Odoni’s Façade The House as Portrait in Renaissance Venice

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Whoever wishes to see how clean and candid his mind is should look at his face and his house, look at them, I say, and you will see as much serenity and beauty as one can desire in a house and in a face.¹

In this sentence from a letter to the Venetian citizen Andrea Odoni (Figure 1), Pietro Aretino conflates two tropes of Italian Renaissance architectural theory. First, he makes an analogy between bodies and buildings: Odoni’s face is compared to his house. Second, he alludes to the idea that a house ought to accurately represent its owner: both the face and the house denote the animo (mind or spirit) “inside.”² In employing the metonymic metaphor of house/inhabitant, Aretino was surely influenced by his friend Sebastiano Serlio, who had begun publishing his famous architectural treatise the year before (1537).³ But Aretino’s literary use of the metaphor is particularly complex and layered.⁴ For Serlio and other theorists, the relationship between man and house was essentially symbolic; one could represent a man’s character and status, translate it in a sense, into the language of orders and ornament: the house is a symbol invented by the architect to represent the patron.⁵ As I will demonstrate, Aretino’s conception of the relationship between house and owner is iconic and indexical as well as symbolic, for he conceives of the house as a portrait of the owner. Since the owner makes decisions about its decoration and interior space, it is also in effect a self-portrait.⁶ For Aretino, houses do not just represent their inhabitants; they are literally “embodied” by them and thus are “endowed with subjectivity, as quasi-agents rather than mere backdrop in the social drama.”⁷

In a letter of 27 October 1537, Aretino used the house/inhabitant metaphor to describe himself, attributing the observations to his friend Giulio Camillo.⁸

[Camillo]... used to take delight in remarking to me that the entrance to my house from the land-side, being dark and crooked, with a beastly stairway,⁹ was like the terrible name I had acquired by revealing the truth; and then, he would add that any one who came to know me would find in my pure, plain, and natural friendship the same tranquil contentment that was felt on reaching the portico and coming out on the balconies above.¹₀

Aretino compares the two parts of his house, the back entrance and the principal room and front, to his own multiple “façades”—his terribilità contrasted with his “pure, plain and natural friendship.” To visit Aretino’s residence is like entering into the man himself; one passes through a sequence of spaces that physically evoke his contradictory persona.¹¹

Aretino uses the house/inhabitant analogy in his letter to Odoni to simultaneously describe the cittadino’s house and evoke his character. (The full text of the letter is translated in Appendix 1.) The passage that begins my essay sets up the conceit and also contains an important double meaning that, to my knowledge, has not previously been noted. Aretino employs the word fronte to mean both building...
front (façade) and forehead (as synecdoche for face). As the social context of the letter makes clear, Aretino chose this word very deliberately. Aretino wrote to Odoni in the first place because of their mutual friendship with the painter Girolamo da Treviso il Giovane, who, it happens, was responsible for frescoing the façade of Odoni’s house some years earlier (probably in 1531–32). On the one hand, Aretino is saying that Odoni’s face and his house reveal his character; on the other hand, he says that both the façade and the interior of the house (the “abitazioni”) are products of Odoni’s animo.

Aretino does not compare Odoni’s house so much to his body as to his face, and in this sense he suggests an analogy with portraiture. Aretino used the word fronte often when writing about portraiture, one of his favorite subjects, and with good reason. In modern Italian, the expression “avere qualcosa scolpito in fronte” (to have something carved on one’s forehead—notably an artistic metaphor itself) means to show one’s thoughts, often unintentionally, in one’s facial expression. The saying stems from Petrarch: “spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge” (one may often read the heart upon the brow). The concept underlies Aretino’s descriptions of several portraits by Titian, and in Ludovico Dolce’s dialogue on art theory, the character named and fashioned after Aretino espouses the proverb. Writing about Titian’s portrait of Daniele Barbaro, the real Aretino exclaims: “the elevation of his thought, the generosity of his mind, and the clarity of his soul are seen within the regal space of his serene countenance [fronte].” In the face of the duchess of Urbino, also painted by Titian, Aretino sees more feminine virtues: “Chastity and beauty, eternal enemies, join themselves to her in her face [sembiante], and between her eyebrows one sees the throne of the Graces. . . . The other internal virtues ornament her face [fronte] with every marvel.” Self-styled the “Assiduous Demonstrator of Virtue and Vice,” Aretino was, in his own terms, a portraitist: “I strive to portray other men’s manners with the liveliness that the amazing Titian portrays this and that face.” In Aretino’s letters as well as in his other writings, both his descriptions of portraits and his descriptions of houses were a means to point out virtues and vices and draw his own verbal portrait of the sitter/inhabitant.

Aretino’s letter was a public pronouncement on Odoni’s character. Published in his second volume of letters in 1542, the literary set piece was not just a personal missive. It is no accident that Aretino used the man/house metaphor extensively in a letter to Odoni; there is considerable evidence that
Odoni was not only particularly interested in his self-image but was also much attuned to the power of the house, and the manner of living it conveyed, to create distinction. In 1527, he commissioned the painter Lorenzo Lotto to depict him surrounded by a variety of antiquities and other objects that identify him as an "art collector" (see Figure 1), a portrait that Aretino may have been rivaling or complementing in composing his own likeness of Odoni. Vasari also elided man, portrait, and house in his brief mention of Odoni's portrait, noting that Lotto "depicted Andrea Odoni, whose house in Venice is filled with paintings and sculptures." The inscription placed on Odoni's tomb in the Venetian church of Santa Maria Maggiore is indicative as well: "Andrea Odoni a citizen [civile] marked by the splendor of his mind [animi], his liberality, and elegance that surpassed his citizen [civilem] status." Odoni's epitaph expresses his desire to transcend his non-noble cittadino status, but more importantly, it suggests that he attempted this through his patterns of consumption and display. The words "splendor," "liberality," and "elegance" were all part of Renaissance discourse on the proper modes of spending, especially with regard to domestic activities and decoration.

In writing the letter at all, Aretino may have been suggesting Odoni's (over?) reliance on his house to create his reputation, a general characteristic that was specifically criticized in Renaissance theoretical writing. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Venetian Giovanni Caldiera, for example, noted, "What is truly appropriate to the houses of citizens is utility and not splendor... The householder should rather make himself worthy of admiration because of the virtue by which he excels than because of the sumptuous home by which he has desired to be conspicuous. Not the house but the virtue makes men immortal and equal to the gods." He, like others, was echoing Cicero: "a man's dignity may be enhanced by the house he lives in, but not wholly secured by it; the owner should bring honour to his house, not the house to its owner." Thus, Aretino's letter may not be entirely flattering. While it seems on the surface to point out Odoni's virtues (and this is the way it has nearly always been read in the past), it may also be slyly drawing attention to his flaws.

I propose that we address Aretino's implication that Odoni's house and façade can be read as multifaceted portraits of the man. The rest of this article focuses on the exterior of the house—its location, setting, and façade decoration—analyzing how Odoni used his façade to project a public persona that negotiated his liminal status as a non-noble citizen and head of an immigrant family. With the house, Odoni literally and metaphorically created a place for himself in Venetian society.

A Collector of Art and Taxes

Due to a fortuitous confluence of sources—visual, literary, and documentary—much is known about the exterior ornament, interior contents, decoration, and layout of the Casa Odoni. In addition to Aretino's letter, there is the innovative and unusual portrait by Lotto (signed and dated 1527), both of which represent him as a collector and lover of fine things. Odoni has been identified as Lotto's sitter because the painting was described, along with many other works of art in Odoni's collection, by the Venetian nobleman and art expert Marcantonio Michiel in 1532. Michiel's notes on Odoni's house are particularly important because they not only provide the artist and subject of the objects on display, but unlike any of Michiel's other descriptions of private collections, they are organized by room, as if on a tour. These notes, in turn, may be compared to an extensive inventory of all household property made by a notary some years later (in 1555), also conveniently organized by room. Finally, the frescoes both on the outside and on the inside of the house were described by several art enthusiasts and historians from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century before they faded completely from view.

The fact that we know more about Odoni's house than we know about him may itself be an indication of how important the house was to his identity. Piecing together details about Odoni's life is a sketchy enterprise, but research in the past two centuries has revealed some basic biographical information. Born in 1488, Andrea was the son of a wealthy Milanese immigrant to Venice, Rinaldo Odoni. However, his mother Marieta came from an established Venetian cittadino clan, and it was his maternal uncle, Francesco Zio, who initiated Andrea into the special privileges accorded Venetian cittadini, such as offices in the state bureaucracy and leadership positions in the religious charity organizations known as scuole. Odoni also inherited land, works of art, and (presumably) his taste for collecting from Zio, who was a well-known collector in his own right.

Odoni began his career in civil service working as Zio's assistant at the Rason nuove (the central accounting office of the state). By 1523, he had obtained the position of scrivan (accountant) at the Dazio dil vin (the office in charge of the tax on wine), one of the highest paid positions available to cittadini, worth about four hundred ducats a year. He reached a pinnacle in his career in 1532 when he was appointed co-condutor of the Dazio, meaning that he and his patrician partner Piero Orio were contracted to be in charge of collecting taxes on wine. The pair amassed record sums, perhaps due in part to shady dealings. Writing in 1533, when Orio and Odoni were still working together, Marino Sanuto noted that Piero Orio “has a bad reputation” (ba
in the cloth trade. The inventory of goods lists a consider-
ing that the inventory of the Odoni household lists only
there seems little reason for him to have had any kind of
very experienced in matters of business and accounting, but
was also, since it was common in Venice for brothers to
involved in the cloth trade, it is likely that Andrea Odoni
received. While some members of his family were well-edu-
cated or married into scholarly circles, there is no concrete
about Odoni’s background.50 He must have been

Much of Odoni’s “disposable income” was probably spent
(legitimate or illegitimate) Odoni may have had in addition
to his salary at the Dazio, it is difficult to determine his rela-
tive wealth.47 The common measures of affluence—land
ownership and dowry prices—do not indicate exceptional
prosperity. Odoni owned his own house and a few prop-
erties in Venice and on the terraferma, but his overall invest-
ment in real estate is not notable, even for a non-noble
cittadino.48 Although Andrea and his wife (Isabella Taiapiera,
née de Monte) had no children, his nieces received dowries
that were adequate but well below the allowable limit.49
Much of Odoni’s “disposable income” was probably spent
on the “cultural capital” of his house and art collection.

Not only is it difficult to calculate Odoni’s net worth, but
it is also hard to judge what kind of education he received.
While some members of his family were well-educated
or married into scholarly circles, there is no concrete
evidence about Odoni’s background.50 He must have been
very experienced in matters of business and accounting, but
there seems little reason for him to have had any kind of
humanist education or to have learned Latin. His handwriting
is more that of a merchant than a humanist, and it is
striking that the inventory of the Odoni household lists only
two books by title—a popular world history and a medical
text.51 From the evidence we have, it would seem that any
pretensions Odoni had to learning and culture lay largely in
his abitazioni and the collection of art and antiquities it
housed, an impression reinforced by Lotto’s portrait.

Odoni did not rise to the highest position in his scuola,
nor did he obtain a position in the prestigious chancellery.
Other than his collection, and his ability to collect taxes,
there was little that was remarkable about him. His public
persona in Venice thus must have been primarily as a tax
collector and probably a merchant as well. Through his
bureaucratic office Odoni would have had business dealings
with a very wide range of people, from wealthy patricians to
workers. Although prominent in many ways, he was both
an insider and an outsider in Venetian society. As a wealthy
cittadino, he was accorded a certain social status and eco-
nomic privilege. But as a non-noble he was politically disen-
franchised and excluded from the highest social elite. In
addition, despite the established Venetian heritage of his
mother’s family, in this patrilineal society Odoni remained
a newcomer, the son of a wealthy Milanese immigrant. In an
important sense, as the eldest of three brothers, Odoni
became the first male “founder” of the Venetian branch of
his family.52 It may have been precisely his liminal status and
familial ambition that led him to challenge the traditional
structures of Venetian oligarchical society—in the words of
his epitaph, to “surpass his cittadino status.” I suggest that
the most important way he sought to construct an elevated
social and cultural position for himself and his family was
through the fashioning of his “fronte e abitazioni.”

Location, Location, Location
Although neither the house nor the façade survive in any-
ting resembling their original state, the location of the
Casa Odoni may be determined on the basis of an address
given by a nineteenth-century visitor.53 The utterly nondes-
script residence now on the site (Figure 2) may incorporate
pieces of the original structure on the inside, but it does not
seem to preserve the original exterior or the interior lay-
out.54 The house must have been destroyed or rebuilt
beyond recognition sometime between 1829 and 1863 (and
probably before 1841).55

The location and size of the house within the city are
significant, however. Near the present-day Piazzale Roma,
the house was decidedly on the periphery (Figure 3). Nor
does it appear to have been very large. The inventory, which
presumably covered the entire house, lists a courtyard and
garden, three principal rooms, and six other more utilitar-
ian spaces. Yet, the site of the house had much to recom-

ODONI’S FAÇADE
Figure 2  House at Dorsoduro 3537–38, Fondamenta del Gaffaro, 
Venice, on the site of the Casa Odoni

Figure 3  Lodovico Ughi, Map of Venice, 1729, showing the location 
of Odoni’s house
mend it. The façade overlooked the Rio del Gaffaro (now Rio di Malcanton), a principal canal linking the upper part of the Grand Canal (near the current train station) to the lower part past the Rialto bridge (a shortcut around the large bulge created by the S-curve of the Grand Canal) (see Figure 3). Along the portion where Odoni lived the canal is also flanked by two fondamente (walkways that run alongside Venetian canals), creating an unusually wide-open and sunny space in the dense, congested fabric of the city (Figure 4).

The more peripheral situation of Odoni’s casa also had the advantage of allowing for a substantial garden by Venetian standards. Jacopo Barbaro’s perspectival view of Venice in 1500 shows the open space in back of the houses on the Fondamenta del Gaffaro (Figure 5). A property agreement of 1551 between the Odoni family and their neighbors mentions gardens behind both houses, and the inventory of the Odoni residence reveals that Odoni displayed fragmented statuary in his. Thus, while Odoni’s house was relatively modest in location and size, he fully exploited the possibilities of the site, creating an all’antica garden in the rear and commissioning large, colorful figures on the façade that looked out on a wide and busy canal. Despite its loca-
tion, the house certainly had a public presence; the colorful painted façade in particular put Odoni and his house "on the map."57

The Painted Face

We do not know if Odoni commissioned the fresco from Girolamo da Treviso in 1531–32 as a way of updating, regularizing, and classicizing a preexisting building or whether he had the house built with a painted façade in mind. 58 In either case, because the façade of a house was its most public feature, it bore the heaviest burden of satisfying measures of decorum. Above all, it was the façade that negotiated the house's place in the city and thus metaphorically, and to some extent literally, the owner's place in society. 59 The façade was both the external shell of the private home and a part of the urban fabric, and it had to suitably accommodate both roles. The sensitivity of the site was particularly marked in Venice because the physical circumstances of the city called for a "façade architecture" and because the political ideology of the Venetian state, the so-called myth of Venice, held that civic harmony stemmed from (a form of) social equality.60 Domenico Morosini's treatise On the Well-Managed Republic (begun 1497) provides an example of how these ideas could be applied to architecture. As summarized by Margaret King, Morosini's treatise made the point that "just as the citizens are to be all of one mind in the ideal republic, the façades of all the buildings should so harmonize according to one grand plan."61 On the one hand, the façade was an ornament to the city-state. 62 On the other hand, it was an articulation of the individual or family as distinct from the state.63

Built façades in Venice reveal how their owners addressed the tension between promoting themselves and honoring the city. Particularly relevant here is the house façade of Giovanni Dario, perhaps not coincidentally a cittadino like Odoni. Dario's house on the Grand Canal is not only more prominently located than Odoni's, but its façade is also covered in very expensive colored marbles (Figure 6). The rather large inscription on its surface, "URBIS GENIO IOHANNES DARIUS" (To the Genius of the City, Giovanni Dario [has dedicated this]), claims credit for the individual, while at the same time framing the palace as a civic contribution.64 There was a delicate balance to maintain between "ornamenting the city" and drawing attention to oneself and one's family, a subject of particular tension in the Venetian Republic where no citizen or family was to stand out too much from the rest.65 Every new façade had to negotiate this balance.

In examining Odoni's façade as his public face, three issues must be taken into account: Odoni's decision to fresco the front rather than ornament it in some other way, his choice of artist and style, and the invention of the iconography. Choosing to have his façade frescoed rather than "encrusted in marble" in the manner of Dario's could be read as a sign of Odoni's decorous modesty as well as his
lesser wealth. There is evidence to suggest that painted façades were seen as the more modest alternative, and certainly they were less expensive.66 But at the same time, they must have been quite flashy and attention-getting, especially in Venice where they were usually painted in color rather than monochrome, color that would have been spectacularly reflected in the water of the canals. Precisely because painted façades were less expensive but very eye-catching and rhetorical, they had the potential for dissembling—activating the Renaissance anxiety that a house, or a façade, might not properly depict the owner’s character or status.67

So while the location and size of Odoni’s house were decorous, the façade ornament was potentially more socially aggressive. The façade was probably painted in or just before 1532, the year Odoni became co-condutor at the Dazio dil vin and Michiel visited and made notes about Odoni’s collection. It thus is tempting to see the decoration of the façade as part of a successful strategy of self-promotion.68

The fashion for façade frescoes depicting figurative scenes, often of mythological subjects, began in earnest in Venice with the Fondaco dei Tedeschi (begun 1508), a very prominently located building painted by Giorgione and Titian.69 By ordering a façade fresco in this tradition, Odoni could be seen as advertising his artistic discernment. In Dolce’s Dialogo della pitura, intitolato l’Arteino (1557), the character named Aretino, exalting the art of painting in general, recommends this form of ornament: “the façades [facciate] of houses and palaces give far greater pleasure to the eyes of other men when painted by hand of a master of quality than they do with incrustations of white marble and porphyry and serpentine embellished with gold.”70 Painted façades thus were not only modest; they could also demonstrate the patron’s privilege of skillful art over mere rich material.71

While there are known examples of figurative façade frescoes on private Venetian houses that predate Odoni’s, his marked a stylistic shift, again highlighting its visual self-consciousness. Although Girolamo da Treviso was presumably trained in the Veneto, he traveled widely, working with many important central Italian artists, and developed a Raphaelesque romanista (Tuscan-Roman) style that differed considerably from established local practices.72 While the artist is known to have painted other façade frescoes, Odoni’s appears to have been the only one in Venice. Girolamo’s work for Odoni is thus “the first Venetian fresco in a modern, classical style,” since it predates by several years the larger and more centrally located Palazzo Talenti d’Anna, painted by Giovanni Antonio Pordenone for the cittadino Ludovico Talenti.73

A sense of the style of Odoni’s fresco may be determined from an almost contemporary large-scale fresco by Girolamo in the apse of the Chiesa della Commenda in Faenza (completed in 1533, following the artist’s sojourn in Venice). The fresco demonstrates Girolamo’s manner on a monumental scale, showing how he harmoniously integrated figures with fictive architecture to illusionistic effect (Figure 7).74 Odoni’s façade, like most painted in northern Italy (including the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Palazzo Talenti d’Anna), almost certainly also depicted a combination of figures and painted architectural motifs. On a frescoed façade in Treviso attributed to Girolamo, one can still make out putti seen through fictive windows at the top of the façade and painted pilasters at the mid-level where a large figurative scene of the judgment of Solomon was once visible (Figure 8).75 By hiring an artist so influenced by central Italian art, Odoni was making a significant statement of style. Mauro Lucco has suggested that Odoni was actively promoting a “third style,” between those of Titian and Pordenone, intended to represent the modern Roman manner. It may be that with this commission, Odoni embraced the opportunity to mark out his own “foreignness”; his aim was perhaps not just to fit into Venetian society, but in fact to distinguish himself within it.76

The façade was distinctive for its iconography as well as its style. A general idea of the overall composition and subjects depicted can be pieced together by comparing visual evidence from other painted façades and the descriptions of Odoni’s façade written by Vasari, Carlo Ridolfi, and Marco Boschini between 1550 and 1674.77 All the accounts agree in identifying the principal subject in the upper portion of the façade as, in the words of Boschini, “a chorus of gods.”78 Vasari and Ridolfi agree on the identification of two of these—Bacchus and Ceres. While Ridolfi describes them simply as “sitting on clouds” (sedente sopra le nubi), Vasari suggests a more narrative interaction: Bacchus is depicted as “fat and ruddy, with a vessel that he is upsetting, and holding with one arm a Ceres who has many ears of corn in her hands.”79

Connected with these gods was a second female figure. Vasari describes her as “Juno, seen from the thighs upwards, flying on some clouds with the moon on her head, over which are raised her arms, one holding a vase and the other a bowl.”80 Ridolfi is less positive in his identification: “a girl, I think one of the Graces, who pours wine from two vases, and some flying children with flowers in their hands.”81 Ridolfi’s idea that it might be one of the Graces may stem from Vasari, who also notes the appearance of “the Graces, with five little boys who are flying below and welcoming them.”82 Both writers signal the presence of flying putti, a common motif of painted façade decoration, also seen, for example, in the façade fresco in Girolamo’s hometown (see Figure 8). In sum, we have the interconnected figures of...
Ceres and Bacchus, a mysterious female figure (Juno, one of the Graces, or Diana—suggested by the moon on her head—or Venus—to be discussed below), flying putti, and possibly the Graces. All these principal figures were painted in color, although there seem to have been additional figures and ornament in chiaroscuro.83

These figures seem to have comprised the upper part of the façade. Below or in front of this, perhaps opening out of the front camera (bedsitting room) and/or the mezzado (office/study), were balconies (pergolato) with sumptuously carved figurative fretwork, which would have contrasted with the more modest use of fresco on the rest of the façade.84 Parts of at least one of these balconies survive and now ornament the façade of the Palazzo Torre, in another part of the city (1373 Rio Terrà San Leonardo; Figure 9).85 The Odoni arms that originally filled the central escutcheon have been replaced, but they are still preserved on the inside of the panel (Figure 10).86 The written descriptions of the

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**Figure 7** Girolamo da Treviso, Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist, Two Saints, and Sabba da Castiglione as Donor, 1533, Chiesa della Commenda, Faenza

**Figure 8** Girolamo da Treviso (?), remnants of a painted façade, Via Manin, no. 67, Treviso, showing fictive oval windows with frolicking putti still visible above
**Figure 9** Sculpted panels originally on the balcony of the Casa Odoni, now at no. 1373 Rio Terrà San Leonardo, ca. 1531–33 (?), Venice.

**Figure 10** View of the interior of the panels illustrated in Figure 9, showing a detail of the Odoni family arms.
façade suggest that frescoed color figures of the gods Apollo and Minerva flanked the balconies.87

Reading the Façade

Any interpretation of the iconography is severely hampered by the absence of the actual fresco and by the likelihood that the descriptions are approximate.88 Still, the written accounts provide enough to determine the overall tone of the façade and its principal themes. In his account, Vasari provides the beginning of an interpretation of at least parts of the iconography. He describes the Graces with “five little boys who are flying below and welcoming them, in order, so they signify, to make the house of the Udoni abound with their gifts.”89 And Girolamo painted Apollo and Minerva “to show that the same house was a friendly haven for men of talent.”90 The figures thus demonstrate that the house is full of Grace (full of the gifts of the Graces) and a friend and refuge of “virtuosi” (talented/virtuous/virile men). Vasari may have taken these interpretations from inscriptions that Ridolfi tells us once filled cartelle (cartouches) beneath the windows.91 Ridolfi could no longer read the words on the cartelle, so he probably relied on Vasari for his pronouncement on the meanings of the same figures; the flying putti “indicate the comfort and fortunes of Odoni,” and Apollo and Minerva “demonstrate the talents he derived from many virtues.”902

Of particular interest and clearly prominent on the façade were the interconnected figures Bacchus and Ceres. While these gods enjoyed a long iconographic tradition in later painting, in the early sixteenth century, they were not a common pictorial pair. At the most basic level, they could be paired as male and female gods of fertility or as allegorical representations of the two most fertile seasons, summer and fall. Odoni’s façade may also have referred to the proverb “SINE CERERE ET BACCO FRIGET VENUS” (Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus freezes), which would have been well-known among relatively educated Venetians through contemporary collections of proverbs if not from Cicero, Terence, or other classical authors. As the proverb books make clear, the general meaning of the adage was that food and wine incite desire and love. While the saying was not directly illustrated by Odoni’s time, there were several allusions to it in the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, published in 1499 in Venice by the Aldine Press. Illustrations of Venus, Bacchus, Ceres, and Aeolus (personifying the seasons) as individual reliefs decorating the base of an altar to Priapus seem to allude to the proverb, and in another part of the text, the inscription “To the gods—Venus the most reverend Mother and her son cupid, Bacchus, and Ceres have given of themselves” hangs on a plaquette above a doorway.93 The association of these particular gods with an entryway may have inspired the idea for Odoni’s façade.

If a reference to the proverb was intended, perhaps the second female figure, whose identity Vasari and Ridolfi dispute, was in fact Venus, who could then appropriately be accompanied by the Graces. What is clear is that the woman held two vessels—either a “vase” and a “bowl” held above her head, according to Vasari, or “pouring wine from two vases,” according to Ridolfi.94 While this recalls figures of Temperance diluting wine with water (discussed below), it could conceivably be Venus holding burning lamps, not unlike the nude woman, often identified as Venus, in Titian’s Sacred and Profane Love (circa 1514). This would fit the proverb since Venus would not be freezing now that she is in the presence of Bacchus and Ceres. An engraving (circa 1595) after a composition by Titian (one of the first surviving depictions of the subject in art) shows Venus holding a burning censer in the shape of a vase with figures of Ceres and Bacchus around her (Figure 11).95

The descriptive observations of Vasari and Ridolfi are as revealing, if not more, than their interpretative musings. Bacchus is described as “fat and ruddy,” knocking over a vessel (surely of wine), with a girl on his arm (Ceres)—an image of drunkenness, sexuality, and superfluity.96 On the positive side it is an image of abundance and fertility, on the other of lasciviousness and drunkenness. The other female figures (one carefully pouring wine, and the Graces) counter this image of excess with restraint and decorum. Similarly, the gods of the arts and knowledge, Apollo and Minerva, who are shown with weapons and armor—Apollo his bow and a cuirass and Minerva her lance and spear—also emphasize the marital and the intellectual as opposed to the amorous and the sensual.97 The ebullience of Bacchus and Ceres, which conveys the abundance and fertility of the Odoni house, is kept in check to some degree by the other major figures. The façade is simultaneously inviting and protective (particularly in the armor of Apollo and Minerva who stand guard either side of the balcony), appropriate qualities for this permeable barrier between self and society, house and city.98

The theme of fertility, abundance, and generosity is reiterated in the balcony decoration (see Figure 9). The two side panels represent mermaids with baskets of fruit on their heads and little satyrs nursing at their breasts.99 The standing putti between the middle and side panels also have baskets of fruit on their heads, and one of them urinates on the unsuspecting viewer below.100 These are all well-known allusions to fertility, human and agricultural.101 In the central panel, two tritons with forelegs raise an escutcheon that
once bore the Odoni arms. Hanging above the heraldic shield is a grotesque skull-like mask. The central panel thus seems to resonate with the more defensive characteristics of the façade. Given the consonance in theme, it would seem that the balcony was commissioned in conjunction with the frescoes. Such imagery signals the prosperity and generosity of the homeowner, or as Ridolfi puts it, “i commodi e le fortune dell’Odone.” Vasari refers to hospitality and conviviality when he calls the house “a friend and refuge of virtuosi.” Through an iconography of abundance, if not excess, Odoni demonstrated his liberality as well as the splendor and elegance of his life—the three qualities stressed in his tombstone inscription. In Renaissance writings about the home, hospitality and liberality were key aspects of virtuous consumption. This dimension of Odoni’s constructed persona also finds expression in the portrait by Lotto. The cittadino is depicted extending a statuette of Diana of Ephesus, a symbol of fecundity and abundance, to the viewer, who is a visitor to his house and collection.

While the façade fresco had an overall thematic coherence, it is more difficult to say that it had an iconographic program in the strictest sense. Selecting which mythological gods or scenes to depict on your façade was probably akin to selecting which saints to include in an altarpiece. One chose gods or stories that had personal associations. From this point of view, Odoni’s choice of subject makes a lot of sense. Odoni had at this point been working in the Dazio dil vin for at least nine years (since 1522), so he was closely connected to that commodity (and was probably campaigning for the position of co-condutor). He may also have been a wine merchant. The façade prominently depicted the god of wine, in a seemingly inebriated state. It also featured vessels and flowing wine: the vessel that Bacchus overturns and the female figure who, according to Ridolfi, pours wine from one container to another—images of excess and of constraint with regard to this substance.
These figures were placed in the most prominent part of the façade, the area that viewers described first. The figures would also have drawn attention because they were painted in color, in contrast to the elements executed in chiaroscuro and the fictive architectural framework. The viewer would probably have seen these gods, sitting on clouds, through framed openings. They could thus be said to “inhabit” the house—in a pictorial equivalent of a literary conceit used by the poet Girolamo Borgia in eulogizing the Villa Chigi in Rome:

But where Augustus Chigi founded his kingly palace and restored [thereby] a [truly] ancient splendor, Gods and their consorts at once descended again from the heavens vying among themselves to favor this one blessed house. Finally Bacchus and Love, the Graces, golden Venus, and Pallas vowed in a pact to inhabit just this place. Augustus [Chigi], a man is blest when benevolent gods love his dwelling; Men, too, compete to praise it with admiring words. 108

Interestingly, some of the same gods inhabit both residences, as if they were considered the most desirable housemates. And although Odoni’s house is hardly comparable to Chigi’s extravagant pleasure retreat on the banks of the Tiber, the two men may have had some epicurean characteristics in common.

While the Odoni façade may have alluded to a classical proverb (notably a lighthearted one), it could also be understood in a more ludic mode by passersby, who may or may not have grasped its more learned allusions. The depiction of a hefty Bacchus propped up against Ceres was also meant to be amusing, to suggest the owner’s own joviality and perhaps even a willingness to poke fun at himself.110 A jocular note may also be detected in Odoni’s portrait by Lotto. In the background, a small figure of Hercules ninus is positioned so that he appears to urinate into the vessel in which the larger adjacent statuette of Venus washes her feet, his powerful jet of (acidic) urine ecoring her ankle.110 The sculptures in the foreground, added late to the composition, also poke out from under the tablecloth in a humorous manner.111 The smaller headless nude female torso reclines against the looming male portrait head, as if suggesting what the male figure (who looks not unlike Odoni) has on his mind. Both the façade and the portrait signal Odoni’s learning and masculinity through humor and wit. This levity may have been an important counter to what might otherwise have been perceived as heavy-handed self-promotion.

At the same time, the classicizing subject matter and style of the façade also acted as an advertisement for the collection of antiquities and other art works housed within (and depicted in the portrait). Both the design of the balcony and the subject of Bacchus and Ceres can be tied to the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, that well-known monument of Venetian pseudo-classicism. 112 As visitors entered through the canal façade, they would have emerged into a world somewhat reminiscent of the protagonist Poliphilo’s dream as depicted in one of the book’s illustrations (Figure 12); the entrance hall was ornamented by statues in niches and led into a courtyard and garden strewn with fragmented statuary. Aretino pointedly commented that, upon entering Odoni’s house, he felt as though he had been transported to Rome, in particular to places where impressive classical statuary was on display. 113

Aretino may be explicitly alluding to the campaign to promote Venice as a “new Rome” in the years after the League of Cambrai and the sack of Rome. 114 Odoni’s façade (and possibly the structure of the house itself) was certainly part a new spurt of building in Venice after roughly 1520, when the depression caused by the War of the League of Cambrai had subsided. 115 With its novel central-Italian painting style and its iconographic classicism, the façade’s decoration may have been Odoni’s attempt to participate in the renovatio of Venice as a New Rome then being advanced by Doge Andrea Gritti in Jacopo Sansovino’s projects for the Piazza San Marco. Among his other works of art, Odoni displayed a painting of the Justice of Trajan with an architectural backdrop designed by the architect Serlio, a recent immigrant to Venice and a major exponent of central Italian classicism in the city. Odoni’s patronage of such a work suggests that he was interested in and connected to circles concerned with the development of a new architectural style in Venice—circles that included Odoni’s visitors, Aretino and Michiel. 116 While this stylistic revolution is commonly thought of as a top-down campaign instigated by Gritti, centered on the Piazza San Marco, and promulgated by elite patrician patrons, Odoni’s façade may have been a more modest contribution, in paint rather than stone, celebrating renewed peace and prosperity. 117

To get the full effect of the façade, we must envision it on the outskirts of town but on a major canal and very visible because the canal is two fundamente wide. The house was not particularly large, but it had a very brightly painted façade with a sumptuously carved balcony. The façade, both in subject and in ornament, proclaimed the classicizing, innovative tastes and knowledge of the owner. We can imagine Odoni himself coming out onto the balcony, framed by his coat of arms carved below and by the mythological “inhabitants” of his house depicted in the fresco.
above and to his sides—making of himself and his house a “degno and reale spettacolo” in the words of Aretino. Appearing thus, he became a kind of Bacchus, the god of wine, the ultimate authority regarding this commodity. Yet, he was a Bacchus also flanked by Apollo and Minerva so that he would appear as a sophisticated *bon vivant* within a classicizing architectural structure and amongst the company of the gods. But the images of abundance—the intertwined, (re)productive figures of the god of wine and the goddess of grain, the carved putti with baskets of fruit, the maritime figures of sirens and tritons—not only signaled Odoni’s wealth and liberality but also the renewed well-being of Venice. In this sense, the façade is about Venice as much as it is about Odoni, or more particularly it is about Odoni’s place in Venice. Celebrating Odoni’s relationship (through the Dazio dil vin) to the city and its economic prosperity, the façade does not just combine honor for the city and promotion of the self/family, it intertwines them. It was Odoni’s most public portrait and a statement of his citizenship; in the words of Leon Battista Alberti, “We decorate our property as much to distinguish family and country as for any personal display (and who would deny this to be the responsibility of a good citizen).”

By commissioning a painted façade, Odoni ornamented the city without explicitly flaunting his personal and familial wealth. At the same time, he undeniably drew attention to himself—his artistic discernment and cultural knowledge as well as his profession and position in Venetian society. What is remarkable about Odoni is the degree to which he was and is known for his house rather than for any other distinction; were it not for his painted façade, his collection, and his portrait, he would be unknown to us today. The example of Odoni demonstrates the degree to which, by the sixteenth century, consumption and display centered on domestic space could make a “Renaissance man.” Aretino’s letter to Odoni is a semi-ironic commentary on this state of affairs. Both Odoni and Aretino understood the power of the house not only to represent but, indeed, to create the man.
Appendix—Translation of Aretino’s Letter to Odoni

Do not think, my excellent man, that my waiting for the letter from England of signor Girolamo da Trevigi—a man most worthy of the reputation he has earned through the favor of that fortunate and religious [King] Henry—was due to my pride. Of every other defect I may be accused, but not of that vice. Certainly the desire to see you and your house was the reason that before I had that letter in hand I was given the pleasure of seeing your house and you. Whence your delay and your promptness injured me twice, and then pinned me, considering that your service to me—that is owed to me—caused me embarrassment. True, the kindness of the good Udono is so full of good fortune that whatever he does is without ceremony and without arrogance.

But whoever wishes to see how clean and candid his mind is should look at his face and his house, look at them, I say, and you will see as much serenity and beauty as one can desire in a house and in a face. If it were not for a little something: I would compare the chambers [bedrooms], the salon, the loggia, and the garden of the apartment in which you live to a bride who awaits her relatives coming to attend her wedding. So I must [do], it is so well-kept, tapestried, and splendid. I myself never visit that I do not fear to tread there with my feet, its floors are so exquisite. I don’t know what prince has such richly adorned beds, such rare paintings, and such regal decor. Of the sculptures I will not speak; Greece would have had the best of ancient form [art] had she not let herself be deprived of her [these] relics and sculptures.

For your information, when I was at court I lived in Rome and not in Venice; but now that I am here, I am in Venice and in Rome. When I leave here where I do not see marbles or bronzes, no sooner have I arrived there [at your house] than my soul enjoys that pleasure it used to feel when it visited Belvedere on Monte Cavallo or another of those places where such torsos of colossi and statues are seen. Whence one judges that earlier literature, including Dante’s

Notes

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2. Both ideas derive from classical writers—Aristotle, Cicer, and Vitruvius in particular—but were much elaborated by Renaissance theorists. The literature on buildings and bodies is vast. For a discussion focused on the façade, see Charles Burroughs, The Italian Renaissance Palace Façade: Structure of Authority, Surfaces of Sense (Cambridge, England, 2002), 31–12. For a recent discussion of the correspondence between houses and their owners, see Georgia Clarke, Roman House-Renaissance Palaces: Inventing Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Italy (Cambridge, England, 2003), 57–65.

3. This is argued convincingly by John Onians, Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance (Princeton, 1988), 299–301, who also allows that the influence might have gone both ways. Although Onians finds Aretino’s use of architectural simile “highly unusual in a literary context” (299), Aretino could have found inspiration in earlier literature, including Dante’s Convivio III, 8 (see n. 119 below).

4. The house/inhabitant analogy had broader diffusion in Renaissance culture as well. In a particularly graphic example, the loose woman Lena, in Ludovico Ariosto’s play by the same name, complains that her “front door” is so trafficked she might have to use the “back one” as well. Ludovico Ariosto, The Comedies of Ariosto, ed. and trans. Edmond M. Beame and Leonard G. Shroochchi (Chicago, 1975), 197 (act 5, sc. 11). This and other examples of popular usage are discussed in Elizabeth S. and Thomas V. Cohen, “Open and Shut: The Social Meanings of the Cinquecento Roman House,” Studies in the Decorative Arts 9 (Fall/Winter 2001–2), 64, 79. The analogy is alive and well in contemporary popular culture, for example, in the title of the television show Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.


6. The idea that a house reflects the identity of its owner is commonplace in our own culture, but we tend to think of the owner as the active agent who shapes the house into the image he or she wants. The Renaissance notion of the relationship between house and inhabitant has more abstract underpinnings. If one conceived of the house as a work of art (as men like Aretino and Serlio clearly did), then according to Renaissance artistic theory, the design of the house ought to be based on the study of nature (one of the underlying concepts of Alberti’s architectural treatise). What, then, is the referent? What is being depicted in domestic architecture? The answer is the owner/inhabitant. It is in this sense that the house is a portrait, a built body that imitates the natural body. This also explains why it was so important that the house be an accurate representation of the owner.

7. Burroughs, Italian Renaissance Palace Façade, 10. For an interesting and more generalized discussion of façade, portrait, and subject, as well as symbol, icon, and index as applied to architecture, without reference to Aretino’s use of the man/house analogy or to Odoni’s house, see ibid., 2–3, 29–30, 31–34. On the house as “embodiment of the family” and the “metaphori-
cal character” of the home, see Patrizia Fortini Brown, Private Lives in Renaissance Venice (New Haven, 2004), 24, 89.
9. Onians translates “di scala bestiale” as “bestial in scale” rather than the more common “with a beastly stairway.” Both translations are probably correct, but the phrase is typical of Aretino’s love of double meaning. The entrance has a beastly stair, Aretino’s dark side is beastly in scale. Aretino also used the stairway as a metaphor for himself in another letter dated 27 Nov. 1357: “So many gentlemen break in on me continuously with visits that my stairs are worn with their feet, like the pavement of the Campidoglio to triumphant chariots.” Quoted and translated in Patricia LaBalme, “Personality and Politics in Venice: Pietro Aretino,” in Titian: His World and His Legacy, ed. David Rosand (New York, 1982), 122.
10. Aretino to Domenico Bolani, letter no. 213, in Aretino, Lettere, libro primo, ed. Francesco Erspermer (Parma, 1995), 442–43. “La cui piacevolezza mi suo dire che l’entrata per terra di sì fatta abitazione, per essere oscura, mal destra e di scala bestiale, si simiglia a la terribilità del nome acquisitamoni ne lo sciorinar del vero. E poi sogiunge che chi me pratica punto, trova ne la mia pura, schietta e naturale amicizia quella tranquilla contentezza che si sente nel comparire nel portico e ne l’affacciarsi ai balconi sopradetti.” Translation based on Samuel Putnam, ed. and trans., The Works of Aretino (New York, [1933]), 2:181. Aretino apparently uses the word portico (portegio in dialect) in the Venetian sense, to refer to the principal salon of the piano nobile of Venetian homes. He may also be playing at another level with the analogy of body and house because the term “portego capraro” (dark entrance hall—which of there are many in Venice) in Venetian dialect/slang (here contrasted with the light portico above), can also mean cucu (arse), essentially the same metaphor used by Ariosto (see n. 4). Giuseppe Boerio, Dizionario del dialetto veneziano (Venice, 1615), 527. Aretino probably intended to liken entering his house to an act of sodomy. For Aretino’s frequent references to the cucu and sodomoy, see Raymond B. Waddington, Aretino’s Satyr: Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art (Toronto, 2004), 28–30.
12. The exact circumstances of the communication are difficult to decipher from the letter, but Girolamo is clearly the intermediary and in some sense responsible for the correspondence. In Aretino, Lettere, libro secondo, 153 n. 2, Erspermer suggests that Aretino asked his friend Girolamo to write Odoni on his behalf and was waiting for this communication to take place when Odoni extended Aretino an invitation to visit the house. For Aretino’s practice of beginning his letters in media res with reference to social connections, see Waddington, Aretino’s Satyr, 51–52.
13. Aretino is also alluding to Renaissance ideas of physiognomy, in which one could know the soul from an exterior reading of the body, particularly the face. On Aretino and physiognomy, see Luisa Freedman, Titian’s Portraits through Aretino’s Lens; and Waddington, Aretino’s Satyr, chap. 3.
21. Waddington, Aretino’s Satyr, 64, argues convincingly that the first volume of Aretino’s Letteres is visually and physically “designed to present itself as a portrait of the author as demonstrative orator, assigning praise and blame.” Interestingly, Aretino’s author portrait on the frontispiece depicts him inside an architectural frame that resembles a building or house. Ibid., fig. 19.
24. “ANDREAE VDONIO CIVI / INSIGNI ANIMI SPLENDORE / LIBERALITATE ATQUE ELEGANTIA / ETIAM SUPRA CIVILEM FORTY- 
NAM SPECTANDA / HIERONYMVS ET ALOYSVS FRATRES / MOERENTES SIBI AC POSTERIS PP. / VIXIT AN. LVII. OBIT A. 
MDXLV.” The inscription, now apparently lost, was recorded by Jacopo 
Morelli in [Marcantonio Michiel], Notizia d’opere di disegno nella prima metá 
del secolo XVI, ed. Jacopo Morelli (Bassano, 1800), 193. Emmanuele Antonio 
Cicogna also published the epitaph, taken from the “codice di Giovan 
Georgio Palfero” with very slight variations, in Delle inscrizioni veneziane 
(1824–53; Bologna, 1869), 3:454.

25. Evelyn Welch, “Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni 
Pontano’s De splendore (1498) and the Domestic Arts,” Journal of Design His-
tory 15, no. 4 (2002), 211–27; and Guido Guerzoni, “Liberalità, Magnificên-
tia, Splendor: The Classic Origins of Italian Renaissance Lifestyles,” in 
Economic Engagements with Art, ed. Neil Del Marci and Crauford D. W. 
Goodwin, annual supplement to History of Political Economy, vol. 51 
(Durham, N.C., 1999), 332–78. The term splendor was associated in partic-
ular with “virtuous and pleasurable” magnificence in the private sphere; see 
Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy 
(Los Angeles, 2001), 29–32. It is significant that the inscription makes no 
call to “magnificence,” a virtue that was accessible only to the most pow-
ervol and wealthy.

26. Giovanni Caldera, quoted in Margaret King, “Personal, Domestic, and 
Republican Values in the Moral Philosophy of Giovanni Caldera,” Rena-
issance Quarterly 28 (1975), 552. Caldera probably wrote the text in the early 
1460s.

27. Cicerio, quoted in Clarke, Roman House, 63 (see n. 2), who also discusses 
Caldiera.

28. For the suggestion that the letter is so hyperbolic that it verges on crit-
icism, see Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches,’” 960–61. Irene Favaretto, Arte 
antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della serenissima 
(Rome, 1990), 75, also notes: “Pietro Aretino descrisse la dimora dell’Odoni 
con parole piene di ammirazione, senza però riuscire a celare una punta di 
sottile ironia per il lusso e lo splendore qui profusi a piene mani.” Elissa 
Weaver, who helped with my translation, agreed that Aretino means to 
claim to “magnificence,” a virtue that was accessible only to the most pow-
ervol and wealthy.

29. The interior of the house, as well as the portrait by Lotto, will be ana-
alyzed in forthcoming publications.

30. Marcantonio Michiel, Der Anonymus Morelliano (Marcantonio Michiel’s 
Notizia d’opere di disegno), ed. Theodor Frimmel (Vienna, 1896), 82–86. 
Michiel’s manuscript was written ca. 1521–43. The notes on Odoni’s collec-
tion are grouped under subheadings for each room. Some of Michiel’s nota-
tions on other Venetian collections may be similarly organized, although 
in a less explicit manner. For the example of the collection of Taddeo Con-
tarini, see Sanuto, I diarii, ed. Rinaldo Fulin et al. (1879–1902; 

31. Odoni is first mentioned by Marino Sanuto in 1517, when he was 
rewarded for catching someone embezzling at the Dazio dil vin “per haver fatto alcuni sconti ad alcuni gen-
tiluomini contra li mandati del consiglio di X.” Codice Cicogna 2848, 
Diarri di Marcantonio Michiel 1511–1521, 235r, Biblioteca Museo Correr,
Venice. The following year, Giovanni della Vedova, notary at the Dazio, was charged with embezzlement but was allowed to keep the office after paying 200 ducats. Neff, “Chancellerie Secretaries,” 574. For further evidence, see Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches’,” 940 n. 113. Odoni had already been accused of stealing when he worked with this uncle, although the charges were subsequently dropped. On this occasion, Piero Orio testified for Odoni, so the relationship between the men was of long standing (see n. 36).

40. See, for example, Battilotti and Franco, “Regesti,” 79; Maria Teresa Franco, “Andrea Odoni” in I tempi di Giorgione, ed. Ruggero Maschio (Rome, Gangemi, 1994), 217; Shearman, Early Italian Pictures, 145 (see n. 22); Michel Hochmann, Peintures et commanditaires à Venise (1540–1628), Collection de l’École Française de Rome, vol. 155 (Rome, 1992), 191; and Coli, “Lorenzo Lotto,” 186 (see n. 22).

41. Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane, 3:434, quotes unspecified “cronache nostre.” Although I have not been able to determine for certain which chronicle Cicogna used, his phrasing is very similar to that in the late sixteenth/early seventeenth-century manuscript “Le due Corone della Nobiltà di Alessandro Zilioli, Tomo II,” MS It. VII, 5 (7926) in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Marciana, Venice. An entry in Sanudo’s I daresi (50:47) has Odoni acting as a middleman in a wine transaction (worth 9250 ducats!), but it is not obvious whether he was acting for the Dazio or in his own business interest. However, Odoni is not listed as a member of the Scuola dei Mercanti. Scuole Piccole, b. 406, San Cristofalo, Mariagola 1377–1545, ASV.

42. According to Ugó Tucci, “Contacts were especially close between the category of merchant and that of public functionary: the incidence of men employed in both sectors at the same time and equally actively is very frequent. . . . [In the case Tullio Fabbri] we see him carrying on an intense commercial activity which was so closely bound up with this public office [rassonatario (accountant)] that it would be difficult to establish which of the two was his principal occupation.” “The Psychology of the Venetian Merchant in the Sixteenth–Century,” in Renaissance Venice, ed. J. R. Hale (London, 1973), 161.

43. Cancelleria inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 39, c. 58, ASV. Odoni’s brothers followed him in his position at the Dazio, see Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 145.

44. The following list of items appears in Cancelleria inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 39, c. 58, 5r and v, ASV; and in Gronau, “Beiträge zum Display of Distinction,” 145–153.

45. The address given by Cicogna is Fondamenta del Gaffaro numero civico 52, as cited in Zilioli, 250. In the case of Odoni’s marriage to Isabella, see Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 154–56; and Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches’,” 942. On Odoni’s nieces’ dowries, see Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 153–56; and Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches’,” 941–42. Yet, a large number of scuola members attended Odoni’s funeral and were given substantial alms, an indicator of Odoni’s wealth and prominence. Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, register entitled “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, et confratelli, 1450–1545,” c. 99v, ASV.

46. On the Venetian practice of renting storage rooms (magazzini), see Jan S. Niehuis, “Lorenzo Lotto,” 186 (see n. 22).

47. Tucci, “The Psychology of the Venetian Merchant,” 362, notes that a post as customs officer at Purgò had “an annual stipend of 200 ducats and the certainty of ‘helping oneself’ to more than 40,000 a year—a figure, which, in its evident exaggeration well expresses the expectations which rested with jobs of this kind.”

48. Tucci even super le decime, b. 100, c. 274 (Mar. 30, 1538); and b. 106, c. 703 (Oct. 27, 1540), ASV; Battilotti and Franco, “Regesti dei committenti,” 80–81, and Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 155–56. Odoni can be compared with some cittadini working in the chancellery who owned substantially more land and had much higher incomes. See appendix to Neff, “Chancellerie Secretaries,” esp. entries for Alessandro Capella, Giovanni Battista Ramsius, and Gasparo della Vedova.

49. I have not been able to find a contract for Odoni’s marriage to Isabella or otherwise determine the date of their marriage. It certainly took place after 1527, when Isabella’s first husband died, and very possibly not until between 1538 and 1540 when Odoni first declared ownership of land that was part of Isabella’s dowry from her first marriage. See Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 155–56; and Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches’,” 942. On Odoni’s nieces’ dowries, see Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 153–56; and Schmitter, “‘Virtuous Riches’,” 941–42. Yet, a large number of scuola members attended Odoni’s funeral and were given substantial alms, an indicator of Odoni’s wealth and prominence. Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, register entitled “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, et confratelli, 1450–1545,” c. 99v, ASV.

50. Zio, Odoni’s uncle, was procurator of the convent of Santa Maria degli Scalzi, a position that probably required him to know Latin, and in his testament he was anxious to arrange for the education of his illegitimate son. Schmitter, “Display of Distinction,” 41–42. Odoni’s brother Alvise married the granddaughter of a doctor in Padua, who was indirectly related to Zio. Ibid., 141. Odoni’s nephew, Rinaldo (son of his brother Gerolamo), was a scholar, prelate, and collector who studied philosophy with Flavio Orsini in Perugia and published a book on Aristotle’s conception of the soul. Rinaldo’s sister Caterina (mistakenly identified as Margherita by Cicogna) married the scholar and publisher Paolo Manuzio. See Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane, 3:436–37.

51. A sample of Odoni’s handwriting can be found in his tax declaration (descima), Dei vivi sopra le decime, b. 100, c. 274, ASV. The two titles of books found in the Casa Odoni are “El supplimento delle chroniche coperto di carton, del padre Filippo carmelitano” and “Libro de medicina de Mro Din da Fiorenza.” Cancelleria inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 37, c. 58, 15r and 15v, ASV; and Gronau, “Beiträge zum Anonymus Morellianus,” 71. The first book was probably an Italian translation of the Supplementum chronice solarii by Fra Jacopo Filippo Foresti di Bergamo (1434–1520), a very popular world history. The second was one of several books and commentaries written by the Florentine physician Dino del Garbo (ca. 1280–1327). I am grateful to Paul Grendler, Karen Reeds, and Valery Rees for their help identifying the authors and texts. In the mezzado, a mezzanine room used as a business office or study, there were another “[ly]treze pezzi di libri de diversa sorte, coperti de cuoro,” but the word “libro” is used elsewhere in the inventory to describe account books. See Gronau, “Beiträge zum Anonymus Morellianus,” 68. Since most of the art collection remained in the house until Alvise’s death, it is likely that books owned by Odoni did as well.

52. When his eighteenth-century descendants applied for “cittadini originarivi” status, they used Odoni to prove the antiquity and “nobility” of their family. Avogaria di Comun, Cittadinanze Originarie, b. 108, c. 274 (dated 1716), ASV. Such petitions typically present genealogical information for only the two previous generations.

53. The address given by Cicogna is Fondamenta del Gaffaro numero civico 443. The modern address is Dorsoduro 3537–18 (Fondamenta del Gaffaro).
faro), as noted by Lino Moretti in his edition of Giuseppe Tassinari, _Curiosità veneziane ovvero origini delle denominazioni staddali di Venezia_ (1863; Venice, 1970), 737 n. 1. Also see Andrew Martin, “‘Amica e un albergo di virtuosi.’ La casa e la collezione di Andrea Odolini,” _Venezia Cinquantenaria_ 19 (2000), 157. I independently came to the same conclusion about the location using _planimetria e cavature_. Note: the new Hotel Palazzo Odolini on the opposite side of canal was never Odoni’s residence. The owners of the hotel have capitalized on Odolini’s reputation for splendid living—his “albergo di virtuosi”—in an ingenious, if obscure, marketing campaign.

54. When I visited the interior in the summer of 1998, I noticed stairs made of red marble and niches in the passageway wall on the ground floor, both items noted by Cicogna. There is also a pozzo (wellhead). It is not the ornamented stone one described by Cicogna (see n. 101), but it may mark the location of the original well. If the ground floor and square footage of the plot have not changed, then the house was quite modest in size and the niches were very unimpressive. I would like to thank Renato Oran for his hospitality and Antonella Mallus for arranging the visit.

55. Cicogna visited the house in 1829, but in 1863, Tassini, _Cicogna, Roman House_, 61 (see n. 2). For more on inscriptions, see ibid., 22–32. A more “self-effacing” inscription on the façade of the palace of the patrician Andrea Loredano referred to Psalms 115: “Not to us, o Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name be the glory given.” Brown, _Private Lives_, 33–34. Vendramin modestly deferred credit more fully than Dario by not actually inscribing his name, and perhaps as a patrician he felt less need to express his devotion to the city-state. For other related examples of palace inscriptions in Venice, see Brown, _Private Lives_.

68. In a particularly striking example of quid pro quo, in 1559 the lawyer Paolo Zorzi, _Delle inscrizioni veneziane_, 3–46, also saw remnants of fresco painting on the side of the building facing the “corticella detta della Polvere,” but he could not make out any subjects. 59. For an example of how façades represented inhabitants and were thus the targets of rituals of shaming, see Cohen and Cohen, _Open and Shut_, 67–69 (see n. 4).

58. The date of the façade fresco is based on the assumption that Girolamo executed it when he was in Venice to paint an altarpiece for the Church of San Salvatore, which is signed and dated 1531. (The altarpiece still survives, albeit in very poor condition.) This seems plausible since this is the only time Girolamo is known to have worked in the city; and as Mauro Lucco has pointed out, the correspondence of this date with that of Michel’s visit to the collection and Odolini’s appointment as co-condotto reinforces the likelihood. While most scholars have suggested the date 1531, Lucco argues that the façade must have been painted in 1532 since Girolamo would have been busy with the altarpiece before. Mauro Lucco, “Di mano del mio Travissio, pittore certo valente e celebre,” in _Saba da Castiglione 1480–1554. Dalle corte rinascimentali alla Commenda di Faenza_, ed. Anna Rosa Gentilini (Florence, 2004), 172; and William R. Rearick, “Pordenone ‘Romanista’,” in _Il Pordenone. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio_, ed. Caterina Furlan (Pordenone, 1985), 130.

60. For the overwhelming emphasis on façades in Venice, see Ralph Lieberman, _Renaissance Architecture in Venice 1490–1540_ (New York, 1982). 61. Margaret L. King, _Renaissance Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance_ (Princeton, 1986), 148. Morosini’s treatise is not specifically about Venice, but as a Venetian nobleman, his concept of an ideal closely resembled his patria, ibid., 141. According to Venetian mythology as embroidered by the sixteenth-century patrician Nicolò Zen, the early settlers of the city fixed “by law, that all residences should be equal, alike, of similar size and ornamentation.” Manfredo Tafuri, _Vénise et la Renaissance_, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 3. Also see Brown, _Private Lives_, 35 (see n. 7).

62. The humanist Giovanni Pontano referred to the house as “a sort of public ornament.” Welch, _Public Magnificence_, 214 (see n. 25).

63. Sanudo succinctly expressed this dual role when he noted that the burning of the famous Palazzo Corner on the Grand Canal was both a private sorrow for the family and a public sorrow because the palace was “the most beautiful in Venice.” “Io . . . havendo grandissimo dolor . . . si per il private che questa caxa e mia amicissima, si per il publico ch’è la più bella caxa di Venexia.” _I diarii_, 56:753. In this passage, Sanudo conflates the meanings of “casa” as “family” and “house.”

64. Clarke, _Roman House_, 61 (see n. 2).

65. The classic discussion of this is Tafuri, _Vénise et la Renaissance_, chap. 1. These ideas were sometimes expressed with fanatical concern about the well-being of the republic. In his dialogue of 1563, Giovanni Maria Memmo wrote that while people used to build for utility and comfort, “finalmente corrotti dall’occhio, si hanno preparato gli edifici a i piaceri e lascivie loro, con tanti soverchi ornamenti & spese, che non solo rendono stupore a cui le mira, ma sono cagione di corrompere i buoni costumi, e il civile e politico vivere . . . Il che non solo è danno a’ Cittadini, & famiglie private, ma corrompe le Città.” _Dialogo del Magn. Cavaliere M. Gio. Maria Memmo_ (Venice, 1653), 73 (emphasis added).


67. Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 152–54. In book seven of his treatise on architecture, Serlio provides an instructive example. A certain miserly patron, forced to restore the façade of his palace by his prince, placed “statues of the four moral virtues in the four niches [on the façade], perhaps wishing, by putting on the clothing of the pharisee, to give the impression that he possessed these noble qualities, or else, like a cunning man, he wished to make the world believe that he was good.” Serlio notes dryly that he should have chosen a statue of Avarice instead. _Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture_. _Videane Tiv_ , ed. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, 2001), 310.

68. In a particularly striking example of quid pro quo, in 1559 the lawyer Pietro Cogollo was promised citizenship of Vicenza if he would ornament the façade of his house to the tune of 250 ducats. The façade was designed by his friend Palladio and frescoed by Giovanni Antonio Pasolo with mythological figures that Ridolfi interpreted as an allegory of vanitas. Howard Burns, “Le opere minori del Palladio,” _Bollettino del centro internazionale di studi di architettura Andrea Palladio_ 21 (1979), 12–14; and Giangiorgio Zorzi, _Le opere pubbliche e il palazzi privati di Andrea Palladio_ (Venice, 1965), 232–37. Lionello Puppi, _Andrea Palladio_ (Boston, 1975), 331, notes that the fresco functioned “almost like a shop sign for the lawyer’s office.”

69. The classic overview of external frescoes in Venice is Lodovico Foscari, _Affreschi esterni a Venezia_ (Venice, 1970), 73 n. 1. According to Venetian mythology as embroidered by the sixteenth-century patrician Nicolò Zen, the early settlers of the city fixed...

For a recent discussion of the artist summarizing earlier literature, see Lucchi, “Di mano del mio Tavisi,” 357–78 (see n. 58). Rearick, “Pordegone ‘Romanista’,” 129 (see n. 58), describes him as “a complete convert to central Italy, although he may never have been south of Emilia.”

Rearick, “Pordegone ‘Romanista’,” 110. For the secure identification of Lodovico Tàlentì as the patron of the fresco and the builder of the palace, see Blake de Maria, “A Patron for Pordegone’s Frescoes on Palazzo Talenti d’Anna, Venice,” Burlington Magazine 146 (Aug. 2004), 548–49. The frescoes must have been painted between ca. 1535, when the palace was complete, and Sept. 1538, when Pordegone left Venice. The Talenti were Florentine textile merchants who became Venetian citizens. The parallels between the Talenti and Odoni families are striking and may appear to suggest that painted façades are associated with wealthy and ambitious newcomers, but established patrician families also commissioned painted façades. For an initial attempt to decode the social meanings of painted façades in Venice, see Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 139–45.

Paolo Casadio, “Un affresco di Girolamo da Tavisi il Giovane a Faenza,” in Furlan, 209–15 (see n. 57). The fresco was commissioned by the collector Sabba da Faenza, “Di mano del mio Tavisi il Giovane,” 373, sees Odoni’s patronage of Girolamo as another sign of the “di mano del mio Tavisi il Giovane” (Venice, 1771), 213, but by his time very little was visible.


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75. This fresco appears at Via Manin, no. 67, and is described by Carlo Castiglione. Giorgio Vasari, Le opere, 5:136 (see n. 23). All the accounts begin with this subject, suggesting that painted façades are associated with wealthy and ambitious newcomers, but established patrician families also commissioned painted façades. For an initial attempt to decode the social meanings of painted façades in Venice, see Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 139–45.

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70. Odoni was also a patron of the central Italian painter and architect Serlio; see discussion on p. 306 of this text. Lucchi, “Di mano del mio Tavisi il Giovane,” 373, sees Odoni’s patronage of Girolamo as another sign of the Venetian cittadino’s “marcassima individualità.”

80. Vasari, Le opere, 5:136: “Bacco grasso e rosso e con un vaso, il quale rovescia, tenendo in braccio una Cerere che ha in mano molte spighe.”

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82. Vasari, Le opere, 5:136: “Bacco grasso e rosso e con un vaso, il quale rovescia, tenendo in braccio una Cerere che ha in mano molte spighe.”
well. For inscriptions on façades, see Clarke, _Roman House_, 227–32 (see n. 2), although she does not mentioned painted inscriptions, which must have been quite common.

92. Ridolfi, _Le maraviglie_, 1:305: “dinotando i comodi e le fortune del l’Odone”; “per dimostrare il talento ch’egli aveva di molte virtù.” Although the general meaning is similar (denoting abundance, hospitality, learning, and virtue), it is interesting to note how Ridolfi reads the façade as providing messages about Odoni himself, whereas Vasari, in a manner more typical of the sixteenth century, attributes these virtues to the house, understood as metonymy for the owner and his family (the “Casa Odoni.”) Writing nearly a century later, Ridolfi rejected the embodied house and severed the tight equivalence between a man and his accommodations.

93. Alison Luchs, _Tullio Lombardo and Ideal Portrait Sculpture in Renaissance Venice, 1490–1530_ (Cambridge, England, 1995), 158 n. 10, was the first to connect the proverbs specifically to Odoni’s façade. For a discussion of the proverbs, its representation, and in particular its connections to the _Hy-
nerotomachia_, see Sarah Blake Wilk [McHam], _The Sculpture of Tullio Lombardo_. _Studies in Sources and Meaning_ (New York, 1978), 78–81; Wilk [McHam], “Tullio Lombardo’s ‘Double-Portrait’ Reliefs,” _Murasca_ 16 (1972–73), 79–81, 83–86; and Jaynie Anderson, “The Provenance of Bellini’s _Feast of the Gods_ and a New/Old Interpretation” in _Titian 500_, ed. Joseph Manca, _Studies in the History of Art_ 45 (Washington D.C., 1993), 273–80. Anderson believes the proverb was the inspiration for Giovanni Bellini’s portrayal of Ceres kneeling to support a man who is drinking wine, a scene that recalls Vasari’s description of Odoni’s façade; however, the male figure in Bellini’s painting is usually identified as Apollo.


95. See the catalog entry no. 149 by Jaynie Anderson in Tiziano. _Amor Sacro e Amor Profano_ (Milan, 1995), 415–36.


97. As described by Ridolfi, _Le maraviglie_, 1:305.

98. On the façade as social boundary, see Cohen and Cohen, “Open and Shut,” _64_ (see n. 4). Burroughs, _Italian Renaissance Palace Façade_, 3 (see n. 2) notes: “[T]he façade precisely marks the threshold between distinct domains, often dramatizing this with architectural and other elements functionally and symbolically related to the act of entry.”

99. Contributing to the theme of rampant fertility, the mermaids’ foliage tails transform into vines that end in flowers from which small figures emerge. While similar designs can be found in the _Hynerotomachia Poliphili_, these motifs were so widespread in Italian art by the second quarter of the sixteenth century that the book need not be a direct source. Alison Luchs, personal communication with Monika Schmitter, 2 Feb. 2005, in relation to her forthcoming book, _The Mermaids of Venice: Hybrid Sea Creatures in Venetian Renaissance Art_.

100. According to Cicogna, _Delle incisioni veneziane_, 3–416, who was able to see the relief more closely, the other child is female.


102. Perhaps the balcony was ordered or installed at the same time as the wellhead in the courtyard, which was carved with foliate festoons between masks and bore the date 1533. Cicogna, _Delle incisioni veneziane_, 3–416. Ridolfi, _Le maraviglie_, 1:305.


105. See Welch, “Public Magnificence” (see n. 25); and Guerzoni, “Liber- alitas, Magnificencia, Splendor” (see n. 25). In the words of the famous Flo- rentine homeowner Giovanni Rucellai: “In the house of a rich man numerous guests should be received and they should be treated in a sumptuous manner; if one did otherwise the great house would be a dishonor to the owner.” Translated in Brenda Preyer, “Planning for Visitors at Florentine Palaces” _Renaissance Studies_ 12, no. 3 (1998), 357.

106. The peeing putto on the façade balcony also relates to the depiction in the portrait of Hercules m英格s, discussed here on p. 106.

107. This looseness of subject matter was typical of contemporary Venetian façades. McTavish, “Roman Subject-Matter,” 190 (see n. 83), notes that whereas narrative subjects were common in Rome, “earlier Venetian façades [before the 1530s] seem only rarely to have included narratives of any sort. Instead, the Venetians preferred allegorical subjects with personifications or classical deities standing for abstract ideas.” McTavish states that the scenes from classical mythology and Roman history on the Palazzo Talenti façade by Pordenone were unusual, but the Talenti façade was also more a collection of parts loosely centered around a theme than a tightly con- structed program. For a brief description of the subjects, see de Maria, “Por- denone’s Frescoes,” 549 (see n. 73).


109. A parallel can be seen in the design for the Palazzo Talenti-d’Anna, where the patriotic Roman citizen Marcus Curtius, astride his horse, appeared to leap into the Grand Canal, a scene that was attention-getting for its humor as well as for its novel foreshortening. De Maria, “Pordene- none’s Frescoes,” 549.

110. On the humor of this and other urinating figures in art, see Keith Christiansen, “Lorenzo Lotto and the Tradition of Epithalamic Paintings,” _Apollo_ 124 (1986), 170.

111. Shearman, _Early Italian Pictures_, 145 (see n. 22).

112. See nn. 93, 99.

113. See Appendix; and Aretino, _Letters_, _libro secondo_, 154 (see n. 1).

114. Just before comparing Odoni’s house to the Quirinale Hill in Rome, Aretino notes that “quando io era in corte, stava in Roma e non a Vinezia; ma ora ch’io son qui, sto in Vinezia e a Roma.” Translated in Appendix; original in Aretino, _Letters_, _libro secondo_, 154.


118. Translated in Appendix; original in Aretino, _Letters_, _libro secondo_, 154. In his letter describing his own house, Aretino specifically says that the one side of his character can be known “nel comparire nel portico e ne l’affacciarsi ai balconi sopradetti.” _Letters_, _libro primo_, 441 (see n. 10).

Aretino associates the revelation of his character with the act of showing
oneself at the balcony, echoing a metaphor used by Dante in his *Convivio* III, 8: “E però che nella faccia massimamente in due luoghi opera l’anima... cioè nelli occhi e nella bocca... Li quali due luoghi, per bella similitudine, si possono appellare balconi della donna che nel dificio del corpo abita.” Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. Franca Brambilla Ageno (Florence, 1995), 2:197–98.

120. On the association between façades and triumphal processions, see Schmitter, “Falling through the Cracks,” 137–38; and Burroughs, *Italian Renaissance Palace Façade*, 19 n. 30.


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