considered honorable, or even to increase their own prospects of salvation. Thus non-nobles excluded from voting in government could nonetheless contribute substantially to the fabric of Venetian life by holding high office in the Scuole Grandi.

Thirdly, it seems that the nobility had little or no interest in serving as officers on the boards of the Scuole Grandi. Most nobles already served in government, many in unpaid positions. And the majority of benefits offered by the Scuole Grandi presumably would have been of little interest to wealthy nobles, such as the possibility of receiving future charity. (After the War of Chioggia [1378-80], however, there did emerge a sizeable group of "poor nobles" who required succor.) Furthermore, nobles were probably more likely to form meaningful social networks through their positions as permanent members of the Great Council.

Scuola Grande bylaws, however, stated clearly that service as an officer was compulsory for those elected to the board.\(^{63}\) To accommodate the nobles' aversion toward such service, and

\(^{63}\) Pullan, 1971, 72-4.
rather than reject the patriciate as a possible source of income, the Scuole Grandi began to institute special memberships: by paying high initiation fees (usually 20–25 ducats) and annual dues (lumenaria), both of which typically went toward the charity of other brothers, nobles (and apparently some wealthy non-nobles) were exempted from the obligation to assume Scuola office and from other responsibilities such as self-flagellation (which had already become largely voluntary). These special memberships allowed nobles to keep the Scuola benefits that they generally considered most desirable: the right to receive a well-attended funeral and subsequent prayers for their soul that assisted in their salvation. Initially these special memberships were limited in number (to 50 in the case of San Giovanni Evangelista in 1359), but it seems that they became, at least for a time, the only type of membership open to Venetian nobility; and in fact I can discover no conclusive evidence demonstrating that nobles served on the banche of the Scuole Grandi in either the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

Under the management of the popolani, the Scuole Grandi continued to maintain their religious character and to process regularly, but during the fourteenth century they were transformed principally into charitable institutions, which presumably reflected the interests of a majority of their members. Even in the late thirteen century, there seems to have been a declining

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64 Ibid. Around c. 1310, the Scuola della Miseracordia established a special membership for nobles; in 1344 the Scuola di San Giovanni and Scuola della Carità set their initiation fees at 25 and 20 ducats respectively. The noblemen, as well as exempt non-nobles, of the Scuola di San Rocco paid 1 ducat in yearly dues, as opposed to 1 lira required by regular members. Non-nobles over fifty (and for a short time over 25) might be granted exempt status in the Scuola San Giovanni, a practice that ceased in 1433 (ibid., 75).

65 Although I am aware of no evidence that nobles served on the banche of Scuole Grandi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, one should leave open the possibility because they might not have been strictly forbidden to do so. Statutes of the Scuole Grandi and of the Council of Ten do not appear to have specifically prohibited nobles from serving in the high offices of the Scuole Grandi. Since nobles were considered members of the cittadini originari well into the fifteenth century, if not into the sixteenth, the laws of 1410 and 1438 did not specifically exclude them. See Pullan, 1971, 73, 75. For their limit to fifty in 1359, see Worthmann, 1975, 61. Andrea de Vendramin, who served as Guardian Grande in 1351, 1359, and 1369, was ennobled after the War of Chioggia in 1381 (Simeone, 2003, 126-8).
inclination among some members to self-flagellate, and the Scuole began to offer exemptions in various forms for the once-required discipline.66 By the second half of the fourteenth century the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista limited self-scourging to a small group of 60 novitiates.67 Slightly earlier, the Scuole, though hardly wealthy, began to construct modest hospitals for members who were poor and sick, such as a small hospital of four beds built in 1330 by the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista.68 Often rental income from real estate that had been endowed to the Scuola was directed toward paying the various expenses such as staff salaries at a particular hospital.69 In 1355 the Scuola della Misericordia admitted four physicians whose only responsibilities were to look after ill members of the Scuola for free.70 Care for the sick and impoverished, especially after the Black Death visited Venice in 1348, had become these institutions' central focus.

The growth and popularity of the Scuole Grandi signaled a significant shift in identity for many non-noble Venetians. The historian Dennis Romano observed that in Trecento Venice "(t)he perception of the entire parish as a community of rich and poor . . . was declining."71 He argued that urbanization had created "less personal ties": the Black Death had reduced the city's population by more than half, leading to government policies that effectively encouraged immigration, and it seems that many immigrants had difficulty adapting to Venetian traditions of

66 Pullan, 1971, 38, 63.
68 Pullan, 1971, 64.
69 Wurthmann, 1975, 62.
71 Romano, 1987, 153.
parish life. Moreover, the Serrata had erected social fences between Venetians. Even the festival of the Marie, which had traditionally celebrated parish identity, was put to an end. Whereas at the beginning of the Trecento, when communal life for Venetians both rich and poor still centered around the local parish church, one in four parishioners of San Giacomo dall'Orio bequested funds to the church, as opposed to one in twenty during the period from 1382 to 1423; rather, donations were being redirected to broad-based charitable institutions like the Scuole Grandi. 72 As bequests to the Scuole Grandi increased substantially and unprecedentedly, their boards took steps toward erecting more permanent places to meet. 73 By 1390 the Scuola di San Giovanni owned 42 separate almshouses, not including other real estate that might be rented for nominal sums to poor members or for more significant sums to pay for hospital expenses. 74 By the early fifteenth century, the four Scuole Grandi owned vast amounts of Venetian real estate and enjoyed booming endowments; they were the largest and wealthiest private charitable institutions in Venice, and they were controlled by a group of distinguished non-noble Venetian citizens gradually forming their own identity, the Proto Cittadini Originari.

**The War of Chioggia and the 2nd Serrata**

In the decades following the War of Chioggia, at least three significant events, I would argue, contributed even further toward the Proto Cittadini Originari's ability to forge an identity. First, the War of Chioggia created tremendous social upheavals in Venice, redistributing wealth and escalating the formation of a politically active and growing subclass of poor nobles, who

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72 These arguments are found in Romano, 1987, 153-54.

73 Only in 1384, however, did the Scuola della Carità purchase space to build an Albergo and in 1411 land for its construction (Wurthmann, 1975, 134n1).

74 Ibid., 70
were dependent on government salary for income and who, I propose, came into conflict with members of the Proto Cittadini Originari. Secondly, a series of laws, sometimes called the second Serrata, enacted toward the beginning of the fourteenth century, further erected barriers between the class of nobles and Venetian non-nobles. Thirdly, after conquering mainland cities such as Padua and Verona, local nobles and cittadini from those areas were granted Venetian citizenship; the influx of these often wealthy, naturalized Venetian citizens threatened the interests of the Proto Cittadini Originari. Each of these events were causes for concern for a significant number of wealthy or distinguished non-noble original Venetian citizens, which I would suggest contributed toward the consolidation of their group identity.

Some have argued that the War of Chioggia (1378-81), the fourth and last campaign that Venice waged against Genoa, uprooted Venetian society more than any other event of the fourteenth century, including perhaps the Black Plague. Seeking maritime control of the Adriatic and naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Genoa aligned with Hungary and Padua and brought a powerful fleet of warships to the Venetian islands of the Lido and Brondolo, before moving South to conquer the island of Chioggia in preparation for besieging Venice itself. Employing local nautical knowledge, the Venetians launched a surprise counterattack, encircling Chioggia and blockading the Genoese fleet from all reinforcements. The Venetians' decisive victory led to the Peace of Turin (1381). But the war had been exceptionally costly, more than doubling the already towering public debt, and the wealthiest Venetians, who were those listed in the estimo of c.1379, were forced to make loans to the

75 Romano, 1987, 154 describes "a reshuffling of power in Venetian society at both the civic and parochial levels."
government; delinquent taxpayers had their real estate and property seized and auctioned off. The conflict indebted most, bankrupted many, and made fortunes for a select few.

Poor Nobles

Perhaps most significantly for the future of Venetian class structure, the war hastened the formation of a distinct subclass of the patriciate that has been called "the poor nobles." Presumably from formerly well-to-do families, due to the war or for various other reasons these nobles had lost much or all of their wealth, but still retained their noble birthright to vote in government and serve in higher government office. This privilege became the central means of their subsistence, for they now depended on government salaries for their livelihood—if they were lucky enough to be elected to a post. Some nobles not elected resorted to begging.

To the crisis of the growing subclass of poor nobles, which continued for centuries without an easy solution, the government responded through a number of policies, one of which was simply to increase the numbers of salaried government positions. An act of 1392 listed numerous salaried minor offices earmarked as welfare jobs for poor nobles who had lost their income as a result of the War of Chioggia and otherwise could not support their families: high-paid judges, police officials, customs officers, troop paymasters, and many other positions including officials overseeing trade at the Rialto or at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi or in salt or in cloth of gold or in rope.

Still, the numbers of poor nobles continued to escalate throughout the next century, and in response the Venetian government continued to create new government positions or transform

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77 For an analysis of the some of the war's effects, see Mueller, 1982, 27-41.

78 Queller, 1986, 43.
previously unpaid positions into salaried ones. In 1454, positions on the large Council of Forty became salaried, which turned the magistracy into a well-known bastion for poor nobles. By 1490, according to an act of the Great Council, and perhaps well before, the majority of nobles derived their main source of income from their government salaries; and in the early sixteenth century the nobleman Girolamo Priuli (1476-1547) stated that three-fourths of the nobility were thus dependent. Donald Queller in his *The Venetian Patriciate*, a groundbreaking study evaluating the effect of these poor nobles on state policy, argued that to a large extent the Venetian government transformed itself into a welfare-like institution solely to provide its own nobles with stable incomes. A significant portion of the tax revenue collected by the Venetian government went toward paying the salaries of nobles, a sum which amounted to more than 200,000 ducats a year.

Scholars have yet to examine the relationship between the poor nobles and the Proto Cittadini Originari, but clearly there existed conflict between the two groups. The poor nobles apparently were willing to use their influence in government to appropriate those government offices that were historically reserved for non-noble Venetian citizens, which began to be distributed to poor nobles *per grazia*, until in 1450 the Council of Ten met to determine which positions rightly belonged to nobles. Earlier in 1425, the Great Council was asked to vote on whether nobles who, because of some serious infraction, had been "deprived in perpetuity of all offices, benefits, and counsels of the commune of Venice" should be allowed to hold government

79 Ibid., 40.
80 Ibid., 30.
81 Ibid., 30, 32, 274n4.
82 Ibid., 34.
offices traditionally given to *popolani*. The close decision, with 215 nobles voting in agreement and 331 voting against, may have had less to do with upholding *popolani* rights than with the fact that many Venetian nobles did not want patricians serving in non-noble government positions that might "besmirch the honor of our state," which was the reason given in 1376 for not allowing illegitimate sons of nobles to have membership on the Great Council. By increasingly living off tax revenues, the poor nobles redirected to themselves government resources that might, for instance, have supplied various social services to the *popolani*. Viewed in this light, the popularity of the Scuole Grandi becomes even clearer: these institutions provided to non-noble Venetian citizens the charity, health insurance, and other social benefits not offered by the Venetian government whose greater concern was dispensing charity to its own poor nobles.

The Second Serrata

"Men whose economic shakiness made them rely on public welfare in the form of public office," Stanley Chojnacki wrote of the poor nobles, "asserted their special genealogical qualifications for office, thus giving their dependence a cloak of dignity." Chojnacki termed these qualifications, defined in a series of laws enacted toward the beginning of the fifteenth century.

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83 ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Reg. 22 (ursa), fol. 70r. (64r) [2 Sept 1425]: "(MCCCCXXV) die secundo Septembris Indictione III, Cum dubium sit si nostri nobiles condemnati quod sint privati perpetuo omnibus officiis beneficiis ac consiliis comunis Veneciarum intus et cetera possent gaudere officiis et beneficiis quibus gaudent alii nostri populares vel non vadit pars in modum declarationis. Primo quod dicti nostri nobiles condemnati ut supra possint habere et gaudere illis officiis et beneficiis que habent et quibus gaudent nostri populares/de parte 215/Capta/Secundo quod dicti nostri nobiles condemnati ut supra non possent habere nec gaudere illis beneficiis et officiis quibus gaudent nobiles nec populares/de parte 331, non sinceri 50"


85 Chojnacki, 1986, 799.
century, the Second Serrata. The laws more rigorously defined those eligible to sit on the Great Council. They denied noble status to nearly all whose blood was tainted by a low-born mother who, though married legitimately to a nobleman, nonetheless had formally been either a slave, servant, or of insufficient social status. New laws mandated that the avogadori di comun must maintain a quaternus or ledger of young male nobles whose fathers had sat on the Great Council and who desired early entry into the Great Council (prior to the age of 25) through the Barbarella or annual lottery—it was Venice's first such ledger, prefiguring by nearly a century the libro d'oro or golden book listing official nobles births, and it strictly defined who, indeed, was a Venetian patrician.\textsuperscript{86}

It seems, however, that many of these laws had less to do with conflicts between nobles and other classes than with inequalities among the nobles themselves. Many rich and poor patricians were attempting to, in the words of an act of 1407, “discourage division among the nobles of Venice,” by articulating a collective and leveled identity for patricians.\textsuperscript{87} For instance, a law of 1420 limited dowries to 1600 ducats for all Venetian citizens because it was "impossible for many of our nobles to arrange marriages for their daughters."\textsuperscript{88} Although many wealthy nobles objected to this law and attempted its repeal, they were outvoted.\textsuperscript{89} Certainly the thrust toward a collective identity benefited less wealthy nobles. But one consequence was that, as Dennis Romano observed, "(t)he early years of the fifteenth century witnessed a hardening of social lines and the substitution of hierarchy for community as the organizing principle in

\textsuperscript{86} Chojnacki, 1994, 349.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} ASV, Senato, ‘Misti’ Reg. 53, fol. 70r: "non est possibile quod multi nobiles nostrī possint eorum filias maritare" as cited and transcribed in Chojnacki, 1994, 350n37.

\textsuperscript{89} Chojnacki, 1994, 351.
Venetian social relations."^90 Increasingly from the 1390s, the nobles employed the title nobilis

vir in notarial documents to distinguish themselves from all others.^^91 And, significantly, in 1423
the Venetian government officially stopped referring to itself as the comune and became instead
the dominio or signoria."^92

The historian Frederic Lane also observed how the Venetian nobles at this time attempted
to close their ranks:

A proposal was made, to be sure, in 1403 . . . to add to the great council a worthy
family of native-born commoners whenever one of the noble families died out.
The proposal was killed by the ducal council. The rejection of this reform
proposal of 1403 symbolizes a definitive change in the nature of the Venetian
aristocracy. Earlier it had been a body which had readily absorbed new families;
thereafter for more than two hundred years it was a closed caste fearful lest the
admission of new men destroy its solidarity. During the fifteenth and sixteenth
centuries the Venetian nobility showed unwillingness to share with new families
the honour and power of their status . . .^93

Thus elite or otherwise distinguished members of the Venetian popolani were confronted with a
fractious nobility that had begun to make strong efforts to increase its unity under the banner of
its own shared bloodlines. The historian Stanley Chojnacki elegantly summarizes this hardening
of identity:

The two elements at the core of patrician status in the fifteenth century were
exclusivism and public office—public office to satisfy practical needs both
governmental and private, exclusivism to prevent diffusion of the benefits of
office and to make enjoyment of them the prerogative of a genealogically specific
caste."^94

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^90 Romano, 1987, 152.

^91 Chojnacki, 1994, 349.

^92 Romano, 1987, 158.


^94 Chojnacki, 1986, 810.
Wealthy non-noble Venetian citizens witnessed this rigorous consolidation of patrician identity, which must have had the likewise effect of increasing a sense of identity among those excluded, in particular among the most powerful non-nobles, the Proto Cittadini Originari.

THE PROTO CITTADELI ORIGINARI: FORGING AN IDENTITY

A crucial moment in the development of the Proto Cittadini Originari occurred in 1381, when, ostensibly to honor the contribution of non-nobles in the war effort, the Venetian government voted on the admission of 59 or 60 popolani families into the Great Council; thirty were accepted, the rest rejected. Some historians, however, have seen strictly pragmatic motives behind the Venetian government's actions.

First, nearly half of the thirty accepted popolani families shared surnames with current Great Council members, suggesting a number of invitees were relatives of nobles who, perhaps for some reason such as neglecting at some earlier point to have registered with the Avogardori di Comun, had been omitted from the Great Council.\(^{95}\) Hence the patriciate might have simply elected into the Great Council several of their own.

Secondly, the popolani families gaining Great Council admission tended to be of rather small size, either soon becoming extinct or at least extending minimal influence over the Council in the years to come, and thus proposed no real threat to the current balance of power within the Council.\(^{96}\) Lastly, some have viewed the election of these 30 families as a necessary repopulation of a disappearing nobility, due to the many Trecento wars and the Black Death.\(^{97}\) According to one count, in the 1290s there were 210 families represented on the Great Council, but at the end

\(^{95}\) Chojnacki, 1973, 57.

\(^{96}\) Mueller, 1981, 38: "Tante di queste famiglie erano piccole e non sopravvissero a lungo nei ranghi della nobiltà."

\(^{97}\) Romano, 1987, 28, 165n55.
of the war against Genoa in 1379, approximately 21% of these families had died out, and, the argument runs, the vacancies in the Great Council were too many to fill for the *Barbarella*, which in more usual circumstances distributed by lottery a number of empty seats in the Great Council to male nobles under the normally prescribed age of 25.\(^98\) Hence the ennoblement of thirty *popolani* families increased the size of the patriciate from 187 families back up to 217 families—or to levels roughly equal to those in the 1290s—perhaps in order to assure that there were enough patricians to fill the higher offices, for, in Chojnacki's words "it simply took a lot of men to run the Venetian Government."\(^99\) It would be, however, the last time *popolani* families were admitted into the Great Council until the seventeenth century.

One entrant into the Great Council was Caresino, the Grand Chancellor during the war as well as a noted chronicler, who referred to his own and the other twenty-nine families, prior to their entry into the Council, as *populares*.\(^100\) Caresino did not use any term more specific to describe either himself or the ennobled *popolo* families, strongly suggesting that in the 1380s, there did not yet exist in public consciousness any strict social divisions among non-noble citizens.\(^101\) Nor did the wealthiest non-nobles typically employ a specific title identifying them as part of some specific group.\(^102\) In the Trecento both nobles and important *popolani* might use the

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\(^98\) Chojnacki, 1973, 55, 82n47. Fourteen men were made patricians for their assistance in squashing Baiamonte Tiepolo's conspiracy in 1310. Chojnacki, 1973, 82n47.

\(^99\) Ibid., 54-55.

\(^100\) The list of names of the thirty given entry are transcribed from the Caresinus cronica in Hazlitt, 1860, 330-331.

\(^101\) Chojnacki, 1973, 57.

\(^102\) Romano, 1987, 37.
title *dominus* or lord. In short, prior to the end of the fourteenth century, little if any evidence suggests that wealthy non-nobles had any sort of distinct social or communal identity.

Like the patricians, however, the fortunes of many non-nobles were strained by the war. Marino Carlo, a non-noble valued at 30,000 lire in the 1379 *estimo* and among the wealthiest men in Venice, died soon after the *estimo*, his son Pietro inheriting most of his father's estate; the family's great contribution to the war effort allowed them to be considered for entry into the Great Council, but they were among the 30 or so families not elected. In 1392 Pietro filed for bankruptcy, and his will cited the war and its effects as a central reason for the family's indebtedness.

"Heavy fiscal and personal demands made by the state," Romano noted, "raised the political awareness of the popolo and led them to demand something from the state in return." Aside from admitting 30 families into the Great Council, the Venetian state did little to compensate wealthy non-noble citizens for their contributions. Rather, the state added insult to injury by enacting new naturalization laws in 1382 and 1391 that gave foreigners nearly the same rights as original Venetian citizens after only five years of living in Venice (*de intus* and *de extra*), far less than the previous requirement of twenty-five years instituted a century earlier. After only one year, instead of the previously-required fifteen, foreigners could become citizens *de intus*. In 1407 a new law stated that a foreigner merely had to take a Venetian wife to

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103 Ibid., 38.
104 The thirty families not elected are listed in Gian Giacomo Caroldo's sixteenth-century chronicle (BNM, Ms. It. VII 127 (=8034): libro quinto, 184-5, 199.)
become a Venetian citizen *de intus*. To some extent, the commercial privileges enjoyed by the *cittadini originari* were being bartered to repopulate Venice with new citizens.

Another source of new Venetian citizens resulted from Venice's territorial expansion into the *terraferma*. In 1406 Venice, after having conquered Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, extended to citizens of those areas Venetian citizenship *de intus*. In 1409, after Venice retook Zara, it granted Venetian citizenship *de intus* to Zara's citizens. In the first decades of the fifteen century, a flood of new Venetian citizens, some very wealthy, arrived in Venice to enjoy their citizenship privileges.

That the government did not adequately recognize the enormous sacrifices made by the wealthy non-nobles to the recent war effort against Genoa, and then subsequently made great numbers of foreigners from captured territories into official Venetian citizens must have not only infuriated longstanding non-noble *cittadini originari* but also catalyzed many into viewing themselves as a social group—and one besieged on all sides. An early tangible sign that the Proto Cittadini Originari were beginning to forge an identity occurs in act of 12 February 1410 by the Council of Ten. It stated that the highest offices of the Scuole Grandi, those of the Guardian Grande, Guardian da Matin, Vicario, and Scrivano (*guardianus magnus nec guardianus a matutino nec vicarius vel scriba*) each could only be filled either by a member of the *cittadini originari* or by a naturalized citizen who had previously been a member of the

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108 Ibid., 127, 233.
111 See Appendix B, Doc. 1.
Scuola for twenty years.\textsuperscript{112} The term \textit{cittadini originari} employed in the law referred in a strict legal sense to the nobility as well, but as we have seen, the nobility had long been exempted from serving in high office of the Scuole Grandi. The document, therefore, may be read as referring to the non-noble \textit{cittadini originari} or the class of citizens from which would emerge the Cittadini Originari.

Although no document describes the reasons for the law's enactment or identifies those responsible for precipitating it, I would offer a speculative explanation. First, the intention of the law was to endow both non-noble \textit{cittadini originari} and long-standing naturalized citizens with the prerogative of controlling the higher offices of the Scuole Grandi, a privilege that the act withdrew from all Venetian citizens who had been naturalized within the past two decades—including the new Venetian citizens from Verona, Vicenza, Padua, and other places that Venice had recently conquered. Through the law, it seems most likely that the distinguished members of Scuole Grandi were attempting to ensure their control over these wealthy institutions, and thus I would speculate that they had acted collectively and behind the scenes to appeal to the Council of Ten. This collective action, if it was indeed collective, may be viewed as the earliest manifestation of the Proto Cittadini Originari demonstrating a political identity.

From 1410 until the end of the century and into the next, this emergent group, the Proto Cittadini Originari, continued to control the Scuole Grandi, which were becoming powerful and influential centers of cultural and communal life in Venice. At the same time, however, non-noble members of the \textit{cittadini originari} were also expanding their control over an institution within the Venetian government itself. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Proto Cittadini Originari

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
Originari had monopolized the Cancellerie, which would also play an important role in forging the group's identity.

**CHANCERY SECRETARIES**

Venice's chancery, extant from at least the ninth century, was comprised of notaries fluent in written Latin who were responsible for record keeping, producing state documents, and taking down correspondence with foreign powers; by 1205 the office had moved permanently into the Ducal Palace.\(^{113}\) From at least the duecento, if not centuries before, nobles had not held positions in the chancery.\(^{114}\) Medieval Venetian noblemen from prominent families undoubtedly had little interest in serving as low-salaried civil servants. (Financially desperate "poor nobles" of fifteenth-century Venice, however might have readily accepted such positions, but by then these were not open to nobles.) Several of the earliest chancery notaries were priests, but during the second half of the trecento, when the proliferation of Venice's magistracies caused increasing demand for notaries, the lack of suitably educated Venetians apparently led to foreigners filling a majority of chancery posts.\(^{115}\) Moreover, as Venice's importance in European affairs increased, Venetian ambassadors, who were typically accompanied on diplomatic missions by a chancery secretary, no doubt valued one with native fluency in languages such as Greek or German.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{113}\) Pozza, 1995, 356n12.

\(^{114}\) This apparently was by tradition. I can find no evidence of a Medieval law omitting nobles from the chancery, even though some have affirmed that one existed (cf. Gilbert, 1976, 506). It is doubtful that, in the duecento, nobles in any numbers desired low-paying functionary positions in government—a situation that would change dramatically after the War of Chioggia and into the sixteenth century, when huge numbers of "poor nobles" attempted to appropriate posts traditionally given to non-nobles.

(The notaries who served as either foreign envoys or personal scribes to ambassadors were called secretaries.) By 1268 the Great Council established the elected position of the Grand Chancellor (cancellier grande) to oversee the ducal notaries (of which there were probably less than a few score, since a law of 1456 reduced their numbers from 60 to 40). Typically the Great Council elected an experienced and reliable secretary from the ducal chancery to become the Grand Chancellor who, like the doge, held his position for life.

Over the course of centuries, the role of Grand Chancellor, from his rather humble and pragmatic beginnings, grew into a position of great prestige and ultimately became a figurehead for the Cittadini Originari. Initially, however, the men who held the position might not even have been born in Venice or to Venetian parents. In the fourteenth century, however, the post gained in prestige by being filled by a sequence of notable men such as the Grand Chancellor Benintendi Ravegnani (1352-65), who was an important early humanist with close ties to Petrarch, and the aforementioned Grand Chancellor Caresino who was ennobled for his efforts during the War of Chioggia. The Grand Chancellor might be addressed as Eccellenza (Excellency), a title principally reserved for the Doge; he was automatically made a knight (cavallier in Italian or eques in Latin); he could wear a robe of purple, a color retained for the

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116 Gilbert, 1976, 503.

117 At least this was the case by the mid-fifteenth century according to Neff, 1985, 38, who noted that, at that time, notaries assigned to the cancelleria secreta, and thus who worked directly for the Senate and Collegio, were also known as secretaries.

118 Neff, 1985, 101n30. She cites: ASV, Maggior Consiglio, reg. Regina, cc. 6v-7, 11 April 1456 and ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Liber Regina, ff. 6v-7r, which set a limit of 50 chancery employees in 1481.

119 Corrado was the first recorded Venetian Grand Chancellor by 1268 and perhaps as early as 1261. See Pozza, 1997, 365-67, 382n1-4 for a discussion of the early documents. For a description of later elections, see Gilbert, 1976.

120 See Lazzarini, 1964. For Petrarch in Venice, see Kristeller, 1956.
most elite government officials including the doge; during state processions he marched directly in front of the doge; and he alone possessed the keys to the cabinet in which were kept treaties, some of which were secret, with foreign powers.\textsuperscript{121}

Only in 1478 did the chancery specifically limit its posts to members of the \textit{cittadini originari} (understood to be non-nobles) and, in 1484, to those who were born legitimate (demonstrating that, at that time and unlike in the middle of the next century, a person could be both a \textit{cittadino originario} and illegitimate.) According to Neff, these laws were likely a direct reaction to the influx of Greek-speaking refugees pouring into Venice after the fall of Constantinople and the Venetian-Ottoman wars; their numbers as well as knowledge of Greek, a diplomatic language of the Ottoman court and one with recently-imbued humanistic significance, apparently threatened the job security of the Venetian chancery members who, armed with the knowledge that the chancery had already hired three such Greek speaking refugees including Nicolo Sagundino I and the esteemed Giovanni Dario, apparently succeeded in persuading the government to pass a law requiring Venetian birth as a pre-requisite for chancery posts, thereby making refugees ineligible and thus ensuring their own job security.\textsuperscript{122}

Yet, the wealthiest non-noble original citizens of Venice, that is, those in the upper echelons of the tax registers, in general represented a different and far more sizeable group than those who worked at the chancery. In comparison to the income of Venice's wealthiest merchants, chancery salaries were relatively low: the yearly salary of the Grand Chancellor was 300 ducats. Sanudo, over the course of nearly 40 years of observations, mentions only one

\textsuperscript{121} Mutinelli, 1851, 84; da Mosto, 1937-40, 1:219. For \textit{cavallier} and \textit{eques} see Gilbert, 1976, 512n35, 516. Secretaries were occasionally dispatched alone to foreign courts, and a title of knighthood doubtlessly improved their reception and entry.

\textsuperscript{122} Neff, 1985, 13. For Greeks and Giovanni Dario in the chancery, see Tiepolo, 2002.
secretary, Bernardino de' Redaldis, who had the means to support himself independently but nonetheless chose to work at the chancery.\textsuperscript{123} Neither did chancery employees represent the educated elite—although they were educated in Latin and Latin literature at the chancery school that was established to train them, but only rarely had they gone to University.\textsuperscript{124}

Nonetheless, the members of the chancery, and in particular the Grand Chancellor, became for a number of later observers and historians the nucleus of the Cittadini Originari, despite the fact that they represented a rather small subgroup of relatively low-salaried government employees. In part this was due to the esteem that many Venetians had for the chancery itself. On 22 December 1456 the Council of Ten described the chancery as the "cor status nostri (the heart of our state").\textsuperscript{125} And in the sixteenth century Contarini referred to the Grand Chancellor as the doge of the commoners (\textit{dux ex populo}).\textsuperscript{126} The Venetian nobleman Sandi, as mentioned earlier, even attributed the class formation of the Cittadini Originari to the Venetian government's decision to make chancery posts the domain of non-noble original Venetian citizens. But by this time, as we have seen, the vast majority of Proto Cittadini Originari had little to do with the chancery, and had long established control over the Scuole Grandi.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the traditional historiographical view that the Venetian patriciate established the Cittadini Originari as an underclass of civil servants, I have argued that pivotal

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 33.

\textsuperscript{124} In her extensive study of chancery secretaries, Neff, 1985, 36, 99n17 discovered only a single reference to two brothers who had attended the University of Padua.

\textsuperscript{125} Cited in Pozza, 1997, 383n8 as ASV, Consiglio dei Dieci, Parti Miste, reg. 15, c. 114v.

\textsuperscript{126} Contarini, 1571, 323-24.
historic events laid the requisite groundwork for the class’s emergence: the Cittadini Originari did not exist when the Serrata, a series of laws from 1285-1323, prohibited non-nobles from holding high government office. Many disenfranchised non-noble families nevertheless became enriched, especially during social upheavals precipitated by the devastating War of Chioggia (1378-81), and both common concerns and polarizing issues, such as the government’s sweeping conferment of Venetian citizenship on wealthy émigrés from conquered terraferma cities, regularly set in opposition influential non-noble Venetians to the patriciate, naturalized citizens, and poorer Venetians, thus catalyzing class consciousness. I have proposed that to fulfill their political and social aspirations and elevate the prominence of their families, these so-called Proto Cittadini Originari gradually assumed control over the administration of four charitable confraternities, later called the Scuole Grandi.

On 3 July 1569, a law precisely defined membership in the Cittadini Originari: a member had to be Venetian-born from a legitimate marriage, as had been his father and grandfather.127 Moreover, the law required that a member practice an occupation that was not manual (arte mechanica).128 Also created was the libro d’argento, the official registration of new original citizens kept by the Avogaria di comun.129

In the mid-late trecento, the Scuole Grandi began to commission the first-known paintings to decorate their buildings. In 1365, the Scuola della Carità commissioned the artist Giustino di Gheradino da Forli to paint an image of the Madonna and Child being worshipped by confraternity members, and in c. 1377, the Scuola di San Giovanni commissioned Giovanni da

127 Casini, 1992, 133n2, citing ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Angelus, c.18r.
128 Ell, 1976, 200.
Bologna to paint a Madonna of Humility with accompanying Saints and members of the Scuola (fig. 17).\textsuperscript{130} These obscure works prefigured the major painting campaign that the Scuole would commission in the next century and which were so very important to the success of the Bellini workshop.

Jacopo Bellini was born into the Proto Cittadini Originari, became a member of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista on 3 March 1437, and was elected as a degano (deacon) in 1441 and in 1454.\textsuperscript{131} As explored in the following chapter, in the 1430s high competition and a low demand for paintings characterized the Venetian art market. During this period Jacopo, as a young artist with a growing family, struggled to find commissions in Venice. Hence, the Scuola commissions Jacopo received beginning in c. 1442 were crucial. At about that time, the board of Jacopo's own Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, which was comprised of men who were Proto Cittadini Originari like Jacopo, hired him to decorate the Sala Capitolare that required a minimum of 17 paintings and probably took a decade or more to execute.\textsuperscript{132} Sometime after 1444 Jacopo was commissioned by the Scuola di San Marco to decorate its Albergo, presumably another multi-year project, and in the mid-1460s Jacopo executed at least four large-scale works for the same Scuola's Sala Capitolare.\textsuperscript{133} Undoubtedly Jacopo's identity as a Proto Cittadino Originario and his membership in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista contributed toward his receiving these commissions, which not only constituted years if not decades of guaranteed income for the Bellini workshop, but also gave

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} Worthmann, 1975, 140n2.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Köster, 396-7.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Fortini Brown, 1988, 267-70.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Jacopo the opportunity to become Venice's leading narrative painter. In turn, this led to the Bellini bottega becoming Venice's leading painting workshop in c. 1450.

Gentile Bellini, literally raised in the Scuole Grandi assisting his father on these painting campaigns, joined the Scuola Grande di San Marco in c. 1466, was elected degano di tutt'anno in 1476, degano di mezz'anno in 1484, Guardian da Matin in 1492, and Vicario in 1504.134 He died before becoming Guardian Grande, which was the Scuola's highest office and the next to which Gentile would have been eligible for election. As considered in chapter 5, when Gentile received his sansaria and became financially independent, he again turned his attention toward the Scuole Grandi, the institutions that had contributed so much to the Bellini workshop's success, and offered to redecorate the Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Marco at greatly discounted rates. Gentile's paintings for the Scuole embody both his affinity with the Proto Cittadini Originari and his artistic talent in the genre of narrative, and are an expression of the skills that the artist learned while assisting his father on earlier commissions for the very same Scuole.

134 ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Degano di tutto anno." ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Degano de mezzo anno." ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Vardia[n] da mati[n]." ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Vichari[i]."
Chapter 3

WORKSHOP ORIGINS AND MASTERING THE NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION

Jacopo Bellini, born in Venice about 1400, has been described as "the founder of the Venetian Renaissance of the fifteenth century" whose art initiated "a radical change . . . in Venetian artistic tradition."

Instead of imagining Jacopo Bellini as a fully-formed artistic force, creating in isolation and detached from the real-world concerns around him, the following chapter considers him, rather, as a workshop founder and master, motivated to a significant degree by business concerns, his artistic self laboring alongside of, and oftentimes subordinated to, his practical self. This emphasis on Jacopo's role as an entrepreneur serves a specific purpose: to provide a richer context for understanding many of his innovative artistic achievements. The argument is that, in order for his workshop to succeed in the highly competitive artistic marketplace of fifteenth-century Venice, Jacopo chose to reinvent his pictorial style, and in doing so, ushered in the Venetian Renaissance in art.

To my knowledge, this thesis has never been argued, nor this particular approach taken. There are a number of possible reasons for this. One is that only rather recently have scholars begun to investigate the Renaissance artist's workshop as a business venture. Another is that there simply has been very little scholarship on Jacopo since Degenhart and Schmitt's monograph of 1990, which explored Jacopo's drawings in topical essays and provided a catalogue raisonné. Moreover, the few recent studies on Jacopo have tended to focus on specific

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2 The secondary literature has now become large. See, for instance, the following studies published after 1990: Bombach; Ames-Lewis, 1998; Coche; O'Malley, 2005; O'Malley, 2007; Honig; van Houdt; Ladis and Wood; Garton, 2012.
themes in the artist's work, such as his representations of fountains, or of temples, or his use of antique models.  

More surprising is that no scholar, to my knowledge, has reconstructed a historical narrative recounting the founding and early expansion of the Bellini workshop. This may be a result of Bellini scholars generally believing that the meager traces of relevant material provided by primary sources could not support such a study. As mentioned in the introduction, the problems include enduring questions concerning the biological and legal relationships between the Bellini, a scarcity of extant paintings executed by Jacopo prior to 1460, and a dearth of documents describing the early Bellini workshop.

On its surface, then, this chapter presents the rather straightforward narrative of a Renaissance artist struggling to make his workshop succeed. This simplicity, however, belies the breadth of primary and secondary sources required to construct this history, as well as the chapter's original contributions, several of which I would like therefore briefly to mention. These include the overall structure and thesis, the biographical conclusions resulting from the discoveries made in chapter 1, the significance to Jacopo's workshop of the Proto Cittadini Originari and Scuole Grandi, the many observations (unless otherwise noted) that demonstrate the relationship of Jacopo's drawings to frescoes by Altichiero. Also original are the close readings of a number of documents and inscriptions pertaining to Jacopo, and the assemblage into a cohesive narrative of small bits of information across a wide range of sources. In sum, this chapter presents a story that, in many respects, has never before been told.

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To begin, I attempt to reconstruct the series of rather unusual events that led to the foundation of the Bellini workshop in Venice. Jacopo seems not to have undergone a lengthy apprenticeship under a Venetian master, who might have guided the young artist toward early commissions or even, perhaps, shepherded the beginning of his independent career (although he might have had closer ties to Giambono than extant evidence supports). Rather, Jacopo received his training from the famous Marchigian Gentile da Fabriano (d.1527), an artistic distinction Bellini repeatedly and publically proclaimed. In Venice, however, the other leading local workshops had similarly been influenced by Gentile da Fabriano's production of International Gothic, and in the fifteen or so years after the artist's departure from the city in c. 1414, they continued to expand upon the once-novel style, individuating it into what is now often referred to as Late Gothic. Hence in 1430, Jacopo ostensibly had little if any competitive advantage when vying for commissions against the other more senior, experienced, and entrenched Venetian painting workshops.

Undoubtedly to position his newly-established bottega in the forefront of patrons' minds, Jacopo began to implement a number of business and artistic strategies. He started to advertise, through signatures and inscriptions. He cultivated helpful relationships with humanists, who might assist in the construction of such inscriptions, and with other painters, who might subcontract work to him or with whom he might share commissions. In the late 1430s and early 1440s, Jacopo was fortunate to be the beneficiary of good publicity that doubtlessly increased his fama.

Yet I would argue that Jacopo's primary artistic strategy was to attempt to distinguish his paintings from those of his rivals. Hence I propose that the artist strove to excel at, and then to innovate, nearly every possible genre of art that he might be called upon to paint. Trained by
Gentile da Fabriano, Jacopo nevertheless endeavored to learn from other celebrated artists including Altichiero and Donatello, executing drawings after their work presumably in order to master and assimilate their artistic skills. He became expert at painting portraits. He collected various pictorial motifs, some of which derived from Trecento model books, others of which he sketched himself, presumably to incorporate them later into his work. He devised new compositions for various religious iconographies, which remained in his notebooks until needed. His multi-use drawings, some of which were highly finished on the expensive material of vellum, were probably also employed as show pieces for future patrons. And Jacopo learned to draw in linear perspective, working through its novel aspects with the aid of detailed practice drawings. I argue that the artistic strategies Jacopo employed, with the objective of ensuring the success of his workshop, also included his ambition to paint narratives in the new art of perspective—a skill that no other Venetian painter of his generation could justly claim and one that would uniquely set apart his nascent bottega.

ESTABLISHING A VENETIAN WORKSHOP

The eldest son of a tinsmith (batistagno, literally tinbeater), Jacopo Bellini (c. 1400-1470/71) in his juvenescence must have been enthralled by the artist luminaries visiting his home city of Venice. Michelino da Besozzo (fl. 1388; died after 1450), among the most famous Italian painters and illustrators of his day, stayed in Venice in 1410, probably for several years. Gentile da Fabriano (c. 1385-1427), a leading practitioner of the International Gothic style, executed a

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4 Jacopo was almost certainly born in Venice, where he exercised the privileges of an original citizen (cittadino originario) and was so described in a document of 1470 (Barausse, 337, doc. 29).

5 He was responsible for some of the illumination in the Epistles of St Jerome (London, British Library, Egerton MS. 3266), a manuscript that is likely to have been produced in Venice around 1414 (Sutton).
number of Venetian commissions from c. 1408-c. 1414, including a fresco that depicted a Venetian naval battle against Emperor Frederick Barbarossa for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Palazzo Ducale.\textsuperscript{6} In late 1413 or January 1414 Gentile departed for Brescia to become Pandolfo Malatesta's court artist, and from c. 1414-c. 1420 Gentile's former apprentice Pisanello (c. 1395-c. 1455) continued the Sala's narrative cycle.\textsuperscript{7} (Decades later in 1441 Jacopo would defeat Pisanello in a famous portraiture competition judged by Niccolò III d'Este, Marchese of Ferrara.\textsuperscript{8}) Jacopo in his formative period must have been impressed by Pisanello's courtly and naturalistic interpretation of International Gothic, frescoed in the large-scale narrative format that would become central to Jacopo's own career. Bellini's early influences also included more traditional Byzantine-inspired styles, such as those practiced by three extremely talented local painters, Nicolò di Pietro (fl. 1394-1430), Zanino di Pietro (fl. 1389-c. 1448), and Jacobello del Fiore (fl.1400-1439), from whose posthumous estate Jacopo in 1439 would purchase an inlaid panel (\textit{una tavolla intarsiada}) once owned by that artist.\textsuperscript{9}

Of all the local and itinerant painters working in Venice in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, it was Gentile da Fabriano who became the primary artistic influence on the young Bellini. In two recorded but lost inscriptions, Jacopo referred to himself as a disciple of the famed artist;\textsuperscript{10} over a century later Giorgio Vasari reported as much;\textsuperscript{11} and the strong stylistic

\textsuperscript{6} Wohl.
\textsuperscript{7} Chiarelli and Pollard.
\textsuperscript{8} Eisler, 1989, 512.
\textsuperscript{9} See Christiansen, 1987, 166-7. For the purchase of the inlaid panel, see Barausse, 331, doc. 7
\textsuperscript{10} Eisler, 1989, 517, 525.
\textsuperscript{11} Vasari-Barocchi, 3:428: "Gentile da Fabriano, stato suo maestro e come padre amorevole."
affinities between Gentile's mature works, such as his *Madonna and Child Enthroned* of c. 1420, and several of Jacopo's earlier paintings, notably his *Madonna of Humility with Donor* (Lionello d'Este?) of c. 1441, support such assertions (figs. 18-19).\(^\text{12}\) Jacopo also executed a portrait of Gentile da Fabriano (lost), described in the Cinquecento by Marcantonio Michiel as in Pietro Bembo's collection in Padua, and, of course, Bellini named one of his sons Gentile, a distinctly non-Venetian Christian name.\(^\text{13}\) Two documents tentatively imply that Jacopo accompanied Gentile da Fabriano to Florence in the early 1420s, perhaps affording the young apprentice the opportunity to study groundbreaking Renaissance works by such artists as Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio, or Masolino.\(^\text{14}\) But no incontrovertible evidence indicates, however, either that Jacopo began experimenting with linear perspective prior to the 1430s or that he certainly had sojourned in Central Italy; the Tuscan influences identifiable in his style could as easily have derived from Florentines working in North Italy.\(^\text{15}\)

In the mid-late 1420s, when Jacopo was likely in his twenties, the untimely death of his father, Nicolò Bellini called Nicoletto, precipitated a remarkable series of events that transformed the young artist’s life (and which, as a result of the analyses made in chapter 1 are

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\(^\text{13}\) For the portrait, see Eisler, 1989, 516. The name Gentile, although rare, did exist in Venice. For example, a Zentil is mentioned in ASVe, *Giudici di Petizion, sentenze a giustizia*, b. 75, ciii(r), 16 July 1437. Of the 2128 individuals registered by the Venetian Government in the *prestiti* of c. 1379, I located only two whose Christian names derived from Gentile: Zentilin Scoltrido and Zentiloto Zentilin (Luzzato, 181, 185). See also Vasari-Barocchi, 3:427 who states that Gentile Bellini was named after Gentile da Fabriano.

\(^\text{14}\) See Introduction, n. 10.

\(^\text{15}\) As discussed below. Since Jacopo doesn't seem to have mastered a system of linear perspective, such as that described by Leon Battista Alberti in his *De Pictura* (1435), until, perhaps, the early 1440s, a direct line of influence from particular works by Central Italian artists to Jacopo's paintings is difficult to determine.
largely described here for the first time). For undetermined reasons, Jacopo was in significant financial debt to his father, whose only known will of 11 April 1424 marginalized Jacopo's future inheritance in favor of that of Jacopo's stepmother, Franceschina, who would "receive the major share." The birth of Nicolò and Franceschina's son, the great painter Giovanni Bellini, sometime after Nicolò had drawn up his will but prior to 3 September 1428, invalidated Nicolò's 1424 testament (which was legally required to mention all legitimate sons). When Nicolò died, either just before or not long after Giovanni's birth but certainly prior to 23 July 1429, he had apparently neglected to draw up a subsequent will and thus likely died intestate. According to Venetian law, his two living, legitimate sons, Giovanni and Jacopo, would inherit undividedly and in equal shares Nicolò's somewhat comfortable estate (taking into account Jacopo's previous debt to his father). It also seems likely that Jacopo, rather than Franceschina, who perhaps died

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16 Three documents give some information about the events in Nicolò Bellini's life: his will of 1424; Jacopo's dowry receipt of 23 July 1429 which recorded Nicolò as deceased; and Giovanni and Jacopo Bellini's fratrus divisio of 1440, which shows that Nicolò did not emancipate his sons prior to his death. Each of these documents are discussed in chapter 1.

17 ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10r-5r, n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3: "uxor mea Franceschina sit pro maiore parte." The will stated that if any of the executors, which included Franceschina, Jacopo, Paolo Remarius (Jacopo's brother-in-law), and Pietro Musolino, sought to challenge Franceschina, then they would be removed from their duties and Franceschina would be named the sole executrix. Nicolò's will also demanded that Jacopo repay a sizeable debt to Nicolò's estate, less 24 ducats that had been promised to Jacopo's deceased mother, Zanina. Finally, the will proclaimed that, sometime after Nicolò's death, if either his son, Jacopo, or his daughter, Elena, initiated legal action against Nicolò's estate for a portion of Zanina's dowry, he or she would receive no inheritance whatsoever.

18 Giovanni's birth annulled Nicolò's will of 1424 (Griphio, 1606, "Rubriche delli decreti civili," M.Cons. 1418.29.Maro, r. XII, 6). Note that Giovanni might have been required to have reached age 14 before entering into the fratrus divisio of 1440, which would narrow his date of birth to between the second half of 1424 and 3 September 1426 (Appendix A, doc. 2).

19 Nicolò is first recorded as deceased on that day, but he might have died years earlier (Appendix A, doc. 1).

young, became Giovanni's legal guardian (tutor) and hence surrogate father.\textsuperscript{21}

The death of his father Nicolò enabled Jacopo to establish his own home-workshop. Jacopo's inheritance likely provided the necessary funds, added to which were 250 ducats received from his wife Anna's dowry.\textsuperscript{22} Also upon his father's death, Jacopo became emancipated, thereafter having the right not only to establish his own household of which he was patriarch (paterfamilias) but also to other entitlements essential toward running an independent workshop, such as that of autonomously entering into contracts without requiring his father's authorizing co-signature.\textsuperscript{23} Jacopo's abrupt transformation from an apprentice or assistant painter, in financial debt and partially disenfranchised in his father's will, to the master of his own workshop in his home city of Venice, must have seemed providential, not least to the young artist himself. Before him, however, lay the substantial challenge of competing for commissions against the finest artists of Venice.

\textbf{VENETIAN PAINTING WORKSHOPS IN THE EARLY QUATTROCENTO}

The art market in early Renaissance Venice was an oligopoly in which high barriers of entry, such as extensive artistic training and considerable upfront capital, were required to

\textsuperscript{21} The circumstantial evidence that Franceschina died young is: (1) No known documents apart from Nicolò's will of 1424 name Franceschina (death may explain her absence from recorded history). (2) Giovanni and Jacopo remained in a fraternal partnership until 1440, and one may imagine that, had Franceschina lived, she might have been made guardian over her son Giovanni and all his possessions, and therefore presumably would have requested a \textit{divisio} soon after her husband's death, which was at sometime prior to July 1429. (3) In 1440 Giovanni was living in San Geminiano, apparently with Jacopo and not with Franceschina. And (4) several primary sources refer to Jacopo and Giovanni as father and son, testifying to their closeness presumably from Giovanni's early years. A soon-to-be published document recently discovered by Anna Pizzatti and David Alan Brown seems to confirm that Giovanni Bellini's biological mother died when Giovanni was very young (communicated to the author by Anna Pizzatti by phone on 2 May 2013 and by David Alan Brown in an email of 10 May 2013).

\textsuperscript{22} Appendix A, doc. 1.

\textsuperscript{23} The legal concept of emancipation is discussed in chapters 1 and 4.
establish a workshop. Also limiting the number of marketplace competitors were Venice’s guild regulations, such as protectionist bylaws intended to constrain the activity of foreign artisans visiting the city (but which did not entirely prevent such visits).\textsuperscript{24} By establishing a Venetian workshop in San Geminiano, the parish facing San Marco and the Palazzo Ducale and thus steps away from the spiritual and administrative center of the Venetian Empire, Jacopo had boldly seized an opportunity: his prior training, recent financial windfall, and Venetian birth allowed him entry into Venice's restrictive marketplace as a legitimate competitor.

Jacopo's early main rivals were three. The most senior was Jacobello del Fiore (fl.1400-1439), whose last decade of life overlapped with the first decade of Jacopo's independent career, and whose earliest works depended on the Byzantine-influenced style of the mid-Trecento painter Paolo Veneziano, as witnessed in Jacobello's extraordinary narrative cycle of \textit{The Life of St. Lucy} of c. 1410 (fig. 20).\textsuperscript{25} The arrival in Venice of Michelino and Gentile da Fabriano, alongside whom Jacobello probably worked in decorating the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale, prompted Jacobello to develop a gothic-inspired, lavishly decorative, mixed-media style, most notably in his magnificent triptych \textit{Justice and the Archangels} of c. 1421, which he ornamented with a gilded pastiglia relief (fig. 21).\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Foreign artists overstaying their welcome were likely to receive a protectionist response from the guild, as did Albrecht Dürer, who described in a series of famous letters of 1506 that, despite being welcomed by numerous Venetians including Giovanni Bellini, who sought to commission a painting from Dürer, he was nonetheless hounded by members of the Venetian Painter’s Guild, called before magistrates on three occasions, and forced to pay a fine of four florins to the Guild (Moore, 81-90).

\textsuperscript{25} For Jacobello's career and his St. Lucy cycle, see Chiappini di Sorio, 2006, 29-33; cat.10, 108-111.

\textsuperscript{26} For Michelino, see Corbett and Eisler, 1989, 9-29. For Jacobello's \textit{Justice} see Symeonides, 50-52. On 11 January 1412 Jacobello’s annual stipend from the signoria, the considerable sum of 100 ducats, was reduced to 50 because of the war that Venice was conducting in Dalmatia (Muraro, 267, with further references).
Michele Giambono, arguably the leading painter of Venice in the 1430s, had also taken up the courtly style of Gentile da Fabriano, perhaps having apprenticed under Gentile's former pupil Pisanello in the Palazzo Ducale in c. 1414-c. 1420. After the 1420s, however, artistic developments either in or outside of Venice do not seem to have greatly affected Giambono's late gothic style, which was marked by an idealism in depicting divine figures, a naturalism in depicting animals and nature, and a lavish ornamentalism, typified characteristically by the sumptuous portrayal of undulating brocaded or damasked fabrics, often intricately creased like crumpled paper unfurled, with curvilinear meandering edging (fig. 22). At the pinnacle of his artistic success, Giambono received what must have been among the most coveted commissions in Venice during the second quarter of the Quattrocento: to design, at least in part, the mosaics of the Cappella nova (Mascoli Chapel) in San Marco; his signature Michael Zabono venetus fecit appears below the mosaic depicting the Presentation of the Virgin, and on 6 December 1449 a notary referred to the painter as "Michael Zambon pictor Sancti Marci," the painter of Saint Mark, an impressive title indeed (fig. 23).

Lastly there were Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini who had formed a partnership in c. 1441 that became the leading Venetian painting workshop of the decade. Their overwhelmingly popular altarpieces generally depicted solid and cylindrical full-length saints,


28 Tiziano Franco, 1996, 7ff. For a detailed assessment of Giambono's style, see Land, 1974, 6-16. In his desultory use of recent innovations, Giambono might nonetheless include retardataire elements: the signature on his Saint James polyptych may be the unique Quattrocento example of a cartellino inscribed with gothic rather than humanist-inspired lettering (Rawlings, 85).

29 Land, 1974, 81, doc. 13. In 1604, over a century-and-a-half after Giambono worked on the Mascoli chapel, the artist was reported to have completed the mosaics in 1490, after 30 years labor, and to have received from the Procuratori di San Marco an annual payment of 300 ducats for doing so (Stringa 1604, 56v.). The year 1490, however, is decades after Giambono's death, and the large amount of his annual stipendio is uncorroborated and highly questionable — yet nonetheless adduced as factual by Michelangelo Muraro and other scholars (Muraro, 1961, 267). Franco, 1998, 85-6,124n35, also questioned Stringa's affirmation.
standing on plinths and molded by realistic light sources—probably two-dimensional projections of Tuscan sculptural models—which were then housed in elaborately carved and gilded Gothic frames (fig. 24).\textsuperscript{30} The partners were not bound to one style, however. Their influential tripartite \textit{Four Fathers of the Church Triptych} innovated in a more courtly, decorative mode by unifying the pictorial space, and probably served as an important model for Mantegna's later San Zeno altarpiece (fig. 25).\textsuperscript{31} The senior partner, Giovanni, likely from Ulm, Germany, apparently had arrived in Venice c. 1432 to decorate the Palazzo of Giovanni Cornaro, one of the \textit{Serenissima}'s wealthiest men.\textsuperscript{32} Giovanni d'Alemagna's professional partnership with Antonio Vivarini, and his marriage to Antonio's sister that granted the artist Venetian citizenship \textit{de intus} according to a law of 1407, presumably silenced objections from the powerful Venetian painter's guild toward foreign artists working in Venice, and opened the door to numerous commissions. In the first five years of their partnership, they received no less than nine major painting commissions, including altarpieces for S. Stefano (1441 and 1445), S. Moise (c. 1442), S. Zaccaria (1443), S. Pantalon (1444); organ shutters for S. Moise (c. 1442), S. Pantalon (c. 1444) and S. Giorgio Maggiore (1445); and the \textit{Four Fathers of the Church Triptych} for the Scuola Grande della Carità (1446).\textsuperscript{33}

Adept at altarpieces, devotional paintings, and probably portraits, Jacopo’s competitors had less experience executing narratives, having yet to assimilate into their work several recent central Italian innovations, such as linear perspective, an interest in spatial depth, and others later

\textsuperscript{30} Holgate, 1998, 91.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 223-234.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 107, 111, 120-21.
\textsuperscript{33} For the law, see Ell, 233. Holgate, 129-237.
codified by Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise *De Pictura* (1435). Jacobello's Byzantine-inspired narrative of *St. Lucy* of c. 1410 was retardataire even in its own time, hardly acknowledging the achievements of Altichiero, the great narrative artist of late Trecento Northern Italy (fig. 20). Giambono, as witnessed in his one extant narrative panel, *The Stigmatization of St. Francis*, as well as in those mosaics of the Mascoli chapel that are most securely attributable to him, had not mastered central Italian methods of creating a convincing depth of space, and was probably "more at ease with an iconic image than a narrative one," according to one scholar's monograph on the artist (fig. 26).³⁴ In narrative works by Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini, such as the *Adoration of the Magi* or the central panel of the *Nativity* polyptych, few Quattrocento Tuscan innovations intrude into their decorative Late Gothic style (figs. 27-28).³⁵ In their other extant narrative works, such as the five surviving panels from the *Life of Santa Monica* altarpiece and the four scenes illustrating the *Life of St. Apollonia* the painters adjusted their pictorial style apparently to suit their patron's needs, in the former uncharacteristically portraying plainly-dressed figures in sparse interiors, and in the latter employing, also rather uncharacteristically, *all'antica* sculptural forms, inscriptions, and motifs in an architecturally-crammed urban setting (figs. 29-30).³⁶ In sum, with the possible exception of the Mascoli chapel (of which the dating and strict authorship remain problematic), few Renaissance pictorial advances informed Venetian narrative painting in the first four decades of

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³⁴ Land, 1974, 9.

³⁵ Holgate, 1998, 42, 46-9

³⁶ In the *Santa Monica Altarpiece*, the simplicity of the style doubtlessly pleased the Augustinian tertiaries who were most likely the work's patrons. Originally from an altar in San Stefano, Venice, the panels are now dispersed in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo; Accademia, Venice; Courtauld Institute, London; Detroit Institute of Arts; private collection, Milan. See Holgate, 1998, 198-223. For *Apollonia*, with panels dispersed in the Metropolitan Museum, NY; Museo Civico, Bergamo; and two in Accademia Carrara, Bassano del Grappa, see ibid., 53-6, 211.
the Quattrocento.

Why had the leading Venetian workshops not kept abreast of recent narrative innovations in central Italy? They might have had little reason to do so. In early Renaissance Venice, the commission of large-scale narrative painting cycles was rare: a mere five or perhaps six are securely documented prior to 1420, two ordered by the Venetian government, two by scuole piccole, one apparently by the linen merchants, and perhaps another by the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista. Moreover, when requiring cycles of large-scale istorie, the Signoria frequently looked far afield to well-established non-Venetian narrative specialists. For example, in c. 1365 Guariento was brought from Padua to execute his famous Paradise and presumably several of the 22 scenes comprising the Story of Alexander III that decorated the recently-constructed Great Council Hall. A half-century later the non-Venetians Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello of Verona both contributed to the second painting campaign of the same narrative cycle. In all probability local Venetian artists had collaborated on the Alexander frescoes—Vasari described the participation of Antonio Veneziano in the earlier campaign, and in 1412, after the second campaign had commenced, Jacobello del Fiore was documented in the employ of the Signoria. Yet in the first decades of the Quattrocento, the relative infrequency of such commissions, coupled with the Signoria's unspoken tradition of seeking outside—albeit regional—experts for major narrative campaigns, could hardly have inspired Venetian workshops to study methodically the latest innovations in the genre. Such might partially account for the retardataire or, occasionally, uneven style characterizing several of the narrative works of

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37 Fortini Brown, 1988, 258-68.
38 Ibid., 261-65.
39 Muraro, 267.
Jacopo’s early competitors.

THE EARLY BELLINI WORKSHOP

A few fifteenth-century archival documents, two notebooks of drawings, a handful of paintings, and several lost but recorded inscriptions cannot adequately recount the spirit with which Jacopo approached his new business venture of founding a workshop, nor describe his underlying grand designs as an artist. This section nonetheless attempts to push these primary sources to their interpretative limits in order to accrue the small details which, when taken together, portray the young artist as a determined, ambitious, innovative, and, in great part, autodidactic painter who, at the same time, trained nearly all of the male members of his immediate family to become successful artists. Behind Jacopo's impressive resolve lay a household relying on him for support, which included not only his wife Anna, and, presumably, his half-brother Giovanni, still a boy, but within a few years at least four additional children: his sons Gentile and Nicolò, his daughter Nicolsia, and his nephew Leonardo, whom in 1431 Jacopo had taken in "like a son, due to the demands of both charity and kinship" (and who would become Venice's leading illuminator).  

As a painter Jacopo needed to generate works of art, as a businessman he needed to sell them, and as a workshop master he needed to ensure the smooth operation of his bottega. To these ends, Bellini employed a number of tactics, several of which are considered below. Perhaps his most important challenge was to distinguish his work from that of his competitors, each of whom were also accomplished practitioners of the International Gothic style. I suggest that

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40 Barausse, 332-3, doc. 11: "[E]um nutriverit tamquam filium ex debito tam karitatis quam affinitatis usque presens."
Jacopo's core strategy was an attempt to excel at, and to innovate in, nearly every genre of painting in which he might be commissioned, and this included the large scale istorie that would later come to dominate the Bellini workshop's output.

**STRATEGIES: JACOPO THE ENTREPRENEUR**

Advertising

Without print and media, few advertising opportunities existed for early fifteenth-century Italian painters to "describe or draw attention to (a product, service, or event) in a public medium in order to promote sales or attendance."41 Paintings themselves, of course, advertised their own quality, but Quattrocento artists, following those in the Trecento, also drew attention to themselves—and to their services—by placing advertising spaces on their own works of art, in the form of signatures and inscriptions.42

In his first documented work of c. 1430, Jacopo signed a now-lost painting of *Saint Michael* for the church of San Michele Arcangelo in Padua, “Jacopo of Venice, disciple of Gentile da Fabriano (*JACOBUS DE VENETIIS DISCIPULUS GENTILE DA FABRIANO PINXIT*).”43 Though Pisanello was Gentile's more obvious artistic heir, completing the Lateran frescoes of his deceased master in 1431-2, and in Venice Jacobello del Fiore and Giambono had long since expanded upon the Marchigian's International Style, Jacopo at the beginning of his independent career nonetheless chose to announce himself as Gentile's artistic successor, his

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41 *Oxford English Dictionary*, "advertise."

42 For examples of signatures in Renaissance Venice, see Matthew, 1998, 616-648.

43 Eisler, 1989, 517.
earlier apprenticeship presumably the young artist's most publicizable distinction to that point.\textsuperscript{44}

In 1436 Jacopo again advertised himself as Gentile da Fabriano's artistic heir, adding a lengthy inscription to his \textit{Crucifixion} fresco (destroyed) for the Chapel of San Niccolò in the Cathedral of Verona:

\begin{quote}
In the year 1436 Jacopo Bellini painted this with his slight talent to the extent his artistic skill (could) reach. His teacher was Gentile, a man renowned in the Venetian world, an outstanding man in whom his native city of Fabriano rejoices.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

Directing attention to Jacopo's creative talent (\textit{ingenio}), this inscription, however unassuming it might appear (as discussed below), nevertheless took significant advantage of cathedral real estate to place before a wide Veronese audience a self-serving business advertisement, written in Latin and hence targeting educated aristocrats, patricians, wealthy \textit{cittadini}, and ecclesiastics, all of whom were potential future patrons.\textsuperscript{46}

As Gentile da Fabriano's \textit{fama} began to recede from public consciousness, Jacopo discontinued proclaiming himself the Marchigian's disciple—or at any rate no further examples are known after the Verona \textit{Crucifixion} of 1436. Jacopo's \textit{Madonna and Child} of 1448 bears a repainted inscription of unknown origin that may duplicate a lost autograph signature: "1448. Bellini rendered these forms with his freeborn mind (1448 · HAS DEDIT INGEN(UA?) BELINUS MENTE FIGURA)(fig. 31)"\textsuperscript{47}

\section*{Notes}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Chiarelli and Pollard.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Transcription after Eisler, 1989, 525: "Mille quadringentos sex et triginta per annos/Jacobus haec pinxit, tenui quantam attigit artem/Ingenio Bellinus. Idem praeceptor et illi/Gentilis veneto fama celeberrimus orbe/Quo Fabriana viro praestanti urbs patria guadet." Translation mine, with suggestions from John Holland, and taking into consideration the translation by Irving Gumb and Michael McGann in Eisler (ibid.).
\item \textsuperscript{46} For a sense of the Padua audience, see Bergstein, 833-68.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Fossaluzza, 1990, 58. Note that the adjective \textit{ingenuus} (free-born, liberal), which was apparently employed in the inscription, is distinct from the noun \textit{ingenium} (skill, god-given talent).  
\end{itemize}
presumably had no further need to advertise his artistic lineage, graduating instead to promoting solely his own artistic creativity that, as we shall see, he had indeed taken extraordinary pains to develop. It is interesting to note that, twelve years later, Jacopo's highly innovative Gattamelata altarpiece once bore the signature "The work of the Venetian Jacopo Bellini, father, and of his sons Gentile and Giovanni, 1460," not only introducing Giovanni and Gentile to a Paduan audience but also associating them with a now-famous artist, Jacopo, much as Jacopo had, thirty years earlier and also in Padua, associated himself with Gentile da Fabriano (fig. 32).48

Networking: Humanists

In 1435/36 Leon Battista Alberti advised painters, for the sake of their art, not only to befriend "poets and orators, for these have many ornaments in common with the painter," but also "(l)iterary men, who are full of information about many subjects (and) will be of great assistance in preparing the composition of a historia."49 Whether or not familiar with Alberti's text, Jacopo in the same decade apparently had arrived at a similar conclusion. His Latinate signature on the Saint Michael of c. 1430 directed itself toward the educated elite and presumably was composed with the assistance of such a "literary man," since Jacopo doubtfully knew Latin. In constructing his 1436 Crucifixion inscription, Jacopo also must have received help from an orator or humanist, because its four-line verse, written in dactylic hexameter,

48 The Gattamelata Altarpiece was once in the Church of S. Antonio, Gattamelata Funerary Chapel, Padua, but the panels are now dispersed (presuming they are, indeed, the panels). Although the altarpiece signature is lost, it was recorded in 1590 by Fra Valerio Polidoro (Callegari, 30): "Jacobi Bellini Veneti patris ac Gentilis et Joannis natorum opus MCCCLX." For an explanation of why Jacopo referred to Giovanni as his son, when he was almost certainly his biological half-brother, see chapter 1.

employed a classical topos of affected modesty (the ninth-century Frankish monk Walafrid likewise described himself as writing with *tenui ingenui* or slight talent), an oratorical strategy intended to place the audience into a receptive frame of mind and one which Jacopo presumably lacked the education to have initiated himself.\(^50\)

While humanist ideas to some extent informed Jacopo's interest in classical models, evident in drawings such as his *Studies or Inventions of Three Classical Monuments* of c. 1440, the artist's pictorial endeavors themselves also impressed a number of humanists (fig. 33).\(^51\) Giovanni Fontana (c. 1395-c. 1455), a Venetian-born physician educated in Padua who wrote approximately eighteen known works on subjects as diverse as sand-clocks, methods of measurement, hydraulics, and war machines, dedicated to Jacopo Bellini a now-lost treatise written prior to 1440 on the pictorial arts, which treated atmospheric perspective among other topics.\(^52\) Whether Fontana contrived his book as a response to Alberti's own treatise describing linear perspective (Alberti and Fontana had attended the University of Padua together in c. 1417-1418) or whether he intended to laud Jacopo as if Northern Italy's answer to Brunelleschi, the dedicatee of the Tuscan vernacular version of Alberti's text (1436), we can only speculate.

Another Venetian humanist, Ulisse degli Aleotti, extolled Jacopo's victory over Pisanello in two commemorative sonnets in which he employed a well-worn trope to describe Bellini as a "second Phidias" (one of the most renowned artists of Antiquity), and likened Jacopo both to Apelles, the famous portraitist of Alexander the Great, and to Polykleitos, the great Greek


\(^{51}\) Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 370-373.

\(^{52}\) Clagett, 1976, 8, 24, and passim.
sculptor of the 5th century BC.\textsuperscript{53} The Milanese humanist Angelo Decembrio, resident at the Ferrarese court during the 1430s and 1440s, also recorded the contest between "Pisanello and Bellini, the finest painters of our time."\textsuperscript{54}

**Networking: Artists**

Developing relationships with other painters, especially at the beginning of one's career, offered the possibility of a number of professional benefits such as subcontracting, whereby the painter receiving an initial commission might share in the profit while a younger associate completed the work. In Padua in April of 1430, three painters, Nicolò of Candia, Antonio of Verona (whom some have identified with Pisanello), and Giambono, were asked to assess the value of Jacopo's recently-completed *Saint Michael* (which they valued at 35 ducats, a probably fair if slightly low price).\textsuperscript{55} It is likely that Jacopo himself had selected Giambono, a fellow Venetian, because in such assessments the artist was allowed to nominate his own expert.\textsuperscript{56} During their lives these two painters were connected in a number of ways: both belonged to the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, Giambono from 1422 and Jacopo from 1437;\textsuperscript{57} both regularly employed the same notary, Francesco Elmi, for much of their legal affairs.\textsuperscript{58} Both also occasionally applied similar painting techniques that were otherwise uncommon in early-mid

\textsuperscript{53} Eisler, 1989, 38, 512, 531.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 512.

\textsuperscript{55} Land, 1982, 283-286.

\textsuperscript{56} O'Malley, 2005, 120-30.

\textsuperscript{57} Köster, 396-7, 446.

\textsuperscript{58} Franco, 1998, 223-5, docs. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13. Degenhart and Schmitt 1990, II-5, 11-14, nn. 10, 15, 18, 19, 24, 27, 32, 33. These citations include documents in which the artist served as a witness. Their association with the notary Elmis began in 24 September 1440 for Jacopo, and in 3 September 1443 for Giambono, but might have begun earlier: unfortunately I was unable to locate Elmis' registers from February 1430 to February 1439 at the ASV. They are missing from his *buste* and presumably lost.
Quattrocento Venice, suggesting perhaps some type of collaboration between the two, such as the Gentilesque use of gold stippling that appears in Giambono's *Madonna with Child* in Bassano and Jacopo's *Madonna of Humility* in Paris (figs. 19, 34).59 Finally, some scholars have argued that Jacopo contributed designs to the mosaics of the Mascoli chapel, signed on the left wall by Giambono (Fig. 23).60

Jacopo's path also periodically crossed with that of Pisanello. Both trained with Gentile da Fabriano; both are documented in Verona in c. 1436 executing frescoes;61 and both, of course, competed against one another in Ferrara in 1441.62 It is unknown, however, whether they had any direct business relationship with one another. On September 24, 1440, Jacopo and the Venetian painter Donato Bragadin engaged a notary to draw up a contract establishing a partnership between the two for a period of five years in which they agreed to divide equally profits received from commissions obtained in Venice but not outside.63 (For unknown reasons, the contract was cancelled before going into effect.) The impetus to devise such an arrangement, however, testifies to Jacopo's characteristic business "hustle" during his early independent years.

**Networking: Proto Cittadini Originari**

Jacopo was born into an emergent Venetian class that I have termed in chapter 2 the Proto Cittadini Originari. As discussed, this social group had prerogatives unique to Venice,

59 For the artists' stylistic similarity, see Franco, 1996, 10-11.

60 Eisler, 1989, 54-55. Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-5, 135-142. For a recent consideration, with further references, see Beverly Louise Brown, 2007, 102n64.


63 Barausse, 332, doc. 9. Gilbert, 1980, 29 offers a partial translation of this document, but with errors that include describing Jacopo's father as a lawyer.

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including the legal right to manage the Scuole Grandi. Jacopo's membership in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista gave him close social ties to other Proto Cittadini Originari including those who served on the Scuola's banca, as did Jacopo himself in 1441 and 1454, and might have contributed toward Jacopo's receiving a number of painting commissions from the Scuola.\textsuperscript{64}

Publicity and Endorsement

During the Renaissance there existed little better publicity for a painter than that generated by a ruler. In 1441 the victory of Jacopo's portrait of Leonello d'Este (now lost) over one by Pisanello amounted to an endorsement of Jacopo's work by the contest's judge, the Marchese of Ferrara (fig. 35).\textsuperscript{65} As mentioned, at least two humanists subsequently publicized Jacopo's triumph. Although Jacopo could not have engineered such publicity, his growing artistic renown and networking endeavors had laid the groundwork for its possibility. A \textit{Madonna of Humility with a Donor} who is often identified as the young Leonello d'Este might have previously been commissioned by the Este (fig. 23); and one cannot exclude the possibility that Pisanello himself might have recommended Jacopo for such a contest.\textsuperscript{66} Although the effects of such publicity cannot be measured, it may be significant that Jacopo, upon his return to Venice in the early 1440s, thereafter is documented as only rarely venturing outside the city to execute a painting, his workshop apparently replete with local commissions until his death.

**Strategies: Jacopo the Artist**

While advertising, networking, and endorsements might have contributed toward the

\textsuperscript{64} Fortini Brown, 1988, 246n59.

\textsuperscript{65} As described in Ulisse degli Aleotti's commemorative poem. See Eisler, 1989, 512.

\textsuperscript{66} Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II:5, 164-65.
expansion of the Bellini workshop, its success ultimately depended on the art that Jacopo produced. Most of the artistic strategies enumerated below derive from an evaluation of Jacopo's drawings, the majority of which survive in two notebooks, one now located at the Louvre and the other at the British Museum. Of the 221 silverpoint and pen drawings contained in these notebooks, the following section focuses on those apparently completed before c. 1445, of which there are approximately seventy-five in his Paris notebook. I have relied on Degenhart and Schmitt's dating of these drawings as well as their numbering system.

Collecting exempla

The "strict canon" of the Medieval model book has been defined as a collection of drawings of "individual animals, alphabets, ornaments, and figures, in some cases also groups of figures (that) were preserved in isolation" for possible “interpolation into, and recombination

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67 The 221 silver point and pen drawings comprising Jacopo's two known drawing notebooks defy simple categorization. They were the only drawing books consciously omitted from Robert Scheller's well-known Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (ca. 900 - ca. 1450) in part because they are "in such a class of their own that they cannot be accommodated in a survey of this kind (ibid., IX)." The other reason given for their omission was that "it would be presumptuous to try to give a survey of material that is now available in the standard work by Bernhard and Annegritt Degenhart-Schmitt (ibid.)." Jacopo's books are unique in their sheer number of drawings, expressive range, and foundational importance to the development of Renaissance Venetian art. Jacopo's initial idea to keep a model-sketchbook might have derived from Gentile da Fabriano: a group of drawings, not unlike several of those by Jacopo, was attributed to Gentile by Degenhart, 1960, and referred to as a taccuino di viaggi that was owned by Pisanello, who might have inherited the drawings after Gentile's death. Some scholars, however, disagree with their attribution to Gentile (Christiansen, 1982, 145-8).

68 The number, diversity, complexity, and uncertain dating of Jacopo's notebook drawings has often discouraged scholars from treating the works as a whole. I focus on a few of the earliest drawings insofar as they reflect an early stage of Jacopo's artistic development.

69 Peter Humfrey, 1992, 217 concurs that Degenhart and Schmitt's dates are compelling, although occasionally one might be off by perhaps a decade. I do not entirely agree with their dating of many of the drawings in the London notebook, however, several of which depict highly similar subjects to those in the Paris notebook and were probably created at the same time; hence the dates of the London notebook likely overlapped the those of Paris notebook to a degree greater than Degenhart and Schmitt argued. It should also be mentioned that if one does not accept the relative dates for the drawings offered by Degenhart and Schmitt's study, then no progression over time in Jacopo's drawings may be reconstructed.
As did many Renaissance painters, Jacopo collected *exempla*, both owning pages removed from earlier model books and drawing original motifs himself. A sheet in Jacopo’s Paris notebook that originally derived from a fourteenth-century model book depicts a series of lions in various poses, undoubtedly helpful when required to paint Venice's ubiquitous winged lion representing Saint Mark, or the lion companion of Saint Jerome, also a popular Venetian Saint (fig. 36). Jacopo's motifs of the model-book type include images of antique monuments and inscriptions, which Jacopo might have employed in paintings that no longer exist (fig. 37). An example of the use of such motifs is provided by Jacopo's son-in-law, Mantegna, in his 1450-51 fresco at the Ovetari Chapel in Padua of *The Trial of Saint James*, in which appears a motif drawn or invented after the same monument that Jacopo depicted in his notebook in c. 1440 (fig. 38). 

**Improving Practice and Individualizing Style**

At about the same time that Jacopo was describing himself as a disciple of Gentile da Fabriano, he was also looking to another famous master for artistic guidance, and in doing so was following the advice set out by Cennino Cennini (c. 1370-c. 1440) in his *Craftman's Handbook* of c. 1390. Documented in Padua in 1398, Cennino had apparently composed his

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70 Ames-Lewis, 2000, 68. Ulrike Jenni, 1987, 35-6, 40-46 has argued that the Giottoesque interest in naturalism led, in the late fourteenth century, to a "preoccupation with visible reality" and thus to the act of "direct illustration" via the medium of drawing, which prompted life studies, such as those of animals or drapery, as well as drafted variants of pose, gesture, and "isolated details" that prefigured the "preparatory sketch, an original pictorial idea by the draftsman. . . with a new emphasis on invention."

71 This observation has been made by a number of scholars: "A few pages of the two books of drawings by Jacopo Bellini are close in type to the conventional model-book sheet, showing a series of precise drawings of natural motifs. A page of copies of antique monuments and inscriptions shows the same layout used for the same reason in response to the different intellectual interests of the circle in which Bellini moved and worked. These pages emphasize the extent to which Bellini's books derive from the North Italian model-book tradition, with which they share meticulous draughtsmanship on parchment and the firm intention of preservation within the workshop (Ames-Lewis, 2000, 68-69)."

72 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 370-372.
libro there, and it is possible that Jacopo was familiar with Cennino's text, in which he advised artists to:  

endeavor to copy and draw after as few masters as possible . . . take pains and pleasure in constantly copying the best things which you can find done by the hand of great masters . . . (and) select the best one every time, and the one who has the greatest reputation. And, as you go on from day to day, it will be against nature if you do not get some grasp of his style and of his spirit . . . Then you will find, if nature has granted you any imagination at all, that you will eventually acquire a style individual to yourself, and it cannot help being good; because your hand and your mind, being always accustomed to gather flowers, would ill know how to pluck thorns.  

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the Northern Italian artist with the greatest reputation was Altichiero. Presumably with Cennino's stated goal of assimilating a famous artist's style en route to forging one's own, Jacopo studied the narrative work of Altichiero in a series of drawings made after the Trecento artist's most celebrated frescoes, located in Padua, in the chapel of S. Giacomo in Sant'Antonio (c. 1376–9) and in the adjacent oratory of San Giorgio (1379–84); and in Verona, in the Sala Grande of the Palazzo Scaligeri (c. 1364-70, called the Palazzo del Podestà during Jacopo's time, today mostly destroyed). Judging by the number and

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73 The text, dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, employs a number of Venetian terms. Cennino was documented as living in Padua in August, 1398 (see Skaug, 46).

74 Trans. by Thompson in Cennini, 1932, 1:14-15: "COME TI DE’ INGENGNIARE DI RITRARRE E DISENGNIARE DI MENO MAESTRI CHE PUO’. Pure atte e di bisongnio si sequiti innanzi, accio che possi seghuitare il viaggio della detta scienza. Tu ai fatto le tue carte tinte; e mestieri disgnare. De’ tenere questo modo. Avendo prima usato un tempo il disegniare, chome ti dissi di sopra, cioe in tavoletta, affaticati e dilettati di ritrar senpre le miglior chose, che trovar puoi per mano fatte di gran maestri.  Essi se’ in luogo dove molti buon’ maestri sieno stati, tanto meglio atte. Ma per chonsiglio io ti do: ghuarda di pigliar senpre il miglior, e quello che a maggior fama. E, seghuitando di di in di, contra natura sara che atte non vengha preso di suo maniera e di suo aria. Pero che setti muovi a ritrarre oggi di questo maestro, doman di quello, e quello che a maggior fama. E, seguhitando di di in di, contra natura sara che atte non vengha preso di suo maniera e di suo aria.  E ora vo' fare a modo di questo, doman di quello altro, e chosi nessuno n'arai perfetto. Se seghuiti l'andar du'uno, per chontinovo uxo, ben sara lo intelletto grosso che non ne pigli qualche cibo. Poi atte interverra cheso punto di fantasia la natura t'ara conceduto, verrai a pigliare huna maniera propia per te, e non potra essere altro che buona; perchë la mano e lo intelletto tuo, essendo senpre huso di pigliare fiori, mal saprebbe torre spina." Over a century later, Dürer, 2007, 23 would likewise advise an aspiring artist to "copy much of the work of good artists until he attain a free hand."
range of these drawings after Altichiero, several of which are considered below, Jacopo's program of self-study was an extensive, multi-year process.  

FIGURAL STUDIES

In 1436 Jacopo completed his Crucifixion fresco for the Chapel of S. Nicolò in Verona Cathedral. There he would have had the opportunity to walk about 500 meters Southeast to the Palazzo del Podestà (formerly and now once again called the Palazzo Scaligeri) to visit a famous narrative fresco by Altichiero that decorated the Sala Grande. Altichiero's fresco, today mostly-destroyed but its composition preserved by an anonymous drawing in the Louvre, depicted a scene based on the De Bello Judaico of Flavius Josephus (fig. 39). A detail of the Louvre drawing shows a clustered and turbulent cavalry battle (fig. 40).

Although Jacopo's various figural studies certainly were not limited to drawings after Altichiero, a page in Jacopo's Paris notebook aptly demonstrates the artist's general approach. Often considered a wholly original composition, Jacopo's Six Horsemen Fighting Dragons (dated 1435-40 by Degenhart and Schmitt) is, rather, almost certainly after a detail of Altichiero's lost Veronese fresco (fig. 41). Jacopo's Six Horsemen did not replicate Altichiero's work (presuming, of course, that the Louvre drawing reproduced somewhat faithfully its original). It does appear, however, that Jacopo drew inspiration from Altichiero's equestrian

75 Using Trecento models during the Quattrocento was hardly novel. Both Donatello and Mantegna apparently adapted Trecento models to create modern versions of narrative histories. For the narrative reliefs for the Santo altar, Donatello's patrons probably indicated two sources as models: the Trecento fresco cycle by Stefano da Ferrara in the same church, and a series of miniatures by Cristoforo Cortese, from a manuscript recounting the legend of St. Anthony. Similarly, the executors of the Ovetari chapel must have referred their commissioned artists to Trecento fresco cycles. See McHam, 1994, 13n82-84, 91-4 with further references.

76 Richards, 2000, 35-44, 246, 268.

77 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 415-416.
throng—aside from the dragons, each motif in Jacopo's design finds at least a conceptual antecedent in the drawing after Altichiero's narrative. Altichiero's foreground knight bounding over a fallen horse likely inspired a similar motif in the right middle ground of Jacopo's composition; Altichiero's rearing horse nearing the bridge is close to Jacopo's central foreground horse; Altichiero's rider on the far left whose sword runs down along his back probably was the model for Jacopo's similar soldier second from the right; and Altichiero's rider plunging headfirst over his mount's bridle apparently inspired Jacopo's own rider falling headfirst on the far left.78

As we shall see, here and elsewhere Jacopo reconceptualized and rearranged the motifs of an earlier master's work into a new composition—in this case one that also reflected a new subject matter. His finished drawing might be an example of what Cennini meant when he advised artists to draw after (disegniare di), rather than only to copy (ritrarre), the work of a famed artist.

LANDSCAPE STUDIES

The work of Altichiero also strongly influenced Jacopo's earliest landscape drawings, as a comparison between Altichiero's Beheading of Saint Catherine (1379-84) and Jacopo's drawing of Martyrdom of St. Isidore of c. 1430 clearly demonstrates (figs. 42-43). It has been remarked that, in these early drawings by Jacopo, landscape functions solely as a backdrop, with little relation to the foreground figures.79 I would suggest, rather, that initially Jacopo's primary concern seems simply to practice landscape construction itself, and apparently only later to

78 To my knowledge, no previous scholars have connected Jacopo's drawing to Altichiero's lost Josephus fresco cycle, but the relationship seems clear.

79 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-5, 49
explore the positioning of figures encompassed by their environment. When Jacopo's subject and landscape combine harmoniously, his experiments from the late 1430s and early 1440s to some degree anticipate later innovations in Venetian art. For example, the penitent internal state of Jacopo's ascetic Saint Jerome in the Wilderness seems reflected in the barren, rocky landscape that engulfs him, his spiritual purity acknowledged solely by gathering animals seeking his companionship (fig. 44). In a certain sense, this St. Jerome is a conceptual predecessor to Giovanni Bellini's innovative Frick Saint Francis in the Desert (fig. 45). Giovanni's Francis apparently receives the stigmata from a spiritual light that sets aglow the countryside and bends gently a tree, the miraculous event likewise witnessed by nearby animals. In Jacopo's own two-sheet drawing of the Stigmatization of St. Francis of c. 1445, the landscape no longer towers over the foreground figures. Rather, Jacopo has found a pleasing balance among the background cliffs, the architecture of the temple, and Saint Francis and Brother Leo—the separately studied elements of Jacopo's earlier drawings brought into a certain congruity (fig. 46). The composition also confidently portrays St. Francis's back while partially hiding his face—a pictorial strategy that might have derived from Jacopo's familiarity with Alberti's Della Pictura, which described Timanthes of Cyprus' portrayal of a highly emotive Menelaus hidden under a veil, thus encouraging onlookers to imagine Menelaus' emotional state.

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80 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 337.
82 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 399-401
83 Alberti, 1972, 82-83, n. 42.
Altichiero's Paduan frescoes, several of which employed architectural forms to organize the pictorial field and create the illusion of spatial recession, also served as a primary influence on Jacopo's own concept of architectural space. Comparing Altichiero's fresco of *St. George on the Wheel* to a detail from an early drawing by Jacopo, titled in the fifteenth-century index of the Paris notebook, "An Architectural Setting with Two Wings on Either Side," both display the frontal view of an ornate building with moldings, columns, and finials, and both construct a U-shaped edifice that compartmentalizes the picture space to allow for the possibility of positioning multiple dramatic scenes (figs. 47-48). (Altichiero's continuous narrative depicts, in the top left, St. George baptizing the magician; in the top right, Dacian, the prefect of Diospolis, commanding St. George to make sacrifices to the pagan gods; and, in the center, St. George about to be tortured on the wheel.) In Altichiero's Trecento fresco, however, the figures typically take precedence, appearing larger in scale relative to their architectural environment. In Jacopo's drawing, an immense edifice dwarfs the more realistically-scaled figures below. Jacopo's work also lacks a traditional subject, as its fifteenth-century title implies, and therefore does not fit easily into an established genre, because isolated architectural "portraits," much like Italian landscape painting, did not yet exist in the Quattrocento. Hence we can be fairly certain that, like Jacopo's experiments in landscape, several of his drawings featuring architecture represent Jacopo's attempt to separate out architectonic forms as their own objects of study.


Beginning in the 1430s, Jacopo's architectural drawings register his sometimes not wholly successful attempt to construct architectonic forms in convincing linear perspective. For example, a drawing of 1435-40 with the fifteenth-century title, "An Architectural Setting with the Presentation of Our Lady," depicts a grandiose architectural structure of a type found in several of Jacopo's drawings at this time (fig. 49). An open-ended barrel-vaulted basilica, as tall as a ten-story building, accommodates a high altar in its far recess, within which a priest apparently awaits two foreground figures who may be identified as Anne, the mother of the Virgin, and the Virgin Mary as a child. Although Jacopo employed a central vanishing point toward which the orthogonals proceed, he did not systematically position the basilica's transversals. Had he desired to construct the building in exacting linear perspective, then the sections of its barrel vault ought to have been spaced as in figure 50. Moreover, a cross section taken from below the triforium demonstrates that the edifice ought to have been constructed with at least two more arches (fig. 51). In these and other drawings, Jacopo, it seems, was attempting to rediscover for himself the geometrical method of perspectival drawing, but his knowledge was incomplete and apparently he was using his eye to approximate.

It is here that I want to emphasize that Jacopo is experimenting with perspective at the same time that Leon Batista Alberti is writing about it. To be sure, in the 1420s Jacopo might have seen Central Italian works drawn in perspective, but apparently there was no one in Venice during the 1430s to teach him the mechanics of the recently-discovered pictorial innovation. Nevertheless, Jacopo clearly wants to master the new visual system, which he is largely forced to figure out on his own, as an outsider far away from Florence—the two manuscripts of Alberti's

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86 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 343-4.
treatise were, of course, not addressed to Jacopo but rather to different cities: Mantua and Florence. Hence, Jacopo's notebook drawings register the artist's process and struggles of working out the mechanics of linear perspective primarily by himself.

Thus, in other drawings of the 1430s, Jacopo followed neither an entirely methodological process for constructing perspective nor aspects of Alberti's basic procedure for drawing people—that they ought to be 3 braccia high ("the average height of a man's body") with the top of their heads directly at the horizon line.\(^8^7\) Jacopo's drawing "A Temple with the Presentation of Our Lady," depicts an imposing church in which a priest stands at the high altar at the end of a long staircase, but Jacopo has positioned the priest's head lower, than those of the figures in the middle ground—a perspectival impossibility given the rising staircase and position of the viewer (fig. 52).\(^8^8\) Indeed, two scholars have referred to Jacopo's divergences from a systemized deployment of perspective as the arbitrariness (Willkür) of Bellini's early perspectival "experiments."\(^8^9\)

In the end, it is unclear which Central Italian works of art might have prompted Jacopo's experiments. As mentioned, Jacopo might have visited Florence during the 1420s as Gentile da Fabriano's assistant, perhaps viewing there works by artists such as Masaccio or Masolino. He also might have seen the work of Central Italian artists visiting the Serenissma, such as Paolo Uccello (c. 1397-1475), who worked as a mosaicist in San Marco only a few hundred meters or

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\(^{8^7}\) Alberti, 1972, 55, n. 19.

\(^{8^8}\) Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 337-8.

\(^{8^9}\) Degenhart and Schmidt, 1990, II-5, 39.
less from Jacopo's workshop between 1425-27 and may have remained in Venice until c. 1431. It's unlikely that Jacopo had direct access to Alberti's *Della Pictura* (1436) prior to about 1440, however, because several of Jacopo's drawings dated to the mid-late 1430s suggest that he was not yet acquainted with certain rubrics in Alberti's text, with which he might have later become familiar when both were at the Court of Ferrara in 1441, if indeed their stays coincided.

Jacopo's early awkward experiments nonetheless led to later competence. The complexity of Jacopo's architectural spaces increased in the decades following 1440, the artist at times strictly incorporating Alberti's method of constructing foreground figures of three *braccia* high and about a third as tall as the composition, and whose heads reached up to align with the horizon, as in his drawing of a Piazza surrounded by buildings (fig. 53). His later drawings, such as that depicting a foreshortened building façade facing a small piazza, also demonstrate architectural forms executed in exacting perspective (fig. 54). Eventually, of course, Jacopo would position large-scale figures within a more moderate rendition of space, as demonstrated in

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90 The Florentine Uccello, who had trained with Ghiberti and was an early and passionate exponent of the application of linear perspective, died with "whole chests full of [his own] drawings (lasciò a' suoi parenti . . . le casse piene di disegni)" according to Vasari, who owned several by the artist (Vasari-Barocchi, 3:70). Uccello's now-lost drawings from the early-mid Quattrocento, many undoubtedly executed in linear perspective, have their obvious analogy in Jacopo's famous two notebooks of drawings, likewise later considered collectable works of art. It is tempting to imagine, without any supporting evidence, that Paulo Uccello showed Jacopo Bellini drawings demonstrating the new art of perspective, thus inspiring Jacopo to initiate his own experimental drawings. But note that nearly all of Jacapo's extant architectural drawings are conveniently dated after the terminus ante quem of Uccello's departure from Venice, which was prior to 1432 and perhaps even several years earlier.

91 If the two didn't actually meet one another in Ferrara, then it still remains possible that Leonello d'Este provided Jacopo with the text of *De pictura* (1435) or *Della pittura* (1436), or told him the contents.


93 Ibid., 82.
some of his late drawings and extant narrative paintings such as the predellas of the Gattamelata altarpiece.⁹⁴

**Original Compositions**

Building on his studies of figures, landscape, architecture, and linear perspective, Jacopo also reimagined compositions of established iconographies, sometimes but not exclusively relying on Altichiero for a model. Jacopo's drawing of the *Adoration of the Magi* (1435-40) demonstrates the artist's early process toward innovating a narrative (fig. 55).⁹⁵ Jacopo might have assisted on the painting of the same subject by Gentile da Fabriano, and his drawing follows Gentile's general composition: on the left before the manger, the Virgin, Child, and Joseph welcome the Magi; from the right, the royal entourage arrives; and in front of the Christ Child, kneels the old king, surely inspired by a similar figure in Gentile's painting (fig. 56).⁹⁶

Jacopo's drawing, however, responds more directly to Altichiero's fresco of the same subject in Padua (fig. 57). Altichiero's backdrop of cliffs, with a slight ledge jutting out just above the procession figures, equally describes Jacopo's drawing, but Jacopo, almost like an excavator, creates a sense of depth by cutting through those cliffs to create a passageway from which the procession emerges. Jacopo exchanges the distant cityscape of Bethlehem in Altichiero's work for more cliffs, and recasts Altichiero's diminutive stable into a cavernous structure drawn in linear perspective upon which smaller figures in the middle ground lean, emphasizing its spatial recession. Jacopo's manger uneasily dominates the left third of the composition and looms over the Madonna and Child.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 35.
⁹⁵ Degenhart and Schmitt 1990, II-6, 349-51
⁹⁶ De Marchi, 162-182
Here Jacopo's process is not unlike that in his *Six Horses Fighting Dragons*: he has drawn after, or reconceptualized, Altichiero's figures, landscape, and architecture, but perhaps at some point Jacopo became displeased with the resultant compositional balance; about twenty years later he and his workshop painted the same subject, probably a predella panel for the Gattamelata Altapiece of 1460, that reformulated and rebalanced Jacopo's earlier motifs: fewer larger-scaled figures comprise the procession that emerges through the pass; the stable has been reduced in size and extension while maintaining its perspectival form; and the foreground figures have retaken their central place of narrative precedence (fig. 58). Peter Humfrey has argued that Jacopo's Pala Gattamelata may be regarded as the first Renaissance altarpiece by a Venetian artist.\(^97\) As we have seen, its predella panel alone represented, in some sense, the culmination of a lengthy autodidactic artistic process, apparently begun by Jacopo when he was already a workshop master. Indeed, several such drawings exist in which Jacopo apparently took as a point of departure a famous work of art, refigured and rebalanced its motifs, sometimes adding new elements or classicizing its details or recasting its architectonic forms in linear perspective, to arrive at a new composition which, itself, would later be employed as a model informing the composition of a painting by Jacopo or, perhaps, by Giovanni or Gentile.

**The Altarpiece**

Innovating the narrative was only one of a number of artistic strategies employed by Jacopo. In 1438 Donatello’s wood sculpture *St John the Baptist* was placed on the altar of the chapel owned by the Scuola dei Fiorentini in the Frari, almost certainly within a Gothic tabernacle, now lost (fig. 59).\(^98\) In a c. 1440 drawing after Donatello's sculpture, Jacopo used his

\(^{97}\) Humfrey, 1993, 177-80  
^{98}\) Humfrey, 1993, 38, 167
imagination to "innovate" what he saw. In his St John the Baptist, Jacopo depicts John with his right arm raised, index finger pointing skyward, and left hand holding a scroll as in Donatello's original. However, the Saint's bare feet break the plane not of a gothic tabernacle but rather of a classicizing arched niche, part of a larger altarpiece with three predella panels depicting scenes from the saint’s life (fig. 60). It is arguably the first design of a fully Renaissance altarpiece by a Venetian artist, prefiguring works in sculpture of a similar arrangement executed twenty years later, as well as Jacopo's own Gattamelata altarpiece of 1460, arguably the first Renaissance altarpiece by a Venetian artist (fig 32).\textsuperscript{99} Jacopo's notebook design of this reconceptualized altarpiece was so ahead of its time, that for years Jacopo himself continued employing gothic frames for his work—presumably at his patrons' request. The first Renaissance altarpiece in Venice proper, Jacopo's Carità triptychs, employed classicizing forms not unlike his drawing of twenty years earlier and established the standard Venetian model for years to come.

Other Artistic Strategies and Notebook Uses

Several scholars have also noted a number of Jacopo's other interests evident in the artist's drawings. For example, Marisa Anne Bass considered how Jacopo's "prescient" images of fanciful fountains came to be realized, in spirit, by actual fonts only after the artist's death (although Boccaccio had previously described such a fantastical font in his Amorosa Visione).\textsuperscript{100} Patricia Fortini Brown explored Jacopo's fascination with the antique as revealed in several of his drawings.\textsuperscript{101} It also seems likely that Jacopo showed his drawings, especially those finished

\textsuperscript{99} Humfrey, 1993, 177-80.

\textsuperscript{100} Bass, 2010, 49-50.

\textsuperscript{101} Fortini Brown, 1992, 69. Brown describes "Jacopo Bellini's albums as pictorial counterparts to the antiquarian sylloges," which were humanist collections of classical inscriptions. Yet even a cursory examination of Jacopo's
on vellum, to possible future patrons as a testimony of his work. And later, in fact, his drawings were collected, Ames-Lewis noting that, after the death of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Jacopo's London notebook was owned by Gabriele Vendramin, "whose collection of drawings is the earliest recorded in the hands of a patrician connoisseur."102

THE FRUITS OF INNOVATION: THE SCUOLE GRANDI COMMISSIONS

The first documented evidence of a major narrative commissioned by a Scuola Grande was on 6 April 1421, when the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista decided to decorate its main meeting hall, the Sala Capitolare on the piano nobile, or floor above the ground floor, with a series of narrative paintings depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament.103 Unfortunately no other extant Quattrocento documents can be securely associated with the cycle. In 1581, however, Sansovino reported that the room was decorated with "stories from the Old and New Testament," with the latter (seconda parte), presumably the New Testament scenes, having been executed by Jacopo Bellini.104 In 1648, Ridolfi described Jacopo's contribution to the narrative cycle, some seventeen scenes that had been "devoured by time (divorati dal tempo)" and "replaced (with works) by other artists (rinnovati d'altri autori)," and which Ridolfi evidently

drawings shows that his interests were vastly more far ranging. Indeed, only a few sheets demonstrate any sort of interest in collecting antique motifs, an endeavor that itself evolved from the model-book tradition.

102 Ames-Lewis, 2000, 12.
103 Wurthmann, 143n2. Note that only in July 1414 did the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista occupy the entire building in its final location, soon after which a period of reconstruction began (Sohm, 1982, 72-76).
104 Sansovino, 1581, 100v: "Vi sono medesimamente pitture diverse, della historia del testamento vecchio & nuovo, con la passione di Christo, non punto volgari, & la seconda parte di questa opera fu di mano di Iacomo Bellino, che fece anco la seconda parte della Natività." Also: "La palla dell'altare fu opera di Iacomo Bellino."(ibid., 101r.)
had not seen himself but which were described to him by old artists (*riferiti da vecchi pittori*).\(^{105}\n
According to Ridolfi, the scenes formed a chronological narrative of the Virgin's life and Christ's life, from the Virgin Birth, through the Nativity, to Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, and ending with the Virgin's Assumption into Heaven. Ridolfi described each scene in some detail, such as the Birth of the Virgin: "the baby Maria bathed by midwives, Saint Anne in bed and Saint Joseph writing (Maria bambina lavata dall'ostetrici, S. Anna nel letto, e S. Gioachino stavasi scrivendo)."\(^{106}\n
Presumably the two-stage campaign had been initiated in the 1420s, with the Old Testament scenes completed by an unknown artist and probably in fresco, the same medium of the recently-completed narrative campaign in the Great Council Hall of the Palazzo Ducale. Jacopo's New Testament scenes likewise might have been completed in fresco, matching the presumed medium of the Old Testament scenes: Ridolfi's involved descriptions of Jacopo's lost works, their consumption "by time," and Ridolfi's reliance on old painters' accounts rather than his viewing of at least some of the works himself, all point to a fresco cycle destroyed by Venetian climate and humidity, rather than paintings on canvas or wood, in various states of disrepair, that had been removed from the sala.

Jacopo probably commenced his part of the decorative campaign in 1442 or soon after—it is doubtful that the Scuola would have wanted to disrupt Jacopo's multi-year campaign by burdening him with the many responsibilities of a Scuola deacon, a post to which Jacopo was

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\(^{105}\) Ridolfi, 1:53-54.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
elected in 1441 and again in 1454.\textsuperscript{107} In fact, as deacon in 1441, Jacopo, who became a member of the scuola on 3 March 1437, might have suggested to the board that he decorate the Sala Capitolare, as his son Gentile, when Guardian da Matin in 1492, would suggest to the board of the Scuola Grande of San Marco that he decorate its Albergo.\textsuperscript{108} We know neither the terms of Jacopo's commission, nor when Jacopo completed the campaign, nor the size of each painting within the cycle. It seems likely, however, that Jacopo, with a minimum of 17 paintings, decorated at least the length of Sala Capitolare, a room 27.5 meters long by 13 meters wide by 7 meters high, a commission that must have taken several years, if not a decade or more, to execute.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Köster, 396-7. It appears likely, then, that Jacopo commenced the project soon after 1442 and completed it before 1453 for the following reasons: 1) Jacopo served as a deacon on the banca of the Scuola in 1441 and 1454—a significant responsibility that would have drawn him away from executing a major painting campaign, and one the Scuola might not have permitted—hence the multi-year campaign likely took place either before 1441, between 1442 and 1453, or after 1455. 2) It likely did not take place before 1441, because Jacopo was in Verona in 1436, and in 1437 joined the Scuola. It is doubtful that he could have completed the 17 or more paintings of the cycle in the four years between 1437 and 1441. Moreover, Jacopo had a contract drawn up in 1440 with the painter Donato Bragadin to divide profits from works completed in Venice but not outside. The contract, which was never finalized, did not mention that Jacopo was engaged in a multi-year campaign, and it is difficult to imagine why Jacopo would have seriously considered entering into such a contract had he been engaged at the Scuola. 3) It is also doubtful that Jacopo commenced the campaign after 1454 because of Venice's financial crisis of the 1450s: according to Wurthmann, 148n2, "There is no evidence of any major artistic commissions in the 1450s, so severe was the crisis." Furthermore, had Jacopo's cycle indeed been in fresco, an earlier date would have been more likely.

\textsuperscript{108} Sohm, 1982, 97-8.

\textsuperscript{109} Note that the room was later expanded in length and height. See Fortini Brown, 1988, 267. For the paintings in the cycle that replaced those of Jacopo, see Rinandi, 293-301. It should also be noted that Fortini Brown, 1988, 266 stated that the ceiling in the Sala Capitolare "was replaced by another one in 1441," but this appears incorrect: she cited Paoletti, 1929, 16 who affirmed that on 2 October 1441, the Scuola deliberated to decorate the ceiling of their sala in emulation of the "sofitado meravioso" executed in the Scuola Grande San Marco. Paoletti probably intended to cite a document of 22 October 1441 (ASV, S. Giovanni Ev., Reg. 72, fol. 122 as transcribed in Sohm, 1982, 318, doc. 178, and partially translated in Wurthmann, 150) in which the Scuola di San Marco's "sofitado meraveroxo" is mentioned with envy, but the document provides not for the replacement or redecoration of a ceiling, but rather for 650 ducats toward a chapel inside the Scuola and dedicated to the Scuola's namesake ("una chapela in la giexia de misser san zuane vanzelista"). This makes sense, for in 1422 the Scuola had decided to spend 500 ducats for a ceiling in the sala, going so far as to admit extra members to raise money (Sohm, 1982, 176, 316-17, doc. 176), and it would hardly seem credible to replace such an expensive ceiling after so short a time, especially when other work on the Scuola clearly needed attention.
Not only did Jacopo's New Testament cycle likely represent his most time-consuming and laborious commission to that point, if not of his entire career, but also, arguably, the commission was among his most important. In those seventeen or more paintings for the Scuola, Jacopo was given the opportunity to demonstrate the results of his years of artistic experiments and self-directed re-training. Presumably his New Testament narratives were original compositions, painted in linear perspective, and likely they represented the first Venetian narrative cycle executed in a Renaissance style. Unfortunately, their effect on contemporary Venetian observers is unrecorded, but this is not surprising considering how little we know about audience reaction for nearly all works of Venetian art prior to the sixteenth century. Judging by Jacopo's subsequent commissions for large-scale narratives, however, the New Testament campaign were likely a success. Sometime after 1444 Jacopo was hired to decorate, in part or in whole, the Albergo of the Scuola di San Marco, presumably another multi-year project; and he later contributed at least four narrative paintings on canvas to the decoration of the same Scuola's Sala Capitolare.\textsuperscript{110}

These cycles constituted years of income for the Bellini, in a difficult market that must have seem largely dominated by the partnership of Giovanni d'Allemagna and Antonio Vivarini, who ran the leading bottega of the 1440s and who secured nearly every major Venetian Altarpiece commission of the decade. The commissions from the two Scuole Grandi gave Jacopo the opportunity to become Venice's leading narrative painter, which, after the death of Giovanni d'Allemanga in 1550, led to the Bellini bottega becoming recognized as the leading painting workshop in Venice until the beginning of the next century.

\textsuperscript{110}Fortini Brown, 1988, 266-70.
CONCLUSION: MASTERING THE NARRATIVE

Circumstance and responsibility, creativity and self-motivation propelled Jacopo toward mastery of the narrative genre. His practice in istorie began, presumably, with his apprenticeship under Gentile da Fabriano, an accomplished large-scale narrative painter. Establishing a workshop in Venice, Jacopo supported a large family while competing for commissions against more established artists. Thus he instituted a number of business and artistic strategies that would contribute toward his workshop's success. Among these was an attempt to achieve proficiency in genres that included altarpieces, Madonnas, portraits, and narratives. A central strategy was to study the work of great masters such as Altichiero and to innovate their work by employing recent pictorial innovations that would distinguish his paintings from that of other Venetian botteghe.

By the late 1430s or early 1440s, Jacopo had reached a level of artistic expertise that made him capable of executing drawings so innovative that they prefigure future trends in Venetian art for years to come. Jacopo's earlier compositions, it has been observed, developed from traditional iconographies in which small-scale Gothic forms were often disjointedly placed within an "excessive . . . spatial perspective," whose recession was divided unsystematically by eye, toward later compositions of creatively-interpreted subjects that featured "Renaissance-like large-scale forms" harmoniously situated within a systemized perspectival space approaching that described by Alberti.\(^{111}\)

Only on rare occasions had large-scale narrative cycles been commissioned in Venice prior to the 1420s. Perhaps partially for this reason, none of Jacopo's Venetian competitors

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\(^{111}\) Degenhart and Schmitt, 1984, 13-15. They also argue that Jacopo's initial interest in individual antique forms led to the creation of entire compositions reflecting the "spirit of antiquity," for which only drawings and no paintings exist.
showed a great interest in mastering the new art of drawing in linear perspective or in keeping current with other central Italian narrative innovations. Jacopo's various strategies, however, included a program of self-study in depicting figures, landscape, and architecture—the very components that usually comprised a narrative. He developed his own artistry through drawing, perfecting the use of linear perspective and creating original narrative compositions.

It is impossible to know whether Jacopo, in the early 1430s, could have foreseen, and thus planned for, the explosive demand for narrative paintings that would occur in Venice when two wealthy corporate institutions, the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista and the Scuola Grandi di San Marco, required the decoration of their immense interiors. The meeting hall alone of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelist would demand no fewer than seventeen large-scale paintings, perhaps a decade or more of work for a painter. During the course of the 1430s, Jacopo had transformed himself into, arguably, the only Venetian painter capable of executing such a commission in a current early Renaissance style that employed linear perspective. It seems that the Scuola di San Giovanni commissioned Jacopo's workshop to complete the entire cycle, as well as another cycle for the Albergo. The Scuola di San Marco also turned to Jacopo for much of their narrative needs. Jacopo's peripatetic existence executing commissions outside of Venice—in Padua, Verona, Ferrara, and Brescia—had largely come to an end. And although his workshop would excel at Madonnas, altarpieces, and portraits, during much of the rest of his life Jacopo would focus on executing narrative paintings for the Scuole. The banche of the Scuole Grandi, comprised of Proto Cittadini Originari like himself, engaged Jacopo in multi-year projects that provided his family with a stable income and gave the artist the means to become Venice's leading narrative painter. And it was in this environment, witnessing his father paint canvas after canvas of large-scale narratives for years on end, that Jacopo's son
Gentile Bellini was raised.
Chapter 4

THE BELLINI WORKSHOP: FROM FATHER TO SON

INTRODUCTION

According to a mid-fifteenth-century observer, due to Venice's maritime climate and the passage of time, the frescoes in the Great Council Hall of the Doge’s Palace executed by Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, and other artists between c. 1410-c. 1422 had significantly decayed.¹ In 1474 the Venetian government decided to redecorate the Hall and thus offered arguably the most prestigious Venetian painting commission of the century: to execute multiple large-scale narrative pictures for the central chamber of Venetian government, among the largest rooms in Europe, and to receive as payment a sansaria, or brokerage at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which provided its recipient with an annual income of about 100 ducats for the duration of his life.² The stipendio, while less than that earned by some Northern Italian painters attached to noble courts, such as the 180 ducats received each year by Mantegna from the Gonzaga, nonetheless allowed for considerable freedom to execute non-government commissions, a latitude Titian would fully exploit in the next century when the income from his sansaria amounted to a small fraction of his earnings.³

It is not clear why the coveted government commission went to Gentile Bellini, rather than to Giovanni Bellini or Lazzaro Bastiani or the Vivarini workshop. An art historian might naturally propose a rationale based on reasons of style: perhaps Gentile's art was particularly

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¹ Malipiero, 663. His description was probably written in the early 1480s. In 1456, Bartolomeo Facio stated that the frescoes in Venice's Great Council Hall by Gentile da Fabriano had "almost entirely disappeared" (Baxandall, 1964, 100-101).

² The particulars of Gentile's sansaria are considered in chapter 5.

³ For Mantegna, see Chambers, 1971, 79-80. For Titian, see Hope, 1979, 7-10; Hope, 1980a, 301-305.
well-suited to the ceremoniously staid decorations that Quattrocento Venetian patricians considered appropriate for distinguished government sale. A more piquant argument, along the same lines, might be that Gentile's unusual blend of archaic and avant-garde pictorial elements uniquely appealed to fifteenth-century Venetian audiences, in some sense reflecting their own distinct aesthetic of the era, with one foot planted in a Byzantine and Medieval heritage, and the other striving to keep pace with Renaissance innovation.

Undoubtedly Gentile's talents as a painter, along with his previous artistic experience, were factors in the Signoria's decision. Gentile had assisted Jacopo in painting numerous large-scale narratives for the Scuole Grandi and had himself been commissioned to execute two for the Scuola di San Marco, which made the artist a particularly qualified candidate to execute monumental works in the same genre for the government.\(^4\) And the mixture in Gentile's work of recent pictorial innovations, such as the construction of convincing three dimensional space in exacting perspective, with atavistic motifs, drawn in a hand that favored sharp, accurate, and readable contour lines instead of plasticity, attention to light, and other painterly qualities typically associated with the Venetian Renaissance, nonetheless probably did please a broad cross section of both older and younger patricians. Moreover, one must question whether many Venetian noblemen by 1474 had cultivated the aesthetic taste necessary to value the art of painters, such as Giovanni Bellini, over that of Gentile. A decade or more later, when both artists' work hung in the Great Council Hall and encouraged comparisons, some observers such as Sanudo began to express a preference for Giovanni's as being "more beautiful," but no such assessments exist from the early 1470s.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 269.

\(^5\) Sanudo, 2001, 209. Sanudo probably wrote this comparison in the early 1490s and certainly by 1494.
Even though Gentile's style presumably played a role in winning the coveted commission, I would argue rather that he was chosen principally because of his *fama* or reputation within Venetian society. *Fama* was related to, but also distinct from, his particular talents as an artist. It constituted an individual's identity projected into the civic sphere, and encompassed the position and reputation of his family, his social networks and class, his business connections, even his comportment, and, of course in Gentile's case, also his skills as an artist. As I shall argue, Gentile's overall *fama* prior to his receiving the Palazzo Ducale commission, if indeed it could have been measured, had reached unprecedented heights for a Venetian painter.

In this chapter I make a case that Jacopo Bellini's central business strategy in transferring his workshop to his son entailed elevating Gentile's *fama*. Certainly this is an age-old story: Bellini, as the father, naturally had a strong interest in seeing his son both succeed and succeed him as master of the workshop. The novelty in the present instance is how this trope unfolded within the context of an artist's *bottega* in Quattrocento Venice. As we have seen in chapter 3, Jacopo applied a rich ingenuity to building his workshop into a successful enterprise, and, with the same creative spirit, I argue, he devised schemes to facilitate its transference to his son.

In considering these schemes, this chapter analyzes several works by Gentile and explores topics that include the civil laws which governed the Venetian family, the Quattrocento Venetian demand for private paintings, and the process of ennoblement in Renaissance Italy, among others. First, I present the artist's basic biography and propose that Gentile almost certainly remained unemancipated until Jacopo's death. The social, economic, and legal system into which Gentile was born hierarchized authority within the family, and thus I examine what it meant for Gentile to have been a legitimate son under his father's supervision and in a successful
Venetian workshop. Then I consider Gentile's early career during the 1440s and 1450s, when the artist is not mentioned in the historical record, and in the 1460s when he began to sign works of art. I also investigate Gentile's acceptance as a member into the Scuola di San Marco and his ennoblement by Emperor Frederick III. In analyzing several major commissions and important social events in Gentile's early career, I demonstrate how Jacopo (d.1470/71), in his last decade of life, endeavored to promote Gentile as an independent artist and to elevate him within the Venetian community. As we shall see, these strategies were highly effective in establishing Gentile as the future master of the Bellini workshop.

**Gentile's Early Years**

**Career Path**

From the moment he was identified as male at his birth, the rough contours of a dutiful version of Gentile Bellini's (1429/35-1507) life became discernable. According to the Medieval workshop system in Venice, a son would labor under the legal authority of his father, become emancipated upon his father's death, inherit his father's workshop, continue the family business, and raise his own children in his father's former home. Gentile, of course, was not the son of a stereotypical artisan, such as a cobbler or goldsmith or pewterer, which was the profession of his paternal grandfather, Nicolò, but rather the son of an artist. His father Jacopo Bellini had himself strayed from custom by not following his own father into the trade of tinsmithing, instead choosing to establish a painting workshop in Venice. Social and familial expectations prescribed that one day Gentile would succeed Jacopo as the workshop's master or share in its ownership with any legitimate brothers. While Gentile might have selected a different profession, as

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6 Lane, 1944, 178-80 and *passim.*
presumably had his probably younger legitimate brother, Nicolò, who apparently was not an artist, he nevertheless adhered to convention and accepted the career path set before him. Indeed, eventually he took over his father's workshop and lived in his deceased father's home. Neither of Gentile's two documented wives had children who survived, however, and upon Gentile's death, the workshop that Jacopo had established apparently shut its doors. By that time, of course, Jacopo's bottega had long since become famous, having infused innovative Renaissance ideas into Quattrocento Byzantine-and-Gothic-inspired Venetian painting.

For Jacopo, Gentile's education, artistic training, and preparations as heir apparent to the Bellini bottega represented but a few of his numerous responsibilities of running a workshop and providing for his family. Though not a patrician, Jacopo nonetheless offered Gentile a privileged upbringing, surrounded by family members and children who were close relatives, in the lively atmosphere of what would become a thriving bottega, located in the parish of San Geminiano which faced the basilica of San Marco and the Ducal Palace, steps away from the spiritual and legislative center of Venice, arguably the wealthiest city in mid-fifteenth-century Europe.

**Name and Birth Order**

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance few Venetian citizens were called "Gentile" because it was not a Venetian name. The name and its variant forms, for instance, appears only twice in the c. 1379 list of the wealthiest 2128 Venetians forced to make prestiti to the Republic as part of

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7 For Nicolò Bellini, brother of Gentile, see Brown, 1969, 372-77.

8 No children are mentioned in either Gentile's or his wives' last wills. For his wife Caterina Baresina's testament of 19 October 1494, see ASV, NT, b. 878, Notary Andrea Scala, nos. 80-81 [the former is a corrected copy of the latter.] For his wife Maria's testament of 20 October 1503, see ASV, Notarile Testamenti, b. 879, n. 243, notaio Andrea Scala.
the war effort against the Genoese.\textsuperscript{9} Jacopo's willingness to contravene Venetian tradition in christening his son "Gentile" has often been read, most notably by Vasari, as an expression of the artist's regard for his deceased painting master Gentile da Fabriano (c.1385-1427).\textsuperscript{10}

According to extant documents, Gentile Bellini had exactly two biological siblings: a sister, Nicolosia, who would marry the artist Andrea Mantegna in c. 1453; and a brother, Nicolò, about whom little is known. Gentile's mother Anna Rinversi, in her first will of 6 February 1429, was described as married to Jacopo Bellini, pregnant, and not yet with children.\textsuperscript{11} If Jacopo adhered to Venetian tradition in naming his firstborn after his father, then either Nicolosia or Nicolò was probably Anna's first child. (No will has been discovered for Gentile's father, Jacopo, who died in 1470/71, and no evidence suggests that Jacopo had biological children apart from those he had with his only documented wife, Anna.) After Jacopo's death, Anna drew up a second will, dated 25 November 1471, in which she was legally bound to mention all her living children, and she named exactly two as heirs: Gentile and Nicolò, with Gentile's name preceding Nicolò's whenever the sons are identified in tandem, implying that Gentile was probably the elder.\textsuperscript{12} (Apparently by late 1471, Gentile's sister Nicolosia, who was not mentioned in Anna's

\textsuperscript{9} Luzzato, 181, 185. Another rare example of a Zentil appears in ASV, Giudici di Petizion, Sentenze a Giustizia, b.75, ciii(r), 16 July 1437.

\textsuperscript{10} Vasari-Barocchi, 3:428: "Gentile da Fabriano, stato suo maestro e come padre amorevole."

\textsuperscript{11} ASV, NT, b. 946/c, Enrico Salomon, n. 313; Barausse, 330–31, doc. 4. Drawing up a will during a first pregnancy was common in Renaissance Venice.

\textsuperscript{12} ASV, NT, b. 361, Notaio Francesco Elmis, carta sciolta, n. 2; Barausse, 338, doc. 31. Tiepolo’s law of book 4, rubric 35 (Cessi, 4:35:213) is titled, “No one can disinherit his or her son.” Disinheritance was rare, aberrant, and predicated on the child committing at least one of fourteen grave transgressions, such as plotting against the life of his or her parents, enumerated in ibid., 4:35:213:207. In Venice, “for the disinheritance to be valid, a legitimate reason must be included in the testament”. Kirshner, 135.
will, would therefore seem to have died.\textsuperscript{13} A birth order of Nicolosia, followed by Gentile, and then Nicolò seems most likely but must remain conjectural, and with the possibility that there were other Bellini children who did not live to adulthood.\textsuperscript{14}

**Date of Birth**

According solely to archival documents, Gentile could have been born at any time after 6 February 1429, the date of Anna's will describing her as pregnant, and before the early 1440s, since in 1460 Gentile must have been at least in his late teens, and more likely several years older, when Jacopo signed Gentile's name as a co-creator of the Gattamelata altarpiece, Gentile's first definitive appearance in recorded history.\textsuperscript{15} Giorgio Vasari, seemingly accurate in reporting that Giovanni Bellini (1424/28-1516) died at age 90 (in 1516), wrote in both the 1550 and 1568 editions of his *Vite* that Gentile Bellini was nearly 80 years old when he died in 1501.\textsuperscript{16} In fact Gentile had died in 1507, but if Vasari’s error was notational, then the author may be read as having situated Gentile's birth between 1427 and 1431 (if one considers 76 years-old as approaching 80).

Other evidence, pictorial in nature and weak as proof, consists of images that might have depicted Gentile at various points in his life. Even the most telling of these is not particularly helpful. In Giovanni Bellini's *Presentation of Christ*, several scholars have arbitrarily identified

\textsuperscript{13} Had Anna died intestate, Nicolosia, although married, would have been entitled to an equal share of her mother’s property. Emancipated and unemancipated sons also succeeded to their intestate mothers’ property: Cessi, 4:27:207–208, with glosses. Nicolosia's possible early death has not been discussed in the secondary literature on Mantegna.

\textsuperscript{14} Curiously, in 1888 Tassini, 142, noted that Gentile had two additional brothers, named Gabriel and Giorgio. No scholar has corroborated this information, however, and it is unclear from where Tassini might have derived it.

\textsuperscript{15} Callegari, 30.

\textsuperscript{16} Vasari-Barocchi, 3:438.
portraits depicting Nicolosia, Gentile, and the artist Andrea Mantegna (born c.1431) (fig. 61). Yet it is unclear whether the image supposedly depicting Mantegna should be read as younger or older than that possibly representing Gentile.

There is a final possible clue: beginning on 16 March 1483, Gentile served on a powerful subgroup within the Scuola di San Marco called the Great Chapter, the members of which might have been required to be at least fifty years old. If such indeed was the case, and Gentile had followed confraternity rules, then he would have been born prior to 1433.

In sum, Gentile's year of birth is uncertain, with a terminus post quem provided by Anna's will of 6 February 1429 (Meyer zur Capellen, in the only published monograph on Gentile, states simply that the artist had to be born after this date). If we provisionally accept both Vasari's assertion (corrected for an apparent typographical error) that Gentile was towards 80 when he died, and that Gentile was born after Nicolosia, then Gentile's birth year was probably in 1430 or 1431. To be safe, however, I have situated the artist's birth within a near-certain range of 1429 and 1435.

Jacopo's Household

When Gentile was born, or soon thereafter, at least two other children of the Bellini family were members of Jacopo's household. Gentile's half uncle, Giovanni Bellini, whose father Nicolò had died sometime prior to 23 July 1429 when Giovanni was under age 5, almost certainly resided in his half-brother Jacopo's home, with Jacopo likely serving as his legal

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18 ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 8r. That the the *boni homeni* or good men who comprised the Great Chapter must be at least 50 years old, see ASV, CX, Misti, Reg. 9, c. 48r(44r), 12 February 1409.

19 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 10.
guardian and perhaps adoptive father. Giovanni (b.1424/8) was older than Gentile (b.1429/35) by as little as a year, but doubtfully more than ten years. If one accepts Vasari's birth year for Giovanni as 1426 and for Gentile as 1429-31, then the two were 3-5 years apart.

Also raised by Jacopo from 1431 was Gentile's first cousin Leonardo Bellini, the son of Jacopo's sister, Elena, who was probably born in 1424-5, and therefore several years older than Gentile. Giovanni and Leonardo, both blood relations of Gentile, presumably served as his surrogate elder brothers. And while no documents or other evidence attest whether Gentile and Leonardo might have had a close personal or professional relationship, much evidence suggests that Gentile and Giovanni shared an intimate and enduring lifelong relationship, which is registered by Gentile’s last testament of 18 February 1507, drawn up a few days before his death, in which he referred affectionately to Giovanni as “my dearest brother.”

**Legal Status**

Gentile's unemancipated status has not yet been considered in relation to his early career or artistic output (indeed, to my knowledge, the question of whether Gentile was emancipated has never been addressed in the secondary literature). Since Gentile was born of legitimate

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20 This is a central argument of chapter 1.

21 According to a contract dated 23 August 1443, some twelve years earlier in 1431 Jacopo Bellini had taken his nephew Leonardo (born ca. 1424) into his home and raised him: ASV, CIN, b. 74–75, Francesco Elmis, reg. XXIII, c. 20; Barausse, 332–33, doc. 11. Leonardo might have been as young as six or seven when commencing his apprenticeship in 1431, perhaps reaching the age of 18 in 1443 when he signed the two-year contract with Jacopo. Such an extended 12-year apprenticeship was unusual, and suggests perhaps that Leonardo had reached an age when payment for his work became appropriate, even though he was a member of the Bellini family. Also, Leonardo's maternal grandfather, Nicolò, named in his will of 11 April 1424 Leonardo's sister, Caterina, but not Leonardo, suggesting perhaps that he had not yet been born by that date, although Nicolò was under no obligation to leave a bequest to either of his daughters' children (ASV, NT, b. 545, Lorenzo Buscarino, c. 10r–s, n. 63; Barausse, 330, doc. 3).

22 ASV, NT, b. 271, Bernardo Cavagnis, n. 307; Barausse, 354, doc. 105: “Iohannes frater meus carissimus.”
marriage and free parents, his legal birth status was that of a legitimate, unemancipated son. As discussed in chapter 1, the legal concept of emancipation, in fifteenth-century Venice and elsewhere, broadly defined both an individual's entitlements and his relationship to the family workshop. Emancipation derived from the classical Roman principle of sovereign paternal power which granted the patriarch rights over all his legitimate male descendants along the male line. Legitimately-born children were legal dependents of their fathers until the children were emancipated, which occurred only through a legal act of emancipation or by the death of the father (or in rare cases by adoption). Marriage did not emancipate a child, and sons might, and regularly did, remain unemancipated for the majority of their lives, even into old age.

Unemancipated children, or filiifamilias, remained under their father's authority with limited rights. In Renaissance Venice, to make a binding contract an unemancipated son needed either power of attorney from his father or the permission and signatures of two magistrates from the Court of the Examiner. From a strictly legal point of view, the earnings of an unemancipated son were the property of his father. Or, more simply, the father owned the son's labor.

23 Cessi, Gli statuti veneziani, bk. 4, r. XXIII, gl. 139, 201: "Dic legittimos, qui nati sunt de legittimo matrimonio et parentibus liberis, sed de aliis filiis nichil cavetur in statuto Veneciarum."

24 See also Connell, 38-42 for a discussion of emancipation in relation to sculptors.


26 Sons might remain unemancipated for the majority of their lives, and, as stated in the Glossa ordinaria, a man in his sixties could still very well be under the authority of his father: "etiam sexagenarius . . . in potestate est": ibid., 177n8.

27 Cessi, Gli statuti veneziani, bk. 1, r. XXXVII, 69, as discussed in Connell, 37-8, who noted that the rights of unemancipated sons were not uniform throughout Italy, and in certain areas and under certain conditions might include the authority to make contracts.

28 Nonetheless, many jurists allowed general exceptions to be made, and often the unemancipated son was entitled to keep payment for his labor. In this way, if the son had in some mode employed his father's money as part of his
A legal act of emancipation liberated the son from the father or grandfather, making him a *homo sui iuris*, possessed with full legal rights, and a *paterfamilias* (patriarch of his own family) under the law. In Venice, the contractual act of emancipation required a legal instrument called a charter of emancipation (*carta emancipationis*), consented to by the father, signed by witnesses, recorded by a notary or magistrate, and subsequently registered in the Cancelleria Inferiore as a public record because it involved the ownership of property. No such document has been found for Gentile, probably because none ever existed.

Rather, it was traditional during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance for Venetian fathers not to emancipate sons in the same business because there was little incentive to do so. In a typical family workshop, the father as patriarch signed the contracts, the son was bound to the father, and the son's labor did not require payment; instead, the legitimate son would often become emancipated upon his father's death, inherit the home-workshop and other property owned by their father, as was the son's legal right, continue the family business, and reside in his father's former home until his own death. Even fathers who practiced trades different from those of their sons might delay emancipating them. For example, Andrea Riccio (1470-1532), a

work, then the father was allowed half the profit for extending the capital, the son the other half for providing the industry (Kuehn, 1982, 20).

29 Ibid., 12.


31 No *carta emancipationis* for either Giovanni, or Gentile Bellini exists where one might expect to find it, i.e., in *ASV, CI, Miscellanea notai diversi*, b. 32-33. The absence of a document from the Venetian archives, however, particularly one from the Quattrocento, should rarely if ever be viewed as negative proof.

32 Connell, 39, observed that “sons who remained in business with their fathers were unlikely to be emancipated from them.”

33 Lane, 1944, 178-80 and *passim*.
leading Northern Italian bronze sculptor, was emancipated only in his late forties by his father, Ambrogio, a goldsmith.\(^{34}\)

As Jacopo's legitimately-born son, Gentile almost certainly underwent this traditional sequence of events, and no evidence suggests otherwise. While he remained unemancipated, according to a strict interpretation of the law, he could not own moveable property, including the fruits of his own labor, nor could he enter into legal contracts without Jacopo's consent. He resided in Jacopo's home and presumably labored wage-free in Jacopo's workshop, apparently until Jacopo's death in 1470/71 at which time Gentile, then about age 40, inherited (along with Nicolò) his father's home and workshop, in which he continued to live and work for the duration of his life.\(^{35}\)

Though Gentile might have signed his name to a work of art, painting commissions entered the Bellini workshop through Jacopo, were executed under his supervision, and left with his blessing. To be sure, Jacopo, in his mid-late career among the most famous artists of Northern Italy, represented the foundational spirit behind the Bellini workshop and remained its central attraction. Patrons naturally would have sought out the master rather than one of his less well-known assistants. Thus, it is crucial to remember that, during Jacopo's life, Gentile signed paintings only with Jacopo's permission—the legal relationships within the family workshop meant that Gentile's pictures were, perforce, collaborative efforts at least to some extent, with Jacopo in a supervisory role.

\(^{34}\) Allen, 2008, 19.

\(^{35}\) It should be mentioned that in 1464, Gentile, perhaps while painting the organ doors for S. Marco, lived for a period of time in an apartment in the Procuratie Vecchie, adjacent to the church of San Marco and in the parish of San Geminiano; ASV, NT, b.46, Niccolò (de) Avanzo, n. 116, 29 February 1463. We should not infer, however, that the procuratorial apartment was either Jacopo's or Gentile's permanent home. Cfr. Bätschmann, 2008, 19, with further references.
During these decades no extant documents mention Gentile and no firmly-dated paintings bear his signature. (Each of the portraits often assigned to Gentile during this period are problematic, such as the Portrait of Doge Pasquale Malipiero (r.1457-62) in the MFA in Boston, which is unlikely to have been by Gentile [fig. 62].)\(^{36}\) It is highly probable, however, that Gentile assisted Jacopo in executing two major narrative cycles, both lost, one for the Sala Capitolare for the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista (c.1440s-1452) and the other for the Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Marco (c.1453-1465).\(^{37}\) No fewer than seventeen paintings comprised the former cycle, according to Ridolfi in 1648, who also reported that Jacopo had been assisted in its execution by his sons.\(^{38}\) If such was indeed the case, then Gentile had spent a large portion of his formative artistic years, perhaps from an early teen until his late twenties, apprenticing and then assisting his father on large-scale narrative works. That Gentile became Venice's leading narrative painter of the next generation seems hardly surprising. No Venetians of his era, with the possible exception of Giovanni and Leonardo Bellini, could have approached the cumulative experience Gentile had gained at his father's side through two extensive multi-year narrative cycles. While in his mid-thirties, Gentile had even been commissioned by the Scuola Grande di San Marco to execute istorie, with, of course, his father's supervision and approval.\(^{39}\) In fact, few other painters in all of Italy could claim such a prolonged involvement with the narrative genre.

\(^{36}\) Korbacher, 327-28. The date given for the work is 1460-2 and Doge Malipiero died in 1462. The extreme high quality of the work, especially the intricacy of the Doge's vela, suggests that Jacopo himself completed it. I see no evidence of Gentile's hand, especially at that early date.

\(^{37}\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 266-70.

\(^{38}\) Ridolfi, 1:53-54.

\(^{39}\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 269.
especially from such a young age. To be sure, the most confident paintings of Gentile's entire career were his istorie.

SIGNING WORKS UNDER JACOPO, 1460-70/71

Gattamelata Altarpiece of 1460

The first mention of Gentile's name in the historic record appears on the lost but recorded inscription of the Gattamelata altarpiece of 1460 in Padua, which Jacopo signed as a work by himself and his sons Gentile and Giovanni (Jacobi Bellini Veneti patris ac Gentilis et Joannis natorum opus). 40 The altarpiece has been dispersed, but a partial reconstruction has been suggested, and in an article on the work, Colin Eisler argued that Jacopo designed the left panel and had Gentile execute it (fig. 23). 41 It was through the work's inscription that Jacopo first introduced Gentile to the general public as a member of the Bellini workshop.

Gentile's Madonna and Child with Donors (fig. 63)

In the following section, I argue that Gentile's Madonna and Child with Donors was a groundbreaking achievement; that its pictorial innovations almost certainly derived from Jacopo Bellini himself; and that Jacopo's purpose in entrusting the execution of the work to Gentile was precisely to increase Gentile's fama or artistic reputation. This argument offers an entirely new interpretation not only of the painting itself, but also of its significance to the early Bellini workshop.

Most Bellini specialists accept Gentile's Madonna with and Child with Donors as among the artist's earliest works, perhaps from c. 1460 (although a slightly later date of c. 1463 seems

40 Although the altarpiece signature is lost, it was recorded in 1590 by Fra Valerio Polidoro (Callegari, 30).

41 Eisler, 1985, 32-40.
equally plausible).\textsuperscript{42} Its frame may be a pastiche of original elements and those added in the 19th century (fig. 64).\textsuperscript{43} The signature on the frame, "Opus Gentilis Bellinus," seems likely to be a later addition, perhaps duplicating a lost original signature (fig 65).\textsuperscript{44} A modern scientific analysis of both frame and signature would be welcome.

The work depicts a frontal half-length Madonna, who seems neither standing nor seated, gazing down toward a male donor as she cradles in her left arm a Christ child. The Virgin wears a brown shawl, trimmed with gold embroidery and clasped below the neck, on top of a scarlet mantle. Her chestnut hair, braided and parted in the middle, is covered by a gossamer veil partly framing her oval face. The male donor also receives the gaze of the Christ Child, his right hand raised in blessing, his left holding a pomegranate, a symbol of the passion and his mother’s grace.

\textsuperscript{42} Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 43, 124.

\textsuperscript{43} About the frame, Karen Serres at the Yale University Art Gallery wrote, "My initial feeling (without seeing the back and knowing what materials the frame is made of) is that it is indeed a 19\textsuperscript{th}-century construction. The top and bottom friezes (with the putti heads) would not have occurred in this way the Renaissance [sic], in addition to looking quite mechanical. However, the two pilasters on either side look quite beautifully carved. It is therefore likely that the frame is a pastiche, integrating both original elements and 19\textsuperscript{th}-century additions, a very common occurrence. I have showed the image to Larry Kanter, who was the co-author of the important exhibition on Italian Renaissance Frames at the Metropolitan Museum (1990) and he agrees. He also suggested looking to see if the painting wasn’t originally rounded at the top and enlarged in the top corners to fit the present frame. It looks from the photo that there is something murky there. This means therefore that the signature at the bottom is unlikely to be original . . . I offer this opinion with the important caveat of not having examined the frame in person." (Email correspondence with the author, April 26, 2012). On the other hand, Frederico Zeri (letter to Dottor Schleier, dated 24 January 1978, located in the file on Gentile Bellini in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) believed that the frame was largely original but re-gilt in the 19th century, and that the signature is very old ("la firma è antica"), implying original authorship. See also Gilbert, 1961 37n3 who wrote, "both frame and signature are obviously of the nineteenth century. This has also been observed by the Museum . . . It seems a likely hypothesis that the inscription copies a previous one on the older frame." However, the restoration report from the museum noted that the painting was cut out of the frame, which suggests it might have been a pastiche.

\textsuperscript{44} The Venetian scholar who analyzed in depth the signatures of Giovanni Bellini, Debra Pincus, wrote: "(I)n my experience signatures are not squeezed into a pre-existing space of a frame as they are on this one . . . The letters of the signature certainly do not agree with a high-quality Giovanni Bellini signature, but they do not look like tentative antique majuscules either. My instinct is to see them as something added at a later period, written ‘in Renaissance style’ (email correspondence with the author, April 23, 2012)." This does not necessarily refute the suggestion by Gilbert, 1961, 37n3, that the existing signature might have duplicated an earlier one.
The male donor gazes toward the Child with his hands in prayer. He is probably in his mid-thirties and apparently kneeling, his brown hair coiffed in a zazzera-type style, and wears a simple black vest over his red vesta, which reveals at the neck a narrow strip of his white camisa. The female donor, presumably his wife, mirrors her husband with hands in prayer, and gazes in the direction of the Madonna. The wife's reddish-brown hair is elegantly gathered in the back by a white cloth ribbon, and wears a simple gold and white-sleeved gamurra edged with small pearls lining her low-cut bodice, a treble-looped gold necklace around her neck, and a thumb ring inscribed on one side with the word "Verbum," likely an abbreviation for "Verbum caro factum est (et havitavit in nobis) [The Word was made flesh (and dwelt among us)]" (John 1.14), which was an amuletic inscription that regularly appeared in shortened form on late Medieval rings and was believed by some to manifest apotropaic or curative properties. Her ring lacks a gem, her necklace a pendant, her hair a brooch, and her dress richly brocaded fabric, all of which imply either wealth not of the highest degree or the preference for modesty in self-depiction. If the worn-away stemma on the frame is original, then the donors were likely to have been Venetian nobles.

A Merging of Types

I propose that the painting's unusual composition was unprecedented in its attempt to merge at least three distinct types of Venetian pictures into one work of art, in order to offer to prospective Venetians patrons a multi-use image for the home. As we shall see, however, the

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45 For other examples of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century rings inscribed with "Verbum Caro Factum Est . . . " or in abbreviated form, see, for instance: Scarisbrick, 1993, 30, 32; Taylor and Scarisbrick, 1978, 60, nos. 444, 445; Dalton, 1912, nos. 229, 260 [Verbum], 895. Dalton questioned whether the inscription alone made the ring magical. For the inscription's use as a charm, and its power to repel evil or dispel paroxysms, see: Scarisbrick, 1993, 30; Henig, 2003, 8-9 [Et Verbum C]; Roos, 2008, 276; Bailey, 2006, 399n77.
groundbreaking composition was not an immediate success, perhaps because it was too vanguard for the conservative Venetian tastes of the time.

Virgin and Child

The first of the three pictorial types that Gentile's work drew upon was the devotional painting of the Virgin and Child, probably the most commissioned image in fifteenth-century Venice, which was typically executed in a vertical half-length format and most often intended for private use in the home.46 Mary was human, motherly, a compassionate intercessor, and, in the words of John of Damascus (c.676-749), “the inexhaustible source of healing, the warder-off of demons, the medicine that drives away evil from the sick, the refuge of all who seek protections.”47 By the early seventh century, a number of icons depicting the Virgin were endowed with miraculous or protective powers, as when the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius attributed his victory over Phocas in 610 to a Marian icon; some became cult images and pilgrimage destinations.48 Perhaps to explain their preternatural powers, to endow the pictures with exceptional sanctity, or to validate the activity of painting icons after the period of Iconoclasm (725-842), by the mid-eighth century a number of Marian pilgrimage icons were attributed to the hand of St. Luke, whose gospel emphasized Christ’s childhood and who was believed to have had a special relationship with the Virgin, even though he never saw in person the Christ Child and thus could not have painted Him from a life study.49

46 Humfrey 1993, 82. Kasl 60.
47 As quoted in Belting, 1992, 559n16.
49 Belting, 1992, 57.
In Venice the popularity of images of the Madonna also reflected the close relationship between the Virgin and the Venetian state since the Middle Ages. According to a legend dating from at least the twelfth century, Venice was founded in the year 421 on March 25, the day of the Annunciation. Although a number of Italian communes had considered the Virgin as their patron, according to David Rosand, only Venice “appropriated the image of the Virgin for its own self-representation.”

Renaissance Venetians might refer to their Republic as “Venetia Vergine,” likening the “uncorrupted purity” of the *serenissima* to that of the Virgin.

As an aid to devotion, images of the Madonna and Child brought into the Venetian home not only the mystery of the Incarnation but also the presence of the Virgin herself, who was believed by many to inhabit her image, and thus could receive prayers, protect the household and its members, and occasionally produce miracles on behalf of the devout.

Inventories taken after the owner's death of household items in the Renaissance Venetian *casa* attest to the domestic popularity of images of the Virgin and Child: one recent study observed that extant Quattrocento Venetian home inventories typically listed exactly one painting, which notaries often described as an "ancona," signifying a religious picture or low-relief sculpture, often housed in a tabernacle frame or cupboard, and presumably most often depicting the Madonna and Child. Another analysis of over 800 inventories of Venetian *case* between 1550 and 1600 concluded that about

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51 As did Francesco Sansovino, cited in Rosand 2001, 36.

52 Ringbom, 1984, 159-62; Kasl 75; Chavasse, 2000, 138-164.

53 Morse, 2006, 60.
90% owned at least one painting, with depictions of the Madonna "omnipresent" and usually in a Byzantinizing (alla Greca) style.\footnote{Fossati, 478-9, 481.}

Gentile's use of a gold ground, punched halo for the Madonna (curiously absent from the Christ child), compressed space, and his emphasis on geometric forms with incisive contour lines, might have suggested to the mid-Quattrocento Venetian viewer a Madonna alla greca. The work's tabernacle frame, though perhaps not original in its entirety, recalls similar extant Renaissance Venetian frames of private devotional images, such as an early sixteenth-century tabernacle frame owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 66).\footnote{Newbery, Bisacca, and Kanter, 1990, 45-47, cat. 14-17.} Gentile's entablature, pilasters, and base with stemma resemble the frame of a Virgin and Child represented by Carpaccio which decorates the King's bedroom in his Scenes from the Life of St. Ursula: Arrival of the Ambassadors (fig. 67).\footnote{For instance, see an early sixteenth-century Tabernacle frame owned by the Metropolitan, New York and reproduced in Kasl, 71.} It is rather likely, then, that Gentile's painting was destined for a bedroom of a Venetian home.

The Ex Voto

Yet Gentile's picture may more properly fit into another category of painting, the votive picture (ex voto). Often commissioned as a consequence of a vow by a patron whose prayer had been answered, votive pictures expressed a donor's gratitude to the divine and might illicit prayers from the viewer for the salvation of the donors' souls.\footnote{Fletcher, 2009, 25-6.} From the fourteenth century, Venetian votive paintings typically portrayed a profile image (ritratto or figura) of one or more donors kneeling before a frontal, full-length Virgin and Child (or patron Saint). Sometimes a

\footnote{54 Fossati, 478-9, 481.} \footnote{55 Newbery, Bisacca, and Kanter, 1990, 45-47, cat. 14-17.} \footnote{56 For instance, see an early sixteenth-century Tabernacle frame owned by the Metropolitan, New York and reproduced in Kasl, 71.} \footnote{57 Fletcher, 2009, 25-6.}
donor was presented to the Virgin by his or her patron saint, oftentimes a name saint.\textsuperscript{58} In the Quattrocento, Venetian votive paintings were regularly commissioned to decorate the Ducal Palace, to form the lunette or other part of a tomb monument, or to serve as a church altarpiece, in which donors were nearly always of a diminutive size.\textsuperscript{59} The Venetian ethos of \textit{mediocritas}, which proscribed self-glorification in public places, probably extended to full-scale portraits of donors in Quattrocento Venetian church altarpieces, of which there are few examples if any—suggesting that Gentile's \textit{Madonna and Child with Donors} might have been indecorous for church display.\textsuperscript{60}

Two basic formats of votive pictures comprise the Venetian early Renaissance type: 1) the horizontal format, such as Paolo Veneziano’s \textit{Virgin and Child with Doge Francesco Dandolo, his Wife and Protecting Saints} (1339), which includes the oldest extant image of a doge in paint (fig. 68). Depicted in the place of honor on the Virgin’s dexter, the kneeling Dandolo (r. 1329-39) is presented to the enthroned Virgin and Child by his patron saint, Francis (1181-1226), and across from him, his kneeling wife, Elisabetta Contarini Dandolo, dressed in the habit of a member of the third Franciscan order and presented by her name saint, Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231).\textsuperscript{61} And 2) the vertical format, such as in the Croatian \textit{Virgin and Child with

\textsuperscript{58} Roberts, 2007, 7.

\textsuperscript{59} Humfrey, 2011, 57.

\textsuperscript{60} Fletcher, 2009, 42; Humfrey, 1993, 83, 106.

\textsuperscript{61} Muraro 1969, 145-6. Goffen, 1986, 131. The saint is usually identified as Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, popular as the daughter of the King of Hungary and wife of the ruler Langgrave of Thuringia. Muraro, 1969, 145 identifies her only as Saint Elizabeth. She has recently been identified as Saint Elizabeth of Portugal (Pincus, 2000a, 106). However, Elizabeth of Portugal was not canonized until the 17\textsuperscript{th} century (Hurlburt, 2006, 254-5n30).
Donor (c. 1315) by an unknown artist, which depicted an unidentified diminutive donor kneeling before an enthroned Virgin and Child (fig. 69). 62

Prior to Gentile's Virgin and Child with Donors of c. 1460, which was of vertical format, only rarely had the half-length Madonna and Child been merged with the votive type onto a single panel. One such example is a mid-fourteenth-century Madonna and Child with Donor (Pietro de Gigi), often attributed to Lorenzo Veneziano, which presumably functioned both as an icon, with the Madonna's gaze meeting that of the supplicant, and as a votive, with the diminutive Pietro receiving the Christ child's blessing (fig. 70). 63 In short, the inclusion of donor portraits in a half-length Madonna made Gentile's picture highly unusual.

The Autonomous Portrait

Even more unusual, Gentile's Virgin and Child with Donors altered the scale of the donor portraits which, rather than diminutive, approached the size of the Madonna. 64 So large are these two profile portraits, that one might consider them influenced by a third pictorial type, the autonomous portrait. It is unclear exactly when independent portraits were first executed in Venice, but Jacopo Bellini was among the genre's earliest practitioners. The sixteenth-century Venetian connoisseur Michelangelo Michiel recorded in Pietro Bembo's house in Padua a portrait of Gentile da Fabriano (d. 1427) by Jacopo, and in 1441 Jacopo competed against Pisanello in a contest to execute the finest portrait of Leonello d'Este. 65 Unfortunately the only

63 Ibid., 334, cat. 68.
64 In Florence, the donors in Masaccio's The Holy Trinity from the 1420s in Santa Maria Novella are on the same scale as the holy personages. In Venice, votive paintings such as Paolo Veneziano's Virgin and Child with Doge Francesco Dandolo, his Wife and Protecting Saints from 1339 (fig. 68) depicted donors and their presenting saints on the same scale.
65 Eisler, 1989, 516.
extant independent portraits attributed by most specialists to Jacopo are the silverpoint drawing *Portrait of a Young Man* and a posthumous image of *Saint Bernardino* (which some might argue was an image of a saint rather than a portrait, although Jacopo likely witnessed Bernardino preach in Venice in 1443) (figs. 71-72).

Perhaps surprisingly, there are remarkably few known Venetian independent portraits executed prior to the middle of the fifteenth century. (Vasari's statement crediting Giovanni Bellini with initiating the Venetian tradition of independent portraiture commissioned for the home rings true in the sense that Giovanni undoubtedly helped to popularize the genre, along with Antonello, Jacometto and others, but without of course inventing it.) Moreover, I am unaware of any Venetian home inventories from the Quattrocento that testify to the private ownership of independent portraits. This absence is in astonishing contrast to Venetian home inventories of the next century, in which portraits appear nearly as often as religious paintings.

One reason for this apparent shift may be that Venetian autonomous portraiture in its first decades was probably reserved principally for doges and other elites. Another reason, which accords with extant Quattrocento home inventories, may simply be that, apart from the Madonna and Child (or a similar type of devotional work), Venetians during much of the Quattrocento seldom commissioned multiple paintings for their homes. Extant Quattrocento Venetian home inventories...

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68 Vasari-Barocchi, 3:438-9. For Antonello and Jacometto, see Christiansen and Weppelmann, 2011, 335-342, 344-349 with further references.
69 Morse, 2007, 326n163 with further references.
70 Humfrey, 2011, 49.
inventories—which are not well studied, so conclusions must remain preliminary—often listed exactly one painting in the household, usually a Madonna and Child; a century later, according to one study, about 95% of inventoried patrician homes contained at least five paintings, and 30% owned more than 20 paintings. In any event, it would seem that wealthy Quattrocento Venetians who could afford a painted self-image tended to commission a votive picture, even though, by convention, their portraits typically would appear small in scale, their unique facial features often hardly distinguishable—unless, of course, the votive painting was particularly large in size, as was typically the case for votives commissioned by the doge that might decorate the Palazzo Ducale.

Although not autonomous, the portrait likenesses in Gentile's *Madonna and Child with Donors* were of such a large size that their dimensions approached those of contemporary independent portraits and of the largest ducal votive images. Figure 73 demonstrates how close in actual size Gentile's donor portrait is to an independent portrait of a doge dated c. 1462, and to a donor portrait from an large-scale ducal votive painting of c. 1480, often attributed to the Bellini workshop. Hence, if autonomous portraits were indeed considered socially inappropriate for most Venetians, Gentile's new type of half-length votive picture offered the opportunity in the mid-Quattrocento of owning a large portrait likeness within the acceptable format of a votive painting, which, in terms of preserving and commemorating a donor's likeness, held many of the same benefits as an autonomous portrait.

*The Dramatic Close-Up*

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71 Fossati, 204, 478–481.

72 Bätschmann, 2008, 90.
Finally, a fourth type of painting, only in its nascency in mid-Quattrocento Venice, might have affected Gentile's composition. The so-called dramatic close-up was a narrative painting comprised of half-length figures and intended for devotional use. Examined by Sixten Ringbom (1935-1992) in his famous study, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting*, this picture type became popularized by Giovanni Bellini and his circle toward the end of the fifteenth century. Ringbom traced its genesis to Mantegna's *Presentation in the Temple*, whose dating is uncertain but was probably c. 1455 (fig. 74). In the *Presentation*, Mantegna removed the full-length Virgin, Child, Joseph, and Simeon from the internal architecture of the temple, and instead placed them within a painted window frame, which would account for their half length images before an undefined black background. Facing one another and nearly in profile stand St. Simeon and the Virgin, who steadies an upright, swaddled Christ on a pillow that rests on the foreground window sill; slightly beyond, a frontal Joseph peers out; and at opposite sides of the panel are three-quarter views of an un-haloed woman and man, whom some have identified as portrait likenesses of Nicolosia, Mantegna's wife, and Mantegna himself. Ringbom, who linked the proliferation of half-length narratives to new Quattrocento religious attitudes toward lay devotion, argued that the type developed from the half-length icon of the Madonna (or Christ) which was then augmented by other figures. It has been shown, however, that some half-length narratives derived from full-scale narrative originals, from which cropped reproductions were made for private devotional use.

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73 Ringbom, 1984, 72.


75 Ringbom, 1984, 5-6, 58. For scholars who have questioned Ringbom's account, see Nova, 107, who argued that these Quattrocento devotional images themselves contributed toward "una nuova mentalità religiosa (a new religious mentality)." Hood, 1986, 429-30 took issue "that this additive notion . . . is too reductivist to explain the genesis of
There are several points of intersection between Gentile's *Madonna and Child with Donors* and the fledgling half-length narrative type, even though Gentile's painting was not a narrative. (Mantegna's *Presentation in the Temple*, not incidentally, was well known to the Bellini workshop: Giovanni Bellini used it as a model for his own version of the subject, the dating of which is unclear and has ranged from 1453 to 1480 [fig. 61].) First, like the *Presentation*, Gentile's picture may be viewed either as a half-length Madonna with the addition of two half-length donors, or as a close-up—not of a narrative but of a traditional votive image depicting kneeling donors before a full length Madonna. Hence Gentile's figures, as in Mantegna's *Presentation*, appear as if cropped from a full-scale image and then reassembled in closer proximity to accommodate the tight framing of the half-length. Secondly, as in Mantegna's work, Gentile portrayed the figures before an undefined background, not of black but of gold, reflecting the Byzantine Icon type. Thirdly, both paintings compress the space between the holy and portrait figures, as if the entire group had been viewed through a long-focus lens; by removing the sense of discrete spatial locality between foreground and background figures, the donors appear to amalgamate with the divine in a complex unified form. Lastly, unlike many later so-called dramatic close-ups, both images contain donor portraits.

Remarkably, the idea for the half-length narrative as a compressed and tightly framed painting, intended either as an altarpiece or for private devotion (or perhaps both), apparently originated not with Mantegna but rather with Jacopo Bellini, depending on how the pertinent

some of the best pictures by Roger van der Weyden, Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, or Albrecht Dürer . . . Ringbom may be right in some cases, though probably not in all."


77 Hood, 1986, 430.
paintings are dated. In his Paris Notebook, Jacopo's drawing of a *Lamentation*, dated by Degenhart and Schmitt to c. 1455 (fig. 75), might have served as a more direct influence on Gentile's *Madonna and Child with Donors*, down to its decorated tabernacle frame (assuming Gentile's frame is, in part, original). This *Lamentation* seems to prefigure both Mantegna's and Gentile's pictures. Experimenting with a new type of devotional image would have been entirely consistent with Jacopo's pictorial inventions of that time, such as his prescient drawing of a Renaissance altarpiece well over a decade before it was realized in Venice in either marble or paint (fig. 60).

**Function and Authorship**

I propose that the particular compositional innovations in Gentile's painting were a brilliant response to the particular needs of the Venetian market. The work could serve as a Virgin and Child, receiving direct prayers from the devout; as a votive picture, in which the donors honored the divine and in turn received other worshippers' prayers to aid in the salvation of their souls; and, in some sense, as a stand-in for an autonomous portrait, so that relatives might retain images of family members when they were away or after their deaths. In the sixteenth century these three different types of pictures might hang side-by-side one another in the same room, such as the *portego*, or, more likely, a bedroom. Gentile's work, then, presented to possible patrons an image of efficiency and consolidation, a three-uses-in-one work of art that could meet the multiple pictorial needs of the Venetian household, and which presumably would

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78 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 303-310, Paris fol. 7v.


80 Alberti, 1972, 61: “Through painting, the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time.”

81 Morse, 327n168.
be more economical than the purchase of a number of individual paintings that collectively would serve the same purposes.

Were these compositional innovations, however, attributable to Gentile? Did the work herald the arrival of an artist willing to combine genres, test limits of propriety, and challenge the prospective patron with highly experimental compositions? In his fifty-year career, Gentile rarely, if ever, displayed such pioneering creativity when it came to exploring the limits of pictorial convention or the merging of genres. Instead, I would suggest that only Jacopo Bellini could have been responsible for the disegno or the theoretical idea behind the panel, especially in light of his drawing of the elaborately-framed half-length Lamentation. Indeed, Jacopo probably expected that his innovative design would become popular in Venice, and thus had Gentile execute the work—a strategy to promote his relatively unknown son. Otherwise Jacopo would have either completed the painting himself or delegated the work to Giovanni, who was proficient in painting Madonnas, rather than Gentile, who apparently never again executed a half-length Madonna and Child.82

The work's groundbreaking format did indeed become successful, but not immediately. It took a generation for the compositional type to reappear, in Giovanni Bellini's Madonna and Child with Saints and a Donor (1490s) and other works painted after 1500 (figs. 6-7).83 Its lackluster initial reception might have been due to a general preference by Quattrocento Venetians for half-length Madonnas uncluttered by the intrusion of large donor portraits, which conceivably could distract from private spiritual meditation. Another reason, perhaps, is that by

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82 Gentile did execute the Madonna and Child in full length (Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 128) and in three-quarter length (ibid., 131).

83 For Giovanni's Madonna and Child with Donor, see Giovanni Bellini, 2008, 270, cat. 43. For a brief discussion of the type, see Humfrey, 2011, 57.
the early 1470s independent portraits had become more widespread and acceptable among many
types of Venetians. Finally, Gentile's new compositional format was in competition with
another artist's innovations at about the same time: Giovanni Bellini had already began executing
images of the Madonna. His unique sensitivity, subtle modeling, attention to light, and painterly
style were well-suited to portraying a contemplative Madonna embracing her small son, her
forlorn gaze pondering his future sacrifice in contrast to the innocence of the Christ child (fig.
76). Prospective patrons of the Bellini workshop were less likely to choose a Madonna in the
Gentilesque style of strong contour lines and minimal shading, with or without an innovative
composition, in place of one executed by the incomparable Giovanni Bellini. Such might
explain why Gentile, whose strengths as an artist lay in other areas, is not known to have painted
another vertical format half-length Virgin and Child during the rest of his career—even though
the subject was undoubtedly the single most popular in late Quattrocento Venice.

Organ Doors of San Marco, c. 1464 (figs. 77-78)

For the Basilica of San Marco, Bernardo d'Alemagna in c. 1464 constructed an organ
with four bellows that was situated in the gallery on the south side of the chancel, above the
chapel of San Clement, in the Basilica of San Marco. Bernardo's organ replaced an earlier one
built in 1374 by Jacobello di Lanzarotto, and each had been called the organum parvum to
distinguish it from the organ on the North side of the chancel, the organum magnum, which had

84 Early portraits executed in Venice of Venetians include a lost portrait by Jacometto of Carlo Bembo as a baby (c. 1472), Giovanni Bellini's Portrait of a Boy in Birmingham (c. 1475), and Antonello's many portraits during his visit to Venice in 1475-6 (Humfrey, 2011, 48-63).

85 Christiansen, 2004b, 9.

been built by Fra Francesco in 1388 and would be rebuilt by Frate Urbano in 1488-90. The *organum parvum* and its organ doors by Gentile Bellini must have still been in place in 1604 when they were briefly described by Giovanni Stringa in his revised edition of Francesco Sansovino's guidebook to Venice, which noted that "all four [doors] were by the hand of Gentile Bellini." In Antonio Visentini's engravings of San Marco, first published in 1726, an organ remains situated above the chapel of Saint Clement, in a gallery that overlooks the Pala d'Oro, but is depicted with its doors removed (fig. 79).

Gentile was almost certainly at work on the organ doors in 1464. The year not only reflects a stylistic dating agreed upon by most specialists, but also that Gentile witnessed a will on 29, February, 1464, the earliest known legal document recording his name, in which he was described as a painter, son of Jacopo, and living in the procuratorial apartments adjacent to San Marco. Among all the known documents of the Bellini, it is the only one that mentions residence in such an apartment, which was probably provided to Gentile as a temporary workspace while he completed the large doors, presumably later that same year.

Supervised by Jacopo, Gentile may nonetheless have been largely responsible for the design and execution of the organ doors, which drew upon numerous pictorial influences, including the mosaics of San Marco, Jacopo's drawings, perhaps earlier now-lost organ doors by Giovanni Alemagna and Vivarini, and works by Mantegna, Gentile's brother-in-law. The saints Mark and Theodore depicted on the outside of Gentile's organ doors were Venice's two patron

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87 Howard, 2009, 28-29, with further references.

88 Sansovino-Stringa, 1604, 31v.

89 See Visentini and Zatta, (1761; 1991), 55, Tav. 11.

90 ASV, NT, b. 46, Niccolò [de] Avanzo, n. 116, 29 February 1463 [m.v.]; published in Bode, Gronau, and Hadeln, 1989. For dating, see Scarpa, 51-8; Meyer zu Capellen, 1985, 140.
saints, statues of whom protected Venice from atop the two-columned gateway into the city in
the piazzetta San Marco (fig. 80). Both Gentile's painting and the piazzetta statue depict
Theodore with one hand steadying his shield against the ground, the other clutching his spear, his
cape dangling from his shoulder, and with a long torso and abbreviated shins (fig. 81). 91 Inside
San Marco, Gentile was likely influenced by a number of mosaics that portrayed individual
saints in niches under classical arches, such as that of Saint Paul the Hermit (circa mid-thirteen
century), situated near where Gentile's doors would be placed (fig. 82). Gentile's unusual bare-
armed and muscular Saint Jerome (fig. 78), his long white hair parted in the middle and his
moustache arching down into his beard, is related to a mosaic of Saint Paul the First Hermit, by
Maistro Antonio di Jacopo and dated from the mid-fifteenth century (fig. 83). Theodore's
platemail, decorated at the knees with small lions, recalls the door handles and fish-scale design
of the sixth-century bronze doors of the central portal on San Marco's west façade (fig. 84).

Gentile's organ doors also recall a number of Jacopo's drawings, such as his figures of
individual saints in niches and his earlier experiments in landscape with figures positioned in the
foreground rather than integrated topographically. Jacopo had also drawn images of Saint
Francis in his notebooks, which probably provided Gentile with a point of departure for his Saint
Francis (fig. 85). 92 Jacopo's Stigmatization of Saint Francis from his London Notebook in which
Francis has his back to the viewer was far more accomplished and experimental than the version
by Gentile, further suggesting that Gentile was largely responsible for the doors' design (fig. 46).

91 The statue of Theodore might have been in place by 1329, but almost certainly by the early fifteenth century. See
Fortini Brown, 1996, 18-19nn63-4, with further references.

Gentile must have modeled Saint Jerome's lion, with its tear-duct eyes, contoured jowls, and half-open mouth, on lions drawn on the same folio of Jacopo's Paris notebook (fig. 86).  

Ultimately, however, a great many elements of Gentile's composition depended on Mantegna's work from the 1450s and early 1460s. For instance (and this list is not exhaustive) the basic composition of Gentile's saints under barrel vaults decorated by a garland was painted nearly a decade earlier in Mantegna's *Saint Euphemia* (1454), whose right toe breaks the picture plane as does that of Gentile's Teodoro (fig. 87). Mantegna's *Saint George* of c. 1455 is also likely to have been an influence for the general composition, and, indeed, George's facial features, hair style, and armor resemble those of Gentile's *Theodore* (fig. 88). The dramatic perspective of Gentile's barrel vaults, resting on pillars, coffered five rows deep, and drawn with a vanishing point under the picture plane, is surely derived from the famous barrel vault in Mantegna's Saint James cycle in the Erimitani (fig. 89). Gentile's landscape in the Saint Francis is close to the backgrounds portrayed in a number of earlier works by Mantegna, including a predella panel of the San Zeno altarpiece (fig. 90).

While the stylistic influences on Gentile's organ doors seem fairly clear, the basic question remains of how this monumental commission, in the Serenissima's single most important church, fell to Gentile. In Venice during the mid-Quattrocento, the leading workshop of Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini had been the local specialists in decorating organ

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93 Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, II-6, 393, Paris fol. 59v.
94 Agosti, 2008, 79, cat. 11.
95 Martineau, 1992, 207-208, cat. 42.
96 Ibid., 135-37.
97 de Marchi, 2008, 153-57.
doors: for S. Moisè (c.1442?, lost), for S. Pantalon (c.1444?, lost) for S. Giorgio Maggiore (1445, lost), and another, perhaps, for S. Francesco Grande in Padua (c.1449). The commission for the San Marco organ doors, for which no contract exists, went to the Bellini workshop, perhaps in part because after the death of Giovanni d'Alemagna in 1450, the Vivarini workshop seems to have taken a position secondary to that of the Bellini. But it is hardly imaginable that such an important commission would have gone directly to Jacopo's assistant, Gentile, who had previously executed hardly a handful of independent works. The far more likely scenario is that Jacopo received the commission and delegated it to Gentile. To be sure, Jacopo might even have demanded that his son sign the work in large Roman letters which were clearly legible to the prestigious Venetian congregation below. As we have seen, Jacopo knew the value of publicity, especially in the most important church in Christendom, which for any Venetian was, of course, San Marco.

Membership in the Scuola Grande di San Marco

Jacopo had executed an unknown number of paintings for the Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, as well as an altarpiece for the Scuola, and in July 1466 he agreed to be paid 375 ducats for two large-scale canvases for the main meeting room, the Sala Capitolare, that would depict scenes from the Old Testament. That same year, Gentile Bellini became a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and in December agreed to execute for the same room two large scale works depicting scenes from the life of Moses that the Scuola wanted to be "better and bigger" than those of Jacopo. Gentile's contract has often been misinterpreted: he

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98 Holgate, 1998, 158-9, 197-98, 234-6, 236n334.
100 Document transcribed in Appendix C.
was to be paid not 150 ducats for each canvas, but 150 ducats for both.\textsuperscript{101} From 1466 to 1470 the Scuola Grande di San Marco commissioned at least six different painters to execute narrative scenes from the Old Testament to decorate the Sala Capitolare: Jacopo Bellini on 17 July 1466, Gentile Bellini on 15 December 1466, the team of Andrea da Murano and Barolommeo Vivarini on 10 January 1467, Lazzaro Bastiani on 7 January 1470, and Giovanni Bellini on 24 April 1470. The contract of each painter (or team) specified that the rate of pay would be the same as Jacopo's, all except for Gentile's contract.\textsuperscript{102}

It is difficult to explain why Gentle would have labored for such a greatly reduced rate—225 ducats less than that of the other artists—unless we consider Gentile's contract and his membership in the Scuola as part of the same agreement. The result was that Gentile's discounted rate probably bought the young artist a membership in the most prestigious Scuola in Venice. As described in Chapter 3, Jacopo seems to have greatly benefitted from joining a Scuola Grande early in his career. In 1437 he had become a member of the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, which ultimately commissioned him to execute no less than eighteen paintings for the Sala Capitolare, perhaps nearly a decade of work. Legally, of course, Jacopo had to agree to all of Gentile's contracts. In the case of Gentile's contract with the Scuola di San Marco, it is easy to imagine that Jacopo had also brokered it. It is the exact type of clever transaction—works of art at a reduced price in exchange for an exclusive membership in an elite institution—that was characteristic of Jacopo in his manifold strategies to expand business for

\textsuperscript{101} Some scholars have written that he was "paid 150 ducats each" (Fortini Brown, 1988, 268) but this does not appear to have been the case: "E per so manifatura daver dala schuola del misser san Marcho ducati zento zinquanta senza queli li ha promexo ser Nicolo dale Carte el pagamento daver in questo modo . . . (Appendix C)"

\textsuperscript{102} Fortini Brown, 1988, 267. Note that only when hiring Bartolomeo Montagna over a decade later did the Scuola contract not refer to Jacopo's rate of pay.
his workshop. In shifting his focus to the transference of his bottega, Jacopo sought not to elevate himself but rather his son, and toward this end Jacopo was almost certainly the person responsible for securing Gentile's membership in the illustrious Scuola di San Marco, a major achievement indeed.

Narratives in the Sala de l'Audientia (or delle Do Nape [two maps] and later dello Scudo [escutcheon]), now destroyed, in the Ducal Palace.

Narratives that depicted Doge Cristoforo Moro's 1464 round trip journey to Ancona to meet Pope Pius II were in place in the Sala de l'Audientia of the Ducal Palace by 1480 when they were described by the Milanese traveler Santa Brasca while en route to the Holy Land. Fortini Brown suggested that the cycle was executed during, rather than after, Moro's reign (1462 to Nov. 10, 1471), because Moro was not well liked, and that the narratives might have been executed by Gentile Bellini. In fact, Moro had a previous relationship with the Bellini workshop when Leonardo, Jacopo's nephew, illuminated a manuscript of the Ducal Promissione for the doge. Hence it is possible that the Bellini workshop—or even Gentile himself—executed the narratives for the Sala de l'Audientia, which apparently were appreciated; Santa Brasca referred to the room as "the most beautiful of the entire Ducal Palace" (la più bella de tuto el palazo). Perhaps the signoria would later imagine that the Bellini workshop might provide comparable decorations for the Great Council Hall.

103 Fortini Brown, 1988, 51-52. For Santo Brasca's 1480 brief description of the cycle, see Brasca, 1966, 48-49.
104 Fortini Brown, 1988, 51-52.
105 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 178.
106 Fortini Brown, 1988, 271-272 also speculates that "[Gentile's] participation in it would help to explain his commission in 1474 to 'renew' the paintings in the Great Council Hall," but this leaves the question of how Gentile had received the commission to decorate the Sala de l'Audientia.
The Palatine Count

On 13 February 1469 Gentile was made a Count Palatine by Emperor Frederick III during the ruler's visit to Venice (and probably not a knight, as is often believed). At that time, Gentile must have received from the Imperial chancery what is called either a patent of nobility or a diploma or an Imperial bull or merely "privileges," which was a document drawn up by the Imperial Chancery, signed by the Emperor, and which conferred Gentile's title and described its specific prerogatives. Gentile's patent of nobility is lost, but on at least two occasions legal documents drawn up by Venetian notaries referred to it when Gentile used his privileges as Count Palatine: 1) on 7 June 1475, Gentile as a "Palatine Count of his [the Emperor's] Holy Lateran Palace" (with no mention of being a knight) who has "permission and authority to make and appoint public notaries and tabellions exactly as is more fully included in the Imperial privileges approved and read by the undersigned notary," appointed the Presbyter Andrea Marin a public notary and tabellion (which was an official scribe with some of the functions of a notary). And 2) on 28 Aug. 1501, Gentile, after his trip to the Ottoman court, is described as both a knight and Palatine Count, and, in accordance with the Bull (bulla) that was granted him on 13 February 1469, made Tomaso son of Giovanni (?) Petri de Laude a notary and ordinary judge.

107 No evidence suggests that he was made a knight at that time (Warnke, 1993, 168). Significantly, the 1475 document in which Gentile employs his imperial prerogatives does not mention that he was a knight (Appendix D, doc. 1). Gentile must have received a knighthood only from Mehmet II. Cf. Chong, 2005. On Frederick III's stay in Venice, see Ghinzoni, 1889, 133-44.

108 Hope, 1980b, 77-78.

109 Appendix D, doc. 1.

110 Appendix D, doc. 2. Sansovino, 1570, folgs. IIr-IIv stated that he had seen Gentile's patent of nobility from Mehmet II that had ennobled the artist.
Gentile's privileges might have differed somewhat from those enumerated in Titian's imperial patent of nobility, which still exists, in which Emperor Charles V appointed the artist Count Palatine and Knight of the Golden Spur on 10 May 1533. Titian's titles were transferrable to his "descendants masculine and feminine" and conferred the right to "create notaries, tabellions, and ordinary justices" with powers within the Roman Empire, and to legitimize various types of illegitimate children (\textit{Insuper Tibi Titiano concedimus, et elargimur, quod possis et valeas naturales, bastardos, spurious, manseres, nothos, incestuosos, copulative . . . legitimare}) except the sons of illustrious princes, counts, and barons (\textit{illustrium Principum, Comitum, Baronumque filiis dumtaxat exceptis}). Apparently on at least seven separate occasions Titian employed his privileges to appoint over a dozen notaries, and on 18 September 1568 he legitimized two teenaged sons of Pietro Costantino, a parish priest.

Titian, of course, had painted the portrait of Charles V, who, in Titian's patent of nobility, described the artist as the "Apelles of this century," and the storied relationship between the two has received much attention. Such may be one reason why some have speculated that Gentile's art similarly impressed Emperor Frederick III, either before or during the ruler's trip to Venice, enough to bestow honors on Gentile. One scholar hypothesized that Gentile's title perhaps was the reward for an outstanding portrait he had painted of the Emperor; another that Frederick III might have been impressed with a narrative cycle he possibly saw in the \textit{Sala de l'Audientia},

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Cadorin, 1850 transcribed the document and translated it into Italian.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 20, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid., Puppi, 2004, 25-28.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Hope, 1980b, 77-78. See Humfrey, 2007, 96-98 for an image of Titian's coat of arms and a partial translation of his patent of nobility.
\end{itemize}
hypothetically by Gentile and described above.\textsuperscript{115} Such speculations might also, to some extent, retroactively interpret Gentile's 1469 knighthood through his future position in 1474 as de facto official painter of Venice and portraitist to the doges. These theories, however, do not realistically take into account either Gentile's position in the Bellini workshop prior to his father's death, or that his relationship with Emperor Frederick III differed drastically from that between Titian and Charles V in so far as it probably did not exist at all. Rather, the events that led to Gentile's ennoblement were probably far more mundane.

Receiving a title was unusual for an artist in the Quattrocento but not altogether rare in Venice, at least among the patriciate. During the entire fifteenth century there are fewer than thirteen known instances of European artists raised to the nobility, such as Dello Delli who was knighted by the Spanish Monarch in 1446.\textsuperscript{116} Yet in one study of 135 Venetian patricians who served as ambassadors between 1454-94, at least forty had been made knights (\textit{miles}).\textsuperscript{117} Clearly ambassadors were a special case; missions to foreign courts allowed for regular and sometimes mutually beneficial interactions with monarchs who, in gratitude, might bestow a title. Such was the case with Sebastian Badoer, knighted by King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary in 1474, who had been convinced by Badoer to aid in an attack against the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{118} In fact, seven of the knighthoods received by Quattrocento artists were conferred by foreign princes, including Gentile's honorary knighthood by Mehmet II.\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] Fortini Brown, 1988, 51-52.
\item[117] Beverly, 1999, 243-373. Unfortunately Beverly does not identify the knighted secretaries, who were non-noble \textit{cittadini originari}.
\item[118] Ibid., 48.
\item[119] Ames-Lewis, 2000b, 63.
\end{footnotes}
During Frederick III's trip to Italy in 1452, when he became the last Holy Roman Emperor crowned in Rome, he stopped in a number of cities in which he ennobled an estimated total of 160 to 275 men as knights.\textsuperscript{120} During his next visit to Rome seventeen years later, he likewise visited several Italian cities where he sold titles. According to the anonymous \textit{Diario Ferrarese}, while in Ferrara on 1 February 1469, Frederick made eighty men knights, counts, doctors, and notaries, such as Alberto di Vigri, a wealthy local citizen, who became Knight and Count Palatine.\textsuperscript{121} For most of these men, receiving such titles was a two-step process, alluded to in a letter dated the next day from Marsilio Andreasi, a Gonzaga secretary, who reported that "Andrea Mantegna says that he too had himself made a count and hopes to get the privilege."\textsuperscript{122} The privilege, as mentioned above, was the patent of nobility, which required payment to Frederick III's chancery that probably amounted to, as one scholar speculated, "enormous sums of money," although Andreasi reported that Mantegna nonetheless "hoped to get the title free."\textsuperscript{123} Apparently Mantegna did not, however, for apparently he received his first title much later, in c. 1484, granted to him by the Gonzaga.\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{120} Hack, 2004, 219-220, 219n81.
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\textsuperscript{121} Pardi, 55-56: ". . . il mercori, che fu il primo giorno di Febraro; et in quel giorno el fece molti cavalieri, conti, doctori, et notari, fra li quali da le 'dignitadi, avenga che fusseno da 80, te ne scriverò alcuni qui. . . . Alberto di Vigri conte paladino et cavaliero, il quale è ricco cittadino di Ferrara 'et senza fioli.'
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{122} Kristeller, 1902, p. 526, doc. 41, 1466, 2 February: "Andrea Mantegna dice che anche lui se fece fare conte, et spera haver el privilegio . . . ".
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\textsuperscript{123} Folin, 2007, 31: ". . . enormi somme di denaro."
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\textsuperscript{124} Lightbown, 1986, 12.
\end{flushright}
As with so many other titles bestowed by Frederick III, Gentile's title of Palantine Count had almost certainly been purchased. Unlike Mantegna, however, Gentile was able to pay the requisite and presumably large sum. Gentile, living in his father's home, unmarried and thus without a dowry, and with only a handful of signed paintings to his name, could hardly have afforded to purchase an expensive title. Moreover, according strictly to the law, as an unemancipated son Gentile did not own any money—rather it would have been the legal property of his father. Hence it appears nearly certain that the funds and ultimate decision to purchase Gentile's title had been Jacopo's.

Again it would seem that Jacopo was attempting to increase the opportunities for Gentile's future success, and in this regard it is significant that the presumed purchase was for the title of count rather than of knight. Both held a degree of prestige, but the specific imperial prerogatives conferred by the title of count could be employed locally for the benefit of other Venetians and hence would empower Gentile within his communal network, where favors might be granted and later received. The title, then, may be read as a sort of investment Jacopo had made for the benefit of his son, increasing his fama as well as his utility within the community, and certainly also projecting the wealth and success of the Bellini family and workshop. It is also interesting to note that Gentile never signed his paintings with his apparently purchased title of count, but only with his title of knight, which he later received directly from Sultan Mehmet II for his services to the Ottoman court, and thus which in some sense had been earned.

Giovanni Bellini

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125 This possibility had been proposed in 1939 by Mather, 51. Ames-Lewis, 2000b, 63 also concluded that "Gentile Bellini purchased the title of Count Palatinate from Frederick III in 1469."
It appears that Jacopo was not similarly concerned with elevating Giovanni's reputation. Giovanni did not become a member of the Scuola di San Marco until 1484, some twenty years after Gentile, even though he was Gentile's elder. Giovanni never became ennobled. Jacopo seems not to have designed any known paintings that Giovanni then executed and independently signed. The evidence suggests that Jacopo did not promote Giovanni as forcefully as he did Gentile.

It would be premature to conclude, however, that Jacopo had simply prized his biological son Gentile over his half-brother Giovanni. Jacopo had raised Giovanni from a very young age, trained him to be an artist, and employed him in numerous commissions, including the Gattamelata altarpiece in Padua, the Carità triptychs, and, almost certainly, the great narrative cycles for the Scuole Grandi. One may speculate that Jacopo, a brilliant artist and intelligent man, must have recognized Giovanni's extraordinary artistic talents. Giovanni's earliest extant Madonnas rivaled in artistic accomplishment, and many might say excelled, those by the mature Jacopo. By the 1460s, whether still working under Jacopo or with a workshop of his own, Giovanni had begun to produce independent works, including a number of Madonnas, narratives for the Scuola di San Gerolamo (1464, lost), and the groundbreaking polyptych of St Vincent Ferrer, probably c. 1465 or slightly later, in SS. Giovanni e Paolo, the most important Dominican church in Venice in which numerous doges chose to be buried. As mentioned, in 1470 Giovanni received a commission from the Scuola di San Marco for two large-scale canvases at the same rate of pay as Jacopo, suggesting perhaps that Giovanni indeed had become master of his own workshop. It is also telling that Giovanni never completed the Scuola's well paying commission, which years later was reassigned to another painter—clearly Giovanni could not have been struggling for work. In sum, Jacopo might simply not have been overly concerned
with Giovanni's future success as an artist, which was already unfolding by virtue of Giovanni's own talents while Jacopo was still alive, and hence Jacopo decided to place his efforts into building the career of Gentile, whom he probably imagined, quite correctly it seems, would need extra help and attention.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that in preparing to transfer the workshop to his son Gentile, his legal and artistic heir, Jacopo undertook a multi-year plan to elevate Gentile's reputation within Venetian society. Gentile's paintings of the 1460s, for which he seems primarily responsible because they include his signature, nonetheless should be understood neither as commissions that came directly to the artist nor as works that he necessarily produced independently. Rather, many if not all of these commissions were probably intended for Jacopo, the master of the workshop, who then carefully selected, supervised, and on occasion even designed the pictures that Gentile would execute. Jacopo, moreover, undoubtedly was responsible for a number of Gentile’s early social triumphs: he almost certainly purchased the imperial title of count for his son, presumably negotiated his membership in the Scuola di San Marco, and more than likely secured Gentile’s early pivotal commission for the church of San Marco. Although still unemancipated prior to Jacopo's death, Gentile had nevertheless already achieved an extraordinarily high level of social prominence within Venice that was rare for a non-noble and arguably unrivalled for an artist. And even though Giovanni Bellini might have begun to be recognized by some early connoisseurs as the leading Venetian artist of his time, Gentile in 1474 was far more well-positioned in society. Hence I have argued that Gentile's *fama*, above all other factors, best explains why he, instead of Giovanni or another painter, was chosen by the Signoria to renew the
decorations for the Great Council Hall and became, in a sense, the de facto official painter of Venice.
CHAPTER 5

GENTILE BELLINI'S MIRACLE

INTRODUCTION

Rarely is Gentile Bellini's famous *Miracle During the Procession in Piazza San Marco* (1496) treated as an expressive work of art (fig. 8). Scholars instead have valued the painting primarily as a visual record, an early Renaissance image documenting Venetian pageantry as it unfolded over half a millennia ago in one of the world's most famous public squares, reproduced by Gentile with his characteristic attention to topography. The work depicts the earliest extant vista of Piazza San Marco during a procession that occurred on the Feast of St. Mark, 1443.¹ In the foreground, members of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista carry their precious relic of the True Cross under a baldachin and past the visiting Brescian merchant Jacopo de' Salis, who has fallen to one knee to pray for the health of his gravely ill son back in Brescia. A contemporary textual source recounts that when the son's bandages were removed the next day, he was revealed to have been miraculously healed.²

From as early as 1871 scholars have employed Bellini's picture as an historical document. In that year art historians Joseph Archer Crowe (1825-1896) and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897), whose groundbreaking studies were among the first written in English to cite archival documents, described Bellini's front-view of San Marco as "perfect in its minutiae, and [it] preserves . . . the old mosaics of the recesses above the doorways, and of the upper gables"—

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¹ Vasari-Barrochi, 3:289-90, describes, however, a now-lost perspective drawing of Venice and San Marco by Leon Battista Alberti, with "the figures in it executed by other masters," but nonetheless "it is one of the best things to be seen by the painter [Alberti]": "Figurò ancora una Vinegia in prospettiva, e San Marco; ma le figure che vi sono furono condotte da altri maestri; et è questa una delle migliori cose che si veggia di sua pittura."

² *Miracoli della croce*, ca. 1490-1506. The passage is translated in full later in the chapter.
mosaics that had mostly been replaced in the 17th and 18th centuries—while the "animated groups of spectators and single figures . . . [afford] lively illustrations of the costume of the period [fig. 91]."  

Subsequent historians and archeologists have analyzed Bellini's depiction of various structures circumscribing the piazza, several of which no longer exist. The two-story arcaded Procuratorial apartments on the north or far left of the painting were rebuilt in the sixteenth century, and remain the only secular Venetian buildings securely datable to the twelfth century. The buildings adjacent to the campanile on the far right were razed during Jacopo Sansovino's (1486-1570) sixteenth-century expansion of the piazza. Others on the north side were leveled to make room for Mauro Codussi's famous Clocktower (Torre dell'Orologio), whose construction began in 1496 and antiquated Gentle's painting even as he was completing it (fig. 92). Scholars mining Bellini's work for veristic details include historians of costume, social historians exploring the dynamics of confraternal and ducal processions, historians of music researching period marching percussion and brass among other topics, and many types of art historians. In terms of extracting period data from mimetic works of art, Gentile's Procession is among the most extensively analyzed paintings of the entire Renaissance.

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3 Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1871, 1:130-31.
5 Howard, 1975, 8-37.
7 The secondary literature referring to the painting is vast. For historians of costume employing the work, see, for instance, Newton, 1988, 14, 42-46, and passim. For social historians, see Muir, 1981; Fenlon, 2007. For historians of music, see Howard Brown, 1981; Glixon, 1983; Glixon, 2003, in particular 307n62. As a defining image of the Renaissance, the work appears on the Renaissance Society of America's homepage (accessed May 1, 2013: http://www.rsa.org/).
Modern viewers also seem to approach Bellini's *Procession* as if it were a photographic record, an association first made over a century ago. In 1905 the art critic Mary Knight Potter remarked of Bellini's work that "[t]he costumes, the head-dresses, the postures of these many individuals, are as exactly accurate as if each were a portrait, and the pose, gesture, and movement of all are almost as natural as if a Kodak had snapped the scene."\(^8\) Five years earlier in 1900, Eastman Kodak had popularized the notion of the photographic snapshot with the introduction of its inexpensive Brownie series of camera.\(^9\) Ten years before that Rudolph Stirn had manufactured the Wonder Panoramic, a camera that helped make fashionable the panorama, which is a late eighteenth-century term often employed to describe the elongated field of view of Bellini's painting.\(^10\) By associating, even unconsciously, the artist with a photographer, the modern viewer of Gentile's work — who perhaps identifies in it lines of processioners, the baldachin and processed relic, a scattered crowd, and the church of San Marco as the backdrop — may suppose that Gentile's principal intention was to record an elaborate parade taking place in the piazza, as a similar spectacle might be captured today by a pocket digital camera.

Yet unlike the fifteenth-century Venetian, the twenty-first-century viewer has been born after the Age of Photography, as it was termed by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1859, and has been conditioned from infancy by the vast proliferation of photographic images — through books, newspapers, and magazines, followed by motion pictures, television, and streaming video.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Potter, 94.

\(^9\) West, 2000, 74-108.

\(^10\) The Wonder Panoramic was sold by Rudolph Stirm in Berlin and by Stirn and Lyon of New York from c. 1890 (Lothrop, 60). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition, 1989) the term "panorama" was invented in c. 1789 by the English artist Robert Barker to refer to a painting machine that that he had patented in 1787.

\(^11\) Holmes, 1859.
Hence, according to a number of critical theorists, the modern viewer approaches photographs and paintings differently. Unlike painting, photography for Susan Sontag, is "a record of the real . . . since a machine was doing the recording," and Roland Barthes notes that "[t]he photograph manually repeats what could never be repeated existentially." A consequence of this mechanical mimesis, according to Walter Benjamin, is that "the viewer feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark of accident" that has "burned through . . . the image with reality." In this sense the photographer, in contrast to the painter, did not materially construct the image but rather "bore witness to the real," according to Sontag, in "essentially an act of non-intervention" that captured "unpremeditated slices of the world . . . and pellets of information." For Barthes, this mechanical reproduction of reality means that "[a] specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least it is not immediately or generally distinguished from its referent (as is the case for every other image, encumbered—from the start, and because of its status—by the way in which the object is simulated)." Hence, for Barthes, the modern observer responds to the artistry of a painting's simulation, but with a photograph "to perceive the photographic signifier . . . requires a secondary action of knowledge or of reflection."

Largely unexplored by these critical theorists, however, is the modern viewer's approach to a photographic-like painting executed prior to the advent of photography. To the Renaissance

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14 Sontag, 1977, 8, 44.
15 Barthes, 5.
16 Ibid.
art historian, the corollary issue is whether the twenty-first century acculturation to photographs inadvertently distorts a period understanding of works such as Gentile's *Procession*. Indeed, Gentile's painting frequently has been described by scholars as a defining work in the so-called "Eyewitness Style," a label that encourages notions of journalistic observation and the photographic snapshot, along with the sense that Gentile spontaneously generated the image as if merely an eyewitness, rather than having constructed it over the course of years.\(^\text{17}\) The translation of these pre-modern works into a modern cognitive paradigm, underpinned by the centrality of the photographic image, nonetheless risks historical inaccuracy and anachronism, whereas paintings commissioned in fifteenth-century Venice had specific and identifiable iconographies. Neither the still life, nor the landscape, nor the genre scene were yet considered proper subjects. Nor was the "eyewitness" representation of a recurring cultural event a topic of Renaissance iconography.

Indeed, the commissioned subject of Gentile's *Procession* was precisely the aforementioned miracle that occurred on April 25, 1441 during the feast day procession honoring Saint Mark: Jacopo de' Salis' prayer before the relic of the True Cross that resulted in the miraculous healing of his gravely ill son.\(^\text{18}\) Yet even armed with this information, the modern viewer nevertheless is still likely to consider the miraculous aspect of the painting tangential — if it were important, he might reason, then Gentile would have called greater attention to it — and thus the work's commissioned subject is often seen as little more than an excuse for Bellini to have depicted a magnificent spectacle. How does the historian then, assess whether the modern

\(^{17}\) The term "eyewitness style" was coined by Fortini Brown, 1988, 4.

\(^{18}\) As described in *Miracoli della croce*, ca. 1490-1506.
viewer's interpretation is correct or merely the result of an interpretative framework conditioned to marginalize certain motifs that at one time might have been perceived as essential?

In addressing this question, the following chapter explores the extent to which a modern viewer can suspend his or her cumulative experience of observing hundreds of millions of photographic images (a two-hour film has 172,800 unique images alone) to perceive Gentile's image as would a fifteenth-century Venetian who had never viewed a photograph. Although it is impossible to recreate the complex set of emotions that a fifteenth-century Venetian likely felt before Gentile's image, it may at least be possible to approach a period understanding of the work as a fictive expression, and Gentile as a creative artist rather than a recording "witness."

Complicating this study's reception-oriented approach is that fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century archival documents are largely silent about the painting, as they are about much of Gentile's life.

Nevertheless, by examining crucial events in Bellini's career and attempting to reconstruct his creative process, it will be argued that his *Miracle During the Procession in Piazza San Marco* allowed late fifteenth-century Venetian observers to participate in a miraculous event and to meditate on its meaning — within Christian theology, in relation to the viewer's professional and personal identity, and in reference to the social fabric of Venetian life. Gentile executed the work most specifically for the elite members of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, and more generally, I would suggest, for the Proto Cittadini Originari, the emergent idiosyncratic class to which these elite members, as well as Gentile, belonged. Thus the painting represents both a miracle and the activities of the Scuola members as non-noble *cittadini originari* in producing the miracle. At the same time the painting depicts the leveling of class
hierarchy before the divine. From this point of view, then, I would propose that it is among the earliest class-conscious works of art of Renaissance Venice, if not of the entire Renaissance.

Gentile's creative contribution to the painting will be examined through a number of aspects of his life and career considered individually, including his artistic "emancipation," his activity in Venice after his visit to Sultan Mehmet, his role in the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and his pictorial approach to the painting's commissioned subject.

ARTISTIC "EMANCIPATION"

On 1 September 1474, the Venetian Senate commissioned Gentile to renovate, in effect meaning to repaint on canvas, the great narrative frescoes in the Sala Grande of the Palazzo Ducale that had fallen into disrepair.\(^\text{19}\) The contract engaged the artist for the duration of his life (esser obligato in vita), and he would receive expenses for the cost of colors and "other things necessary (altre cose necessarie)" to execute the cycle. For payment, Gentile would receive the first vacant sansaria, or one of thirty government brokerages at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which provided its holder with a lifetime annual income of approximately 100 ducats, less taxes, roughly equal to that of a master ship builder in the Arsenale or a senior Chancellery secretary.\(^\text{20}\)

\[^{19}\text{ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni, Terra. Reg. 7 (1473-1477), fol. 50r [1 Sept. 1474]; transcribed in Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 107, doc. 9.}\]

\[^{20}\text{Ibid. For Arsenale salaries, see Lane, 1973, 333. For Chancellery secretaries and salaries of other Venetian offices, see Neff, 181-84; 348ff. The official estimate on 5 December 1537 of Titian's annual income from his sansaria was 100 ducats (Lorenzi, 1868, 219, doc. 462) less an annual tax (tansa) charged on mercantile transactions estimated at 20 ducats, eighteen ducats of which Titan was further exempted from paying (Chambers and Pullan, 1992, 134-6, 147, 463). Charles Hope, 1980a, 302, apparently added the tansa when he computed that Titian's sansaria brought the artist an annual income of about 120 ducats. Thausing, v. 1, 352, estimated the sansaria "brought in about 300 scudi a year," but in fifteenth-century Venice the scudo was not employed domestically as a money of account, and its value in the mid-fourteenth century was one-third greater than a ducat (Lane and Mueller, 1985, 439n85, suggesting that Thausing's estimate is far too large). Moreover, while waiting for the first vacant sansaria, Giovanni Bellini initially earned 80 ducats per year for his work in the Great Hall, a fee roughly commensurate with that received by Gentile after taxes (Barausse, 339, docs. 36-7). Later, presumably as he continued to wait, Giovanni received 60 ducats annually (ASV, Consiglio dei Diece, Parti Miste, 1493-1494, Reg.}\]
For the Venetian government, issuing a *sansaria* represented a convenient administrative method for dispensing annual payments *in perpetuum* to an individual engaged in a trans-generational public works project.

Never in the government's contract with Gentile was it signified that the artist had been selected as the Serenissima's unique state painter. (In the next century, Titian and his circle disseminated the idea that the holder of the *sansaria* became the official painter of Venice.\(^{21}\)) Indeed, several years later in 1479, when Gentile departed for the Ottoman court, the government contracted Giovanni Bellini to continue the decorations in the Great Hall and promised him the next vacant *sansaria*, while Gentile would retain his own and continue his work in the Great Hall after returning to Venice.\(^{22}\) That is indeed what happened, and both artists contributed to the hall's decorations for the remainder of their lives. Whether the two held *sansarie* at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi at the same time remains unclear, however, because there was a waiting list to receive the brokerships—thirty were available and one became vacant only upon the death of a current holder. It is unknown precisely when Giovanni received his, although his wait was apparently at least fifteen years and perhaps longer.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Hope, 1980a, 301-5

\(^{22}\) Barausse, 339, doc. 36.

\(^{23}\) Promised the next vacant *sansaria* on 29 August 1479 (*prima sansaria fontici que vacabit* [Barausse, doc. 36, 339]) and reiterated the following year (ibid., doc. 37), Giovanni on 23 December 1495 received an annual salary of 60 ducats for his work in the Great Council (Barausse, 342-343, doc. 51), suggesting that after fifteen years he was still waiting for his *sansaria*. Malipiero, a contemporary, wrote that the two Bellini had "due sansarie in fontegho" (Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 108, doc. 11).
The honor and monetary value associated with the prized brokership undoubtedly carried with it the unwritten expectation that Gentile, then in his mid-forties, would devote the majority of his remaining days toward renewing the Hall's cycle, which meant replacing the damaged frescoes with newly executed large canvases. (Ultimately the project would require far more than a lifetime to complete and would include finished teleri by later artists such as Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, before a devastating fire destroyed the entire campaign on 20 December 1577.\textsuperscript{24}) Though undoubtedly coveted, the lifelong assignment was nevertheless creatively restrictive, for it bound Gentile to a single artistic campaign without a foreseeable end—a monumental project that glorified the Venetian state, needed to please conservative patrician taste, and hence narrowed the possibilities of Gentile's artistic expression to a subgenre of historic narrative, as well as to the occasional official portrait of the doge.\textsuperscript{25}

In another sense, however, the sansaria set Gentile free. Unlike the great majority of Renaissance artists who struggled to survive from commission to commission, at the mercy of economic conditions, temperamental patrons, and the fluctuating demand for art, Gentile could rely on the stability of his brokership, which assured him an income as long as Germans traded with Venetians. He also would benefit, at first perhaps unforeseeably, from a lack of specificity in the language of the government contract itself, which had stipulated no timeline of execution for the project's completion, no systemic incentives to complete individual canvases, and no obvious penalties for slackness. With little if any direct oversight, Gentile theoretically might scale back his labor for the Signoria, accept outside commissions, and continue to receive his sinecure just the same.

\textsuperscript{24} Fortini Brown, 1988, 272-73.

\textsuperscript{25} It was never specified that Gentile was expected to execute ducal votive paintings.
The *Votive Picture of Doge Mocenigo* (1478-85) in the National Gallery in London is significant in this regard because it may be an early example of a commission outside the purview of Gentile's government contract (fig. 93). In an asymmetrical composition, doge Mocenigo kneels at the right side of the painting, clasping the standard of Saint Mark, and is presented by his name-saint, John the Baptist, who stands behind him. On the left, the enthroned Virgin steadies on her lap the Christ Child who blesses the Doge, and behind the Virgin on the far left stands Saint Christopher bearing a second infant Christ. Both the Virgin and the architecture of her throne is close in style to an *Enthroned Virgin* signed by Gentile also in the National Gallery (fig. 94); the profile portrait likeness of the kneeling Mocenigo corresponds closely to the Correr's independent portrait of the Doge, executed by Gentile (fig. 95); but the Saint Christopher recalls a full-length image of the same saint in Giovanni Bellini's polyptych of *St. Vincent Ferrer* (fig. 96). To account for the painting's motifs having possibly derived from both Gentile and Giovanni, it has been suggested that both artists contributed to the work, Gentile perhaps commencing it and, upon leaving for Constantinople, turning the painting over to Giovanni to finish—although this proposal does not account for the painting's rather low quality of execution.

Soon after becoming doge, Giovanni Mocenigo almost certainly commissioned a votive painting, which he would have displayed in the ducal apartments of the Palazzo Ducale, presumably in the largest room then called *delle do nappe* (of the two maps or, perhaps, fireplaces) and later known as the *sala dello scudo* (Room of the Escutcheon). The *sala* served

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26 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 64-5, 154-55.

27 Ibid.,155; also Lucco, 1990, vol. 2, 450-51; and most recently Bätschmann, 2008, 90.

as a semi-private reception area in which the doge was allowed to exhibit his family coat-of-arms, which indeed appear at the base of the *Votive Picture of Mocenigo*.\(^29\) If the fire that ravaged the ducal apartments on 14 September 1483 and destroyed the painting cycle depicting the *Meeting of Doge Cristoforo Moro and Pope Pius II in Ancona* in the *sala delle do nappe* also destroyed the original *Votive Picture of Mocenigo*, likely in the same room, then the National Gallery's painting may best be understood as a replacement copy executed largely by workshop assistants, which would account for its uneven quality and the hesitation among some art historians to attribute the painting to either Gentile or Giovanni.\(^30\)

The large-scale *Votive Picture of Doge Mocenigo*, which measures 184.2 x 295.9 cm, might have been an important commission for Gentile in that it blurred the line between government and private patronage, perhaps paving the way for the artist to accept other commissions apart from his contracted work in the Great Hall. In due course Gentile took on projects that included monumental narratives for the Scuole Grandi, but neglect of the campaign in the Great Hall did not go unnoticed. Eventually work proceeded so slowly, even with the assistance of additional artists including Giovanni Bellini and Alvise Vivarini, that on 24 December 1493 the government stipulated that the paintings in the Hall would be examined each

\(^29\) Ibid. Like other private furnishings the doge was permitted to keep in the ducal apartments, the votive picture would have been transferred out of the palace upon Mocenigo's death and in accordance with his testament, in order to make room for the possessions of the incoming doge. Many decorations were fixed according to Pietro Casola who toured the apartments in 1494 (Casola, 127). Giovanni Bellini's *Votive Picture of Doge Agostino Barbarigo* (1488), almost certainly once displayed in the *Sala dello Scudo*, was bequeathed by Doge Barbarigo to the convent of S. Maria degli Angeli to which two of his daughters belonged, but in general a deceased doge's privately-owned paintings would have typically returned to his family home (Roeck, 1991, 44-46). Barbarigo's will describes the work as hanging in the "crozola," of the ducal palace, apparently on the south wall of the Sala dello Scudo across from where it forms a cross with the Sala dei Filosofi (Bätschmann, 92 with further references).

\(^30\) For documents relating to the *Meeting of Doge Cristoforo Moro and Popo Pius II in Ancona*, and the fire of 1483, see Fortini Brown, 1988, 271-272.
day to ensure progress was being made.\textsuperscript{31} It is unclear, however, whether such oversight had any
direct effect on Gentile or his willingness to accept outside patronage, which he did with greater
frequency beginning in the mid 1490s.

For Gentile, then, the life-altering consequence of receiving a \textit{sansaria} secured for him a
rarefied position unlike that of any other fifteenth-century artist in Venice—except, perhaps,
Giovanni Bellini after he, too, was hired by the Signoria and when his workshop had become
exceptionally prosperous—in that Gentile's assured lifetime sinecure enabled him to offer his
labors \textit{according to his own interests} and allowed him not only to choose, but, as we shall see,
also to suggest and even attempt to control creative projects—presumably as long as he did not
run afoul of the Signoria (as would Titian in the next century when his absenteeism in executing
works in the Great Council Hall led to his \textit{sansaria} nearly being revoked.\textsuperscript{32}) Certainly Gentile's
successful performance in the role of Venetian emissary to the Ottoman court, which led to a
regional \textit{fama} such that in 1486, the influential humanist Jacopo Filippo Foresti in his popular
\textit{Supplementum Chronicarum} described him as “the most celebrated painter of these times,”
meant it would have been difficult for patricians to rescind his \textit{sansaria} without extreme cause,
which indeed was never the case: Gentile apparently balanced his government and private
commissions with discretion.\textsuperscript{33}

Before departing from Venice for the Ottoman court on 3 September 1479, Gentile had
already commenced and probably completed one or more of the large narratives in the Sala

\textsuperscript{31} Fortini Brown, 1988, 274. For a list of painters being paid to work in the Great Hall, see ASV, Consiglio di Dice,
Misti, reg. 26 (1493-1495), fols. 199r-200r [23 December 1495]; Barausse, 342-43, doc. 51. Gentile is not
mentioned, presumably because he received his payment from the \textit{sansaria}.

\textsuperscript{32} Hope, 1980a, 301-5.

\textsuperscript{33} Foresti, 1486, under the year "1483"
Grande, most likely The Presentation of the White Candle to the Doge or the Battle of Salvore, the latter of which apparently was continued after Gentile's departure by Giovanni Bellini, who, according to Sansovino writing in the next century, spent eleven years finishing the work (which, if correct, meant that the artist had procrastinated for many years).  

VENICE AFTER THE SULTAN

In January 1479, the non-noble Venetian secretary Giovanni Dario brokered a peace treaty with the Ottoman empire to end its sixteen-year war with Venice and, later that year on August 1, Sultan Mehmet II (1432–3 May 1481) requested from the Signoria that a painter be dispatched to his court. The Venetian Senate selected Gentile, a natural choice as he was already "obligated" to the government for life. The peace with the Sultan was fragile, and Bellini, in the unprecedented position of Venice's first artist-emissary, presumably received specific instruction on both diplomatic and Ottoman mores. Perhaps as a result of this preparation, he decided to bring with him a present for the Sultan: one of his father Jacopo's drawing notebooks, which was a particularly appropriate gift in a period when the Ottomans had begun to collect drawings. The book believed to have been given by Gentile to Mehmet is now in the Louvre, and Jacopo's only other known drawing book is in the British Museum. Both register Jacopo's introduction of Renaissance ideas into Northern Italian art, both are vital to

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34 Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 146, stated that The Presentation of the White Candle to the Doge was the first work completed by Gentile in the Great Council Hall. However, sometime after 1479 Malipiero reported that Gentile and Giovanni Bellini had begun with the Battle of Salvore (Fortini Brown, 1988, 274, 3a; 278n13).

35 Wright and MacKay, 2007. Chong, 107, with further references.

36 For Gentile's departure from Venice with two assistants, see ASV, Collegio, Notatorio. Reg. 12 (1474-1481), fol. 107r, n. 441 [1479 September 3], transcribed in Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 110, doc. 17 with different numeration.

37 Fournier, 39-52 and passim.

understanding the history of Venetian art, and each in itself is a priceless compendium of magnificent drawings.\textsuperscript{39} Gentile certainly valued his father's notebooks; on his deathbed he bequeathed the one not given to Mehmet to Giovanni Bellini, on condition that Giovanni finish the painting \textit{Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria} that Gentile had begun for the Scuola di San Marco.\textsuperscript{40}

The presentation of an irreplaceable gift to the Sultan must have been intended, at least to some extent, to put Gentile into Mehmet's good graces. Although Gentile, prior to his departure, might have allowed himself to envision the possibility of receiving an honorific title from the Sultan, the ennoblement of a non-noble Venetian by a foreign sovereign was rare. Venetian diplomatic missions to foreign courts often resulted in sovereigns bestowing titles on Venice's emissaries, but typically they were Venetian nobles, although occasionally a non-noble secretary might also receive a title. For instance, after the aforementioned non-noble Giovanni Dario, who was respected as a particularly fine negotiator, brokered a peace between Venice and the Ottomans, he received an honorific knighthood from Sultan Mehmet.\textsuperscript{41} Apparently Mehmet had also knighted Costanzo di Moysis, an artist dispatched to the Ottoman court by the King of Naples after a request by the Sultan, but Gentile might not have known of this.\textsuperscript{42}

Gentile's sojourn at the Ottoman court, lasting little more than a year, would become the most storied event of his life, celebrated in his own generation and studied comprehensively in

\textsuperscript{39} For a magisterial discussion of the drawings, followed by a \textit{catalogue raisonné}, see Degenhart and Schmitt, 1990, 34-102.

\textsuperscript{40} Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 120, doc. 75.

\textsuperscript{41} Fortini Brown, 1988, 248n73.

\textsuperscript{42} Venturi, 1891, 374-5, transcribes a letter of 24 August 1485 written by Battista Bendidio, the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples, to Eleonora, the Duchess of Ferrara, that introduces Costanzo and mentions his knighthood. See Chong, 126-27 with further references for a discussion of the artist and a partial translation of the letter.
ours (fig. 3).\textsuperscript{43} Despite this, little is known for certain about the trip. Although scholars have attempted to establish Gentile's activities in Constantinople and the actual commissions he executed for Mehmet, the source documents remain problematic. For instance, Giovanni Angiolello's authorship of \textit{Historia Turcha}, which includes the only eyewitness account of the artist at the Ottoman court, has recently been questioned, and it is unclear whether the passages describing Gentile originated from a lost manuscript by Angiolello or another source.\textsuperscript{44}

In late 1480 or early 1481, Bellini bid farewell to the \textit{Gran Turco} and, while it is unknown if the artist decided to continue on with his travels or return home directly, by 16 March 1483 he was already in Venice, almost certainly having received an honorary knighthood from Mehmet.\textsuperscript{45} Although the original document conferring the honor is lost, in the next century Sansovino recorded that he had read it, and Venetian notaries described Gentile in legal documents as a knight, as did other contemporary sources, including Gentile himself, who regularly noted the honor when signing his works.\textsuperscript{46} Apparently Mehmet also gave Gentile a

\textsuperscript{43} See \textit{Bellini and the East} for Gentile's sojourn.

\textsuperscript{44} Mackay, 2004, 213–23. MacKay notes that Angiolello is only partially the source for the MS \textit{Historia turchesca} (Paris Biliothèque Nationale, Cod. Mixt. 1238, among others) and often not the source when Mehmet is referred to by something other than "Gran Turco," such as "Signor Turco," as is the case in several of the passages that mention Gentile Bellini (\textit{Historia Turchesca}, 1909, 119-21). In private correspondence (2-8-2013), MacKay wrote that his "guess is that much of the Bellini stuff would have derived, ultimately, from Angiolello," but in later correspondence, Mackay rethought this statement (3-6-2013): "Angiolello was not given to much discussion of visiting Venetians during his service with the Ottoman court."

\textsuperscript{45} Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 112, doc. 22. The date Gentile departed Constantinople remains unclear. The London National Gallery portrait of Mehmet, attributed to Gentile but which may not be autograph or might have been completed in Venice, is dated 25 November 1480. The purported copy of a letter from Mehmet's court to Gentile (see n. 47, below) has been read as if dated 15 January 1481 (Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 111, doc. 21; Chong, 114), but the authenticity of the document, and thus its date, are questionable.

\textsuperscript{46} Sansovino, 1570, fols. IIr-IIv. See Appendix D, doc. 2. See also Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 116, doc. 48, and 116-117, doc. 55, the latter drawn up by a notary. The late fifteenth-century letter in Innsbruck (transcribed in Babinger, 1962, 88) purportedly is a copy of the privileges given to Gentile by Sultan Mehmet II. It states that Gentile was made a "golden knight and count Palatine (\textit{miles auratus ac comes palatinus})." A number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century observers described Gentile as having received a knighthood from Mehmet, including Sanudo (Fortini Brown, 1988, 247n26) and even Gentile himself in a lost inscription recorded by Sansovino, 1829, 27:
large golden chain, first mentioned by Foresti and later by Vasari and others, and which Gentile wears in a portrait of the artist in his and Giovanni Bellini's *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria* (1504-7) (fig. 97).^47

Once back in Venice, Gentile continued his work in the Great Council Hall. According to Vasari, he was responsible for a total of six paintings, on the North and West walls of the Hall: *The Presentation of the White Candle to the Doge, The Battle of Salvore* (attributed to Giovanni Bellini by Sansovino), *The Departure of the Venetian Ambassadors to the Court of the Emperor, The Ambassadors Plead the Pope's Case Before the Emperor, The Consignment of the Sword to the Doge,* and *The Presentation of the Ring to the Doge.*^48 (As mentioned, Gentile's pictures along with the entire campaign were lost in a fire of 1577.) An estimate of 3-5 years for the execution of each work seems plausible, given the time it took Gentile to finish other large-scale

"Gentilis patriae dedit haec monumenta Belinus; Othomano accitus, munere factus eques." It is unlikely, however, that Sultan Mehmet II conferred to Gentile the title of Count Palatine. In this period, foreign sovereigns often gave honorific titles of knighthood to patrician Venetian ambassadors and sometimes to non-noble secretary-envoys, sometimes along with gifts such as a robe or a golden chain that envoys were allowed to keep with permission of the Signoria (Neff, 143 and 154nn84-5). The Imperial title of Count Palatine, however, was not purely honorific and described a set of specific legal prerogatives enjoyed by its holder under Imperial law, such as the right to make notaries and legitimate children (under Imperial rather than Venetian law), and hence the title of Count Palatine was conferred by the Emperor alone (Warnke, 158n62). I cannot locate compelling evidence that, on any occasion, the Sultan ever granted the title of Count Palatine, which is to be expected since it conferred rights outside the sultanate. For this, among other reasons, Babinger argued that the Innsbruck letter, purportedly a copy of Gentile's privileges from the Sultan, was a forgery (Babinger, 1962, 88-101). Julian Raby and Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, however, consider it a transcription of the original privileges, and, in agreement, Alan Chong translates *comes palatinus* as "palace companion," an unlikely rendition of a highly standard phrase (for a summation of the arguments, see Chong, 114 with further references). I have not had the opportunity to examine the letter in person, but the fact that it describes the Sultan bestowing the title of Count on Gentile makes it suspect in and of itself, pace Chong's creative solution. If the Innsbruck letter is indeed a forgery, then it probably drew material from Jacopo Filippo Foresti's *Supplementum chronicarum* of 1490 (and certain later editions), for Foresti is the only contemporary source to recount that Mehmet made Gentile a Count Palatine (see Worthen, 2013). Foresti probably conflated Gentile's honorific title of knight granted by Mehmet with his title of Count Palatine granted earlier in 1469 by Emperor Frederick III. Foresti, however, is replete with errors, even describing in an early version that Gentile Bellini as a Paduan painter (ibid.).


^48 Vasari-Barrochi, 3:430-433; Fortini Brown, 1988, 277-278.
narratives, such as his *Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria*, begun in 1504 and nearly complete at the time of his death in 1507.

**THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN MARCO**

Extant documents bear evidence to a significant shift in Gentile's life that began a few years before he departed Venice for Constantinople and continued after his return. Gentile started to take an active role in the management and concerns of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, of which he was a member. His father Jacopo had belonged to the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, and Gentile had almost certainly assisted him on a now-lost narrative cycle of seventeen scenes from the New Testament that had decorated its Sala Capitolare.49 Sometime after 1444, Jacopo executed a series of paintings, now destroyed, for the Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and it was on this multi-year project that Gentile presumably came of age, probably assisting Jacopo on it from when he was about fifteen years old.50 When Gentile was about thirty-six years old, in 1466 or slightly earlier, he joined the Scuola Grande di San Marco as a member, and that same year was commissioned by the Scuola to paint two works depicting scenes from the life of Moses for the Sala Capitolare (destroyed).51

Beginning in 1476, with his election as *degano di tutt'anno*, and continuing for the next thirty years until his death, Gentile became an elite member of the Scuola, meaning that he was elected to the board in increasingly prominent roles and became a regular member of the Great Chapter.52 Only non-noble members of the *cittadini originari*, or naturalized citizens who were

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49 According to Ridolfi, 1:35–36.

50 Fortini Brown, 1988, 268.

51 ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, second part, f. 36.

52 ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Degano di tutto anno"
members of the Scuola for over 20 years, could serve in leadership roles in the institution.  

Scuola Grande board members were elected for a full calendar year *more veneto*, which began on March 1, except for the two *degani di mezz'anno*, who were elected on the half-year, in August.  

There was a hierarchy to the positions, and members were elected almost always in the following order: *degano di tutt'anno* (of which there were 10), *degano di mezz'anno* (of which there were 2), Scrivano (a bookkeeping position), Guardian da Matin, Vicario, and Guardian Grande.  

With the exception of the position of Scrivano, which apparently was not mandatory, aspiring Scuola members served in each of these roles exactly once until reaching the position of Guardian Grande, to which they might then be elected more than once. A rule of *contumacia* established by the Council of Ten in 1349 stated that Scuola members had to wait for a period of five years before being eligible for reelection to the board.  

In Gentile's time, there were 16 members on the board or *banca* and each had prescribed duties in managing the affairs of the Scuola. The Guardian Grande was the chairman of the board, presided over meetings, and alone could present motions for debate. The Vicario was the vice chairman, acted as chairman when the Guardian Grande was absent, and generally assisted the Guardian Grande. The Guardian da Matin oversaw the organization of the many processions of the Scuola. The Scrivano kept careful account books for the Scuola. The two *degani di mezz'anno*, or deacons of the half-year, oversaw the other ten deacons, for a total of twelve, two elected for each of the *sestieri* or six districts of Venice. Within their elected district, deacons

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53 ASV, CX, Misti, Reg. 9, c. 48v(44v), 12 February 1409 (m.v.).  

54 For a general discussion of how the Scuole Grandi were organized, see Pullan, 1971, 108-114.  

55 Massimi, 8.  

56 ASV, Consiglio dei Dieci, Misti, Reg. 8, fol. 18v, after Sohm, 1982, 7n2.
ensured that members participated in the processions at the scheduled times, visited sick or old members to see that they were receiving proper care, checked on the various almhouses and other rental properties owned by the Scuola, and assisted in other duties related to the Scuola's charitable acts and dispensation of dowries.\textsuperscript{57}

Once a\emph{ cittadino originario} served on the board, he was eligible to be a member of the Great Chapter (although some evidence suggests that he might have been required to reach the age of 50). There were about 600 total members of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, called the General Chapter, a body which met three times a year, but only about sixty of these members were part of an inner elite, sometimes referred to as the\emph{ boni homeni} or good men, who comprised the Great Chapter.\textsuperscript{58} (The fact that the\emph{ boni homeni} monopolized the boards of the Scuole Grandi and tended to come from powerful non-noble families did not go unnoticed by the Council of Ten, the government magistrate charged with overseeing the Scuole.\textsuperscript{59}) A day or week after the sixteen board members held their own meeting to vote on Scuola business, which could be monthly or bi-weekly depending on matters pressing, the Great Chapter would then convene to vote and either approve or reject the actions of the\emph{ banca}.\textsuperscript{60} Although the members of the\emph{ banca} were responsible for the active management of the Scuola, the Great Chapter held authority of approval.

As other aspiring\emph{ Proto Cittadini Originari}, Gentile in the course of his later life ascended

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\textsuperscript{57} See Pullan, 1971, 64ff.

\textsuperscript{58} ASVe, Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, b. 2,\emph{ Capitoli 1261-1688}, c. 58r-58v.

\textsuperscript{59} ASV, Consiglio dei Dieci, Miste, Reg. 22, fol. 74v, after Sohm, 1982, 14n12.

\textsuperscript{60} In future, I plan a study of the "Great Chapter (\emph{gran chapitolo})" (see, for instance, ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 17r, c17v) as the power center of the Scuole Grandi. To my knowledge, this inner corporate body has not received thorough investigation.
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through the ranks of the Scuola Grande di San Marco.\textsuperscript{61} He was elected \textit{degano di tutt'anno} in 1476, \textit{degano di mezz'anno} in 1484, Guardian da Matin in 1492, and Vicario in 1504.\textsuperscript{62} His next elected position would have been Guardian Grande, the Scuola's highest and most prestigious post, for which Gentile would have been eligible beginning in 1509, five years after having served as Vicario. Gentile died in 1507, however, at the age of about 77.

\textbf{THWARTED ASPIRATIONS}

A fire on 1 August 1485 destroyed much of the Scuola Grande di San Marco and most of its contents, including the painting cycle in the Albergo executed by Jacopo Bellini, and the paintings in the Sala Capitolare executed by Jacopo, Gentile, and other artists.\textsuperscript{63} That Gentile was not instated as one of the five \textit{provedatori sopra la fabrica} who supervised the Scuola's reconstruction, which still continued thirty-seven years later with the construction of an elaborate

\textsuperscript{61} From 1483, not long after his return from Constantinople, Gentile began taking a particularly active role in the management of the Scuola. For instance, and to give an example of typical Scuola business, for the first time in the extant records, on 16 March 1483, Gentile was one of 68 voting members of the Great Chapter. This vote approved the construction of a hospital with painted decorations (\textit{ospedal e telleri}) in which between eight and twelve of the Scuola brothers would live. Seven Scuola members were chosen to oversee the project and its decoration (\textit{deputardi sopra la expedezion dela fabricka delo hospedal et eziam defar compir i telleri}). If one of the seven renounced his position, then the Guardian Grande and his companions would select a replacement from among the members. To help finance the hospital, it was decided that the Scuola would seek from the Papal Court in Rome an indulgence for those who pledged funds toward its construction. Every three months the supervisors would report the status of the project's collections and expenses to the \textit{banca} (\textit{hogni 3 mexi debi vegnir conquel che lavera schoso e spexo ala bancha da miser lo vardian e compagni}), until, presumably, the project was completed (ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 8r.).

\textsuperscript{62} ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Degano di tutto anno."  ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Degano de mezzo anno."  ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Vardia[n] da mati[n]."  ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Vichari[i]."  In 1484, a few months before Gentile was elected \textit{degano di mezz'anno}, and perhaps with Gentile's encouragement, Giovanni Bellini, who was nearing the age of sixty, became a member of the Scuola di San Marco — previously he had not belonged to a Scuola Grande (ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 4, 161r.). It is surprising that such a prominent original citizen of Venice would not have joined a Scuola Grande earlier, and we can only speculate on the reasons, that range from the exclusivity of the Scuole to Giovanni's personal inclinations. Nonetheless, Giovanni was elected \textit{degano di tutt'anno} in 1486 and \textit{degano di mezz'anno} in 1494, when he was nearing 70 years old (For Giovanni's activity in the Scuola, see Köster, 396.) Giovanni rarely participated in meetings of the Great Chapter, however, although he was eligible to do so, and he was not nearly as active as Gentile in the Scuola's affairs.

\textsuperscript{63} Fortini Brown, 1988, 268-269.
ceiling of the chapter hall, indicates to an extent the separation of the arts in Venice: painters in Renaissance Venice were considered more or less as painters, and not as architects, builders, or sculptors.\textsuperscript{64} Certainly artists might work in conjunction — for instance, in 1476 Gentile made a drawing of a five-sided pulpit for the Scuola's chapter hall that the sculptor Antonio Rizzo agreed to follow and carve in low relief — but Venetian painters and sculptors belonged to separate guilds, each of which were particularly protective over who could perform the artistic labor associated with that guild.\textsuperscript{65}

Thus, for the next several years while the Scuola was in its first phase of rebuilding, there was little that Gentile could contribute artistically to the construction. He still attended meetings of the Great Chapter and participated in a number of votes, such as those held on 28 October 1487, 29 November 1489, 11 November 1490, 25 November 1490, and so on—his attendance at the exclusive Great Council meetings was fairly regular up until his death in 1507.\textsuperscript{66} Mainly he continued executing the monumental cycle in the Great Council Hall; in July of 1488 he was described working there alongside Giovanni Bellini by the artist Alvise Vivarini, who, in a request later granted by the Venetian government, expressed his own desire to assist in the campaign.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} ASV, San Marco, Reg. 17, fol 93, after Sohm, 1982, 283.

\textsuperscript{65} ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, notatorio 16 bis part 2, fol. 51v – 52r; Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 108-9, doc. 13.

\textsuperscript{66} ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 10r; ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 17r-v; ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 59r; ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, c. 59v; ASV, Scuola di San Marco, Notatorio, 16 bis, part 1, c. 22r.

\textsuperscript{67} ASV, Notatorio del Collegio, 1481-1489 c, 168v; Notorio 1, del Magistrato al Sal, 1482-1493, c. 181, after Lorenzi 1868, 102-3, doc. 221.
Yet, at about this time, Gentile was also hatching a plan, one which might have led to the single most important artistic project of his life, had it not failed. Because of the fire, the Albergo of the Scuola, the room in which the board met, required new paintings to decorate the walls, and Gentile, along with Giovanni, evidently saw a way to gain control over the narrative campaign and to execute every painting in it. The Scuole Grandi were the wealthiest and most powerful private institutions in Venice; the Scuola Grande di San Marco was the most prestigious among the five; and the Albergo was where the most powerful members of the Scuola met. The room, in some sense, was the power center not only of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, but of the emergent class of Cittadini Originari who comprised the Great Chapter and the banca. To monopolize the decorations of this room would signify Gentile's primary influence not only over the Scuola but also within the Proto Cittadini Originari.

Gentile's plan involved a two-pronged strategy. First, he would offer to execute for the Scuola's Albergo a cycle of large-scale narrative works for well under market rates, one that the cash-strapped institution would be foolish to refuse. Gentile could afford to propose such an arrangement in large part because of the substantial income provided by his sansaria. Secondly, Gentile would wait for the right time to extend his offer, that is, when he was at a peak of his influence within the Scuola, which meant waiting until he was next elected to the banca.

In March 1492, Gentile became Guardian da Matin of the Scuola, the third most powerful position on the board. On 15 July 1492, the Guardian Grande brought to a vote Gentile's proposal for the decoration of the Albergo: Gentile, along with Giovanni Bellini, would execute all the paintings in the room, each for 100 ducats plus expenses—the fee to be split evenly

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68 ASV, Scuola Grande S. Marco, b. 6 bis, ledger 1, under "Vardia[n] da mati[n]."
between the two artists—provided that no other painter be commissioned for the campaign.\(^{69}\) This last stipulation seems to have been unprecedented in Venetian artistic contracts: it registers Gentile's clear intention to monopolize control of the room's decoration. Since Jacopo's rate of pay for his work in the same Scuola's Sala Capitolare had been 375 ducats for two paintings, Gentile was offering his and Giovanni's services at roughly half of what his father had charged twenty-six years earlier.\(^{70}\) His proposal, Gentile avowed, was "not out of greed of gain (\textit{non per cupidità de guadagno})" but rather only toward the end and effect of both lauding and praising Almighty God (\textit{ma solum a fin et effecto chel sia laude e trionfo de l'omnipotente dio.})\(^{71}\) Neither documents nor Gentile's paintings provide sufficient evidence to determine whether the artist was deeply religious or regularly motivated by religious beliefs, and so it is difficult to assess whether honest sentiment lay behind the seemingly stock rhetoric Gentile employed in his offer to the Scuola.

The fifteen board members, not counting Gentile, voted unanimously in favor of the project, and Gentile's plan initially seemed a success.\(^{72}\) It was not to be, however. Despite the enthusiastic support of the board, the scuola's Albergo, and in particular its ceiling, took much longer to reconstruct than was planned: by 1495, three years after Gentile's proposed offer, work had suddenly ceased on the ceiling purportedly because the Scuola was short of funds, having spent a treasure (\textit{texoro}) on the reconstruction; soon after, however, a new, more beautiful

\(^{69}\) ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 135, Note e conti di Fabbriiche e Palazzi, after Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 112-113, doc. 31.

\(^{70}\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 269.

\(^{71}\) ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 135, Note e conti di Fabbriiche e Palazzi, after Meyer zur Capellen, 1985, 112-113, doc. 31.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
ceiling was planned instead. The painting campaign of the Albergo did not get underway until 1504, twelve years after Gentile had made his proposal, and by then under different financial terms than those earlier offered by Gentile. (The new terms specified that, for the first painting, Gentile would be paid twenty-five ducats a year, and, when finished, that the painting would be appraised at either 200 or 250 ducats, fifty ducats of which Gentile would donate back the Scuola. If appraised at the higher value, then Gentile would have received for his three years of work a total of 325 ducats less the donated fifty, or 275 ducats for the painting including expenses.) Whether in 1492 there simply weren't funds available to pay Gentile, or, more probably, that it was necessary for the Albergo to be largely complete before its decoration could commence, the Scuola missed out on the opportunity of having two of the greatest artists of the Renaissance execute their most important cycle—at heavily discounted rates.

THE TRUE CROSS

As the Scuola di San Marco continued to rebuild its meeting house after the fire of 1485, the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista initiated a program to redecorate its own Albergo, beginning as early as 26 February 1491 when the Scuola requested from the Council of Ten that it be allowed to admit 25 extra members to defray part of the costs. In that year, the room was almost certainly decorated with a painting cycle by unknown artists depicting the Miracles of the True Cross, probably begun sometime after 1414 in fresco, and which

73 ASV, S. Marco, Reg 16bis, fol. 35v-36r, after Sohm, 1982, 69.
74 See Fortini Brown, 1988, 293 for further references.
75 Ibid., 283
presumably had fallen into disrepair.\textsuperscript{76} It is unclear exactly when the Scuola officially contracted to replace the cycle, but it may have been in 1492 when the aforementioned diplomat Giovanni Dario, who had brokered the peace agreement with the Ottomans and who may have been friends with Gentile, became Guardian Grande of the Scuola.\textsuperscript{77}

The Scuola's newly-commissioned painted cycle would depict the miracles performed by the Scuola's most prized possession, the relic of the True Cross. A long tradition described the spiritual power manifested by these relics. According to the New Testament, certain objects that came into contact with Christ or his Apostles exhibited miraculous powers, such as Christ's robe, the hem of which, when touched by a woman with a blood disease, healed her.\textsuperscript{78} The Cult of Relics describes the Christian belief in, and veneration of, the spiritual power of objects that had touched Christ or a Saint, and which included the physical remains of saints. According to Thomas Aquinas and others, Christ's bodily ascension into heaven, as described in the New Testament, meant that He left no anatomical relics, although according to legend, an angel presented His foreskin to Charlemagne in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{79} Hence, the scattered earthly physical objects that are believed to have touched Him have great spiritual significance, such as the Veil of Veronica used to wipe sweat from his brow as he carried the cross and which bears the likeness of his Face.\textsuperscript{80} As the instrument of his final suffering, the wooden cross upon which

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 266

\textsuperscript{77} For a discussion of Giovanni Dario's service as Guardian Grande, see ibid., 241-42

\textsuperscript{78} Matthew 9:20–22

\textsuperscript{79} Goodich, 1-2

\textsuperscript{80} See Hamburger.
Christ was crucified became a symbol not only of His suffering, but of Christ himself and, of course, the Christian religion.

The central text describing the history of the True Cross to late fifteenth-century Venetian audiences and artists was Jacopo Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, among the most popular texts of the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance.\(^{81}\) It was translated into Italian and printed in Venice in no less than ten different editions between 1475-1499.\(^{82}\) In describing the *inventio*, or the finding of the Holy Cross, Voragine differentiates between the authentic history and its apocryphal history, the veracity of the latter Voragine "leave[s] to the reader's judgment, because none of it is found in any authentic chronicle or history."\(^{83}\) In an apocryphal history recounted by Voragine, Adam became ill and his son Seth, seeking a cure at the gates of paradise, is visited by the archangel Michael who

> gave him a branch from the tree under which Adam committed his sin, informing him that when that branch bore fruit, his father would be made whole. When Seth went back and found his father dead, he planted the branch over Adam's grave, where it grew to be a great tree and was still standing in Solomon's time.\(^{84}\)

Citing authenticated chronicles, Voragine describes a tree emerging from Adam's grave that King Solomon admired and had cut down to construct his forest house. The wood was worshipped by the Queen of Sheba who, according to one version, told Solomon that it would help bring about the end of the Kingdom of the Jews, and so the King buried it

\(^{81}\) Baert, 194-216 with further references

\(^{82}\) Pagnotta, 87-96

\(^{83}\) Voragine, 1:277.

\(^{84}\) Ibid.
deep within a pond. Though submerged, the "power of the wood . . . caused the motion of
the water and the healing of the sick."\(^{85}\)

As the Passion approached, the wood floated to the surface and was discovered
and used to construct the Holy Cross. After the crucifixion, Christ's Cross along with
those of the two thieves were buried. Over two hundred years later they were
rediscovered by Helena (ca. 246/50 – 18 August 330), Constantine the Great's mother,
who had been an innkeeper when she met Constantine the elder and "Christ lifted her up
from the dunghill to the throne."\(^{86}\) With the begrudging assistance of a Jewish man
named Judas, later baptized Quiriacus and ordained bishop of Jerusalem, Helena located
Golgotha, razed the temple of Venus that stood on the site, and had Judas search for and
dig up the three buried crosses, which were then brought to the Queen in the center of the
city. When a dead man was carried past, Judas held each of the crosses over the corpse;
the third miraculously brought the man back to life and was identified as the Lord's
Cross. Helena brought to her son, Constantine, a piece of the Holy Cross, as well as the
nails that had secured Christ to it, and left the other pieces encased in silver at Golgotha.\(^{87}\)

Even before the life of Christ, the wood that would eventually become the True
Cross served as a witness to humankind's spiritual journey. It was the tree branch
overhanging Man's first sin, and the fruit it bore metaphorically later included the Savior
himself, nailed to the cross. The holy wood, therefore, embodied the possibility of
salvation brought by Christ to Adam and his descendants.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 1:278
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 1: 280-81
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 281-83
THE RELIC OF THE TRUE CROSS

By the mid-4th century, pieces of the cross had become objects for veneration. Saint Cyril (c. 313-386), bishop of Jerusalem, in his thirteenth catechetical lecture of c.350, wrote "the wood of the Cross . . . was afterwards distributed piecemeal from hence [Golotha] to all the world," 88 and wrote in the tenth lecture, "[t]he holy wood of the Cross bears witness, seen among us to this day, and from this place now almost filling the whole world, by means of those who in faith take portions from it." 89 By the end of the century, documentation exists that pieces of the cross were employed as sacred relics. 90 For example, Saint Macrina (c. 330 - d. 379) is described by her brother, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 395), as wearing a necklace inside of which was hidden a piece of the cross. 91

The miraculous powers of the holy wood of the cross carried over to its pieces, which were sometimes actively used to precipitate miracles. For instance, the chronicle by bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (975 - 1018) recounts how Archbishop Gero of Cologne realized there was a crack at the top of a revered crucifix (today known as the Gero Cross), and so placed a piece of the host and a piece of the True Cross in the crack, and prostrated himself in vigorous prayer; when he arose, the cross had been mended. 92 Throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, miracles, especially those recounted in hagiographical sources, conformed to such well-established topoi. Thus, half a millennium later and much like Archbishop Gero, Jacopo de'

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88 St. Cyril, xiii.4:83
89 Ibid., x.19-20:63.
90 Snoek, 84 ff.
91 Clarke, 65.
92 Thietmar, 128.
Salis threw himself on his knees in prayer before a piece of the cross, but in Jacopo's case hoping not to mend a crucifix but his son's wounds.

In 1368 or 1369, a piece of the True Cross was donated to the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista by Philippe de Mézières, Grand Chancellor of Cyprus under the King of Jerusalem. Its Eastern provenance undoubtedly served to legitimize it. Significantly, it was received by the Guardian Grande Andrea Vendramin who would become one of the Scuola's most famous members. He was directly involved in two miracles of the cross, both later depicted, along with his reception of the cross, in the late fifteenth-century cycle for the Scuola's Albergo: he appeared in Bastiani's *Donation of the Relic* (1494); Pietro Perugino's now lost *Deliverance of Andrea Vendramin's Ships* (1494), and Gentile Bellini's *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lorenzo* (1500) (figs. 98–99). Vendramin's real fame, however, rested on his once having been a non-noble citizen of Venice and a well-respected member of the Scuola before Venice went to war with Genoa. Due to Vendramin's actions during the war of Chioggia, he was one of thirty men made Venetian nobles by the Senate and his family subsequently enjoyed noble status, the right to vote in the Great Council, and to be elected to high government office. Hence he represented the non-noble Scuola member that had achieved *fama* on a grand scale, his family retaining noble status in perpetuity.

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93 All sources identify that Andrea Vendramin, as Guardian Grande, received the relic. *Miracoli della croce*, c. 1490-1506, provides the year of 1368, *more veneto*: "nel 1368 Guardiano de la scola misier andrea vendramino . . . " Vendramin, however, apparently was Guardian Grande in 1369, presumably from the beginning of the year in March (ASVe, Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, b. 4, *Elenco fratelli 1387 ca.*; ASVe, Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, b. 5, *Elenco fratelli XIV.*). I thank Gabriele Matino for the latter citation.

94 Ibid.


THE MEANING OF A MIRACLE

In her study of Medieval miracles, Benedicta Ward traces the theological foundations of interpreting miracles to four works by Saint Augustine of Hippo: *De Genesi ad Litteram, De Trinitate, De Utilitate Credendi*, and *De Civitate Dei*. Augustine argued that God's act of creating the world in six days was the only miracle, and everything He created was both natural and filled with the miraculous. Miracles, therefore, were inherent in the natural order rather than separate from it, but only became identified as miracles when a specific event caused man to enter a state of "wonder." Indeed, the term *miraculum* is derived from *miror*, to wonder at. Augustine delineated three types of wonder: the first is a result of "daily miracles" — of the flower, the stone, life itself — to which men have become so habituated that they evoke wonder only from wise men who can discern in them God's grace. The second type of wonder is experienced by the ignorant when they do not understand the complex workings of the world known to wiser men. The last type occurs when God's power becomes manifest through a genuinely miraculous event, that is not against nature (*contra naturam*) but beyond it (*supra naturam*), and "which appears wonderful because it is either hard or impossible, beyond hope or ability."

In his *Compendium Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas agreed with Augustine that "miracles are not contrary to nature," yet "not within the sphere of natural causes." He further distinguishes between Augustine's latter two types of wonder:

When effects are thus wrought by divine power outside the order of secondary causes, they are called miracles; for when we perceive an effect without knowing

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97 Ward, 3.


99 Ward, 4.
its cause, our wonder is excited (mirum est). Therefore, when some effect is wrought by Him outside the order of secondary causes known to us, it is called simply a miracle. But if an effect is produced by some other cause that is unknown to this or that person, it is not a miracle simply as such, but only with regard to him who is ignorant of the cause. Thus an event may appear marvelous to one person without seeming marvelous to another who is acquainted with its cause.  

For Aquinas, the "common benefit bestowed in all miracles … is the bringing of men to the knowledge of God." Hence miracles aided the Apostles in converting non-Christians, and, according to Augustine, in particular the Jews who were often unswayed by theological disputation. Miracles are the signs that confirm the word, according to Mark 16:20, but to Aquinas they confer a special type of knowledge: "Wherefore just as man led by his natural reason is able to arrive at some knowledge of God through His natural effects, so is he brought to a certain degree of supernatural knowledge of the objects of faith by certain supernatural effects which are called miracles."  

Both Augustine and Aquinas were careful to point out that the psychological state of "wonder" is not necessarily a response to a miraculous event manifested by the divine; it might also be elicited by events or works the creation of which are not thoroughly understood.

100 Aquinas, 1947a, 136.  
102 Augustine, 1968, 4-10, after Goodich, 10n9.  
103 Aquinas, 1947b, 2:2:178.
THE COMMISSION

Although no record of the commission exists, the Scuola apparently hired five artists at the same time or in close succession to complete the first few paintings of the campaign: Lazzaro Bastiani (*Donation of the Relic*, 1494), Pietro Perugino (*Deliverance of Andrea's Vendramin's Ships* [lost], 1494); Vittore Carpaccio (*Healing of the Possessed Man by the Patriarch of Grado*, 1494); Giovanni Mansueti (*Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio*); and Gentile Bellini (*Miracle during the Procession in the Piazza San Marco*, 1496).\(^{104}\) Gentile provided a contract drawing for the painting Mansueti would eventually complete, and Mansueti, in his signature on the finished work, described himself as a disciple of Bellini (*bellini disc[i]p[u]li*); a few years earlier, on 30 June 1489, Gentile had witnessed the will of Mansueti's wife.\(^{105}\) Hence Mansueti was likely to have been Gentile's assistant and Gentile instrumental in Mansueti's securing from the Scuola his first large commission.\(^{106}\)

*Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco* was apparently the first major commission that Gentile accepted in over ten years – since his *Votive Painting for Doge Mocenigo* (1478-85). It would take up the entire West Wall of the Albergo, and its size, 3.67 x 7.45 meters, was nearly twice that of the next largest painting in the cycle, Mansueti's *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio* of 3.18 x 4.58 meters.\(^{107}\) Thus it is possible that Gentile's work was the first commissioned in the cycle but took longer to finish than the others and hence should not be thought of as an addition to a pre-existing campaign already decorating the Albergo.

\(^{104}\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 284-86.


\(^{106}\) On their relationship, see Matino, 2011, 5-34.

\(^{107}\) Fortini Brown, 1988, 286.
As mentioned, Gentile's contract for the work has not been discovered, but an incunabulum from c. 1490-1506 records how the Scuola understood the miracle that Gentile was commissioned to paint, and it is entirely possible Gentile drew directly from the text itself:

In 1443 during the feast of Saint Mark that happened on the day of April 25th, the almighty God demonstrated the greatest miracle of this most holy cross because, being that day, the Scuola went to the church of Saint Mark, as is the custom; in the piazza was a citizen of Brescia, a man and merchant of good reputation and status, that had the name ser Jacopo de' Salis, to whom had occurred a curious event, namely that a son of his in Brescia was running in the piazza toward the loggia of that city and happened to strike his head and forehead on a corner of a stone baluster of that loggia in a way that he injured himself and opened his skull (*averse la testa*), whereby many bones from his head needed to be put back (*trar*). On the eve [of the feast day] of Saint Mark, the said Jacopo received the news that this accident had occurred. And finding himself the next day, which was the said day of Saint Mark, in the piazza very melancholy and full of heart-ache, having heard of the great miracles that the almighty God demonstrated by the said most holy cross, (and with) the said cross moving through the piazza with the Scuola, he bowed and threw himself on his knees, praying to the omnipotent God, by that most holy cross, if he would mercifully deign to make a miracle for his son and free him from so much hurt and danger. And so it happened by divine power that the doctors went the following day to treat him, took off the bandages from his head and discovered the wounds firm and clean without even a scar, and so from that moment it [the miracle] was revealed. And the most dignified guardian, who was misser Francesco di Argoisi, and board members heard the news, to whom the said ser Jacopo offered to bring to the said place of messer Saint Giovanni his said son to bow before and worship the said most holy cross.

el 1443 nella festa de misier san marco che vien adi 25 aprile de. Mostro laltissimo dio grandissimo miracolo de questa croce sanctissima impero che esendo in tal giorno andata la scola a la chiesia di misier san Marco como e usanza essendo nella piazza se trovo uno citadino de Bressa homo marcadante de bona fama e conditione che havea nome sier Iacomo da Sali al quale era occorso uno stranio caso cioe che essendo uno suo figliolo a Bressa e corendo per la piazza verso la loza de la dicta citade venne ad urther con la testa e con el fronte in una balestrada de piera in uno cantone de la dita loza per modo chel sesfesse & averse la testa: Onde li bisogno trar molte osse della testa. Del qual caso intravenuto el dito sier Iacomo havea havuto notitia la vigilia di misier san Marco. Et trovandose el giorno seguente che fu nel dicto di de san Marco in su la piazza molto melinconico e pien di afano havendo udito el di grandi miracoli che havea

108 *Trar* likely refers to the verb tirare rather than trarre, and the bones could have been collected (*raccogliere*) or, more likely, pushed back.
demostrato laltissimo dio de la dicta croce sanctissima portandose la dicta croce per piazza con la scola se inclino & butose in genochioni pregando l'omnipotente dio che per quella croce santissima piatosamente se degnase mostrar miracolo del suo figliolo & liberarlo da tanto male & pericolo. Et cusi seguite per la potentia divina che essendo andati i medici el di sequente per medegarlo levatoli el pano de sopra la testa trovono le piaghe salde e nete senza macula alcuna & cosi da quel dapoi fu revelato & have la nova el dignissimo vardiano che fu misier Francesco di Argoisi e compagni al quale el sopra dicto sier Iacomo si oferse far vegnir nel dicto loco de misier san Zuane el dicto suo figliolo ad inclinarse & adorer la dicta croce sanctissima.109

In six distinct scenes, the narrative shifts between Venice and Brescia: first, the place and date of the miracle are established as having occurred during the feast day procession in San Marco and Jacopo de' Salis is introduced; a day or more earlier, in the piazza in Brescia, Jacopo's son runs and injures himself; on the eve of the feast day, Jacopo learns of the tragedy; the next day in Piazza San Marco, Jacopo throws himself on his knees to pray before the cross; the day after in Brescia, the doctors uncover the bandages and the miracle is realized; finally at some later late, the board members of the Scuola di San Giovanni learn of the miracle from Jacopo, who offers to bring his son to pray before the holy relic. In terms of classic narrative structure, the climactic moment of tension happens in Venice when Jacopo throws himself on his knees, of release when the doctors in Brescia uncover the healed boy, and of resolution when, again in Venice, the main protagonists converge at the Scuola to pay respect to the relic (whether or not Jacopo did in fact bring his son to the Scuola).

MIRACLE DURING THE PROCESION IN PIAZZA SAN MARCO

To illustrate the text, Gentile could have depicted not one but a series of images, each representing a scene from the above written narrative. (While is unknown whether the miracle had been depicted earlier in fresco, or whether Gentile was inspired by any earlier representation

109 Miracoli della croce, c. 1490-1506, pages unnumbered.
of the event, there is no evidence to suggest that such was the case.) The other extant paintings in the cycle, however, each employed a single image to represent the entire narrative of a single miracle (with the exception of Bastiani’s *Donation of the Relic*, which is not a miracle), probably a previously agreed-upon pictorial strategy. Gentile, then, was likely faced with the problem of constructing a single image to represent a story that alternated between Venice and Brescia, with crucial moments occurring in multiple locations: the piazza in Brescia; Piazza San Marco; the home of Jacopo de’ Salis; and the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista itself.

Most challenging for Gentile, however, was that the structure of the written narrative separated the actions precipitating the miracle from the moment of its revelation. According to Augustine, miracles are inherent in the world but only identified as such when they produce wonder, which in Jacopo's narrative occurred only when the bandages were removed from his son and the miracle revealed. Gentile conceivably could have chosen to depict that moment, that is, the view of an interior in faraway Brescia with doctors loosening bandages, a healed boy, perhaps a mother in a state of wondrous joy. Indeed, in another painting in the cycle, *Healing of the Daughter of Ser Benvegnudo of San Polo*, Mansueti employed a similar pictorial strategy in depicting the moment of wonder — or soon thereafter. Mansueti's painting described the miraculous healing of a child; blind since birth, the three-year old daughter of a member of the Scuola was healed when her father, at the Scuola, touched three candles to the relic of True Cross, and, later, lay them on his daughter's head while she was in bed.\textsuperscript{110} Mansueti represents the daughter still in bed, her father Nicolò kneeling beside her and clutching two of the candles, her mother with a hand on her daughter's shoulder holding the third, while Nicolò's home has

\textsuperscript{110} Described in *Miracoli della croce*, c. 1490-1506, pages unnumbered.
become a center of festivities, full of visitors paying respect to the miracle and its wonder (fig. 100).  

Gentile chose not to depict Jacopo's home in Brescia, however. Instead he selected a moment during the procession in the piazza when Jacopo prayed for the miracle. Yet, the problem with this choice is that the moment of wonder, which crucially defined the miracle, occurs outside the represented scene. And it is here, I would suggest, that Gentile had a moment of inspiration. As both Augustine and Aquinas described, the state of wonder could be produced not only by a miracle but also by a man-made object such as a work of art — precisely because the cause or mechanics behind certain works of art were not well understood. It must be remembered that Gentile was one of only a small handful of men in Northern Italy, which included Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini, with the expert ability to employ the somewhat recently discovered art of drawing in perspective. Could Gentile, then, construct an image that reintroduced into the painting the wonder that, in purely narrative terms, his choice of scene perforce had to exclude? By creating an image that evoked wonder in the viewer, the miraculous nature of the event might nonetheless be conveyed.

In his large-scale panoramic image of San Marco, Gentile produced an image that had no equal in fifteenth-century Venetian art. No work of such size and ambition had represented in such great detail an event—any event—taking place within the city; no image had sought to reproduce in all its complexity the façade of the church of San Marco and its piazza. Gentile's remarkable undertaking probably took about four years to complete, and in the end, must have astonished its intended audience: for in a sense, it represented the first monumental "photograph"

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111 For a brief discussion of the work, see Fortini Brown, 1988, 154-56.
of Venice nearly three-hundred and fifty years before the advent of photography. Without any evidence documenting its reception, however, we can only speculate whether it did indeed produce the sense of wonder among its intended viewers. Even so, that modern viewers approach the work as if a photograph in some sense registers Gentile's groundbreaking achievement.

Assuming that Gentile's *Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco* provided the Quattrocento Venetian viewer with a visceral experience of wonder, the work would have encouraged meditation on the meaning of a miracle. Its cause was not merely Jacopo's spirited prayer to the relic; the Feast of San Marco, the processioners passing in front of the church of San Marco, and, first and foremost, the Scuola members of San Giovanni Evangelista all contributed to its occurrence. Yet this was a recurrent ritual event, often a monthly or bi-monthly affair in Venice. Gentile's image, then, challenged the viewer to see in these religious convocations the embodiment of the miraculous, indeed to become like the wise man described by Augustine who can appreciate the wonder in the everyday existence of God's creation.

The viewer, then, if in a state of wonder, might have perceived the leveling of social class distinctions before the divine. The doge and his entourage, on the far right of the painting, represent an ingredient as crucial to the miracle as the members from the other scuole who have assembled in grids on the left side, or the bystanders watching the procession, or the onlookers at the windows, or even the woman who begs in front of San Marco. While all share in the miraculous moment, it is unrealized by them. But Gentile's work first and foremost addresses the non-noble *cittadini originari* who have organized the procession and march within it. From the baldachin above the relic hangs insignias of all the Scuole Grandi, positioned at heart of the miraculous event, which visually signified the presence of the *cittadini originari*, as members of the Scuole, from across Venice.
THE ANACHRONIC MODEL

A recent theory proposed by Hans Belting and expanded upon by Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood further helps us to understand how Quattrocento Venetian viewers likely experienced Gentile's *Procession.* \(^{112}\) The so-called Anachronic model holds that a Medieval viewer understood art as making the divine present by duplicating, and thus being the surrogate for, earlier, prototypical artifacts that may have been lost or even mythic (the substitutive principle). Renaissance viewers, however, began valuing art as an expression of creativity (the performative principle), where an artifact represented the labor, ideas, and performance of an artist.

Employing this model, let us imagine Gentile’s *Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco* as viewed by a Quattrocento Venetian. According to Nagel and Wood, he or she would have valued artifacts as surrogates for earlier artifacts, which themselves were substitutes for even earlier artifacts, pointing back through history to distant, often divine, origins. The authors write, “A primary function of art under the substitution system was precisely to collapse temporal distance.”\(^ {113}\) Indeed, the painting ostensibly depicted a miracle that occurred in 1444 and included recognizable portrait figures from the time the painting was completed in 1496, most of whom would not have, in fact, witnessed the miracle. This is not real time, but collapsed time, a ritual or liturgical time.

The backdrop of the work represents Saint Mark’s Basilica, which was modeled on Justinian’s Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, itself a replacement for the original Church of the Holy Apostles, dedicated by Constantine himself in 330 AD, and which predated

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\(^{113}\) Nagel and Wood, 2005a, 408.
the Hagia Sophia. Although Saint Mark's was a post-antique structure, it substituted for ancient models traceable at least to the founding of Christianity in Constantinople. To Venetians, this church was regarded as the most important in the world, for Venice was the New Rome that had replaced Constantinople after its fall, and Piazza S. Marco, the religious, political and social center of this New Rome. Thus, this painting depicts the divine center of Christendom, traceable to Constantinople, to Rome, to Roman Judea and Jerusalem, through links that may have been forgotten, and toward origins that point to Christ’s first church and thus Christ himself.

The confraternal procession is the incarnation of ceremonies that occurred in Constantinople and which had ancient origins. This particular procession honored the Evangelist St. Mark, the accepted author of the Gospel of Saint Mark, on April 25, the date the saint was believed to have been martyred. In 828 Venetian merchants returned the supposed relics of Saint Mark to their prophesized resting place, Venice, and the basilica was built and then rebuilt to house his remains. The procession commemorates Venice as the divinely chosen last resting place for Mark the evangelist, whose symbol, the winged lion, represented Venice itself.

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115 For fora as models for Piazza San Marco, see Fenlon 2007, 88-9.
117 For Venice as a New Jerusalem, "a city beloved of God," see Rosand, 13. Fenlon 2007, 21, 41-2 with further references.
118 For processions with Marian icons in Constantinople from at least the early 7th century, see Pentcheva, 37-60.
119 For a recent and fine recounting of this history, see de Maria 2009, 4-17.
As discussed, the holy relic being processed, a remnant of the True Cross, is traceable to Adam, the moment of the crucifixion, and to Christ himself. Its particularized manifestation of a miraculous event connected and collapsed vast periods of time, referring back through earlier miracles to the Virgin birth, and earlier still, ultimately to the word of God in his act of creation in Genesis, before which time did not exist.

In the center of Christendom, then, before a divine and timeless church and during an eternally recurring ritual that venerates St. Mark, the True Cross, and Venice itself, a visiting merchant from Brescia, Jacopo de’ Salis, dressed in eye-catching red, kneels to one knee to pray for a miracle. Gentile layered the divine elements upon one another, and at the precise moment when the bustling Piazza seems to fall into an unusual symmetry, when the reliquary aligns with the center of the façade of St. Marks, a miracle seems ordained to occur. Viewers who gazed upon this divine, miraculous moment *di sotto in su*, the canvas positioned above the door of the *albergo* in the Scuola di San Giovanni, viewers whose eyes alighted on the basilica housing the relic of Saint Mark, mirrored the kneeling Jacopo de’ Salis as he prayed to the reliquary that housed the relic of the True Cross. The painting itself must have induced a silent prayer from the contemplative Quattrocento Venetian viewer, who is transformed into a beholder in the presence of the divine, a witness to the miracle of which his confraternity brothers within the painting were unaware. As public and crowded a space as this painting depicts, ultimately the miracle is private—it is prayed for by Jacopo, who only later would learn of his son’s miraculous healing, but its wonder is experienced by the early Renaissance viewer alone.

To sum, I have argued that Gentile's painting relies on its viewers experiencing a sense of wonder to replace the moment of wonder that Gentile's narrative had to omit when translating the work from text to the visual. Hence this sense of wonder was integral to the period construction
and reception of the work. But the modern viewer, inured to photographic images, does not share in this wonder and thus has tended to consider the painting neither with a period eye nor as an expressive work of art, but as a photographic record. He therefore has retroactively attributed to Gentile motivations fit for a modern photographer: that the artist merely wanted to capture, as an eyewitness, a festive scene in Piazza San Marco, which has meant marginalizing the very miracle that the painting was commissioned to depict.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has laid essential groundwork for a comprehensive study of the Bellini workshop, which was founded by Jacopo Bellini in the Venetian parish of San Geminiano during the last years of the 1420s and dissolved upon Gentile Bellini's death in 1507. The summary remarks will examine briefly how the individual chapters have reshaped our understanding of the Bellini bottega, the overall contributions of the dissertation, and avenues for further research.

Driving each chapter has been a basic question concerning the Bellini workshop or the business strategies of its master. On a conceptual level, chapter 1 began with the question of whether Giovanni and Gentile Bellini were legally emancipated from Jacopo, which prompted the use of Venetian codes of law and other legal sources to reexamine Bellini-related legal documents. No answer to this fundamental inquiry had previously appeared in the Bellini literature, apparently because few art historians of Venetian painting have explored the legal concept of emancipation, in particular as it relates to the artistic workshop.¹ Nevertheless, in Medieval and early modern Italy biological relationships determined legal relationships, which was especially the case in Venice, a city of merchants and artisans whose civil code developed to a great extent by prioritizing the family-run business. The chapter presents the case that Gentile, Jacopo's biological and legitimate son, remained under paternal authority almost certainly until Jacopo's death in 1470/71, while Giovanni had been legally emancipated when his and Jacopo's father died between 1424 and 1429. Hence it is argued that Giovanni and Gentile's different

¹ A typical example of this type of misunderstanding is found in the Cambridge Companion to Giovanni Bellini, in which Keith Christiansen, currently the John Pope-Hennessy Chairman of European Paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, writes of Giovanni Bellini, "In 1459 he was living independently in the parish of San Lio: this may indicate an age between twenty-one and twenty-five (between the age of paternal emancipation and legal independence.)" (Christiansen, 2004a, 53). The parenthetical comment is entirely incorrect: in Venice and many other places in Italy, there was no "age of paternal emancipation," and, without being emancipated, no "legal independence" period.
biological and therefore legal relationships to Jacopo resulted in their having differing roles in Jacopo's *bottega*—which had important repercussions for each painter in their early careers.

Chapter 2 responds to the question of how the Bellini understood their social identity. It relies on the work of Medieval and Renaissance historians, as well as on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Venetian government documents such as official correspondence, decrees, and immigration laws, to periodize the development of the Cittadini Originari, the emergent social class to which the Bellini belonged. I argue that to fulfill their political and social aspirations and elevate the prominence of their families, the Proto Cittadini Originari gradually assumed control over the administration of four charitable confraternities, later called the Scuole Grandi. I propose in the following chapters that Jacopo's membership in the Proto Cittadini Originari enabled the early success of his workshop, not least because it positioned Jacapo Bellini to receive a series of pivotal commissions at the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista and the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Furthermore, these crucial commissions, received during a period of low demand for paintings by private patrons and the Venetian government, constituted a sort of social debt that Gentile Bellini in some sense would later repay by becoming a leading member of the burgeoning class through his association with the Scuola Grande di San Marco.

Chapter 3 asks how the business of running the early Bellini workshop affected the art it produced. Its exploration of Jacopo's strategies in founding and managing his *bottega* prompted a new approach to analyzing the body of primary sources that concern the artist and in particular his drawing notebooks. Recently married and with at least five children for whom to provide (Leonardo, Giovanni, Gentile, Nicolosia, and Nicolò), Jacopo was under pressure to make his business enterprise succeed. Foregrounding this pragmatism, the dissertation assesses Jacopo's various business, social, and artistic activities during the workshop's pivotal first years in light of
the highly competitive art market of mid-fifteenth-century Venice. The image that emerges is not of a creative genius working in isolation, but of an artist struggling to distinguish his work in a market saturated by gifted painters who practiced in the gothic style in which Jacopo himself was trained. Hence, I argue that Jacopo's response to this highly competitive environment was to reinvent himself into what we would now consider the first Renaissance Venetian artist. Indeed, Jacopo is portrayed in this study as a figure driven to innovation by economic circumstances as much as his ambitions to create new types of art.

A critical event in the life of a family workshop is its transference to the next generation, and chapter 4 inquires how Jacopo prepared for this event. Gentile Bellini's early works of art, and even his ennoblement, have typically been analyzed as if he were an independent artist operating as master of his own workshop. Instead, Chapter 4 contextualizes this early period in Gentile's career as a decade of transition: the artist, in his thirties, still lived in Jacopo's home-workshop, remained unemancipated and under Jacopo's paternal power, and, in a strict legal sense, could own neither money nor even the clothes on his back. The argument presented is that behind Gentile's activities as an unemancipated son lay Jacopo's powerful guidance. Hence, much of Gentile's work in the 1460s is reexamined in light of Jacopo's strategies to transfer the workshop to his son. Even Gentile's lauded ennoblement, portrayed by some scholars as the result of having painted a portrait of Emperor Frederick III during the ruler's visit to Venice in 1469, is shown almost certainly to have been purchased from Emperor—paid for Jacopo's money as part of an overarching plan to increase the *fama* of his son Gentile.

The two questions of chapter 5 correlate to two central themes developed in the prior four chapters: the first asks if and how Gentile benefited from Jacopo's workshop strategies. The second considers how the Bellini's membership in, and debts owed to, the Proto Cittadini
Originari expressed itself in Gentile's career. A few years after Jacopo died, Gentile won the most important commission offered in decades by the Venetian government, and the case made in Chapters 3 and 4 is that, at that time, Gentile was not considered the greatest painter in Venice. Rather, Jacopo's various strategies—training Gentile to execute large-scale narratives, nurturing his early career, and raising Gentile's *fama*—played a crucial role.

In Gentile's later career, it is then argued, his *sansaria* or assured government income, coupled with the fame he earned during the trip to Sultan Mehmet's court, led to what may be regarded as Gentile's "artistic emancipation." Perhaps unprecedented in fifteenth-century Venice, this artistic freedom was of a particular type, different in character than freedoms enjoyed by most artists today. For Gentile it meant that he could offer his services at inexpensive rates in order to choose, or even attempt to generate, projects that interested him. Thus, it is argued that Gentile's freedom became manifest in his offers to execute paintings for the Scuole Grandi, which led to his magnum opus, the *Procession of the True Cross in the Piazza San Marco*, a work that expressed Gentile's affinity with the Proto Cittadini Originari and brought together in a single image his many artistic skills. By creating a monumental image of Scuola members processing in Piazza San Marco, Gentile was able to create a type of "miracle," a unique veristic panorama nearly four hundred years before the art of photography was invented (and which modern viewers often perceive as if a photograph).

By emphasizing the importance of business concerns in running a *bottega*, this dissertation contributes to a recent and growing body of scholarship on how successful artistic workshops situated themselves in contemporary art markets to compete with other artists.² The

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² The secondary literature on the subject is large. For competition among artists in late sixteenth-century Venice, see Ilelhmann, 2009, 21-40.
present study complicates these relationships by demonstrating that other crucial concerns also occupied the workshop master as entrepreneur. In the case of the Bellini, social identity and civic 
*fama* represented vital elements that contributed to the workshop's success.

Moreover, each chapter of the dissertation makes contributions to our understanding of the development of Quattrocento Venetian art. As described in chapter 1, situating correctly Giovanni's date of birth has implications in the development of the artist's early career; in the dating of dozens of his works (which now must be reconsidered); in his artistic relationship with Mantegna, which might have been more mutually influential than recently thought; and, by extension, in the stylistic development of early Northern Italian Renaissance art. Chapter 2 proposes a basic theoretical framework for periodizing the evolution of a social class that profoundly influenced the cultural life of Renaissance Venice. Chapter 3 contributes to our understanding of how the artistic Renaissance came to Venice by exploring the economic pressures that galvanized Jacopo Bellini to reinvent his retardataire gothic style. Chapters 3 and 4 both deemphasize theoretical and stylistic explanations of crucial events in Venetian Renaissance art—how the Venetian Renaissance in art began; how Gentile became Venice’s first "official" painter—by furnishing important practical and social considerations, thus offering a more encompassing methodological approach that will resonate with social historians. In analyzing Gentile's *Procession*, chapter 5 also considers whether our modern approach to photographic-like paintings has limited our period understanding of his and similar works.

Other questions concerning the business aspects of the Bellini workshop remain to be explored. For instance, it is unclear whether the Venetian Artists Guild helped or hindered the Bellini *bottega* over time. Another question is whether the Bellini workshop utilized outside assistants within the workshop. And many issues briefly broached by Jennifer Fletcher's article "I
Bellini" deserve further study, particularly in relation to several Bellini workshop practices, such as the use of drawing books, the in-house making of frames, and the mixing of pigments.

The dissertation also more broadly suggests a number of lines of future research. The first chapter's method of extracting valuable biographical information from primary-source legal documents when they are interpreted according to the applicable civil statutes may encourage the worthwhile reanalysis of legal documents connected not only to Quattrocento Venetian artists, but also to any number of historical figures who lived in Medieval or early modern Europe. Chapter 2's periodization of the development of the Cittadini Originari raises the question of the role of the Scuole Grandi in the emergence of the class, and a book-length study on the subject would reshape our understanding of these institutions as well as their painting decorations, by artists that include the Bellini, Mansueti, Carpaccio, Titian and Tintoretto. Lastly, a text such as Shearman's *Raphael in Early Modern Sources* written for the Bellini would be particularly helpful for scholars, and, in this vein, I have begun to transcribe documents related to Gentile Bellini, several of which have only been partially transcribed by scholars over a hundred years ago.
APPENDIX A

TWO LEGAL DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE BELLINI FAMILY

Document 1. 13 September 1440. Charter of division between the brothers Giovanni and Jacopo Bellini, sons of the deceased Nicolò, both residing in the parish of San Geminiano (fig. 1): ASV, CIN, b. 149, Vittore Pomino, reg. “Protocollum mei Victoris Pomino notarii de 1439,” c. 55v.\(^2\)


MCCCXL, die 13 septembris, indicione quarta.

Licet divisio que fit inter fratres et cetera. Hinc est quod nos Iohannes Belino et Iacobus Belino fratres ac filii quondam ser Nicolai de confinio Sancti Iuminiani neullo umquam tempore aut quovis errore scandalum sive discordia oriri posit, ymo potius omnis iurgiorum materia tollatur a nobis plenam et irrevocabilem securitatem facimus nos Iohannes et Iacobus Belino suprascripti cum nostris heredibus et successoribus nobis invicem vicisim, de tota nostra fraterna societate quam simul habuimus et habemus, et de cuncto et super toto havere nostro magno vel parvo et de omnibus et singulis denariis et aliis quibuslibet bonis rebusque mobiliis quecumque nobis habere pertinuerunt tam paterno quam materno, fraterno vel alio quocumque iure aut ex aliqua propinquitate aut ratione vel causa tam tacita quam expressa, necnon quod et insimul vel absentes habuimus vel acquisivimus aut lucrati fuimus ante obitum, ad obitum et post obitum suprascripti defuncti patris nostri, vel quod nos invicem vicisim per quodvis modum vel

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1 I thank Chiara Scarpa for her help with the transcriptions that appear in the appendices.

2 Pomino made a copy of this document in a different register: ASV, CIN, b. 149, Vittore Pomino, reg. 1439–44, c. 11v.
ingenium requisivimus vel requirere potuimus ab initio usque ad diem presentem cum cartis et sine cartis, per curiam et extra curiam iuste quoque vel iniuste. Nunc autem quia ammodo in antea intendimus nos a fraterna nostra divisos esse et penitus segregatos, nos invicem vicissim videlicet unus alterum et e converso securi reddimus pariter et quietos quia nihil modo remansit quo amplius ab invicem compelli seu requiriri valeamus sive velimus per ullam ingenium sive modum et ideo reddentes omnino nos invicem tacitos et quietos atque de portione uniciuique nostrum perventa contentos promittimus invicem vicisim unus alterum et e converso non provocare ad aliquam aliam divisionem fiendam nec dicere vel allegare quemque nostrum fuisse deceptum. Etiam si in futurum quis nostrum devenirit ad fortunam pinguiorem, promittentes preterea invicem vicisim de cetero nos aut quoscumque nostrum heredes et successores nostros de lucris et utilitabus quomodolibet perventis et ammodo in antea perventuris non requirere vel aliqualiter molestare occasione dicte nostre fraterne ullo ingenio sive modo, quia omnium eorum que quilibet nostrum fecerit prode utilitas sive damnum, absque ulla parte utilitatis vel damni exinde in alium perveniendis, debent vigore huius nostre segregationis et divisionis in eum qui ea fecerit et habuerit pacto expresso totaliter devenire. Si igitur et cetera.

Testes ser Ludovicus de Rigis ser Iacobi de confinio Sancte Iustine; ser Hercules quondam ser Iacobi de Flore pictoris de confinio Sancte Agnetis.

Document 2. 23 July 1429. Jacopo Bellini acknowledges receipt of his wife Anna’s dowry of 250 gold ducats, or twenty-five lire di grossi a oro (fig. 2): ASV, CIN, b. 212, T. de Tomei, 23

1429 mensis iulii . . .

die XXIII. Plenam et irrevocabilem securitatem facio ego Iacobus Belino pictor filius quondam ser Nicoleti Belino de confinio Sancti Geminiani cum meis heredibus tibi Anne filie quondam ser Branche Diversis uxor me dilecte et tuis successoribus de tota illa tua repromissa magna vel parva que tempore nostre dispensationis et contractationis nostri matrimonii pro te mihi dari promissa fuit. Que vero repromissa fuit ducati ducenti quinquaginta auri videlicet libre viginti quinque grossorum ad aurum. Nunc autem et cetera.

Testes vir nobilis ser Franciscus de Molino quondam ser Ieronimi Sancte Marie Magdalene et ser Bartholomeus de Aventuratis, gastaldus dominorum procuratorum ecclesie Sancti Marci.

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\(^3\) The 1429 document is contained in a register that, although collected along with other registers in an envelope labeled, “Tomei (De) Tomeo,” is itself marked with the name, “Nicolaus de Griffonibus [Nicolò Griffoni],” who was a notary active in Venice from 1421–30: see da Mosto, 1:231. The 1429 document appears to be in Griffoni’s hand: cf. ASV, NT, b. 917, Nicolò Griffoni, reg. 41–A.
Document 1. 12 February 1410. The highest offices of the Scuole Grandi may be filled only by a member of the *cittadini originari* or by a naturalized citizen who has been a member of the Scuola for at least twenty years: ASV, CX, Misti, Reg. 9, c. 48v(44v), 12 February 1409 (*m.v.*). Published in Anna Bellavitis, *Identité, mariage, mobilité sociale. citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVIe siècle*. Rome, 2001, 335. Retranscribed here because I make the argument in chapter 2 that the document registers the first political act by the Proto Cittadini Originari.

MCCCCVIII die XII mensis februarii.

Capita de X/Capta

Cum infrascripta provisio videatur nostro dominio bona utilis et honorifica pro quatuor scollis batitorum. Vadit pars ex decetero non possit esse guardianus magnus nec guardianus a matutino nec vicarius vel scriba in aliqua dictarum scollarum a batutis aliquis qui non sit venetus noster originarius per nationem et non per privilegium

non intelligendo tamen de illis factis cuibus originariis per privilegium qui fuerunt et steterunt de dictis scollis annis viginti vel inde supra. Et si aliquis de his qui sunt vel erunt in dictis scollis eligeret vel faceret contra id quod dictum est aliquem in aliquo dictorem offitiorum sit privatus perpetuo illa ex dictis scollis batitorum in qua esset, et sit addatur in matricula cuiuslibet ex dictis scollis batitorum pro observatione eorum que supradicta sunt — 12

Ser Leonardus Sanuto consiliarius

Vult quod possint esse in dictis offitis quilibet civis noster per privilegium qui fuit et steterit de dictis scollis annis quindecim vel inde supra — 3
de non — 0

non sinceri — 0
APPENDIX C

GENTILE BELLINI'S CONTRACT WITH THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI S. MARCO


Retranscribed here because I make the argument in chapter 4 that Gentile's payment has been misinterpreted by scholars.

+ Iesus MCCCCLXVI adi XV dezembrio

Chovenzion e pati fati chon maistro Zentil Belin de plui lavori apar qui de soto e prima disse chusi.

Sia manifesto a chi vedra questo schrito chome miser Antonio Zivran vardian dela schuola de misser san Marcho é romaxi dachordo chon maistro Zentil Belin pentor el qual maistro Zentil de far suso la dita schola over sala de la dita schuola de misser San Marcho do teleri de pentura suso terlise i qual teleri lui a nele man suso i qual el de far suso uno historia chome faraon esci fuora dela zita chon el so ezerzito e chome el se somerse et in laltro chome el so populo se somerse e chome laltro populo de Moise fuza nel deserto chome in parte a mostro per el disegno el de far el dito lavor ben e dilizentemente e meter boni cholori azuro e horo chome achadra a tute sue spexe in modo chel stia a parangon con i altri.

E per so manifatura daver dala schuola del misser san Marcho ducati zento zinquanta senza queli li ha promexo ser Nicolo dale Carte el pagamento daver in questo modo che subito inzesado che havera i diti teleri daver per chapara ducati 5, chome lui havera poi desegnadi de aver ducati 12...
1/2 el resto del pagamento de aver secondo che de tenpo in tenpo el lavorera e chusi de tenpo in
tenpo i se de andar dagando danari et faendo el suo dover anchora lui habia el suo, et perche el
dito maistro Zentil se ubiga far mior e maior opera over tanta chome quella de so padre maistro
Jacomo Belin faendo chome e dito de aver de so manifatura tanto per tanto quanto sara plui
fatura e mancho fatura de quella del dito maistro Jacomo Belin de aver plui e mancho.

In margin: mercado fatto cum maistro Zentil Belin depentor.

Note: Nicolo dale Carte was scrivan of the Scuola.
APPENDIX D

TWO LEGAL DOCUMENTS IN WHICH GENTILE BELLINI USES HIS IMPERIAL PREROGATIVES

Document 1. 7 June 1475. Gentile Bellini makes the presbyter Andrea Marin a notary and "one who draws up legal documents" (tabellio): ASV, Miscellanea Atti Diplomatici e Privati, b. 44, n. 1304 bis. Published in part in Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, Gentile Bellini, Stuttgart, 1985, 108, doc. 12. This document is transcribed in full to demonstrate how Gentile employed his title of Count Palantine. The document does not mention that Gentile was also a knight.

In nomine dei eterni Amen. Inperialis providentia culminis gererens interris publicam

auctoritatem et divine Maiestatis ymaginem cuius ineffabilis potentia dat esse rebus et dispenssat munera gratiarum ordinans suo motu creaturarum conditiones et status et totus rei publice decus et robur tabelionatus offitium introduxit ut legiptima humanorum actuum negotia que ad labilem memoriam rationabils creature lubrica deberet in(?)oblivio conscripta manu publice perssone imperialis auctoritate constitute reperirentur in suo sed non valens ipsi imperialis munifficientia cunctaque multorum utilitas et necessitas vel publicum exposcit comodum proprio adimplere iudice princeps comites duces et proceres sacri sui inperii fideles ordinant quorum devotionum suo satisfatiens desiderio onera imperialia et obsequa decorantur naque(?) passi(?) omnibus utilia fecit temperie(?) laudabili concludunt hinc est quod serenissimus princeps et excelentissimus dominus dominus Federicus divina favente clementia Romanorum felicissimus Inperator et semper augustus Ausrte Scirie dux etc. spectabilem virum dominum Gentilem Bellinum Venetum filium spettabili domini Iacobi Bellini comitem palatinum sui sacri lateranensi palatii constituit fecit et creavit eidemque dedit plenam licentiam et auctoritatem notarios et tabeliones publicos faciendi et creandi prout in privilegiis imperialibus superinde confectis a me visis et
lectis notario infrascripto plenius continetur prefactus spectabilis dominus Gentilis Belino comes auctorictate sibi concessa per prefactum serenissimum dominum inperatorum Romanorum semper augustum etc. Christi nomine invocato sapientem dominum presbiterum Andream filium ser Zacharie Marino de Venettiis coram eo genibus flexis exmittentem ac instanter et devote petentem publicum et autenticum notarium et tableionem fecit constituit et creavit ipsumque de dignitate et officio tableionatus publice exercendo ubique locorum et terrarum in contractibus et ultimis voluntatibus ac judiciorun actibus necnon in omnibus aliis et singulis faciendis et exercendis que ad dictum pertinent et spectant officium dextra dicti domini presbiteri Andree Marino sua sacra manu primum tacta cum pena et calamo ut moris est, legitime investivit recepto prius ab eodem presbitero Andree vice et nomine sacri Romani inperii fidelitatis debito iuramentto qui presbiter Andreas tactis corporaliter sacris scripturis iuravit in verbo veritatis et solemniter promisit se prope tuo fidelem fore et quod insuprascripta testamenta et alias ultimas voluntates non scribet in publicam formam in papiro nec in carta prius abrasa vel scripta sed in carta membrana munda et ipsa instrumentta et ulitimas voluntates ac dicta et testificationes testium fideliter scribet et [dict?]as testificationes et dicta testium occulte servabit nulique pandet donec debuerint aut mandato iudicis seu alias exigente iusticia publicari et quicquid ad mandantibus et contrahentibus audiet fideliter scribet et clare leget rogata seu instrumenta vel scripturam alicuius fraudis scienter non scribet causas(?) miserabilum personarum maxime pupilorum orfanorum et viduarum pro posse manu tenebit eidemque omnia et singula que ex debito offitii tableionatus facienda occurrerant et scribenda omni falsitate et dolo remotis iuste pure ac fideliter faciet non atendingo munera odium vel amorem, dans et concedens prefactus dominus comes predicto presbiter Andree liberam auctoritatem et plenam potestatem in dignitate et officio tableionatus omnia et singula faciendi exercendi et operandi ubique locorum que ad
dictum officium de iure vel de consuetudinis pertinent et spectant insuper prefactus dominus comes auctoritate cesarea eundem presbiterum Andream de officio(?) iudicis ordinarii et dignitate legiptime investivit ipsi virtute imperialis potestatis de gratia concedendo quod ubique locorum et per totum Romanum imperium possit et valeat legiptime constituere et creare tutores curatores ac mondinaldos, nec non aparenbibus(?) liberos suos quos in potestate haberent emancipare con consensu tamen ambarum partium(?) et adoptionibus et arogationibus possit et vallet auctoritatem inpartiri et decreptum interponere et omnia et singula alia facere et exercere possit que ad officium iudicatus viderit quodlibet pertinere inquorum omnium evidens testimonium robur perpetuum et memoriam sempiternam prefactus dominus comes presens publicum instrumentum per me notarium infrascriptum scribi iusit et sui soliti sigili appensionum muniri. Actum Venetiis in ducali palagio in conscilio Maiori Anno nativitatis dominice MCCCCLXXV Indictione VIII die VII mensis iunii presentibus venerabilis viro presbitero Antonio benefitiato ecclesie sancti Felicis et ser Stefano ser Nicolai de Antibaris testibus ad hec vocatis specialiter et rogatis.

S.T. Ego presbiter Lodovicus Rubeo de Venettis publicus imperiali auctoritate notarius predictis omnibus interfui rogatus scripssi signumque meum notarie apposui consuetum infidem et testimonium omnium premissorum

Document 2. 28 August 1501. Gentile Bellini makes Tomaso son of Giovanni (?) Petri de Laude a notary and ordinary judge: ASV, CIN, b.29, I, Giovanni Bonetti, fasc. VIII (1), 28 Agosto 1501. Published in part in Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, Gentile Bellini, Stuttgart, 1985, 116-117, doc. 55. This document is transcribed in full to demonstrate how Gentile employed his title of
Count Palantine and to show that, after his trip to the Ottoman court of Sultan Mehmet, he was referred to as a knight.

Privilegium notariorum

In Christi nomine amen. Anno nativitatis eiusdem millesimo quingentesimo primo indictione quarta die vero vigesimo octavo Augusti mensis. Nobilis et mirificus dominus Gentilis Belinus venetus Eques quondam domini Iacobi Comes Palatinus ad presens habitator in confinio Sancti Geminiani iuxta eius previlegium patentissimum bulla Imperatoris Romanorum fulta datum Venetiis die terciodecimo mensis februari anno domini millesimo quadrengentesimo sexagesimo nono, regnorum nostrorum romani vigesimo nono, Imperii decimo septimo, Ungarie vero decimo.

Principio Federicus divina faventes clementia Romanorum imperator semper Augustus Ungarie Dalmatie Croacie etiam dux ac Austrie Stirie Arinthie et Carmole dux et cetera creavit dominum Tomam filum ser Ioanni(?) Petri de Laude notarium et iudicem ordinarium et consuetum.

Venetiis actum in doxa prefati domini et presentibus ser Ioane Antonio Licinio quondam Ioannis de confinio Sancti Stefani de Muriano et Ieronimo filio ser Alexi de confinio Sancti Martini pictore et Luca filio ser Andreae preconis de confinio Sancti S[e]verii rogatis.
Figure 1  Jacopo, Giovanni, and Gentile Bellini. *Triptych of St Sebastian, of the Nativity, of St. Lawrence, and of the Virgin*, 1460-64. Tempera on panel. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.
Figure 2  Attributed to Gentile Bellini. Sultan Mehmet II, c.1480? Oil (19th-century repaint) on canvas, perhaps transferred from wood. 69.9 x 52.1 cm. The National Gallery, London. Note: according to The National Gallery, “The painting is almost entirely repainted, especially in the figure.”
Figure 3   Titian. *Self-Portrait*, 1562-64. Oil on canvas. 96 x 75 cm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
Figure 4  Gentile and Giovanni Bellini. *Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria*, 1504-07. Oil on canvas. 347 x 770 cm. Pinoteca di Brera, Milan.
Figure 5  Gentile Bellini. *Madonna and Child with Donors*, c. 1460. Tempera on panel. 74 x 46 cm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
Figure 6  Giovanni Bellini. *Madonna and Child with Saints and a Donor*, 1490s. Oil on panel. 73 × 124 cm. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 7  Giovanni Bellini and studio. *The Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Peter and Mark and a Donor*, 1505. Oil on poplar, 91.4 X 81.3 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
Figure 8
Gentile Bellini. Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco, 1496.
Tempera and oil on canvas. 367 x 745 cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.
Figure 9  Charter of division between the brothers Giovanni and Jacopo Bellini, sons of the deceased Nicolò, 13 September 1440. Venice, State Archives, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 149, Protocollum mei Victoris Pomino, c. 55v.
Figure 10  Jacopo Bellini acknowledges receipt of his wife Anna’s dowry, 23 July 1429. Venice, State Archives, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 212, fasc. notaio T. de Tomei. Documento 1429, luglio 23. The abbreviated “quondam” signifies that Nicolò was deceased.
Figure 11  Gentile Bellini. *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lorenzo* (detail), 1500. Venice, Gallerie dell’Accademia.
Figure 12  Giovanni Bellini. *Madonna with Child*, ca. 1455. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.
Figure 13  (?:) Giovanni Bellini. *Chapter of the Order of the Crescent*, 1453. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, ms. 940, fol. Cv.
Figure 14  (?) Giovanni Bellini. *Saint Maurice*, 1453. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, ms. 940, fol. 34v.
Figure 15  (?) Giovanni Bellini. Allegory of Venice, 1453. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, ms. 940, fol. 39.
Figure 16  (?) Giovanni Bellini. *Jacopo Antonio Marcello*, 1453. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, ms. 940, fol. 38v.
Figure 18  Gentile da Fabriano. *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, c.1420. Tempera on panel. 95.7 x 56.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Figure 19  Jacopo Bellini. *Madonna of Humility with Donor* (Lionello d’Este?), c. 1441. Tempera on panel. 60.2 x 40.1 cm. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 20  Jacobello del Fiore. *St. Lucy* altarpiece, c.1410. Pinacoteca Civica, Fermo.
Figure 22  Michele Giambono. *St Chrysogonus on Horseback*, c.1450? Panel. 199 x 134 cm. Chiesa di San Trovaso, Venice.
Figure 23  Michele Giambono and (?) others. *Birth of Mary and Presentation of the Virgin*, c. 1440-50? Mosaics. Mascoli chapel, Church of San Marco, Venice.
Figure 25  Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini. *Four Fathers of the Church Triptych*, 1446. Accademia, Venice.
Figure 26  Michele Giambono, *Stigmatization of Saint Francis*, c. 1430s. Formerly in Cini collection, Venice.
Figure 27  Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini. *Adoration of the Magi*, c.1444. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Figure 28  Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini. Central panel of the *Nativity* polyptych, 1447. National Gallery, Prague.
Figure 29  Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini. *The Marriage of Saint Monica*, part of an altarpiece originally in the church of Santo Stefano, c. 1445. Accademia, Venice.
Figure 30  Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini. *St. Apollonia is Blinded*, c. 1449. Accademia Carrara, Bergamo.
Figure 31  Jacopo Bellini. *Madonna and Child*, 1448. Tempera on canvas on panel. 50 x 45 cm. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.
Figure 32  Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni Bellini. (?) *Gattamelata* altarpiece reconstruction. 1460. Panels dispersed.
Figure 34  Michele Giambono. *Madonna with Child* (detail), c. 1430(?). Museo Civico, Bassano.
Figure 35  Pisanello. *Portrait of Leonello d’Este*, c. 1444. Tempera on wood. 26 x 18 cm. Accademia Carrara, Bergamo.
Figure 37  Jacopo Bellini. *Studies of Four Classical Monuments*, c.1440. Paris Book, fol. 44. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 38 Andrea Mantegna. *The Trial of Saint James* (detail), 1450-51. Fresco. Destroyed in World War II. Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua.
Figure 39  Anonymous. Drawing after a lost fresco by Altichiero depicting a scene based on the *De Bello Judaico* of Flavius Josephus. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 42  Altichiero. *Beheading of Saint Catherine* (detail), 1379-84. Fresco. Oratory of S. Giorgio, Padua.
Figure 45  Giovanni Bellini. *Saint Francis in the Desert*, c. 1478. Oil on panel. 120 x 137 cm. Frick Collection, New York.
Figure 46  Jacopo Bellini. *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, c. 1445. Paris Book, fol. 64v-65r. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 47  Altichiero. *St. George on the Wheel*, 1379-84. Fresco. Oratory of S. Giorgio, Padua.
Figure 50  Daniel Maze and Elisabetta Fava. *Barrel Vault from Jacopo Bellini’s An Architectural Setting with the Presentation of Our Lady.*
Figure 51  Elisabetta Fava. *Cross Section of An Architectural Setting with the Presentation of Our Lady.*
Figure 56  Gentile da Fabriano. *Adoration of the Magi*, 1421. Uffizi, Florence.
Figure 57  Altichiero. *Adoration of the Magi*, 1379-84. Fresco. Oratory of S. Giorgio, Padua.
Figure 58  Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni Bellini. Adoration of the Magi, probably a predella of the Gattamelata Altarpiece, 1460. Tempera on panel. 28 x 57 cm. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara.
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Giovanni Bellini. Presentation at the Temple, c. 1460-64. Tempera on wood. 80 x 105 cm. Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice.
Figure 62  (?) Jacopo Bellini. Often attributed to Gentile Bellini. *Portrait of a Doge, probably Pasquale Malipiero*, 1457-62. 53.3 x 42.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
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Figure 66  *Tabernacle frame*. Veneto, early 16th century. Wood. 53.3 x 45.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.
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Figure 69  Unknown. *Virgin and Child with Donor*, c. 1315. Tempera, gold on wood. 1.68 x 0.88 m. S. Maria Minor, Zadar, Croatia.
Figure 70  (?) Lorenzo Veneziano. *Madonna and Child with Donor* (Pietro de Gigi), c. 1360. Tempera on panel. 75 x 60cm. Palazzo Vescovile, Imola.
Figure 72  Jacopo Bellini. *St Bernardino da Siena*, 1450-55. Tempera on wood. 30 x 21 cm. Private collection.
Figure 74  Andrea Mantegna. *Presentation in the Temple*, c. 1455. Tempera on wood, 67 x 86 cm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
Figure 75  Jacopo Bellini. *Lamentation*, c. 1455. Paris Book, fol. 7v. Louvre, Paris.
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Figure 77  Gentile Bellini. *Saint Mark and Saint Theodore*, c. 1464. Organ doors. 4.3 x 2.1 meters. Chiesetta San Teodoro in Basilica San Marco, Venice.
Figure 78  Gentile Bellini. *Saint Jerome and Saint Francis*, c. 1464. Organ doors. 4.3 x 2.1 meters. Chiesetta San Teodoro in Basilica San Marco, Venice.
Figure 79  Antonio Visentini. *Interior of San Marco*, 1726. Published in Visentini and Zatta, (1761; 1991), 55, Tav. 11.
Figure 80    Jacopo de' Barbari. *Map of Venice* (detail), 1500. Woodcut.
Figure 81  Unknown. *Statue of Saint Theodore with a Dragon*. Modern copy of original (currently in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale, Venice), which itself is a pastiche of Roman and Medieval parts. Piazza San Marco, Venice, Italy.
Figure 82  Unknown. *Saint Paul the Hermit*, c. 1250. Mosaic. Basilica San Marco, Venice.
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Figure 86    Jacopo Bellini. *Lions*, c. 1455. Paris fol. 59v. Louvre, Paris.
Figure 87 Andrea Mantegna. *Saint Euphemia*, 1454. 1.71 x0.78 m. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.
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Figure 91  Gentile Bellini. *Miracle during the Procession in Piazza San Marco* (detail of façade), 1496. Tempera and oil on canvas. 367 x 745 cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.
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Figure 100  Giovanni Mansueti. *Healing of the Daughter of Ser Benvegnudo of San Polo*, c. 1505. Tempera on canvas, 369 x 296 cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.


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