"Virtuous Riches": The Bricolage of Cittadini Identities in Early-Sixteenth-Century Venice

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“Virtuous Riches”: The Bricolage of Cittadini Identities in Early-Sixteenth-Century Venice*

by Monika Schmitter

This study questions the traditional assumption that Venetian cittadini emulated the collecting and patronage patterns of the ruling nobility. An alternative theoretical model, drawn from sociological, anthropological, and historical analyses of collecting, suggests that the cittadini should be cultural innovators rather than followers. Case studies of two prominent early-sixteenth-century cittadini collectors reveal that, although they pursued different strategies, neither sought distinction primarily by imitating established patrician tastes; both were at the forefront of new developments. In both their differences from the nobility and in their heterogeneity as a social group, the cittadini have had an unrecognized impact on the style and content of Venetian art in the “Golden Age.”

“...It has been our good fortune,” Pietro Aretino wrote to his fellow Tuscan expatriate, Jacopo Sansovino, “that here [in Venice] the worthy foreigner is not only the equal of a cittadino, but on par with a nobleman.” Ever the astute observer of status distinctions, Aretino provides an intriguing, even paradoxical, view of social stratification and social mobility in early-sixteenth-century Venice. He indicates the hierarchical relationship between cittadini and nobili, while at the same time suggesting that the rigid political and legal distinctions between the two orders could in some sense be transcended. Despite Aretino’s estimations of his own possibilities, however, the highest social level that immigrants to Venice could ever hope to achieve was cittadino status since the ruling nobility was a closed caste.

The cittadini, an intermediary social group between the popolo (common people) and the patriciate, have traditionally not received much attention in Venetian historiography. This has begun to change in the last decades and especially in the past ten years; as the number of studies devoted to

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1Aretino, 1:81 (20 November 1537): “È stata nostra ventura, poi che qui il buon forestiero non solo si agualia al cittadino, ma si pareggia al gentiluomo.” All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
cittadini has increased, the social group has begun to assume a more prominent, as well as a more nuanced, position in our view of Venetian society. Although we now have a better understanding of the development, make-up, and political and economic roles of the class, it is still hard to grasp the exact nature of their social position and status. In short, it remains difficult to understand what it meant to be a cittadino, especially in the early sixteenth century, when the group was less precisely defined than later in the century. This article contributes to this developing area of research by investigating the collecting practices of two prominent early-sixteenth-century cittadini. By examining the literal bricolage with which these men surrounded themselves we may gain access to the metaphorical bricolage of their identities.

My aim is also to investigate how members of this “second elite” might have contributed to the development of Venetian art. Although some research has been done on private cittadini patrons and collectors in later periods and a few earlier cittadini have been studied as individuals, their impact as a social group on the style and iconography of Venetian art of the early sixteenth century deserves further examination. This article questions the assumption that cittadini emulated the interests and behaviors of the patriciate, at least in their collecting practices. An alternative theoretical model, drawn from sociological, anthropological, and historical analyses of collecting, suggests that the cittadini should be cultural innovators rather than followers. I investigate this hypothesis through case studies of the collectors Francesco Zio (1477–1523) and his nephew, Andrea Odoni (1488–1545).

1. CITTADINI AND SOCIAL EMULATION

The idea that cittadini constituted an identifiable “order” grew over time and can be seen as a byproduct of the Serrata [Closure] of the noble caste in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In Venice, unlike in other

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2See especially Pullan, 1971, 1999; Ell; Neff; Cozzi and Knapton, 133–46; Casini; Zannini; Trebbi, 162–82; Bellavitis, 1995a, 1995b; Schmitter, 1997; Grubb; de Maria.
3On bricolage and identities see Findlen, 1994, 296.
4Hochmann, 187–218; de María. For earlier cittadini patrons see, for example, Goffen on Nicolò Aurelio; Neff, 268–73. The cittadini have been studied primarily as corporate patrons in their Scuole commissions.
5Pullan, 1999, prefers the term “order” to describe the cittadini as a group; Chambers and Pullan, 241, use “estate.” I prefer the sociological term “status group” since, in the early sixteenth century, the cittadini were not as fixed and defined a social group as “order” or “estate” would seem to imply. However, I have used a variety of terms interchangeably, including “class,” although I do not use it in the Marxist sense. The nobility, on the other hand, may be defined as a “caste.”
Italian cities, individuals and families who distinguished themselves through wealth, occupation, or accomplishments had no possibility of entering the ruling elite. As a result, over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a new social group began to emerge, whether through their own ambitions or for the convenience of the patriciate. Citizens who were educated and “honorable” — but not noble — were increasingly given important bureaucratic positions in state government, as well as in the administration of the major charity institutions, the Scuole Grandi. While not all cittadini were so employed, the ability to hold offices that were often reserved only for cittadini was a valued privilege. Over the course of the sixteenth century the requirements for obtaining different levels of citizen status (and the economic rights and bureaucratic offices with which they corresponded) became more stringent, contributing to the exclusivity of the cittadini as a group.

By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, several descriptions of the city and its government clearly identified three distinct orders. In 1493 the patrician Marino Sanuto wrote in his encomium of Venice:

there are three classes of inhabitants: gentlemen who govern the state and republic . . . citizens; and artisans or the lower class. The gentlemen are not distinguished from the citizens by their clothes, because they all dress in much

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6For an overview of the formation of the class see Zannini, 23–60. It is generally assumed that the cittadini themselves pushed for special recognition (see, for example, Ell, 206; Neff, 2, 190–93; Grubb, 354), but as Bellavitis, 1995b, 367–70, notes, the formation of a special status group also served the interests of the nobility.

7Grubb, 341, points outs that the cittadini who held offices in the state bureaucracy have received the lion’s share of scholarly attention, although they were only a subset of the larger group.

8There were several different kinds of citizenship, each with its own qualifications and privileges. Cittadini originari were members of well-established Venetian families (usually meaning that one’s father and grandfather had resided in the city), and held the most politically sensitive offices. The status de intus was awarded those who had lived and paid taxes in the city for a certain period of time (generally fifteen years) and allowed them to hold minor bureaucratic offices and engage in commerce within the city. Citizenship de intus et de extra required a longer period of residence (usually twenty-five years) and provided access to more-important offices and the right to trade between Venice and elsewhere with lower customs fees than for foreigners. Qualifications for all three forms fluctuated somewhat during the fifteenth (and most of the sixteenth) century in response to various political and economic factors. A law of 1569 definitively set the qualifications for cittadino originario status and has sometimes been characterized as a cittadino “serrata.” The legislation required not only that one’s father and grandfather be Venetian, but also that no member of the family had engaged in manual professions for the past three generations. At this point, the laws finally reflected a reality that was clearly acknowledged earlier in the century — that the qualification cittadino was a social status as well as a legal one.
the same way, except for the senatorial office-holders, who during their term of office have to wear the coloured robes laid down by law. The others almost always wear long black robes reaching down to the ground, with sleeves open to the elbows, a black cap on the head and a hood of black cloth or velvet.  

In this passage, Sanuto stresses the similarities between cittadini and nobles (at least those who did not hold important political offices), both of whom were obviously distinguished from the lower classes by their dress.

In his treatise *Libro de la Republica de’ Vinitiani* (written 1525–27, published in 1540) the Florentine Donato Giannotti also emphatically noted that the inhabitants of Venice belonged to “tre ordini distinti”: popolari, cittadini, and gentilsuomini, refuting earlier writers — in particular Sabellico, who, he said, “makes a single group of the first two, and calls it popolare.”  

His contemporary, the Venetian nobleman and political theorist Gasparo Contarini, still subscribed in principle to the older bipartite model in his *De magistribus et republica Venetorum* (written ca. 1523–32, published 1543). In a subtler manner though, he recognized the cittadini by noting that the popolo was “devided into two partes, the one of the honester and best respected sort, the other of the very base common people, as mechanickall, and handcraftes men.”

Sanuto and Giannotti, both writing from a more historical and pragmatic point of view, were more willing to fully distinguish the cittadini from the popolo. In many ways the status distinctions between nobles and well-to-do, respectable cittadini were deliberately downplayed in public. Not only did the cittadini and nobles dress alike, but the sumptuary laws always applied equally to both groups. Within the realm of consumption and display, in theory the cittadini were “like the nobility.” On the other hand, in

5Chambers and Pullan, 6–7; Sanuto, 1980, 22: “Sono tre generation di habitanti: zentilhuomini — che governano il stato, et la Republica ... cittadini, et artesani overo popolo menudo. Li zentilhuomini da’ cittadini in habito non sono conosciuti perché tutti vanno vestiti quasi a un modo, eccetto li Senatori deli magistrati mentre sono in officio — come dirò al luoco suo — che vanno vestiti di color, per lezze. Li altri portano sempre quasi veste negre longhe fino a terra, con maneghe a comedo, barretta negra in testa, et becheto de panno negro, et anco di veluto.”  

10Giannotti, 46: “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.”  

11Contarini, 141, who also (142) refers to cittadini as “the other better kinde of people.” On the bipartite versus tripartite models in Venetian historiography, see Grubb, 339–40.  

12P. F. Brown, 2000, has recently argued that the sumptuary laws were designed to narrow the gap between nobles and wealthy commoners in order to help maintain political and social stability. On ties between patricians and cittadini see Romano, 55–56, 145–6; Grubb, 345–47.
Contarini’s more abstract and ideological depiction of the Venetian state they were only the upper echelon of the *popolo* and thus, in essence, entirely unlike the patriciate.

Modern historians of Venice have tended to characterize the *cittadini* “order” as a lower, or secondary nobility. In the words of Brian Pullan, “Venice in fact possessed a parallel, minor aristocracy with no distinctive culture or outlook of its own”; “the citizens did not serve Venetian society as an independent middle class creating its own institutions, but as a lesser aristocracy cast in the image of the greater.”13 According to Ugo Tucci, even as the patriciate and the *cittadini* were becoming distinct economic groups, the *cittadini* “continued to appropriate the values and forms of behavior of the nobles even though the gap between them long remained unbridgeable.”14 In their family life, Dennis Romano writes, “the *popolano grande* [*cittadini*] families mimicked as much as possible their noble counterparts.”15 These views derive in part from comments like Sanuto’s, which accentuate the similarities between the two groups, and in part from Contarini, who specifically employed metaphors of imitation and reflection in his discussion of the *cittadini*’s role in society and government. Holding leadership positions in the Scuole, Contarini wrote, is a dignitie belonging onely to the plebians, wherein also they imitate the nobility, for these heads of societies doe among the people in a certaine manner represent the dignitie of the procurators, but to the end that neither their societies, nor their heads, may any way be dangerous or cumbersome to the common wealth, they are all restrained under the power and authoritie of the counsell of ten.16

Contarini depicts the *cittadino* government of the Scuole as a smaller replica of the patrician state, one that remained safely subordinate to and controlled by its superior model.17 While his comments reveal that certain nobles wished to see the *cittadini* as a controlled and minor reflection of their own civil order, they do not necessarily demonstrate that the *cittadini* had, *pace*

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14Tucci, 372.
15Romano, 55.
16Contarini, 146. Pullan, 1971, 107–08, cites this passage specifically.
17Francesco Sansovino, 282, probably echoing Contarini, also claimed that the Scuole Grandi “also represent a type of citizen government, in which the *cittadini*, as if in their own Republic, have ranks and honors according to their own merits and qualities” (“rappresentano anco un certo modo di governo civile, nel quale i cittadini, quasi in propria Repub[lica] hanno i gradi & gli onori secondo i meriti, & le qualità loro”).
Pullan, “no distinctive culture or outlook” of their own or that they thought only of imitating the patriciate.18

Underlying this modern view of *cittadini* is the theory of social emulation, that lower social orders, whenever possible, imitate the behavior and consumption patterns of more privileged groups rather than establish their own.19 This view of the relationship between *cittadini* and patricians can also been found in the art historical literature. In his study of Venetian patrons and collectors from 1540 to 1628, Michel Hochmann argues that by engaging in patronage and collecting *cittadini* could “pretend to rival the patricians”: “There is no difference in nature between the collecting of a merchant or a secretary from that of a rich patrician . . . it was often the case that the *cittadini* imitated the habits and culture of the patricians.”20 Other recent studies, however, suggest that patterns of social emulation do not always apply. Peter Humfrey found that altarpieces erected by *scuole piccole* that were not associated with trade guilds but run by *cittadini* were often quite innovative.21 Comparing altarpieces commissioned by noble and *cittadino* individuals and families, he concluded that *cittadini* were not necessary more “progressive” in their taste, but that they did seem to be less inhibited than the patricians about lavish displays.22 In his study of the *Scuole Grandi* building projects Manfredo Tafuri portrays the *cittadini*’s complex vacillation between an “experimental spirit” and conservatism.23 Recently, Alison Luchs has gone so far as to suggest that *cittadini*, rather than patricians, were at the forefront of the patronage of private sculpture in Venice.24 These studies demonstrate the difficulty of drawing one-to-one correspondences between particular social groups and particular artists or styles. Like other microanalyses of consumption, such studies indicate that one must look for patterns in the evidence rather than assume a model of social emulation.25

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18 Muir, 42, has warned against similar assumptions, noting that “so little is known about individual *cittadini* that a conclusion about their careers and attitudes cannot be drawn.”

19 For the enduring legacy of the concept of social emulation in early modern studies of consumption, see Allerston, 368–70. I am grateful to Patricia Allerston for alerting me to the parallels between my research on collecting and her studies of clothing consumption in early modern Venice.

20 Hochmann, 190, 211–12.


23 Tafuri, 81–97.

24 Luchs, 30.

25 Allerston, 369–70.
2. TOWARDS A THEORY OF COLLECTING AND SOCIAL STATUS

An alternative theoretical framework, derived from sociological, anthropological, and historical studies of collecting as a dynamic process of consumption and social exchange, allows us to consider the patronage and collecting habits of cittadini in the early sixteenth century in a different light. An important starting point for a theory of collecting and social status is Pierre Bourdieu’s critique of Immanuel Kant’s objective, individual, and ahistorical notion of “taste.” According to Bourdieu, taste is an ideological instrument that serves to both articulate and propagate class differences. As such, what constitutes “good” taste is constantly contested and negotiated among elite social groups: “behind the virtues of the accomplished man the legitimate titles to the exercise of domination are at stake.”

Different groups and individuals try to define “proper” modes of consumption in their own favor and thereby gain legitimacy.

Although Bourdieu would have us see the arena of collecting as one of competition, one could also make the case that collecting creates community. Collecting fosters cohesion among a group (of the elite), as well as distinguishes that group from those who lack the money, connections, or knowledge to take part. In her study of late-sixteenth-century naturalist collectors in Italy, Paula Findlen has argued that collecting created a community of men above and beyond other kinds of social, economic, and political distinctions: “[museums] provided an axis through which all these different sectors of society intersected . . . The museum was not only a place in which objects were housed; it was also a setting in which relationships were formed.” While this community does not completely dissolve other social distinctions, it puts them temporarily in abeyance, allowing one to create distinction through competitive consumption.

In its combination of cohesiveness and divisiveness, the activity of collecting can be linked to what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls a “tournament of value.” In these tournaments, for which the kula system of the Western Pacific is the paradigm, the circulation of objects both unites and opposes groups and individuals: “Participation in them [tournaments of

26Bourdieu, 94.
27Baudrillard, 117, argues that “the essential function of the auction is the institution of a community of the privileged who define themselves as such by antagonistic speculation upon a restricted corpus of signs.” Although he refers to twentieth-century art auctions, this idea applies as well to elite collecting circles in Renaissance Venice.
28Findlen, 1994, 8.
29Ibid., 41–42.
value] is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests between them.” Appadurai describes two main strategies employed in such competitions for the “central tokens of value in the society in question.” The dominant elite try to maintain their control over symbolic valuables by limiting the circulation of such objects through what Appadurai calls “enclaving” — the removal of objects from commodity status. Those who are at a relative disadvantage in the tournament, on the other hand, find ways to “divert” valuables from their accustomed trajectories. An important method of diversion is the introduction into the competition of new types of valuables, which may be easier for those with less wealth or connections to procure, and thus enter into the competition. Appadurai’s conception correlates well with that advanced by the historian Krzysztof Pomian. According to Pomian, innovation in collecting practices is a “bottom up” process, whereby those lower on the social scale, priced out of the market for established “semiophores,” seek new objects of value. These new objects are then eventually adopted by the highest elite, continually reproducing the same phenomenon.

These theoretical and interdisciplinary discussions suggest three primary phenomena that one might observe in early-sixteenth-century Venice. First, art collecting should create a community of like-minded men that transcends some of the social distinctions otherwise in place. Second, there should be considerable competition between status groups, who seek to define the “proper modes of collecting” to favor their own competencies and abilities. Third, rather than emulating the collecting practices of the established elite, the cittadini, a disenfranchised and socially inferior group, would actually invent and deploy new kinds of collectibles and develop new methods of collecting. If the theoretical model holds, the patricians ought to have engaged in “enclaving,” whereas the cittadini should have actively created “diversions.”

3. Collecting as a Higher Form of Consumption

The idea that collecting created a community of like-minded men that transcended normal social barriers is demonstrated by the notes compiled by the Venetian nobleman and art expert, Marcantonio Michiel. Michiel visited

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30Appadurai, 21.
31Ibid.
32Ibid., 16–29.
33Pomian, 30, defines a “semiophore” as an object “of absolutely no use . . . which, being endowed with meaning, represented the invisible.”
34Ibid., 35–41.
and described the contents of eleven private collections in the city, seven of which were owned by patricians and four by nonnobles. The notes represent the kind of community and interconnection that Findlen describes among later-sixteenth-century natural history collectors. They also portray the exchange of objects within the network through inheritance, sale, barter, and gift-giving in a manner similar to the “tournament of value” described by Appadurai.

Participating in this kind of exclusive, but at the same time competitive, network was a particularly effective means of creating distinction. Seen as a higher form of consumption, art collecting not only fell outside the purview of sumptuary laws, but was regularly touted as a pursuit of truth and knowledge. A strong rhetoric of legitimization portrayed collecting as an admirable form of accumulation and display. This attitude is fulsomely expressed by Paolo Manuzio (a cittadino himself, who was married to Andrea Odoni’s niece) in a letter written to the patrician Andrea Loredano in 1552. Manuzio agrees to procure ancient coins in Rome for Loredano’s collection not only because he wishes to do Loredano a service, but also because the task itself is noble: “If I were to spend a thousand years searching for items of such quality, there could be no greater prize for such hard work [lunga fatica] than to find them.” Manuzio derives status merely by finding the items, even though he will not ultimately own them. The objects in Loredano’s collection are so valuable, Manuzio claims, because they contain knowledge: “Looking intently at such objects, one gathers in the mind as much knowledge in a short span of hours as one does after years of reading Livy and Polybius, and all the ancient historians put together.” As a repository of

35Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (hereafter BNM), MS Ital. XI 67 (7351). I refer here to Theodor Frimmel’s published edition (Michiel, 1896). The noble collectors are Taddeo Contarini, Hieronimo Marcello, Antonio Foscarini, Zuanantonio Venier, Domenico Grimani, Gabriel Vendramin, and Michiel Contarini. Antonio Pasqualino, Andrea Odoni, and Francesco Zio were cittadini; Giovanni Ram was a Spanish merchant living in Venice.

36To my knowledge only one of these laws would have applied directly to paintings, and none to sculpture or antiquities. Even the decree passed in 1476 — stipulating that the expense for decorating a room (whether in wood, gold, or painting) should not exceed 150 ducats — most likely only applied to a single decorating campaign, not to a collection of portable paintings accumulated over time: see Bistort, 239, 359. It seems to have applied, for example, to the cycle of paintings the Cornaro family commissioned from Andrea Mantegna in 1505, reportedly for exactly that sum, although the artist later complained the price was too low: see Lightbown, 215.

37Manuzio, 71r: “E dove mille anni interi nel ricercare cose di tal qualita io consumassi, di così lunga fatica niun piu degno premio riputerei essere, che il ritrovarle.”

38Ibid., 72r: “le quai cose con attento pensiero particularmente riguardando, tante belle notizie in poche hore nella mente raccolsi, che ne Livio, ne Polibio, ne tutte le historie insieme havevano altrettanto in molti anni potuto insegnarmi.” Translation from Campbell, 303–04.
Knowledge, the collection represents much more than material wealth:

Leave to your sons, my Lord, as much wealth as you wish, whether acquired by your industry or given to you by fortune; for you will never be able to leave them any land, any palace, any treasure that will equal the value and excellence of your antiquities. These are not material goods that can be acquired by simple labor. Your collection is not a gem that can be obtained for a price. These are virtuous riches [ricchezze virtuose] that are not for idiots, but can only be collected with judgment, intelligence, and infinite knowledge over a long period of time.39

Unlike palaces or other “treasures,” Loredano’s collection — here, in particular, his antiquities — was a form of conspicuous consumption beyond reproach. As such, collections were also less bound than other forms of display by the Venetian ethos of mediocritas, the principle that all members of the patriciate were theoretically equal and thus should not publicly exhibit differences in wealth and status.40 Behind closed doors and appreciated only by an exclusive minority, collecting created an unlegislated and less-socially-restricted arena for the display of distinction.

Although Manuzio claimed that Loredano’s antiquities were “not material goods,” in fact collections walked a fine line between economic and cultural capital. The patrician collector Gabriele Vendramin, for example, promoted the spiritual benefits of his “virtuous riches” without losing sight of their economic value. In his testament, Vendramin informed his descendants that the works of art and other objects in his collection which are worth many hundreds of ducats, as distinct from everything that has been entered in our account books concerning the furnishings, would bring in much more than they cost...this expenditure has not deprived our family of a single ducat; rather I can say that it has brought it profit...all these things, both for their high quality [eccellentia et raritâ] and because of the many years’ hard work [faticha de molti ani] taken to acquire them, and most of all because they have brought a little peace and quiet to my soul during the many labors of mind and body that I have endured in conducting the family business, are so pleasing and dear to me that I must pray and beseech those who inherit them...

39“Lasciate pure a’ figliuoli vostrî, signor mio, quanto piu ampie facoltà vi vogliate, o da voi acquistate per industria, o donatevi dalla fortuna: che nessun podere, nessun palagio, nessun tesoro lascierete voi loro giamaï, il quale pareggi la valuta, e l’eccellenza della vostre antichità. Questi non sono beni materiali, che con semplice fatica si acquistino; non è gemma, che per prezzo si ottenga: queste sono ricchezze virtuose, che a gl’idioti non toccano, ma solamente col giudicîo, con l’ingegno, con infinita scienza in molto spatio di tempo si raccolgono.” Manuzio, 72r–v, emphasis mine. For further discussion of this and similar texts, see Schmitter, 1997, 23–25; D. Thornton, 113–14; Campbell, 302–04.

40On the importance of mediocritas in Venetian society see Tafuri, 1–13.
to treat them with such care that they shall not perish. And on this count I have no fear, because if they be virtuous men [homeni studiosi de virtù], they cannot do otherwise.  

While here Vendramin justifies his interests as a valid economic investment, more commonly the opposite was true — collections were rhetorically distinguished from and elevated above typical forms of economic expense, such as clothing, food, other household furnishings, and even palaces. This made art collecting an excellent forum for competition between groups within the elite and a particularly useful way to increase social prestige and distinction by transforming economic capital into cultural capital.

4. TWO CASE STUDIES

Both Francesco Zio and his nephew Andrea Odoni recognized this potential. These two collectors serve well as case studies in part because of the wealth of documentary evidence concerning their collections. Both collections are described by Michiel, and the Odoni possessions are further detailed in an inventory compiled at the death of Andrea’s brother, Alvise, in 1555. Zio and Odoni also provide an interesting comparison because they demonstrate how two cittadini, even though related, conceived of their social position and engaged in the activity of collecting in quite different ways.

Zio was an exemplary civil servant whose collection suggests that he identified with his native city’s notions of civic virtue and humility. On the other hand, Odoni, the son of a wealthy Milanese immigrant, seems to have been a more flamboyant and self-promoting character, less careful about his moral profile and more determined to draw attention to himself. It is no accident that he is the subject of a portrait that specifically identifies him as a collector (fig. 1). An analysis of the two men’s possessions reveals that neither Zio nor Odoni sought distinction solely by imitating established patrician tastes. Rather, both of their collections had innovative aspects that set them squarely at the forefront of new developments in collecting.

Chambers and Pullan, 428-29; Battilotti and Franco, 1978, 67: “Dicho tuto quello che si atrova in esso chamerin le quale tute cosse amontano de molti centenara de duchati como distintamente del tutto è sta fate le partide sopra i nostri libri a conto de fornimenti et si hanno costo se chaiveria molto piú del costo, né questa spesa ha schomodà caxa nostra de uno duchato . . . . Non voglio restar de dir che tute queste cosse si per la sua eccellentia et rarità como etiam per la fatiche di molti ani haula per causa de aquistarle et maxime per esser sta quelle che a tante fatiche di mente et di corpo, che io ho patido neli negotii familiari, che mi ha dato uno pocho de riposso et quiete de hanimo, et perho mi sono tanto grate et chare che sum astreto pregar et esortar quelli in chi pervenirono le sopradite cosse che voglino usar diligentia de sorte che non perischano del che non dubito che se sarano homeni studiosi de virtù che altramente possino far.”
5. Francesco Zio, an Exemplary Cittadino

Francesco Zio was a member of a well-established cittadino clan, one that claimed even to have been members of government councils before the Serrata of 1297.\textsuperscript{42} Cittadini prided themselves on this kind of heritage because it indicated their long-time commitment to their patria and demonstrated

\textsuperscript{42}According to a sixteenth-century chronicle of “all the ancient and noble families of Venetian citizens who are not in the Great Council,” the branch of the Zio family living at San Pantalon “were always members of the old councils but have been excluded since 1297”: BNM, MS. It. VII, 27 (7761), 95v. Although Francesco Zio lived in Castello, on the other side of the Grand Canal, he was probably related to this branch. They belonged to the same scuola, Santa Maria della Carità, and used the same notary, Giovanni Francesco dal Pozzo. The Zio at San Pantalon were jewelers, a trade that sometimes involved commerce in antiquities and art objects. The jeweler Girolamo Zio was one of the executors of the will of the wife of Domenico di Pietro, whom Michiel described as “zogieller [jeweler] et antiquario singular”; Schmitter, 1997, 40–41. For other cittadini chronicles, see Neff, 205, n. 118; Grubb, 342, 344–46.
that they were originally the equals of the nobility. Francesco was an up-
standing member of his family who distinguished himself in a number of the
prestige-producing occupations and activities accessible to cittadini.

Born in 1477, in 1506 Francesco inherited his father Benetto’s position
as gastaldo (procurator) of one of the most elite convents in Venice, Santa
Maria delle Vergini in Castello, a position he held until his death in 1523. Such
posts within the Church, which were open to patricians and cittadini alike, required substantial education and were important avenues of social
advancement. As procurator Zio would have been responsible for the fi-
nancial affairs of the convent. He used the same skills in his civil service
position. Although there is no record that his father worked in the state bu-
reaucracy, in 1513 Francesco was given his office of scrivan (accountant) at
the Raxon nuove (the central accounting office of the state) in vite ut in parte
as a reward for his diligent devotion to the state. His position at the Raxon
nuove was lucrative as well as prestigious, earning him 200 ducats a year. Zio
also played a prominent role in another important institution — the
Scuole Grandi. He was elected to leadership positions at the Scuola di Santa
Maria della Carità on several occasions, a sign of both his wealth and his
prominence within his social group.


Cicogna, 5:627, notes that Zio died 5 March 1523 according to the Necrologio. Since
Cicogna reported this fact in an addendum, it has been overlooked by subsequent scholars, who have sometimes argued that Zio might have been alive as late as 1528–30. The date re-
ported by Cicogna is confirmed by two notices of his death in the records of his Scuola: Venice, Archivio di Stato (hereafter ASV), Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, register en-
titled “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, e confratelli, 1450–1545,” c. 42v, 64r. (I learned of
this volume from Gabriele Kister, and Piero Scarpa, who is indexing the archive, kindly al-
lowed me to consult it.) Zio’s birthdate can be calculated from his tombstone inscription
(recorded in Cicogna, 5:59), which stated that he was forty-five years, six months, and eigh-
teen days old when he died. For Benetto Zio, see Schmitter, 1997, 41. On the convent of the
Vergini, see Lowe, 400–10; Zorzi, 364–67.

Romano, 94–96. The fact that Antonio Marsilio, a cittadino closely connected to hu-
manist circles, assumed this position after Zio’s death is an indication of its requirements and
prestige. Cornaro, 121; Schmitter, 1997, 97–98.

This meant that he had the right to pass the position on to his descendents after his
death. Sanuto, 1969–70, 17:389, records that he had discovered and reported a worker at the
Dazio dil Vin who was defrauding the state of 150 ducats per year. As the archives for the “Uf-
ficiali poi Provveditori alle rason nuove” are almost nonexistent for this period, Zio’s activities
there can only be traced through Sanuto.

Neff, 182–83, notes that this was the salary in 1523, the year Zio died.

He was “Degano de tutto anno” in 1502 and again in 1508, and “Degano de mezzo”
in 1516. ASV, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, register entitled “Successioni, eredita-
rrie, guardiani, e confratelli, 1450–1545,” c. 43v, 48r, and 54v; Venice, Biblioteca del Museo
Although it is difficult to determine the net worth of Venetians in this period, especially cittadini, the available evidence suggests that Zio was comfortably well-off, rather than extremely wealthy.49 In his decima (tax statement) of 1514, Francesco declared ownership of four rented houses in the confino (district) of San Polo, a newly built house in Mazorbo, and thirty-one fields near the town of Candela, which together earned him a little over forty-seven ducats annually.50 While not an inconsiderable sum, Zio owned substantially less land, and earned less money from it, than several successful cittadini who worked in the chancellery.51 A lifelong bachelor, however, with no large household to maintain nor daughters to dower (and only one illegitimate son to educate), Zio was left with enough money to invest in yet another pursuit of distinction — collecting.52

Zio was a high-ranking and well-respected member of his class, but his collection brought him recognition of a different order. Zio’s was one of the first two collections Michiel visited when he first began compiling notes on private collections in Venice in 1521 — the other was that of Cardinal Domenico Grimani, the most eminent patrician collector of the time.53 Nearly sixty years after Zio’s death Francesco Sansovino remembered him above all as a collector. Describing his “beautiful tomb” in the church S. Maria delle Vergine, Sansovino noted “in his time he took great delight in sculpture and painting, conserving for a long time rare and exquisite examples of both these professions.”54

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49On the difficulty of determining wealth see Romano, 32; Neff, 156–58.
50ASV, Dieci Savi sopra le Decime in Rialto, b. 58, s. Piero di Castello, c. 24.
51As compared to his contemporaries Alessandro Capella, Giovanni Battista Ramusio, and Gasparo della Vedova in Neff, 398, 513, 575.
52Zio remarked in his will that he went to considerable expense to educate his illegitimate son Jacopo and asked the executors to continue to support him should he wish to continue his studies. ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Giovanni Francesco dal Pozzo, b. 764, c. 101 and b. 765, c. 89v–90r (protocollo). Published in part in Battilotti and Franco, 1978, 80.
53Sometime subsequent to writing the entries Michiel added the date “1512” in a different pen to his description of Zio’s collection, but he clearly intended to write “1521.” Schmitter, 1997, 39, n. 5; Rylands, 19–21; Fletcher, 1981b, 602.
54Sansovino, 20: “Fra quali [ornamenti] sono assai notabili due bellissimi sepolcri in aria di marmo, l’uno di Francesco Giglio, che ne’ suoi tempi si dilettò molto della Scultura, & della Pittura, nelle quali due professioni fece per lungo tempo conserva di rarissime et esquisite cose.”
6. Zio’s Collection

The contents of Zio’s collection reveal that he was no dilettante: he owned a number of objects that were coveted by other collectors. Particularly notable is his possession of antique statuary, the most expensive and difficult type of object to procure. More than other collectibles, antiquities were thought to impart virtue and knowledge to their owners. Michiel recorded antique statuary in only six of the eleven collections he visited, and an analysis of over 1,800 sixteenth-century inventories suggests that there were few other major collections of antiquities in Venice at the time. In addition to noting the many marble “heads” (teste), vases, and medals, Michiel described three marble statues in Zio’s collection in greater detail. One of these, a faun playing bagpipes, must have been particularly impressive, as it was later owned by the nobleman Antonio Foscarini, who had a particularly notable collection of antiquities.

Two modern objects Zio purchased secondhand also reveal his ability to procure highly desirable commodities. According to Michiel, Zio owned a book of hours with four “finely and perfectly illuminated” incipit pages by Jacometto Veneziano that “have gone through the hands of various collectors over a long period of time, but were first made for Messer Zuan Michiel, and have always been valued at forty ducats at least.” Michiel describes this work in greater detail than others in the collection, highlighting its history of ownership and remarking on its value. Also in Zio’s possession was a renowned object from further afield — a porphyry cup crafted by the Florentine artisan Piermaria da Pescia. According to Michiel, the artist had “buried [the cup] underground at the time of King Charles’s invasion of Rome [1495], so that it was somewhat cracked and had to be held together by a copper band”; the cup was subsequently “sold several times as antique at

55 Sabba da Castiglione, 56v, noted the “great difficulty and expense” of procuring good antiquities; see n. 155 below. On the symbolic value of antiquities, see especially San Juan, 75.

56 Jestaz.

57 For contemporary usage of the word testa, meaning sculpted head or bust, see Luchs, 134–35, n. 180.

58 Michiel, 1896, 92, 94.

59 Ibid., 94: “Li quattro principii de uno officiol o in capretto, inminiati sottilissimamente et perfettamente, furono de mano de Jacometto, andati per diverse mani d’antiquarii longamente, ma fatti al p(rim)o per M. Zuan Michiel, stimati sempre almeno d(ucati) 40.” He described the book again in 1532 in Odoni’s collection: “Li 4 principii del officiol fo de mano de Jacometto, i qual sola haver Francesco Zio” (ibid., 82). Since Frimmel’s edition does not accurately reproduce Michiel’s punctuation, in these passages, and all others quoted below, I have altered the published transcription to more closely resemble the original manuscript. Any changes other than punctuation will be noted specifically.
a very great price."\textsuperscript{60} An object of distinguished provenance and history, its reputation was enhanced because it had been mistaken as antique. The amount of information Michiel records about these objects reveals the considerable interest they held for a fellow collector.

Although these examples demonstrate Zio's seriousness and ambition as a collector, his social position probably circumscribed his collecting practices somewhat, whether for lack of wealth or lack of access. In terms of sheer size, his collection did not compare with those of Gabriele Vendramin or Domenico Grimani.\textsuperscript{61} Also revealing is the value Michiel assigned to Grimani's breviary (500 ducats) compared to Zio's book of hours (forty ducats). Zio also did not own any paintings by Giorgione or Giovanni Bellini, the two artists whose works figured most prominently in Michiel's descriptions of patrician collections.\textsuperscript{62} As Zio was probably the first member of his family to collect, he did not inherit such desirable items, but he also does not seem to have had the money, connections, or perhaps inclination, to obtain them secondhand.\textsuperscript{63} Similarly, he did not own works by older Netherlandish or German artists (what Michiel referred to as "opere ponentina," or "western" art) such as Jan van Eyck, Hans Memling, or Albrecht Dürer. Like antiques these were among the most highly valued objects in collections and were a particularly important part of the Grimani holdings.\textsuperscript{64} Zio shared this interest in Northern art, but was only able to commission a painting from the young, unknown Dutch artist Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), who

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 96: "La tazza de porfido cun li 3 maneghi et el bocchino, fu de mano de Pietro Mario intagliatore de corneole Fiorentino, la qual ascose in Roma sottoterra, alla intrata de re Carlo cun molte altre sue cosse, ove si schiappo alquanto, sicchi fu bisogno cingerla d’uno cerchio de rame, la qual e stata venduta piti fiate per opera antica a gran precio."

\textsuperscript{61}Schmitter, 1997, 131.

\textsuperscript{62}Taddeo Contarini owned three paintings by Giovanni Bellini and three by Giorgione; Gabriel Vendramin had three by Bellini and two by Giorgione; Hieronimo Marcello had one by Bellini and three by Giorgione. All the other collections Michiel visited, with the exception of Zio's and Odoni's, contained at least one work by one of the artists.

\textsuperscript{63}The difficulties Isabella d'Este had procuring works by these artists before and after their deaths are an indication of the challenge Zio would have faced. That Zio probably obtained his Mantegna secondhand indicates that he was interested in works by older artists.

\textsuperscript{64}For example, Brown and Lorenzoni, 124–27, write that in 1506 Isabella d'Este paid the high price of 115 ducats (others were willing to pay 140) for a painting by of the \textit{Submersion of the Pharaoh} by Jan van Eyck, ten ducats more than she paid for an antique agate vase. One hundred and fifteen ducats would have been more than half Zio's annual salary at the \textit{Razon nuove}. On the other hand, inventories demonstrate that Northern works were fairly common in Venetian households, and it may be, as Aikema, 84, 90, suggests, that lower-quality works from the North were relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain. For the Grimani collection of Northern paintings see Michiel, 1896, 100–04.
happened to pass through Venice. This work would not have entailed the expense or required the connections necessary to procure an older work by a well-known artist. Zio was an aspiring and enterprising collector, but a patrician of the stature of Domenico Grimani clearly priced him out of the market for the most valuable “semiophores.”

There is considerable evidence, on the other hand, that Zio did practice “diversionary” tactics — that is, he introduced new types of valuables into the “tournament” of collecting. Zio’s interest in curios and natural specimens is remarkable in this regard. Michiel noted several such objects in his description of Zio’s collection in 1521, but he gave a fuller account when he saw them a second time in Odoni’s home in 1532. In his account of the “studiolo de sopra” (the studiolo upstairs), Michiel recorded that “the five vases made of gems ornamented with gold are modern and used to belong to Francesco Zio, and so also the vases and basins of porcelain, the antique vases and medals, and natural things — that is petrified crabs, fish, and snakes, a dried chameleon, little and rare shells, crocodiles, bizarre fish.”

Michiel did not describe such objects in other collections he visited. Although examples of naturalia like these became commonplace, even de rigueur, in late-sixteenth-century collections, at this early date they indicate that Zio was introducing new objects of value (or, at this point, at least objects of curiosity) into his collection.

65Michiel, 1896, 94; Faries and Wolf, 724.
66When seeking to purchase the painting by Jan van Eyck (see n. 64 above) from the heirs of the Venetian collector Michele Vianello, Isabella d’Este told her agent “should you have need of the authority of a nobleman, use the services of Messer Pietro Bembo,” suggesting that social status and connections were useful in procuring highly sought after objects.
67Ibid., 84: “Li 5 vasetti de gemme ornati d’oro sono moderni: solean essere de Francesco Zio. Et cusi anchora vasi et piadene de porcellana, et vasi antichi, et medaglie et cose naturali, zoa granchii, pesci bisse, petrificadi, un camaleonte secho, caragoli picoli et rari, crocodili, pesci bizarre.” Since these “natural things” are only described in the account of Odoni’s collection, scholars have only recognized Odoni as a naturalist collector. However, as Favaretto, 1990, 76, noted, Michiel indicates that Odoni inherited these objects from Zio.
68The only possibility is the “infinite number of other galanterie” in the collection of Giovanni Ram (Michiel, 1896, 106). While in Italian galanterie are beautiful, decorative objects, in Venetian dialect galanterie de mar are maritime species collected by naturalists (Boerio, 295). The inventory of the Ram family collection compiled in 1592, however, does not list any maritime curiosities: Gronau, 74–82. The inventory of the collection of Gabriele Vendramin reveals that he owned several animal horns, a number of shells, an animal tooth, and the back, or spine, of a crocodile: Ravà, 161, 163, 165, 167. In Vendramin’s collection, however, the objects were not displayed together as they were in Odoni’s house. Natural objects encompassed a larger percentage of the Zio/Odoni collection and were present in greater variety.
69Findlen’s now-classic study of naturalist collectors (1994) begins midcentury.
Zio’s patronage of painting represents another form of “diversion.” Rather than seeking out works by Giorgione and Bellini, Zio adapted to his limitations by becoming an adventurous patron of contemporary art. A closer examination of the works he commissioned indicates that he often employed artists early in their careers, actively discovering “new talent.” He must have been one of the first patrons, for example, of Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo (fl. 1506–48) after the artist moved to Venice around 1520. Already in 1521 Zio owned a canvas of Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples, as well as a painting in gouache of unknown subject by the Brescian painter. Although active in Parma and Florence in 1506 and 1508 respectively, Savoldo’s earliest securely documented painting is the altarpiece of the Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints completed in 1521 for San Niccolò in Treviso. In the records of expenses for this work, Savoldo is referred to as “a painter who is helping fra’ Marco” (the artist Fra Marco Penaben, who began the composition), suggesting that he was virtually unknown in the region at the time that Zio employed him.

Zio took a precocious interest as well in the work of Giovanni Cariani (ca. 1485–after 1547), a Bergamask painter who was intermittently active in Venice. Zio’s painting of “cupid sitting with the bow in his hand in an Inferno,” seen by Michiel in 1521, must have been executed during the earliest period of the artist’s career, before he returned to his native city in 1517. Indeed, the subject of the painting accords well with what is known of Cariani’s early Giorgionesque work before he attained his mature style in Bergamo. Zio was also an enthusiastic patron of another painter of Bergamask origin, Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (1479/80–1528). Palma painted at least three pictures for Zio, including one of Christ and the Adulteress. Only two paintings of this subject attributed to the artist survive, one of which (now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome) can be identified as the unfinished version in Palma’s studio at his death in 1529. The second, in the Hermitage, may well be the painting Zio owned. Scholars now generally agree that it is a very

70Gilbert, 27–29.
71Michiel, 1896, 94. For the paleographic complexities and problems of this passage in Michiel’s manuscript see Schmitter, 1997, 80.
72Fragi, 8; Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo, 94.
73Palluchini and Rossi, 18, 29, 32. Sanuto, 1969–70, 19:443, saw a play featuring an intermission farce with the God of Love carried into a scene of flaming Hell, which might relate to the subject of Zio’s painting.
74Rylands, 21, 197, 232. He also mentions (327) a third “lost” version of the subject, once attributed to Palma, painted on wood. Although Michiel refers to Zio’s painting as a tela (canvas), he does not seem to have used terms such as “tela” and “tavola” with technical precision. See Schmitter, 1997, 68.
early work by Palma, perhaps as early as 1510–11 (fig. 2). Such a commission would fit the pattern of Zio’s attention to young immigrant artists.

Both Zio’s interest in naturalia and his penchant for seeking out new talent suggest that his collecting practices cannot be adequately explained by the theory of social emulation. In this regard at least, he appears to fit the model put forth by Pomian that members of the lower ranks of the elite “discover” new collectibles and that their innovations are later adopted by the

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75 See Artemieva, 64.
76 Zio’s patronage of Scorel also fits this pattern since the artist was young and unknown when he first came to Venice.
most established elites. What the collector lacks in monetary resources or social connections can be made up for (perhaps in some way even surpassed?) through the practice of diversion.

Another question remains, however — to what degree might Zio's status as a cittadino have influenced the thematic content of his collection, as opposed to just the artists he commissioned and the kinds of objects he collected? This question can be best examined through a consideration of the subjects Zio chose for the paintings he commissioned. Among the eleven collections Michiel recorded, Zio's stands out for its emphasis on religious narrative painting. Zio owned four such works by three different artists: *Adam and Eve* and *Christ and the Adulteress* by Palma Vecchio, *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples* by Savoldo, and the *Submersion of the Pharaoh* by van Scorel. While Michiel's text hardly provides a scientific sample, Zio's religious narratives contrast with the preponderance of portraits, portrait-like images, and standard devotional works, such as the Madonna and child, that Michiel noted in other collections. The narrative scenes Michiel described in patrician collections were usually either ambiguous, pastoral, and vaguely antique scenes by Giorgione or religious subjects by Northern artists, most of which were probably not direct commissions. Locally produced religious paintings, other than the ubiquitous Madonna and child, were typically “close-up” devotional images, such as a bust-length “Christ carrying the cross over his shoulder” or a half-length image of St. Jerome reading. Interestingly, Michiel only notes works more comparable with Zio's in other nonnoble collections — Antonio Pasqualino had a painting of the *Last Supper* (a common subject listed in many inventories) by a student of Titian, and Giovanni Ram (a Spanish merchant) commissioned Titian himself to paint *St. John Baptizing Christ* (now in the Capitoline Museum, Rome) with Ram’s own portrait in the lower-right-hand corner. These collectors, however, owned only one such work, not four.

77 The collector Taddeo Contarini in particular owned several such subjects by Giorgione: *The Three Philosophers*, *The Inferno with Aeneas and Anchises*, and *The Birth of Paris*.

78 Owned by Taddeo Contarini and Gerolamo Marcello, respectively. Contarini also possessed the painting Michiel, 1896, 88, described as “St. Francis in the desert” by Giovanni Bellini (now in the Frick Collection, New York), which was originally commissioned by another patrician, Zuan Michiel. In this painting, however, the "narrative" components of the scene are conspicuously downplayed. Similarly, the *St. Jerome in his Study* by Antonello da Messina, owned by Antonio Pasqualino, is hardly a "narrative."

79 Michiel, 1896, 88, does describe a painting of the “ordinanza de cavalli” in the collection of the patrician Taddeo Contarini, which obviously depicted some kind of narrative. Zio's nephew Odoni, on the other hand, owned narrative subjects more comparable to Zio's, which are discussed below.
The narratives Zio selected, with the exception of *Christ and the Adulteress*, are also relatively rare in Venetian painting, suggesting that they were chosen quite deliberately. Unlike purely devotional works, these narratives not only suggested Zio’s piety, but also intimated that he derived moral lessons and values from the *istorie*. The messages such paintings conveyed were likely to be clear and instructive, rather than ambiguous, poetic, and arcane, qualities typically associated with the Giorgionesque.

The subjects Zio selected also suggest a high degree of civic consciousness, as if Zio wished to show his adherence to the traditional values of the Venetian State. For instance, *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples* provides an example of charity, humility, and ritual brotherhood, and can perhaps be seen in light of Zio’s good works for the Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità.80 On the other hand, the other three subjects may be related to aspects of the “Myth of Venice” as a just and perfect society.

Most obvious in this regard is the *Submersion of the Pharaoh* by van Scorel, which is likely to be the oblong panel now in a private collection in Milan (fig. 3).81 Unlike the collectors Gabriele Vendramin and Giovanni Ram, who also purchased works from van Scorel, Zio chose a narrative with distinctively Venetian roots rather than a typical “world landscape” subject like the *Flight into Egypt*.82 The subject of the drowning of the Pharaoh is not common in Renaissance painting, although there were a number of Venetian precedents, at least two of which were part of major civic commissions.83 The most famous rendering, and one that would surely have been known to Zio and Scorel, is Titian’s gigantic woodcut in twelve blocks, executed and published around 1515 (fig. 4). Titian’s print, produced at the end of a troublesome period in Venetian history, has been widely recognized as a political

80Giovanni Agostino da Lodi’s painting of this subject, dated 1500, was probably an altarpiece, perhaps commissioned by a Scuola del Sacramento (Leonardo e Venezia, 368). According to Hills, 32, “[c]learly the Washing of the Feet was a subject with a direct appeal to the Venetian sense of a symbolic act.” The chief officer of the Scuola della Sacrament in San Trovaso gave holy water to the members of the confraternity in memory of the Christ’s act of humility, and on Mauundy Thursdays the doge washed the feet of twelve poor citizens. Although the subject is rare in Venetian art, the apothecary Daniel Dolce also owned “a large painting of Christ washing the feet, in a gold frame”: ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 34 (July 1528), c. br.


82Michiel, 1896, 94, 106; Faries and Wolff, 727; Schmitter, 75–77.

83See Olivato, 1980, 530–31; Brown and Lorenzoni, 128–32. Moschini Marconi, 179–80, notes that a rendition by Andrea Previtali was originally in the Doge’s Palace; Collins, 105, writes that Gentile Bellini painted the subject for the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Zio may also have known the painting by Jan van Eyck, which was in a private collection in Venice until 1506 (see nn. 64 and 66).
allegory. The Venetians had traditionally identified themselves with the Israelites, and the doge with Moses. The mythic foundation of the city paralleled the history of the Jews; persecuted for their religious beliefs, the Venetians had fled across water to the islands of the lagoon and established a state governed by a constitution similar to that of the Israelites. Given the political connotations of this subject in Venice and the recent publication of Titian’s print, it is likely that Zio picked it in order to exhibit both his civic pride and his belief that the Republic, against all odds, would triumph and be graced by God as the home of the chosen people. It is perhaps significant that the painting in Milan places more emphasis on the arrival of the Israelites on land and their subsequent celebrations than on the actual drowning of the Pharaoh’s men. Perhaps this represented a more optimistic outlook for the Republic by 1521.

The last two religious paintings Zio commissioned could also allude to aspects of the “Myth of Venice,” albeit less overtly. The subject of Christ and the Adulteress was unusually prevalent in Venice, suggesting that it had more than a strictly devotional purpose. While the reasons for this popularity have not been thoroughly investigated, the subject may have resonated with the Venetians’ wish to see themselves and their government as models of justice and tolerance. In both renditions, Palma emphasizes neither Christ’s forgiveness of the adulteress nor the Pharisees’ tormenting of her; rather, he depicts an imagined moment in which one of the Pharisees understands Christ’s message and himself forgives the adulteress. In what is likely to be Zio’s painting, the Pharisee on the left looks compassionately into the adulteress’s eyes and lays his hand on top of hers, contrasting vividly with his compatriots in the background, who are depicted as unpleasant, almost

84Olivato, 1980; Muraro and Rosand, 19, 81–83. For the influence of Titian’s composition on Scorel’s, see Meijer, 1992, 5–6.
86To my knowledge, this is the first rendition of the subject to place such emphasis on the arrival and celebrations. Cortesi Bosco, 462–66, notes Lotto’s originality in this regard, but the composition for his intarsia panel for Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo is clearly based on Scorel’s painting. The Venetian artist adopted Scorel’s elevated viewpoint, his compositional use of the tree in the left foreground, emphasis on the landscape over the seascape, and many genre-like details of the Israelites arriving with their packages. Lotto created this composition in 1526–27, precisely the time at which he was working on Odoni’s portrait (signed and dated 1527). It seems likely that Odoni inherited the Scorel Submersion and that Lotto saw it in his house. For the influence of Scorel’s composition on Lotto’s landscape in his St. Nicolas altarpiece in S. Maria dei Carmini (1527–29), see B.L. Brown, 425–26.
87First noted by Burckhardt, 1995, 121, n. 377.
88Keyes et al., 88, suggest that the subject reflected “the antidogmatic attitude prevailing in Venice at the time, manifested in its religious and political tolerance.”
grotesque, figures, still immune to Christ’s teaching. Palma further stressed the moral lesson by inscribing the famous line from John 8:7, “let him who is without sin cast the first stone,” in the upper-right-hand corner of the painting.89 Whether or not this subject can be tied to particularly Venetian ideologies, it is nonetheless characteristic of the sort of moral example Zio looked for in the paintings he commissioned.

Also by Palma was a depiction of Adam and Eve, which is almost certainly the over-life-size rendition of the subject now in the Braunschweig Museum (fig. 5).90 Although the “Fall of Man” appears infrequently in Venetian painting (especially on this scale), there were three important sculptural models in the city — the anonymous corner relief on the Doge’s Palace (1340s), Antonio Rizzo’s statues on the Arco Foscari (ca. 1470), and Tullio Lombardo’s Adam (and Eve?) on the tomb of Doge Andrea Vendramin in San Giovanni e Paolo (ca. 1490–94?) — all of them on public monuments in civic contexts.91 The classical forms, geometrical proportionality, and sculpturesque quality of Palma’s male nude are quoted directly from Tullio’s Adam.92

Within the context of the Doge’s Palace, both the Trecento relief and Rizzo’s statues refer to the Fall of Man as the origin and justification for government. It has been argued that Adam and Eve on Vendramin’s tomb instead pertain to the ultimate rectification of the Fall through Salvation.93 But given that these life-size sculptures repeated a theme associated with the Doge’s Palace and were part of a doge’s tomb, the political implications of the subject should not be overlooked. Within Zio’s household, Adam and Eve alluded to the Fall from a state of perfection and to the hope of regaining Paradise, perhaps through a combination of civic virtue and religious salvation.

The didactic, civic-oriented themes of several of Zio’s religious paintings are echoed in two secular works he owned as well. Although he probably did not commission his “small image of Mucius Scaevola burning his own hand,

89“QVIS VESTRUM EST/ SINE PECCATO/ PRIMUS LAPIDEM PROI/CIAT IN EAM.”
90Rylands, 21, 131–33, 198–99, 328; Schmitter, 1997, 62–63. According to Rylands, 131–33, “the aura of classical statuary” in the painting supports the idea that it is the work Zio commissioned, despite its being the size of an altarpiece (over two meters tall).
91For other paintings of the subject see Schmitter, 1997, 63–66. For the problem of Tullio’s Eve, Sheard, 1971, 100–06; Luchs, 45, 145, n. 88; Schmitter, 1997, 64, n. 122.
92Rylands, 131–33. As Rylands notes, Dürer’s famous print of the Fall of Man and Michelangelo’s Creation of Adam on the Sistine Ceiling were other important sources for Palma’s composition.
painted to look like bronze” (perhaps the small canvas now in Munich — fig. 6) directly from Andrea Mantegna, the subject, as well as the artist, may have appealed to him.\textsuperscript{94} The story is one of heroic perseverance and self-sacrifice for the good of the State, a theme that did not fall on deaf ears in Venice in

\textsuperscript{94} Michiel, 1896, 94: “El quadretto de Musio Scevola, che brusa la mano propria, finto de bronzo, fo de mano de Andrea Mantegna.” The painting in Munich is the only known rendition of the subject attributed to Mantegna or his school, and the small size of the image (40.8 x 34 cm) accords with Michiel’s description of a “quadretto.” The canvas is poorly preserved, making it difficult to determine whether the now grayish tone of the figures and the golden-orange color of the background fit Michiel’s description of it as “finto di bronzo.” See Lightbown, 469–70; Boorsch et al., 86, 407; Schmitter, 1997, 47–53.
the early part of the sixteenth century. Mucius, a Roman nobleman, thwarted in his effort to assassinate the Etruscan King Porsenna and captured by his enemy, demonstrated the resolve and steadfastness of his countrymen by deliberately burning the hand with which he had failed to kill the king; hence his name Scaevola, “left-handed.” Zio’s interest in this subject could relate to his civic patriotism and may even have recalled some actual military experience. The subject was evoked for exactly this purpose by the nobleman Jacopo Loredano on the reverse of his portrait medal (ca. 1523).95

That Zio might actually have participated in military actions is suggested by his portrait “in armor, shown down to his knees” by Vincenzo Catena. This portrait and another half-length image of him by the same artist were in Odoni’s collection in 1532.96 Since Michiel did not mention them in his account of Zio’s collection, they may have been commissioned after 1521 but before Zio’s death in 1523. While I have not found any record of Zio’s involvement in military matters, cittadini did take active roles in the war against the League of Cambrai.97 Since actual portraits of men in armor are unusual in this period (as is the three-quarter-length format that allowed for a fuller view of that armor), it seems likely that Zio did have some martial experience.98 In any case, the portrait foregrounded Zio’s manly engagement in the vita activa and alluded to possible sacrifices made in the name of his patria.

Neither of Zio’s portraits by Catena can be identified, but some idea of what they must have looked like can be developed by comparing two portraits by the artist that represent men in Venetian dress: Portrait of a Man with a Book (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, fig. 7), dated “substantially before 1520,” and Portrait of a Senator (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. 8), painted ca. 1525 or perhaps later.99 Despite some stylistic development from tightly rendered realism toward a more

95Scher, 110–11.
97Mallett and Hale, 336–37.
98The only other image of a man in armor that Michiel, 1896, 88, specifically identified as a portrait was Giorgione’s depiction of Gerolamo Marcello, a patrician who participated in the defense of Padua in 1508–10. On Marcello see Battilotti and Franco, 1994, 208–10; Anderson, 1997, 224, 304. For portraits of men in armor, see Schmitter, 1997, 92–96.
99Robertson, 53, 66. The blue satin veste, worn with the pinkish-red stola and the black baretta, probably identifies the sitter of the first portrait as a Venetian canon or parish priest: see Molmenti, 2:416. Fletcher, 1973, 384, n. 25, has suggested it could be a portrait of the humanist Egnazio Battista, who was a parish priest. The red toga of the sitter in the second
Giorgionesque softness of form, the works have much in common, particularly in their relationship to Venetian artistic traditions and their conceptions of what portraits ought to convey about their sitters. In both portrait identifies him as either a noble member of a council or conceivably the *cittadino* Great Chancellor. See Newton, 19, 22

In style they hark back, both in mood and composition, to the remote, hieratic impenetrability of Giovanni Bellini’s portraits. However, Catena, influenced by Giorgione and Raphael, subtly updates the type by creating a greater sense of individual physiognomy and psychology. It is quite likely that the artist was appreciated in his own time for precisely this elaboration...
upon tradition. To characterize Catena simply as an old-fashioned painter because his style does not fit the trajectory of the development of painterliness in Venetian art is to miss the point. Catena's “neogiorgionisme” and “archaizing revival” should not be seen as shortcomings, but as a more conservative balance between tradition and novitas, and one more expressive of the Venetian Republican ethos of mediocritas, which rejected the display of magnificence and novelty in favor of “equality and similarity.” In addition to appealing to the social outlook of more “old-fashioned” patricians (perhaps the “senator” depicted in the portrait in New York), the style was also suitable to a cittadino who wished to underscore his ancestral roots in the city and his adherence to time-honored civic virtues.

This interpretation of Zio's collecting habits accords well with his wish to be memorialized after his death. In his testament, Zio asked his executors, one of whom was his nephew Andrea Odoni, to build him a stone tomb elevated from the ground and bearing his name and coat of arms, but requested that they abstain from “unnecessary and excessive” display in his funeral. While such requests for modesty are not unusual, they indicate that Zio was interested in a tasteful memorial, but was well aware of the dangers of appearing too extravagant. Zio's nephews understood his desires well, for the inscription they placed on his tomb conveys much of the same character:

Francesco Lilio, son of Benedictis, procurator of the blessed Virgins, whose life was renowned for so many different praiseworthy virtues that it surpassed the exemplars of ancient probity.

One can almost imagine Mantegna’s painting of Mucius Scaevola hanging above the tomb. Unable to seek his identity in the actual nobility of his family heritage, Zio conveyed a kind of cittadino nobility in the “civic ethos of meekness, humility and faithful service” to the Venetian state.

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100 Le siècle de Titien, 274. On tradition and novitas see Tafuri, 2.

101 ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, G. F. dal Pozzo, b. 764, c. 101: “Item volo quando contingere me mori que cadaver meum depositet in ecclesia dictarum Monialium de virginibus de observantia usque quo fiat per meos commissarios una sepultura lapidea altior a terra cum nostris Insignijs et literis indicantibus nomen et familiam quam volo construi in dicta ecclesia monialium observantium ad inconiurum altraris corporis Domini Nostris Jesu Christi, ubi postea dictum meum cadaver reponat. Circa pompam meae sepulturae dimitto in discretionem meorum commissariorum quos rogo ut modeste se gerant circa dictam meam sepulturam abstinendo a superfluis et supervacaneis.”


103 Muir, 21.
7. Andrea Odoni, Cittadino Extraordinaire

Andrea Odoni may have been Francesco Zio’s nipote, but he was in many ways a different kind of cittadino. For one, his father, Rinaldo Odoni, was a recent Milanese immigrant to the city, albeit a wealthy one: thus the Odoni family had no established heritage in the city. It was Andrea’s maternal uncle Zio (or barba Zio in Venetian dialect), not his father, who introduced him into all the avenues of advancement and prestige available to Venetian cittadini, including, perhaps most importantly, the practice of collecting. Zio, only eleven years Andrea’s senior, acted as paterfamilias to Andrea and his brothers, Alvise and Gerolamo. Through Zio, Andrea obtained bureaucratic offices, became a member of the Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, and inherited land and wealth, as well as an art collection. After Zio’s death, Andrea himself then did the same for his younger brothers and their offspring.

Odoni began his career in civil service as his uncle’s assistant (cogitor) at the Raxon nuove, where he is recorded for the first time in 1517 when he was accused of embezzlement (the charges were subsequently dropped). Despite this temporary setback, by 1523, the year of Zio’s death, he had become scrivan at the Dazio dil vin (the office in charge of the tax on wine), a position he seems to have received in exchange for Zio’s hereditary office at the Raxon nuove. He was very successful at the Dazio, reaching the high point

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104Cicogna, 3:454, citing “cronache nostre”: “Anno di Christo 1490 si trasferì ad abitar in Venezia con grosso capitale di mercanzie Rinaldo Oddoni Milanese, e con esso venne Guglielmo suo fratello ch’era eremita uomo santissimo illustre per molti suoi pellegrinaggi.” Rinaldo is identified as “cittadin veneto” in his son Gerolamo’s testament, but I have not been able to determine how he obtained citizenship — probably through marriage: ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Angelo de Canale, b. 211, c. 40–41. If Rinaldo emigrated from a region of Lombardy under Venetian domination, he may not have required an official grant of citizenship. See Schmitter, 1997, 139–41.

105In his will, Francesco refers to Andrea Odoni as his nipote. Although nipote is a more general term than “nephew,” Rinaldo’s wife “Mad. Marieta di Odoni” (ASV, Cancelleria inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 39, c. 58, fol. 20r), whose maiden name is not given, was probably Francesco Zio’s sister. See Schmitter, 45, n. 32; 141–43. Andrea’s father Rinaldo is remarkably absent from both official and family records, perhaps because he died early.

106Schmitter, 1997, 145, 147, 159.


108ASV, Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità, Reg. 254, c. 179r. After Zio’s death in 1523, his position was given to Zuan della Vedova, son of Gasparo, in exchange for the office of the notary at the Dazio dil Vin, which the Signoria in turn hoped to sell at auction for 4,000 ducats: Sanuto, 1969–70, 34:41, 102 (who refers mistakenly to “Alvise Zio”). This exchange of offices took place only after Zio’s death, but had been officially arranged as early as 1517. See Neff, 574–75.
of his career in 1532 — the very year Michiel visited his collection — when he and the patrician Piero Orio were elected co-condutors of the Dazio dil Vin (that is, they contracted to be in charge of collecting taxes for the State). In 1534 a carved marble plaque was mounted at the Dazio offices commemorating the successes of the condutors Pietro Orio and Andrea Odoni. Both the plaque and Sanuto register the record-setting sums the partners collected.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Andrea may not have inherited (or imitated) his uncle’s civic rectitude and professed morality. While his position at the Dazio afforded him wealth and prominence, it seems to have garnered him an unsavory public reputation. During the very period when Orio and Odoni were co-condutors, Sanuto referred to Orio as a person of bad repute (ha malafama), accusing him of corruption and cruelty in his tax estimations. Odoni had a longstanding relationship with Orio, who had risen to his defense against the corruption charges in 1517. This close relationship between the two men cannot have reflected well on Odoni, and one wonders how much of his collection might indeed have been funded with graft from public office.

109 Sanuto, 1969–70, 56:781. Orio was the “principal” whereas Odoni was supposed to “attend to the estimates [of taxes on wine].”

110 The plaque does not seem to have survived but was transcribed in 1726: ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Cittadinanze Originarie, b. 404, c. 92, p. 9. See Schmitter, 1997, fig. 43; Sanuto, 1969–70, 56:781, 58:643.

111 Sanuto, 1969–70, 58:643: “[E]l qual Orio ha mala fama, usa grande crudeltà con tutti, fa stimar fino li cerchii, fa meter per l’ordinario una quarta de più per anfora contra el statuto.”

112 Ibid., 24:622. Prominently displayed in the “portego in soler,” the most public room of the Casa Odoni, was “una banderuola con l’arma Oria et Odona”: Gronau, 63.

113 That the office of the Dazio dil Vin was susceptible to corruption is suggested by a 1538 decree stating — ASV, Dazio del Vin, Ufficiali, b. 1, Decreti, Parte e Statuti Veneti dal 1400, n. 715: 22 August 1538 in the Collegio di datii — “that not withstanding the corruption and judgments made contrary to the laws and rules of auctions of the Dazio del Vin, all of these laws and rules will be observed” (“Che non ostante le corruetelle et iudicature fatte in contrario delle lezze et capittolli delli incanti del datio del vino siano osservade tutte esse lezze, et capittolli”). A later publication of the import and export tariffs on wine, malmsey, and vinegar sought to curtail past irregularities by “giving security, clarity, and ease to those who pay and receive, to justly give and take such payments, according to the most just intentions and prudent laws made by this most serene and Christian republic” (“dando chiarezza, sicurtà, et facilità a chi paga, et chi riceve, di dar et pigliar essi pagamenti giustamente, secondo la intentione giustissima, et le legi prudentissime fatte da questa Serenissima et Christianissima Republica”): Draghia, dedication. In his will of 1547 the patrician Gabriele Vendramin specifically warned his nephews to avoid the taxing offices because they were ugly and dangerous things (“son cosse brute et pericholoxe”): ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Antonio Marsilio, b. 1208, c. 403 (3 January 1548). Walker, 102, notes that “fixing the distribution of the Dazi in advance by intimidation during the auctions” was one of the numerous crimes attributed to the nobleman Zuanne Memo in 1598: I am grateful
Such connections did not, however, prevent him from following in his uncle's footsteps at the Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità. Becoming a member in 1513 at the age of twenty-five, he was subsequently elected to exactly the same positions his uncle had held before him. Odoni's status within the fraternal community is reflected in the unusually large crowd of scuola members who attended his funeral in 1545. 309 confraternity brothers accompanied his body to his tomb in Santa Maria Maggiore, compared to an average of about 100 at most funerals. The only other brother who commanded more attendees was the nobleman Francesco Bembo, who had 314. The high numbers, however, are probably less an indication of popularity than of wealth, for alms were traditionally given to those who attended funerals and prayed for the soul of the deceased.

As was the case with Zio, it is nonetheless difficult to determine the extent of Odoni's wealth. In his decima of 1538 he reported an income of eighty-five ducats a year from his landholdings. Some of this land he inherited from Zio (the four houses in San Polo), but Odoni also owned his own house in Santa Croce and a butcher stall at the Rialto. In 1540, he filed an addenda to the earlier statement and reported sixteen fields (campi), near Oriago and Miran, which earned another fourteen ducats. This makes Odoni's total annual income from land about 100 ducats, which was twice that of his uncle. Another indication of the Odoni family wealth is the dowries Andrea's brothers provided their daughters. These ranged from 1,000 to 2,000 ducats, respectable sums but certainly not signs of extraordinary

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114He was elected one of the twelve “Degani de tutoanno” in 1516 and in 1522 as well as “degano di mezzano” in 1523. ASV, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, registered as “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, et confratelli,” 52v, 55v, 59r, 59v; BMC, Codice Cicogna 2118, Mariegola 120. Much later in life, in 1542, he was elected to be one of the twelve members of the zonta, but refused the office: ASV, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, registered as “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, et confratelli,” 79r.

115These records survive only for the period 1538–46: ASV, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Carità, registered as “Successioni, ereditarie, guardiani, et confratelli,” 99v.


117ASV, Dieci savi sopra le decime, b. 100, c. 274 (March 30, 1538) and b. 106, c. 703 (October 27, 1540).
wealth. Overall, it seems that Odoni was probably somewhat better off than his uncle, but there is no evidence that he belonged even to the most prosperous level of cittadini. Although Odoni did eventually marry Isabeta Taiapiera, née de Monte, sometime after 1527 (and perhaps not until 1538, when he was fifty years old), like his uncle he had no children, and thus was able to invest a considerable part of his disposable income in his collection.

8. ODONI'S COLLECTION

As in other areas of Odoni's life, Zio's example had a notable impact on his nephew's collecting practices. Odoni inherited a number of works directly from his uncle, but he also continued to patronize some of the same artists Zio had "discovered," and sometimes commissioned paintings with similar moralizing themes. He was also an enthusiast of antique statuary, and increased his uncle's collection of curiosities and naturalia. At the same time, Odoni pursued new interests. In particular, he became an important patron of modern sculpture and commissioned paintings from artists who were more influenced by Central Italian art. Overall, Odoni's patronage and collecting could be daring and innovative, as is shown in Lotto's portrait of him, but his interests and ideals were less coherent and consistent than his uncle's.

Evidence of Zio's influence is most apparent in Odoni's portego, the main salon on the piano nobile and the chief area for public display in the

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8 Gerolamo Odoni's daughter, Loredana, had a dowry of 1,000 ducats when she married Marco di Raspi: ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Contratti di Nozze, b. 144, c. 284v (6 May 1550). In ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Nicolò Moravio, b. 675, c. 47 (17 June 1555), Alvise Odoni leaves his daughters Cornelia and Marieta 2,000 ducats each. The cap on dowries at this time was 4,000 (in 1535) and then 5,000 ducats (in 1551), so the Odoni dowries were well below the allowable limit, which was in any case often not respected. See Bellavitis, 1995a, 62.

9 In his will, Odoni states that some of the land at Miran came from his wife, Isabella: ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Vettor Giordano, b. 528, c. 40 (21 March 1545); Battilotti and Franco, 1978, 81. Given that Odoni did not mention ownership of any land at Miran in his 1538 decima, he may not have married until after this date. According to her testament, Isabella had been previously married to Alvise Taiapiera, with whom she wished to be buried "a S. Chatarina, nel arca della schuola dove sono sepuliti il primo mio marito et mia sorella et deli altri mei": ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Giorgio Draco, b. 927, c. 113 (11 January 1546). Alvise Taiapetra died in 1527 leaving all his property (including land at Miran) to his wife, "Isabetham de Monte": ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Gio. Maria Cavanaies, b. 217, c. 4 (5 October 1527). The land is also mentioned in an inventory of his property: ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea notai diversi, b. 34, c. 42 (18 November 1527). Although both Tagliapietra and da Monte are noble names, as Grubb, 346, points out such standard names were widely used by commoners as well. Unfortunately, Andrea and Isabella's marriage contract is not preserved in ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Contratti di Nozze.
Venetian home. In this room Odoni complemented the canvas of “Cupid in an Inferno” that he had inherited from Zio by commissioning two other works from artists his uncle had favored — Cariani and Savoldo. The subjects Odoni chose probably would also have suited his uncle’s taste for moralizing narratives and examples of “ancient probity.” The Savoldo painting depicted “the young woman presented to Scipione” (the Clemency of Scipio), and “the story [istoria] of Trajan, with many figures and antique buildings was by Zuanne del Comandador [Cariani], but the buildings were designed [dissegnati] by Sebastiano Bolognese [Sebastiano Serlio].” The latter picture must have represented the “Justice of Trajan,” a story taken from the life of St. Gregory, relating how the Roman Emperor stopped to listen to the pleas of a woman who had lost her son, and vowed to obtain justice for her. Although technically a subject from ancient Roman history that could be embellished with “antique buildings,” it also had a clear Christian moral theme: Trajan’s act of mercy, helped by St. Gregory’s prayers, led to his release from eternal damnation. Scipio and Trajan — ancient exemplars of Clemency and Justice, respectively — were ideal role models for a man who collected taxes for his livelihood. By displaying these subjects in his portego, Odoni was perhaps not only imitating his uncle’s example, but also trying to combat the negative image of his public office.

If the paintings by Cariani/Serlio and Savoldo relate in some ways to Zio’s patronage, two other paintings in the portego suggest that Odoni was more susceptible than his uncle to the strategy of emulation. These works were so “derivative” that Michiel could only identify their style, not the

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121 Michiel, 1896, 84: “La tela della giovine presentata a Scipione fu de man de Gierolimo Bressano” and “Listoria de Traiano cun le molte figure et lì edificii antichi, fu de mano de lìnsto Zuanne del Comandador; ma lì edificii furono dissegnati da Sebastiano Bolognese.”
123 The same two subjects are represented alongside a depiction of the lion of St. Mark and Doge Loredano in a painting attributed to Gerolamo Mocetto (1454–1531) now in the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona (inv. n. 461, 474, 476). Martin, 2000, 166–67, notes that the subjects were also depicted on one of the capitals of the Doge’s Palace (ca. 1450) and suggests that the paintings might have been commissioned as pendants. For the capitals, see Manno, 76–77.
124 The attempt by Pallucchini and Rossi, 250–51, cat. no. D3, to link a drawing attributed to Cariani with Odoni’s painting is unconvincing: Schmitter, 1997, 194–95; Martin, 2000, 166. Gilbert, 36–37, 516, cat. no. 16 bis, suggests, more plausibly, that the composition of Clemency is preserved in a copy after Savoldo (private collection, Florence). See also Martin, 1995, 79.
artists who painted them: “the nude Saint Jerome sitting in the desert by the light of the moon by the hand of ______, copied from a canvas by Zorzi de Castelfrancho,” and “the canvas with the monsters and inferno alla Ponentina [in the “western,” i.e. Northern, style] was by the hand of ______.”

Like Zio, Odoni did not own original paintings by Giorgione; unlike his uncle, he imitated patrician tastes by purchasing a copy. Similarly, Odoni’s Northern hellscape, referred to as “the large painting . . . of Purgatory” in the inventory, conformed to a well-established predilection for such works in Venice. Odoni did not, however, own originals by Bosch — as did Cardinal Domenico Grimani — but rather a work by a lesser-known Northern artist, imitating Bosch’s style and subject-matter.

The decoration of Odoni’s bedroom also demonstrates his tendency to follow, rather than establish, trends. The room was luxuriously fitted out with a matching set of bed, chests, and doors, all painted by Stefano, a student of Titian (perhaps the Flemish artist Giovanni Stefano Calcar). According to the inventory, the bed itself had a silver quilt, two gold-covered pillows, and yellow damask bed hangings with embroidered curtains. Such lavish bedroom furnishings were common status symbols and were often targeted in sumptuary laws. A decree of 1512 specifically outlawed the use of gold, silver, and damask for bedclothes; when the same rules were repeated in 1530 the Senate admonished “all try to outdo one another, and if something is not done about it, total ruin will effectively follow for many of our nobles and cittadini.” Odoni’s bed furnishings clearly overstepped the bounds of the sumptuary laws and were an entirely conventional display of wealth.

Nor were the paintings that hung in the bedroom — with the notable exception of Odoni’s portrait — in any way unexpected. The “large reclining female nude behind the bed” by Savoldo, the “two half-length figures of a young woman with an old woman behind her” by Palma, and “our Lady in

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125Michiel, 1896, 86, who provided ellipses hoping to fill in the missing names at a later date: “La tela delli monstri et inferno alla ponentina fu de mano de ______. El San Hieronimo nudo che siede in un deserto al lume della luna, fu de mano de ______ ritratto da una tela de Zorzi da Castelfrancho.”

126Gronau, 63. For this predilection see Meijer, 1990, 78; Virdis, 73; B.L. Brown, 426–28. Harbison, 25, 32, refers to the taste for “Northern exoticism.”

127Michiel, 1896, 84; Pallucchini, 1:215.

128Gronau, 67: “Un fornimento da letto da damasco zallo, racamado attorno tutte le coltrine, con due cussini d’oro, et el suo covertor d’arzento.” P. Thornton, 121, notes that a “fornimento” was a complete ensemble of bed-hangings that could include curtains all the way around the bed, and a cloth “ceiling” above the bed and its valence.

129Bistort, 240–41.
a landscape with Christ and the infant Saint John and Saint ______ by Titian were all standard Venetian types: the reclining nude, the half-length beauty, and the sacra conversazione in a landscape. None of these works suggests that Odoni was particularly adventurous in his choice of subjects or artists.

Some of his commissions, however, demonstrate a more experimental and open-minded attitude, especially towards novel Central-Italian influences. In 1531 Odoni hired Girolamo da Treviso to fresco the façade of his house. Although born and presumably trained in the Veneto, Girolamo worked primarily in Bologna and adopted many features of Central-Italian painting. The Odoni façade no longer survives, but an approximately contemporary fresco in Faenza provides a sense of his style at the time (fig. 9). The painterly quality of the landscape and the emphasis on effects of light reveal the artist’s Venetian heritage, but the monumental, architectonic, figural composition is indebted to the school of Raphael. According to Vasari, the façade iconography included numerous classical gods and goddesses who indicated that Odoni’s residence was “a friendly haven for men of talent.” This was the style and message that Odoni chose to advertise on the façade of his home for all of Venice to see.

130Michiel, 1896, 84. The famous prototype for the reclining nude is, of course, Giorgione’s Dresden Venus; for an overview of the genre see Meiss, 212–39. For a discussion of Odoni’s nude, sometimes identified with a painting attributed to Girolamo da Treviso in the Borghese Gallery in Rome, see Schmitter, 1997, 217–20. Rylands, 298, suggests the half-length image in Odoni’s bedroom could be a work he tentatively attributes to Palma in the San Diego Museum of Art. For a discussion of the pictorial type, see Junkerman, 47, who mentions the painting owned by Odoni as an example. For the development of the sacre conversazioni see Rylands, 67–85. Titian painted several sacre conversazioni with the Virgin and saints in a landscape around 1530; Odoni’s may have been a now-lost composition once in the Reynst collection known through an engraving: Gould, 1959, 111–12; Logan, 154–55.

131This fresco was commissioned in 1533 by another collector-on-a-budget, Sabba da Castiglione, who recommended Girolamo as “a quite talented and renowned painter — quick, decisive, and expert in colorito and chiaroscuro and in fresco, gouache, and oil — and skilled in painting landscapes, buildings, and perspective scenes, as can be seen in his works in many Italian cities” (“pittore certo valente e celebre, presto, risoluto, et universale nel colorito, nel chiaro, et scuro, in fresco, à guazzo, ad oglio, pratico di paesi, di lontani, di casamenti, di prospettive, si come fede ne fanno le opere sue in molte città d’Italia”) (57r). On the fresco in Faenza, see Casadio.

132Zanetti, 213, remarked that the single figure of Odoni’s façade decoration surviving in his time indicated that Girolamo “was a worthy follower of the Roman school.”

133Vasari, 1:887: “amica e albergo di virtuosi.” On figural frescoes on palace facades in Venice see Schmitter, 2002; McTavish.
The painting by Cariani (with its backdrop design by Serlio) was another Venetian/Central-Italian hybrid. It may have been commissioned very shortly after Serlio arrived in Venice in 1527. In September 1528 Serlio and Augustino Veneziano applied for copyright permission to produce prints representing “various buildings in perspicientia and various other ancient things delightful to all.” Odoni’s painting may have been related to these inventions, although Michiel does not specify the exact nature of Serlio’s involvement in the project.

Even if the background was copied from a print without Serlio’s direct input, it demonstrates Odoni’s openness to and contact with the most up-to-date artistic developments of the time. The background architecture was probably — to suit the story (which was supposed to take place in the streets of Rome) — an impressive perspectival vista of Ancient Rome. Perhaps Serlio provided an example of the Corinthian order combined with rustication, which he later claimed was used at the Porta Decumana of Trajan’s camp in Pannonia “to show figuratively the gentleness and mildness of the Emperor Trajan’s mind in giving pardon.” If so, Odoni’s painting may have been an early formulation of Serlio’s idea that different orders and ornamental features should be applied to architecture according to the “rank and professions” of the owner or dedicatee of the building. The painting illustrates that, like Michiel and Gabriele Vendramin, Odoni was interested in classical architecture. In any case, the idea of including an elaborate all’antica architectural backdrop was itself novel in Venetian painting at the time. Until the 1520s landscape dominated the backgrounds of Venetian narrative scenes; it was only in the 1530s and 1540s that architectural settings increased in popularity. Odoni’s early interest in the works of Girolamo da Treviso and Sebastiano Serlio suggests that he shared, rather than emulated, the interests of the most sophisticated contemporary patrician collectors and patrons.

Odoni’s enthusiasm for sculpture, however, shows the clearest examples of “diversion” along the lines of Zio’s interest in naturalia and his patronage of young artists. The display of both ancient and modern statuary throughout the house set Odoni’s collection apart from the others described by...

134 Odoni may have known Serlio through Lorenzo Lotto, who painted Odoni’s portrait in 1527 and witnessed Serlio’s testament 1 April 1528. See Olivato, 1988, 249–50.
135 Howard, 512.
136 As quoted in Onians, 277.
137 Serlio, 254; Onians, 275.
138 For the circle of “dilettanti d’architettura” surrounding Serlio (and Odoni’s connection to it), see Olivato, 1988, especially 250; Fletcher, 1981a, 456–57.
139 Gould, 1962, 63.
Michiel or known through inventories. In Odoni’s bedroom were bronze statuettes by different modern masters; other small-scale sculptures were displayed in the “studiolo” and the mezzado (a mezzanine level used for offices) as well.\(^{140}\) In the portego, marble, stucco, terracotta, wood, and bronze sculpture was exhibited alongside paintings, weapons, and other objects. Particularly notable were a number of portrait busts and heads. Some of these depicted classical figures, such as Hadrian and Antinoö, but at least one was a contemporary likeness.\(^{141}\) Michiel recorded a “portrait of Misser Pollo Trevisan of the fesse [dalla drezza] in color,” which may or may not be the same object as the “wooden head of Messer Francesco Zio” mentioned in the inventory.\(^{142}\) In either case, as Alison Luchs has shown, sculpted portrait busts were very rare in Venetian household collections in the early sixteenth century. It was not until much later, with the works of Jacopo Sansovino, Alessandro Vittoria, and Danese Cattaneo, that sculpted portrait busts became commonplace.\(^{143}\) Ownership of such objects indicates Odoni’s precocious interest in a new type of collectible.\(^{144}\)

The pièce de résistance of the entire house was undoubtedly the area referred to in the inventory as the antigaia [antiquarium], which encompassed all the public spaces in the bottom level of the house — the andedo da basso

\(^{140}\)Michiel, 1896, 84; Gronau, 57–59, 66, 68.

\(^{141}\)Gronau, 63–64.

\(^{142}\)Michiel, 1896, 86: “In portico el ritratto de Misser Polio Trivisan dalla drezza colorito et molte figure, dorate, tutte de terra cotta furono de man de diversi maestri”; Luchs, 9–10, 121–22, nn. 40–44. Luchs, 10, suggests that the portrait could have represented the patrician Paolo di Andrea Trevisan (ca. 1457–1534) who, like Odoni and Michiel, was a patron of the sculptor Antonio Minello: Fletcher, 1981a, 466–67; Schulz, 1991, 28. Schulz, 1991, 210, notes that this Paolo Trevisan was appointed Proveditore sopra le fabbriche di Rialto in 1520; Odoni would therefore have known him through his work at the offices of the Dazio del vin at the Rialto. However, Paolo Trevisan was a very common Venetian name, which is why Michiel added the descriptor “dalla drezza.” (As Frimmel notes, Michiel inserted the phrase above two short crossed out words. The change appears to be in the same ink.) Frimmel (Michiel, 1896, 87) translated the phrase as “von der Seitenlinie,” “of the collateral branch,” which is correct, if imprecise. “Dalla drezza” is “dalla fascia” in Italian, meaning “of the fesse” (a horizontal band forming the middle third of a coat of arms); see index to Sanuto, 1969–70, 5: under “Trevisan.” A certain “sier Polo Trivisan el cavalier . . . qu. sier Andrea da la dreza” (Sanuto, 1969–70, 5:7) died 8 October 1505, when Sanuto (6:243) referred to him as “a young man of great repute . . . and had he lived he might have been doge” (“homo molto zovene et in gran reputation . . . et si ’l viveva fortasse saria stà doxe”). Such acclaim combined with premature death would make him a good candidate for memorialization.

\(^{143}\)Luchs, 9–20, 112–14.

\(^{144}\)The inventory of the “studio” also lists two portraits of Andrea himself, which may have been death masks: “Do retratti over impronti del q. m. Andrea di Odoni de stucco” (Gronau, 57).
(the long hall of the ground floor corresponding to the portego above), the
courtyard, the loggia, and the garden. Strewn throughout this space were
a variety of ancient and modern statues and fragments. This would have
been the first (and in some instances the only) part of the house visitors
would have seen after passing through the inviting public façade, and it was
the first part of the house Michiel described.

Michiel noted only six of the works in the “corte a basso” in any detail,
but he also mentioned that there were “many other mutilated and lacerated
antique marble heads and figures.” The inventory gives a more visceral im-
pression of the whole. Twenty-seven “heads, reliefs, and little busts of
different types” were displayed on the reme [stringcourse or cornice?] around
the entry hall, while another fifty-nine “large and small busts of live stone,
heads, legs, and arms, and feet” could be seen in the hall and courtyard. Fur-
ther figures in terracotta ornamented the loggia and, finally, twenty-four
“heads, busts and legs” made of stone were distributed in the garden. Some
of the works were displayed in niches, so that the overall impression
probably resembled the calculated effect of disarray and fragmented body
parts seen in Maerten van Heemskerk’s contemporary drawing of the cour-
tyard of the Casa Sassi in Rome (fig. 10).

The similarity to a Roman collection may not be accidental. In his letter
to Odoni written in 1538, Pietro Aretino suggested just such a comparison:
“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 or colossi and statues are
seen.” In comparing Odoni’s house to monte Cavallo (the Quirinal Hill),
Aretino may have had in mind the famous statues of the Horse-Tamers on
display there, but he may also have been referring to the collections housed

\[145\]In the inventory, the “studio” is said to be in a room “sopra dell’antigaia”: ibid., 56.

\[146\]Michiel, 1896, 82; Gronau, 70. A “remo” is an oar, but within an architectural context
probably refers a stringcourse or cornice: the word is not listed in Boerio. Venetians often dis-
played objects on cornices: see Luchs, 155, n. 72.

\[147\]Michiel, 1896, 82, describes one ancient marble bust as “incontro in terra” (stuck into
the earth). The inventory describes terracotta figures “nelli capitelli” (in niches — see n. 149
below): Gronau, 70. When Cicogna, 3:435, visited the house in the nineteenth century, he
noted “the walls in the entrance way have vestiges of little niches that contained little statues,
vases, and other things.” For Heemskerck’s drawing, see Hulsen and Egger, 1:42-45.

\[148\]Aretino, 1:125: “[N]on son prima costi guinto che l’animo piglia di quel piacere, che
soleva sentire nel giugner a Belvedere on Monte Cavallo o in qualcuno dei luoghi dove si veg-
gono di si fatti torsi di colossi e di statue.” I am very grateful to Elissa Weaver and Antonella
Mallus for their help in translating and interpreting this difficult letter.
in nearby villas. By creating such an environment, Odoni was indeed recreating “Rome in Venice.”

Gallo, 35–36, notes that the Grimani unearthed antiquities for their collection from the land surrounding their villa on Monte Cavallo. According to Vicenzo Scamozzi, 1:305, the Venetians initially imitated the Romans in their collecting practices: “for some time now, following the example of Rome . . . senators, gentlemen, and other virtuous men [in Venice] have introduced into their homes the practice of collecting and studying marble antiquities, bronzes, medals, and other reliefs, as well as paintings by the most celebrated and talented painters” (“da qualcunc eco quin con l’esempio di Roma . . . si sono introdotto nelle case di molti Senatori, e Gentilhuomini, e persone virtuose il far raccolte, e studii d’Antichaglie di Marmi, e Bronzi, e Medaglie, e altri bassi relievi, e parimente di Pitture de’ più celebri, e dil-igenti maestri”).

He did not miss the opportunity to connect the recreation directly to himself and his family. Intermingled among the fragmented arms, legs, and heads were conspicuous references to the Odoni family arms — three white circles on a red ground. Two stone balls crowned the door from the loggia into the garden, where six red and white marble balls were displayed “in their niches [capitelli].”¹⁵⁰ Interspersed among the antiquities and other sculptures, these symbols suggested the antiquity and “nobility” of the Odoni family. For, as Aretino put it, “one judges on the evidence of such a worthy and regal spectacle the greatness of your generous and magnificent spirit. Truly the pleasure of such carvings and castings does not issue from a rustic breast or an ignoble heart.”¹⁵¹

Although intended to evoke a spectacle of antiquity, one of the most interesting aspects of this ensemble was the exhibition of modern as well as ancient works. Michiel described at least four statues by modern artists that reflected upon ancient art, but were not fakes per se, since he carefully recorded the names of their makers. In the courtyard Michiel noted “the

¹⁵⁰Gronau, 70: “In horto balle sie de marmoro biancho et rosso con li sui capitelli.” The Odoni family arms are illustrated in BNM, ms Ital. VII, Cod. 91 (7441), c. 122v. Boerio, 134, translates “capitello” as a “small altar or tabernacle” (altarino, tabernacolo, or tabernacoletto).

¹⁵¹Aretino 1:125: “Onde si giudica, col testimento di si degno e reale spettacolo, la grandezza del generoso e magnifico animo vostro. Imperocché il diletto di simili intagli e di cotali getti non nasce da petto rustico, né da cuore ignobile.”
complete marble foot on a base was by Simon Bianco, “a Tuscan sculptor active in Venice who is best known for his all’antica busts of Roman gods and heroes.” This may be identical to a colossal foot illustrated in a mid-nineteenth-century sales catalog of the Grimani collection (fig. 11). Both its “mutilated” state and its colossal scale made it a pseudoantiquity. The foot was accompanied by two over-life-size busts of the Roman gods Hercules and Cybele by the Paduan sculptor Antonio Minello, and in the portego above was another statue by Bianco of “Mars, nude, carrying his helmet over his shoulder.” This last work may also be illustrated in the same nineteenth-century catalog under the title “Ulysses in the act of the going to the bath” (fig. 12). The connection between antique and modern sculpture was further reinforced by an ancient statue of a draped female figure in the courtyard, which Michiel noted “used to be in the workshop of Tullio Lombardo, copied by him several times in several of his works.”

Odoni’s patronage of such pseudoantiquities could be read as a sign of his limited means and restricted access to original ancient objects, but it is also a classic example of diversion. While the idea of displaying modern works alongside antiquities was hardly new in Central Italy, in Venice modern sculpture was primarily a public art form; it was rarely part of private collections and was produced almost exclusively by non-Venetian artists. Odoni’s is the only one of the eleven households Michiel visited in which he ascribed sculptures to known modern masters. This has led one scholar to dub Odoni “the most adventurous collector of modern sculpture on record.

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152Michiel, 1896, 82.
153Favaretto, 1985, 405-08.
154Ibid.; Michiel, 1896, 86.
155Michiel, 1896, 82: “La figura marmorea de donna vestita intiera senza la testa et mani, è anticha, et solea esser in bottega de Tullhio Lombardo, ritratta da lui piu volte in piu sue opere.” For this work see Pincus, 1981; Luchs, 131, n. 156.
156Sabba da Castiglione, 56v, recommended collecting works by Donatello if one could not obtain antiquities “because good antiquities are rare and, thus, cannot be had without great difficulty and expense” (“perche le antiche buone, si come sono rare; così non si ponno havere senza grandissima difficoltà e spessa”). On “surrogate antiquities” see Luchs, 108-12; P.F. Brown, 1996, 247-50.
157Luchs, 17-18, 23-27.
158Michiel, 1896, 82, notes in the collection of Antonio Pasqualino, another cittadino collector, “the marble head of a woman with her mouth open is by _______.” (“la testa marmorea de donna che tien la bocha aperta, fu de mano de _______”). Ibid., 92, also notes that Antonio Foscarini, who also owned many antique works, owned “the foot-high statue in bronze of Hercules striking the Hydra, made by _______.” (“L’Hercole de bronzo de un piede, che percote la Hydra, è de man de _______”). Although Michiel does not provide the names of the sculptors, these must have been modern works.
in Venice in his time.” On the other hand, by the latter part of the sixteenth century modern sculpture had become a required component of Venetian collections.

Since antiquities were the most “virtuous” form of riches, Odoni’s modern works were a particularly ingenious form of diversion. Through them one could demonstrate that one understood the value of antiquities and sought the knowledge and wisdom they could provide — even if one had to fabricate that knowledge rather than receive it directly from the source. This strategy was even more effectively employed by combining ancient and modern together, and thereby creating opportunities for a discussion of the classic paragone.

The most striking evidence of Odoni’s unusual, even daring, approach to collecting is undoubtedly the portrait he commissioned from Lorenzo Lotto in 1527. Odoni’s choice of this unconventional artist in itself indicates his willingness to explore new talents, much as his uncle had done before him. Lotto had only recently returned to Venice after a period of thirteen years in Bergamo, so this commission was an important opportunity for him to impress new prospective clients in the city. The ambitions of the two men came together to produce a portrait which reconceived and reconfigured the genre, and thereby fashioned a new kind of subject.

On a formal level it is an innovative portrait in that it experiments with a horizontal, rather than vertical, format. Lotto used this increased breadth to show Odoni surrounded by a number of objects that constitute a collection: fragmented marble statues, bronze statuettes, coins, a small decorative book, pearls, and a small blue dish. The idea of using works of art and antiquities to specifically construct the identity of the sitter “as a collector” was unprecedented in Venice and novel in portraiture on the whole. Lotto’s invention was instrumental in establishing the “portrait of a

159 Luchs, 9–10.

160 Oldfield, 141–42, notes that when Lotto arrived in Venice from Bergamo on 20 December 1525 he had never worked in the city before. Humfrey, 1997b, 106, calls the Odoni portrait “one of the finest and most ambitious of all Lotto’s portraits”; in 1997a, 161, he writes it “may be interpreted as a deliberate challenge to Titian’s supremacy in the field of portraiture and as a demonstration to the Venetian public of an alternative, more richly detailed and allusive mode of portrayal.”


162 Lotto also used the various objects to create a convincing sense of depth — with foreground, middleground, and background — that is accentuated by the dramatic foreshortening of the sitter’s right arm. By bathing the whole in a soft light from an unseen window to the left and employing an uncharacteristically sfumato effect, Lotto creates a particularly convincing illusion of an individual within an interior space.
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collector” type and inspired a number of later representations, including Titian’s portrait *Jacopo Strada* (1567).163

The objects in the painting do more than simply metonymically identify Odoni’s hobby; they also function metaphorically. While this is not the place to enter into a detailed iconographic analysis, scholars have repeatedly suggested that the painting is “conceptually and psychologically more complex than a simple portrait of a collector.”164 According to Burckhardt, the contrast between the statue of Diana of Ephesus (a symbol of nature) held in Odoni’s hand and the other works of art surrounding the sitter represents the Renaissance antithesis between art and nature.165 For Larson the opposition is instead between nature and the antique (the artist’s two teachers) and Odoni’s gesture foregrounds Diana—nature, indicating the Venetian preference for the former.166 While Pope-Hennessy sees a representation of the destructiveness of time, in an original, if flawed, interpretation, Coli analyzes the painting as a wish for fertility in marriage.167

All these interpretations were made, however, before the cleaning of the painting in 1996 recovered the golden crucifix Odoni fingers with his other hand on a chain around his neck. For Humfrey this suggests instead a contrast between the true religion of Christianity and the false worship of idols in antiquity. (Lotto used Diana of Ephesus as a symbol of idolatry in his contemporary intarsia panels.) Humfrey suggests Odoni (or Lotto) included the crucifix to indicate that despite his adulation of antiquity, Odoni remained a devout Christian.168 The painting may not present such a clear, dichotomous message; it seems rather to open up questions, provoking a meditation on any number and combination of the themes raised above. The painting is a reflection upon the values and meanings of collecting as much it is a “portrait of a collector.” As I will argue elsewhere, rather than apologetic or defensive,

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163 On the “portrait of a collector” type see Reinach; Larsson, 27–32; Sachs; Dubus; Schweikhart; Schmitter, 1997, 237–40. The only apparent precedent for Lotto’s invention is Parmigianino’s *Portrait of a Collector* (National Gallery, London), painted ca. 1524.

164 Shearman, 147.

165 Burckhardt, 1911, 304.

166 Larsson, 30–32.

167 Pope-Hennessy, 231; Coli, 201–02. Coli’s interpretation assumes Odoni was married at the time he commissioned the portrait, but it is not clear that he married before 1538. See n. 119. For synopses and variations on these themes see Shearman, 147; Humfrey, 1997b, 107. See also Galis, 226–29; Schmitter, 1997, 252–76.

the presence of the crucifixion expresses the continuity and reconciliation of antiquity and Christianity, rather than their opposition.169

Michiel’s interpretation of Odoni’s portrait supports this view. While he initially wrote that the portrait depicted Odoni “with ancient marble fragments,” he altered his account to read “who contemplates ancient marble fragments.”170 Through this phraseology, Michiel evoked the idea that Odoni gained access to the divine through his objects.171 In other words, in his typically compact mode of expression Michiel saw the painting as demonstrating that Odoni reaped the highest intellectual, moral, and spiritual benefits from his “virtuous riches.”

Michiel gives voice to the “private” side of collecting — the notion that a man retreats alone to his studiolo to “contemplate.” Vendramin expressed a similar sentiment when he wrote that his collection provided him with “a little peace and quiet to my soul” away from the demands and labors of his family’s soap-manufacturing business. In evoking his need to “retreat” to the collection and to the contemplative life, Vendramin exhibits his “melancholic” temperament. The collection of antiquities, with its “mutilated and lacerated” remains, gave form to the nostalgia for some lost whole, a key component of “melancholy.”172 As Juliana Schiesari has argued, the stance of melancholy was an enabling strategy for Renaissance men who sought to distinguish themselves: melancholy gave a “heightened awareness of self as ‘different’ from the common vulgus and by virtue of this difference, 169 For now see Schmitter, 1997, 252–76.
170 BNM, MS Ital. XI 67 (7351), 52r. This change in the manuscript has not been previously noted.
171 The verb “contemplare” was used elsewhere by Michiel, as well as by Baldassare Castiglione, to indicate the act of accessing the divine through the faculty of sight. For example, writing of Raphael’s burial in the Pantheon, Michiel remarked: “his spirit is thus undoubtedly contemplating those celestial constructions that bear no opposition [weight], but the memory of him and his name will endure here on earth and in the thoughts and minds of honorable men for a long time” (“l’anima sua indubiamente se n’è ita a contemplare quelle celesti fabbriche che non paticsono oppositione alcuna, ma la memoria e il nome restara qui in terra et ne lo pensiero et ne le menti de gli huomeni da bene longamente”) — recorded in Sanuto, 1969–70, 28:425 (emphasis mine). Michiel wittily likens the “heavenly” dome of the Pantheon, which stands without supports, to the buildings of paradise. Raphael contemplates the divine (paradise) through the earthly medium of a work of art. Michiel used the same verb in a similar manner in his description of the Three Philosophers by Giorgione; see Schmitter, 1997, 250–51. Castiglione, 1959, 82, writes of those “who are so enraptured when they contemplate a woman’s beauty that they believe themselves to be in paradise” (“che tanto godono contemplando le bellezze d’una donna che par lor essere in paradiso”): Castiglione, 1991, 86 (emphasis mine). For a related use of the word by Lotto, see Schmitter, 1997, 251–52.
172 See Schiesari, especially 5–6, 10–11.
extraordinary.” Thus the collection, as the visible sign of the melancholic’s retreat to the “contemplative life,” became an important indicator of distinction — distinction not only from the common people, but also from other members of the elite who did not share such a cultivated sensibility. The collection was not so much a form of conspicuous consumption as it was a “conspicuous display of privileged subjectivity.” By including these fragmented antiques within a portrait, Lotto and Odoni made this point all the more conspicuous.

In order for this private “contemplative” retreat to be recognized as a virtue and a form of distinction, however, it had to be publicly demonstrated. By showing the objects surrounding Odoni in a somewhat jumbled state, rather than carefully cataloged, Lotto suggests Odoni’s private engagement with his possessions. But Lotto also depicts the “public,” interactive aspect of collecting: Odoni holds out his statuette to the viewer, inviting the acts of contemplation, interpretation, and conversation, which collections as a whole were set up to elicit. Lotto portrayed a similar combination of the personal and social in his charming drawing of an ecclesiastical collector in his studiolo (fig. 13). In both images the act of “contemplation” is interactive and performative.

It is no accident that Odoni’s nonconformity and originality come across most clearly in his portrait, a work of overt self-fashioning. Portraiture was an important and valued component of Venetian collections, as both Michiel and Vasari attest. Odoni turned to this worthy genre to begin a lineage of the Odoni family, but rather than emulating the portraiture of the patrician elite, he instead deliberately foregrounded his differences from them. It is difficult to imagine a patrician commissioning such a radical self-image, one that constructs his identity as a collector above all else. Gabriele Vendramin, for example, hired Titian to paint a novel portrait of himself with his brother and his nephews in adoration of a precious relic famously associated with one of their ancestors. Even if atypical in size, format, and, to some degree,

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173 Ibid., 19.
174 Ibid., 264. See also Findlen, 296; Campbell, 302–03.
175 For the interplay between the private, “secretive” aspects of collecting and its public, “theatrical” dimensions, see Findlen, 1999.
176 Michiel notes many portraits in his descriptions of collections. According to Vasari, 1:494–95, Giovanni Bellini “introduced into Venice the fashion that everyone of a certain rank should have his portrait painted either by him [Bellini] or by some other master; wherefore in all the houses of Venice there are many portraits, and in many gentlemen’s houses one may see their fathers and grandfathers, up to the fourth generation, and in some of the more noble they go still further back — a fashion which has ever been truly worthy of the greatest praise, and existed even among the ancients.”
iconography, the portrait still highlights the traditional patrician values of piety, lineage, and progeny. It was not until later in the century that using objects within a portrait to identify the sitter as a “collector” became commonplace. In a late-sixteenth-century manuscript depicting members of the Grimani family, Giovanni Grimani, Patriarch of Aquileia, is shown not only with his prelate’s robe and cross, but also with “antique marble fragments.” By this point it had become admissible for even the highest level of nobility to be shown with such objects as symbols of their distinction and accomplishments (fig. 14).

Odoni’s portrait is an example of how a cittadino, less bound by Venetian traditions and the ethos of mediocritas, could pursue more, rather than less, innovative and challenging art. The vein of ambition, verging on

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177 The literature on Gabriel Vendramin, his collection, and this portrait is extensive, but see the recent study by Lauber with its important revisions of earlier literature. Notably, the Vendramin family was of relatively new nobility; they were among the families admitted to the patriciate in 1381 in recognition of their economic contributions to the War of Chioggia.

178 BMC, Archivio Morosini e Grimani n. 199, mss. n. 270, c. 26. Published in Favaretto and Traversari, 22.
defiance, conveyed by Odoni’s portrait was also given voice in the inscription his brothers erected on his tomb in Santa Maria Maggiore: “Andrea Odoni a citizen [ciuti] marked by the splendor of his mind, his liberality, and elegance
that surpassed his civilian [civilem] status." By having himself depicted surrounded by "virtuous riches," Odoni demonstrated his ability to exceed his birth status through the practice of worthy consumption. His portrait evokes the heritage of antiquity — rather than the conventional status distinctions of Venetian society — as a sign of his "nobility."

Odoni was an ambitious and enterprising man, but in pushing the boundaries of his cittadino status he may also have courted danger. While Michiel was willing to recognize Odoni as "a man who contemplates," Aretino was more skeptical. Although his letter describing Odoni's house has nearly always been read as purely laudatory, in fact it begins by berating Odoni for some wrong he has done Aretino. So that when Aretino writes that "the kindness of the good Udone is so full of goodness that whatever he does is without ceremony and without arrogance," one should perhaps not take this at face value. On closer inspection, a vein of sarcastic hyperbole courses through Aretino's florid prose:

[Casa Odoni] 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 the best of ancient form [art] had she not let herself be deprived of her [meaning 'these'] relics and sculptures.

The degree of exaggeration here undoubtedly pokes a bit of fun. By seeming a prince, Odoni would certainly have overstepped the boundaries of Venetian decorum (note the emphasis given to "richly adorned beds"), even those of a patrician. When he compares Odoni's house to "a bride who awaits her relatives coming to attend her wedding," he is again suggesting that it is

179 ANDREAE VDONIO CIVI / INSIGNI ANIMI SPLENDORE / LIBERALITATE ATQUE ELEGANTIA / ETIAM SVPRA CIVILEM FORTVNUM SPECTANDA / HIERONYMVS ET ALOYSIVS FRATRES / MOERENTES SIBI AC POSTERIS PP. / VIXIT AN. LVII. OBIIT A. MDXLV. Transcribed in Michiel, 1800, 193. Cicogna, 3:454, publishes the inscription, taken from the "codice di Giovan Georgio Palfero," with very slight variations. The term "splendore" was associated in particular with "virtuous and pleasurable" magnificence in the private sphere; Syson and Thornton, 29-31.


181 Aretino, 1:125: "Benché la benignita del buon Udone è talmente core de la bontade, che ogni sua operazione è senza cerimonia e senza arroganza."

182 Ibid.: "si è ella forbita e atapezzita e splendidete. Io, per me, non ci vengo mai, che non tema di calpestarla coi piedi, cotanta è la delicatura dei suoi pavimenti. Né so quel principe abbi si ricchi letti, si rari quadri e si reali abigliamenti. De le sculture non parlo, con ciò sia che la Grecia terrebbe quasi il pregio de la forma antica, se ella non si avesse lasciato privare de le reliquie de le sue sculture."
overdone and “too dressed up.” What Aretino’s famous epitaph — “the man whose sharp tongue lays bare virtues and vices” — does not make clear is that the writer often slyly pointed out vices while pretending to admire virtues. In his letter to Odoni Aretino lays bare the very ambiguity in collecting that made it an appealing, but also a risky, avenue to distinction. For the richezze virtuose at some level remained “material goods” that could always turn into a crass display of wealth and ostentation, to be viewed publicly as overweening conceit, arrogance, and an improper attempt to transcend the “natural” social order.

9. Conclusion

If there is single conclusion to be drawn from the recent studies of cittadini, it is the difficulty of defining this social group. Although Sanuto and Gianotti paint a clear picture of three distinct orders in Venice, the more scholars look at the intermediary group the less clear its confines and its contents become. Not only was this a permeable and ill-defined class, especially in the early sixteenth century, but it was also an extremely heterogeneous one, composed of longstanding Venetian families, new immigrants from a variety of places, nobles from the terraferma, and the illegitimate offspring of the nobility, among others. Such diversity in a social group would make it very difficult to isolate particular practices and behaviors common to all. In this sense, the idea that cittadini had “no distinctive culture of their own” may have some merit, but the conclusion that they then necessarily imitated the patriciate seems rather more problematic.

The examination of these two case studies reveals that while social emulation may have played some role in both Zio’s and Odoni’s decisions about what and how to collect, it does not explain their practices sufficiently. In general, Odoni was more inclined towards direct imitation of patrician tastes than his uncle — a strategy seen most clearly in his purchase of a copy of a composition by Giorgione and a Bosch-like hellscape. On the other hand, both collectors introduced new kinds of collectibles in the “tournament of value.” In Zio’s case these consisted of curios, naturalia, and paintings by young immigrant artists. Zio’s interest in religious narratives with clear moral and civic themes may also set him apart from patrician patrons. Although Odoni sometimes followed in his uncle’s footsteps in this regard, he invented new diversions himself. Odoni was open to artistic influences from Central Italy and distinguished himself as one of the foremost patrons of

183 Marriage was a time of extraordinary display beyond what was normally permitted; see Syson and Thornton, 35–76.
184 See ibid., 23–33 on the fine line between proper and improper display.
modern sculpture in the city, creating an elaborate display of ancient and modern works in his antigaia. Odoni’s non-emulative — indeed, daring and conspicuous — attitude towards collecting is most clearly demonstrated in the portrait he commissioned from Lorenzo Lotto. The painting sums up his belief that collecting was an alternative road to distinction, one outside the confines of traditional patrician prerogatives. A number of the artistic innovations the two men sought out were later adopted by the patrician elite — Zio’s enthusiasm for naturalia and Odoni’s interest in modern sculpture, not to mention the invention of the “portrait of a collector” type.

These case studies also suggest the difficulty of identifying any consistent “cittadino taste.” Although these two men were related to one another, and Odoni even seems to have learned to collect from his uncle, the differences in their attitudes towards their cittadino status and their consequent approaches to collecting are apparent. Zio was an entrenched Venetian cittadino. In various aspects of his life as well as in his collection Zio sought respectability and recognition through an identification with moral values (both Christian and antique), civic patriotism, and service to the state. Although not a patrician, Zio laid claim to a particularly Venetian identity, perhaps stressed all the more fervently precisely because he was not a member of the ruling elite.

Although Zio provided Odoni with an all important entree in the world of privileges available to cittadini, he was Odoni’s maternal uncle, not his father. This meant that no matter how much Zio acted as paterfamilias, in this patrilineal society Odoni remained a newcomer, the son of a wealthy Milanese immigrant. (Since citizenship status depended solely on the male line, despite his maternal family heritage, Odoni was technically only a second-generation Venetian.) Therefore he had to transmute his family’s wealth into social prominence and distinction in his adopted city. Odoni undertook this task with considerable enterprise. Like his uncle before him he exploited the institutional routes to wealth and power in civil service and the Scuole. But it was in the less constrained and more freely competitive realm of collecting that Odoni was most able to challenge the limits of his cittadino status. The flamboyant palace, collection, and portrait flaunted his devotion to the arts, drawing attention to himself and his family without necessarily imitating the practices of his social and political superiors.

The differences between Zio and Odoni are most visible in their respective portraits. While Zio chose the conservative painter Catena to represent his adherence to established values, Odoni commissioned a portrait from the highly unconventional Lotto that deliberately broke with all previous practices of portraiture in the city. The implied motion, improvisatory quality, and complexity of Lotto’s painting could not differ
more from the staid, stable simplicity of Catena’s portraits. While Zio chose to have himself painted in armor as a sign of his civic engagement, Odoni’s attributes are those “virtuous riches” that created new standards and measures of status.

While this study provides evidence that collecting was used by cittadini as a central strategy for pursuing social distinction, it is less clear whether the strategy was always successful in the long run. By transforming economic capital into cultural capital, collecting was an effective means of challenging established notions of nobility, but the dual economic/cultural status of collections also limited their durability and longevity. In order to transform a collection into a permanent sign of status and nobility, it had to be “enclaved”: that is, removed from commodity status. This is precisely what several patrician collectors attempted to do, with different degrees of success. Domenico Grimani gave his collection to the State to form a public museum, which, still intact today, stands as a memorial to this distinguished patrician family. Vendramin attempted something similar when he forbade his nephews from selling any part of his collection, but this less definitive and decisive tactic did not prevent successive generations from yielding to the temptation to reconvert the cultural capital into its monetary value.185 Unfortunately for Odoni, even if he had made such provisions in his will one wonders if his position as a cittadino would have allowed him to transform his family collection into that of the State — this form of enclaving may have been the prerogative of the most powerful patricians alone.

Aretino’s letter to Odoni suggests the fragility of the cittadino collector’s position. Although art collecting was probably one of the most effective means for cittadini to emphasize alternative forms of distinction, individual cittadini might use this practice to navigate and exploit the ambiguities of their social position in quite different ways, and with varying types of success. In both their difference from the patriciate and in their heterogeneity as a group, the cittadini made vital and distinct contributions to the richness and variety of Venetian art.

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