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# Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, a stylistic study of his work

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Dissertation

GIOVANNI ANTONIO BOLTRAFFIO

A STYLISTIC STUDY OF HIS WORK

by

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## TOPICAL OUTLINE

GIOVANNI ANTONIO BOLTRAFFIO

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## INTRODUCTION

The research on material used and compiled for this dissertation has been done in fulfillment for the requirements for a doctoral degree and represents a preliminary study which allows for additions and reattributions in the future if necessary, but more precisely because of the need of an initial study concerning the life and works of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. Through neglect this pupil of Leonardo da Vinci has been overlooked and relegated to the realm of a relatively forgotten painter. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that documentation is so meager and insufficient that the artist has been avoided for lack of just such information. It is the writer's intention to define more clearly the scope of the artist's life and works, and to examine such works in order that a style and character may be established by which attributions and a catalogue raisonné may be suggested, thus contributing greater understanding and knowledge to the field of art history.

Although the illustrations accompanying the text do not allow for better and more detailed analysis, more adequate and superior photographs were available for the writer's use while compiling the study. These latter photographs were not available for copying.

In appreciation, the writer would like to acknowledge those persons and institutions who have been of great value and constructive help in formulating this dissertation: Associate Professor George Levitine, and Professor William Jewell; the Boston Public Library; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Boston University; the Witt Library of the Courtauld Institute, University of London; and the Fogg Museum, Harvard University.



**PART I**

**Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**

**His Life and Style**

## CHAPTER I

### THE LIFE OF GIOVANNI ANTONIO BOLTRAFFIO

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio has been shrouded in the shadows of mystery and doubt for many years, his life and artistic works by and large treated in summary fashion with an apparent attitude of neglect and evasion. This is not only true of Boltraffio, but also of other artists of the Leonardesque school in Milan even though in the majority of cases there is more documented evidence in connection with these other artists for the verification of their lives and works. The entire problem of establishing definite persons within this school is that they are all overshadowed by the renown of their master, Leonardo da Vinci, whose teachings and style they have absorbed to such a degree of mimicry that obvious and instant stylistic individuality is not readily observable. This alone has the tendency to frighten most investigators of the Milanese school into evading, if not altogether avoiding, an intimate inquiry into the lives and works of these artists. What makes Boltraffio one of the more difficult personalities of the group with which to cope is the very limited source of documented evidence or any substantiating dates on which a biography or style can be constructed. With the exception of three dates, two of which are his birth and death, Boltraffio's activities have to be conjectured from other reliable sources.

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio was born in 1467 and died in 1516; the month and day are unknown as well as the place, but all inferences as to place suggest Milan which is reliable for all practical purposes. The source of these two dates is most dependable as they are taken directly from his mortuary stone.<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid confusion, it is necessary that the entire text of the epitaph be printed forthwith:<sup>2</sup>

IO ANTONIO BELTRAFFIO  
ET CONSILII ET MORVM  
GRAVITATE SVIS OMNIBUS  
GRATISS . PROPINQVIORES  
AMICI DESIDERIO AEGRE  
TEMPERANTES P.  
VIXIT ANN. XXXXVIII

. . . . .

PICTVRAE AD QVAM PVERVM SORS  
DETVERAT STVDIO INTER SERIA  
NON ABSTINVIT NEC SI QVID  
EFFINIXIT ANIMASSE OPVS  
MINVS QVAM SIMVLASSE  
VISVS EST  
MDXVI

As can be seen, the date of his death, 1516 is given, but his birth has to be calculated from the given age as incised in the first portion of the epitaph. Thus the earliest possible date at which Giovanni Antonio could have been born would be the year 1467. The inscription clearly acknowledges the fact that he dedicated himself

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<sup>1</sup>V. Forcella, Inscrizioni di Milano, (5; Milano: Stamperia Reale, 1869-1884), I, p.86, n.116.

<sup>2</sup>Translation: Antonio Boltraffio through the dignity of counsel and habit, lived with ardent desires, tempered passions, good propinquities and friends. He died the 49th year. . . . The young artist did not digress from serious endeavors. When from the hazard of painting he did portray animated work, he gave it the character he saw in it. // 1516.

to painting for pleasure and not as a means of livelihood. The tomb and mortuary stone originally were placed in the church of San Paolo in Compito in Milan where it remained until it was moved to the Accademia di belli arti in the Brera, September 24, 1806, — as recorded by Gustavo Uzielli.<sup>1,2</sup> The writer has been unable to determine what disposition was made of the body of the artist as the records merely mention the moving of the stone. However, for us the importance lies with the stone and its inscription, not the body.

The third date, 1500, alluded to previously was originally on the painting of the Casio Madonna (Plate I) in the Louvre Museum, Paris, and was accompanied by the signature of the artist. However, due to some unfortunate and unknown incident the signature and date were obliterated, thus depriving us of a source of valuable documentation. Both Giorgio Vasari and Abate Luigi Lanzi recorded in their respective publications the date of the painting as 1500 and attested to the signature of the artist.<sup>3,4</sup> Vasari at least was in the advantageous position of having been

<sup>1</sup> Carlo Bianconi, Nuova guida di Milano per gli amanti delle belle arti e della sacre, e profane antichita milanesi, (Milano: 1787), no pagination - count 193.

<sup>2</sup> Gustavo Uzielli, Richerche intorno a Leonardo da Vinci, (Torino: Ermanno Loesche, 1896), I, p. 367.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Vasari, The Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors, Trans. A.B.Hinds, (4, 2nd & rev. ed.; New York: Dutton & Co., Inc., 1927), II, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi, History of Italian Painting, Trans. Thomas Roscoe, (4, London: Simpkin & Marshall Co., 1828), IV, p. 252

able to witness this signature and date before their destruction. These two sources are reliable enough to allow us to accept their statements with little doubt concerning their validity. The writer will discuss the reliability of these sources in more detail and with more affirmation in the next chapter, which devotes itself solely to an examination justifying the validity of the above mentioned picture. Hence 1500 is the pivotal point from which all other pictures will either have to precede or follow in the stylistic chronology.

Boltraffio, in 1500, was thirty three years old, a mature young man with his formative years behind him so that his own developed individuality is strong enough to be more or less permanent, maintaining itself by means of its own strength and durability. Hence, 1500 becomes a crucial date in the life of this artist when any form of chronology is attempted in relation to his art.

There are other sources of dependable documentation which allow for the establishment of several dates for determining Bolttraffio's whereabouts and activities. Undoubtedly the most trustworthy dates are those recorded by the hand of Leonardo da Vinci himself and compiled into what is known as his Notebooks. The most complete compilation of all these many scattered manuscripts is the study by Jean Paul Richter.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Richter has culled the voluminous material and discovered four dates which accompany

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari di Leonardo da Vinci, Trans. Mrs. R.C.Bell, (2, 2nd rev. & enlar. ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

direct references to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. One of these dates was written by Leonardo on "St. Mary Magdeleine's Day (July 22,) 1490," where he lists the articles stolen from his workshop and from Giovanni Antonio by Giacomo Salai.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Leonardo spells Giovanni Antonio's family name Beltraffio, in the same manner as it appears on the latter's mortuary stone. From this it can be easily deduced that Boltraffio was a pupil in the workshop at that time. In the very same year (1490) Leonardo records that he has two pupils, Marco d'Oggione and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio.<sup>2</sup> This substantiates the previous date, but gives no indication as to the month or day regarding their official acceptance into the studio. The date, July 10, 1490, appears previously in the chronological ordering of dates when Leonardo took the ten year old Salai into his studio, probably as a grinder of pigments.<sup>3</sup> Thus Boltraffio must have entered the workshop of Leonardo prior to this date.

Dmitri Merejkowsky tells us a great deal about Boltraffio in his Romance of Leonardo da Vinci, but unfortunately we cannot accept his statements inasmuch as they are contradictory to fact.<sup>4</sup> Mere-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.,II, p.27

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.51.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari di Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), II, p.17.

<sup>4</sup>Dmitri Merejkowsky, The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Modern Library, 1928).

jkowsky wrote The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci, as an historical novel, but unhappily it is more romance in the genre of fiction than historical. Therefore, this source must be excluded from any consideration of a serious nature. For example, Merejkowski states that Giovanni Antonio was an illegitimate son of Reynold, a stone mason, the former having received the name Boltraffio from his mother who was a loose woman who had ruined his father.<sup>1</sup> This we know is not true; there is evidence of his ancestry in the records of Milan and the inference made from the tomb stone, all of which will be discussed at length further on in the chapter. The insertion of the above statement is for the purpose of eliminating once and for all a source which is untrustworthy and undesirable in such a text as this.

Leonardo da Vinci records the fact for us in the entry of April 3, 1491, that, "Giacomo Salai stole a silver point from Boltraffio (16) at the value of a soldi - (1 lira 4s)."<sup>2</sup> This statement verifies the fact that Giovanni Antonio was still associated with the bottega of Leonardo da Vinci. Another date recorded amongst the manuscripts refers to the artist under discussion; on September 26, 1510, Leonardo states, "Giovanni Antonio broke his leg - laid up for forty days."<sup>3</sup> This date has little significance for us as it implies little about the activities of the artist except that he must have been considerably

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.17.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti letterari de Leonardo da Vinci, (2, London: Oxford University Press, 1939), II, p.51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.246.

limited during his period of convalescence.

The final and most important annotation set forth by Leonardo is dated September 24, 1513. He notes there, "Left Milan for Rome with Giovanni Antonio, Francesco di Melzi, Salai, Lorenzo, and il Fanfoia (commonly known as Gianpietrino)."<sup>1</sup> This is most interesting because it heightens the anticipation that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio is the real author of the Madonna with Donor, in Sant' Onofrio in Rome, still ascribed to by the church as being a work of Leonardo himself. However, most art historians and connoisseurs take a different stand, usually attributing it to the hand of Bolt-raffio. The writer includes this point only in passing, but will return to it with more convincing evidence on behalf of Boltraffio in a later chapter.

Giorgio Vasari in his Lives acknowledges the artistic existence of Boltraffio when he cites the Madonna, Child, Saints, and Casii Donors, now in the Louvre, as being signed and dated by the artist.<sup>2</sup> He also adds in this short but informative paragraph that he was the pupil of Leonardo, who was "a very skillful and intelligent man."<sup>3</sup> There is little else that Vasari tells us about the artist; however, this appended to the scanty accumulation of evidence helps to enlarge the scope of activity of this Milanese artist.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.378

<sup>2</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives of the Most Eminent Architects, Sculptors, and Painters in Italy, (4, New York: Dent and Sons, 1927), II, p.168

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Abate Luigi Lanzi recognizes Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio in his History of Painting in Italy, published in its entirety in 1796, some sixteen years before the author's death.<sup>1</sup> Lanzi not only mentions the Madonna in the Misericordia, Bologna (Casio Madonna), stating the signature and date had been erased, but indicates his knowledge of Boltraffio's mortuary stone.<sup>2</sup> This date of 1796 cited above is the earliest date known concerning a published recognition and existence of such a stone by an author of art history. If this be the case, and the discovery and recognition of the stone are made in writing, it might be an indication that Lanzi was personally interested in this artist and that his information is more reliable than indicated on casual observation. Alone, it would tend to limit Lanzi's reliance on Vasari for factual information and thus make his treatise more dependable.

Therefore, we may assume with confidence that these two writers are reliable sources in verifying the date, signature, and the fact that Boltraffio was a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci.

Another date which has been preserved is found in the archives in Berlin which is indicated in the Catalogue of the State Museum of Berlin.<sup>3</sup> The catalogue states that the painting of Saint Barbara was acquired by the museum on September 27, 1904, and also that, "the Archives made public a preserved notice of the commission of

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<sup>1</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi, History of Painting in Italy, (4, London: Simpkin and Marshall Co., 1828), IV, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Staatl Musum zu Berlin, (Berlin: 1931), p.51.

Boltraffio to paint the Saint Barbara for the altar of the saint in San Satiro, Milan, on October 27, 1502."<sup>1</sup> The date of this picture is extremely valuable as it gives us another painting with certainty from the hand of Giovanni Antonio and enables the examiner to study the technical advances and refinements accomplished by the artist during the two years following the execution of the Casio Madonna. Furthermore, it can nourish some hypotheses as to the direction in which further development of style ought to continue.

These enumerated dates will have to serve as those tangible and verified accounts in the life of Boltraffio on which his entire existence must hang. Limited as they are, several are of sufficient importance to warrant further investigation and to combine the results with other less substantiated information so that subaudition of facts can be logically established.

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio was born into a well-to-do and noble family in the country outside Milan, and both Gustavo Frizzoni and Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri attest to his nobility.<sup>2,3</sup> The latter authority also states that this noble Milanese family had

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.: "St. Barbara - (acq-Sept. 27, 1904): veroffentlichen archivalischen Notiz-erheit Boltraffio am 27 Ocktober 1502 den Auftrag, die hl. Barbara fur den Altar der Heiligen in S. Satiro in Mailand zu Malen. Von Bianconi, Nuova Guida di Milano, 1795, noch in S. Satiro erevahut.

<sup>2</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, (Milan: 1904), IV, p.109

<sup>3</sup>Francesco-Malaguzzi Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (3, Milano; Ulrico Hoepli, 1913-1923), III, p.75.

a patrimony, and a home in Milan, "situated where the via San Paolo is now."<sup>1</sup> The suggestion of nobility is strengthened when we concentrate our attention on one part of the epitaph, picturae ad quam puerum sors detuerat studio inter seria non abstinuit, which assures us that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio dedicated himself to the practice of art for pleasure rather than as a vocation.<sup>2</sup> Such a statement as this helps to support the contention that he or his family had sufficient wealth to support him and his advocacy, which at that time was considered a vocation beneath the dignity of the well to do classes.

If we accept the authorities cited above, our anticipations are further elevated when we reflect on some of Boltraffio's attributed portraits of such persons as Il Moro, Isabella d'Aragon, Girolamo Casio and others, all of whom the artist would have known, thus receiving their favor much more easily and perhaps without insistence of monetary consideration. None of the other followers or imitators of Leonardo da Vinci portrayed this class of society in Milan as much or as often as did Boltraffio. Permit the fact to be pointed out again, that the statements made by Merejkowsky concerning Boltraffio are utter fantasy and far exceed plausibility when he discusses his association with the higher class of society in Milan.

In fact, to heighten the assertion of nobility concerning this artist, Frizzoni refers to Boltraffio as the "Milanese gentleman-painter," and follows it by a statement that, "it (painting) is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

imposing to all for the gravity in concept and the nobility of style."<sup>1</sup> This concept of noble ancestry is also maintained by Andre Michel, Adolfo Venturi, and Arduino Colasanti and Tiberio Gerevich.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Finally, Boltraffio's entombment and mortuary stone in the church of San Paolo in Compito would scarcely have been likely had he not been of noble family and position. Even though the stone was later moved, it was probably erected not only to honor his artistry, but also his ancestry.

As will be seen later in this study, Boltraffio painted on several occasions the portrait of the poet laureate of Italy, Girolamo Casio. From the little information available, it is well founded that Girolamo Casio and Giovanni Antonio were friends. Pope Leo X appointed Girolamo as senator to Bologna in 1513.<sup>5</sup> We also learn that his family name was Pandolfi, a name of a branch of the Bentivoglio family, but that he adopted the name of his region, Casio, where he was born.<sup>6</sup> Mr. de Hervesy informs us that

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<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, (Milan: 1904), IV, p.108.

<sup>2</sup>Andre Michel, Histoire de l'art, (XIX, Paris: 1909-1913), VI, p.269.

<sup>3</sup>Adolfo Venturi, North Italian Painters of the Quattrocento, (1st ed., New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1913), p.56.

<sup>4</sup>Arduino Colasanti and Tiberio Gerevich, "I quadri italiani nell' collezione del Conte Palffy in Ungheria," Rassegna d'arte, XI, p.168.

<sup>5</sup>Cestaro (Benvenuto), Enciclopedia italiana, (Rome), IX, p.308.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Pope Leo X allowed Girolamo to join with his name that of Medici, this is verified by the publication of 1526, of Casio's own works with the full author's name, Hieronimus Pandolfi de' Medici Casio, sometimes written Girolamo Pandolfi da Casio de' Medici.

In the portrait of Girolamo Casio in the Brera Gallery in Milan, interesting testimony is given by the uninspired poet in the tetrastyle verse which he holds in his hand:<sup>1</sup>

"Il Decimo Leon fu quel pastore  
 "Che mie die il stoccho et li speroni d'ore  
 "Clemente el capo me orno poi de aloro  
 "Per dare il premio alla vertu de honore.

Sonnett CCXXI of the Clementina

"Leo X was that shepherd  
 Who gave the sword and spurs of gold to me  
 Clement (VII) the head then decorated me  
 To give the reward of honor to virtue."

This piece of poetry, even though it indicates egotism on the part of its author, nonetheless clarifies certain points which otherwise might be raised in a later section of the dissertation. It is helpful in rounding out the biography of this person to cite the epitaph, which he wrote himself and which is found on his own tomb:<sup>2</sup>

"Visse il Casio mercante e zoiliere  
 "E con Apollo ebbe sua menta unita  
 "A Terrasanti ando; scrisse la vita di  
 "Cristo; e qui e' Poeta e Cavaliero.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardante Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Andre de Hervesy, "Boltraffio et ses modeles," L'amour de l'art, (XIII, Paris), p.260.

"Casio lived merchant and jeweller  
 And with Apollo he had his kindred spirit  
 To Holylands he went; he wrote the Life of  
 Christ; and who is a poet and cavalier."

Essentially from this we learn that he earned a livelihood as merchant and jeweller, was both a poet and a cavalier, and had been to the Holyland. This helps to attest to the poet's position and the relationship with personages of noble and influential status, obviously doing him little harm.

The friendship between Boltraffio and Casio is not defined factually as such in writing; however, Giovanni Antonio's paintings of preserved portraits of the poet and three drawings, some of whose attributions are uncertain, as well as several half-length figures of St. Sebastian which have facial features identical with those of the Bolognese poet and the Bentivoglio family, remain from which assumptions can be drawn. In fact, to carry the discussion a step further, when one reflects on the Louvre Madonna in which both donors are members of the Casio family, there is little doubt that there was a friendly association between artist and poet.

Girolamo Casio acknowledges his awareness of the artist when he mentions Boltraffio in his sonnet, Per Madonna Giustizia. Casio must have had considerable regard for Giovanni Antonio to have included his name within the sonnet as its contents are in praise of a sculptured figure by Romano (Gian Cristoforo), and not an artistic production from the hand of Boltraffio.

"Il marmo che nasconde le sante ossa  
 "Di Giustizia fra noi gia in corpo humano  
 "Trovo il Beltraffio e il suo scultor Romano  
 "Qual per scolpir la opro lo ingegno e possa.

"Da questa fu più volte già riscossa  
 "Ragion, perseguitata in monte e in piano  
 "Con quella diva spada che l'ha in pace  
 "Che non mai fu da amor od odio mossa.

"Le giuste sue bilance oprò talemente  
 "Che a tutti dimostrò per certo e chiaro  
 "Esser qua giù de Ciel locotenente

"E il suo partir di questo mondo avaro  
 "Fu segno a chiunque tanto non l'ha<sup>1</sup> in mente  
 "Che a sua ruina non havran riparo.

"The marble that conceals the Holy framework (bones)  
 Of Justice is already amongst us in human form  
 Found Boltraffio and its sculptor Romano  
 Who to sculpture it revealed talent and power."

"Reason, by the former was quite often worked up  
 Pursued in the mountain and plains  
 By the Divine sword goddess, who in peace  
 Was never moved by love or hate."

"Justice's scales worked in such a way  
 Which showed to everyone for certain and clear  
 To be down here as Heaven's Lieutenant."

"And her separating of this avaricious world  
 Has been a sign to whosoever does not keep her in mind  
 That for her ruin, they have no defence."

That Boltraffio and Romano (Gian Cristoforo) were friends or ever knew each other would be very questionable as there are no facts or reasons to substantiate such a hypothesis. Not even Leonardo's writings contain any reference to this individual. Girolamo Casio with all probability merely included the name of the Milanese artist because of his desire to give credit and honor to Bolt-raffio and his artistic talents.

Casio also wrote of Boltraffio the following lines in his

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<sup>1</sup>G. Fontuzzi, Notizie degli scrittore bolognesi, (Bologna: 1783), III, pp. 130-132. (In Cronica or Epitaffi del Casio -c.63,a).

Libro intitotlato Cronica, to demonstrate his admiration for the artist and friend.

"L'unico elievo del Vinci Leonardo  
 "Boltraffio che col stile e col pennello  
 "Di natura faceva ogni uomo piu bello.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

"The unique pupil of Leonardo da Vinci  
 Boltraffio who with his stylus and pen  
 By nature made every man more beautiful."

Had Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio not been a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, Leonardo would not have mentioned him in his Notebooks in the manner in which he did and as alluded to previously in this chapter. Kenneth Clark documents his statement from Leonardo's manuscripts that both Boltraffio and Marco d'Oggione were pupils of Leonardo in the year 1490.<sup>2</sup> Vasari tells us that the signature on the Casio Madonna in the Louvre not only carried the date and the artist's name, but that he also was a pupil of Leonardo.<sup>3</sup> These two sources alone testify adequately to the fact that Giovanni Antonio was a pupil of Leonardo as stated by so many writers, but seldom documented. Both Frizzoni and Kenneth Clark state that Boltraffio was Leonardo's best pupil because of his sensitivity of

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<sup>1</sup>Maria Reggiani-Rajna, "Un po'd'ordine fra tanti Casii", Rinascimento, (Milan: 1951), n.3-4, p.367.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.59.

Giorgio Vassari, The Lives of the Most Eminent Architects, Sculptors, and Painters in Italy, (4, New York: Dent and Sons, 1927), II, p.168.



approach and strength of characterization, and that he was the pupil who came the closest to assimilating the sensuous surface charm of the master combined with a depth of meaning.<sup>1,2</sup> Mr. Vallentin states that Giorlamo Casio regarded Boltraffio as Leonardo's "only pupil," this phrase undoubtedly being asserted in the superlative sense with relationship to the other pupils.<sup>3</sup> When one looks closely at Giovanni Antonio's work in conjunction with the other followers and imitators of Leonardo there is evidence at times of a notable sensitivity and more unique individuality than in the mimicry so often indulged in by the others. It may be concluded, then, that Casio's statement has greater profundity than might otherwise be acceptable upon first acquaintance.

The French art historian, Andre Michel, describes Giovanni Antonio as the "dearest of his pupils."<sup>4</sup> This would seem to be merely supposition on the part of Michel; however, it can be easily understood as true, at least in part, if we consider the duration of time that the artist and pupil remained together. It has already been established that Boltraffio was one of the master's first pupils during his Milanese sojourn, which came not later

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<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, IV, p.108.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.61.

<sup>3</sup>Antonio Vallentin, Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Viking Press, 1938), p.238

<sup>4</sup>Andre Michel, Histoire de l'art, (Paris 1909-1913), IV, p.269.

than 1490, and was associated with him at least until the trip to Rome in 1513. Thus these two individuals must have maintained an amiable friendship which was strong enough to enable the teacher to transmit to his charge his own strength and feeling of style and character observable in Boltraffio's work. From what can be determined, only Francesco Melzi, another well-to-do person, could have been closer to Leonardo in the last two decades of his life. It was this person who went to France with Leonardo, was with him at his death, and was mentioned reverently in Leonardo's will. He was the recipient in the will of all Leonardo's books, instruments, drawings relative to his art, and the remainder of his pension.<sup>1</sup> When looking through Richter's study, it is noticeable that Melzi is mentioned much more often after 1516, the year of Giovanni Antonio's death.<sup>2</sup> This might well suggest that Francesco Melzi takes the place to some extent of Leonardo's loss of friendship with Boltraffio.

Nowhere in Leonardo's notes does the master make any reference whatsoever to Boltraffio's death, nor does he acknowledge knowing anything about it. This is rather curious because Leonardo, from what we learn, was a very sensitive man about such things in that he recorded other similar occasions with deep concern and emotion. There is one explanation which possibly could account for such an

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<sup>1</sup>Rachel Taylor, Leonardo the Florentine, (2nd ed. New York: Harpers and Co., 1928) p.557.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari di Leonardo da Vinci, (2, London: Oxford Press, 1939).

omission. If Boltraffio had died after September of 1516, the suspected month for Leonardo's departure for France, then it would have been some time before news of the artist's death reached his ears, and thus Leonardo never made an acknowledgement of the fact. Such a supposition is not too far reaching in its plausibility, and to some extent seems reasonably feasible when one considers the friendship of Giovanni Antonio with the master.

Assuredly at this point it can be adamantly maintained that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio was a close friend and pupil of Leonardo da Vinci; this leads us to the conclusion that he must have also been associated with other pupils and some of the followers of the master. It has already been established and can be stated at this point that one of his fellow-pupils was the Milanese artist, Marco d'Oggione. From what can be ascertained from the style and characteristics shown in their individual art, these two artists were of different temperments and intent, both showing more individuality than the other followers. Marco was a person who not only sought the style and refinement of Leonardo, but also infused it with other qualities of animation and emotion of a physical nature - an influence derived from another source. Giovanni Antonio, on the other hand, was much more subtle with his employment of emotion while any movement was so well calculated that the result sometimes has the tendency to be hesitant.

There were other students of Leonardo with whom we can be certain Boltraffio had some connection and acquaintance as their

names are all grouped together in one entry in the Notebooks.<sup>1</sup> They are Francesco Melzi, Salai, Lorenzo, and il Fanfoia (usually called Gianpietrino). The first two men, Salai and Melzi, are highly questioned regarding their actual practice in the field of painting; but as has already been pointed out, both men figured prominently in the life of Leonardo. Two entries in the Notebooks concern themselves directly with the stealing by Salai from Boltraffio.<sup>2</sup> Such a relationship as this between Boltraffio and Salai could have hardly been one of a binding nature on the part of Giovanni Antonio. Thus it will have to be said that they were acquainted.

As for Gianpietrino, Melzi, or Lorenzo (the latter has never been satisfactorily identified), all that can be determined is that they worked together in Leonardo's bottega during the master's stay in Milan. Therefore, the only supposition which can be injected here is that the four artists knew each other and were undoubtedly friendly. Mrs. Taylor stresses this point in her book on Leonardo, and certain faith must be placed in her honesty and scholarly approach to the material even though there is some desire remaining on the part of the reader for greater documentation in the area of footnoting.<sup>3</sup> However, as running documentation occurs

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari di Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

<sup>2</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (2nd ed., New York: George Braziller, 1954) p.1159.

<sup>3</sup>Rachel Taylor, Leonardo the Florentine, (New York: Harpers & Co., 1928).

often within the text, there is little inclination on the reader's part to doubt her authority.

A strong suggestion is constantly made about the connection between Boltraffio and Ambrogio de'Predis. For the sake of clarity it might be mentioned that Boltraffio is always referred to as a pupil of Leonardo while Ambrogio is usually designated as a follower of the master; so there is some question as to whether de Predis ever studied in Leonardo's workshop. There is definite proof that Ambrogio worked for Leonardo; Edward MacCurdy records a note on an apparent commission for a painting by Leonardo where Ambrogio da Predis' name is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Leonardo did not clarify the notation so the follower in question remains ambiguous in connection with the specific work of art. That Ambrogio de Predis' connection with Leonardo is close stylistically is witnessed in his copy of the Madonna of the Rocks in the National Gallery in London; this may have been worked on in Leonardo's studio. Confusion exists between Boltraffio and Ambrogio de'Predis stylistically in relationship with their individually attributed works which cements these two artists more closely together than any of the other followers. The only resolve which rationally can be supported is that there was a definite association between these two artists, a premise of sufficient concreteness to substantiate the contention of their friendship and association.

The one other artist of this Milanese school of Leonardo da

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<sup>1</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: 1954), p.1013.

Vinci, who has definitely established connection with Giovanni Antonio is Antonio Cesare da Sesto. Both MacCurdy and Mrs. Taylor remark with staunchness that Cesare frequented the Vincian studio in the company of his two friends, Gianpietrino and Marco d'Oggione.<sup>1</sup> As has already been proven, these two painters were friends of Boltraffio; thus some kind of positive conclusion can be suggested for assuming an actual friendship between Cesare da Sesto and Boltraffio. Out of their individual works alone there must have grown a certain curiosity because of the opposite leanings of their influenced styles, Cesare perpetually being drawn by the magnetism of the great Umbrian artist, Raphael.<sup>2</sup> A similar magnetism can be seen in Marco d'Oggione, who had always been impressed and inspired by the animation of Michelangelo.<sup>3</sup>

There remains one other name definitely linked with that of Boltraffio, and that is Lorenzo. Who or what Lorenzo was we have little knowledge other than that Leonardo's note of 1513 records Lorenzo's full name, but it is well established that he was considerably younger because of an entry in 1505 stating that the youth was seventeen years old and engaged for employment by Leonardo.<sup>5</sup> How-

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<sup>1</sup>Rachel Taylor, Leonardo the Florentine, (New York: Harpers & Co., 1928), p.222.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.144.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.401.

<sup>4</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: 1954), p.1161.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

ever the case may be, we should suppose that there must have been an acquaintanceship between Boltraffio and Lorenzo.

As for any discernable relationship between Boltraffio and the other followers and imitators of Leonardo so far unmentioned such as Andrea Solario, Bernardino Conti, Lorenzo di Credi, and Bernardino Luini, we can make no assumptions or definite statements in that as far as the writer is aware there remains no documentation to substantiate any such offered suppositions.

In fact, as far as the writer was able to determine, Leonardo never made any written statements to acknowledge that he knew them or was aware of their existence. To claim any association between these men and Boltraffio would be a fallacy and certainly would endanger the positive nature of the assembled facts thus far established.

The inference has been drawn that Boltraffio left his native city of Milan on two separate occasions. The first trip, somewhat in question, was made to Bologna in 1499 with Leonardo after the latter's flight from Milan and Lodovico Il Moro in December of that year. It is known that Leonardo went to Bologna, Venice, Mantua, and Florence, and that Giovanni Antonio must have gone as far as Bologna with him. Carlo Pedretti clarifies this fact for us stating, "Girolamo Casio housed Boltraffio of Milan after the fall of the Sforza dynasty, and had him execute a pala for the altar of

the Misericordia."<sup>1</sup> As we are aware, Boltraffio signed and dated this painting 1500, and it was originally placed in a small chapel to the left of the main entrance of the church of the Misericordia. From this it is certainly plausible to assume that the painting was begun in the year 1499, and the fact cannot be denied that the artist was in contact with both Giacomo and Girolamo Casio whose portraits appear as the donors of the painting. Therefore, the fact must be supported that the artist was in Bologna at that time. Carlo Pedretti cites a tradition which corresponds to this trip by stating, ". . . this unknown trip to Bologna remains a legend according to the old Bolognese tradition in that the celebrated artist, Leonardo, had painted an angel in the picture of his student, Boltraffio."<sup>2</sup> This trip in 1499 is strongly insisted upon by Gustavo Frizzoni, who cites the same departure of Leonardo from Milan for Bologna.<sup>3</sup>

The second known occasion for Boltraffio to leave Milan was his journey to Rome. This trip was made in the company of Leonardo da Vinci and Giovanni Antonio's fellow pupils, Lorenzo, Melzi, Salai, and Il Fanfois - a fact evidenced by Leonardo's own entry of September 24, 1513.<sup>4</sup> Certainly this sojourn cannot be questioned;

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<sup>1</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: 1953), p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Exposition de Maître de l'Ecole Lombard a Londres," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, (Paris: 1898), XX, p.300.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti letterari de Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford Press, 1939).



however, there are no other records of this trip so the nature of Boltraffio's activities in Rome is open to speculation, but this will be considered later in the dissertation. Bertolotti mentions neither Leonardo nor Boltraffio having been in Rome nor any of their activities.<sup>1</sup> As other authorities confirm the trip of 1513 to Rome, we must assume Bertolotti's omission of the fact to be an oversight. There is no indication of when Boltraffio returned to Milan, but as we know Leonardo spent little time in Rome, it might be ventured that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio returned home not later than the following year. Charles Blanc cites a drawing published by Felice Lemmonnier at Florence for the judicious annotators of Vasari; a drawing of a landscape on which Leonardo had written, "Sulla rive del Po vicino a Sant'Angelo 1514, addi 27 di settembre."<sup>2</sup> If this is the actual date in Milan, we can suppose that Boltraffio had returned to his native city with Leonardo sometime previous to the date recorded on the drawing.<sup>3</sup> Such writers as Richter and Villot consider this date significant as showing the whereabouts of Leonardo, and if it shows where he was, we may assume Boltraffio was with him. If for any reason we are not inclined to accept the foregoing contention, it is obvious that Boltraffio was

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<sup>1</sup>A. Bertolotti, Artisti lombardi a Roma nei secoli XV-VXIII, (Milan: 1881).

<sup>2</sup>Charles Blanc, Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles, (14, Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1861-1876), VIII, p.4, note 1.

<sup>3</sup>Due to political causes, the actual dates recorded by Florence and many Florentines outside their native city state are one year behind the other city states in Italy and Europe at that time. This might create a problem here.

in Milan by 1516, the year of his death and the erection of his mortuary stone in San Paolo in Compito in Milan.

Where and from whom Boltraffio received his early instruction in painting is a question of considerable magnitude, and one which can be answered only through conjecture and inference. Nowhere is there to be found any records or even statements that actually allude to his artistic career previous to the time of Leonardo's first visit to Milan. Some writers on this particular phase of Boltraffio's life have recorded, not without some vehemence, their definite theories on the subject.<sup>1</sup> However, most of these writers make peremptory statements avoiding any necessity to find a basis for their assertions or to set forth a stylistic analysis between teacher and pupil.

Adolfo Venturi and the Cyclopedia of Painters state that Giovanni Antonio had his original training in the old Milanese school of Vincenzo Foppa and Vincenzo Civerchio.<sup>2,3</sup> In Boltraffio's early work there is an apparent smallness of scale and delicacy, and a fragility of the depicted human form not unlike that of Civerchio, (ex: Nativity with St. Catherine, National Gallery,

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<sup>1</sup>Writer referred to: Gustavo Frizzoni, Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, Giulio Carotti, Kenneth Clark, Giovanni Morelli, and Adolfo Venturi.

<sup>2</sup>Adolfo Venturi, North Italian Painters of the Quattrocento, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1913), p.56.

<sup>3</sup>Cyclopedia of Painters, (New York: 1927), I, p.135.

London), yet the gentility and the human quality of Foppa is ever present. Gardner Teall opposes a relationship of styles between Boltraffio and Foppa stating that the former shows no evident marks of such training.<sup>1</sup> Boltraffio does show a firmness in the fleshy area of his subjects that has an explicit similarity to Foppa. There is no mistaking a strong relationship among the rendered babies of both men, and the high lighted passages of the hair.

With reference to these babies, it is noteworthy that in his early works Boltraffio comes as close if not closer to the style of Borgognone than he does to Foppa. Here the evidence of the rounded face, undulating mouth, and hair are at times almost indistinguishable from those of Borgognone. The artists of Milan all have an approximate style in connection with the rendering of young children, but it is Borgognone's tendency to be hard and somewhat metallic. The dignity and quietude combines with a genuine sweetness and spiritual capacity of the individual subjects have a close proximity in both artists' styles. Where Borgognone's spiritual content is inevitably of a religious manifestation and shows some severity, Boltraffio's work often lacks a deep sensation of the religious and supplants this with an inner character and personality. Mr. Berenson indicates that Borgognone followed a Franco-Flemish tradition in his particular type of landscape and drapery.<sup>2</sup> Passages in some of

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (London: October 1926), LXXXV, p.97.

<sup>2</sup>Brenard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.199.

Giovanni Antonio's work illustrate a poignant similarity to this suggested tradition.

The handling of color by these individual men is of little help in tracing the artistic background of Boltraffio. Giovanni Antonio is decidedly more vigorous in his use of rich color combinations than either Civerchio or Foppa, but he never attains the brilliance nor complementary schemes of Borgognone. Hence, only a circumspect and uncertain analogy ever could be arrived at here. It would be fallacious to pursue this. The flesh tones of all four artists mentioned have decided individuality and little in common with one another. There is, at times, a resemblance between Boltraffio and Civerchio, but any fixed affinity on which a parallel could be established is almost non-existent. Therefore, to trace a coloration relationship would have no relevance to the problem under consideration.

One aspect which all these artists have in common is their innate ability for compositional organization of a classic character in the dispositioning of the various figures. When the composition of the Milanese artists is well executed, the spatial relationship is more than adequate with respect to figures, objects, and parts of the composition being logically and convincingly related while there is a realistic sense given to the volume and mass given the figures. This feature alone immediately has the tendency to direct one's thoughts toward the Paduan school of art under the influence of Mantegna and Squarcione. Mr. Berenson states that

Foppa studied in Padua in the school of Squarcione.<sup>1</sup> Hence the strong evidence of this type of spatial organization and composition would be an integral part of the Milanese school of painting in so far as Foppa himself was its founder.

To carry this reasoning one step further, Mr. Berenson, in common with other writers in the field of the Italian Renaissance, asserts that both Borgognone and Vincenzo Civerchio were formed under the direct tutelage of Foppa.<sup>2,3</sup> If this is to have any consequence on the deliberation of the problem, we necessarily have to assume that the various influences are of such an analogous nature that they become inseparable in considering a direct influence on Boltraffio. Giovanni Antonio is a product of the Milanese school and shows direct and pertinent influences from the above mentioned artists, but more affinity toward the style of Foppa.

Just what date Boltraffio becomes a pupil and under the dominant influence of Leonardo da Vinci is difficult to ascertain, but if one is to rely on the Notebooks once again, the date could not have been later than 1490, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's twenty

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.199.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.97.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.150.

third year.<sup>1</sup> We also know that the date could not have been before 1482 when Leonardo first went to Milan for Lorenzo de'Medici, as verified by Anonimo Gaddiano.<sup>2</sup> Several dates have been offered ranging back to 1483, as Gardner Teall suggests 1485, but none have any given proof.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is only feasible to assume on the basis of the entry made by Leonardo that Boltraffio was first associated with the studio prior to July 10, 1490.<sup>4</sup> This would intimate that the studio group had been working together for sometime before the arrival of Salai on the scene. Nevertheless, to dogmatically maintain or even establish a date would be impossible at this point.

Boltraffio's style as such could not have been well established previous to Leonardo's acceptance of him as a pupil; there is a possibility that Giovanni Antonio was immediately capable of adopting with ease the technique and teachings of the master, while carrying over to some extent types and distinct stylistic tendencies which had been formerly learned. Ambiguity such as this complicates and limits any definite assertion as to the positive identity of his teachers, who they were, or how

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari de Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), II.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (London: October 1926), LXXXV, p.24.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti litterari di Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

long Boltraffio spent in direct contact with any of them except Leonardo himself.

The lack of output of the artistic works of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio after Leonardo's departure from Milan is unexplainable unless the artist found it necessary to have the immediate presence and criticism of the master in order to continue his work or maintain his enthusiasm. Boltraffio's works are decidedly limited in number if we look at the numbers on the individually listed attributions by authorities in the field. Mr. Teall gives 49 paintings to Boltraffio, Berenson gives 41, and Carotti cites 40 paintings and 10 drawings which only help to illustrate the limited production of this Milanese artist. Any proof or suggestion of the limited nature of his production is merely conjecture and lacks authority of fact. The only possible way to determine with accuracy the reliable number of works painted by this artist is to accompany any study with a thorough stylistic analysis of such concentrated magnitude that tangible evidence will without question authorize any attribution.

Boltraffio's social position as well as that of his family may have had a limiting effect on the size of his production. Mr. Layard has gone so far as to refer to him as a mere amateur in the field, praising his work but drawing no conclusion as to

its restricted nature.<sup>1</sup> Colasanti and Gerevich refer to him in their article as a dilettante, asserting that painting was not his profession; this in its own way might throw some light on his limited performance.<sup>2</sup> It is more likely that Giovanni Antonio had other interests in conjunction with either his family's position or business, which has never been divulged, or perhaps even some direct connection with the court as has been suggested but never substantiated.

A gross discrepancy has arisen amongst writers on the Leonardesque school in Milan with regard to the successor as head of the workshop after the departure of Leonardo himself from the immediate vicinity. Both Andre Michel and Edmondo Solmi write that Boltraffio continued the school, becoming its head, yet the latter recognized the fact that there was no contemporary evidence of the period to justify such a claim.<sup>3,4</sup> Gustavo Uzielli affirms this fact through the writings of Borsieri, probably the first person to make a declaration of Giovanni Antonio's position as head of the Vincian Academy.<sup>5</sup> Uzielli interprets for us the writings of Du

<sup>1</sup>Austin Henry Layard, Handbook of Painting - Italian School, (London: John Murry Press, 1891), p.410.

<sup>2</sup>A. Colasanti and T. Gerevich, "I quadri italiani nell collezione del conte Palffy in Ungheria," Rassegna d'arte, XI, p.167.

<sup>3</sup>Andre Michel, Histoire de l'art, (Paris: 1909-1913), IV, p.269.

<sup>4</sup>Edmondo Solmi, Leonardo, (Firenze: G. Barbera, 1919), p.90.

<sup>5</sup>Gustavo Uzielli, Ricerche intorno a Leonardo da Vinci, 2, (2nd.ed., Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1896), I, p.343.



Fresne, who pointed directly to Borsieri's error that Boltraffio was made head of the academy after Leonardo's departure in 1500.<sup>1</sup> Du Fresne maintains that the academy was terminated with Leonardo's departure.<sup>2</sup> Also, it has been established earlier in the chapter that Boltraffio and Leonardo both left Milan together for Bologna in December of 1499. Uzielli makes one other enlightening contribution to this subject by expressing the idea that had Boltraffio succeeded Leonardo as head of the school it most certainly would have been inscribed on the mortuary stone preserved in the Accademia di belle arte di Milano.<sup>3</sup> This point by Uzielli seems logical since such a position at this time more than likely would have been recorded. Had there been any truth in the original statement by Borsieri, one would expect to find it somewhere in the contents of the Notebooks of Leonardo himself, yet no record remains to us from the hand of this meticulous annotator. Another reliable source in this area would be Vasari, but he makes no mention of any position relating to the Vincian academy of Boltraffio. Vasari would have mentioned it had he been aware of the situation, as this was the type of annotation he personally delighted in. In all probability then, Boltraffio never became a recognized head of the Vincian academy.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.357.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.365.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.366.

Were there only several more dates and documented facts with which to support the contentions set forth herein, the biography of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio could be substantially more complete and permanent, thus permitting us to move forward with greater ease and certainty with respect to forthcoming analogy. The limitation of such facts will necessitate the narrowing of our vision with respect to viewing his works and styles involved. With the exception of two acceptable and documented works, the dissertation will have to progress on analogy of stylistic comparisons and the relationship of this artist's works to one another in an endeavor to show progressive advance in technique and style, and to eliminate those productions which seem to have little correlation with the immediate and intimate style of the artist.

The order, therefore, which this study must follow is first to establish the style of Boltraffio and then to endeavor to distinguish his style from that of his master and those of his fellow pupils and the Leonardo imitators, before any certainty can be maintained in conjunction with this Milanese artist. Our first objective then is to establish a style and technique reciprocal to the individuality of the artist as a painter and person.

## CHAPTER. II

### THE KNOWN STYLE OF GIOVANNI ANTONIO BOLTRAFFIO

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#### The Madonna of the Casio Family

Now that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio has been biographically established, the next logical direction in which we must progress is toward justifying his position as an artist. More than that it will be necessary to substantiate his individuality of style in order that Boltraffio may be isolated as an individual with a specific personality. The pupils and imitators of this great Florentine master are so intimately related in their learned style and technique that the results of their concerted efforts become almost indistinguishable when an attempt is put forth to divorce their works from one another. Consequently an analysis of style will have to be made of each of these followers so that their individuality may be established and presented. This analysis of fellow artists will have to be put aside until the next chapter. The style and technique of Boltraffio must be established first so that all comparisons which inevitably must be drawn will have concrete and justifiable foundation upon which to accept or reject a given work.

When one considers the number of pictures attributed to Giovanni Antonio, and the varying qualities they represent, the

necessity arises to select works (in this situation there is only one) which are signed and dated, on which an uncontested style may be established so as to bring into being an individual artistic personality. Unfortunately, there are no other paintings in existence which carry such unquestionable evidence, save the one in the Louvre Museum by this artist, on which such an analysis must be determined. Even though we are limited in this respect, the picture to be analyzed is sufficiently large, both in size and scope of material contained within its borders, to be more than merely adequate. This picture of the Madonna of the Casio Family greatly enlarges for our use the tremendous scope of Boltraffio's style and further helps substantiate the certainty with which other attributions can be made.

The Madonna, Child with Two Saints and Donors, commonly referred to as the Casio Madonna, is now in the Louvre Museum of Paris, France. We learn of its origin through the diligent research of Andre de Heversy who states that the poet-goldsmith, Girolamo Casio, commissioned this work in 1500 shortly after Pope Leo X nominated him as senator to Bologna.<sup>1</sup> It was commissioned for a chapel in the church of the Misericordia at Bologna.<sup>2,3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andre de Heversy, "Boltraffio et ses modeles," L'amour de l'art, (Paris: 1913), p.261. XIII.

<sup>2</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi, History of Painting in Italy, (4, London: 1828), IV, p.252.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (4, London: Dent & Sons, 1927), II, p.168.

Giorgio Vasari states that Boltraffio painted a ". . . panel in oil in the church of the Misericordia, outside Bologna . . . To this fine work he signed his name, adding that he was a pupil of Leonardo."<sup>1,2</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi makes an identical notation when he states, "It was placed at the Misericordia, and bore his signature, with that of his master Vinci, and the date 1500."<sup>3</sup> As these are the only two literary sources we have for reliable documentation of the picture we shall have to accept their testament. With an artist of Boltraffio's stature, it is hardly likely that Vasari, much less Lanzi, should have found the necessity of falsifying the painters position by exaggeration or misstatement, and as neither man devotes more than a paragraph to Giovanni Antonio, their individual statements alone ought to be reliable. Both of these men were in a position to view this work so that they could have observed the signature and date. These two statements become more plausible when we understand the personal feeling Vasari had for Leonardo. Giorgio Vasari felt that Leonardo was difficult competition for his personal friend and artist, Michelangelo, and takes every opportunity to build up the prestige of the latter and his followers while understating or merely mentioning the greatness of Leonardo and his associates. Hence, if this were the case, Vasari would not have had to mention Boltraffio if he

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (4, London: Dent and Sons, 1927), II, p.168.

had not known his art and felt in enough sympathy with it to give the artist recognition within the section devoted to the scope of Leonardo da Vinci's life. Thus, the writer believes these two sources can be accepted as authentic and unaffected reports so that we may proceed with the knowledge that the Casio Madonna is unquestionably by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio.

The difficulty now is to explain how this altar painting came from Bologna to the Louvre in Paris. Part of its provenience is not entirely certain, but it can be ascertained through conjecture. When Vasari published his first edition of the Lives in 1547, he states that the Sacre conversazione was in the Misericordia at Bologna; however, when his second and revised edition of 1568 was published a footnote was attached stating, "Now in the Brera, Milan."<sup>1</sup> From this the conclusion might be drawn that the picture was taken from the Misericordia to the Brera sometime between 1547 and 1568.

The picture, or altar piece, remained at the Brera until the XIX Century when it was finally acquisitioned by the Louvre as recorded by C. Mongrei. He states that in 1812, through the efforts of the Viceroy Eugenio, there was an exchange of five of the best pictures from the Pinacoteca in Milan to the Louvre for five Flemish and Dutch works.<sup>2</sup> Thus the painting is among the permanent accessions of the Louvre.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>C. Mongrei, L'arte in Milano, (Milan: 1872), p.337. He states here, "To Paris they forwarded, by the order of the

Some damage has been done to this Casio Family Madonna as the signature of the artist and the date no longer exist. Luigi Lanzi, in the 1828 edition of his History of Italian Painting, states that the signature and date were erased;<sup>1</sup> however, in his 1853 edition of the same text the statement is footnoted, "The lower part of this picture was cut away, and with it the inscription by the author."<sup>2</sup> Just where, how or when this picture was mutilated, the writer has been unable to ascertain, but a certain amount of reliance can be placed on the Louvre catalogue which states that the picture had been cut.<sup>3</sup> The conjecture might be advanced that the damage was done to this panel at the time of its removal from the Church of the Misericordia, Bologna, if it had been attached to a permanent frame or to the wall directly. When one considers the proportions and the devotional nature of this picture, its com-

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government in 1812, five of our best pictures in the Pinacoteca, The Boltraffio Madonna, which was given by the Casio Family, by G.A. Boltraffio: a Holy Family by Marco d'Oggione: two panels of Moretto da Brescia, S. Bernard of Siena with S. Louis, and S. Bonaventura with S. Antonio of Padua; and a picture by Carpaccio, The Preaching of S. Steven in Jerusalem. In exchange there joined us on the first day of 1813, five canvases or altar-pieces by Flemish and Dutch painters: S. Anthony, by van Dyck; The Last Supper, by Rubens; The Sacrifice of Abraham, by Jordaens; two portraits of women, one by the same van Dyck, the other Rembrandt. The exchange was precious, considering the imperfection of foreign painters in the befuddled Pinacoteca.

<sup>1</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi, History of Italian Painting, (4, London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1828,) IV, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> Abate Luigi Lanzi, History of Italian Painting, (2nd ed. rev., 3, London: Henry Bohn, 1853), II, p.488.

<sup>3</sup> Catalogue of the Louvre, (Paris: 1911), p.37.

position has been injuriously disturbed by cutting through the two donors, thus placing them and the Virgin and Child on the immediate picture plane, the latter almost on the edge of the frame. It is most unlikely that any artist of Italy in 1500 would have composed a picture in such a manner that the proximity of the devotional object makes it more intimate to the observer than is characteristic of the art of the period.<sup>1</sup> Nor would any artist in this period paint a panel where the figures would be partially severed.<sup>2</sup>

Carlo Pedretti summarizes for us the findings which resulted from a radiograph study in 1940 of the Casio Family Madonna made by the Louvre in Paris. The analysis showed considerable repainting in the area of the Madonna's head, the head of Girolamo Casio, and the left hand of St. Sebastian.<sup>3</sup> The underpainting showed that the Madonna was considerably less peasant-like than she is at present, and that Girolamo's head was bent forward originally at a fifty degree angle rather than the seventy-five degree angle of its present state. The wreath was also added at a later date; this led the Louvre to suppose that it was repainted sometime shortly after 1523, that being the earliest year in which Pope Clement VII could

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<sup>1</sup>Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy from 1450-1600, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

<sup>2</sup>Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, (7th ed., New York: Dover Publishing Co., 1951).

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: 1953), p.26.



possibly have made Casio poet-laureate of Italy.<sup>1,2</sup> The writer would certainly be in agreement with the addition of the wreath on Girolamo's head, but would hesitate accepting the theory concerning the change in the positioning of the head or the repainting of the Madonna. Later, when the analysis of the composition is made we will be able to see more convincingly the necessity of this particular angle of the inclination of the head, which Boltraffio himself might possibly have changed soon after the original attempt was made in order to satisfy his own sensitivity to the organization and composition. There is no scientific report that a different type of paint or technique was employed. The hand of St. Sebastian is an exceedingly awkward passage and the writer seriously doubts if Boltraffio would have intentionally included such an unpleasant object in what is otherwise a fine work of art. Perhaps it was the addition by another painter or, by chance, a restorer.

Another interesting factor brought out by the radiograph concerns the musical angel at the top of the picture. It is definitely not repainted and the analysis shows that the paint density of the angel on the immediate area of the panel is much weaker and is covered by a layer of varnish.<sup>3</sup> Pedretti believes that the angel

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Benvenuto Cestaro, "Girolamo Casio," Enciclopedia italiana, (Padua: 1931-1939), VI, p.308.

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: 1953), p.51.

was a later addition, perhaps at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> If this were the case, why should the paint density be so thin if it had been repainted over already existing paint? Unfortunately, there is no way to determine a definite point of view; to complicate any position which might be taken there exists an old Bolognese tradition that Leonardo is the author of the angel.<sup>2</sup> Because of this perpetuated tradition and the proof given by the radiograph, the question has to remain moot with either side of the argument having equal justification for its conclusions.

In fact most of the documentation which remains to us on this painting and its author in the vicinity of Milan is in great error with regard to Boltraffio's name being published. His name was perpetuated in two different editions of Malvassi's catalogue as Bultrafio and Bultrasio, and it is not until the printing of the fourth edition that the name is corrected.<sup>3</sup> However, in all editions the angel is attributed to Leonardo, a fact which can hardly coincide with the Louvre findings or Pedretti's suggestion. Nevertheless, whoever the artist of this angel may have been, he kept faithfully to the Boltraffiesque style and character, not overlooking Leonardo's advanced technique evidenced in portions of the picture.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.55.

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Cesare Malvassi, Le pitture di Bologna, (Bologna: Monti, 1706, 1732, & 1755 [4th]).

The painting is handled in a linear fashion, while the modeling is soft, the artist having utilized a chiaroscuro technique; moreover, there is a certain relief effect given the figures against the background without any feeling of hardness. The composition is placed on the picture plane with obvious utilization of horizontal bands parallel to the picture plane and in a progressive series stretching back into depth, creating a very genuine illusion of recession. Boltraffio has employed aerial perspective to emphasize yet further this convincing recession. The composition is self-contained, heightening the impression of sophistication and monumentality. The closed form of the composition is achieved primarily by the decided accent placed on the dominant verticals and horizontals of this classic type composition, while the figures are so disposed within the frame that one is absolutely dependent on the other for the existence and maintenance of the composition. In the composition the figures are brought forward on the picture plane, where their attentions, glances, or gestures are focused either on the Virgin and Child or on the observer himself. Hence, all the figures are contingent upon each other yet separate and individual entities making up the whole. The painting was designed and executed with absolute precision and arranged on a formal basis of a classic nature, illustrating the artist's exhaustive contemplation of the linear arrangement of the whole, calculated with reference to the viewer.

### Composition

The composition as conceived by Boltraffio for the Casio Family Madonna is triangular in disposition, even though the Virgin and Christ are the focal center of interest and are positioned slightly below eye level. Closest to the viewer on the picture plane and in each of the lower corners of the picture are Giacomo, donor on the left, and his son Girolamo Casio the poet, on the right. They are kneeling in profile and have assumed the attitude of reverential adoration. Showing a certain aggressiveness and considerably more earnestness, the father is quickened more physically while the son Girolamo is more self-contained and pensive in attitude. In the center, the Madonna sits in a three-quarter pose, holding the Christ Child on her knees and restraining Him with her left hand. The Child, twisting and facing front, indicates with a gesture of His right hand the sign of the blessing. Behind Giacomo and slightly nearer the vertical center of the picture is St. John the Baptist in a slightly twisted position, looking directly at the observer and pointing with his right hand to direct attention of the observer toward the Virgin. St. Sebastian balances out the composition opposite St. John, directing his head and glance toward the focal group. The completion of the pyramidal composition is effectuated by the musical angel at the apex of the triangle, and poignantly accented by the diagonal thrust of the Baptist's staff. The foreground is made obvious and emphasized by the microscopic botanical detail of plant-life, soil, and stones in a strikingly executed Leonardesque manner.

Boltraffio, of all the Milanese followers of the Vincian school, attains the height of perfection in his composition. He works at them in a precise and meticulous method of balance and counter balance not only of physical objects, but also in terms of light and dark values. The composition illustrates an intricate adjustment of interwoven parallel and juxtaposed lines aggregating all into a unified whole. Granted the symmetry of arrangement is obvious in the Casio Madonna; this architectonic quality and equipoise create excitement when investigation is made of the complexity of its refinement. It has been said that Giovanni Antonio's compositions lent themselves to certain dryness and astringent quality which diminished the pleasure derived from his work after their initial viewing. However, the writer would judge that these critics failed to scrutinize them with sufficient penetration to realize the subtlety of movement and expression these compositions intrinsically possess. The movement is never fast or frenzied, but gentle and of a calculated nature so as to maintain an idealized state of tranquility as observed in the Classic of the Greek. Even when the artist introduces movement in his figures, it is positive and calculated with intent to seize the beholder in contemplative inquiry and interest. Thus the effectiveness of Boltraffio's compositions can hardly be called dry, but subtly they captivate and hold the attention of the spectator.

#### Incongruities and Refinements

To each artist there are specific qualities, whether they be

superior to other artists or inferior in some instances, that isolate the person from his contemporaries and make him individual in terms of style. Usually these characteristics are of a permanent nature, being habitually and unknowingly repeated by the painter in his desire to create. It is not our stand to judge these qualities as good or bad, but to utilize them to their utmost as marks of personal identification particular to an artist. It is with this in mind that the writer includes and stresses this section within the stylistic analysis of Boltraffio in hope that such refinements and incongruities will be repeated in other works, thus helping to make attributions more definite and plausible.

If a vertical, gravitational line be dropped through the figure of St. Sebastian bound with his hands behind his back and against a tree, it is immediately discerned that he is considerably off balance actually making it physically impossible to hold such a position. However, this is illusionistically corrected by the inward diagonal pull in the posing of the Child; which is repeated in the figure of Giacomo Casio and in the staff of St. John, all of which are strong enough to subdue any feeling of awkwardness pertaining to the balance of this saint. This use of strong opposing forces to create an artificial balance has a strong affinity to that in Botticelli's masterpiece, The Birth of Venus, in the Uffizi, Florence, in which Venus herself is considerably off balance, being righted by the rush of Flora, the drapery, and the promontories behind.

The most obvious incongruity is found in the ambiguity of the

placement of St. Sebastian's right hand. Both upper arms are in the same parallel position, making it an absolute physical impossibility for the hand to be tied in such a way that the right hand is visible on the left side of the body, nor would the theoretical line of the hidden right forearm allow for the present positioning of the right hand.

Another incongruity might be marked in the physical structure of the Virgin with particular reference to the awkward position of the neck and head. This will again be seen later in other attributed works by this artist, when he attempts to turn the heads of his sitters. The relationship of the lower limbs with the body of the Virgin creates a maladjusted concept of a torso which is too short. However, on close inspection it can be determined that the body is adequate, but that any displeasing illusion is attributable to the inharmonious handling of drapery rendered without adequate regard for the form beneath. This is pointed out only as an acknowledgement of an unskillful attempt on the part of the artist, Boltraffio, to perceive and execute the form accurately.

The refinements of this picture can be seen in the multifarious repetition of diagonal movements. The upward diagonal of St. John's right leg is repeated in his torso and head, and his left arm; other corresponding diagonals to this one are perceived partially in the upper arms, and the head of St. Sebastian and in his right leg and left foot; in the upper arms of Christ; and in Girolamo's arm and bodily profile. An opposing set of

diagonals having about the same intensity receive their major accent from the staff of St. John along with that created by his upper right arm and left leg; they are repeated in the forward thrust of Giacomo's body and head, the draped legs and upper left arm of the Madonna; the Child's body and lower right leg; part of the lower torso of St. Sebastian while the upper part corresponds to the reverse diagonal. The strongest parallel diagonals of the composition are observed in the right forearm of the Baptist; the right arm of Giacomo as well as the suggested line of his shoulders; the head and right leg of Christ; the right foot of St. Sebastian, as well as by the intimated line of his left arm obscured behind his back; and the right arm of the angel. The inward diagonal slant of the Baptist's shoulders is the reverse of those of St. Sebastian which have a pronounced tendency to reduce the vertical height of the apex of the pyramidal composition.

The accented horizontals of the Casio Family Madonna have their greatest potency in the planistic banding of the background recession and re-affirmed by the right forearm of Christ; the Virgin's left forearm and the hem of her drapery; and the implied horizontal of Girolamo's left arm. The major emphasis on the verticality of the composition is accomplished chiefly by the free fall of the drapery and its folds, the overall upright position of the figures, and the suggested verticality in nature's growth in the background.

A rather difficult refinement, but completely successful, is the foreshortening of the musical angel which in its own subtle



manner emphasizes the horizontality and directs the eye back down to the main subject. The soaring height of the theoretical apex of the triangular design which is above the framing is lowered by Boltraffio's positioning of the angel below this apex and his allowing it to hover closer to the central group. An interesting notation is the branching of the tree on the right side of St. Sebastian which parallels and corresponds to the profile outline of his left arm and its muscular modeling silhouetted against the background.

Because of the many crossing and intersecting parallels, the composition builds up in a tectonic structure in somewhat of an occult fashion. However, in order that this pyramidal building should not be too evident, stabilizing devices are employed. The use of "Vs" or inverted triangles, as observed in the right arms of the Baptist and Giacomo, counteract this upward movement, broadening and filling out the entire arrangement.

Observing Boltraffio's meticulous and schematic handling of the composition, one is aware that the crossing of lines and parallels was the prime motivating concern of the artist to achieve complete stability within the composition while infusing with it a stability of movement. Undoubtedly this is a method and technique derived from his careful tutelage under the watchful pedagogy of Leonardo da Vinci, again another of the factors which has to be taken into account and consideration as creating greater difficulties and pitfalls with respect to positive attribution.

### Figure Style

The Madonna of the Casio Family by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio possesses three distinct and somewhat independent figure styles. The different groups may be specified and divided according to personages in the following manner: first the Madonna and Child; second, the saints; and finally the portraits of the two donors. They vary from the idealistic to the realistic with a verisimilitude of expression ranging from amenity and sweetness to ardent emotion. Giovanni Antonio endows the design of his figures with a rectangular quality, having some affinity to the style of Borgognone in this respect. There is also an attenuated and graceful style to his drawing of the human bodies accented by strong lineament which often becomes rather hard and sculptural in character, yet is controlled and exhibits restraint. These are the basic characteristics which help to establish the work of Boltraffio as sophisticated, aristocratic and mild in nature with an over all tranquillity.

The central group is made up of the Madonna who holds the Christ Child on her knees and supports Him with her left hand. The form of the Virgin's body is rather heavy in its rectangular proportion accentuated by the drapery made of heavy stuffs. The drapery hides the body and its anatomical structure to a considerable extent even though its positioning is easily recognizable. The placement of the head is awkward in relationship to the neck and the body - jutting forward, slightly tilted, and glancing toward the spectator. The face is elliptically rectangular, narrowing at

the lower point of the jaw. There is a peasant quality to the face with its wide, deep set eyes; long, full nose; wide, flat forehead; and broad mouth with a puffy under lip. The deep set eyes are dark, whose flattened arc-like curve of the upper lid is swollen at the outer extremity, and a rounded swollen ridge serves as the under lid, curving in reverse at the inner corner. The eyes express a decidedly melancholic aspect. The eyebrows are merely suggested in the bone contour of the eye socket, but accented above by the gossamer like veil on the forehead which flows down on either side of her face and onto her shoulders. A definite feeling of skeletal structure lies beneath the skin surface and is indicated by the blunt semi-pointed chin, the heavy jaw line, the cheek bones, and the wide forehead, all of which appear prominent and individually characteristic of Boltraffio. Even though there exists a vigor and animation in the transition of the planes of the face, there is a sureness of modeling, which is still delicate in the adopted use of chiaroscuro, eliminating any hard delineation of these planes. His shadows on the face frequently become quite strong, particularly in such areas as beneath the nose and mouth; however, this is beautifully relieved of harshness in other areas such as the jaw and cheek by a soft reflected light, giving the execution of the painting a nimbleness and refinement. The lighted planes of the face would be considerably harsher if it were not for the coolness of some colors in relationship to the juxtaposition of the warm shadows. These lighted areas have the tendency to become somewhat agitated, thus smothering ever so lightly the too heavily delineated

lines of the mouth and the nose and their adjacent shadows. The Madonna's left hand has a rather broad, swollen back area, but lacks good form. The tong-like fingers which are long, delicate, and nervous, give a sensitivity to the hands, an aspect which otherwise they would completely lack. The one visible foot, only part of which is showing, is executed with conviction and firmly modeled. In many respects, there is much to recommend the figure style of this peasant-like Virgin of Boltraffio's creation, and we will see her humane and realistic type used again.

The Child, turning and facing forward, indicates with his right hand the gesture of a blessing. He is completely nude, thus revealing actually the sensation of organic structure beneath the flesh of His chubby form. The flesh tones are warm, soft, and subtle, rendering a definite sense of refinement to the figure while the linear movement is steady but restrained. The chiaroscuro is much softer in the case of this figure and would enhance any aspect of tenderness and softness of the child. The face is square with a little rounded chin, widely separated eyes, a rather long and well developed nose for a child, fat cheeks and puffy lips. He has a 'sleepy-eyedness' to His gaze that lends to the melancholic attitude, similar to that of His mother. This expression, coupled with the slight tilt of the head toward His left shoulder, suggests a pleading attitude. His hair is blond and arranged in ringlets close to his head. Christ is well modeled, being realistically heightened by the cast reflection on the shaded areas. A tactile sensation is given to the flesh of

the Child that sharpens the realistic and psychological acceptance of the painting. The Child, as a specific type, seems to have a great affinity to the pre-Leonardesque types of Foppa and Borgognone in style and manner. This type appears to be well established as part of the tradition of the Milanese school before the arrival of Leonardo in the locale, about 1482. There are other artists of the Milanese school before and after Leonardo who employed this very same type. It might be suggested that Leonardo looked to this school for his prototype of the Christ Child when one refers to his drawings for the painting of the Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizi, begun in 1481. The child in this picture is different from any in the drawings and paintings of children after his stay in Milan, and as contrasted to the Child in the Madonna of the Rocks, and Ste. Ann and the Virgin, both in the Louvre, which are more closely allied to the Milanese tradition and which were executed after his arrival in Milan.

St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian represent the second figure type in this picture, a purely idealized concept of sainthood strengthened by serenity and classical restraint. On first observation, they possess a sculptural effect even though their attitudes can be associated with effeminacy of a Praxitilian character. Hence, any likelihood of protraiture in these figures has been completely suppressed, and the figures provide a distinct contrast to the individual portraits of the donor and his son. Both heads, St. Sebastian's in profile, continue Boltraffio's use of the long oval

face with a predominant chin, the wide smooth forehead, widely placed eyes, having heavy upper lids and rather swollen outer corners limited by fine and delicate arched eyebrows. Again the noses are long, appearing dilated at the nostrils and accented by their heavy cast shadows on the upper lips. The soft undulating line of the creasing and fleshy mouths have the suggestion of a smile due partly to the fleshiness of the cheeks and the tautness of the small muscles at the corners of the mouths. If particular notice is taken of the necks in connection with their relationship to the placement of the heads and torsos, one observes that they are heavy and well modeled, yet awkwardly project the heads forward. Their hair, long and wavy, is parted in the center and allowed to descend onto the shoulders, terminating in ringlets and picking up high-lights at the same time. St. Sebastian's hair is fine and golden in color while St. John's is thicker and darker; both being soft and having a tactile quality. The ever pervading aspect of melancholy is present in these two figures attesting to the serious and solemn nature of Boltraffio's art.

The nude body of St. Sebastian reveals one of the higher levels of attainment rendered in terms of chiaroscuro in the modeling of the human form. The suggested effeminate quality is created chiefly by the stance; however, other contributing agents that suggest mannerism are the heavy wide hips and narrow shoulders, and the fleshiness of the upper thighs; this latter quality is also suggested in the Baptist. These particular proportions intimate mannerism, but such a concept is immediately limited

because of the individualistic quality of the figure and the independently personal style of Boltraffio. The right hand of St. Sebastian, of which the dislocated portion has already been mentioned, has very little structure, fingers widely splayed at the knuckles - incongruous to the rest of the picture. This might insinuate repainting, however, to the knowledge of the writer the discovery of any repainting has never been recorded in connection with this painting.

The tree to which St. Sebastian is supposedly bound and which he stands in front of, appears from all ascertainable evidence to be lacking a lower trunk. This omission on the part of the artist would then have to be added to the list of incongruities listed above.

The three wound marks made by the extracted arrows cause the saint little or no pain as he looks down with a thoughtful but saddened countenance of sensuousness on the seated Madonna and Child.

St. John, the muscles of whose right arm and hand are beautifully and sculpturally executed regarding structure and modeling, points toward the Virgin and Child; this gesture considerably helps to direct the observer's attention to them, actually forcing the viewer to focus his attention on the central group. The Baptist is clad in the heavy lamb skin garment in which he is customarily depicted and realistically suggestive of a tactile quality. With the exception of the neck region, all the planes are rendered with extreme delicacy, produced with restraint and demonstrating certain strength of technique.

These two saints manifest an idealized beauty which has its sensuous moments, yet maintains a masculinity which over-rides any strong accent on the effeminate. This idealized beauty, as conceived by Boltraffio, accompanied by a profound calmness adds a second quality still unmentioned - the classic. The classic attitude is sustained by the stance and the psychological mood, and is heightened by the sculptural quality of the figures themselves. It harks back to the fourth century Greek art, namely the style and character of Praxiteles. Thus there is a strong suggestion of the Hermes by Praxiteles in this figure of St. Sebastian with the elongation of the body and sway of the hips. It is only the positioning of the head and arms that varies. In contemplation of this classic quality with the beauty and sensuousness of these figures, it might be well to interject a few remarks about what Bernard Berenson calls the prettiness of Milanese art.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Berenson attributes prettiness in art to two qualities, inferiority and popularity in terms of intelligibility. Distinguishing it from beauty, which is life-enhancing, he asserts that prettiness is the by-product which remains after the permanent cause of the sensation has been removed.<sup>2</sup> Prettiness is also present in any art which is in the process of decline, or which embodies archaic manifestations, or when an art movement has reached its climax. This so-called prettiness is evident in one

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (rev. ed., London: Phaidon Press, 1952), p.175.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



form or another in almost all Milanese art of the late fifteenth century, even earlier painters of the Renaissance and the Gothic painters of the fourteenth century in Italy. This fact has to be mentioned so that too much emphatic criticism or condemnation will not be laid on its persistent presence.

Prettiness as such in Milanese art is independent of the basic aesthetics of art - form, movement, space, and color. It was used by this school as an inherited form of expression, when not overdone or imitated poorly, and was employed in connection with emotion. For this reason, when prettiness is overdone, it produces an almost distasteful effect that might be termed merely prosaic illustration instead of art; this conjures up a host of objections antagonistic to any pure enjoyment of the art itself. Then it may possibly be this device which will condone or condemn a work of art of this particular school of Milan. As it is ever present, it will have to be considered as part of the intrinsic style of the Milanese school and not one of the adoptions after the arrival of Leonardo da Vinci in Milan and its environs. It takes a true artist in the ultimate and pure sense of the word to produce and create a work of art, in which prettiness is utilized, which will communicate information and offer promise to the spectator rather than merely illustrating for us the representation of life and beatitudes.

The two kneeling figures, Giacomo, the father on the left, and Girolamo Casio, the poet-laureate of Italy on the right, are much

more individualized and personal than the two saints or the central group. They constitute the highly accurate style of portraiture, and lack any sensation whatsoever of hinted mannerism. Both men are robed in heavy wood and rich velvet stuffs that have an effect of severely limiting the realization of body contours other than in the immediate areas of the shoulders and arms. In profile, both heads are thrust forward at various degrees of inclination; however, in this particular pose utilized by Boltraffio, the necks remain heavy, but the adjustment of the heads, necks, and shoulders is achieved with considerably more success than in the other personages in the picture. The head of Giacomo, whose short hair falls to the nape of his neck and covers his ears, thrusts forward as his entire body leans toward the object of his ardent adoration. The profile view, even though this is portraiture, reaffirms the inherent predilection in Boltraffio's style for the long nose, slight undulation of the mouth, and the dominant chin. Giacomo's dark eyes are intently fixed on the Virgin. His skin shows evidence of advanced age in the hallowed and flabby areas, indicated by the subtle modeling, and lacks the resiliency of youthful flesh as observed in his son. The direction of the light comes from behind leaving a great portion of his facial feature in shadow, thus sacrificing some detail, yet simultaneously heightening the emotional expression of the man. The strongly executed hands are in the attitude of prayer and have much the same stylistic manner as previously discussed. The fingers are tong-like, being long and slender, while more attention is given to the actual structure, the

venated quality of the back of the hand, all of which is accented by the rings placed on the thumb and little finger. Giacomo's arm, indicated by the velvet sleeve which conforms to the contour and bend of the elbow as does Girolamo's arm and sleeve which is held close to the body, hands clasped on his breast and holding a cap.

Girolamo is dressed in a tunic, sack-like outer garment of tactile beauty which reveals none of his body, but which in itself has lovely volume and form. His father wears the same fashion, but his is of a texture similar to that of the Madonna's. Girolamo's profile is bathed in the direct rays of the descending light that reveals his more youthful age and fatter face. As with his father, a broad forehead is indicated while the stronger undulating line of the mouth suggests a bit of a smile. There is a pudginess or double chin beneath the usual prominent Boltraffio chin heretofore mentioned. His eyes are soft and intimate the suggestion of a certain preoccupation, rendering an expression of reverence, but with more reserve and dreaminess. His hair, confined beneath fine netting, falls to shoulder level and is held in place by a laurel wreath.

Both of these donors illustrate for us Boltraffio's position as a master of portraiture, highly sensitive in his observation and approach, and able in his technique to execute and convey the spirit, attitude, psychology, and individuality of his sitters. He exhibits a great restraint and sophistication in the quiet and mild nature of his art. There is never any theatricality or overdramatization on the part of the artist as there is in some of the other

Leonardesque followers, which would result in falsifying its sincerity and meaning. If not in portraiture alone, the realistic and idealized types convey their individual messages and thoughts in harmony with the entire picture and its composition. This confirms Boltraffio's prowess in maintaining an individual style and his ability to translate it into different types all within the same panel. In this picture, there is an overall consistency in manipulating the various types and in maintaining an harmonious relationship of balance among all.

Hovering in the sky above the central group, is a musical angel, whose face is considerably foreshortened. The use of such a device decidedly limits the analysis of the figure. However, with the stretching of one's imagination within the limitations of feasibility, the head is not unlike that of the Christ Child. Immediately the broad, smooth forehead, fat cheeks, rather deep set eyes, puffiness of the undulating mouth and soft brown hair are all of the Boltraffio vocabulary of style and not unfamiliar to the preceeding discussion. More outstanding in similarity and of considerable interest is the fact that both pudgy hands of the angel with their short and very pointed fingers are identical to the left hand of Christ. This fact alone would leave little doubt as to the authorship of this angel.

### Summary

The style of Boltraffio in this picture of the Madonna of the Casio Family is consistent and refined in its approach and possesses an attitude of sophistication, warmth, and restraint regardless of whether the figures are in their manner realistic, idealistic, or portrait. The faces are long and oval for the most part with broad, smooth foreheads. In all cases the eyes are deep set and widely separated in their placement. The eye has a swollen ridge for an under lid with a reverse curve at the inner corner, and a flat, heavy arc for an upper lid. The upper lid swells at the further corner between the eyebrow and itself, the former limited by a fine, slightly arched line. The nose is long and slightly dilated at the nostrils, casting a rather heavy shadow on the upper lip. The mouth is usually composed of a soft undulating line of a creasing and fleshy nature having the suggestion of a smile with a puffiness to the lower lip which also casts a distinct shadow on the habitually dominant chin. The entire skeletal structure of the head is well felt and adequately handled even though its placement is sometimes awkward in relationship to the neck and shoulders. The hands are usually firm and broad (swollen), and encumbered with long tong-like fingers which are rather delicate embodying a slight nervous quality. With hands, Boltraffio is not always consistent in his execution, but they usually have some quality or character about them that is distinctive to the artist.

Mention must be made of Boltraffio's use of color and the effects achieved by it. Like Leonardo and his followers, Giovanni Antonio finishes his panels with a smooth surface which often appears polished because of a surface quality not unlike that of enamel. For the most part he uses warm color which becomes lively, indicative of influences of the pre-Leonardesque school of Milan, similar to that of Borgognone. Occasionally this results in a brilliancy and hardness of light. Another influence of the past is the coloration of the flesh tones, which do not consistently maintain the Leonardesque golden quality, but from time to time develop a greyish aspect. Adolfo Venturi states that Boltraffio is more akin in this respect to Ridolfo Ghirlandiao.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to believe that such a relationship ever existed, and Venturi is the only person who alludes to it. Boltraffio's technique of applying color is entirely different from that of Leonardo in that he builds up the surface by means of a network of minute squares which is most in keeping with his rectilinear structure of the composition.<sup>2</sup> Such a technique of applying paint adds to the surface animation of the panel resulting in contrasts and producing occult movement. However, there remains one quality of his color, that of transparency, which lends greater depth and subjectivity to his work evidencing his search for an overall harmony.

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, North Italian Painters of the Quattrocento, (New York: Harcourt & Brace Co., 1913), p.56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

There is also a consistency about the modeling of the figures which is pertinent and individual to the style of Giovanni Antonio. His use of chiaroscuro is achieved with more than average knowledge creating a certain vigor of transition from one plane to another. The shadows beneath the nose and mouth of his figures are the heaviest and might become harsh and disagreeable if the transparent colors and reflected lights were not introduced into the transitional areas and the shadows themselves. This only justifies more fully the sensitiveness and capability of the artist's technique of modeling. His drawing has a lengthy and graceful quality; however, in his linear manner he occasionally becomes strong and frequently hard, but this is readily overcome by the nimbleness and elegance of execution and the mild temperament of his art.

The meaning and expression with which Boltraffio often endows his work is one of amenity and sweetness, individual unto the artist, yet peculiar to the Milanese school; being subdued by quietude and calmness, it produces a self-possessed and secure attitude in the figures. The melancholic aspect which penetrates much of his work is characteristically individual to Boltraffio and is created to a large extent from a dreamy or sleepy-eyedness. This plus the serenity create a certain tenderness and extinguishes any possibility of dramatic or theatrical inference. Definite facial expressions of the individual figures make the interpretation more significant, poignant, and explicit. Such subtle meanings and emotions as drawn together in the Casio Madonna aid in showing a serious and solemn side of Giovanni Antonio who by these terms

must have been a very perceptive and sensitive observer of man and nature.

Something must be said about the drapery and the technique of its execution. Boltraffio's drapery is usually heavy, in some cases obliterating the structural form of the body beneath. Usually the materials, if they are of a bulky character, have broad, flat folds that tend to become flatter as the material terminates or when the folds break-over on themselves; this appearance sometimes is contradictory to the nature of the stuffs. Sashes, throws, and veils, materials of lighter, softer, and more transparent textures, conform to a much higher degree in their execution to the actual material. However, the tactile quality with which Giovanni Antonio endows his drapery is most convincing. One short-coming can be observed in the largeness of the planes of the drapery which gives it a stiff quality, yet he can execute with an accuracy of detail and sensation of softness in other area that becomes almost poetic in its finished state.

The background and landscape are handled in a planistic fashion with regard to the recession, and all objects show a definite diminution in size, adjustment of value, and intensity. The obvious banding of horizontal planes is characteristically a Quattrocento device; Boltraffio had profited very little from Leonardo's influence in this respect at the date of this picture's execution. There is a strong semblance of atmosphere and haziness in the far background, showing on the other hand and within the same context a similar influence of Leonardo. The mountain to the left of St. John



the Baptist is sharply delineated against the sky, yet, a softness is created by breaking the line with small plant-life which restrains any blatant harshness that might otherwise have existed. The general vertical stratification seen in the rocks on the right helps considerably to reduce the monotony of the horizontal accents. There is also a relief of harshness because of the delicacy and meticulousness in which the vegetation is rendered. The small, rounded and heavily foliated trees along the base of this small mountain in the center have the tendency to stand out as if in relief, while those in the same area but in the middle ground are tall, slender and supple with a feathery quality given to their foliage. These latter trees are very reminiscent of those seen in the paintings by Umbrian masters.

That which holds more importance for us can be seen in the microscopic execution of the small plant-life in the foreground, which would almost appear to be abstract from the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci - the same drawings as used in the painting the Madonna of the Rocks, Louvre. Its detail is handled with great care and restraint which Boltraffio's technical proficiency demonstrates.

The same calmness and quietude prevail in the landscape as was seen in the figures themselves. There is not so much as a breeze. The only hint of expression, other than the inborn tenderness of the panel, is the slight agitation seen in the sky at the very top of the frame, and this is a questionable and uncertain quality. The landscape enhances the mood and attitude of the

figures while they in turn aid in establishing and heightening the very subtle meaning of the landscape.

As can be distinctly seen, Boltraffio is not only a capable and sensitive master of composition with respect to balance, sequence, and harmony, but he is most competent in pulling together all objects within the design so that individually they echo each other repeatedly, establishing an overall harmony of a universal nature where the entire panel as a whole produces the same effect, expression, and meaning. Boltraffio has interwoven the total composition so meticulously that movement and very subtle animation are produced; consequently any dryness of design or boredom to the composition is eliminated. For all this, the conclusion must attest to the great talent of this Milanese artist; we might wish he had followed art as a vocation rather than merely as an avocation, that he had had more leisure time, and that he had not died at such an early age.

**PART II**

**Artists of Leonardo da Vinci's School  
and Their Styles**

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STYLES OF THE FOLLOWERS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI IN MILAN

The continuation of this dissertation on Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio would hardly be conclusive if there were not some consideration given to his contemporary fellow artists residing in Milan. These artists were either pupils of Leonardo or direct followers of his style and teachings. Were it not for the fact that the artists herein discussed have a direct connection with Leonardo, his school, or the school of Milan at that particular time, the task of investigation would be limitless with possibilities of such an investigation leading as far as France and Flanders to the northwest and Naples to the south. Therefore, the study must be confined within reasonable and workable boundaries which have definite relationships and bearings on the immediate subject under consideration, that being the confused connection these artists have with Boltraffio and the attribution of his work as distinct and separate productions stylistically identifiable from theirs.

Naturally these men will exhibit varying degrees of association and similarity with the style of the master and Boltraffio; however, these men are of different talents and demonstrate heterogeneous intricacies of style, but as is so often the case with followers and pupils, they sometimes lack in creative

imagination. Most of these men had been trained in portraiture and subject material of a religious nature, consequently lacking in a fresh approach to the subject material, being not only copiers of a style, but also of basic composition. This is not an essay on the inferiority of these painters, but there is a necessity to point out their limitations and deficiencies in the creative sense. In doing this, however, another aspect of their art is elevated, that being the adroit nature of these men to become perfection itself in the ways and style of Leonardo. This they must be praised for and it must be realized that through their arduous persistence they establish a new school of art which was combined with those local elements of the Milanese traditions from which they could not divorce themselves. These men elevated the Leonardesque and firmly established it as a part of the local artistic scene. Other than Boltraffio, there were Ambrogio de'Predis, Marco d'Oggione, Andrea Solario, Cesare da Sesto, Gianpietrino (Giovanni Pedrini), Bernardino Conti, Lorenzo di Credi, Bernardino Luini, and two persons of great speculation - Giacomo Salai and Francesco Melzi.

Unfortunately in some cases a few of the above mentioned artists are shrouded in as much mystery as Boltraffio himself. There is a similar lack of dated and signed pictures and documented information. It will be necessary therefore to approach some of these men in much the same fashion as this dissertation treats Boltraffio, that of being able to accept as certainty works which have been attributed to these men with creditable

authority and to use those works as representative of their style for the purpose of analysis. The establishment of these styles will be systematically ordered with sufficient proof that an individuality of types and style will evolve to identify and distinguish the various personalities implicated. In all but two of the mentioned artists, there remains sufficient material of signed and dated works or reliable documentation to construct and compile precise evidence to substantiate the contentions set forth.

It will be observed that all these men can be separated and maintained as individual artists with positive representations of their works. Such a study inserted into the dissertation at this point will alleviate the necessity of constantly referring to extraneous material and the repetition of such to establish Botticelli as an individual artist and eliminate questions and confusion concerned with the style of the followers and imitators of Leonardo da Vinci.

#### Ambrogio de'Predis

Ambrogio de'Predis, who was active in Milan between 1472 and 1506, formed in his style under the influence of Zenale and Butinone. The second strong influence on his art was that of Leonardo da Vinci when he became a closer follower of the master. Outside the school of Milan, Ambrogio de'Predis shows rather strongly some distinct influences of Antonello da Messina from time to time as pointed out by Adolfo Venturi.<sup>1</sup> He is technically a well equipped artist;

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte, (Milan: Hoepli, 1901-1939), VII, n.4, p.1017.

however, he does not have a great similarity to many other Lombard artists of this school. De'Predis has left two signed works which are also dated, one in the National Gallery, London, and the other in Vienna, both verified by Berenson.<sup>1,2</sup>

The Portrait of a Youth in London's National Gallery number 1665, often referred to and identified as Francesco di Bartolomeo Archinto, has the following inscription on a scroll held by the sitter, "1494, ANO 20. A. M. Pred."<sup>3</sup> The other painting which is signed and dated 1502 in Vienna, is of Emperor Maximilian, but often its identity is allied with that of Lodovico Il Moro. As is so often the case with portraiture of the Milanese school, there is great confusion as to the true identity of the sitters, and as this portion of the dissertation is to be concerned with the establishment of individual styles, the writer shall not force the issue by trying to prove the identity of the individual sitters.

These two paintings along with two others, a Portrait of a Young Man (#790), in the Ambrosiana, Milan, and the Portrait of Francesco Brivio, in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan, all have definite stylistic relationships. Ambrogio de'Predis appears to be much more linear than the other Milanese artists with a sharp, careful line of execution accompanied by a metallic elaboration of detail. His outlines are produced with a pronounced harshness

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<sup>1</sup>A Catalogue, National Gallery Illustrations, (London: 1950).

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.471.

<sup>3</sup>A Catalogue, National Gallery Illustrations, (London: 1950).

of squarish angularity and lineament having deep, dark cut contours. The general structure of his human forms is superficial as is the muscular movement seen beneath the surface of the flesh. In this respect, he has a great deal in common with many of the other Lombard artists who also possess a spineless and careless assemblage or separate parts of the composite figure. Ambrogio exhibits an individuality in the solid padding of the flesh with a strong accent on relief resulting in a compartmentalizing of the surface due to the deep contours, while the flesh lacks the firmness which so well characterizes Boltraffio. The tone of the flesh painted by de'Predis has a dry greyish quality resembling a chalkness with harsh and abrupt transitions from one plane to another, caused mainly by the weaker handling of color. Hence, the textures and the qualities of the paint can hardly be referred to as marvelous, concerning a tactile sense, yet they possess a realistic aspect about them.

The heads in these portraits seem almost colossal in comparison to the proportion of the figures. Regardless of this, his foreheads are less expansive in comparison to most of those exhibited by his fellow imitators. The eyebrows are hard and usually drawn in a flattened arch and accompanied by a continuous puffiness below, accenting the deep set structure of the eyes. The eyelids are hard and unbending in their execution which only heightens the penetrating quality of the eyes themselves. The upper lid is marked by a distinctive hard line at the edge while the lower is accented by a whitish rim of light. There is a decided undulation



given to the mouth although the large lips tend to be compressed. Ambrogio d'Predis did relieve to a considerable extent the puffiness given the upperlip, a characteristic most evident in the work of his fellow aspirants.

As stated above, any subtle transition in the planes of the face is lacking, the result is harder accompanied by a sculptural sensation suggestive of a bony quality. This is particularly evident in areas of the jaw, nose, and cheek bones, the nose appears almost to be detachable. The execution demonstrates greater angularity and harshness and is intensified by the irrational distribution of light in the shaded areas with no attention given to correctness of perceptive execution. His shadings are rendered with about equal value and intensity, resulting in a learned but heavy chiaroscuro of a hard metallic quality and zigzag lineament.

Ambrogio de'Predis when painting hands was as consistent in their rather poor structural handling and manipulation as he was in other physical features. He gave them an unnatural puffiness which poignantly detracts from a persuasive articulation of the joints.

The expression of character with which he imbued his sitters was more distant and detached when compared to Boltraffio and the other Lombardian painters, thereby diminishing the relationship between the sitter and the spectator. This particular type of expression lends to the profound dignity of the person, while an intimated meditative docility suggests an alleviation of what might otherwise be called a dominating personality on the part of the

sitter. Thus the concentrated state of sobriety of the sitter is reduced to some degree by the overall stillness and quietude of interpretation.

Even though the textures created by Ambrogio de'Predis are not always convincing in a tactile sense, there is some resemblance to actuality. In the execution of his drapery especially, he demonstrates a hard if not brittle effect in the folds which are often heavy and have the appearance of molded concrete. The drapery does not always conform to the structure of the body in a persuasive manner and is frequently lacking in realism. Another way of describing these rather disturbing folds is that they resemble square modeled clay.

As Ambrogio de'Predis was principally a portrait painter, we find no work with a positive attribution that includes landscapes other than the copies he made from paintings by Leonardo, such as his Madonna of the Rocks in the National Gallery, London. Thus to attempt to establish a particular or distinctive style in this area of his production would be difficult, uncertain, and unreliable.

In comparison to Boltraffio, Ambrogio remains for us essentially a portrait painter with qualities considerably harder and less refined. He carries on the late Quattrocento Leonardesque tradition, but without the subtlety or cultivation of the adopted style. In this respect, it has to be admitted that Boltraffio was more prone to the adaptation of a learned style and can be said to be a better technician with reference to performance. Obviously, there is neither the hardness nor the poorness of physical pro-

portion in Giovanni Antonio's work which one is constantly aware of in de'Predis'. Yet, the greatest confusion over attribution occurs between these two men of the Milanese school, though Botticelli demonstrates his skills to be superior to those of Ambrogio and is a more able and a more sensitive pupil of da Vinci.

#### Marco d'Oggione

A more readily and rather easily identifiable style is that of Marco d'Oggione (d.ca. 1530), who was an imitator and follower of Leonardo da Vinci. It is believed and universally suggested that this artist was a pupil of Butinone and that he came under the indomitable influence of Leonardo da Vinci late in his career. For this reason, and the late adoption of the master's style, his individual and personal style as a painter is more discernable from the others. Marco d'Oggione left only one signed painting, but without a date.<sup>1</sup> It is the Three Archangels (#313) in the Brera Museum, Milan, originally in St. Marta of the same city. Another painting that has definite proof because of a commission contract of 1524, is the Madonna and Saints, in the Parish Church of Besate (Milan).<sup>2</sup> Two other panels corresponding in style to the above mentioned that are identical unto themselves not only in style, but in size and shape, are the St. Sebastain (#644), in the Poldi-Pezzoli

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, Catalogo della R. Pinacoteca di Brera, (Milano: Alfieri e Lacroix, 1908), p.168.

<sup>2</sup> Gustavo Frizzoni, "La pala di Marco d'Oggione nella chiesa parrocchiale de Besate," L'arte, (1905), V, p.61.

museum, and the San Rocco (#961), in the Accademia Carrara.<sup>1</sup>

Further, two others ought to be cited--the Brera's Assumption of the Virgin (#312), and the St. Sebarian (#210A) in Berlin--in order to draw a complete picture of this painter's most individual style.<sup>2</sup>

It has been stated by Bernard Berenson that Marco d'Oggione has a cruder and somewhat harder style; however, the writer feels that this is really not the case, but that his intentions were bent in the direction of expression which might well have been the cause of this resultant quality.<sup>3</sup> His work, without stretching one's imagination too much, resembles to a degree the characteristics of Roman mannerism as seen in the followers of Raphael or Michelangelo, but without either the sincerity or virtuosity commonly associated with them. An adroitness and meticulousness accompany the linear quality of d'Oggione's work; however, there is evidence of his knowledge of the purpose and technique of chiaroscuro when one notes the modeling in his more mature work. Frequently this aspect is overlooked in his painting because of the strong contrast of chiaroscuro and his intense use of color. St. Sebastain, in Berlin, is a splendid example of this. The nude figure demonstrates good anatomical structure and a superior rendering of definite

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.400.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1952), p.186.

transition from one plane to another, even though the shadows appear in solid masses of one value.

The heads produced by Marco d'Oggione for the most part are much rounder in their physical proportion when compared with the works of Boltraffio and others. Consequently, the eyes are placed far apart and set deep conveying an attitude of sleepiness. Noses painted by Marco are rather prominent, while the mouths are considerably elongated and have the inclination to droop at the corners in a way contrary to the customary Leonardesque smile. He maintains a proneness to show a slight swollen area above the moderately flattened eyebrows.

Because of his propensity toward expression, eventuating in a type of mannerism, Marco d'Oggione displays much more movement and animation in his work than do any of the others who imitated Leonardo. It is observed on occasion that when specific emotional effects were desired, he had a tendency to over-emphasize the gestures made by his figures. But never does he become effeminate as do the other followers of the school or even Leonardo himself. In this vein, Marco exhibits more movement and emotion than the others, which, very likely, is one of his basic motives in trying to prove his art and make it individual in terms of emotional appeal. At least it is convincing and the casual observer understands what it is he is trying to entreat. From this point of view, there is no other follower, including Boltraffio, who generates as much movement or provocative emotion as does Marco d'Oggione. This expression of physical emotion through gesture and

animation is somewhat different from the other followers and is intensified by facial expression. All of his faces have a distinct and descriptive expression, but on occasion sometimes tend to become gaunt and lacking in spiritual quality although the attitude is convincing enough to be interpreted correctly. Another characteristic is the realism of the hair, and Marco d'Oggione executes it with much greater feeling of a tactile nature with the suggestion that it is being animated by the wind. Sometimes it has the tendency of being too animated and emotional in its assertion, but it is always characteristic with the general temper of his work.

Structurally, Marco d'Oggione's figures are more convincing in their anatomical organization and certainly demonstrate a superiority to those of the other Leonardesque followers. Where the others show definite inclination toward a gentle, elongated and suave sort of mannerism, Marco avails himself of a more masculine and animated form of the individual. In conjunction with this, his hands, which despite their rather small size, are attached to very subtly modeled arms, obviously distinguishable from others of the school by the intensified meaning and character given their articulation and gesture.

The drapery painted by Marco d'Oggione is unusually beautiful and realistic, highly suggestive tactile sensuality with illusionistic qualities. He profited well and more so than the others from the teachings of Leonardo in this respect. Boltraffio comes close to him only in his later works in this genre of

execution. However, because of his proficiency in handling drapery, Marco overdoes the quality to a point where it actually becomes suffocating in its voluminous abundance. Where the artist manifests discretion as to the magnitude of the drapery, he is able to reveal the form beneath beautifully. There is a close affinity to the rest of the school with respect to some area of the drapery, but its own restlessness individualizes it from the others in what might be interpreted as a baroque turbulence.

Fortunately we have the opportunity to observe painted landscape in this artist's works. The majority of his religious pictures exhibit background landscapes. Marco usually employed a northern Alpine type like that occasionally exercised by Boltraffio, but painted with greater clarity and precision, making use of recession much in the same manner as did Giovanni Antonio and his master, Leonardo. The mountains, foliage and sky in particular illustrate a crystalline quality and a very linear manner in the cloud formations which are imitative of porcelain in a hard, formula-like fashion.

Marco d'Oggione is perhaps the most identifiable and individual in the interpretive style of translating the teachings of Leonardo da Vinci and the school into paint. However, it is justifiable to think that there were other influences on this artist from outside the immediate school under consideration, perhaps helping to explain this mannered individuality of style which characterizes him so well.

### Andrea Solario

Andrea Solario (act.1493-1515) is another of the imitators of Leonardo da Vinci in Milan. Of the group of imitators, he varies in his style to the greatest degree. This may be explained by his uncertain background of artistic influences. At the beginning of his career especially and at various intervals, he comes under the influence of Alvise Vivarini, but he also strongly felt the influences of Bellini, Antonello da Massina and finally Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>1</sup> Such influences as these, all combined in varying degrees, have a limiting effect on the permanence of his style, thus establishing a conclusive style is difficult. Therefore, the writer shall concern the discussion herein with the influences which Leonardo exerted upon the style of the artist. It might be well to point out that Leonardo in his Notebooks not once mentioned Andrea Solario, nor does Vasari mention him in his Lives.<sup>2,3</sup> Bernard Berenson is the authority who establishes the dates of his active period (1493-1515) and suggests the possibility that he was first the pupil of his brother, Cristoforo, the sculptor.<sup>4</sup> This one fact alone could explain the apparent hardness and immobility in his early work.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.541.

<sup>2</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York, 1954).

<sup>3</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Architects, (4, London: Dent and Sons, 1927).

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.541.



Many works all over the world have been given to Andrea Solario, but mention only of that work which is signed, dated, or both will be made. However, in such a list, to leave out a universally accepted picture as the Louvre's (#1530), Vierge au Coussin Vert, would be most unfortunate even though it lacks the requisites just cited. The Brera Museum in Milan is in possession of two signed and dated works: a Madonna, which is signed and dated 1495, and a Madonna, Child with SS. Joseph and Jerome, which carries the following inscription: "ANDREAS MEDIOLANENIS 1495. F."<sup>1,2</sup> A later portrait is that of Giovanni Cristoforo Longono, having the inscription, "Andreas D. SOLARIO F. 1505," in the National Gallery, London, and finally a later work without a date, Salome with the Head of St. John, in New York's Metropolitan, signed "ANDEAS DE/ SOLRIO/F."<sup>3,4</sup> We are most fortunate to have as many signed and dated works as these over a period of time when the artist had more than one style and several influences exerted upon him. Thus when we examine his work these influences may be taken into account and attention given to those which are Leonardesque.

Andrea Solario's style of drawing varies from the soft and delicate to the hard and unbending depending on the kind of detail

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<sup>1</sup>Lisa du Schlegel, "Andrea Solario," Rassegna d'arte, (1913), p.79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Catalogue - National Gallery Illustrations - Italian School, (London: Harrison & Son, Ltd., 1950), p.338.

<sup>4</sup>Catalogue of Italian, Spanish and Byzantine Painting, (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1940), p.141.

he happened to be working on. This is most noticeable in the lineament of the face and results in a strength of relief which has volume to its form, but often resembles stonelike modeling, for example in the Boston portrait of a Venetian Senator (#51). He produces a long-oval, fatty face when not dealing with portraiture per se, hinting at a bony structure beneath the surface usually being widest in the area of the cheek bones. Again excluding portraiture, the noses appear to be a continuation of the forehead, the latter being rather shallow, but broad. The eyes, which have a crystalline quality, are small in size and soft in the majority of cases, devoid of extensive modeling other than that which suggests a rounded protusion of the eyes from the cavities which are frequently dark. The jaw line is decidedly rounded rather than angular as is often the case with the other followers of Leonardo, but the chin has a strong jutting effect. The upper lip is noticeably short for being part of what could be specified as an extended mouth. The mouth in all instances does not have the heavily curled corners so customary to the Milanese school, yet a suggestion is made of an habitual smile.

The execution of the hands by Solario has a grossness of volume and is not consistent in their production--frequently lacking structure. This same character can also be illustrated and perceived in his rendering of anatomical forms, which are generally poor in their boneless fashion.

As previously stated, Andrea Solario's modeling results in considerable harshness. This ranges from the delicacy of hard

porcelain to the heaviness of marble. In his earlier years there was little emphasis placed on chiaroscuro, certainly a device either learned or greatly improved upon after his association with Leonardo's school. The modeling becomes harder in his later years as the chiaroscuro becomes more intense. The depth of his shadows, of which there are few, are bituminous, but quite warm in coloration, accenting instead of subduing so as to cause their recession.

The intensity of expression in most of Andrea Solario's heads has an obvious lack of genuineness regarding character and which seems to be accompanied by a dreamlike concern of stoniness. This particular expression does little to enhance anyone's belief in the intellectual prowess of the sitter or subject. Solario is entirely different from Boltraffio in this particular detail. However, such an attitude produced by the artist only increases the exterior austerity of his figures, however, occasionally some intensification of sentiment is created by the delicate flesh tones of his female figures.

The combination of expression and modeling are psychologically heightened by the lack of physical movement on the part of the sitter so that this sustained immobility, which is not unlike that of Antonello da Messina or at times Ambrogio de'Predis, punctuates the sculptural quality of his figures. Particularly in Andrea's portraiture, there is an indomitable character which one finds difficult to penetrate in order to determine the feelings and temperament of the sitter.

A strange phenomenon exists in Solario's handling of drapery

where the textures are often hard, soliciting little tactile response, yet there is a certain delicacy occurring in the folds. There is a voluminous quantity of drapery not always conforming to the figure it covers. Occasionally the hardness of the drapery resembles metal; however, there is in all circumstances a precision of detail.

Landscape executed by Andrea Solario shows several influences, none of which can actually be called Leonardesque. They often adhere to a Florentine stylization in the combined flatness and calm. Consistently, they are low and rolling countrysides with little detail, and thin delicate trees not unlike those of Raphael. However, throughout his work, inclusive of the landscape portions, the dominating coloration is close to that of the Venetians with occasional suggestions which indicate influences from the northern regions of Europe with particular reference to Flanders in the quality of warmth.

Andrea Solario like Marco d'Oggione is an identifiable individual amongst the Leonardo followers in Milan as former traits and characteristics perpetuate themselves in his style developed during the period of Leonardesque influence. He, unlike Ambrogio de'Predis, Boltraffio and the others, experienced dominating influences from outside the locale which he was unable to divorce himself from completely, and unconsciously persisted in employing them. Even in the Vierge au Coussin Vert, in the Louvre in which he most successfully adopts the Vincian technique, there are still traces strong enough to indicate other influences on Solario's style and

thus enable us to attribute this and other works to him.

### Cesare da Sesto

Cesare da Sesto (1477-1523) was an imitator of Leonardo, but there is no record that this artist ever came in direct contact with the master, who does not mention him in his Notebooks.<sup>1,2</sup> However, Vasari states that he was an assistant to Baldassare Peruzzi and went to Rome with him.<sup>3</sup> He also affirms the partnership between Cesare da Sesto and Bernazzano Milanese, the latter employed by da Sesto to paint landscapes, a facet of Cesare's work that we will not have to investigate as thoroughly.<sup>4</sup> Berenson alludes that the artist under discussion was also strongly influenced by Raphael and Michelangelo.<sup>5</sup> This fact is evidenced in the work of Cesare and undoubtedly the artist was able to view the original works of both these men while in Rome with Peruzzi.

To date, the writer has been unable to locate any signed or dated works by Cesare da Sesto to substantiate and verify his style

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.144.

<sup>2</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York, 1954).

<sup>3</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Sons, 1927), II, p.242.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.335

<sup>5</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.144.

with uncontested evidence; hence we will have to rely on Vasari and Lanzi to affirm those works from the hand of the artist to establish his style.<sup>1</sup> The listing which Vasari gives us is The Baptism in the Principe de Molfetta, Milan, (landscape by Bernazzano), Salome, in Vienna, a Young Saint, S. Rocco, Rome, and a Madonna, Child and Lamb, in the Brera, Milan. Remarks will be confined to those examples of his art which follow the Leonardesque tradition in order to discover the basic traits of his art which distinguish him from the other representatives of the school.

The composition of Cesare da Sesto, like that of all artists in Milan at the time, followed the Quattrocento tradition of basic pyramidal construction and circular movement. Cesare placed his figures in such a manner having very erect posture and a slight turn to the head. Where his Madonnas are concerned, he added the charm, idyllic sweetness and quietude found in much of Raphael's work, the type of sweetness that is saccharine and distinguishes him readily from Boltraffio and the other Milanese. There is always the softness and gentleness to touch combined with a strength of attitude, sureness of movement and calculated restraint. However, when movement, as displayed by this artist, is forced, it is transformed into contortion possessing a certain pomp and chaotic disorder. Thus far, we can easily recognize his tendency toward academicism and virtuosity, which cannot exist side by side with the sincerity of Boltraffio.

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<sup>1</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Sons, 1927), III, p.325.

His figures have heads that are decidedly oval with high foreheads, lowered eyes and swollen lids, frail smiles, and a slightly receding chin that terminates in a definite point. Consistently he presents an almost affected, serious sweetness which has the potential of becoming annoying. The temperament of his personages in total have an almost unreal quality indicative of a characterless sculptured feeling. Little or no movement is given the central figures, who have to rely on attributes, objects, and other persons within the composition to give them life sufficient to make them convincing. Cesare does show a consistency in the fine rendering of well articulated hands that are most discerning in their anatomical structure. His children, on the other hand, can be categorized into two types, the first of a pure Lombard style which finds its prototype in those of Vincenzo Foppa and Borgognone, and carried on by the Vincian followers, the other is of a more individualistic nature which embodies Roman characteristics. The children always have well nourished bodies and animated attitudes. However, with Cesare da Sesto, his second type can be stylistically identified in that they have wide placed, small eyes with undulating lids that lack expression, fat cheeks, and the entire figure is in want of modeling due to the scarcity of shadow. The aggregate effect is one of a suggestive diabolic nature which is neither satisfying nor aesthetically pleasing.

The drapery, frequently demonstrating movement and activity as in the Poldi Pezzoli Madonna (#667), is full and does not always indicate properly the structure of the form beneath. The

textures are often stiff, hard, and unreal with some stylistic suggestion of Ambrogio de'Predis. The arc-like sweeping forms of the folds possess an easy restlessness, but little tactile sensation.

Da Sesto's work presents an overall warm feeling in connection with his use of color which results in a persistent reddish tonality that bathes the surface of the panel.

Before taking leave of this artist something ought to be said concerning the landscape, even though there is proof of definite collaboration with Bernazzano. The landscape varies from the central Italian type of mannered Raphaelism with low planes and Umbrian type trees to the mountainous types of the north and Lombard schools. This latter species is distinctly Alpine, yet so warm in tonality that it is almost incongruous. Interestingly observed is the fact that the foreground landscape is usually produced with the same botanical and geological care and detail as that employed by Leonardo and others.

Hence in reviewing another one of the Leonardesque imitators, he, too, has taken on more individuality in style and characterization so as to isolate him from his fellow aspirants. The necessity of such a study with sufficient distinctiveness for the 'le je ne sais quoi,' to become known and useful. Whether it has been Bolt-raffio or Marco d'Oggione, or Solario, de'Predis or da Sesto, such an analysis is necessary to individualize their style or representation and to establish it with certain concreteness which is not likely to be challenged.



### Gianpietrino

Gianpietrino, sometimes known as Giovanni Pedrini, has no established dates concerning his life and we have to rely on Bernard Berenson who states that he was active in the first decades of the sixteenth century,<sup>1</sup> No pictures with his signature remain, but Adolfo Venturi states that the altar-piece: Madonna with St. John the Baptist and St. Jerome in a chapel of the Duomo of Pavia is dated 1521, and according to documentation in that church it was painted by one, Gianpietrino.<sup>2</sup> However, as there are many works attributed to this artist, a few may be chosen with certainty to establish his style and expression. For purposes of analysis, the writer has chosen the Brera Madonna (#261), the Leda in Neuwied, Germany after a design by Leonardo, the Cleopatra (#1686) in the Louvre, and the Madonna (#111), from the Cook Collection, Richmond. These paintings appear to be universally attributed to Pedrini and all have a strong stylistic affinity to each other.

There is no doubt that Gianpietrino was an imitator of Leonardo da Vinci both in technique and in sentiment as the alliance between the master and imitator is exceedingly poignant, even though Vasari makes no mention of him.<sup>2,3</sup> Gianpietrino's work can easily

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.299.

<sup>2</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte, (Milan: Hoepli, 1915), VII, (part 4,) p.1044.

<sup>3</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954).

<sup>4</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Sons, 1927).

be separated from that of Boltraffio because of its highly sentimental state of expression which borders on the saccharine sweetness of the effeminate. In this respect he comes much closer to Cesare da Sesto and Sodoma. Usually coupled with the quality of sentiment is a languid, dreamy expression that becomes pathetic in its intensified pleading approach for attention and recognition. This languidness perhaps is intensified by the slowness of gesture which is most apparent.

Giovanni Pedrini's figures have a sculptured rotund form, rhythmically curvilinear in nature, and on occasion an exaggerated development of skeletal construction. He increases this impression by considerably overemphasizing the muscular development of the bodies, which might well be the explanation for the apparent awkwardness of the contorted bodily positions. These physical features alone detract from the effectiveness of his paintings.

The heads of these figures are long and oval with the concentration of their widest portions at the temples and narrowing acutely as they recede toward the rounded jaw and chin. The soft, inert eyes are almond shaped with a definite high-lighted ridge of narrow dimension for the eyelids. Resulting from this are the eyebrows which have the character of a pencil line in a flattened arc. The high and wide forehead of his figures continue downward in an unbroken line to form the long nose narrow at the nostrils. The soft gentle smile of the mouth comes closest of all to those

of Leonardo da Vinci, but due to a tightening of the cheek muscles there results a rounded point under the cheek bone. Gianpietrino's modeling of the bodies as well as the head is heavy in comparison to the other Leonardesque followers. He utilizes brilliant shadow effects; however, his employment of chiaroscuro appears hurried and often exaggerated destroying any delicacy of transition between planes. The hands as painted by Pedrini vary greatly in their individual handling being either nondescript or structurally over-developed so that they inevitably lack reality and character.

The tactile quality of Pedrini's textures have a limited range as can be seen in a great deal of his drapery which more often than not resembles marble or other fine stone. None of his tactile sensations are convincing whether it be flesh, drapery, or foliage in the landscape.

There is an infantile quality of approach to Gianpietrino's Leonardesque landscape which occasionally is directly copied from those of Leonardo's paintings or drawings. He employs the master's technique of sfumato, but with certain clarity which is incongruous to the principle. Interestingly, however, this stylized landscape can propagate a combined sentimentalism and idealized state similar to that which was observable in his figures. On occasion he produces a landscape of decided northern character of Flemish art, particularly in the rendering of mountains and other topographical detail.

It is easily discernable that there is little in common stylistically between Boltraffio and Gianpietrino as the totality of

moods created by their individual pictures is entirely different; the form being quiet and genuine in its intent in Boltraffio while the latter is contorted into sweetness and sentimentality. They are artists of opposite natures and approaches, Boltraffio being the most efficacious and sincere.

### Bernardino de'Conti

Bernardino de'Conti was another of the imitators of Leonardo da Vinci and perhaps an assistant at times as Berenson suggests.<sup>1</sup> However, the last part of the statement can be questioned as there is no actual documentation available to substantiate it, nor does the master record or even mention this artist.<sup>2</sup> To begin with, he was a pupil of Zenale and active in Milan from about 1490 to 1522.

Venturi in his Storia dell'arte cites for us the fact that the artist signed and dated one known picture, the Madonna with Two Children Embracing, in the Brera, Milan. The inscription reads thus: "BERNARDUS DE COMITIBUS FACIEBAT M.C.XII."<sup>3</sup> There is a known version of the Madonna of the Rocks in Postdam of about 1522 by this painter. Other pictures which are dated and attributed to him are the Portrait of Francesco Sforza of 1496 in the Pinacoteca Vaticana, and a Madonna, of 1501 at Bergamo. These two latter

<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.78.

<sup>2</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954).

<sup>3</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte, (Milan: Hoepli, 1915) VII, part 4, p.1052.

pictures are well defended by Venturi.<sup>1</sup>

Bernardino de'Conti had anything but an original mind or technique as he copied isolated parts of different figures previously executed by Leonardo and others, put them together, and thus produced a picture. His work on the whole is typified by very smooth surface area with little attention given to detail or modeling other than that absolutely necessary to produce a summary effectiveness of reality. This is sharply evident in the landscape and drapery. In connection with these two items, it should be noted that his form of drapery is developed on a parallel repetition of folds, which limits any genuine sensation of actuality; his geological formations are constructed by means of the same technique. This alone becomes a significant stylistic character by which to isolate this artist from the other Leonardesque followers.

Bernardino's modeling was reduced to a minimum having a hard incised effect which creates a metallic impression. The contrast between values is exceedingly drastic in his work, limiting perceptibly the quality of convincing textures or evoking a tactile sensation. The rendering of flesh immediately comes to mind in this connection. Again when the fine points of any particular painter's style are examined, Bernardino becomes isolated and once again this artist is placed at the polar opposite of Boltraffio.

The majority of heads painted by de'Conti are long, oval and expressionless being accompanied by a hardness of the lineament.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.1051

The foreheads are high and accented by very thin eyebrows above decidedly bulging eyes. Habitually, de'Conti paints a heavy undulating mouth, curving at the corners which unavoidably recalls the perpetual Leonardesque smile. Let it be noted that it is not an effected sweetness of smile frequently observed in other imitators, but one of structure alone. The nose is markedly heavy and long with evident dilation at the nostrils creating an extremely onerous shadow. There is a 'fatty' quality of the necks that eventuates in a poor relationship between the head and shoulders. This same awkwardness was noticed in Boltraffio; however, Boltraffio's is more of a structural nature considerably relieved when he attempts to turn the head. In Bernardino's work the hair becomes stylized, losing its softness, and falls from the head in well contrived ringlets. The hands are probably the least efficacious part of his art, having very little if any structural form and being frequently poor and awkward in their placement with respect to the body and their effectiveness within the composition. This is undoubtedly a consequence of his copying isolated parts as formerly mentioned.

De'Conti's children have a definable individuality. They are usually fat having a bumpy quality to the modeling, breeding poor transition in areas between planes. Their eyes have a marked stare and harshly delineated, this latter quality also being evident in the drawing of the ears. The arms and legs are not only spotty in connection with the modeling, but are actually perfect cylindrical volumes. That which is not quite so noticeable in the adult figure

is the apparent overshoot construction of the upperlip and the obvious pointedness of the slightly upturned nose.

As Bernardino develops, there is a progressive firmness in the manipulation of the flesh which is similar to that of Boltraffio, but is lessened in its effectiveness because of his inability to maintain a high standard of development in his modeling. In this connection there is a strong feeling of some influence of Bramantino, another Milanese painter, but from outside the domination of Vincian potency.

As for landscape in his work, little can be called his own as far as style is concerned in that a sizable part of what remains to us is merely a reiteration of Leonardo's with little originality of his own. His obvious parallelism of construction has already been mentioned. It is noticeable he tried to utilize Leonardo's technique in respect to aerial perspective and sfumato, but this results in mere vagueness with a deficiency of suggestive reality.

Bernardino de'Conti stands apart from Boltraffio in his individual style and character, and ultimately aids in making both capable of supporting themselves and their works independently on a stylistic basis. Naturally where any of these men under discussion are concerned there is going to be an overlapping and confusion of styles, but eventually they develop their own individuality of style and become stylistically identifiable. However, there remain paintings within this designated school which will be anonymous as they reside in ambiguous area of individual production. Hence, not only these men but Boltraffio himself, will not

be given their full honor and credit because of chance proximity in the growth and experimental periods of the artists' lives.

### Lorenzo di Credi

A curious case arises in the personage and artistic activity of Lorenzo di Credi (1459-1537), who is usually classified as a member of the Florentine school. However, he is closely associated with the style of Leonardo da Vinci because he was a fellow pupil of this master when they both were in the workshop of Verrocchio.<sup>1</sup> There are no known signed works by Lorenzo di Credi as far as the writer was able to ascertain; however, there are many attributed and accepted works by this man which we can rely on and which are within the realm of his style. Such paintings are his as the Baptism in St. Domenico de Fiesole, Madonna del Letto in the Cathedral of Pistoia, a Bartholomew in Or San Michele, a Nativity for S. Chiara - now in the Accademia, Florence, to mention only a few works.<sup>2,3</sup>

With the exception of portraiture in which he adheres closely to the style of Verrocchio, Lorenzo di Credi's work is generally characterized by the strong influence of Leonardo, but occasionally infiltrated by the influences of Botticelli and Fra Bartolomeo.

<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.296.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Sons, 1927), II, p.288.



These two artists show their influence over him largely in terms of composition. It is Leonardo da Vinci whose technique and meticulous articulation he imitates in his work. There is always a delicate finish and high polish to his panels which is seldom achieved by others. Regardless of his great technical skill, one occasionally observes that the structural relationship of parts in his figures is not wholly satisfying. His modeling also has features about it that are not gratifying in conjunction with contrasted areas, due somewhat to his performance and his limited knowledge of chiaroscuro. This property of contrasting values is often strong, but the flesh tones are often pallid and frequently monotonous. Naturally, Leonardo had not fully developed his idea about chiaroscuro when he left the bottega of Verrocchio, thus one might suspect that Lorenzo had ceased to develop the technique past this point.

Heads as executed by Lorenzo di Credi, geometrically speaking, are elongated ovals, being rather expressionless and lean toward an overt sweetness. All the features of the face have the appearance of being rendered entirely within one plane resulting in a decided flatness created by his deficiency in modeling, yet there is a solidness given to the flesh in spite of this. This feature alone isolates this painter from other Milanese artists and from Boltraffio in particular. The brow is high and wide with exaggeratedly arched eyebrows, while the eyes are often nondescript. The most identifiable trait in Lorenzo di Credi's style is the pouting quality of the mouth which actually decreases the

possibility of a Leonardesque smile. This painter is inconsistent in his use of textures showing considerable variance; however, there is usually an apparent hardness that decreases the convincingness of reality.

The children seen in Lorenzo's works are flat and poorly modeled in their comparative relationship of individual parts. They possess the general formula of the majority of children presented heretofore. This is a curious note to consider; as has already been pointed out, the prototype of these children is Milanese in origin and there is no knowledge of Lorenzo's going to Milan, yet any likelihood is faint of a relationship between Leonardo and Lorenzo after the former's departure for Milan in 1482. There is one outstanding stylistic character about the artist's children and that is the great intensification given to the undulation of the mouth.

The manner in which he renders the hands of his subjects is not unfamiliar to us. In most cases, they lack a certain structure that is occasionally obscured by puffiness. They demonstrate little imagination with limited powers of attracting attention.

His drapery can either be heavy or light depending on the texture represented. At times it is so hard that a loss in tactile realization results producing a metallic semblance; however, there exists a bulkiness and voluminous quality. The folds are broad and most adequately handled, revealing the form beneath rather convincingly, a quality seen less frequently among the Milanese followers.

Notice must be made of di Credi's landscape which holds a strong alliance with that of Verrocchio's in its rugged and northern, almost Germanic type. Occasionally a stiffness and awkwardness are seen in some passages, but this is compensated for by the slicked and polished execution. For some strange reason there is a distinct awareness of some Flemish influence which is detectable when architecture or other structural devices are introduced into the background. The foliage has a hard metallic quality at times, especially in the high lighted areas making one think of the artistic works of Conrad Witz.

Lorenzo di Credi, though being influenced by Leonardo, was essentially a Florentine and is readily separable from the Leonardesque followers in the locale of Milan. The characteristics brought out here in this brief analysis establish and distinguish him as a distinct individual. Hence there will be little problem in discriminating his style from that of Boltraffio.

#### Bernardino Luini

Bernardino Luini, (1475-1532), is a distinct and honored artist of the Milanese school, yet there is no mention made of him by Leonardo nor does Vasari take particular interest or give him much space in the Lives.<sup>1,2</sup> His style is refined and well developed to the apex of perfection when the works of this painter are isolated

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<sup>1</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954).

<sup>2</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Sons, 1927).

and appraised by themselves. He is thought to have been the pupil of Borgognone while strong influences of Bramantino and Leonardo are evident in his paintings.<sup>1</sup> The writer was unable to find any signed works by this man; however, there are some dated ones and substantial proof of works attributed to Luini with unquestionable certainty; many cited by Vasari.<sup>2</sup> Some of these include the series of frescoes of St. Catherine executed in 1529 in S. Maurizio, Milan; the Presentation in the Temple in Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Saronno, of 1525; a Polyptych in S. Magno, of 1523 in Legnano; and the 1529 frescoes in Santa Maria degli Angeli in Lugano.<sup>3</sup>

We ought first to establish the character and mood found in Luini's paintings in order that the underlying subjective quality, which is an intrinsic part of his work, may be realized. In large, the beauty found in his work is epitomized in a purity, grace, and spiritual nature sometimes accompanied by a gentle seductiveness. A perceptible lack of movement or counter resistance on the part of the individual figures is apparent so that the composition is actually static. Because of this, the figures seem isolated; consequently, an inward quietude and tranquillity is sensed about them. A noticeable mannerism is also seen in Bernardino's figures, especially in their elongation and placement within the total com-

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (London: Phaidon, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Son, 1927), II, pp.292-293, III, p.326.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), pp.314-319.

position. Undoubtedly one of the finest details in his pictures is the coloration. It is accomplished with great discretion and refined delicacy possessing a transparency which emits a vibrance giving his paintings a living quality that might otherwise be lost to dullness and sobriety.

The heads of Luini's figures are generally oval and long with a convincing structural quality beneath the flesh. They exhibit fine transitions between the well articulated planes while occasionally employing a rather heavy chiaroscuro. The eyes and brows have a sculptured feeling while his noses become the punctuating feature of the physiognomy, being long and broad in their disposition. This artist executes the mouths of his figures in varying manners from what might be indicated as a hard thin line slightly curved upward to a heavy undulated type, overaccentuating the typical Leonardesque smile. The jaw is without angularity, becoming rounded and contiguous to an adequately modeled chin. There are times when his female figures have an incongruously masculine type face as do his youths who appear to have an advanced yet unpleasant maturity. This characteristic of Luini's is individual to himself and directly opposed in the majority of cases to what we are accustomed to witnessing in the other Vincian imitators. Boltraffio is a fine example of this opposite tendency of Bernardino's.

The superficiality of his gestures is readily caught by the eye and prove themselves to be a combination of several styles, thus placing this phase of his artistic rendering into the realm

of eclecticism. The superficiality of such borrowing is also evident in his attempts to become dramatic where the resulting action falls short of being convincing.

Bernardino Luini is exuberant in the amount and use of drapery in many of his pictures. The copious drapery hides the form of the body that lies beneath. The definition of textures also varies greatly, not only within the realm of stuffs, but with other materials and objects as well, ranging from that which is convincingly true to that which holds little association with the tactile response of the article. The drapery can be either hard and sculptural or as soft as cotton; either dry and crisp or wet and matted; or have folds that conform in parallel patterning or fall free and restless in a highly realistic manner. From this position he becomes very difficult to attach a definite style so as to distinguish him from the other Vincian imitators.

It is under such circumstances as these that one can readily go astray when an attribution is required. If this had been merely a change in style from one period to another of the artist's activity, more accuracy could be maintained; however, he springs from one to the other without the slightest provocation. Some of his drapery as in the St. Catherine frescoes is highly suggestive of Piero della Francesca's work at Arezzo.

Little landscape is used by this artist and the genuine authenticity of those works which have any amount of it is sometimes questioned. However, suffice it to say, what does remain for us today in this genre is borrowed from Leonardo, but without the

latter's deftness or precision.

To draw a conclusion or establish a style as being individual to Bernardino Luini would be somewhat difficult as his styles and types are capable of varying within definitely defined periods. Actually to give a concrete attribution on this premiss might be disastrous, but resorting to and utilizing the strong subjective qualities of tranquility, sweetness and charm of quietude individual and characteristic of Luini along with a combination of his varying styles proves to be the only certain manner in which an attribution may be substantiated in favor of this artist.

Once again and the closer we come to the end of this chapter, the more individuality and character each of these artists has from the Milanese school. The differences and ramifications are sometimes narrower and slighter than we might wish for, but enough exist so that identification, with more than average certainty, can be made with reliability.

#### Giacomo Salai

The last two men under discussion are the most mysterious with regard to their work. There is a great lack of reliable reference to any completed works or any works which can be ascribed to them with any certification. Very few sources today wish to acknowledge the fact that one Giacomo Salai (Salaino) was an artist. Berenson and Venturi among many, are the sources to which the writer refers. However, Giorgio Vasari writes for us in his Lives, that

Leonardo took Salai as a pupil, but makes no further mention of the youth or works executed by him.<sup>1</sup> Leonardo himself makes several entries in his notebooks about Salai both as a pupil and as an incurable thief and servant.<sup>2,3</sup> Why Leonardo should have kept a youth of such character in his household is difficult to determine. Vallentin states that Salai was both pupil and servant, but judging from what can be ascertained from the research on this individual, Leonardo received little worth out of this young man from either source of employment.<sup>4</sup> It has been written by several, and with particular elaboration by Vallentin, that Giacomo was a youth of extreme beauty and marvelously developed physique.<sup>5</sup>

This statement adequately establishes the existence of Salai, but it does nothing to indicate that the man was a painter. As mentioned above, many writers have refused to mention him in their

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<sup>1</sup>Giorgio Vasari, The Lives, (London: Dent and Son, 1927), II, p.163.

<sup>2</sup>Edward MacCurdy, Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954), p.1149.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), II, pp.63, 81, 96, 142, 367.

Richter has translated the notes of Leonardo and compiled them in chronological order of dates. Leonardo noted the following: "July 10, 1490, Salai joins the studio (age 10); St. Mary's day (August 14, 1490), lists the articles stolen by Giacomo Salai; September 7, 1490, Salai stole silver point; April 24, 1491, Salai stole a silver point from Boltraffio; September 24, 1513, Leonardo leaves for Rome with pupils (Melzi, Salai, Lorenzo, il Fanfois, and Bolt-raffio)." There are also many references concerning the money spent by Leonardo on clothing for Giacomo Salai.

<sup>4</sup>Antonina Vallentin, Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Viking Press, 1938), p.164.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.240.



catalogues, and there are no signed or dated works, or one attributed to him with substantiating reliability. Hence, it is hardly possible that any style can be established. Those pictures which in the past have been given to this person are of such uneven quality, character, and type, that the suggestion of a definite style becomes impossible to establish or maintain. Again to repeat, the only indications that he might have been a painter are the references made of the articles of the artist's trade purloined by Salai.

#### Francesco Melzi

The other artist, whose artistic career is dubious, is Francesco Melzi. He was born of a well-to-do Milanese family and became interested in painting only as an avocation, but became so attached to Leonardo that he remained with him until his death in 1519 at Chateau Cloux, France. There is no proof in any form that would indicate that Melzi left a single painting. Francesco Melzi as a painter has been contested over the years by many men such as Berenson; the latter avoids making any reference to him as an artist, or on another occasion refuses to recognize him in his catalogue.<sup>1,2</sup> In his notes Leonardo himself makes no reference to him as an artist or having accomplished any work.<sup>3</sup> It is common

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (London: Phaidon Press, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932).

<sup>3</sup> Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954).

knowledge as so adequately described by Rachel Taylor, that Melzi was with his master at the time of the latter's death and inherited the largest part of the drawings and manuscripts which Leonardo had compiled during his long life.<sup>1</sup> Melzi kept these intact until his own death.

However, there are two pictures occasionally given to Melzi which for no better reason than that their style is close to the work of Leonardo and that they both appear to be from the same hand. They are of consistent quality and adequate production. These are the pictures entitled, Columbine, in the Hermitage, Leningrad, and the Vertumnus and Pomona, in Berlin. Definitely these two works are of the Leonardesque school in Milan, but fail in every category to resemble in the faintest the style of any artist previously discussed, so they have to be linked with this person for want of another name.

The figures have a slightly oval face of sweetness and attempted delicacy, but are shallow and almost devoid of expression of any description other than contentment. The eyes have the usual Milanese characteristic, but the noses show a pointedness which extends straight down from the foreheads. The mouths possess the familiar archaic smile yet small and pursed. The figures are mannered in conjunction with the small scale rendering of the head and the structurally elongated nature of the forms. The forms are rounded and heavy in proportion, but reveal little sensation of

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<sup>1</sup>Rachel Taylor, Leonardo the Florentine, (New York: Harper & Bros. Inc., 1928), p.462.

skeletal articulation beneath the surface.

These two particular works have a specific roundness even to the flattened areas and the attempt toward realistic facial expression eventuates in mere caricature of the master while the gestures become mere affectation. The heavy drapery has a shiny metallic quality and the majority of its folds are contrived in a parallel patterning.

The sparse landscape seen in the background is painted in an attempt to imitate the Leonardesque manner but lacks either clarity, structure, or a quality of aerial perspective and sfumato. It is seen merely as a cluttered and ill-defined attempt at copying its parts from botanical drawings of the master. In the Leningrad Columbine the artist has merely placed these colored 'drawings' of plant-life on the background with no reference or suggestion of the environment in which they exist, and the result resembles tapestry or wallpaper.

An analysis as disjointed and inconclusive as this would not lend itself to the establishment of a well defined style and cannot substantiate Francesco Melzi as an artist, if he were one. The writer included these two works, not so much to prove Melzi a painter, but to focus attention on two paintings of almost identical style of the Milanese school of Leonardo which have to be considered to complete the totality of the study of the Vincian school so that from the profusion of material existing, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio can be sequestered and identified as an individual artist with a style personal to himself.

We can easily ascertain now the individuality of each of the Milanese imitators of the style of Leonardo da Vinci. Unfortunately this is an area in the art of painting of Renaissance Italy which has been sorely neglected. It almost appears to have been purposely avoided because of the difficulty of separating the works of these various artist. Another problem of even greater magnitude is that of iconography coupled with these men. None of them show any great variance in pose or attitude and the same objects, attributes, and draperies as seen in the work of one artist is also seen in the works of the majority. This would indicate that these things were the property of the workshop governed by Leonardo and were used alternately first by one and then by another of these followers. They are workshop articles because even though some of these men were not pupils of the master, they worked in his bottega during his absence or after his death. It is easily seen, therefore, that the iconography only increases the difficulty and problem of certain identifiable attributions.

It will then be almost entirely necessary to base the study of Boltraffio on the groundwork of style alone and develop a foundation which isolates him and makes him a definite personality and individual artist. Therefore, it will be necessary to refer again to chapter two for a concrete analysis of Boltraffio's style and character, utilizing the present chapter to segregate his works from those of Ambrogio de'Predis, Marco d'Oggione, Andrea Solario, Cesare da Sesto, Gianpietrino, Bernardino de'Conti, Lorenzo de Credi, Bernardino Luini, and perhaps Francesco Melzi.

**PART III**

**The Works of  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**

## CHAPTER IV

### ATTRIBUTION OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS WORKS TO BOLTRAFFIO HAVING SOME PROOF OR POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP OF STYLE

Essentially the problem of attributed works by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio becomes exceedingly more difficult because there remain no pictures that have inscribed either the signature of the artist or a date. In two rare instances, a date and a commission with date are associated with two paintings, but beyond this point all attributions will have to be made through reference to definite and positive relationships of stylistic analysis. Unfortunately, the extent of Boltraffio's production is meager, and coupled with the fact that the duration of his artistic career is unknown, as are his early teachers, makes the charge of assigning works to this artist an arduous if not formidable task. However, with Giovanni Antonio's style tentatively established by means of the stylistic analysis of the Louvre's Madonna of the Casio Family, (Plate I), and juxtaposed to this the analysis of the other individual pupils, followers, and imitators of Leonardo da Vinci, the problem in itself has become substantially more intelligible.

It is the writer's intention to utilize these established styles to affirm or disprove the authorship of pictures assigned to Boltraffio. In doing so, it is hoped that a list of paintings can be established with sufficient and unequivocal certainty that Boltraffio's rightful place in art history may be established.

It requires no great stretch of the imagination to perceive the sensitivity for design, composition, and color, as the second chapter of this study has maintained, which motivated the artistic talents of this man even though as some have stated, he was a dilettante in the field. Nonetheless, there is evidence in his work of latent power and artistic craftsmanship which, had he devoted himself more prodigiously to painting, he might have borne fruit of even greater significance than is displayed in the skillful and aesthetically satisfying work which remains for us today. He is an artist who can not be just merely passed over lightly; his works possess a power to command attention, revealing a depth of character, interpretation, and a meaning for the spectator.

An altarpiece undeniably from the hand of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio is that of Saint Barbara (Plate II), Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, originally painted for the church of San Satiro in Milan in 1502. This fact is known and proved by the existence of the commission of October 27, 1502, which states that Boltraffio was the artist commissioned and San Satiro the pictures destination.<sup>1</sup> The altarpiece was still situated in its original place according

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<sup>1</sup>Arch. di stato. Fondo de Religione, Cause Pie. Milano, Santa Maria presso San Satiro. MDII, C.I., v.: da noi edito in ARCHIVIO STORICO LOMBARDO. Mar 20, 1905, "Per la storia artistica della chiesa de San Satiro in Milano."

Copy of the commission: "Nota che a di 27 de octobre del'anno suprascripto fu concluso nel Capitolo et ne la Concregazione del priore et scolari de domina Santa Maria de Sancto Satiro de Milano che se dovesse far dipingere per Johanne Antonio Boltraffio di-pintore de Milano suso una tavola una figura de sancta Barbara per essere posta a lo altare de suprascripta sancta posto la supra-scripta giesia."

to Bianconi's account in his Guida di Milano written in 1795. However, we learn from its provenience that it was acquired by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, on September 27, 1904, from the Hanfstaengl Collection, Munich.<sup>1</sup> Other than this, no other records exist concerning how or when the picture was moved from Italy to Germany.

It immediately solicits and captivates the attention of the spectator because of several interesting points, one being the apparently well established female type by which Boltraffio individualizes and isolates himself from his fellow artist, and the size and subject matter of the work. As one of the artist's largest pictures, particularly of a single figure, it not only permits, but invites closer examination. Adolfo Venturi criticizes this painting rather severely in his Storia dell'arte italiana, laying great emphasis on the fact that Giovanni Antonio derives a major portion of his stylistic heritage from Solario in the rendered areas of the drapery and landscape.<sup>2</sup> The writer fails to find any similarity between these two men except in a certain hardness of quality and voluminous quantity - a stylistic occurrence common among most Leonardesque followers. Another criticism of Boltraffio by Adolfo Venturi concerning this picture is the artist's manner of handling the tower which he states, "is the trunk of a severed cannon."<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Catalogue of the Staatl Museum of Berlin, (Berlin: 1931), p.51.

<sup>2</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milan: Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.714.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



tower does have this appearance; however, as the contract does not mention who or what organization commissioned the altarpiece, the explanation is open to speculation. St. Barbara was the patron saint of the makers of cannons, firearms, and gunpowder. If the painting had been commissioned by cannon makers, Boltraffio could have very reasonably and deliberately designed the tower to suggest the barrel of a cannon. Surely Boltraffio was a fine enough artist to reproduce a tower skillfully and realistically had he so desired. Therefore, it is the writer's belief that Boltraffio purposely invented this cannon-like attribute to signify the saint's relationship to the commissioning group, namely cannon makers.

Iconographically, this tower seems unique in art history. The writer has been unable to find or locate another picture of St. Barbara in which the cannon and tower have been conceived as one object attribute for the saint. Giovanni Antonio has also placed a diadem on her head, which alludes to her martyrdom rather than to the fact that she was a princess - the daughter of Dioscorus of Heliopolis. The sacramental cup and small book which she carries attests to her devout and studious life. Again Giovanni Antonio with his subtlety and refinement has given her more attributes than are customarily portrayed in other pictures of the saint. This illustrates how uniquely the artist employs clever devices and unsuspecting elements to enhance and maintain greater interest.

Although the voluminous drapery deprives the observer from realizing the physical form, there is an admirable quality about the naturalness of the folds and the well defined textural effect.

Some passages are stiff to the point of being almost brittle. In comparison with the large flat folds of the Virgin's drapery in the Casio Family Madonna (Plate I), the drapery in the Berlin picture has greater texture--it is massive and heavy to the point of being burdensome. The striped scarf of sheer material thrown about her neck and shoulders is a type of material which the artist for effect juxtaposes to the heavier type.

The sophisticated facial features of St. Barbara are idealized in the feminine genre and correspond to the features and expression observed in St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian in the Louvre painting (Plate I). She has the same long oval countenance with wide forehead, wide-set eyes, long nose which appears to dilate slightly at the nostrils, undulating mouth that does not mimic the Leonardesque smile yet has a full underlip, and a strong, dominant chin and jaw line. These are the features which were stressed as individual to Boltraffio's style of executing the idealized type of figure or portrait. The sculptured arc of the eyebrows and the puffiness above the eyelids only reaffirm the established characteristics noted in the Casio Madonna, as do the two heavy shadows cast by the nose and the mouth. The modeling is executed with delicacy and beauty which we associate with the refined use of chiaroscuro employed by Leonardo. Her long flowing dark hair is kept in place under a gossamarlike net held by the diadem.

St. Barbara in her own majestic and sophisticated manner maintains a classic stance which turns the torso into a three quarter position of the shoulders while her head is facing straight forward.

She dominates the entire picture to the extent of dwarfing all other objects in relationship to herself. There is a relaxed yet poised air about the saint.

The landscape contains some passages which leave something to be desired, such as the small mounds of hills and unconvincing cliff-like rock formations to the right rear. In fact these areas lead one to wonder how such an artist as Boltraffio could have painted this when two years earlier he had produced such an exciting landscape in the Louvre panel (Plate I). One might ask what has happened and what foreign influences exert themselves on his style. The landscape to the left of the saint (Plate II) shows a close similarity to Flemish landscape, yet the castles have a distinct French flavor. Undoubtedly Giovanni Antonio was influenced by someone or something from the north, the other side of the Alps, a style alien to Italy.

The small round bushlike trees and the semidelineated clouds in the sky duplicated in this picture (Plate II) are individual to Boltraffio's style, while the four flowering columbine plants would appear to be mere reiteration in paint of the sketches found in the Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.

This picture of St. Barbara represents the young artist. Separated at this time from Leonardo, who is traveling about Italy, he is left completely to his own devices and without the benefit of critical advice from his master. Circumstances such as these and the exertion of alien influences might readily lead to inconsistencies and incongruities in the style of any artist. Nevertheless,

whatever the criticism levied against this painting may be, a sufficiently large portion of it is of such excellent quality as to recommend its intrinsic worth. This picture coupled with the Louvre painting enlarges considerably our knowledge of Boltraffio's style, enabling us to proceed more intelligently with the examination of other works.

The Madonna and Child (Plate III) in the National Gallery of London, according to the Burlington Fine Arts Club Catalogue, is the finest work by Boltraffio while the Casio Family Madonna was his most ambitious work.<sup>1</sup> The provenience of this picture states that the National Gallery purchased it at the June 12, 1863, sale of the Rev. W. Davenport Bromely Collection, having formerly been acquired from the Northwich Collection on August 3, 1859.<sup>2</sup> There is no other information concerning this picture prior to this date.

Boltraffio deviates from the traditional costuming of the Virgin in that she wears a ruby red bodice, a Prussian blue garment, and a sage green mantel, the latter color repeated in the altar cloth behind her and the Child, and in the deep green band around his waist. Binding the head of the Virgin, a veil allows the hair to fall loose onto her shoulders; an identifiable custom of the fifteenth century Milanese tradition which eventually in-

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<sup>1</sup>Burlington Fine Arts Club, Illustrated Catalogue of Pictures by Masters of the Milanese and Allied Schools of Lombardy, (London: p.p., 1899), p.lviii.

<sup>2</sup>National Gallery of London - Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of British and Foreign Pictures, (London: Stationary Office, 1921), p.61.

fluenced the artists of Northern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Boltraffio cleverly poses the Virgin so that she is not only "Madre Pia" and Madre Dio," but also "Mater Amabilis."<sup>2,3,4</sup> The Madre Dio is shown in her maternal aspect of nursing, an emphasis which evolved from the Nestorian schism. Madre Pia's worship of her Son is illustrated by her support of His foot, thus acknowledging His sovereignty and superiority. In addition to these two distinct meanings, a third is possible. The half length picture of the Virgin existing tenderly and affectionately for her Son represents the Mother of the Redeemer. Thus she is also "Mater Amabilis."

Christ looks directly at the observer in recognition. A subtle combination of attitudes, which will be repeated by Bolt-raffio on succeeding occasions and utilized by other Milanese artists, joins the alertness of the Child with the warm thoughtful maternal feeling of the Madonna. In the decorative motifs on the altar cloth, a stylistic representation of the sheathed wheat alludes to the sacrament. The sheaves are bound by a ribbon on which is embroidered "AVE". This word seldom appears alone, but is usually accompanied by a proper noun. Implied by the presence of the Virgin, the phrase "AVE MARIA" is completed. Boltraffio is subtle with the introduction of these small detailed iconographical devices which without doubt lend to his work a meticulous sophisti-

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<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Anne Jameson, Legends of the Madonna, (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, Pub., 1852), p.liv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.74.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.129

cation not often viewed in the work of other artists.

The Madonna and Child (Plate III) of the National Gallery, London, has strong similarities to the Louvre picture (Plate I) in its style. There is the same heaviness given to the drapery and physical form as there is to the same rich but cool tonality. The facial features of the Virgin in the National Gallery panel are a composite of the Casio Madonna and the St. Barbara (Plate II) in Berlin. The same model or type of idealized spiritual quality have continually haunted the mind of the artist. He goes so far as to repeat his performance of employing the Leonardesque *chiaroscuro* and the accentuated shadows beneath the nose and the mouth, a very important and individual stylistic mark of identification. Such a feature immediately and ultimately strengthens his identity. The strong and vigorous modeling tends to emphasize the skeletal framework beneath the surface of the flesh, giving it firmness and solidity. The nude Child has the same quality and resembles to a great degree so many other children painted by previously mentioned Milanese artists.

Overlooking for a moment the golden haired, "sleepy-eyed", pudgy child, the observer is subconsciously aware that Giovanni Antonio's technique resembles that of a sculptor in its austere dignity. Francois Rio acknowledges this in a more poetic fashion when he refers to the Madonnas of Boltraffio as existing in "an aura of a mystic ideal with an inspiration of positive realism"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alexis Francois Rio, Leonardo da Vinci e la sua scuola, (Milano: Francesco Sanvito, 1857), p.133.

The writer of this study is inclined to agree with such a statement rather than with the criticism by Berenson, who mentions this picture along with others when he states "Boltraffio contrives to spoil with sugar and perfume," his personages.<sup>1</sup>

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio has in the Madonna in the National Gallery, London, as well as in the previously inspected works, rendered a very stable composition of a pyramidal form superimposed upon a vertical rectangle, a transposition which creates sufficient movement to enliven the picture. The use of the altar cloth and the positioning of the Virgin with her Son is identical in its iconography with the Venetian tradition of the same era. Little of the landscape in this composition is visible, but the discernable portions to the left suggest an Alpine mountain range. What else is visible is so minute that speculation is eliminated. There is, however, a relationship between this and that viewed in the panel of St. Barbara (Plate II).

The London picture (Plate III) is a marvelous piece of work and certainly enhances the artist's reputation as a formidable person worthy of our attention, both technically and intellectually stimulating from his iconographical subtleties to his expression and spiritual content.

There exists in Bergamo at the Accademic Carrara a tondo which resembles in facial features both the London Madonna and more precisely the Berlin panel of St. Barbara. However, from

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, The Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (London: Phaidon Press, 1952), p.183.

the evolutionary development of the artist's type of physiognomy with reference to the Virgin, it would seem that the Bergamo tondo (Plate IV) followed closely the completion of the altar (Plate I) for the Church of the Misericordia in Bologna mainly because of its tonality and the manner in which the physical structure of the Virgin and Child have been executed. The half-length erect figure of Mary combines the expression of maternal love and tenderness with a superimposed quality of sophistication and dignity. As in many works by Boltraffio, a regal aspect pervades the panel and suggests a static nobility that might have the force to dominate the mood if it were not for the animation of Jesus. This slight suggestion and appearance of rigidity does have a correlative association with Andrea Solario, who Venturi insists had an influence on Giovanni Antonio.<sup>1</sup> However, the writer is inclined to believe that the noble and solemn aspects of this artist's inspiration are derived from the serious and modest influences of the Florentine master, a contention supported by Gustavo Frizzoni.<sup>2</sup>

Frizzoni notes that the coloration of this picture is exceptionally deep with a marvelous enamel-like surface texture which qualifies Boltraffio as one of the most distinctive artists of his time.<sup>3</sup> The style varies little from those thus far examined

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italianna, (Milan: Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.1032.

<sup>2</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Exposition de maitres de l'ecole lombarde a Londres," Gazette des beaux-arts, (Paris: 1898), XX, p.300.

<sup>3</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, Le gallerie dell'accademia Carrara in Bergamo, (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1907), p.51.



with the exception of the Child, who is more individually Bolt-raffiesque, the artist having reduced the enlarged size of the head, thus eliminating the encephalitic aspect in relationship to scale. The awkward passage of this picture is seen in the hands of both Madonna and Child. The Virgin's right hand, whose fingers are tong-like, is delicate as it touches her breast, yet formless, having little skeletal structure beneath the surface of the porcelian-like flesh. Christ's hands are extremely fat with accentuatedly pointed fingers. The modeling, in terms of Leonardesque chiaroscuro, has strength, but maintains the peculiarity of accentuated shadows cast by the nose and mouth. The drapery is characteristically voluminous, yet reveals carefully the various textures, especially the veiling about the head and neck.

The composition of the tondo (Plate IV) is pyramidal with the Virgin's eyes downcast looking at her Son. She offers her breast to the Child, who, seated and supporting himself on a book, turns in a slight contrapposto position. This picture can be classified as of the Mater Amabilis type, encompassing the concept of the Madre Dio of the London picture (Plate III); however, two iconographical features are added, the sealed book not held by the Virgin but placed in front of her and the decorative touch of columbine. The flower symbolizes peace, love, and joy, the delights of the Virgin, yet at the same time its suggestion of a dove or a dovelike quality would have direct reference to the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost. The sealed book alludes to the text of Isaiah (xxix. 11,12), "In that book were all my members

written."

Another Madonna and Child (Plate V) which is interesting from an iconographical standpoint is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. Again Giovanni Antonio has utilized his favorite theme, the Mater Amabilis, but now the Child, in a forward turning movement, reaches for a faience bowl in the lower left corner of the picture. Just what the meaning of such a bowl is the writer has been unable to determine. Regardless of meaning, its significance within the composition is important as it is the focal point of attention for the Virgin and her Son.

Compositionally, the bowl forms the lower left apex of the pyramidal arrangement, yet it has been sufficiently deprived of accent so that the viewer is not distracted from the theme of the panel. The only unharmonious passage of the painting is poor perspective with reference to the cushion upon which Jesus sits. Here the model or prototype for the Virgin and Christ are identical with those of the London panel (Plate III) whose sculptural qualities they possess. The firmness which has been noted before is accompanied by a similar Leonardesque restraint and use of chiaroscuro. The physical structure of the persons is most satisfying, and shows greater experience on the part of the artist. Andre de Hervesy states that Giovanni Antonio executed this picture under the direct tutelage of the Tuscan master, which the author of this study is inclined to disagree as we have to this point considered only those works of the artist's own personal style.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andre de Hervesy, "Boltraffio," Pantheon, (Munchen: Bruchmann, 1936), XVIII, p.325.

Perhaps de Hervesy's insistence with regard to this statement is derived from his own contention that Leonardo brought a model from Florence to Milan who posed for the Virgin in the unfinished, Adoration of the Magi (1481).<sup>1</sup> This could very well be true, and if she figured predominantly in Leonardo's bottega, she would have been obliged to sit for his students. This would account for the great similarity in the female type prevalent amongst the paintings of the majority of pupils and followers. De Hervesy supports this contention further by citing several silver point drawings heightened with pen and executed by Leonardo's pupils now in the Louvre.<sup>2</sup> An equally fine drawing by Boltraffio of the same woman is preserved at Christ Church College, Oxford, of a silver point on bluish paper (Plate VI), and another drawing of a Madonna and Child (Plate VII) in the British Museum.<sup>3,4</sup> This would adequately support his contention concerning the model, but not the direct tutelage with respect to this panel. Insofar as this model is identical with the London panel (Plate III), and the Berlin (Plate II) and Louvre (Plate I) pictures, one ought to be hesitant in accepting such a broad statement. The Casio Madonna (Plate I), however, does not resemble as strongly the nameless model as do the others. If it

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<sup>1</sup>Andre de Hervesy, "Boltraffio et ses modeles," L'amour de l'art, (Paris: 1932), XIII, n.8, p.264.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.265.

<sup>3</sup>Clyde F. Bell, Drawings by the Old Masters in the Library of Christ Church, Oxford, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), p.vii.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Theodore Parker, North Italian Drawings of the Quattrocento, (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1927), p.72.

were suggested that this panel was Boltraffio's first independent undertaking after Leonardo left Milan, it is not too far reaching to suppose that the image of the model was not too firmly implanted in the artist's imagination; to make improbable the variance in the Virgin of the Casio Madonna. The later renditions of the model hold more closely to the concept of his noble and gentle Madonna type. The style demonstrated in these pictures has a firmness of drawing and a sophisticated attitude, but humble with regard to their form and feeling, while Leonardo's highly refined style spoke unequivocally of delicacy and perfection coupled with humility and repose. Therefore it is doubtful that Leonardo had any direct part in the execution of the Budapest Madonna.

The suggestion has already been offered and to some degree established that the Budapest Madonna (Plate V) was painted after 1500, the year Boltraffio and Leonardo severed their close association as pupil and teacher. Because of this, the writer would have to disagree with Kenneth Clark when the latter states that the painting in question along with another Madonna (Plate VIII) in the Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan, were painted sometime during the last decade of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> But let us first examine the facts which append themselves to this production before suggesting a likely and probable date for this Madonna and Child in Budapest.

Unquestionably it is admitted that this devotional panel comes closer to the subtle gradations of shaded modeling employed by

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.51.

Leonardo than do some of the other works by Giovanni Antonio. Our artist possesses an inherent habit of building his compositions on architectonic terms much like those of Bramantino. Venturi has noted this characteristic of constructional technique and further states, "Boltraffio's application of paint is entirely different from Leonardo's as he builds up his surfaces by means of a network of minute squares of vivid colors in harmony with a rectangular structure of the design itself."<sup>1</sup>

The surface animation of the Budapest picture is more convincingly developed not only by the figures themselves, but by the voluminous drapery which swirls around the Virgin in a free and restless fashion. The colors are particularly rich in their full bodied reds, blues, and golds set off against the greenish brown background. The result is an elegance seldom witnessed in any work by Leonardo. The drapery in this case is handled in a most realistic manner with all areas of equal merit in their execution. Inward movement and depth created by the drapery is further heightened by the contrapposto of the two subjects and the parallel directioning of their heads and glances. In reverse and change of positioning, the protective gesture of the Virgin's left arm and the stretching of the Child in the Budapest picture remind one of the Madonna in the Madonna of the Rocks and the Christ in the Madonna and Ste. Ann, both by Leonardo da Vinci and both in the Louvre. Boltraffio had ample opportunity to see the Madonna of the

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, North Italian Painters of the Quattrocento, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 2nd ed., 1936), p.56.

Rocks as the commission date was 1483 and the panel was not completed until 1508. The first recorded statement concerning the Ste. Ann and the Virgin was in connection with the preliminary drawings made in Florence on April 24, 1500, and again in Novellara's letter dated April 8, 1501, to Isabella d'Este describing the cartoon.<sup>1</sup> The latter entry is curious as Leonardo's picture certainly had not been started when Boltraffio was with him in Milan, but obviously he was aware of the sketches the master had been recording. Thus it is most unlikely that this panel in the Budapest Museum could have been painted before the beginning of the sixteenth century, and probably a later date can be assigned it. From a stylistic analogy alone, based more formidably on composition and coloration, the plausible date would almost suggest itself to be in his second period - about 1505.

The already mentioned Madonna and Child (Plate VIII) in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan, might well be stated as one of the most animated paintings remaining from the hand of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. In the reaching and contrapposto movement of the Child, this picture is closely allied to the Budapest Madonna (Plate V) as the basic composition follows the pyramidal form constantly employed by the artist. The Child is now superimposed on the figure of the mother, thus creating depth and movement as their individual turnings oppose one another. Mary turns and reaches to the right while restraining the Christ Child by a sash that encircles His

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paul Richter, Scritti letterari di Leonardo da Vinci, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), II, p.243.

waist as He reaches for a flower on the balustrade on which He kneels. The movement, the configuration of compositional parallels, and the roundness and solidity of the forms recommend this painting as one of the finest of Giovanni Antonio's works.

A painting of luxurious richness, it displays the usual voluminous stuffs multifariously draped as if it were created as an exercise for studio practice. The costuming of the Virgin deviates from the customary iconographical precedent, but not without purpose. The Madonna is clothed in gold silk brocade with black stylized pomegranate figures symbolizing the religious concept of hope. The sleeves are of beautifully textured velvet. Two other attributes have been employed by Boltraffio: the rose, the Virgin's emblem of love and beauty; and a branch of flowering dogwood, a symbol of the passion (crucifixion.)<sup>1</sup> Such a variety of inclusions only whets the intellectual appetite in contemplating the kind of man who confronts us as we examine the talents of his hand while considering his thoughts in their combined and intricately ordered state.

To return to the individual stylistic character of this particular work, there is little change in the Christ who remains the golden curly haired Child maintaining the usual "sleepy-eyed" expression. A great realization of skeletal structure in His nude body illustrates an experienced deftness in the rendering of the

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<sup>1</sup> Tradition has it that Christ's cross was made from dogwood, which was a nonflowering tree of great size until the Crucifixion, after which time the tree became smaller and has flowered with a four petal blossom of white with a spot of red on the edge of each petal symbolizing the nail punctures of His hands and feet.

Leonardesque technique and the use of chiaroscuro. It is the Madonna in this picture that evidences a slight divergence from what we have been accustomed to observe. Summarily, the facial features are the same as those of the previous Virgins; however, the forehead is higher and the eyes more curvilinear; the cheek bones are more predominant, and the indentation of the jaw line makes the chin more conspicuous. Greater emphasis of a pointed puffy quality is given the underlip as the heaviest shadows continue to be cast by the projection of the mouth and nose. A more poignant feeling of delicateness is given the Madonna who in this particular circumstance is much closer to the Leonardesque type. As Venturi points out, and correctly so, the Virgin is very similar to the one in Leonardo's unfinished Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizi.<sup>1</sup>

The Virgin's hair is parted in the center and allowed to flow freely down onto her shoulders in the typical Milanese fashion of the early Cinquecento; it is held in place by a diadem with a pearl pendent drop attached in front. The overall tonality of the flesh tones has been lightened so that a porcelain effect results, further enhanced by the enamel-like surface given the entire panel.

As in so many of his smaller pieces such as this, Boltraffio becomes more lucid and refined in such areas as the reflected light in the shaded portions of the modeling. Adolfo Venturi states that this and the complicated composition is merely a

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.1033.



search for "apparent effect".<sup>1</sup> The writer does not concur with this statement as the complication is merely another device utilized by the artist to create maximum interest. This is borne out by the fact that he retains his firmness and solidity, although refinement and movement are points of emphasis in this particular panel. Stylistically it is closely related to the Budapest Madonna (Plate V) in date of execution, especially with regard to the handling of the areas where folds break over on themselves or lie across the cornice.

The chronological ordering of this picture is exceedingly difficult as a number of writers have dated it indiscriminately with either slight or no documentation or stylistic justification. Because of the surface treatment alone, the Poldi Pezzoli Museum catalogue places it in the last decade of the Quattrocento.<sup>2</sup> This catalogue also states that the painting was restored about 1860 by G. Moltini, again in 1951 by Pelliccioli, and that it had previously resided in the Duca Antonio Litta Collection.<sup>3</sup> Suida emphatically states that it was painted in collaboration with the Florentine master, while Berenson insists that its execution reveals solely the "sweetness and perfume" of Boltraffio, yet after a design by

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Guido Gregorietti & Franco Russoli, La Pinacoteca Poldi Pezzoli, (Milano: Electa Editrice, 1955), p.126.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Leonardo.<sup>1,2</sup> This latter idea is dispelled when Gardner Teall states there is a drawing of a Woman (Plate IX) in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, which is identical with the Poldi Pezzoli Madonna (Plate VIII), thus attributing greater originality to Giovanni Antonio than Berenson is willing to concede him.<sup>3</sup> Solmi associates this picture with a date of about 1510 without stating it in so many words.<sup>4</sup> This later date would seem more reasonable under the circumstance and certainly concurs with Andre de Hervesy, when he asserts a Leonardesque quality is evident but that a direct influence is not apparent.<sup>5</sup>

As there is no intention on the part of the writer of this dissertation to formally discuss and include in this study the accepted or unaccepted drawings of Boltraffio, the reader is requested to refer to Appendix B for a stylistic analysis of Giovanni Antonio's drawings. The drawings are mentioned within the study only to verify or substantiate works of the artist or to show a similarity or likeness between a certain drawing and a painting one of which or both have been given to Boltraffio on one occasion

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Suida, Leonardo - und sein Kreis, (Munche: F. Bruckmann, 1929), p.126.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (London: Phaidon Press, 1952), p.183.

<sup>3</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (New York: Oct. 1926), LXXXV, p.25.

<sup>4</sup>Edmondo Solmi, Leonardo, (Florence: G. Barbera, 1919), p.86.

<sup>5</sup>Andre de Hervesy, "Boltraffio et ses modeles," L'amour de l'art, (Paris: 1932), XIII, n.8, p.263.

or another.

It was in 1513 (September 26) that the Tuscan master with his pupils left for Rome where he received a commission for a Madonna, Child and Donor (Plate X) in the Church of Sant'Onofrio, Rome.

This painting is generally attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio today - an attribution which is most logical. Certainly the Poldi Pezzoli painting (Plate VIII) comes very close in style and feeling of expression to the Rome fresco, thus the later date of 1510 for the Madonna and Child in the Poldi Pezzoli which shows a later style is logical.

The Madonna and Child with Donor (Plate X) in the Convent Church of Sant'Onofrio in Rome has been subject material for considerable discussion both as to the identity of its author and that of its donor. This lunette fresco is on the first floor of the convent in a corridor leading to the famous cell which was once the refuge for Torquato Tasso and where he died insane. It is between the door of the cell and the window. Edmondo Solmi states that Leonardo received a commission from Pope Leo X for the fresco in the convent and supports the tradition held by the church that it was a work executed by the Florentine master.<sup>1</sup> Gustavo Frizzoni adds his acknowledgement to this attribution in his earlier writings, but later becomes reconciled to the fact that its attribution does not belong to Leonardo but instead to his pupil, Boltraffio.<sup>2</sup> Such

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<sup>1</sup>Edmondo Solmi, Leonardo, (Firenze: G. Barbera, 1916), p.206.

<sup>2</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, Catalogo della Galleria Morelli, (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1982), p.22.

a change of mind is reasonable when we observe that Solmi himself is confused and uncertain about the technique and modeling of the personages encountered here in the fresco. Frizzoni and Malaguzzi-Valeri both give the lunette to Giovanni Antonio, stating that it shows a close affinity to the Madonna and Child (Plate VIII) in the Poldi Pezzoli in Milan.<sup>1,2</sup> Other writers on the subject such as Adolfo Venturi, Munzo, Mongrei, Adolf Rosenberg and Rachel Taylor give the Sant'Onofrio fresco to Boltraffio. The writer feels that this fresco unquestionably can be given to Boltraffio alone if on nothing else but stylistic grounds. We shall return to the stylistic analysis after considering the period and the identity of the donor.

The question of a date for the painting is considerably simplified by Leonardo's recorded statement that he, Giovanni Antonio, and other pupils went to Rome on September 26, 1513. This valuable information immediately indicates a date after 1513 and before 1515. In fact this is the latest date that can be assigned to a specific work by the artist.

A question of greater proportion and an highly conjectural subject remains to this day - the identity of the donor portrayed here. Adolfo Venturi, Munoz, as well as Betti assert that the donor seen in the lunette is the same person as seen in the fresco

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<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Exposition de maitres de l'ecole Lombarde a Londres," Gazette des beaux-arts, (Paris: Charles du Bus, 1898), XX, p.300.

<sup>2</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.53.

by Baldazzare Peruzzi in the central apse of the same church.<sup>1,2,3</sup> This may well be; however, the writer could not locate any source material which gave the name of Peruzzi's donor. Due to the extremely poor condition of both works and their reproductions, it is difficult to ascertain the validity of such a statement. Nevertheless, Signore Munoz has done a scholarly piece of research on the subject of the donor's identity in the fresco as well as substantially verifying it as Boltraffio's work. Stress may be given to Betti's observation of the similarity of the donors in the two paintings, but as Munoz points out, extensive restoration was carried out in 1835, the same year that Betti's article was published.<sup>4</sup> It was at this time that some alterations were made to the lunette.

The donor represents the person of Francesco Cabanyas, a Spanish priest born at Saragozza about 1426, who went to Italy with the Borgias. He remained in Rome for the remainder of his life, becoming a frequent visitor (at times a permanent guest) at the Vatican and friend of Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia). One of the primary pieces of evidence supporting the contention that Cabanyas was the donor pictured in the lunette is the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, La Galleria Crespi a Milano, (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1890), p.240.

<sup>2</sup>Antonio Munoz, "Madonna del donatore nel convento di Sant' Onofrio," L'arte, (Milano-Roma: Hoepli-Danesi, 1930), VI, p.308.

<sup>3</sup>Antonio Betti, "L'ape italiana delle belle arti," Giornale, (Roma: Boncompagni & Co., 1835), II, p.34.

<sup>4</sup>Antonio Munoz, "Madonna del donatore nel convento di Sant' Onofrio," L'arte, (Milano-Roma: Hoepli-Danesi, 1930), VI, p.308.

the Pope made him deacon of Ste. Maria de Tudela near Tarragona, yet Cabanyas never took possession of the office because the climate was not conducive to his health, but continued to reside in Rome.<sup>1</sup> According to Vatican records we learn that Cabanyas was charged with the task of reconstruction and enlargement of the Church of Sant'Onofrio, a fact supported by Calerbi.<sup>2,3</sup> This work on the church must have been started before September 21, 1506, the date of Francesco Cabanyas' death, yet the portrait must represent Cabanyas sometime between 1502 and 1506 as he is dressed in a violet colored costume of a prothonotary, an office to which he was elevated in 1502.

If the donor of this fresco is the same person as the one illustrated in the central apse by Baldazzare Peruzzi, then both portraits are posthumous as the earliest possible date of the Peruzzi work would be about 1510. Therefore, he as well as Bolt-raffio must have had to use another source from which to execute these fresco portraits.

Another fact which makes the argument all the more convincing in favor of Cabanyas as the donor of this picture is the existence of his sepulchral stone which is placed in the floor equidistant

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<sup>1</sup>Antonio Munoz, "Madonna del donatore in convento di Sant' Onofrio", L'arte, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1930), VI, p.310.

<sup>2</sup>Vatican Registry, No. 878, p.82.

<sup>3</sup>Guisseppi Calerbi, La Chiesa de Sant'Onofrio ed le sue tradizione, storiche, religiose, artistiche, e letterarie, (Rome: Danesi, 1858), p.74.

between the chapels of San Girolamo and the Blessed Peter of Pisa. Betti wishes us to believe that the stone had been moved to this place at a later restoration of the church, but as Munoz points out, there is no indication that the sepulchral stone was ever moved to the spot where it is found today because of the unfortunate condition which it has been reduced to by the tread of feet.<sup>1</sup> The inscription on the stone lends itself to ambiguity with regard to its original location; it is as follows:<sup>2</sup>

D.O.M.  
FRANCESCO.CABANYAS.HISPANO.PRO  
TONOT.APOSTL.ALEXANDERI.VI.PONT.  
OPT.MAX.A.SECRETO.CUBICUOLO  
QUI.SACELLUM.HOC.A.FUNDAME  
NTIS.EREXIT.ORNAVIT.DOTEM.DEDIT  
VIX.AN.LXXX.MEN.V.  
FR.CHERUBINUS.FERRAREIN  
HUIUS.CENOBI.PRIOR.EXECUTOR  
PONDED.CURAVIT. M.D.VI..

The confusion arises in the phrase sacellum hoc which might indicate that at one time it was in the smaller of the two chapels. However, these two chapels were later additions as clearly revealed by the material of which they are constructed, their decoration,

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<sup>1</sup>Antonio Munoz, "La Madonna del donatore nel convento di Sant' Onofrio in Roma", L'arte, (Milano: Hoepli, 1930), p.310.

<sup>2</sup>Translation: To God the Best in the Infinite // To Francesco Cabanyas, Spainard, Apostolic Prothonotary, and secret chamberlain to Pontif Alexander VI, the Excellent and Greatest, built, adorned and endowed this chapel from its foundation. // Lived 80 years and 5 months.// Fr. Cherubinus of Ferrara, the Prior of this monastery, Administered and paid for./ 1506.

and their dated inscription.<sup>1</sup> Thus sacellum hoc refers more distinctly to time rather than place.

The writer believes that it is safe to assert forcefully that the donor was the Spaniard Francesco Cabanyas and that both paintings were executed after the prothonotary's death, having been commissioned more in the sense of memorial paintings to the prelate rather than paintings of a votive nature.

To return for a moment to the condition of Boltraffio's lunette, it was mentioned prior to this that cleaning and restoration had changed the subjects represented. Stefano Rossi states that the first known cleaning was accomplished in 1835 or shortly before, at which time some alterations were introduced.<sup>2</sup> The changes made to the donor were slight, but certainly harmful to the effectiveness of the fresco. Originally the thumb of Cabanyas' right hand had been placed upon that of the left hand rather than being straight as it appears today.

A much greater change was accomplished with regard to the Virgin. At present there is awkwardness revealed in the slightly raised position of the left hand and the unnatural manner of pressing the index finger against the thumb. The lily which she originally held in her hand has been painted out.<sup>3</sup> This alteration

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Stefano Rossi, "Leonardo da Vinci", Giornale arcadico di scienze, lettere, ed arti, (Rome: 1855), tonco CXLIII.

<sup>3</sup>Antonio Munoz, "La Madonna del donatore nel convento di Sant' Onofrio in Roma", L'arte, Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1930), VI, p.313.



has had a drastic effect on the overall composition. In its original state the Christ Child was the predominant figure because His mother was partially hidden by the lily. With two objects to the rear of the Child, the Virgin claimed a subordinate position to Christ, whereas she now has equal dominance with her Son, a result which certainly cannot be as satisfying as the original design.

The composition of this lunette, with particular reference to the Madonna and Child (Plate X), maintains a strong affinity to a small votive design attributed to Leonardo in the Bonnat Collection, Paris, where the positions are identical and Jesus steadies himself by placing His left hand on the left arm of the Virgin; an analogous observation about the same picture was made and convincingly stressed by Adolfo Venturi.<sup>1</sup> A correlative observation can be cited with reference to the Peruzzi fresco in that the Child in both works has the same precise movement of the right arm and leg.

If the Peruzzi picture was executed as early as 1510, as suggested by Venturi, and is of the same period as the artist's Farnesina works, then it was painted prior to Giovanni's lunette and we would have to suppose that Boltraffio scrutinized its composition and donor carefully in designing his own work and that he was still dominated by his predilection for the prototypes and teachings of his Florentine master.<sup>2</sup> Yet in searching the

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, La galleria Crespi a Milano, (Milano: Hoepli, 1890), p.241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

provenience of the Peruzzi painting one finds in the writings of Vasari the date of 1517 as ascribed to this particular work - a date which for years has been used by many other writer.<sup>1</sup> Naturally a question is always raised about the factual accuracy of Vasari. If he were correct in this case, the premise making Peruzzi the scrutinizer of Boltraffio's work tenable would also explain the exact compositional similarities mentioned above when we realize Leonardo's design was used as the prototype. This later date is plausible when we consider Baldazzare Peruzzi (1482-1537) was considerably younger than Boltraffio (1467-1516), and it is logical to suspect that the younger man should look to the older for his inspiration. Certainly one artist had to look to the other for the portrait of Francesco Cabanyas. The date of 1517 for the Peruzzi painting seems more plausible and convincing in this particular instance, as it would account for the superficial Leonardesque traces in Peruzzi's painting. It certainly supports the date of 1513 or 1514 for the lunette executed by Giovanni Antonio and at the same time verifies Vasari's date of 1517 for the Peruzzi fresco.

The lunette in Sant'Onofrio by Boltraffio is unique because the fresco was painted on a background of gold mosaic which gives the picture a warm radiance. The Virgin and Child are set slightly to the left of center so that the composition is balanced when the donor is considered. Stylistically, Mary retains the long

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<sup>1</sup>Girogio Vasari, The Lives, (New York: Dutton and Co., 1929), II, p.294.

oval face, the wide forehead, wideset eyes lowered, and the typical Boltraffiesque nose. As in many of his previous works, the hair of the Madonna is allowed to fall free onto her shoulders and is parted in the centre. The jaw line and chin continue their familiar type, yet the mouth becomes ineffectual and weak in character due to the intensification of the archaic smile, which perhaps was exaggerated during restoration. The modeling measures up to Bolt-raffio's best quality as it picks up the reflected light to create the flickering quality and movement in the shadows, while his distinguishing characteristic is retained in the heavy cast shadows of the nose and mouth.

The Christ Child also follows the Boltraffiesque tradition yet has a more convincing physical structure. This Child is almost identical with another given to the artist of a Madonna and Child in the Loeser Collection (Plate XVI). He turns in a contrapposto position to face the prothonotary donor and indicates with his right hand the sign of a blessing.

It is the donor's individuality and character which create the great interest. As Munoz observes, he distinctly represents a Spanish rather than an Italian type, especially in the nose, eyes, and mouth. Regardless of the age beautifully revealed by the loose sagging flesh about the jowls and the soft thinning gray hair, the mouth and chin betray determination and purpose of spirit, while the eyes have a penetrating quality of faith, all being lessened in their intensity by the relaxed state of the body. A character similar to that in the portraits of the Casio

Family Madonna (Plate I). The drapery of Cabanyas is handled so that none of the bodily form is evidenced.

The drapery of the Madonna is very similar to that of all figures previously discussed; it is so voluminous and abundant in quantity that it limits any observable physical structure. The luxurious textures still remain discernable although the fresco is in a disreputable state of preservation. Boltraffio is constantly more aware of executed textures than his Tuscan master appears to be; however, the Milanese pupil never achieved the same refinement or naturalness of executed folds or falls of the drapery. Commonly Giovanni Antonio's drapery has a stiffness that tends to reduce the conviction of weight.

This fresco in Sant'Onofrio is without doubt, and in accord with popular modern criticism, a work of Giovanni Antonio and not Leonardo da Vinci who tradition and the insistence of the church state to be its author. The date certainly falls within the two years span of 1513-1514, giving us another pivotal point on which to ascribe other works stylistically. It is truly unfortunate that this lunette was restored in an almost destructive manner in 1835 and has since been allowed to fall into such disreputable disrepair as it provides us with one of the few fine examples of Bolt-raffio's late works.

"The female saints in the choir of San Maurizio in Milan are among the most charming productions in the Milanese school," according to the Burlington Fine Arts Club publication.<sup>1</sup> In the Chiesa

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<sup>1</sup>Burlington Fine Arts Club, Illustrated Catalogue of Pictures

della Monastero Maggiore (San Maurizio), Milan there are twenty martyr saints (Plates XI,XII,XIII,XIV) painted in the false eyes of the upper walls near the ceiling of the nuns choir. They have darkened considerably and are today in a poor state of preservation, a feature which makes them difficult to view. To date, the writer has been able to secure only a few reproductions of the series so that discussion will be somewhat limited. However, a considerable number of reproductions of these individual saints may be found in Adolfo Venturi's publication, Studi dal vero attraverso le raccolte artistiche d'Europa.<sup>1</sup>

Tradition has it that Boltraffio painted these twenty frescoed saints in San Maurizio, works which have been universally accepted by the art world as from the hand of a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci. Certainly and without hesitation, this attribution would appear to be correct. Gardner Teall questions whether or not they were all painted by Boltraffio, but does concede that they were all painted after his design.<sup>2</sup> He never expands upon this assertion, leaving us to wonder why he should have made such a statement to begin. To date the writer has been able to locate the names of only six of these saints: SS. Catherine, Monaca, Barbara, Agatha, Agnes, and Apollonia. There are also panels of the Annunciation, Noli me tangere, and a group of four male saints in two pediments.

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by masters of the Milanese and Allied Schools of Lombardy, (London: 1899), p.lviii.

<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Studi dal ver attraverso le raccolte artistiche d'Europa, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1927), pp.344-358.

<sup>2</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio", International Studio, (New York: October 1926), LXXXV, p.25.

These saints follow the general style of Giovanni Antonio's work, particularly with respect to the facial characteristics. Berenson states that they all have a quality of "sugariness" about them, but full agreement cannot be accorded this observation as a more compelling expression is evoked by the combination of quietude and isolation of the saints in the individual panels having great sophistication and the gentleness which martyred saints ought to possess.<sup>1</sup> In each case the saint's hands, occupied with some object, exhibit a delicacy and refinement which not only helps to reveal the character of the individual saint, but show the artist's technical advancement. This portion of the anatomy was always a weak point in Boltraffio's art; however, here the hands assume strength and purpose within the composition and add greatly to the effectiveness of the frescoes. In the majority of instances there appears to be a reduction in the scale of the hands in comparison with the size of the figures. This is especially true of the saint holding a basket of flowers on her left arm and a martyr's palm in her left hand. This fresco bears a strong resemblance to the Girl with a Basket of Cherries by Ambrogio de'Predis in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

The exquisiteness of the frescoes is further enhanced by the delicacy of execution encompassing transparent tones. Accompanying this is a relaxation of the artist's adherence to the stylized model evolved from the Leonardesque type. This individuality of

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (New York: Phaidon Press, 1952), p.183.

Boltraffio demonstrates to a higher degree his ability as an independent artist, and gives evidence that he should be elevated to a position of greater notice rather than relegated to the semi-inconsequential position in which he has been forced to remain all these years. He gives more meaning and movement to his works from this point of his career on, regardless of how close he may hold to designs by his master as recently discussed in the lunette of Sant'Onofrio. Even in that work his individuality predominates with regard to his approach and style.

In the rounded pediments of the choir of the Church of San Maurizio there are four other frescoes of noteworthy execution. In the first of these is a rather unusual Annunciation in the characteristic style of Boltraffio, but it is iconographically derived from a northern or Flemish concept. On the right the Virgin is seen kneeling at a prie dieu, while the archangel Gabriel appears to be rushing forward in a great swirl of drapery, a device not unfamiliar to the art of Fillipino Lippi. Gabriel carries a banner which reads - "AVE GRATIS / PLENA.DOMINU / TECUM," while a small child descends upon a ray of light from above. These are devices usually associated with the art of Flanders. The Virgin holds a prayer book in her right hand and at the same time acknowledges her awareness of Gabriel as she timidly lifts her left hand.

In another pediment is a Noli me tangere composed to fill adequately the designated space; here, too, the classic type of composition favored by Boltraffio is maintained. The Magdalene

in this picture is stylistically and physically identical with the Virgin in the Annunciation, both undeniably in the style of the artist's traditional female type. The hands are exceedingly poor and unconvincing structurally; this raises the question of their authorship when comparing them with the much more realistic and sensitive hands of the saints in the medallions. This analogy alone gives some impetus to Gardner Teall's theory that not all the pictures were painted by Giovanni Antonio, and that other painters executed some portions of these frescoes.

The remaining two windowed, round pedimented areas are composed of saints and donors. Again as with the medallion saints, some are not identifiable. The first one is composed of St. George and another military saint, the two being separated by the round window in the center. The pendent fresco is composed of St. Ambrogio on one side while opposite is an unknown saint recommending an unknown donor.

These four frescoed pediments follow the tradition, style and character of Boltraffio's composition and technique in manner of execution. The modeling is basically and essentially attributable to the Leonardesque influenced hand of the Milanese artist with only the slight question as to whether they were completed by Giovanni Antonio. Naturally there is some unevenness, but as far as can be determined these panels were Boltraffio's first attempt to work with the fresco medium, which might account for the minor variations and lack of technical virtuosity which exist.

Gardner Teall suggests that these medallions were painted in



the years 1505 and 1506, but again does not explain why he chose those dates nor why anyone should accept them.<sup>1</sup> Let us suppose for a moment that he was justified in making such an assumption. It is obvious that this series of paintings was executed somewhere within the eleven year span between the painting of the Saint Barbara (Plate II) dated 1502 and of the Sant'Onofrio lunette of 1513 or 1514. Certainly in style and composition they are closer to the Saint Barbara than to the Madonna, Child and Donor in Sant' Onofrio; however, with good reason the date 1510 has been assigned the Madonna and Child (Plate VIII) in the Poldi Pezzoli in Milan. In this work Boltraffio favored the perpendicular composition but varied and complicated it by the addition of contrapposto movement in the figures; the same animation is repeated in the Rome lunette. Thus there is a rigidity held to in the use of one plane and the physical movement is lacking which is usually associated with those works prior to the Poldi Pezzoli panel. The martyr saints conform to the earlier planistic verticality found in that period just following Boltraffio's emancipation from the dominant influence of Leonardo da Vinci. Some portraits which have yet to be considered indicate slight movement; this becomes more obvious in his later development and reveal that the artist subordinated formal rigidity in order to produce more life. For example the Saint Barbara in Berlin is viewed in a frontal position without any movement, while these saints in San Maurizio vary in their poses and

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio", International Studio, (New York: October 1926), LXXXV, p.24.

the increased expression of their facial features indicates that they were executed sometime after 1502, probably at the mid-point between 1502 and 1510, this would be either 1505 or 1506 - the dates suggested by Teall.

After examining these pictures, the writer feels safe in giving to Boltraffio's style certain other characteristics which have been mentioned from time to time but never formally stated or adhered to in the discussion because of the uncertainty about the evolutionary direction of the artist's formation. From the beginning of his artistic career until its conclusion, Giovanni Antonio held a strong predilection for the rectilinear both in his overall composition and in the physical positions of his figures, but as he develops and advances he introduces movement in his figures, yet rarely in the total aspect of his compositions. The compositions maintain their interest and manifest movement through the subtle but extraordinary series of parallel crossed lines - a feature evident in all his work. Progressively transparent effects of light and tone seem to invade his panels giving depth not only to the pictures, but to the character of the portrayed individuals. One thing which remains constant throughout his career is the heaviness of the costume; this makes it appear evident that the technique was learned before his tutelage with Leonardo and harks back to the work of the earlier Milanese master, Borgognone, whose influence is revealed in the metallic heaviness and sculptural

folds and contours of the drapery concealing the physical structure of the subject. These features are individual to Boltraffio, who differentiating himself from the other pupils, followers, and imitators of Leonardo, is the least faithful in maintaining the mannered style of Leonardo, although the learned influences are ever present in his work.

It may seem somewhat illogical perhaps to be jumping around from one picture to another without the discipline of some chronological ordering, but the object of such a procedure has its merits. Establishing various works both stylistically and by suggested dates, we are able to place many other less definite and more obscure works with greater assuredness if we allow stylistic comparisons as the primary procedure in establishing and attributing work. Such a method establishes with more concreteness the stylistic character of the artist.

The Madonna, Child, with St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian with Donor, Orlando da Ponte (Pontano) (Plate XV) now in the Count Pálffy of Pressburo Collection in Budapest has unanimously been given to Boltraffio and assigned the date of 1508. It was originally painted for a chapel in the Cathedral of Lodi, but there is no record as far as the writer can determine as to when it was removed or on what occasion. It is only by tradition that we know the identity

of the donor, and this would tend to indicate that the date and artist originate from a similar tradition. Ignazio Fumagalli wrote describing the painting in 1811 and included an engraving of it from his own hand as well as one of the Casio Family Madonna in the Louvre. This was the first published information concerning the Lodi Madonna. The greatest contribution of the article concerns Fumagalli's discovery of a stamp of the City of Lodi with the date of 1776 on the reverse side.<sup>1</sup> This date is significant in the provenience of the altarpiece because it would be unlikely that the Cathedral would have stamped the picture, hence it must have been imprinted by the city shortly after its acquisition. Therefore we may rightfully assume that the painting remained in the Duomo until 1776.

Frizzoni states that the Lodi Madonna (Plate XV) passed through many private hands before it was sold to Count Pálffy.<sup>2</sup> This information is most scant, and insofar as the attribution has been upheld without reservation by such men as Carotti, Berenson, Venturi, Rio, Malaguzzi-Valeri, the authenticity of tradition may be accepted. When the analysis of the picture's style is discussed, there will be little doubt as to its author. The date will have to be accepted prima facie and serve as a salient point on which other undated panels may precede or follow it in their chronological ordering.

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<sup>1</sup>Ignazio Fumagalli, Scuola di Leonardo da Vinci in Lombardi, (Milano: Reale, 1811), no pagination.

<sup>2</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), IV, p.108.

The composition and the subject of the Lodi Madonna resembles closely that of the Casio Madonna (Plate I), composed on a rectangular perpendicular arrangement with an infinite variety of parallel diagonal movements. Without question, it is in keeping with Boltraffio's arrangement for effect. It also contains the composure and solemnity which we have come to associate with the artist. When looking at the various persons portrayed, we find considerable change from the types noted in the panel of the Misericordia Altar (Casio). The saints possess less of the classic idealization that was formerly linked with the style of those of the Louvre picture; the Virgin has lost the peasant-like quality heretofore possessed; the Child has become much more solid in form; and the donor, Orlando da Ponte, has an aspect of physical frailty which heightens the effect of devotion and humility.

Had he scrutinized carefully, Venturi would not have made the error of calling St. John the Baptist, the Magdalene as the Baptist obviously holds a crossed staff and presents the donor to the Virgin and her Son; seldom if ever does a female saint present a man.<sup>1</sup> St. John has become less Praxitilian in countenance and physique, yet in keeping with the advanced manner of Giovanni Antonio's style, the artist has attained an individuality. The saint's curly hair parted in the center still flows gently down upon his shoulders. The head retains the oval elongated shape and the eyes are dreamy, but the sensuous appeal which we associate with

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.1035.

the earlier rendition is lacking. St. Sebastian, on the other hand, has lost much of his sensuousness of his former prototype in the Louvre and is now viewed in the more traditional pose of throwing his head back to look heavenward. There is a strong resemblance of Boltraffio's St. Sebastian in the Lodi panel to another St. Sebastian in the Louvre (#1566A) by Perugino (1445-1523); however, there is no likelihood that there could be any connection between the two artists or their pictures and that only coincidence can justify the similarity. The misplaced right hand, tied behind the saint, again appears here in this picture, an incongruity of Giovanni Antonio's style which may be considered a characteristic eccentricity of the artist. This peculiarity alone leaves little doubt about the authorship of this panel although the suggestion was formerly made that restoration or repainting might account for the awkwardness. St. Sebastian's body is executed with a slight manneristic elongation while the expression is accentuated in a rather dramatic fashion. The physical representation of the body is not as successfully created because of the structurally formless right leg and the poor transition from the shoulder to the head.

Mary, seated on a thronelike chair and enveloped in her characteristic drapery, looks down at her Son with lowered eyes in a gentle yet sophisticated manner. She is similar to her equivalent in the Louvre picture. Her proportions and features are more delicate and refined, as if there were less dependence on an actual studio model. If the Casio Family Madonna was done under the

tutelage of Leonardo, then this picture exhibits a noticeable development in the individual style of Boltraffio. Certainly the Leonardesque techniques and teachings remain, but they are modified and proportionately adjusted to satisfy the aesthetic taste of the pupil whose own individuality now instinctively emerges to dominate his style. In quality, the Virgin is superior to the other figures painted in this panel in the Pálffy Collection - superior even to the portrait of the donor who, as Venturi tells us, has a stuccolike flesh, a defect which may readily be traceable in his countenance.

One feature about this painting which almost instantly commands the attention of the spectator is the landscape. In the execution of the background Boltraffio has been decidedly influenced by the cavernlike setting with its stalactite formations seen in Leonardo da Vinci's Madonna of the Rocks in the Louvre of the same date - 1508. These formations of vertical striated rock substituting for the more common device of an altarcloth or throne backing serves as a backing in front of which the Virgin is seated. The rocks, however, are conventionalized to such an extent that their realistic quality and effectiveness is lost. The dark trees are also stylized manifestations of what might supposedly be Lombard poplars. Even the sparse scattering of foliar life appears to have become metallic in its brittle and shiny execution. Reflecting for a moment back to the altarpiece of St. Barbara (Plate II) in Berlin, there is a close affinity between the handling of the geological formation of the landscape with its cliff-

like stone mountain in this picture and that of the background immediately behind the Virgin in the Lodi picture.

Boltraffio would appear to have regressed in his development of landscape in these two pictures from that which can be considered much more adequate in the Casio Madonna and the Brera panel. The landscape discussed in this latter work, in Milan, (Plate XXXIX) witnesses an advancement of a style superior to that of any of the earlier works so far discussed. Hence the Lodi Madonna (Plate XV) and the Berlin Saint (Plate II) exhibit an independent style which became so stylized that the artist abandoned it to return to the more successful and realistic interpretation of nature which he learned from the Tuscan master rather than mimic a less satisfying mannered prototype. The landscape in the Count Palffy painting is well handled and illustrates a meticulous technique even though its translation considerably reduces its realistic effectiveness.

There are many things to recommend this work if we overlook the incongruities elucidated thus far; the salient feature shows the emancipation of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio from the complete dominance of Leonardo's influence. This picture alone supports the contention of many writers concerned with Boltraffio when they assert that this pupil, while maintaining the tenets of his master's teaching, was the most individual and original of the students. Never does Giovanni Antonio lose sight of the pedagogics, but he modifies and individualizes them in keeping with their application to his purpose and style.

In his limited production Boltraffio often repeats an identical



subject with little variation. So it is with three Madonnas usually referred to as Madonna and Child with Book, one of which is in the Loeser Collection in Florence (Plate XVI), a second in the National Gallery, London (Plate XVII), part of the Salting Bequest, and finally the last one which has greater variation in the Bellini Collection in Florence (Plate XVIII). Both the London and the Loeser Madonnas are identical in the composition even to the detail of the background landscape although there are a few minute variations given to the tints and minor corrections of the physical parts of the figures.

The two Virgins of the Loeser and Bellini Collections wear blue mantles with a yellow-orange lining, while the London Madonna's blue mantle is lined with moss green. In all three instances Mary wears a red bodice and the naked Child is seated on a green marble parapet in front of His mother. The Virgin's head in all three panels is draped with veiling tied at the nape of the neck, restraining the hair. Again in the three pictures the book on the cornice is covered with red velvet, but in the Bellini version it is embossed with a gold rosette. The composition of these three pictures does not vary as the Madonna is turned toward the right and looking down at her Son in much the same manner that we will observe in the two pictures of the Narcissi. She is seated between two windows. The Child, who sits facing the observer, twists in a contrapposto fashion to reach with His right hand for a flowering twig held by the Virgin. In His left hand He holds an apple. There is a variation here in that the flower in the Bellini and Loeser

panels is jasmine while the flower in the London picture is columbine. One last variation is seen in the Child; in the London and Loeser pictures the Child reaches for the twig, but in the Bellini panel the Child holds the branch while the Madonna retains it.

The question arises concerning the chronological ordering of these pictures. Mr. Venturi writes that because of its obvious corrections, the Bellini Madonna (Plate XVIII) was painted after the Loeser Madonna (Plate XVI).<sup>1</sup> However, he makes no mention of the Madonna in the National Gallery in London (Plate XVII); the present writer would venture to place it prior to the two mentioned above because the red of the book's cover and the Virgin's bodice are lighter in the London version than in the other two which show greater contrast of values but less refinement.

To pursue the chronological ordering one step further - the landscape of the London and Loeser Madonnas is almost identical with only minute variation, but the bluish mountains and the blue green of the foliage have a close affinity to Flemish backgrounds although they are truly Milanese in spirit. The landscape of the Bellini Madonna (Plate XVIII) is simplified in its articulation, the mountains having been replaced by more luxuriant foliage. This latter feature and the overall change would certainly place the Bellini panel at the end of the chronological ordering.

The facial features are all the same in profile with the line of the forehead extending to form the nose with its dilated nostrils.

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, La galleria Crespi a Milano, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1890), p.237.

The slight overshoot placement of the upper lip is truly characteristic of Boltraffio in these panels. The modeling is adequately executed but lacks the heaviness observed in the paintings executed between 1500 and 1505.

Just what dates might be assigned the panels of the Loeser and London collections presents a more difficult problem for us. It would be safe to assume that these two paintings were executed under the watchful eye of Leonardo da Vinci although they demonstrate a good deal of individuality on the part of Giovanni Antonio. However, they are similar in composition to the Benois Madonna by Leonardo in Leningrad. Because of their relationship with regard to profile and modeling of the St. Sebastian (Plate LIX) of the Sicilian collection of Frizzoni, the two Narcissi (Plates LVII and LVIII), and the altar wings of the Castello by the artist, these paintings fall within an approximate period somewhere between 1491 and 1498. Venturi wishes, however, to place a date on these pictures somewhere between 1510 and 1515 because of their close relationship of the children with the Child in the Madonna, Child, and Donor in Sant'Onofrio (Plate X), believing it the larger and more mature style of the artist's Cinquecento period.<sup>1</sup> If we were to base all our conclusions and judgments on one object seen in a series of pictures, dates would vary to a great extent, but when we consider the lineament of the Virgins, the landscapes, the heaviness of the awkwardly modeled drapery, and the rigidity of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.241.

the poses, we can readily ascertain that they are more closely allied to an earlier period than the Cinquecento. The writer would thus place these two productions of the Madonna, Child and Book (Plates XVI & XVII) of the Loeser and London Collections about the years 1497 and 1498.

As for the Madonna and Child with Book (Plate XVIII) of the Bellini Collection, the writer would be hesitant in accepting this work as from the hand of Boltraffio. The panel has been included in the text of this chapter due to its exact composition, nature, and subject with the two pictures just discussed and accepted as the work of Giovanni Antonio. Obviously the Bellini Collection picture is deficient in spirit, expression, and the technique from either the Loeser or London panels which characteristically meet the performance of Boltraffio's established works. The poor physical construction, the superficiality of technique and expression, and the awkwardness of handling the Virgin and her Son affirm the writer's contention that the picture in the Bellini Collection is a copy after the design and work of Boltraffio and not by the artist himself. Therefore, it should be assigned to the School of Boltraffio as there is no other known artist of the period or locale to which it may be assigned on a stylistic basis.

The Castello Sforzesco in Milan has in its collection a Madonna Nursing (Plate XIX) which maintains a close relationship to those of the Loeser and London panels just discussed. The composition of the background with its two windows looking out onto a landscape is similar to those already seen. The difference

noted in this panel from the previous pictures is that the Virgin is standing and facing the left, holding the Christ Child in her arms while He nurses from her breast. Her attire is the same blue mantle lined with gold and a red undergarment. A scarf of light veiling binds the hair and is knotted in the rear. Though the Child is being held He maintains a similar position of twisting as He places His right hand on Mary's right breast while holding a bird in His left hand.

Both Mother and Child conform to the prototype already established by Boltraffio. The Child is puggy and reveals little structural form beneath the surface flesh. He has the dreamy eyedness characteristic of the Milanese artist as He looks toward the observer, yet the modeling is heavier and somewhat more convincing than in the previous Madonnas which we have examined. This latter feature alone would indicate a date nearer 1500 than the earlier pictures. The Virgin exhibits the same delicate lineament of drawing although she is not seen in direct profile. There is greater sophistication in the transition of one plane to another in the development of the artist's technique; the whole is conceived with the utmost simplicity and economy, yet a slight curve is indicated at the corner of the mouth which under the existing circumstances cannot be attributed to sweetness as much as to gentleness.

As voluminous as the drapery is, it is developed in the characteristic Boltraffio manner with the ever-present quality of stiffness with disturbing rounded folds. The texture of the drapery is more tactile because of its lustrous effect. It is

the landscape to the rear that demonstrates the artist's extraordinary ability to reproduce perceptibly the realism and feeling that are inherently part of nature. The coolness of tone caused by the blues of the mountains and their reflections in the water and the abundance of foliage in the foreground indicate a great step forward in the artist's development. The tranquillity and softness of the landscape complement the repose and peaceful expression of the Virgin and her Son.

Boltraffio, who commonly produced more than one painting from an original composition, painted several others following the same basic arrangement. His use of variation in the present series eliminates to some extent the monotony that prevailed in the last group of similar works. In the P.A.B. Widner Collection there is a Madonna with Nursing Child (Washington, D.C.) (Plate XX) acquired through Scott and Fowles, New York, in 1926. The alteration seen in this Madonna who, placed before a dark background and seated in a three quarter length position turned to the left, cradles the Child with her right arm and only gently rests her left hand on His left leg. The Virgin's hands are more advanced in their development and articulation. The Child is exactly the same; His left foot rests on Mary's arm while He suckles at her breast and looks directly at the observer. The Virgin is dressed in a red undergarment with a blue and green mantle over her shoulders. Her auburn hair is held in place by a voile scarf tied behind the head, and her flesh tints have a ruddy quality.

Her face is turned more toward the viewer so that the essen-

tials of Boltraffio's style are more readily observable. Her downward glance heightens the sculptural quality given to the broad forehead, the nose, and the widely spaced eyes.

Another panel of an analogous type is the Madonna with Nursing Child (Plate XXI) in the Fogg Museum, Harvard University. This painting has a greater intimacy with the observer. Mr. Berenson believes this to have been done only in part by Boltraffio, but does not indicate which part he painted or who the other artist might have been.<sup>1</sup> The Madonna and Child fills up the entire surface of the panel, and there is no parapet to separate the spectator from the immediate presence of this devotional subject. The Madonna and Child is identical in many respects with the Castello Sforzesco picture (Plate XIX) except for the head of the Virgin which corresponds with that of the Widner picture (Plate XX). This panel in the Fogg Museum is the simplest of the group with respect to the manner and amount of drapery displayed, but it takes on a quality of harshness seen in the earlier works.

The face of Mary in the Fogg Panel has a more childlike quality and an expression of simplicity conveyed in the articulation of the eyes being somewhat different from those of the Widner picture. The writer believes that a greater span of time is indicated in these three works due to the more extensive modifications noted in the composition, the development of textural rendering, and finally the more poignant expression and articulation viewed in the face.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.91.

Therefore, the date of the Fogg panel should be set at about 1497 to 1499 with the Castello votive picture around 1501 to 1504, and to place the Widner Madonna about 1506 for its execution.

A modification of the Madonna with a Book (Plate XXII) previously examined is found in a similar painting in the Kress Collection of the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Because of the close affinity of the Virgin's head of the Kress panel with the Widner picture (Plate XX) and the placement of her body, the date ought to precede 1505. The Child is seated on a marble parapet in front of His mother and turns to reach with His left hand for a branch of columbine which Mary holds in her left hand. Her right hand is resting on the cover of the closed book.

The hands of the Virgin are more fleshy and mature, lacking the nervous quality which is so characteristic of the earlier Madonnas, yet they still are in need of greater realism. The head of the child, whose hair is in tight ringlettes, has a fatter quality in the cheeks and the chin, which allies Him more closely with the baby seen in the Casio Family Madonna (Plate I). The criticism of this child is, that despite the ardent desire for more convincing skeletal structure, Boltraffio attempted to foreshorten the legs and feet which resulted in their becoming phlebitic and unrealistic. However, this is compensated for by the realistic movement in the child's arms and head which detracts from the emphasis on the legs.

At Bergamo in the Carrara Gallery there is a panel of a Youthful Christ Blessing (Plate XXIII). The Christ is seen in full



face, looking directly at the observer, with His right hand raised in the sign of a blessing while in His unseen left hand He holds an orb surmounted by a cross symbolizing His dominion over the world. As is peculiar to him Boltraffio has placed a wreath of ivy about Christ's head in addition to the Customary halo which is conventionalized by three foliated points. There is a second Youthful Christ Blessing (no reproduction) in the Borromeo Collection; it is different only in being smaller. Both are of the same period as Casio Madonna.

The oval head is soft and delicately rendered. Its adolescent countenance has a broad forehead partially covered by the hair which is parted in the center and flows down onto the shoulders in waves. The flat arc of the eyebrows with their puffiness at the outer corners accentuates the widely spaced eyes so typical of Giovanni Antonio. The elongated nose and the sensuous mouth are not emphasised to the extent that the eyes are. The modeling is extremely delicate and soft in its golden glaze yet pallid tones. The right hand of Christ immediately attracts attention because of its beauty and the artist's realistic dexterity of handling it. Without doubt it is one of the finest hands seen among Boltraffio's works. The foreshortening of the wrist seems a bit heavy and flat, but not to such an extent that it is resolved in an awkward or unseemly fashion.

His garments, particularly the mantle, are rich in quality and texture; while the undergarment is heavily pleated and adorned with decorative caligraphic ornamentation at the neck and the

diagonal crossing on the breast. Everything about this painting and the one of the Borromeo collection has a luxurious quality while being refined and meaningful. The solemnity of the panel is enhanced by the pensive, yet soleful commanding expression, having a sobriety and warmth that such a panel as this demands in its execution.

## CHAPTER V

### QUESTIONED RELIGIOUS WORKS PREVIOUSLY

#### ATTRIBUTED TO BOLTRAFFIO

In the preceding chapter the discussion centered about those religious works attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio that either had documentary proof to substantiate their authorship or were sufficiently analogous stylistically with the established character and style of the artist to verify convincingly and conclusively their attribution. What remains to be examined in this present chapter are those sacred works previously assigned to Boltraffio by noted connoisseurs and cataloguers that have only slight relationship or none at all to the style of the Milanese pupil of Leonardo da Vinci. Some works will hold a strong affinity to Giovanni Antonio's characteristic style while others will have little or no kinship to those pictures already established and definitely attributed. There are a few works which in the last two decades have been taken from the productions of Boltraffio and assigned to other artists; these also must be considered if one is to compile a revised catalogue of the artist's works.

Included within this chapter as well as chapter seven will be several works for which reproductions have been unprocurable, either because the pictures remain in private collections or because photographs of them have never been made available. These are few and

do not make up any significant proportion of the artist's works represented here or the works of any other artists of noteworthy importance. However, works will be discussed that have caused considerable controversy during the past forty years - in one case resulting in court proceedings. First let us examine those paintings whose subject material is of a religious nature. This approach will create less confusion and the discussion will have greater continuity.

The Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan owns a Madonna with Nursing Child (Plate XXIV) that was purchased for the institution in 1894.<sup>1</sup> The museum catalogue states that Bertini, who procured the panel for the museum, assigned it to Boltraffio, an attribution which Berenson accepted without reservation.<sup>2</sup> The attribution is somewhat baffling in that its style is removed from that of Boltraffio and fails to adhere to the perfection of design and drawing that underlies his recognizable characteristics. Against these arguments there are certain features which compel us to think of the Milanese artist.

The Virgin, whose right breast is seen through an opening in her dress, is seated on a parapet with her Son on her lap, and she is steadying Him with her right hand. In her left hand she holds a twig of columbine upon which her gaze is fixed. The Christ Child, who is posed in a three-quarter position, turns His head and looks upward, raising His right hand to indicate the sign of a blessing

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<sup>1</sup>Guido Gergorietti & Franco Russoli, La Pinacoteca Poldi Pezzoli, (Milano: Electa Editrice, 1955), p.127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

while placing His malformed left hand upon His mother's breast. The heavy and voluminous drapery, the flat and almost skeletalless form, the shape and tilt of the head, the hands, the nose, the forehead of the Virgin, and the handling of the landscape are reminiscent of Boltraffio's style.

A certain crudeness of design, less rigidity of pose, an opaqueness of tonality, the individual style of the hair which, caught on either side of Mary's head, falls onto her chest, is unlike Boltraffio. There are many things about this picture which exclude Giovanni Antonio as its author, yet an equal number of characteristics point to him. Just whose work does it represent?

It indicates an artist of some experience but without the direct influence of Leonardo. Although there are characteristics evidenced by a smoothness and an opacity resembling that of *Il Francia*, there is nothing else except the mouth that parallels this artist's work. There is no part of this painting, except the hands, which we would accept as being the style of any other Leonardo follower. The ambiguity concerning the assignment of the picture provokes the same conclusion as that drawn by Gregorietti and Russoli in the museum's catalogue where it is suggested that its author is a minor artist from Boltraffio's circle.<sup>1</sup> However, the full agreement cannot be accorded such an attribution because of the Boltraffiesque strength of character and attitude represented here. The writer would feel that this work illustrates the work of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

two painters - one unknown, the other Giovanni Antonio. Under such circumstances the attribution must remain with Boltraffio in part or given to the School of Boltraffio until another co-author can be identified or some documentary proof can be established to answer the perplexing problem.

A Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist (Plate XXV) in the Tucher Collection in Vienna has been given to Boltraffio for many years. The panel does not have the strong stylistic similarities characteristic of the artist's manner, but enough of a style is evident to suggest the hand of a single person. Like the Poldi Pezzoli Nursing Madonna (Plate XXIV) mentioned above, the Tucher panel exhibits either a foreign style or a period when Boltraffio was searching to establish an individual style of his own.

The Virgin, seated facing to the left in a three-quarter position, holds her Son on her lap. Jesus turns in a rather rigid manner and bestows a blessing on St. John. The Baptist, with his folded arms resting on the Virgin's right leg, looks up in the same manner as the Christ in the Poldi Pezzoli picture. In fact, the resemblance between the children in these two panels is so clearly evident as to suggest that the painters were the same person. Mary, though having many stylistic characteristics common to Boltraffio, has an expression of sadness combined with the customary quietude that prevails in much of his work. The drapery is voluminous and stiff, and is almost metallic in its tactile handling, particularly in the folds and the highlighted areas. The Madonna's head is covered by an exceedingly realistic piece of veiling which encircles

her neck and shoulders.

The modeling is somewhat heavier than the Poldi Pezzoli picture and shows a strong influence of Leonardo in the progressive attainments of the artist's use of chiaroscuro technique. The reflected lights in the shaded areas and the delicate drawing display an increasing assurance in the development of the artist. Certainly criticism can be levied on such passages as the hands and the feet which lack the preceptive execution and the sensitivity to nature associated with Giovanni Antonio.

The landscape, observed through the window in the upper left corner, has the same blue tonality and transparent clarity of light seen in other works of the Milanese artist, and parallels the Flemish analogy formerly referred to. The difference in this landscape is its smooth quality and lack of conical angularity that has been common in the great majority of the landscapes discussed thus far. However, if there appear to be many portions of the panel which give way to doubt, and if Boltraffio is not the sole author of this picture in the Tucher collection, assuredly he executed the composition if not the painting. Hence the panel should be attributed to the School of Boltraffio.

In the select collection of Mr. D.F. Platt of Englewood, New Jersey, there is a picture representing a Madonna and Child (no reproduction) which is worth time to note. Some authorities have wished to assign the panel to the Veronese school; Berenson, with others, gives it to the Neapolitan school following the standards of the Milanese tradition and influence, while others identify

Boltraffio with the work.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately no reproduction is available; however, a photograph accompanied Perkins' article and it is evident that the panel maintains the Milanese tradition with which we are familiar. F. Mason Perkins in his short but pertinent article states his belief that it is a production of the Milanese school, but hesitates to attribute it directly to Boltraffio.<sup>2</sup> The writer considers such a conclusion justifiable as several things about this painting deter our attention from directly associating it with the number of works by Boltraffio so far considered.

The Virgin is seated in a twisting position with an accentuated tilt of the head. The Child, whose shoulders are exceedingly heavy and disturbingly out of proportion, rotates in the opposite direction from that of His mother. A coyly sweet expression which is lacking sincerity is given both figures and is climaxed by the Child who reaches up to chuck His mother under the chin. The expressionless quality of technique and the Leonardesque sweetness of the figures allude specifically to the style of Gianpetrino. In an article published two years after the previous one, F. Mason Perkins recognized the definite association of this panel to the style of Gianpetrino, thus substantiating the present writer's immediate reaction to the picture.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>F. Mason Perkins, "Un dipinto sconosciuto di scuola milanese," Rassegna d'arte, (Milano: Menotti Bassani & Co., 1909), n.1, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>F. Mason Perkins, "Dipinti italiana nella raccolta Platt," Rassegna d'arte, (Milano: Menotti Bassani & Co., 1911), n.9, p.149.



An attribution such as this seems reasonable when one compares the head of Mary with that of the Leda by Gianpetrino in Neuwied, Germany, or with his Cleopatra in the Louvre, or the Madonna and Child in the Cook Collection, Richmond. One startling feature is its extraordinary brilliance of tonality; this discourages any definite relationship with Boltraffio. Foreign to Giovanni Antonio is the hard drawing of the physical features; however, this property isolated by itself can equally be distributed amongst many of the Milanese artists of the period.

There are three pictures having as subject content the Madonna and Nursing Child, and all have at one time or another had the attribution of Boltraffio given to them. They all find their prototype in the model of the Madonna Litta in the Hermitage, Leningrad, which is commonly given to Leonardo da Vinci, but on occasion referred to as a work by Ambrogio de'Predis, Boltraffio, or Brenardino de'Conti. The three pictures which come to our attention here are found in the Howard Young Collection in London (Plate XXVI), the Demotte Collection of Paris (Plate XXVII), and the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan (Plate XXVIII) - the latter being assigned at present to Pseudo-Boltraffio.

Perhaps it might be wise to consider for a moment the Madonna Litta in the Hermitage, Leningrad. Kenneth Clark in his informative treatise on Leonardo da Vinci states that the panel has twice been repainted to a considerable extent and has been transferred from wood to canvas so that it is today in a ruined condition.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.43.

Virgin and her Son are situated in front of a darkened wall with two arched openings through which a landscape to the rear is observable. Mary, turning to the left, holds the Child who looks out at the spectator, although Mary's exposed breast indicates that she is nursing the Child.

Oswald Siren attributes the Madonna Litta to Leonardo and a pupil, showing definite characteristics that identify Boltraffio.<sup>1</sup> The drapery corresponds closely with that of Boltraffio in both its tactile quality and the heaviness of the stiff folds. The Child's head is unlike the Leonardesque type, but fortunately a drawing in the collection of M. Fritz Lugt in Paris ascribed to Boltraffio corresponds almost identically with the Child of the Hermitage panel. To take the analogy a step further, the Child in this picture shows definite relationships to Giovanni Antonio's Madonna and Child (Plate VIII) in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan. The figure of Jesus is based on a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci (No. 12,568) at Windsor Castle, thus adding to the confusion in determining the artist of the work.<sup>2</sup> A final item, and one which relates it to Boltraffio, is the design of the veiling which is the same as seen in the Madonna and Child (Plate III) in the National Gallery in London and the Madonna of the Casio Family (Plate I) in the Louvre. However, caution must be observed here

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<sup>1</sup>Oswald Siren, Leonardo - the Artist and the Man, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), p.68.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Clark, Leonardo da Vinci, (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p.43.

as this particular fixture undoubtedly was studio equipment used not only by Leonardo and Boltraffio but also by other pupils.

Therefore, without more available information and because we do not detect the identifiable hardness of Ambrogio de'Predis, or the jig-sawed manipulation of Bernardino de'Conti, and because of the haunting resemblance of the Virgin's head to the drawing in the Louvre by Leonardo, and because the landscape is like that in the master's Adoration in the Uffizi, the attribution of the Madonna Litta will have to remain questionable. In the writer's opinion, the Leningrad picture conclusively proves the style and composition of Leonardo in its major portion, but stylistic elements of Bolt-raffio traceable in certain areas warrant the consideration of this artist as a minor co-painter of the Hermitage panel.

The three paintings mentioned prior to the discussion of the Madonna Litta possess a negligible relationship to the style of Boltraffio, but they are closely allied to the imitative techniques of Bernardino de'Conti. This artist's piecing together of copied parts to compose a picture is a primary consideration if not an indication that the panels do not follow the individual and unified style of Boltraffiesque compositions. Two of the Paintings, London (Plate XXVI) and the Milan (Plate XXVIII), are typical of Bernardino de'Conti's style in their smooth surfaces and the evident minimum of modeling. The metallic quality emphasised by the hard incised effect of the drawing is accompanied by exceedingly drastic contrasts between juxtaposed areas, thus limiting the sensation of easy transition. Probably the drapery alone points most directly

to Bernardino's formula in the repeated measured parallel folds. The individual heads of the Virgins in all three panels are long and expressionless; in each case accent is given to the undulated mouth and the pointed quality of the nose.

Perhaps the painting closest to the style of Giovanni Antonio is the Demotte panel (Plate XXVII) which has its stoutest stylistic claim in connection with the head of the Virgin and with the drapery. Even the Child is further removed from the others because of its expression and the sleepy-eyedness associated with Boltraffio. The landscape in the Demotte panel has been created in a summary fashion much in the manner of Bernardino de'Conti and has little realistic effectiveness. The three pictures present the Madonna standing and holding her Son who is nursing; however, in the Poldi Pezzoli version she is placed behind the parapet on which the Christ Child is placed.

The backgrounds of these three paintings are different. The Demotte painting shows landscape only to the left; there is a large section of drapery behind Mary. The Milan panel has drapery hung across the back but it is gathered in the middle, allowing landscape to be viewed on either side. The London picture, excluding drapery and landscape altogether, employs a dark painted area.

Boltraffio's authorship of the Demotte panel (Plate XXVII) remains questionable, certainly with regards to the Child's head and the landscape. However, the writer would attribute both the Milan and London pictures to the increasing number of works by Bernardino de'Conti.

There is a painting (Plate XXIX) in the Hurd Collection in New York which was previously in the Achillito Chiesa Collection (1927) in Florence. The style of the picture resembles Boltraffio slightly in manner and is a copy with modifications of Leonardo's Madonna of the Rocks in the Louvre. The Madonna, Child, St. John, Angel, and Donor (Plate XXIX) retains the same composition as the Louvre panel and is set within a grottolike cavern. The Donor is kneeling to the extreme left of the composition and has the physical and spiritual qualities distinctly resembling those of the donor, Bassano da Ponte, in the votive painting (Plate XV) in the Pálffy Collection, Budapest.

Though there is no question of its origin being from another school than that of Milan, it in no way reaches the attainments of perfection and delight of the Louvre prototype or the version in the National Gallery of London more recently given to Ambrogio de' Predis. The painting is a copy to be sure, but it could hardly be given to Boltraffio because of the drawing, modeling, and the proportions of the figures. Nowhere in the course of our investigation of Giovanni Antonio's works have we ever been confronted with such crude drawing or lack of feeling for form. Whenever Boltraffio copied a work of Leonardo's in whole or in part, he never failed to maintain the correct proportions and relationship of size and scale of the figures, a feature which is altogether lacking in this composition. The writer is unable to understand why Mr. Berenson ever attributed this copy to Boltraffio; however, the painter of this panel was considerably inferior to Giovanni Antonio and his

work must be categorized as subordinate even when compared with other works by unknown artists of the Milanese school.<sup>1</sup>

A panel of much higher quality and standard is in Vienna and part of the Wittgenstein Collection. The panel represents a Madonna and Child (Plate XXX), and individually the figures are much closer to the style of Boltraffio although there are portions which do not agree with the stylistic character associated with him. Behind Mary are two windows, one closed and the other to the left opening out onto a harbor scene. The Child is cradled in the Virgin's arms and with a slight turning to the head and body reaches up toward His mother. The head of the Virgin is certainly harmonious with the prototypes established by Boltraffio with exception of the mouth which is more accented in its undulation. The Child is more akin to the customary rendering of Giovanni Antonio's children in whom liveliness and an attentive quality are usually prevalent.

The modeling, which utilized the technique of chiaroscuro and the subtle transitions from one plane to another, is accomplished with great delicacy and economy of purpose. The soft atmospheric character of the background with its sfumato only affirms the fact that the artist had to be close to the Florentine master to have succeeded in capturing the advanced technique and richness. The Virgin strongly resembles those of the Madonnas of the Loeser and London Collections (Plates XVI & XVII) in that they are pallid yet warm and wholesome.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.92.

With exception of the leaded window in the upper right hand corner which strongly suggests a Flemish characteristic of the sixteenth century, the picture belongs to the lengthening list of Boltraffio's works primarily because of the expression, adroitness, finish and technique. If for any reason one were to suggest another artist rather than Boltraffio as the author of this panel, it would have to be a painter having direct contact with Giovanni Antonio or one who was a fastidious copier.

The Profile of a Youth as St. Sebastian (Plate XXXI) is plausibly by Boltraffio. The painting was once in a private collection in Vienna, but has found its way into the Leichtenstein Collection. Once its attribution to Ambrogio de'Predis was rather unanimously accepted; however, writers of late suggest that it was painted by Boltraffio. Undoubtedly, it was of an earlier period in which effeminacy and youthful beauty were sought by the artist in his works.

From the lineament of the face with particular reference to the continuous line of the forehead and nose and the protruding chin, we quickly associate this work with the two Narcissi of London and the Uffizi (Plates LVII & LVIII) respectfully. The same delicacy of youth and refinement of features combined with the timid employment of modeling and the hard drawing have an affinity with Boltraffio's earlier style. There is an evident striving for reality in the textures of the drapery, fur, and flesh. The verticality of pose and the calm expression evoke the relaxed but attentive aspect associated with Giovanni Antonio. The writer, however, conceding Boltraffio's style and character are observable

in varying degree, reserves the right to withhold a definite attribution.

A panel now in the Learmont Collection, Montreal, Canada, which was previously from Trotti of Paris, is a Madonna with a Book (Plate XXXII) which from a compositional standpoint is analogous to the Loeser and London panels (Plates XVI & XVII) of the same subject. If the work in question is by Boltraffio, it definitely must be of an early period in his career because of the obvious and summary fashion of an immature technique. The artist of this work has certainly followed the Leonardesque manner of execution with a learned adroitness, but without fully realized success. The chiaroscuro has its effectiveness, but limitation results from the superficiality and lack of perfection in the areas of rendered sfumato of the background. Deprived in large of the true realism of landscape, it does establish a mood of nostalgia that echoes the subject of the picture. The writer is not trying to create a poetic mood, but seldom are we confronted with a picture whose entirety so harmoniously conveys a nostalgic quality of gentleness and dreaminess.

Many portions of the picture warrant more critical attention; among these are the flattened folds of the voluminous drapery, the geological formation which acts as a backing for the Virgin and achieves in a strange psychological sense a feeling of mystery, and the precisely drawn and painted parapet on which the Child is seated. The shape of Christ's head, as well as that of the Virgin's, is alien to the style of Boltraffio as is the general character of both faces. In this vein the picture has only a weak correlation



with Boltraffio's style. Hence the writer would seriously question the artist involved with the production of the panel and would prefer to recognize it as from a minor painter's hand of the School of Boltraffio.

The Head of Christ (Plate XXXIII) in the Vittadini Collection, Milan, carries the name Boltraffio on the frame, an attribution which the writer seriously questions. Nowhere in the works of the Milanese artist do we find a panel that has the slightest affinity to this one. The long gaunt face, lacking in firmness of construction, is framed by the hair parted in the center which is allowed to fall loosely onto the shoulders. The eyes, which have none of the Boltraffiesque characteristics, are placed at different levels and have straight lines above them for eyebrows. The mouth is a straight thin line while the pointed chin accentuates the lower termination of the head. The drapery and flesh textures are poor, but certain portions retain details that have a refined quality. The sad pleading expression is unlike anything to which we are accustomed in the works of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. The Portrait of a Man in the Metropolitan Museum in New York by Bartolomeo Veneto corresponds very closely to this Head of Christ in the Vittadini Collection. Stylistically and physically, it has a similar expression of a sober but pleading gentility, and its eyes are placed at different levels. By no manner or means can we possibly accept the Head of Christ as a work by the noble student of Leonardo da Vinci, but suggest that it be given to the above mentioned artist.

The works which remain to be discussed are grouped together and are mentioned only lightly in passing. Obviously none are by Boltraffio even at his poorest, but as he is referred to on occasion as their author we must mention them in the text. With the exception of a few panels they all represent a mediocre technique, talent and knowledge of the Vincian precepts. All can be assigned to the Milanese school because of their evident style and coloration, and their close association in an aped manner with the Tuscan master who lived in Milan a good portion of his life.

Two works whose major portion suggests the copied style of Bernardino de'Conti are the Madonna and Child (Plate XXXIV) in the Crespi Collection in Milan and the Holy Family (Plate XXXV) in the Seminario, Venice. The former panel has been given to both de'Predis and Boltraffio, but obviously is inferior to the work of either of these artists. The only portion of the Madonna which reveals a superior hand and knowledge of technique is the head of the Child which reveals the talented hand of Ambrogio de'Predis with specific reference made to the eyes, the nose, and the hair. The hand does not conform with the execution of the body nor does the remainder of the panel. Thin and emaciated in appearance the Virgin has eyeless sockets, a blunt nose, and a narrow pointed chin. The right hand possesses neither structure nor proportion, and the drapery is hard and unrealistic. It is actually unethical even to suggest de'Conti as its author, however, it has an undeniable relationship with the Seminario picture.

Mary in the Venice picture (Plate XXXV) is the same figure as

that just referred to in connection with the Crespi Madonna. Her facial features, structure, and even the dress and mantle pinned with a brooch - the same brooch as seen in the Madonna of the Rocks in the Louvre by Leonardo - are all identical. The Child, seated on the parapet in front of the Virgin, makes a gesture of blessing while existing in a state of suspended animation. Beside Him on the parapet there is placed a book which is completely devoid of perspective. Joseph is a direct copy aped from the drawings of Leonardo. The expression of Joseph is sullen due to the down turned mouth, the sinister expression created by the deep-set eyes and the scowl. There is little to recommend this figure. Other than Christ, the musical angel is the only personage who creates any sensation of refinement and delicacy, yet this figure, too, is unconvincing. Both the Madonna and Child (Plate XXXIV) in the Crespi Collection and the Holy Family (Plate XXXV) in Venice are exceedingly inferior and must remain unassigned productions originating from the Milanese school.

There is a very curious painting of a Madonna and Child (Plate XXXVI) in a private collection in Paris that is said to be by Giovanni Antonio. The writer has been unable to locate any published reference to this work and it was only by chance that a reproduction of it was discovered in the Witt Library of the Courtauld Institute, University of London. The prototype of this painting with the exception of the mosaic background and donor is the Madonna, Child, and Donor (Plate X) in Sant'Onofrio in Rome.

To begin with, a definite statement can be made concerning its

attribution. The writer is convinced that the panel is of a later date than the Sant'Onofrio fresco and believes it to be a copy after Boltraffio's original design. Whoever its painter may have been, he was faithful to every detail and managed to capture the Bolt-raffiesque spirit with considerable aptness.

The peculiarities that were noted in the positioning of Mary's left hand which originally held a flower are repeated in this panel. This fact immediately justifies the assumption that the picture was copied after the change was made to the Sant'Onofrio fresco, having been changed and restored shortly after 1835 as Betti indicated in his article.<sup>1</sup>

This panel has greater articulation in the area of the drapery, and the expression of the Virgin is a variation of the original. The mouth of Mary is not as undulating and the construction and movement of the neck are not as realistic as in the Rome fresco. The Child is entirely different in character, the face being much more divided (compartmentalized) in its individual features. It corresponds with the head of Jesus in the panel of Jesus and St. John the Baptist in the National Museum in Naples, which is assigned to the Milanese school. In the first volume of his monumental work, Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri reproduces an identical picture to that in Naples by Joos van Cleve (act 1507 - 1540), who was known to be at the French court the same time as Leonardo.<sup>2</sup> This proves very little

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<sup>1</sup>A. Betti, "L'ape italiana delle belle arti," Giornale, (Rome: Boncompagni & C., 1835), I, p.51.

<sup>2</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, Il corte di Lodovico Il Moro,

but suggests that the prototype of Milanese children was well known in France.

Another copy after Boltraffio is to be found in Cambridge, England; it is a picture which finds its origin in the Loeser and London panels (Plates XVI & XVII). This composition, background, and personages are the same. This Madonna (Plate XXXVII) is of the Milanese school, but it is difficult to attribute because it does not reveal the style of any one particular artist. The Virgin is in the Leonardesque tradition, yet her bodily form is noticeably frail, unlike the usual Madonnas of the school. The Child's upper torso and head are smaller in proportion and scale to the rest of His body. The head of Christ is absolutely round but delicate in its manipulations. Faint traces of a similar style in the Madonna's head can be observed in her counterpart in the Holy Family (Plate XXXV) in the Seminario, Venice, or the Madonna (Plate XXXIV) in the Crespi Collection whose attribution has been left linked half heartedly with the name of Bernardino de'Conti. The Virgin's hands are poor and disjointed in comparison with any we have witnessed in Giovanni Antonio's work. However, in this case the writer would reserve the right to withhold a definite attribution - he prefers to assign it as a copy.

The clarity of the landscape deprives it of the sfumato effect which so wonderfully characterizes the Leonardesque school. The observer also desires a more adequate knowledge on the part of the artist for better perspective, yet as a painting this one in Cam-

bridge is far superior to either the Venice or Crespi pictures just mentioned.

The final picture to be examined in this chapter is a Christ Blessing (Plate XXXVIII) in the Vittadini Collection at Arcola which is assigned to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. The panel maintains the precepts of Milanese art, but why it should be given a definite attribution is not understandable. Christ, now fully matured, faces the spectator squarely, raising His right hand in the sign of a blessing while holding an orb in His left. He wears a richly ornamented and embroidered tunic with a mantle thrown over His left shoulder. The long face, framed by parted wavy hair, is hard and stonelike with a heavily accentuated nose; this is a characteristic unfamiliar to Boltraffio's style. The face is partially hidden by a beard, but the mouth, which has a hint of a hermaphroditic smile, is sensuous with a distinct heaviness in the underlip. The penetrating eyes are the most disturbing feature. Widely separated and in need of better articulation, they seem to have been painted in as an afterthought.

The modeling is hard, merely indicating the transition from one plane to another. From this standpoint it has a Germanic flavor; however, the modeling in the drapery is superior to that of the flesh and it would seem that the painter had invented folds and convolutions to gain a theatrical effect. The decorative aspects have some correlation to Boltraffio, but the picture as a whole is foreign to his individuality.

The expression of Christ is sober to the point of somberness

that overaccentuates the solemnity of his gesture. Meaning and life are here replaced by a static austerity devoid of movement. The harsh quality of direct light is not in keeping with the soft warm light that customarily invades and enfuses the greater majority of Boltraffio's work. Because there is little if anything to recommend this panel in the personal style of any Leonardesque students or followers, it should remain undesignated, merely specified as a Milanese work.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ATTRIBUTION OF CERTAIN PORTRAITS TO BOLTRAFFIO HAVING SOME SUBSTANTIAL PROOF FROM KNOWN SOURCES OR A POSITIVE STYLISTIC RELATIONSHIP

Little if anything has been said about Boltraffio's portrait production other than when it has been directly related to religious works. The characteristics of style revealed in portraiture are much more difficult to isolate because the subject itself influences the representation of the character of an individual person and excludes to a certain extent the possibility of pure creativity in which the individual style of the artist can be manifested to its fullest extent. Thus the search for characteristic individuality, peculiar to Boltraffio, becomes more intense and concentrated; however, some of his personal traits will be maintained, although he preserves an honesty of approach and translation of the sitter.

Boltraffio has a predilection for somber backgrounds and subject attired in dark and often rich clothing. Such attributes in portraiture heighten and add to the poignancy and intensity of character of the person portrayed by contrasting and eliminating the external objects that tend to distract from the primary purpose of the portrait - the person portrayed. In all but a few pictures Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio maintained a high degree of skill and excellence in execution and demonstrated sensitivity in



reading and translating the character of the sitter. There is a group of portraits which, if they were the only remaining works of this artist, would attest to his great ability. Portrait after portrait exhibit his sitters in their tranquil, but by no means languid state. They reveal an inner depth and beauty of soul rarely so well stated, yet divulging the nature of his subjects honestly.

The physical characteristics of Giovanni Antonio's style prevalent in the majority of his portraits is the artist's ability to attain beneath the surface of the flesh a structural feeling upon which all else is built. Seldom does he allow his technique to become flat or to show a lack of modeling. Volume and mass are ever-present to provide a convincing illusion to depth and an adequate rotundity. On occasion the artist unknowingly broadens the forehead, slightly elongates the nose which often exhibits a nervous quality about the nostrils, and occasionally creates a puffiness in the under lip.

Portraiture is no different from any other type of painting for Boltraffio. One promptly detects the firmness of flesh, the clarity of tone, the solidity of form, and the meticulous rendering of reflected light in the shaded areas. This combined with his predilection for strengthening the shadows about the nose and the mouth unmistakably identifies the artist. One of Boltraffio's greatest achievements is his method of painting the eyes of his figures. They always have a transparent beauty and retain an alertness of character in the pupil or lens of the eye, while the iris is lighter, appearing in an almost fluid state and vibrant with

life. The eyes are never annoyingly penetrating, but are certainly compelling, and instantly command attention. In some instances they all but hypnotically coerce the viewer to contemplate and read with greater profundity the meaning and character of the sitter.

A very important work given to Boltraffio, perhaps one of the most sensitive and beautifully executed, is the panel of a Man and Woman Praying (Plate XXXIX) in the Brera, Milan. As far as can be determined no authority has ever given an attribution to this painting other than Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, yet its origin is shrouded in mystery. The provenience in the Brera catalogue states, "that it was formerly in the collection of Count Generale Teodoro Bonomi of Milan and remained in the Credea Bonomi Gallery until 1896. It was acquired at an auction by M. Edouard Andre of Paris and the same person yielded in 1897 to this Pinacoteca."<sup>1</sup> This entry accounts for a long span of time, but the question of who commissioned it, for what occasion, where it was originally placed, and whether this is the entire picture, remains a mystery.

There are no documented sources in existence to answer the above questions. No suggestion has ever been ventured as to the identity of this man and his wife and until some obscure information concerning the identity of these two persons is uncovered they will have to remain anonymous. If such information were to

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<sup>1</sup>Giulio Carotti, Catalogo della R. Pinacoteca di Brera in Milano, (Milano: Lombardi & Bellinzaghi, 1901), p.35.

come to light, we would perhaps know for what reason or occasion the picture was painted and where it was originally placed. From its size, and the placement of the man and woman looking upward, a much larger panel of a vertical nature is suggested, a type of composition for which Boltraffio had a strong predilection. Frizzoni, Malaguzzi-Valeri, and Teall all intimate that this panel is part of a larger piece, perhaps an altarpiece - the upper half of which is no longer in existence. There is nothing to support this contention other than the consequence of logically placing these two kneeling figures facing each other, in profile to the spectator, looking toward Heaven.. Except for the heads of two putti, there is nothing in the sky above them to cause such ardent adoration. Thus it would seem that such a premise set forth by these three men is logical and in keeping with the composition.

Frizzoni and Reinach both place the date of this production about 1510.<sup>1,2</sup> Others have hinted at earlier dates, but these authorities are neither definite nor do they attempt to substantiate their contention. The writer sees no reason why a date in the vicinity of 1510 is not consistent with the observations made thus far in the development of Boltraffio's style. The costuming and the richness of the stuffs are very close in their individual textural qualities and luxuriousness to those in the Madonna and Child

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<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), IV, p.108.

<sup>2</sup>Solomon Reinach, Repertoire de peintre du moyen age de la Renaissance (1250-1580), (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), I, p.138.

(Plate VIII) in the gallery of the Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, whose date has been established as about 1510. There is a morbid quality in the dark clothing but the beauty of the black cut velvet of the man's tunic and the water silk taffeta of his sleeves vibrate with the same luxury of contrast that we saw in the Poldi Pezzoli Madonna. The woman is dressed in heavy black silk which drapes and folds in a most realistic manner to enhance the sophistication of her attitude. Her head is covered with a light veil-like scarf that has been given a naturalness seldom surpassed in the Milanese school. The execution of these two persons is far advanced technically from the Casio Family Madonna (Plate I) where the stuffs are adequate but hardly reach the level of perfection witnessed in this picture. In fact there is no area in the painting of the drapery that allows one to be dissatisfied. Thus the writer would tend to place the execution of this Brera panel just prior to the Poldi Pezzoli Madonna, or about 1509.

There are few examples in the painting of landscape among Boltraffio's works that affords us such an excellent opportunity to examine a later development of his style in this genre as this does. It has many of the elements which we noted previously in the Louvre Madonna (1500) by Giovanni Antonio, but in that pala the dominance of his master is most evident in the detail of the immediate foreground. We also saw in the Saint Barbara (1502) (Plate II), now in Berlin, a slight retrogression in the realistic rendering of the landscape; it is a landscape which came close to being a painted backdrop as reality is supplanted by a type of conventional styliza-

tion. Here, however, in the Brera painting we witness a style similar to that of the Louvre panel but possessing greater freedom and individuality. It is less dominated by the influence of Leonardo. The trees retain their rounded and modeled forms, the mountains whether foliated or not are realistic and convincing, although those to the right could be criticized for a certain geometric parallelism of structure. Boltraffio has preserved the Leonardesque sfumato quality in the distance, making it atmospherically more realistic in its gradual recession. The landscape is flooded with light which is echoed in the reflection of the water in the foreground. The immediate foreground, where the figures kneel, is less satisfying and somewhat reminiscent of that seen in the Saint Barbara in Berlin, but in no way does it detract from the effectiveness of the entire picture.

The freedom and delightful manner in which Boltraffio has so carefully placed the trees in the background has effected the loosening up of the composition - preventing it from becoming formalized. This by far is the most exciting landscape executed by Boltraffio. Thus there is no reason to think that the date of this picture is not 1509 or shortly thereafter. The Brera picture, which might readily be called Giovanni Antonio's masterpiece, demonstrates nobility and maturity of style incorporated with a concept of great depth seldom evidenced amongst the other followers of Leonardo.

The sky was painted in much the same manner as that in the Louvre altarpiece, building up in a nebular fashion in the center to a cloud formation which contains not a musical angel as in the

Casio Madonna, but the heads of two putti. They are foreshortened and have a close relationship to the angel mentioned above. In chapter two the point was raised concerning the painting of this musical angel which could not be established with definite certainty; however, the intimate resemblance of the angel to the putti helps considerably to unite the two pictures, leaving less area for doubt with reference to the Casio Madonna. The same question might be raised about the Brera picture and the possible later addition of the putti because of its fragmentary state. Nothing was revealed by the two separate and independent restorations carried on by Professors Cavenaghi and Bertini who undoubtedly would have recorded some fact about such a discovery had they found anything.<sup>1</sup> This would ally then the two pictures and discount the Bolognese tradition that attributes to Leonardo the musical angel in the Casio Family Madonna in the Louvre.

The later style of Boltraffio is evidenced in the rendering of portraits that illustrate a category of his work. Beneath their facade of quietude and composure there is a keen sense of intelligent interpretation on the part of the artist to execute character and poignancy of expression. Never does Giovanni Antonio overstate a premise by exaggerating the physical aspect of his portrayed subjects; he unobtrusively depicts them in a motionless state, thereby heightening the effect of subtle expression. The expression is always deep seated and immediately readable in the eyes while the

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<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Frizzoni, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," L'arte, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), IV, p.109.

remainder of the physiognomy complements them by underscoring the sitter's character and the artist's honest portrayal.

Thus it is not difficult in the Brera picture to comprehend the meaning expressed and to be convinced of the sincere piety that these two people possess for their revered and unseen object of adoration. Boltraffio's style has become firm and strong in the precision and accuracy of drawing, he commands a skill and technique which are entirely his own. The man shows not only the aspect of age, but also those of wisdom and humility, while his fine-featured wife possesses a sophisticated nobility accompanied by the reserve that permits humbleness of attitude.

The writer's first impression of this work was its great similarity to Holbein's Madonna of the Meyer Family (ca.1523) in Darmstadt, Germany, and he was not surprised that this was affirmed by Frizzoni in his article on Boltraffio.<sup>1</sup> The women in both instances hold a strong resemblance to one another in both features and attitude, but it was the men involved who originally attracted the writer's attention. Although their positions are different, their facial features are very much alike. However, the attitude of Jacob Meyer is one of alertness with an ardent desire to seek recognition from the Virgin while Boltraffio's unknown man is ceremoniously reserved like the majority of Italian donors who exhibit only adoration. Thus the resemblance, although strong, is close enough for the immediate awareness of the similarity to have occurred to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.108.

the author of this study.

The modeling of these two figures by Boltraffio is most sensitive, and the use of chiaroscuro with its play of light upon the folds of the drapery demonstrates the painter's alert perception. He was able to create a realistic sense of rotundity and volume in these figures as well as to give truth and naturalness to the objects in the background. They possess the feeling of weight necessary for the faithful reiteration of nature on a two dimensional surface. Truly this could well be called his masterpiece; the only unfortunate circumstance about the work is that we have no idea of what the non-existing portion of the picture was like.

The Castello Sforzesco near the Brera in Milan is in possession of a Female Portrait commonly referred to as the Woman with Gloves (Plate XL), bequeathed by the Marchese Emanuile D'Adda at the beginning of the twentieth century. Formerly in his collection at Campagna, it had been in his family's collection for many generations.<sup>1</sup> To date the writer has been unable either to discover how or when the d'Adda family acquired this panel or to ascertain anything which reveals its former provenience. With the exception of one painting, this, like all the others, is unsigned and undated opening up the problem of attribution to controversial opinions. However, it is universally accepted today by the leading art historians and connoisseurs who with the exclusion of Suida give the work

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, "Il ritratto femminile del Bolt-raffio lasciato del Senatore d'Adda al Comune di Milano," Rassegna d'arte, (Milano: Menotti Bassani & C., 1912), XII, p.9.



to Boltraffio. Suida still insists that it is a work by Andrea Solario.<sup>1</sup> Although there are some technical similarities to the work of Solario, particularly in the rigidity of pose and hardness of effect, it allies itself to the style of Giovanni Antonio in the most part.

This thoughtful woman, seated in a three-quarter position, folds her left hand over her right which holds a pair of gloves. She is dressed in a red under waistcoat and a bodice decorated with embroidery. The blue sleeves are attached at the shoulders with large white puffings of great richness.<sup>2</sup> Many of Boltraffio's female portraits appear rather flat bosomed as does this one. The fullness and lovely modeling of the neck forms a beautiful transition between the shoulders and the head and alleviates any need of greater rotundity to strengthen the sensation of form over the flattened squareness of the bodice and neckline. Perhaps Giovanni Antonio recognized the suggested flatness and appreciably reduced it by emphasizing the contrasting black beads which encircle the woman's neck.

A delicate net, held fast by a thin velvet band decorated with a rosette of pearls, allows the heavy blond hair to fall within the net to the shoulders. The head is long and oval with the characteristically predominant jaw and chin and the elongated nose which

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Suida, Leonardo und sein Kreis, (München: F. Bruchmann, 1929), p.174.

<sup>2</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.84.

is rather broad bridged. The forehead is arched at the base by delicately curving eyebrows. The deep blue eyes immediately attract attention with their melancholy composure and serenity. This, in contrast to the warmth of her flesh, kindles and preserves a vibrant quality of youth to the sophistication of the woman. The decided undulation in the full sensuous mouth fortunately does not develop into a grimacing archaic smile.

The artist has observed the Leonardesque rules of modeling in his successful utilization of chiaroscuro in the transition to the shaded areas which skillfully pick up the reflected light that enlivens interest and enriches movement. Repeated in this portrait and characteristic of Boltraffio is the heavy shadow cast by the dilated nostrils and the slight puffiness of the underlip. There remains little room for hesitation or skepticism as to the identity of the artist; the character and sureness of modeling coexist with the style of the artist.

An evident analogy can be made with the Virgin in the Casio Madonna (Plate I) in its strong modeling, in the pose, in the obvious skeletal framework of the head, and the body with its enveloping drapery, yet this woman possesses greater sophistication and a less peasantlike character than that of the Louvre altarpiece.<sup>1</sup> It is close in style and technique to the Louvre picture yet is dependent on the learned teachings of Leonardo. Its lack of inde-

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, "Il ritratto femminile del Bolt-raffio lasciato del Senatore d'Adda al Comune di Milano," Rassegna d'arte, (Milano: Menotti Bassani & C., 1912), XII, p.9.

pendence of style places this production close to the Casio Madonna of 1500. Malaguzzi-Valeri suggests the first decade of the Cinquecento for its execution, but this seems too large a span of time when we think of the great change and increased individuality of style developed by Boltraffio in this decade.<sup>1</sup> Saint Barbara in Berlin, dated 1502, would seem to show more advanced technique than the Woman with Gloves (Plate XL), but because of its sureness of drawing and modeling the Louvre painting must precede it. Therefore, the writer would suggest that the date of this work be fixed at about 1502.

The Woman with Gloves (Plate XL) is an appealing and sensitive portrait. Although a work directly influenced by the artist's association with Leonardo, it demonstrates Giovanni Antonio's alertness of mind and creative ability. The only passage within the framework of this panel which is in any way disturbing is the execution of the swollen left hand having the appearance of being an inflated glove. It is poorly constructed in terms of reality, but as we have noted previously Boltraffio often had difficulty with the rendering of hands. Had Boltraffio not been a dilettante but of necessity a practicing artist, we should have today greater works and more of them. This is a lamentable fact, but when such distinguished results as this portrait are achieved with so little practice, we can only speculate what his production might have been.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.10.

A unique and more sensitive portrait of a woman is the Clarice Pusterla Portrait (Plate XLI) in the collection of Contessa Soranzo-Mocenigo of Milan. It formerly belonged in the Lachino del Mayno Collection of the same city. The picture bears neither marks of its executor nor a date, but it is not difficult to understand why no one questions the universally accepted attribution of its being by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. This portrait, far more than the previously discussed portrait, possesses characteristics close to the style of Boltraffio. Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri and Carotti were among the first of the writers to point out its close affinity to Mary in the Casio Madonna.<sup>1</sup> However, the actual physical resemblance lies in the three-quarter pose and the slight tilt of the head, and the raised eyes which look at the viewer with a pleading quality that we have noted not only in the Virgin of the Casio Madonna, but also in the portraits of Giacomo Casio (Plate I) and Orlando da Ponte (Plate XV).

The eyes, represented in a suggestive dreamy state, are painted with the same poignant and liquid fashion. The portrait embodies more of the individual characteristics and the individualized physical features of the sitter. The face is rounder and the nose is shortened yet casts the familiar heavy shadow about the nostrils. The mouth has no hint whatsoever of the Leonardesque smile; thus the sense of sweetness which is so commonly associated with the Milanese school of this period is eliminated. However, a predomi-

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.82.

nance and strength are given to the line of the jaw and the highlighted area of the chin. The modeling of the flesh is beautifully handled. A soft delineation about the eyes, from the aspect of technique alone, accounts to some degree for the languid effect. The shading on the left cheek and neck admirably absorb the reflected light of the shoulder and the breast to enhance the flickering quality of life and movement.

The hair is confined in much the same manner as was that of the Woman with Gloves in the Castello, Milan. The gossamerlike netting confines the hair as, falling to the nape of the neck, it is held fast by a narrow bejeweled band encircling the head. Had not the hair line been so harshly delineated, there would undoubtedly have been a softer transition of values and contrasting textures which would have inadvertently resulted in a more subtle softening of the features.

The mode of the day is preserved in her dress with its rather tight fitting green bodice, squared open neck fringed with embroidery, and the large full slit sleeves revealing red material beneath and tied at the shoulder with white puffs. The textural qualities, having a stiffer and somewhat harder aspect, are not as handsomely rendered as those in the Woman with Gloves. Probably the most delightfully executed portion of the portrait is the double strand of beads. Instead of conforming to the undulations of the collar bones and the upper breasts, they remain suspended to create a delicate and charming shadow on the satinlike flesh. Wilhelm Suida, in his article about the Chatsworth portrait, makes

reference to the Portrait of Clarice Pusterla suggesting that the beads were executed by Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>1</sup> Suida in no way substantiates his assertion with either documentation or logical reasoning; hence, such a statement must be viewed with great caution. The only reply to this theory is in the form of a question - why should Leonardo have painted the beads when it is conceded that Boltraffio executed the portrait.

There is no doubt in accepting the attribution of this work as being by Giovanni Antonio, but where to place it chronologically among his other works poses a more difficult problem. The pose and attitude of Clarice Pusterla is very much like that of the Virgin in the Casio Family Madonna, yet is more relaxed and less formal than the Portrait of a Woman with Gloves in the Castello. There is more feeling for form and a realistically rendered mass than were evident in the Castello portrait or the Virgin in the Louvre panel, the former having been attempted but without ultimate success and the latter shrouded under loose drapery which reveals little of the physical structure. Thus, because of its dependence of the Leonardesque mannerism, the writer would place this portrait in the first half decade of the Cinquecento, as the obvious individuality in Boltraffio's underlying development is apparent. The suggested date therefore should be about 1503 or 1504.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Suida, "Das Leonardeski Junglisbildnis in Chatsworth," Pantheon, (München: F. Bruckmann, 1930), VI, p.565.

"Boltraffio . . . himself a beautiful young noble, paints these palace children of luxury as lovely youths whose smile is the faint effluence of their beauty."<sup>1</sup> As romantic as this statement from the pen of Mrs. Taylor appears to be, the truth remains that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio saw only the beauty in nature when translating in paint the objects and figures before his eyes. As sober and often melancholy as some of his portraits may appear, there is always an underlying current of aesthetic quality intrinsic unto itself which can be interpreted only as a profound form of beauty being underscored by quietness and sobriety. Never are Boltraffio's portrayed subjects so autocratic that whatever stiffness they might possess ever produces a distant relationship between the portrait and the observer. Nor do they ever become so familiar in their attitude that they become oppressive in clamouring for attention. Displaying a humility and warmth, Boltraffio's portraits are reserved and subtle while maintaining an elegance of dignity and bearing.

A portrait which claims all these qualities and sustains a youthful charm is the Portrait of a Youth (Plate XLII) now in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. Seldom does a portrait of a youth emerge, as Pedretti so adequately states, that has such an intimate psychological expression coupled with so sensitive an appearance as does this portrait.<sup>2</sup> The Portrait of a Youth commands our

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<sup>1</sup>Rachel A. Taylor, Leonardo the Florentine, (London: Richards Press, 1927), p.176.

<sup>2</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.24.

attention immediately with an empathetic reaction. This certainly equals in sensitivity the artist's masterpiece in the field of portraiture - the Two People Praying (Plate XIXXX) in the Brera. If these two pictures were to remain the only works out of the meager production now existing of Giovanni Antonio, they alone would irrefutably rank the artist as one of the first rate men in the field of painting in the Renaissance.

This picture came to the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. in 1947 as a bequest from the Ralph and Mary Booth Collection in Detroit. Like so many other works by Boltraffio the portrait has an uncertain provenience. There is evidence that the panel passed through the galleries of Sir Joseph Duveen, coming from the collection of Sir Philip Sasson in England shortly after 1921 - the year Sir Charles Holmes saw the painting in that collection and published his article concerning it. Sir Charles informs us that it had previously been the possession of Baron Gustave de Rothchild.<sup>1</sup> However, the provenience ends here and remains unknown as does the identity of the youth.

Maria Reggiani Rajna and Malaguzzi-Valeri hold to the idea that this is a portrait of Girolamo Casio as a youth, a contention the writer is unable to accept.<sup>2,3</sup> The writer will always maintain,

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Charles Holmes, "Leonardo and Boltraffio," Burlington Magazine, (London: 1921), XXIX, p.107.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Reggiani Rajna, "Un po'd'ordine fra tanti Casii," Rinascimento, (Roma: Reale, 1951), no. 3-4, p.365.

<sup>3</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.90.



unless newly discovered material indicates otherwise, that the identity of this youth is anonymous. The sitter cannot possibly be Girolamo Casio who was three years the elder if we are to assume that Boltraffio had had no connection with Casio before going to Bologna in 1500, when the artist was thirty-three years old. This alone dispels any possibility of the portrait's imaging the person of Girolamo Casio.

The youth in the panel is placed in front of a full deep background of dark green in a three-quarter view and looks directly at the observer. He wears a white blouse richly embroidered about the collar, and a red jerkin edged with dark brown is worn as an over garment; its sleeves are tied in the customary fashion at the shoulder to allow the white puffs to show at the juncture. He also wears a black cap with a high brim, to the front of which is attached a gold placchetta. On close inspection of the costume it is observed that the right sleeve is empty; it is folded over and pinned, indicating that the youth had lost his forearm. This final observation dispels completely the assertion by Rajna and Malaguzzi-Valeri that this portrays the youthful Casio.

Because it does not show the meticulous reworking which is visible in many other works of Giovanni Antonio, Sir Charles Holmes contends it was painted from nature.<sup>1</sup> The drawing is quick, lacking in precision, but gaining a fresh and vigorous quality; the shadows seem a bit heavy in the customary places in the vicinity of the nose,

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Charles Holmes, "Leonardo and Boltraffio," Burlington Magazine, (London: 1921), XXIX, p.108.

under the mouth, and on the neck. The reflected light in the other shaded areas is executed in the finest chiaroscuro technique and reveals the refinement so often associated with Boltraffio. A filtered golden light bathes the entire surface of this panel enhancing its beauty immeasurably. One of the handsomest features about this painting is the warm tones and textural quality of the hair as it falls in smooth waves to the youth's shoulders. In a quick and almost impressionistic technique the artist has given it high light with the suggestion of calligraphic delineation; in the shaded areas he has merely suggested, with a broad brush, the darkened valleys of the hair.

The nervous quality mentioned in the two previous portraits is detected in the Portrait of a Youth in the dilated region of the nose where just enough light penetrates the shadows to give a quivering quality. It would seem to the writer that there is a close connection between this portrait and the Clarice Pusterla Portrait (Plate XLI) in the execution of the eyes. They are arched by flattened eyebrows, and a slight puffiness at the extremities accents the heavy delineated shadows in the conjoining of the lids and eye sockets, while the underlids are rendered lighter in contrast to the prevailing shadow directly below. For this reason the writer would prefer to place its production somewhere between 1503 and 1506 or slightly after the Pusterla Portrait, only because of one feature - the distinct undulation observed at the inner corner of the eyes, a phenomenon which becomes increasingly evident in the development of Giovanni Antonio's style in the latter part of the

first decade of the Cinquecento. Perry B. Colt states in his article that the execution of the youth corresponds not only to the Clarice Pusterla Portrait but also to the St. Barbara in Berlin and the Female Portrait (Plate LXIV) in the Collection of Febo Borromeo in Milan.<sup>1</sup> Again there is a strong similarity in the mouths of each of these portraits although the Pusterla panel exhibits a deliberately reworked area. However, if we are to rely on Holmes in believing that the Portrait of a Youth was executed directly from nature, there is an explanation for the less finished aspect of the heavily shaded mouth.

This Portrait of a Youth in Washington, D.C. is undoubtedly one of Boltraffio's best works. Much more could be said of this charming work with its youthful vigor and gripping personality set down truthfully with its numerous variations of classic perfection. The individuality illustrated in this portrait alone shows that even though he was influenced by Leonardo, Boltraffio was never overwhelmed to such a degree that he lost his own characteristic identity.

A portrait which has received considerable attention in this present decade because of the controversial issues concerning its attribution is the Portrait of Girolamo Casio (Plate XLIII) in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. In the past this portrait has generally been accepted as a work from the hand of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, an opinion which the author of this study favors and

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<sup>1</sup>Perry B. Colt, Worcester Art Museum Annual, (Worcester, Mass.: 1941), IX, p.36.

respects to a degree regardless of the material recently gathered and published. In spite of the rather poor condition in which this panel exists today, the writer feels that from its stylistic character that in large the work is from the hand of Boltraffio.

The three articles published in consecutive years beginning in 1951 with Maria Reggiani, Leo S. Olschki, and Carlo Pedretti, give this work to Il Francia (1450-1517), reputedly a friend of the poet-jeweler, Girolamo Casio.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In summation of all three these writers contend that the Brera portrait shows the age of Casio to be about ten years younger than his profile in the Louvre picture (Plate I), thus dating the panel about 1490, a time when Boltraffio was in Milan and still somewhat indebted to the Foppeschi and Borgognoneschi tradition. Secondly, without thoroughly examining the differences of style of these two artists they assert that the picture is in the style of Il Francia. Thirdly, Pedretti states that the portrait has the warmth gotten from Andrea Solario by Bartolomeo Veneto (active 1502-1530), an artist who Berenson states was influenced in part by Boltraffio.<sup>4</sup> This influence passed on to Il

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<sup>1</sup>Maria Reggiani Rajna, "Un po'd'ordine fra tanti Casii," Rinascimento, (Roma: Reale, 1951), no.3-4, pp.337-383.

<sup>2</sup>Leo S. Olschki (ed.), "On the Iconography of Girolamo Casio," Rivista d'arte annario, (Firenze: 1952), XXVII, ser.3, pp.229-230.

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie rigaurdanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), pp.16-58.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.50.

Francia. Signore Pedretti, when mentioning Il Francia as its probable author, is treading on treacherous ground when he contends that its date is 1490, twelve years prior to any possibility of Veneto's having painted a portrait, much less transmitting an influence to Il Francia. In all cases these persons support their claims in behalf of Il Francia on the scientific finds of the radiograph reports.

These reports prove conclusively that there is considerable repainting on the surface of the panel and that the addition of a slip of paper and a wreath was executed after 1523, the year Pope Clement VII honored the poet, a fact which has already been established in the first chapter. The addition of the paper could not have been before 1523 as, according to Pedretti, Casio's Clementina, from which the poem on the paper is an excerpt, was published in that year.<sup>1</sup> Pedretti's article also indicates that Signore Marcello Oretti in 1757, who also attributed the panel to Il Francia, stated that there was a great deal of over painting at that time.<sup>2</sup> Although the writer can find no report concerning the awkward positioning of the right hand and its placement over the paper, the writer would suspect that the hand was a later addition, its construction and thin nervous quality being foreign to Boltraffio's style.

Considering the great amount of repainting that remains on the

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<sup>1</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.15.

surface and the information revealed by the radiograph reports, it would seem logical to suppose that there was considerable loss in character and style as a result making the portrayed person more youthful than was originally intended. Thus it is possible that the person is older than he is represented here.

In the portrait, Girolamo Casio dressed in a very late Quattrocento fashion sits in a three-quarter position looking directly at the observer. His head is covered by a small cap upon which has been placed a laurel wreath. The red mantle over his shoulders is tied with black velvet, as are his sleeves, and the color is repeated in the trim about the neck. The conservative costume is typical of Boltraffio and indicates little feeling for body structure beneath the outer garments. But from a stylistic point of view it is the head that interests us most because it is here that the identity of the artist can be substantiated. Characteristically the head is an elongated oval with what would be a broad forehead were it not hidden by the coiffure. The eyes are widely separated and have the dreaminess accompanied by the heavily delineated shadow directly above the upper lids so often associated with Giovanni Antonio. Primarily that which is poignantly obvious and characteristic of Boltraffio's style is the wide bridge and elongated rendering of the nose which terminates at the base with dilated nostrils and punctuated by heavy shadows. Even more evident of Boltraffio is the construction of the mouth where there is no indication of a smile. The jaw line and the chin are given their customary dominance, and there is a swollen quality in the jaw line

of the right profile. This swollen area creates the heaviness of shadow at the juncture of the head and neck. The modeling is not as successful as we have seen before, probably because of the repainting; however, the reflected lights in the shaded areas and the subtlety of transition from one plane to another were accomplished with a knowing technique and warmth of texture.

This painting, like so many other portraits by Giovanni Antonio, is bathed in an overall warm light which gives it an affinity with the Washington portrait (Plate XLII) and the one at Chatsworth (Plate LI). Stylistically it seems obviously apparent that this work could belong to none other than Boltraffio. Although a similarity to the style of Il Francia may possibly be detected, the latter's technique differs in the execution of the mouth which is more undulating and somewhat smaller, of the eyes which are usually more deeply set, and of the pointedness apparent in the nose and chin, while his color basically embodies Venetian combinations and tones - none of which is observable in this portrait. Boltraffio always maintains a firm quality in his rendered flesh while Il Francia gives greater meaning to the body form beneath the drapery. The writer can see no other possible course under the circumstances revealed by these comparisons and with the accompanying analogies to Giovanni Antonio's other works than to assign this Portrait of Girolamo Casio in the Brera to Boltraffio.

The attribution of an individual group of male portraits to Boltraffio is seldom, if ever, questioned. The pose changes from one panel to another, but there is little difference in their ex-

pression or in the dignified bearing which the artist has endowed them. From the point of coloration, they might be termed 'morbid' in that they all are dressed in very dark clothing seated against an equally somber background of brownish green. The first which attracts our attention is the Profile of a Man (Plate XLIV) in the National Gallery, London, which was formerly in the Ludwig Mond Collection.

Showing the simple and conscientious side of Boltraffio's art, this figure in profile looks straight ahead without the slightest hint of emotion. He is dressed in a black hat and black garments relieved only by the white and gold puffs of velvet. His vertical pose is lessened to some extent by the horizontal thrust of his inflated right hand as it is inserted in the folds of his vest, a hand similar to that in the Portrait of a Woman with Gloves (Plate XL). The masklike face, marked by contours rendered with an incised precision, gives a brittle effect to the lineament and the relief. The effect is further heightened due to the tones and the coloration of the pallid flesh with its shimmering luminosity and umber shadows.

Analogy reveals a close similarity between the heads of the figure of Girolamo Casio in the Casio Madonna (Plate I) in the Louvre and this portrait. This is particularized in the areas of the cheeks, the eyes and eyelids, and the fatty quality beneath the chin. There is a difference in the inclination of the nose, but in the London portrait is more emphasized by the placement of the cap. In profile we might expect to see a jutting chin and more



emphasis given to the under lip than is apparent; however, Pedretti points out that the concave area between the nose and the upper lip in the Mond portrait is not characteristic of the Casio son in the Louvre Madonna.<sup>1</sup> The writer of this study believes that we can see on close inspection this same concave segment in the Casio profile. It has been suggested by von Seidlitz that the hair has been repainted black.<sup>2</sup> The writer has not been able to obtain any reports concerning the condition of this painting and von Seidlitz may be correct in his assumption. If the hair had been lighter at one time it might have helped to some extent to alleviate the somber quality.

Another portrait and analogous to the one just discussed is the full face Portrait of a Man (Plate XLV) owned by the Count Alessandro Contini, which was previously in the Frizzoni Collection at Bergamo. As far as can be determined, this portrait has generally been accepted as a work of Boltraffio, but the identity of the individual portrayed will have to remain an unanswered question. Pedretti wishes it to be Girolamo Casio at a later date; this contention is upheld by Malaguzzi-Valeri who in the same breath states that this panel is a full face view of the London panel.<sup>3</sup> Such a

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<sup>1</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.25.

<sup>2</sup>Waldemar von Seidlitz, Die Mailander Ausstellung in Burlington Club, (Berlin: Preuse Jahrbucher, 1904), p.6 et seg.

<sup>3</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La Corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.89.

comparison does not seem entirely reasonable in that there is an appreciable difference in the fleshy quality of these two individual men and the writer can hardly believe it possible that they are one and the same person; however, both express great restraint and rigidity of pose.

This portrait is of a pale, clean-shaven man with long hair held in place under a black hat and wearing a black coat with a portion of his left hand projecting from the sleeve. He looks in the direction of the observer, but evades any direct glance. All other features about the portrait are characteristically executed in the Boltraffiesque style. The modeling is sharper and more adequately defined, but lacks the sense of harshness seen in the London portrait (Plate XLIV).

Another portrait of this same genre is of an Unknown Man (Plate XLVI) in the Palazzo Borromeo at Isola Bella outside Milan. This varies very little from the preceding ones except that its color is less brilliant and its expression is more intense. The modeling and use of chiaroscuro again reveal the work of Boltraffio, although the heavy delineation of this unknown man accents a firmness of execution. The verticality of his pose has been lessened by the thrusting forward of the head. This, then, produces the feeling of tranquility that seems to be more characteristic of Boltraffio's later work; however, the position of the head makes possible greater intimacy between the spectator and the sitter.

All these portraits are similar in that they are of a very severe nature. They can easily become confused by reading things

into them and drawing analogies that do not exist. However, in each panel a personality is involved, although its apparentness is not as evident at first sight as in the few portraits discussed earlier in the chapter. Truthfulness counts for a great deal in this genre of portraiture for Boltraffio. There are no embellishments or decorative features to detract from the true person. Seldom in portraiture do artists achieve as successful a definite type and style as does Boltraffio, who creates his own individual formula and tenaciously adheres to it. Giovanni Antonio follows more closely the Lombard tradition here, although his connection with Leonardo had the happy facility of eliminating the static and immobile nature of the inherited art of the region. The artist is identifiable by the sitters' self-possessed calm, their dignified appearance, and the deep and thoughtful expression indicative of a sedate nature. Their broad and powerful forms give the firmness and gravity a foundation upon which Boltraffio interpreted their individuality and human character.

A splendid and exciting example of his treatment of such an individual is the Bust of a Young Man (Plate XLVII) in Berne, Switzerland. A hat placed on top of the head confines the light brown hair which is held by a net and allowed to fall onto the shoulders. He is dressed in a white blouse embroidered about the neck and covered by a dark gray doublet tied at the throat. A black velvet cloak is thrown about the shoulders. The outward more luxuriant appearance of this portrait decisively reduces the sobriety that might have existed, but even here the earth green

background compliments the flesh tones and the hair of the sitter.

There is great refinement in the rendering of details and the arduous care of modeling the features. The Boltraffiesque characteristics are present, undeniably identifying its author. However, the picture is more studied and meticulously accomplished as if to suggest that it was not painted from nature directly. The writer believes such a contention is substantiated by an examination of a sanguine drawing (Plate XLVIII) owned by the Ambrossiana in Milan, which appears to be of the same person, but at an earlier age. The costumes are not identical, but there is a very strong resemblance in the features of the heads, which are identical with respect to the hat, hair, eyes, and mouth. The lengthening of the nose in the Berne portrait (Plate XLVII) is the only structural change, a stylistic trait over which we will have to concede that Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio had no control. Certainly the drawing is fresher and has more movement and life than the portrait, this is to be expected, yet the panel cannot be said to be labored.

The Portrait of a Young Man (Plate XLIX) owned by Mr. William G. Mather of New York City is another painting in which somberness has been reduced by a red curtain hung behind the sitter. This enlivens and enriches the panel in not allowing the subject to recede into an abyss of darkness. The figure is dressed in a black doublet with only a very narrow band of white showing about the throat. The sitter wears a large foppish hat that covers part of the right eye and makes him look almost top heavy. A placchetta, the detail of which is not distinguishable, is attached to the left side of

the hat. His long dark hair descends to his shoulders without the confinement of a net. Great delicacy is seen in the features of this frail youth whose slightly sunken cheeks bring out the bony quality and accentuate the mouth. However, the still rounded jaw line gives prominence to the cleft chin. The modeling, with the delicate use of chiaroscuro, is very light, yet the customary lights reflected in the shaded areas are not as evident in this portrait. The entire panel seems to emanate warmth which compliments its charm and exhibits a youthful alertness and vigor in many ways exceeding the other portraits of this type.

One of the freshest and most moving portraits universally attributed to Boltraffio is the red chalk and pastel drawing of Isobella d'Aragon (Plate L) in the Ambrossiana, Milan. There is little doubt of her identity as there are other portraits which verify this one. Isobella d'Aragon is viewed in full face with lowered eyes. Her loosely confined hair, covered by a thin transparent veil, is allowed to fall onto her shoulders and back in a very soft but brilliantly high lighted fashion. The rounded prominence given to the jaw and the chin with their diagonal shading convincingly breathes with life and movement. The nose in this drawing is much more exquisitely handled than others being diminished to some degree from its usual elongation, yet its protrusion results in the typical Boltraffiesque shadow.

The modeling and the artist's innate ability to execute textures with even greater superiority in this medium illustrates a sensitivity rarely witnessed in his paintings. The portrait

possesses a spontaneity and a definition of depth rarely equaled in Milanese art. The sketchy and rapid execution of the Renaissance costume represents merely the necessary portion of any portrait, but executed here with the greatest freedom. This chalk drawing might easily be called the artist's most spontaneous work.

In the upper right corner there is a preliminary sketch for a pair of eyes which are wide open and look straight forward. These eyes may be those of the person in the drawing, perhaps as an after thought on the part of the artist who may have intended to change the eyes in the drawing at a later date or when he reproduced it in a more permanent medium. If the artist did use this as his working sketch, there is no record of a portrait nor can a picture corresponding to this drawing be found. We ought to assume then that a drawing such as this, worked up and modeled so carefully in detail and character, was originally executed for the purpose of reproduction.

The beauty and loveliness of this person have been so sensitively expressed by the artist that one need have little doubt of the acute perception of this artist in capturing the true essence and stature of the person seen here.

Among the works of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio are four half length figures which have been identified as either saints, men, or women. The four panels as a group can be given to Boltraffio with little question in so far as they conform with a certain formalized rigidity to the stylistic character of the Milanese artist which has been established and emphasized. The four panels

are identified in various and decidedly contradictory ways. The first and foremost of these portraits in the Collection of the Duke of Devonshire (Plate LI) at Chatsworth is catalogued as a Portrait of Casio, the poet, as a Bust of a Youth, or on occasion as St. Sebastian. The second painting which holds a close relationship with the first is sometimes entitled the Casio Youth as St. Sebastian or as a Youth as St. Sebastian and belongs to the Earl of Elgin (Plate LIII) at Demfermline, Scotland. The third panel, often referred to as St. Sebastian, and on occasion as Casio but which is obviously of St. Louis of France (Plate LIV), is found today in the Gallery Romitaggio at the Hermitage in Leningrad; it came formerly from the Strganoff Collection. The fourth is a St. Sebastian (Plate LV) in the Frizzoni Collection, Milan. This last one and the previously cited Ivy Crowned Youth as St. Sebastian (Plate XXXI) in the Leichtenstein Collection have always presented a great problem with respect to their attribution, explicit iconographies, and individual identities.

To examine the panel at Chatsworth (Plate LI) belonging to the Duke of Devonshire first will clarify the iconographical question and thus allow a more positive conclusion to be drawn with relation to the other paintings in this hypothetical group of confused but interrelated panels. This picture portrays a person having the physical characteristics of the Casii, particularly in the area of the head. The golden brown hair flows down in high lighted waves to the bare neck and shoulders. The sitter is richly adorned in a dark blue dress with sleeves of red ochre overlaid with brown

embroidery. The flesh tones are rendered in warm golden hues identifiable with Boltraffio's technique. The figure has a warmth and charm about its person which leads many writers such as Malaguzzi-Valeri to comment on the effeminacy of the portrait while Adolfo Venturi believes the person to be that of a woman.<sup>1,2</sup> Such suppositions as these are further heightened by the fact that a band about the head is adorned by a jewel with a black pearl pendant; a delicate gold necklace hung about the neck terminates in a heavily ornamented cross, and a gold tendrillar monogram brooch is pinned to the right lapel. It is this clasp which has created the difficulty of identifying the person; however, we shall return to this problem after due consideration has been given to the stylistic analysis.

An emphasis on verticality is evident although the sitter is in a three-quarter pose looking out almost directly at the spectator. The broad forehead and widely separated eyes are conceived in a Boltraffiesque fashion, and the obvious horizontality broken by the elongated nose which, dilated at the nostrils, is emphasized by the heavy cast shadow. The mouth, a bit more undulating and more relaxed, evokes greater sensuality in its puffiness, but certainly does not flaunt a smile. The rounded jaw line and the accentuated chin testify to its authorship. The eyes in particular exhibit a

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<sup>1</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.86.

<sup>2</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1915), VII, no.4, p.1029.



strong affinity to those which have been closely scrutinized in the Castello portrait of a Woman with Gloves (Plate XL). The person's inflated hand in the Devonshire panel is thrust into the front of the dress in the same manner as that in the Ludwig Mond portrait (Plate XLIV) in the National Gallery, London.

The drapery, which is better defined and more colorful, has a characteristic stiffness, but reveals more substantially a specificity of form beneath. The folds are handsomely high lighted, but break over on themselves to form rounded angles. The jewelry and ornamentation have been executed with a meticulous and careful detail similar to that seen in the microscopic realism of the fifteenth century Flemish painting.

On the reverse side of this panel there is the painting of a skull placed in a niche (Plate LII). The lower jaw is missing. The painting is done in grisaille and umber and bears the following inscription: "INSIGNE SVM IERONYMI CASSI" painted to imitate carved Roman relief. Naturally this inscription led earlier writers to suppose this was a portrait of the poet on the front; however, we shall see the fallacy of such an assumption. Believing the painting on the reverse side to be a rarity, the writer endeavored to trace the practice. As nearly as can be discovered this type of identification on the reverse side was seldom seen, the detail and the extensiveness of the painting were often limited, never attaining the perfection of the front. Curiously enough, in tracing the origin which the writer was unable to ascertain, he discovered a portrait in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan (no.

477) attributed to Mariotto Albertinelli (1474-1515), a pupil of Fra Bartolomeo, with an identical skull in a niche painted on the reverse side of the panel. Whether or not Boltraffio was aware of this particular Florentine work would merely be supposition in any discussion and of little importance at this time.

The question as to the identity of the person portrayed has been left unanswered until this point. Among others, Cook, de Hervesy, and Malaguzzi-Valeri state that this portrait is of the poet, Girolamo Casio, a friend of the artist. This contention was originally based by these writers on the monogram pin on the dress when its design was taken to represent the initials G.B., standing for Giovanni Boltraffio. However, Cook in 1899 evidently discovered some written record by Inigo Jones, the English architect, who had discovered in the seventeenth century that the initials were C.B. and not G.B.<sup>1,2</sup> Herbert Cook was not the only authority to have misread the initials; Sir Christopher Wren had also interpreted the initials as G.B. which he announced stood for the Venetian artist, Ginevra Bensi.<sup>3</sup> After his discovery of the error, Cook resolved the monogram to mean, "Casio Beltraffius," a meaning which could signify the friendship between Casio and Boltraffio.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Cook, "Notizie d'Inghilterra," L'arte, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1907), XXIV, p.150.

<sup>2</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.17.

<sup>4</sup>Burlington Fine Arts Club, Illustrated Catalogue of Pictures of Masters of the Milanese and Allied Schools of Lombardy, (London: 1899), p.57.

Because of this, the identity of the picture has been retained for the past fifty years as the portrait of Girolamo Casio. But does this portrait resemble the various figures already viewed and supposedly of the poet laureate of Italy? There is a generic relation between the person portrayed and the Casio family. The writer of this study sincerely believes that it was Adolfo Venturi, who in his monumental work first hinted that it represented a woman.<sup>1</sup> In our own decade Maria Reggiani Rajna, and supported with great documentary evidence gathered by Carlo Pedretti, stated emphatically that the portrait is of a young woman by the name of Costanze Bentivoglio.<sup>2,3</sup> The fact that Girolamo was also a member of the same Bentivoglio family accounts for the family resemblance.

Mr. Pedretti states that Costanza Bentivoglio was the daughter of a Sante, Ercole Bentivoglio and his wife Barbara Torelli di Montechiarugolo. We also learn from the complete and verified work of Pedretti that many poems in Casio's Libro Intitulato Cronica, and one in his Epitophii di Amore e di Virtute, are dedicated to Costanza Bentivoglio, who was also the niece of Ginevra Sforza - the wife of Giovanni Sforza.<sup>4</sup> From the contents of these poems the

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<sup>1</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.1029.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Reggiani Rajna, "Un po'd'ordine fra tanti Cassi," Rinascimento, (Milano: 1951), n.3-4, p.361.

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.19.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

poet must have had rather strong feelings about his distant cousin as they are of an ardent nature, yet from what can be learned she was considerably his junior. The figure represented in this picture can conceivably be a person about 14 or 15 years old - certainly a minor by our standards. Her date of birth is unknown, but Pedretti in his relentless search discovered that she was married to Count Lorenzo Strozzi before reaching her majority shortly before January 21, 1506.<sup>1</sup> This might very well explain why Casio in a group of confessions to Pope Clement VII reveals his secret love as Giovio, a suspected play on the word Bentivoglio.<sup>2</sup> Thus there is little doubt that the tendrillar monogram brooch on the dress of the sitter bears her initials and thus reveals her identity.

The provenience of this picture is most uncertain; however, we do know that it was given by Pope Urban VIII to Charles I of England sometime between 1625 and 1636; the latter date being the first notice of its being in England and is due to Inigo Jones previously cited attribution. The painting arrived in England with an ornate frame upon which was inscribed the name of Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>3</sup> The writer has been unable to discover what happened to this painting or the list of owners; Jean Paul Richter states

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.20.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Reggiani Rajna, "Un po'd'ordine fra tanti Casii," Rinascimento, (Milano: 1951), n.3-4, p.372.

<sup>3</sup>Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia, (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.17.

it was in the Mond Collection in 1910.<sup>1</sup> Two years later it was transferred to Chatsworth and the Duke of Devonshire's Collection where it remains to this day.

A portrait (Plate LIII) of even greater refinement is one which in the nineteenth century came into the possession of Lord Elgin and his collection at Dumfermline in Scotland, having formerly been owned by the Marchese del Dallo and generally attributed to Melzi. It was Dr. Waagen who recognized the style and hand of Boltraffio, later publishing his findings in the Illustrated Catalogue of the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1899.<sup>2</sup> He was so convincing that even the Stragonoff picture was re-examined and assigned a new artist, Boltraffio.

Certainly as Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri has so adequately maintained, this panel is almost identical with the Devonshire Portrait, and Pedretti indicates that it is the same person; Costanza Bentivoglio is portrayed here as a youthful St. Sebastian. There is no reason why this is not an acceptable assumption as the feeling, expression, style, and quality all indicate the artistry of Bolt-raffio and the countenance of Costanza Bentivoglio. Whereas the Devonshire Portrait may have been done from sketches or even from life, the Lord Elgin Portrait possesses more finish and shows the verticality, and to some extent the idealization associated with

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paul Richter, The Mond Collection, (London: Clarendon Press, 1910), p.375.

<sup>2</sup>Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain, (London: John Murray, 1857), p.444.

the religious works of the Milanese artist. Naturally this latter picture has often been identified as Girolamo Casio because of the fillet adorned with laurel about the head though the arrow in the inflated right hand is obvious; however, the writer concedes that the identity of the person in this painting is the same as that of the Chatsworth Portrait.

The fillet confines the blond hair which is parted in the center and allowed to fall onto the shoulders in beautifully highlighted waves that terminate in full curls. The coat of a rich red trimmed with a black velvet collar is worn over a green vest which is complementary with the dark background. The warm tones of the flesh and the delicacy of the linear quality combined with the Leonardesque modeling and use of chiaroscuro can only point to one artist having this style and individuality. The magnificence with which the pendant brooch of pearl and topaz at the neck and the three pearls on the shoulder are painted add that ultimate touch of delight and luxuriousness which we commonly associate with the artist of noble birth, who on occasion divulged in this manner the strata of society in which he had his beginnings.

It was not uncommon in the Renaissance for individuals to be portrayed with sacred attributes or symbols such as we find in this painting. The perplexing feature is that there is a certain timidity in the Devonshire Portrait which is not found in the Elgin Panel. Again such a phenomenon is explainable if we assume that the Elgin picture is of a later date; under the circumstances in a work executed for a second time, greater ability and sureness would

be demonstrated. Thus the slight differenced, the firmness of approach, and the lack of depth of interpreting character are readily accountable in that the sitter has a dual function in this panel.

A portrait which has even greater refinement and depth of character is the St. Louis of France (Plate LIV) formerly of the Stragonoff Collection and now in the Hermitage in Russia. This effigy has often been mistaken for St. Sebastian as the arrow (spear) has obviously been introduced as an attribute of the saint. This Boltraffiesque youth, who resembles to some degree the subject of the Devonshire panel (Plate LI), is pictured against a dull black background. His flowing, shoulder length blond hair complements the warm flesh tones of the face which radiate with a living quality, but the saddened smile has not become accentuated to a point of mannerism. He is dressed in a fur lined mantle of rich blue embroidered with gold fleur de lis, sleeves of dark red and a vest of green. His head is crowned with a full wreath of leaves and red flowers fastened at the front by a gold clasp made of a large square cut sapphire from which a pendant pearl hangs. A similar brooch hangs from a necklace, but this one contains a ruby and a pearl.

As in the Devonshire Portrait, this youth inserts his inflated right hand into the front of his coat in the characteristic Bolttraffiesque fashion, almost as if the artist were avoiding the necessity of painting the entire hand. From what we have witnessed of Boltraffio's executed hands thus far, he must have been aware of

his inferiority in rendering them with true structural realism.

The physiognomy reveals the same Leonardesque techniques of modeling and use of chiaroscuro that were employed by Boltraffio, and his own painstaking drawing. It would only be repetitious to restate the stylistic features that have been stressed thus far, but one point that seems a bit foreign is the metallic handling of the hair. Instead of flowing in large wavelike patterns it now seems light and kinky with a springlike quality. Why Boltraffio should have depicted this type of hair is a mystery and the only accountable reason might be that he had been influenced by a new mode of the day or else he had employed a new model to sit for him.

The drapery is handled in very much the same manner as in the St. Sebastian (Plate LII) owned by Lord Elgin; the same typical folds and refinement are given the material. Here, however, the textural qualities are better preserved and more faithfully adhered to in their rendering. The vest or blouse, beautifully gathered at the neck, is allowed to break into many naturally placed folds. From a tactile point of view, this panel is one of the richest pictures executed by Boltraffio.

There is a drawing in the Uffizi in Florence (Plate LVI) of a wreath crowned youth in a fur lined coat which has a definite relationship with the St. Louis of the Hermitage. The expression on the face and the tight curled hair in the drawing are the same, but the direction of the pose is different as the Uffizi drawing is viewed in profile to the right while the St. Louis is seen facing left. The Leningrad panel has more of the stereotyped qualities of



Leonardo which lend an immobility to the pose.

There is in existence another half length figure of St. Sebastian (Plate LV) in the Milanese collection of Frizzoni, in which the shape of the panel is in the form of a tondo. The youth, who holds an arrow in his poorly articulated hand, faces toward the left. Boltraffio's style of execution and modeling duplicates his previous work in its alert but docile manner. Against a drab background the saint is dressed in black trimmed with white about the neck, and the lapels of the collar are fur lined; the details show less vigor and tactile sensation than usual in their individual modeling. This panel reminds us more distinctly of the Madonnas executed at the beginning of the Cinquecento by Boltraffio because of its quietude and a certain pleading quality observed in the eyes. The hair flows more freely and the turning of the head gives not only movement to the figure but a sensation of thoughtfulness.

In three different collections there exist paintings by Boltraffio in which he employed the same model for his sitter. Two of these panels are of the same subject, Narcissus: one in the National Gallery in London (Plate LVII), and the other in the Uffizi in Florence (Plate LVIII). The third painting is of St. Sebastian (Plate LIX) in Messina, Sicily, in the Collection of Signora Eugenia Scalione Frizzoni. The three paintings illustrate Boltraffio's guided predilection for pyramidal form in their schematic compositions, yet in both versions of the Narcissus the subject leans forward to view his own reflection. Giovanni Antonio adheres to his customary rendering of the almost feminine profile of the

youths in their smooth and delicate modeling. He has repeated the prolonged line of the forehead and the nose which terminates abruptly in the concavity of the upper lip as the lineament continues to flow sensuously into the contours of the delicate and full lips. A decided indentation under the rounded underlip which accentuates the strong protruding curve of the chin appears to be more predominant in the St. Sebastian, probably because of the erect nature of the head.

The hair in all three instances is bound in place by a wreath of leaves and presents a somewhat unkempt appearance as it descends to the shoulders. They are all dressed exactly the same in dark coats with fur collars, but the latter addition is missing on the garment of St. Sebastian. The bodice of the under garments is richly embroidered with a leafy acanthus design which has a bursting pomegranate in the center, a peculiar device to be associated with Narcissus. The pomegranate in Christian iconography symbolizes a hopeful future and the spreading of the faith; the writer has been unable to attach any direct significance to the symbol in pagan mythology. Nonetheless, the design is not the same in all cases. It is most realistic in the Uffizi picture (Plate LVIII) while the London panel (Plate LVII) illustrates a highly stylized pomegranate with only six heavily outlined leaves. The design embroidered on the garment of St. Sebastian (Plate LIX) is dark in mass and has ten stylized leaves and a small pomegranate. The inflated left hand of St. Sebastian is again partially hidden and holding a diagonally poised arrow which releaves the verticality

of the sitter.

All three would appear to have been done in the same period although greater skill can be distinguished in one as opposed to another. Both Narcissi illustrate this best in their respective backgrounds which reveal considerable landscape while St. Sebastian is placed in front of a dark background. The detail and execution of the typically Leonardesque background is more superficial and wanting in textural effects in the London Narcissus (Plate LVII) than the more meticulously rendered rocks, water, and trees of the Uffizi Narcissus (Plate LVIII). The London panel shows the pool of water in which Narcissus sees his own delicate image while the Uffizi picture merely implies its existence by the inclination of the head. The stalagmite rock formation of the immediate background, that portion which acts as a backdrop for the individual profiles, is handled in the same geological manner as Leonardo utilized in his Madonna of the Rocks in the Louvre, Paris. The gaunt trees, the winding stream, the low mountains in the background, all enlivened with the semi-sfumato effect, continue to illustrate Giovanni Antonio's dependence on Leonardo for his inspiration and prototype. The Uffizi Narcissus is closer to Leonardo than the London picture which has been minimized in its detail and the amount of background executed.

The provenience on either the St. Sebastian or the Narcissus in the Uffizi is uncertain, and how these two collections acquired their paintings the writer has yet to determine; however, the London panel is accompanied by a more extensive but limited pro-

venience. The first notice of the London Narcissus was the Walch Porter Sale on April 27, 1810, where it was listed as having formerly been in the Aldobrandini Collection and attributed to Bellini. It was exhibited in 1870 as a Luini, but later turned up as a Boltraffio in the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition in 1899 having been lent by Lady Alice Taunton. Sir A. Ellis lent the same painting again for exhibition purposes in 1908 at which time it carried the attribution of Pseudo-Boltraffio, with which Suida wholeheartedly agreed, and at the same time designating the same author to the Uffizi picture and the St. Sebastian in Messina.<sup>1</sup> The Narcissus was finally purchased by the National Gallery in London in 1910 through the Salting Bequest.<sup>2</sup> By means of this provenience we learn that various attributions have been assigned these pictures; however, it is now safe to assume that they may be given directly to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio from a stylistic basis alone. From their physical features and characteristics a suggestive date for these panels would range somewhere from 1495 to 1497.

Similar to the facial features and expressions which we have just examined are those of four saints and male and female donors seen in two panels which undoubtedly made up the wings of an altar of which the center portion is missing. These Two Altar Wings

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Suida, Leonardo und sein Kreis, (München: F. Bruckmann, 1929), pp.117-124.

<sup>2</sup>National Gallery of London, Description and Historical Catalogue of British and Foreign Pictures, (81 ed. London: Stationary Office, 1913 & 1921), n. 2673.

(Plate LX) for centuries attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio are in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Each panel is composed of three kneeling persons and two saints. The panels are unique in the production of Boltraffio as they are the only altar wings by the artist which are preserved today. They show distinct characteristics of Giovanni Antonio fused with not only early Leonardesque mannerisms but also with strong Lombard and Milanese influences. These panels, the writer believes, predate all the pictures which we have examined to this point.

In fact there are three identifiable influences represented in these two panels. They are divided according to the old Lombard tradition of placing the men with their patron saints, St. George and St. Domenic on the left side and the women to the right with their saints, St. Roch and St. Sebastian. The proportions given to those persons portrayed recalls the mark of Foppa while the columnar crowding of the figures in the limited compositional area is reminiscent of Borgognone's style.

In the heads of at least one man, two women, and four saints, the striking resemblance to Giovanni Antonio's individual style is apparent. These heads hold a close affinity to the two Narcissi and the St. Sebastian in Messina, while the modeling and the sculptural manner seen in the treatment of the drapery are individual to Boltraffio. The Leonardesque passages are vividly seen in the man and woman furthest from the center of the individual panels, who look as if they belonged to that category of cariacature sketches made by Leonardo in his Notebooks. The landscape cannot

be adequately seen in the left panel, but in the right panel (that of the women) an extremely beautiful landscape is observable. It has a strong suggestion of that employed by Leonardo da Vinci in the Mona Lisa (1508) in the Louvre, but lacks the realistic effect of sfumato so characteristic of the world renowned painting. Without any great stretch of the imagination one perceives that it reflects a quality and feeling derived from similar landscapes by Pollaiuolo and Baldovenetti.

The crowding of the architectural features is indicative of Borgognone yet lacks the detail and ornamentation which this artist would have employed. The space is hardly adequate for the distribution of all these people, an explainable phenomenon if we suppose that these panels were executed about 1490 or shortly before. If this is the case, then we are witnessing Boltraffio in the process of emancipating himself from one style and learning the more modern techniques expounded by Leonardo.

Recapitulating for a moment the manner of style found in these panels and noting particularly the heads, Boltraffio in his early career had a predilection for an elongated nose, one which formed a line with the forehead profile. This consequently had the effect of separating the eyes to a great extent. The flesh, even at an early date, was flooded with warm golden tones which tended toward a reddish tint and limited to some extent the amount of modeling which could be achieved. His greater talent in modeling is witnessed in the folds of the drapery which are handled with a considerable degree of realism and with an intensification of the

rotundity and stiffness which results in an inflated quality, this being the only disturbing feature.

Interestingly enough, Giovanni Antonio has painted the hair of these figures in the two panels in thick straggly masses, also evident in the St. Sebastian of the Frizzoni Collection in Messina and the two panels of the Narcissus. The hands are grossly inflated and appended with long tapering fingers - a combination that is almost incongruous. However, the expression of the figures in the Castello Altar Wings is convincing, the saints being most benevolent and gentle while those persons kneeling possess a quietude and ardent sincerity of a spiritual nature.

These two Castello panels present an interesting pair of paintings to examine as early works of the artist. The writer believes that Boltraffio as seen here proves that there were other definite influences if not teachers in his artistic career before his acquaintance and discipleship with Leonardo da Vinci, an opinion contradictory to that held by some writers on the subject. Boltraffio, who among the pupils, was perhaps the most independent of the master and was the most individual of all the followers, maintained those precepts which were pre-eminently Leonardesque, using them in his work but giving them a uniqueness, originality, and character.

In the Dreyfus Collection in Paris there is a Portrait (Plate LXI) which is most baffling because of the uncertainty of the gender of the sitter. It has been referred to as a Young Man in two publications.<sup>1,2</sup> However, the picture is much more suggestive of a

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<sup>1</sup>"Dreyfus Collection a Paris," Les arts, (Paris: 1908), p.13.

<sup>2</sup>Solomon Reniach, Repertoire de peintures du moyen age et de

woman. After some searching a drawing (Plate LXII) in the Albertina in Vienna was discovered which settles the question. The drawing, obviously of a woman, shows a three-quarter length figure wearing a dress. The drawing's features correspond identically with the features of Boltraffio's female type while the style of the costume leaves no doubt as to the sex.

The Portrait of a Young Girl (Plate LXI) is as rich as the Washington Portrait (Plate XLII) in its external appearance and has about the same date of execution. The expression is one of gentle quietude and the charm characteristic of Boltraffio. The young girl who faces the observer squarely is clothed in a heavy brocade dress laced up the front of the bodice which has a heavily embroidered square neck line. A small dark necklace encircling her throat echoes the wreath of Leonardesque flowers on her head. The full brown hair falls to the shoulders in a wavy mass which sets off her delicate face.

The face in the Dreyfus Portrait, like that of the Washington Portrait, has a broad forehead and a line which extends down perpendicularly to form the elongated nose with its dilated nostrils. The mouth is full with great puffiness in the lower lip which, like the nose, casts its characteristic shadow. The oval construction of the face is slightly subdued by the slight turn of the head which reveals the rounded jaw line and accentuates the chin. The eyes are most sensitive and clear, their dark pupils punctuated by



the high lighted ridge of the under lids.

There can be little doubt as to the author of this painting which so typically maintains the rigidity of pose, the rotundity of the form being somewhat flat in the area of the chest, the chiaroscuro in the heavy but sophisticated modeling, and the psychological manner in which the sitter manages to capture the attention of the observer. This particular portrait deserves consideration because it preserves all the qualities of Boltraffio's expression, individuality of style and technique, and adherence to the Leonardesque principles.

This portrait in the Dreyfus Collection, like so many others which we have examined, demonstrates Boltraffio's ability as distinct from that of his master. His individual characteristics are not often found among many of the other pupils, followers, and imitators of the Tuscan teacher. At this point, we have to concede to Boltraffio the honor and precedence of being one of da Vinci's finest pupils, a man who learned and incorporated the master's teachings, but individually developed a unique and independent stylistic character which distinctly sets him apart from Leonardo's other associates.

## CHAPTER VII

### QUESTIONED PORTRAITS PREVIOUSLY

#### ATTRIBUTED TO BOLTRAFFIO

There is a group of portraits which over a period of time has been given to Boltraffio and on occasion to other artists of his immediate locale and period. Such productions must be considered next as to whether or not they have an association with the style and character of Giovanni Antonio's established works. There are those works that have always been given to Boltraffio which we must examine as well as those which have periodically been given to one or another of the associates of the Milanese artist reviewed in chapter three. Therefore, the purpose set forth in this present chapter is to examine and assign to Boltraffio only those portraits which have a direct bearing on his style; the remainder, to ally with the character and individuality of other artists.

The Profile of a Woman (Plate LXIII) in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and identified as Caterina Sforza, the Countess of Forli (1463-1509?), is one of several female portraits which follows the same style and trend of characterization and sobriety that we have witnessed so far almost exclusively in male portraiture. The sitter, facing to the right, is a woman of middle age. She is dressed in a black costume with embroidery down the front and a white veil draped spherically over the head. As in the case of

several male portraits whose hats extend down on the forehead to the bridge of the nose, the veil in this portrait has the same effect of limiting portions of the features.

The somewhat pallid complexion of the woman's flesh is well modeled in the Leonardesque fashion, but the characterization is not wholly individual to Boltraffio's style. The emphasis given to the jaw line, chin with a fatty quality beneath, and the elongated nose unquestionably identify the artist. The eyes have a suggestion of dreaminess, but lack the penetrating quality which we have observed from time to time in the donors of various religious works. The mouth, which is decidedly more undulating, has an upward curve at the corners while executed at a downward angle.

There is a thoughtfulness and quietude in the expression which has been successfully and sensitively executed capturing the true essence of womanhood and age at this particular period in history. However, the hardness of execution, the lack of specific expression, the summary fashion of the rendered textures, and the poor proportion of the head removes this work from the direct hand of the artist. Thus the writer of this study would assign this work to the School of Boltraffio and not the artist himself.

Another fastidious Portrait of a Woman (Plate LXIV) by Bolt-raffio is in the Collection of Count Febo Borromeo in Milan, having formerly been in the Schloss Rohoncz Collection at Lugano. The Portrait of a Woman is pleasing and gentle; although the subject is not beautiful by nature, she is lovely by spirit and delicacy. The artistic tradition of Boltraffio is apparent in the facial

features which are executed with technical perfection. The short but jutting jaw and chin, the large nose and well delineated eyes and eyebrows have a gross quality about their structure lacking to some degree in refinement and delicacy. As Malaguzzi-Valeri observes, this woman bears a close resemblance physically to the Virgin in the Casio Madonna (Plate I) in the Louvre, while the refinement seen in the drawing is reminiscent of that in the Portrait of Clarice Pusterla (Plate XLI).<sup>1</sup>

Probably the overall handling of texture indicates a high level of attainment in execution, yet the tactile quality of the flesh has a porcelain sensation possessing the usual pallid aspect - contrasted by the black beads and ornamented cross. The modeling is exciting in the reflected lights in the shaded areas and the resultant flickering quality, while the nose and mouth cast their tell-tale shadows. Her eyes, like those we have seen in other portraits, have the gentle, quiet quality and the clarity and alertness associated with the artist, but appear large in comparison to the relatively small forehead. The same type of eye, attached to a wandlike stick, held by the sitter whose right hand is exceedingly poor in its rendering, is reproduced in the lower left corner of the picture.

Such a curious insertion as an eye into the picture unfolds an iconographical problem. Undoubtedly this refers in some way to Santa Lucia, who to this day is the Patroness of Syracuse and

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.84.

protectress against all diseases of the eyes and the laboring poor. Observing her eyes, we detect nothing which would denote anything but perfect and unimpaired vision. There remain, then, two other possible solutions; perhaps she was christened with the saint's name, or else she may possibly have worked with the poor laboring people, relieving their needs with her own wealth and material. From all outward appearances she was born into a wealthy strata of society; nevertheless, the existence of this symbolic addition reveals nothing of any certainty.

This Portrait of a Woman in the Count Febo Borromeo Collection does not come up to the stylistic standards or character of Boltraffio's work. Hence, the writer questions the artist involved and would prefer to assign the work to the School of Boltraffio rather than attributing it to the artist directly.

The Portrait Bust of a Youth (Plate LXV) in the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia is a questioned example of Boltraffio's work which might be termed mannered and stylized. The expression of the youth is quiet and gentle with just a hint of underlying sweetness to make us think of Perugino in his later years - or even the young Raphael. Here we observe a youth, a few years older than the youth in the Washington Portrait (Plate XLII), whose cheeks are still smooth but whose chin shows its first growth of beard. He is wearing a richly embroidered coat with a square opening that reveals the heavily pleated white shirt beneath. A delicate gold chain hangs about the neck. His head is adorned with a black hat with a high brim fastened on the left side with a gold placchetta

as in the Portrait of a Young Man (Plate XLIX) owned by Mr. Mather of New York City. His hair, which is rather stylized, falls to shoulder length in a wiglike fashion. To the rear is a disturbing Alpine landscape with conical snow capped mountains and several houses, one dead tree, a meandering body of water, and one peasant with a farm implement over his shoulder. The landscape is the poorest portion of this work and discourages us from attributing it to Boltraffio.

To accept this Portrait of a Youth (Plate LXV) as the artistic work of Boltraffio would be fair to neither the artist nor to the discussion thus far. The face has a hard sculptural quality of stone but lacks the refinement and subtlety of the artist's technique. Certainly the broad forehead, the widely spaced eyes, and the dominant chin are in the manner of Giovanni Antonio, but the elongated nose - grossly exaggerated at the bridge, and the rude fashion with which the learned chiaroscuro has been rendered are in no way indicative of Boltraffio's style. There are areas which are nicely handled, but to assign this work to Giovanni Antonio, who possesses a sensitivity and refinement of style and character when painting a portrait, and who at the same time reveals for the viewer the psychological quality and the spirit of the sitter, would be an injustice. The writer, who finds this panel to have generally acceptable Milanese character with reference to its execution, would assign the picture to the Milanese School without designation of an artist.

A group of portraits which has caused no less question than

the questioned religious paintings exists in various museums and private collections throughout the western world. The portraits have not been exclusively given to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio alone, but to other Milanese artists closely allied with the artist of the Casio Madonna. On frequent occasions some of the portraits have been simultaneously attributed to more than one artist by different connoisseurs and cataloguers. The problem remaining for us is to sort and examine this group of works for possible attributions and to establish by means of stylistic comparison the identity of their authors.

The Portrait of a Woman (Plate LXVI) in the Malaspina Gallery in the Museo Civico, Pavia, is well worth our consideration. Wilhelm Suida contends that this portrait is by Bernardino Conti while van Marle holds it author to be Boltraffio. The position of the sitter varies to some extent, thus reducing the accentuated verticality habitually associated with Boltraffio's style; however, the fullness of form, the tonality, the abundance of drapery, and the slight tilt of the head evidence the hand of the artist. The hands, which are held in a meaningless position in and about the area of the breast, show in part a quality that is distinctly Boltraffiesque.

The head demonstrates an incised manner of drawing and fine modeling; the latter, creating an easy transition from one plane to another, is unavoidably suggestive of Giovanni Antonio during his discipleship with Leonardo. The elongated nose and the heavy cast shadows created by it and the mouth affirm that Boltraffio must have had some part in the execution of this painting, but certainly not

a major portion.

A baffling portrait of a Woman with a Dog (Plate LXVII) in the Schloss Rohoncz Collection in the Ernst Museum Budapest has been assigned to Boltraffio by the Museum. The writer has been unable to find any written material or documentation either on the painting or for such an attribution. This wealthy appearing sitter looks directly at the spectator, yet her position is turned slightly to the left. Her dress is richly embroidered, and she wears a matching and equally ornate head band which confines a portion of the parted hair, the remainder of which is allowed to fall in highly stylized waves onto the shoulders. She wears a mantle over her left shoulder, and white puffs where the right sleeve is tied to the dress. She holds in her arms a shaggy little dog that is lively and pert by nature. There is a correlation between the overall composition of this painting and that of the Woman with the Ermine (Plate LXXVI) in Cracow which is usually attributed to Leonardo.

The eyes of this Budapest portrait are Boltraffiesque and are probably the most commanding part of the portrait. They have a dreamy quality but the lids are neither as rounded nor are the eyebrows as arched as is customary in the characteristic works of Giovanni Antonio. The lineament and shape of the head does not have the smooth oval character but is much more articulated and detailed. The broad nose, long, straight, and hard, lacks the soft character and style of the Milanese artist. The chin, with its hint of a cleft, possesses a bluntness in place of the usual roundness. The narrowness and slope of the shoulders is another element foreign



to the style of Boltraffio. To take this analysis one step further, there is a distinct Germany flavor about this panel. Several questions then arise: Is this painting by Boltraffio? Does it show collaboration? If not, who is the artist?

An interesting passage of the portrait is the widely separated initials V. B. painted on the dark background, one on either side of the head. These could be either the initials of the artist or of the sitter. We have no idea of the persons identity, but the analyzed style of the portrait exhibits a close relationship with that of Bartolomeo Veneto. We learn from Bernard Berenson that Veneto, a pupil of Giovanni Bellini, was considerably influenced by the Giorgioneschi, Solario, and Boltraffio.<sup>1</sup> Giuseppi Delogu, knowing Dürer was in Venice in the years 1493 and 1506, tells us that Veneto was influenced by him before the latter going to Milan.<sup>2</sup> All these influences observable in varying degrees in this portrait in Budapest make possible the attribution to Bartolomeo Veneto. In all probability he shows a hint of the Boltraffio influence. The portrait in question exhibits a close stylistic relationship to the Portrait of an Unknown Man in the National Gallery (Corsini), Rome, and is almost identical in respect to drawing and tonality with the Courtesan signed by Veneto in the Stadel'sches Institute, Frankfort a./M. The writer sincerely believes that the Portrait

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.50.

<sup>2</sup>Giuseppi Delogu, Antologia della pittura italiana dal XIII al XIX secolo, (Bergamo: Istituto italiana d'arti grafiche, 1947), p.93.

of a Woman with a Dog (Plate LXVII) is in large a production of Bartolomeo Vaneto, although stylistic evidences of Boltraffio are to be found.

A refined portrait of an Unknown Lady (Plate LXVIII) belonging to the Theodore and Mary Ellis Collection was shown at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Museum in 1941. Prior to this exhibition the panel, which had been in the collection of King Wilhelm II of Wurtemberg, was attributed to Luini - carrying that assigned artist without justification. The attribution of Giovanni Antonio is perfectly logical and plausible. The woman sits in a three-quarter position to the picture plane, with her head turned directly front. Although her costume may appear elaborate in the reproduction, she wears a white chemisette beneath a dark gray dress trimmed with black. A black necklace adorns her shoulders and a net covers her hair.

The features beautifully correspond to the stylistic character of Giovanni Antonio if we overlook for a moment the heaviness of the jaw. The warm golden tonality of the flesh with its faint traces of pallidness marks the time of production as being relatively late. Mr. Perry Colt in his article cites that Madame Vavala found a puissant relationship between the portrait and Boltraffio's Saint Barbara (Plate II), Clarice Pusterla (Plate XLI), the Washington Portrait of a Young Man (Plate XLII) and the Female Portrait (Plate LXIV) belonging to Count Febo Borromeo in Milan.<sup>1</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup>Perry B. Colt, "Theodore and Mary Ellis Collection," Worcester Art Museum Annual, (Worcester: 1941), IV, p.36.

aside from this analogy there exists the feeling of volume and mass so important in the work of the Milanese artist. The execution of the right hand which rests on a cornice is well rendered in its foreshortened position, another feature indicating its lateness of production and strengthening its assignment to the brush of Bolt-raffio.

The Profile of a Young Woman (Plate LXIX) in the Jacquemart-Andre Museum of Paris has many points to recommend it as a work of the Milanese School. The lineament, even to the employment of the same beads and shadows they cast upon the breast has an intimate correlation with the Portrait of Clarice Pusterla (Plate XLI). Her hair is drawn back and knotted behind the head while a band of spaced clustered pearls crowns the head. The nose is a bit more pointed than usual but the fleshiness beneath the chin is evident as analogous with other profile portraits and with the donors in the Casio Family Madonna (Plate I) in the Louvre. The modeling was done with understanding and adeptness, but the staring quality and goitrous execution of the eyes is not in keeping with Antonio Bolt-raffio's usual depiction; however, the same disposition of the eyes in the Pusterla Portrait might very well have the same effect if the sitter were not viewed from above eye level.

The dress is exceedingly rich and more ornate than anything we have witnessed so far in our examination of Boltraffio's works. It presents the luxuriousness associated with the La Belle Ferronniere (Plate LXXVII) in the Louvre Museum. However, in examining the two portraits we find no relation between the costuming,

although the dress indicates to some extent the date of execution. The style of elaborately pleated dress and sleeves was prominent during the first two decades of the Cinquecento. This fact and the pallid golden tonality of the flesh would place the portrait at about 1506. With reservations, the author believes that the portrait belongs to the catalogue of School pieces although Malaguzzi-Valeri in the first volume of his La corte di Lodovico Il Moro attributes it without authority to Bernardino de'Conti.

The Portrait of a Woman (Plate LXX) in the Collection of Hugh Morrison Esq. at Fonthill, London, has on occasion created considerable controversy as to who its author is. At present the panel is designated as a work of Boltraffio, but there are those persons who disregard this attribution and ascribe it to Bernardino de'Conti. Berenson holds fast to this latter attribution, and with just cause.<sup>1</sup> The woman is seated facing the left with her head turned in profile. The net and veil covering the hair are fastened with a circlet of beads. She is attired in a richly embroidered lacy dress that lacks form and a convincing sense of reality.

The portrait in many ways epitomizes the style of Bernardino de'Conti in the expressionless countenance, in the poor relationship of different parts to another as seen in the shoulders, neck, and head, and in the incised quality of the harsh drawing. Unlike Boltraffio, whose executed flesh is firm with mass and tactile sensation, Bernardino de'Conti's style reveals a fatty quality

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.79.

suggesting loose misplaced tissue. From all outward appearances this portrait can be given to de'Conti and not Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio.

The Jacquemart-Andre Museum of Paris is in possession of a Female Portrait (Plate LXXI) which is recognized by that institution as the work of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. This adds another portrait to the number of works attributed to Boltraffio in that museum. This particular panel depicting a woman seated in a three-quarter pose with her head in profile was executed in the Boltraffiesque tradition, but the lineament and modeling of the profile create doubt. Dressed in a very luxurious garment of finely woven wool and shimmering satin, the young woman possesses an aristocratic bearing. The resultant feeling of rigidity is heightened by the painter's accent on the vertical.

The individuality and character of this woman are witnessed in the region of the head in profile, a manner of style which is not wholly characteristic of Boltraffio; however, it is a portrait, and to be truthful the artist had to follow the dictates of the sitter's physiognomy. The forehead is high and would appear to be wide, yet it does not have the customary subtle transition into the nose often linked with Giovanni's style. The nose forming an accentuated obtuse angle at the bridge, then lengthening to terminate at a point, immediately brings to mind the style of Bernardino Luini. The Leonardesque mouth would complete the analysis if it were not that the tendency to protrude the pursed upper lip punctuated beneath by the heaviness of the chin is an emphasis foreign to

Boltraffio.

The expression of gentility and quietude which echoed in the hands suggests a seductiveness usually associated with the style and character of Luini. This portrait is certainly divided between two styles and would remain disputed if it were not for a corresponding drawing of Luini's owned by Colnaghi and previously in the J.P. Hesselstine Collection. Though the panel is not an exact copy of the drawing, the resemblance is so strong and convincing that it leaves little doubt that the two women are one and the same.

The Borghese Gallery in Rome has in its collection the Portrait of a Woman (Plate LXXII) which is sometimes attributed to Giovanni Antonio. The sitter faces toward the left while moving her eyes to meet those of the spectator. The panel could generally be conceded as a production of the Milanese school, but the writer would hesitate to give it directly to Boltraffio. Features such as the angularity and skeletal manipulation of the face, the large but not elongated nose, the sardonic expression and rendering of the mouth, and the ineffectual attempt at modeling certainly have no alliance with the style of Giovanni Antonio. The relationship of the heavy muscled neck, misplaced and poorly developed shoulders (similar to those of the Unknown Woman, Pavia), and the large, dark, inert eyes have no parallel among Boltraffio's productions.

If this is not a work of Boltraffio, whose work is it? In chapter three the styles of the other noted pupils and followers of Leonardo da Vinci were discussed. Among none of these artists

do we observe a style corresponding to that which appears in this work of the Borghese Gallery. Except for Suida and a few lesser known writers on the Milanese school of the Renaissance, we find none of the better known authorities recognizing this work in their writings.<sup>1</sup> Berenson mentions the picture with a possible attribution to Bernardino de' Conti, but seriously admits that it is a debatable question.<sup>2</sup>

The question of its authorship should continue to be challenged. Undoubtedly the panel had its origin with a minor artist of the school rather than with any of the artists discussed within this text.

An identifiable portrait is that of Lodovico Maria Sforza-Visconti (detto Il Moro) (Plate LXXIII), formerly of the Trivulzio Collection in Milan. The portrait shows Il Moro seated in profile and attired in an opulent, richly embroidered dark green tunic and wearing a hat without brim pinned on the side of which is the initial 'M' with a pendent pear shaped pearl. This pin leaves no doubt as to the identity of the sitter. The picture must have been painted prior to 1499, the year Lodovico Il Moro was exiled from the city of Milan and his dynasty ended. It is unlikely that this portrait would have been painted between 1500 and 1508, the period of his imprisonment by Louis XII of France and the year of his death.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Suida, Leonardo - und sein Kries, (München: F. Bruchmann, 1929), p.83.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.79.

Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri and Gardner Teall attribute this painting of Il Moro to Boltraffio, while Hanna Kiel gives it to Ambrogio de'Predis.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Other writers merely refer to it as a production of the Milanese school or disregard making reference to the artist who executed it. However, a search through many reproductions of the Milanese school brings to light an altarpiece in the Brera of Milan of a Madonna with Saints and Donors by Bernardino de'Conti whose male donor is Lodovico Il Moro. The technical and physical resemblance of Il Moro in both instances is exceedingly close; their affinity is heightened by the proximity of the modeling, the erect pose, and the expression. There exists in Vienna a Portrait of the Emperor Maximilian signed by Ambrogio de'Predis and dated 1502 which, because of its style and character, could easily be taken to be by the same artist. Perhaps this is why Mr. Kiel gives the Portrait of Il Moro to Ambrogio de'Predis.

Characteristics of the style of the Trivulizo panel (Plate LXXIII) indicates a close alliance with the style of Bernardino de'Conti. The lineament of the face in the transition from the forehead to the nose and the pointed nature of the nose itself exhibits a pertinent relationship to de'Conti's established works. The lack of adequacy and subtlety of modeling and the obvious absence

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<sup>1</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.82.

<sup>2</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (New York: Lane & Co., Oct., 1926), LXXXV, p.23.

<sup>3</sup>Hanna Kiel, "Oberitaliensche Porträts der Sammlung Trivulizo," Pantheon, (München: F.Bruchmann, 1930), VI, p.434.



of the identifiable shadows inherent in Boltraffio's style have a tendency to eliminate our painter on technical grounds alone. It was previously noted that in his earlier works Bernardino de'Conti had a predilection for utilizing a sculptural incised manner of drawing and the parallel treatment of folds in the drapery; both of these identifiable peculiarities of style are evident in this portrait.

Although the eyes are dreamy, their treatment as well as the eyebrows and the protruding chin are foreign to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. Bernardino was not noted for accentuating the chin in such a manner as this, but the heaviness of the chin in general and the irregular quality of the jaw line and its modeling have always been his dominant characteristics. Despite the great respect one holds for the writings of Malaguzzi-Valeri, former editor of Rassegna d'arte, the writer is convinced that he mistook this portrait of Il Moro for the work of Boltraffio. Therefore, in substitution for Giovanni Antonio, whom we will have to concede had no part in this picture's execution, the author of this study finds the style closer to that of Bernardino de'Conti than to any of the other painters of the Milanese school.

A sensitive and beautifully executed portrait belonging to Julius Böhler of Monaco de Baviera is the Profile of a Youth (Plate LXXIV). The youth is seated facing left, showing only his head and shoulders. He wears a simple black hat and a black tunic with red sleeves. His soft brown hair is cropped short at the nape of the neck, the coloration of which aids considerably in complement-

ing the golden hues of the flesh, which are accentuated by the dark background. The nose is not characteristic of Boltraffio; however, the eyes, mouth, and chin show a particular individuality to the artist's style. In comparison with the male portraits of the previous chapter, this portrait having been executed with utmost delicacy ranks well with them in modeling and technical adeptness.

It was only Malaguzzi-Valeri who recognized the portrait as Boltraffio's work. It existed for many years without attribution; however, on occasion the suggestion of Umbrian origin was attached to it. The latter interpretation is totally incongruous with the generally accepted type of Umbrian portraiture.

Its expression of tranquil severity is emphasized by the dreamy quality of the eyes. As in all Giovanni Antonio's work there is, due to the ever present vertical pose, a static quietude that seems almost artificially produced. Because the attentive quality of Boltraffio's portraits is always reinforced by their erectness, they never can be said to lack alertness. This apparent perpendicularity never results in an absolute stiffness because the facial expressions tend to reduce any tension or strain in the portrait. There is no doubt but that this Profile Portrait of a Youth, owned by Julius Böhler, belongs to the hand of Boltraffio.

In the J.P.Labbey Collection in New York City there is a Profile of a Man (Plate LXXV) which obviously had its origin in the Milanese school, but great question arises when one tries to assign it, successfully, to Boltraffio. In fact, its only attribution to date is to Giovanni Antonio, but his name is generally

followed by a question mark. The head which has been constructed over a very bony foundation with irregular modeling shows some influence of Bernardino de'Conti in the area of the nose, the straight line of the eyebrows, and the knobby roundness of the chin, all observable in and reminiscent of the Portrait of Lodovico Il Moro (Plate LXXIII). The transition of the jaw line is poor as under no circumstances could it be considered a continuous line. This poor formation has been further emphasized by the fact that the double chin is misplaced and the neck grossly enlarged. The hair, falling loose on the shoulders, does not have the characteristic and distinctive linear quality or tactile values associated with the style of Boltraffio. The red tunic with its small black collar edged with white is heavy and formless, in no way conforming to the body structure.

There is no portion of the portrait that bespeaks the hand of Boltraffio, and even though Bernardino de'Conti has been mentioned in connection with the panel, this attribution ought to be seriously questioned. The primary interest here is not in reassigning the portrait, but in certifying that it is not the work of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. Therefore, this piece should remain a school production without definite attribution.

The Portrait of a Woman, which is perhaps more commonly known as the Lady with an Ermine (Plate LXXVI), at Cracow in the Czartoryski Collection, is held by Berenson avidly to be a work of Leonardo.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.279.

However, the origin of the portrait has created considerable controversy because from time to time two of Leonardo's pupils have been given credit in its execution. Herbert Cook and Seidlitz hold steadfastly that Ambrogio de'Predis painted the portrait, while Ettore Verga feels that it is the joint work of Ambrogio de'Predis and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Venturi, Mary Berenson, and others assert that the panel was painted exclusively by Boltraffio.<sup>4,5</sup> A group of connoisseurs including Carotti maintain that Leonardo is the sole master of the portrait.<sup>6</sup> From the standpoint of available documentation this question can never be adequately answered until more substantial information is made available for further consideration. Mr. Ochenkowski, who takes into consideration the findings of the writers preceding him, presents about the most complete analysis of any writer.<sup>7</sup>

The identity of the sitter is almost unanimously declared to

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Cook, "Notizie d'Inghilterra," L'arte, (Milano: 1907), XXIV, p.150.

<sup>2</sup>Wilhelm von Seidlitz, Leonardo da Vinci und die Dame mit dem Hermelin, (Berlin: Jahrbacher Preuss, 1916), p.146.

<sup>3</sup>Ettore Verga, Gli studi intorno a Leonardo da Vinci nell'ultimo cinquantennio, (Roma: P. Maglioni & C.. Strini, 1923), p.32.

<sup>4</sup>Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1915), VII, n.4, p.1040.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Logan Berenson, "Dipinti italiani a Cracovia," Rassegna d'arte, (Milano: Menotti Bassani & Co., 1915), XV, p.25.

<sup>6</sup>Giulio Carotti, Le opere di Leonardo, Bramante, e Raffaello, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), p.129.

<sup>7</sup>H. Ochenkowski, "The Quarter Century of Leonardo da Vinci," Burlington Magazine, (London, 1919), XXXIV, p.187.

be Cecilia Gallerani (1466-1536), who reputedly was the very intimate friend of Lodovico Il Moro and was commonly referred to as his mistress. This fact is supported by the evidence that Il Moro gave Cecilia Gallerani the estate Saronno in 1481 and the Palazzo dal Verme in via Broletto in 1491.<sup>1</sup> In the picture, Cecilia Gallerani holds an ermine which occasionally has been referred to as a weasel, a most unlikely animal to associate with such a person as the weasel's symbolic meaning is 'sensuality' - although at the end of the Quattrocento it was universally known that she was Il Moro's mistress. He would never have acknowledged this or allowed such a blatant emblematical association to adorn the portrait of his mistress. Therefore, the small animal must be identified as an ermine. As recorded iconographically in the medieval text, Fiore di Vertu by an anonymous author, the ermine was the symbolic emblem of chastity. In Milan at that period the ermine was directly associated with Il Moro himself and probably unbeknown to him carried the connotation of 'mud'.<sup>2</sup> Surely both Cecilia Gallerani and Lodovico Sforza would have found the symbol of an ermine with the meaning of chastity much more satisfactory and complimentary than that of the weasel. The symbol of the ermine was often associated with Il Moro whose chief device was the mulberry tree; this is another fact which proves the identity of the sitter and her association with

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm von Seidlitz, Leonardo da Vinci die Dame mit dem Hermelin, (Berlin: Jahrbacher Preuss, 1916), p.151.

<sup>2</sup>H. Ochenkowski, "The Quarter Century of Leonardo da Vinci," Burlington Magazine, (London: 1919), XXXIV, p.187.

Lodovico Il Moro. Some writers, including Ochenkowski, believing them to be the same person, compare this portrait with the La Belle Ferronniere (Plate LXXVII) in the Louvre; however, the physical characteristics of these two sitters have very little in common - the Cracow figure being finer featured, more delicate, and possessing a nervous quality. She also lacks the solidity and quietude which sustain themselves over the entire attitude and physical existence of the La Belle.

Cecilia Gallerani (Plate LXXVI) is placed facing slightly to the left; her head is turned to look to the right. She is portrayed as a young woman in her late teens, a fact which would date the picture about 1495. However, the style of this portrait has little in common with Boltraffio's style of the corresponding period. Dressed in very expensive and richly ornamented clothes and wearing a double strand of beads about the neck, she lives up to that class of society to which we would believe Cecilia Gallerani belonged. Her hair, parted in the center and drawn down tight to the sides of the head, is tied beneath the chin; the latter peculiarity is due to a later addition to the panel. A thin embroidered veil covering the head is held in place by a narrow black band tied about the head. On immediate examination the portrait shows a distinct propinquity of style to that of Leonardo. There is in the Turin Library, Turin, a drawing of an angel's head that is identical to that of Cecilia Gallerani; even the gown, coiffure, outlining, and expression of the mouth are the same. The similarity is so evident that one may assume the painting to be of the same young woman.

The modeling, relationship of values, and the golden tonalities are truly those of Leonardo.

The right hand of Cecilia Gallerani is the most disturbing passage of the entire picture. It is out of scale with the remainder of the picture. The prototype and positioning of the hand can be found in the figure of Phillip in the Last Supper by Leonardo in Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan. This point alone only indicates its origin, yet the same hand appears in the London copy of the Madonna of the Rocks and also in the Virgin in the Holy Family in Venezia, by de'Predis and de'Conti respectfully. There is another painting where the hand is identical - the Girl with a Basket of Cherries in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and it is also — given to Ambrogio de'Predis.

The writer would like to state at this time that in his opinion Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio had nothing to do with the execution of this work. If we look at some of the documentary proof remaining to us today, we will readily accept the idea that Leonardo himself played a unique part in its production. In his own writing, Leonardo describes the portrait in his Notebooks using the phrase "L'ermellino con fango," which has more significance than the reader of today is willing to ascribe it; however, the description alone testifies to da Vinci's own interest in and knowledge of the picture.<sup>1</sup> Bellinconi, the court poet of Il Moro, makes reference to the portrait in an assertion concerning the identity of the sitter

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<sup>1</sup>MMS. M, Manuscript in the Library of the Institute of France.

and the painter by stating, "Sopra il rittartto di Cecilia, qual fece Leonardo," in Sonnet XLV.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the portrait was also affirmed by a letter of Isabella d'Este to Cecilia Gallerani of April 26, 1498.<sup>2</sup> This date is contemporary with the Last Supper, but the painting has neither the Florentine feeling of Leonardo's style of the period nor the compact compositional organization which stylistically marked that period in Leonardo's art.

The Portrait of a Woman with an Ermine (Plate LXXVI) assuredly has the characteristics of Ambrogio de'Predis' style in the hardness of drawing, the articulation of the head, the roundness of the shoulders, the nose, and the mouth with its projecting lower lip. The chin and the eyes do have an affinity with Boltraffio, but only as we find a similar relationship with other portraits and other artists of the period and locale. The drapery contains the refinement and occasionally the slight imperfect passages witnessed in both the above named pupils of Leonardo. However, the overall flatness is more characteristic of Ambrogio de'Predis. The tactile values of the drapery and hair are less descriptive than those found in the work of either Leonardo or Boltraffio, but they are prevalent in numerous productions of de'Predis. Ettore Verga illuminates the conclusion of the discussion by asserting that Leonardo did the design, but that it was painted by a pupil.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. Ochenkowski, "The Quarter Century of Leonardo," Burlington Magazine, (London: 1919), XXXIV, p.186.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.187.

<sup>3</sup>Ettore Verga, Gli studi intorno a Leonardo da Vinci nell'ultimo Cinquantennio, (Roma: P.Maglioni & C. Strini, 1923), p.32.



To eliminate Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio from further consideration evolves out of necessity as his stylistic characteristics are not clearly evident. Allow it to remain, then, as a design by Leonardo and painted in part by one of his pupils, according to the opinion of the writer, Ambrogio de'Predis.

Seldom in the annals of art history do we find a picture which has caused such international dispute or litigation as the La Belle Ferronnière (Plate LXXVII) which is still catalogued by the Louvre Museum as by Leonardo da Vinci, number 1600. This painting has been questioned by many authorities, but it was not until an identical portrait (Plate LXXVIII) bearing the same name and painter, and owned by Madame Andrée Hahn, was offered for sale to the Kansas City Museum that the battle of the authorship of the individual pictures came to a boiling point. Sir Joseph Duveen (Lord Millbank) stated in 1920 that the Hahn version was a copy and obviously not from the hand of Leonardo da Vinci, but that the Louvre panel was the original work of the Florentine master. Naturally such a statement by one of the world's greatest art dealers, (who incidentally had nothing whatsoever to do with the sale or purchase of the Hahn picture), brought to a halt the negotiations already in progress. Madame Andrée Hahn immediately instituted suit against Sir Joseph Duveen for \$500,000.00, maintaining that her property rights had been invaded.<sup>1</sup> Her action finally culminated in a court case in

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Hahn, The Rape of La Belle, (Kansas City: Frank Glenn Pub. Co., 1946). The material compiled on the court case was derived from this source, all of which were documented records obtained from the State of New York.

1929.

The first trial in the Supreme Court of the State of New York was dismissed by Mr. Justice William Black on the grounds that the jury could not reach a verdict because of insufficient evidence. However, although a new trial was set for a future date, settlement was reached outside of court. Sir Joseph Duveen had for his defence witnesses a glittering array of renowned art historians and connoisseurs, who in most cases testified in his behalf with little regard of whether or not they contradicted what they had previously published or stated concerning the Louvre's La Belle.<sup>1</sup>

The case is important for us in so far as the technical and scientific data revealed during the trial will aid in settling the question of the attribution of either one or both of these portraits. As for the legal suit brought by Madame Hahn, it was quietly settled out of court, thus leaving the court and the interested public still in the dark not only as to which of the two paintings was the original and which the copy, but also the identity of the artist or artists involved.

Before venturing further with the Louvre panel and the Hahn version (as it is commonly called), mention must be made concerning the provocative book on the subject, The Rape of La Belle. Mr. Hahn, the author of the book, has endeavored to justify the Hahn portrait

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<sup>1</sup>The men who were witnesses for the defence were: Bernard Berenson, Maurice Brockwell, Sir Martin Conway, Sir Herbert Cook, Captain Robert Langton-Douglas, Roger Fry, Sir Charles Holmes, Prof. Schmidt Degner, not to mention statements by Adolfo Venturi, Alan Boroughs, and Dr. W. R. Valentine.

(Plate LXXVIII) as a production from the hand of Leonardo and has left no stone unturned or argument untouched, regardless of its transparency. He makes brutal attacks on many of the witnesses for the defence although in some cases they were of help to Madame Hahn's cause. He is often bitter and obviously has an ax to grind, a fact which from time to time impinges upon the case, but more often is irrelevant to the nature of the book. Mr. Hahn's attack is against all art historians and connoisseurs, the latter being the category in which he fancies himself. He singles out only a few men who in his estimation are honest and worthy of his exalted opinion to be classified as such. Some of his arguments are just, but certainly misattributions have been made in the past, the greater majority of which were wholly in good faith. In the field of art such mistakes can be made and they are not all accomplished with such clandestine motives as Mr. Hahn would like to make his readers think. This constant haranguing on the part of the author and his failure to confine himself within the scope of the case, rather than encroaching upon territory and persons who are in no way connected with the case, certainly endangers his position and establishes an antagonism that need not exist.

Returning to the Louvre painting (Plate LXXVII) which holds the great interest for us in this dissertation, the La Belle Ferronnière has on numerous occasions been given to Boltraffio and many articles have been written to substantiate this. However, Bernard Berenson, the Dean of Historiana on Italian Painting, states, "Paris No. 1600, La Belle Ferronnière: one would regret to

have to accept this as Leonardo's own work."<sup>1</sup> Yet in defence for Sir Joseph Duveen he completely reverses this statement, upholding the painting as a genuine production of the Tuscan master. This illustrates only one instance where among these witnesses for the defence there was a sudden and complete change of mind and heart. Seymour di Ricci, Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, Dr. J. P. Richter, Dr. Osvald Siren and others have written that the Louvre panel was not executed by Leonardo da Vinci. Mr. Hahn states in support of this last statement, "The very officials of the Louvre Museum doubted their picture."<sup>2</sup>

The only persons who, to the knowledge of the writer, have given the Hahn portrait to Leonardo are the Hahn family, close friends, and Harry Hahn, who substantiates this attribution on the basis of tradition, Madame Hahn having received the picture as a wedding present from her family in which it had been for generations. At other times the Hahn version of the La Belle has been mentioned in connection with Boltraffio, the same reference which has been made to the author of the Louvre picture. Before proceeding further, let us examine the provenience of the two pictures which Mr. Hahn has so assiduously uncovered.

One of the two pictures existed in the Royal Collection at Fontainebleau for many years, presumably from the sixteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, North Italian Painters of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p.260.

<sup>2</sup>Harry Hahn, The Rape of La Belle, (Kansas City: Frank Glenn Pub.Co., 1946), p.11.

It was evidently during the reign of Louis XIV (1638-1715) that the present confusion had its origin. Up to that time a single portrait had carried the attribution of Leonardo da Vinci. It was Louis XIV who, when Versailles was ready for his occupancy, ordered copies made of those paintings which were to be moved from Fontainebleau to Versailles in 1683, the copies supposedly remaining at Fontainebleau. Therefore, we can safely assume that the original was copied at that time. We also learn from the inscription on the reverse side of the Hahn portrait that Sieur Jaun Hacquin, who was the King's restorer, wrote the following: "Removed from wood and transferred to canvas by Hacquin in Paris, 1777."<sup>1</sup> With the advent of the French Revolution the Crown Collection became the property of the state. The Hahn portrait was purchased by General Louis Tourton from citoyen Hubert of the Republic, (his real name being August, Cheval de Saint-Hubert, and he was the brother-in-law of Jacque Louis David), Inspecteur General des Batiments de la Republique, having acquired the picture upon his occupancy of his quarters in the apartments at Versailles - the Salon du Directoire des Batiments.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly Saint-Hubert felt that by the mere occupancy of the apartments, he automatically inherited the paintings and thus was free to dispose of them as he wished. In the sales catalogue compiled on February 25, 1846, by Ferdinand Laneuville of the Solomon Rothchild Foundation, it lists the paint-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.187.

ing among six originally from the Collection of General Louis Tourton.<sup>1</sup> From this sale the Hahn picture passed into the hands of the Hahn family where it remained until the litigation of 1929. Without documentary proof, Mr. Hahn goes on to state, "the jewel was painted on the forehead by Primaticcio at the order of the King."<sup>2</sup> Why this should have been stated in such a manner is difficult to reason - determined when one considers that it is unsupported by evidence.

The provenience of the Louvre panel is much simpler, it remained part of the Crown Collection having been formerly catalogued by Bernard Lepicie in 1752 with previous inventory dates of 1653, 1683 (Le Brun), 1690 (Honasse), and 1709 (Bailly).<sup>3</sup> These inventory dates do not distinguish or support the existence of two panels (one a copy), but supposing that a copy of the original was executed in or about 1683, the inventory date following might register either of the two panels. However, we shall assume that the La Belle Ferronnière now in the Louvre belonged to the Crown Collection previous to 1690, the year of Le Brun's death. If there were any juggling of these two paintings before the possession-inheritance by Saint-Hubert, we have no records of it today, and we would therefore have to assume on mere circumstantial evidence that the above proveniences are to be correct.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.188.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.192.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.190.

From a scientific approach there is stronger evidence to support the contention that the Hahn portrait is the original. The Hahn version, according to the findings of Professor Laurie, exhibits the presence of vermillion and ultramarine pigments while the Louvre picture has neither.<sup>1</sup> Both of these colors were highly prized and advocated by Leonardo da Vinci. There is evidence that lamp-black was used in the shadows of the flesh in the Louvre panel; Leonardo, who always used inorganic ultramarine prohibited the use of this pigment.<sup>2</sup> The microscope of Professor Laurie also revealed a green in the Louvre portrait which has the characteristic of verdigris green but unlike in chemical structure.<sup>3</sup> This particular color was first used some thirty years after the death of Leonardo.<sup>4</sup> If we can rely on this dating of pigments by Professor Laurie, it proves that the La Belle Ferronière in the Louvre must have been painted after 1550. Other than the green, no dateable colors were discovered in either painting, and only the Hahn version contains true ultramarine. This only suggests that it was painted first and by an artist who was able to afford the cost of precious ultramarine.

At the conclusion of Mr. Hahn's twelfth chapter of his book, he states in a footnote that the Louvre portrait is "In all likeli-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.125.

<sup>4</sup>A. Pillian Laurie, The Pigments and Mediums of the Old Masters, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1914), p.38.

hood a copy of the School of Fontainebleau."<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting statement and certainly logical, but Mr. Hahn blatantly proposes this conclusion, does not support it, shows no documentary evidence, and eliminates any further elucidation or discussion of the subject. Actually his book ends on this note as the remainder is not pertinent to the discussion or the original premise of his study.

If we are to assume that the Louvre La Belle Ferronnière is the duplicate painted at the order of Louis XIV, then we might justifiably presuppose that the Hahn version (Plate LXXVIII) is the original. Such an assumption is substantiated by X-rays and shadowgraphs taken of both pictures.<sup>2</sup> In the present state of both panels the sitter is placed behind a cornice or parapet. The original description of the picture does not mention any cornice, but describes the hands as visible and holding a piece of lace; this is clearly observable in the shadowgraph of the Hahn portrait and attests to the repainting of this particular panel and its original description.<sup>3</sup> A final discovery made in the examination of these two paintings is that the Hahn picture reveals the use of tempera with oil glazes while the La Belle Ferronnière in the Louvre (Plate LXXVII) is painted in an entirely different medium and technique-

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Hahn, The Rape of La Belle, (Kansas City: Frank Glenn Pub. Co., 1946), p.193.

<sup>2</sup>On file at the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup>Harry Hahn, The Rape of La Belle, (Kansas City: Frank Glenn Pub. Co., 1946), pp.137-153.



palette mixed oils.<sup>1</sup> The interesting consequence of this is that as far as records can determine a full oil technique was never used by Leonardo or his pupils, and was not used in Italy until the era of Titian and Correggio. These findings definitely establish the Hahn panel of La Belle Ferronnière as being the earlier of the two pictures in question.<sup>2</sup>

Thus at this point we may concentrate on the Hahn portrait safely presupposing that the Louvre panel was a copy ordered by the king, Louis XIV, and that there was a shifting of the two panels at this time so that the copy went to Versailles instead of remaining at Fontainebleau. Who, then painted the Hahn portrait? The writer believes this question to be unanswerable for the moment. The expression of the sitter, who has been identified on occasion as Cecilia Gallerani, but more commonly and correctly as Lucrezia Crivelli, was also a mistress of Lodovico Il Moro. She went to France with Il Moro during his imprisonment and remained with him until his death in 1509. Interestingly enough her daughter Dejm eventually became the mistress of the French King Francis I, and reputedly had an uncanny resemblance to her mother. This does not prove that Leonardo or even Boltraffio painted the portrait. However, among the manuscripts of the Codice Atlantico (167V.c) there is a poem which presumably was sent to Leonardo by an admirer of his art and more particularly of the portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.162.

Ut bene respondet naturse ars docta: dedisset  
 Vincius, ut tribuit cetera, sic aimam.  
 Noluit, ut similis magis hoec foret; alters sic est:  
 Possident illius Maurus amans animam.  
 Hujus, quam cenis, nomen Lucretia: divi  
 Omnia cui larga contribuere manu.  
 Rara huic forma data est: pinixt Leonardus: aneavit  
 Maurus: pictorum primus his: ille docum.  
 Naturam et superas hac laesit imagine divas  
 Pictor: tantum hominis posse menum haec doluit  
 Illae longa dari tam magnae tempora formae:  
 Quae spatito fuerat deperitura brevi.  
 Has laesit Mauri causa: defendet et ipsum  
 Maurus: Maurum homines laedere diique timet.<sup>1</sup>

From this Latin verse we may correctly suppose that the painting was executed before 1500, the year Il Moro's power came to an end and he was taken to France as prisoner of the King. After this date the phrase 'Il Moro will protect him,' indicates a power which Lodovico would no longer have possessed as prisoner in the Castel Cloches. Nor would he have been able to have a portrait of his mistress painted while he was a prisoner. Finally, Leonardo remained in Italy until 1516 before going to France some eight years after the former's death. Thus the conclusion may be drawn that the so-

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<sup>1</sup>Edward MacCurdy, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, (New York: Geo. Braziller, 1954, 2 ed.), p.1016.

TRANSLATION: How well the master's art answers to nature. Da Vinci might have shown the soul here, as he rendered the rest. He did not, so that this picture might be a greater likeness: for the original is possessed by Il Moro, her lover. This lady's name is Lucrezia, to whom the gods gave all things with lavish hand. Beauty of form was given her: Leonardo painted her, Il Moro loved her - one the greatest painter, the other of princes. By this likeness the painter injured Nature and the goddess on high. Nature lamented that the hand of a man could attain so much, the goddess that immortality should have bestowed on so fair a form, which ought to have perished. For Il Moro's sake Leonardo did the injury, and Il Moro will protect him. Men and gods alike fear to injure Il Moro.

called portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli painted by Leonardo was executed in the latter part of the last decade of the Quattrocento.

The Hahn portrait (Plate LXXVIII) is certainly of a woman of Milanese society and is confirmed by the pottery beads around her neck, and the costume which also proves the time of the portrait and its place of origin.<sup>1</sup> The information which is lacking is how and when the panel was transported to France. If this is the original by Leonardo, it might have been carried to France by Lodovico Sforza himself. Another hypothesis could be propounded that the French King added this picture to the plunder with which he returned to France, or that it was brought to French soil by Francis I at a later date. If it had been transported by any other means there should have been some documentary evidence of such an event. There is one last supposition which can be offered that it was, with the Mona Lisa, still in the possession of Leonardo da Vinci and that he took it with him to France where it eventually became the property of the Crown.

A speculative hypothesis might also be suggested here, either Louis XII or Francis I, when returning to France with art works of Italy, took a copy of the original by one of the pupils of Leonardo mistaking it for Leonardo's own work. In so far as doubt and uncertainty accompany these copies and because the Latin verse written to Leonardo is not wholly complimentary, the writer seriously questions the existence of the original La Belle Ferronnière today or

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1913), I, p.214.

whether it ever left the Italian peninsula. Noting several lines of verse such as: 'Da Vinci might have shown the soul here, as he did the rest,' 'He did not, so that the picture might be the greater likeness,' or 'in this likeness the painter injured Nature and the goddess on high.' Are these words those which one would use to praise an artist such as Leonardo? It is somewhat unlikely. Perhaps to continue this thought further, Leonardo knew it to be a school piece done by one of the pupils under his careful eye. We find no entries or references made directly to the La Belle Ferronnière in his Notebooks, a practice which he observed rigidly when he worked on his own panels, but seldom mentions the subject material of his students. Until something more concrete concerning the origin and proof of the original painting comes to light, theory, hypothesis, dispute, and conjecture will continue and these will forever be challengeable. Because of all the indefinite material and the compiled scientific data, the writer of this study questions the statement that the La Belle Ferronnière came from the hand of Leonardo da Vinci.

The Hahn Portrait (Plate LXXVIII), being of Milanese origin, is obviously of the Leonardesque school as verified by the pose, the dark background, the characteristic turn and tilt of the head, the hermaphroditic smile, and the evident use of chiaroscuro in the modeling of the flesh. There is a somberness, an almost sullen attitude which is foreign to the customary nature of Leonardo's art. The verticality and the rigidity of pose accomplished with compositional parallelism is certainly more indicative of Giovanni

Antonio's style than that of Leonardo's. The attentive quality and the fact that the relaxed state lacks the rhythmical composition of the mass support the contention that we are viewing a student's work.

The sculpturally wide forehead, the widely separated eyes, elongated nose, the full undulating mouth and predominant chin all suggest Boltraffio's style. The textures as well as the drawing are hard, and the line of the hair reduced to the effectiveness of a wig. However, the inflated roundness of the chin is disturbing and far more reminiscent of Bernardino de'Conti than of Boltraffio. There is a sleepiness in the eyes, yet they lack the sparkle and attentive quality of those of Giovanni Antonio. The modeling is heavier than Boltraffio's and the line of the face less indented at the joining of the eye sockets and the cheek bones, an area more shaded in many works of Bernardino. There is a parallelism in the folds of the drapery of the sleeves which, although it might occur in Boltraffio's work, would not be evident. Therefore, the writer would not wholeheartedly accept this portrait as being by either Leonardo or Boltraffio; he reserves some inclination to give it in part to Bernardino de'Conti.

A copy of the La Belle Ferronnière (Plate LXXIX) which in the opinion of the writer is correctly attributed to Boltraffio is in the L. Glen Collection in London. This attribution can be stylistically substantiated by the rendering of the necklace - which in actual numerical count has fewer beads per strand than that in the other two panels, by the more characteristic chin and the quality

of the eyes, and by the more direct relationship with the spectator than is created in the other two works. As we have found in other cases, there were studio projects of copying a particular work under Leonardo's tutelage that had previously been completed by him. The writer again believes this might very well be what exists in the Hahn and London panels, the Louvre picture merely being a copy of the Hahn version. The writer has been unable to locate a provenience of the Glen portrait, hence its association with the style of Boltraffio is made on a purely stylistic basis with no scientific or technical data to support the writer's contention.

The Hahn-Duveen suit, which was not brought before the court for a second time but settled outside, is shrouded in an air of mystery. Recalling the figure of a half million dollars which Madame Hahn filed against Sir Joseph, why one asks was the settlement so comparatively, almost ridiculously low? The settlement was for sixty thousand dollars and a statement by Sir Joseph about his attribution of the Hahn portrait. In the opinion of the writer, Mme. Hahn could have demanded more if her contentions that her portrait was the original Leonardo were true. This settlement would infer that eventually there was doubt about the Hahn panel although it was adequately proven to be the older of the two pictures. The writer also wonders why no mention was ever made in the litigation of the Glen portrait in London as it could have been used to advantage by either side as supportive evidence at the beginning of the trial. Another strange fact arises in a publication by Bernard Berenson, some three years after the Supreme Court of New York

State dismissed the first case, where he states again emphatically that the La Belle Ferronnière in the Louvre is by Leonardo.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Berenson certainly maintained his stand for Duveen even after data was revealed that almost conclusively disproves the authenticity of the Louvre panel.

There is a group of minor paintings of second rate quality which has to be acknowledged in this dissertation because either a more thorough investigation is needed or because for want of another artist, Boltraffio has been designated as the author. This kind of attribution which is not too uncommon is unfair to the artist, being injurious to his reputation as an established artist. There are also those works which are adequate and of good quality, but which for one reason or another have been assigned indiscriminately to other artists. Such attribution has survived unchallenged for many years. This last group of pictures which remains to be discussed falls into this category and deservedly warrants our attention.

In the Borromeo Gallery in Milan there is a panel of an Ivy Crowned Youth (Plate LXXX) that has been attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio both by Malaguzzi-Valeri and Gardner Teall, and the Gallery itself endorses such a probability.<sup>2,3</sup> However, neither

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.279.

<sup>2</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, La corte di Lodovico Il Moro, (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1917), III, p.92.

<sup>3</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (New York: Lane & Co., Oct., 1926), LXXXV, p.94.

writer mentioned above supports his own contentions, and it is only Teall who holds no reservation with regard to the painting or painter assigned; admittedly Malaguzzi-Valeri does question his own thoughts on the subject.

When we examine the painting there is little connection with Boltraffio stylistically. The portrait shows merely the head and shoulders of the youth with little to recommend it as a fine painting. It is a likeness lacking realistic qualities. The most natural object of the painting is the ivy which wreathes the head and confines the hair that is allowed to fall behind the shoulders. With the exception of the wide forehead, elongated nose, and dominant chin, there is nothing to connect this panel stylistically with the art of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. The style, the crude modeling, and the goiterous effect of the eyes which possess a cold bloodless stare, denote more conclusively the hand of Bernardino de'Conti. The drapery is poor in quality and tactile sensation, yet exhibits a density as do the physical parts of the body such as the neck and the shoulders.

Whoever the artist may have been, the panel reveals the efforts of a young painter who has yet to acquire character and individuality in his work. Even so, it could never be given to the youthful Boltraffio if we but reflect for a moment on one of his early works, the Altar Wings (Plate XXXIX) in the Castello where we observed an entirely different technique and feeling for form. Actually there are very few stylistic points that can even vaguely suggest the presence of Boltraffio in this panel. Therefore, the



painter must remain anonymous although the name of Bernardino de'Conti has been suggested.

There are several paintings which have not been discussed in this text because there was neither published information nor reproductions from which to start an investigation. Evidently they are of minor quality and not worthy of the attention of writers and cataloguers. They are mentioned, however, in order that one may have as complete as possible a listing of the works associated with the Artist Boltraffio. They are as follows: a Madonna in the Magazine in Berlin; the Profile of Matthias Corvinus (repro. Venturi) in Budapest; Portrait of a Girl in Lille, France; Christ Falling Under the Cross (questioned) in the Borromeo Collection, Milan; and a Salvator Mundi in Vienna. By listing and incorporating these works within the framework of this dissertation, the writer neither accepts them as works by Boltraffio nor discards them as not being by the artist. He mentions them merely to acknowledge their existence and the possibility that they might possibly be from the hand of Giovanni Antonio.

Naturally all the works of Boltraffio have yet to be discovered. It would be absurd to assume that the entire artistic production of such a man as Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio has been brought up to date today when we consider how few facts are known concerning this person. There are still many facts and details to be uncovered, and where they are hidden remains to be disclosed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Boltraffio - the Man and His Work

The records offer us little in the nature of information or personal touches of enlightenment about Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's life; it is almost with a sense of apology that the writer, in spite of this, endeavors to suggest the circumstances of how and when this artist's works came into existence. It is with deep regret that more facts are not known, but where there are so few it is difficult to restrain one's self from allowing the imagination to dictate and color to some extent the pure logical theorizing. This the writer has attempted to suppress in order to present a clear and concise view which has not been altered or enlarged upon to enhance the prestige or greatness of a person who has captured and deserved our attention.

It is inevitable and right that Boltraffio be overshadowed by his master, Leonardo da Vinci, but it is difficult to understand why he has for so many years been subordinated to his fellow students and imitators of the master. The question is answerable only when we consider the circumstances surrounding the shroud of darkness in which the artist has existed for these many years, even centuries. As a personality he has been passed down in art history merely as a name to which a few paintings have been assigned.

Other than his epitaph, one contract, and six entries made by Leonardo in his own Notebooks, there is little upon which to base Boltraffio's actual existence. However, these details are sufficient to claim for Giovanni Antonio a place in the annals of the history of art, for they prove that he lived and died, was of noble birth, was a student of the great Florentine, and that he painted. From two reliable sources we possess almost irrefutable proof that he was the artist of two pictures - enough evidence in this case to establish a foundation on which to distinguish the style and character of his work. Once this has been accomplished, Giovanni Antonio emerges from the depths of neglect and obscurity to appear as an artist possessing integrity, originality, and individuality. With the exception of Ambrogio de'Predis, Boltraffio maintains a higher degree of individuality and personal character than any of the immediate pupils of Leonardo. He utilizes the teachings and the advanced artistic developments of Leonardo without the mimicked mannerism so evident in much of the art of the period and locale.

Distinguishing creative originality can never be claimed on behalf of Giovanni Antonio, who inherits from the Milanese school of Foppa and Borgognone those identifiable characteristics that are evident from time to time yet alien to or remote from his learned Leonardesque technique. His compositions are not revolutionary, but are confined within the concept of northern Italian art of the Milanese region and its predecessors in the practiced field of painting. His compositions, based on the Quattrocento idiom of quietude and firmness of conservatism, avoids the insta-

bility and emotionalism which began to invade the art of the locale by the end of the century. To this foundation, Boltraffio adds a graciousness and delicacy, which at first might appear to be austere in order to impregnate the entire picture with warmth and harmony - features common to the majority of his works.

Criticism has been leveled against Boltraffio for the evident effeminate characterization of his youths and his male saints; however, as justifiable as such criticism may seem on the surface, the writer feels that such characterization illustrates the idealism and perfection which he was endeavoring to attain, and that he was aspiring to unveil a universal type of beauty inherent to man. As noted in the second chapter, Boltraffio's characterization was compared with a classic concept most nearly epitomized in the art of Praxitiles. The era in which he lived was the Age of Humanism, a period in which theories were propounded into universalities in the search for the desired perfection. We have only to fix our attention of Leonardo da Vinci to realize the truth of such a contention and to consider his rediscovery of the so-called "Golden Mean" originally conceived by Polyklitus.

The artist's desire for perfection and for the attainment of the finest is borne out by his technical approach of highly refined and smoothed surfaces which result in effects akin to enamel or glass. Such a process in itself requires time, a commodity which appears to have had little association with the ultimate price or intrinsic worth of the object of art. Whether or not Boltraffio's art reaches such perfection, we are assured, regardless of its

occasional inadequacy, poor proportion, or its measure of kinship with reality, that the painting was completed with the highest degree of proficiency attainable by the artist when he executed a particular work.

Naturally this seeking for classic perfection so poignantly evident in Boltraffio's rendered saints introduces not only ideas and ideals of Renaissance art - then the universal language - but transmits to another age the aesthetic values which were buried deep in the taste and sensitivity of its people. Giovanni Antonio, representing his age and utilizing the classic model and restraint in his work, inadvertently acknowledges his own personal character.

A peaceful person of refinement, he displays a cultured personality and grace while at the same time he reveals an alertness of preceived expressions, painting them with the rarest subtleties that attest to his own mental acuity and refinement of thought, insight, and perception. His portrayed eyes, though at times somewhat too gentle and sober, always reveal an alert quality that can never be confused with any meaning other than an awareness or cognizance to a situation. The alertness is further heightened in his portraits by what initially and primarily is felt to be rigidity of pose, yet there is complete lack of tenacity and an attitude of composure which would indicate a person of refined and infinitely acute perception, a personality which must have been in harmony with that of the artist's. These characteristics are disclosed over and over again in one portrait after another.

Boltraffio's own individual taste, which is not to be confused

with refinement, could only be classified as reserved but never austere. Never does he utilize any great amount of ornamentation or unnecessary configurations of a decorative nature and he rarely uses embroidered draperies and stuffs. If jewelry appears in his portraits, it is never in quantity, but whatever he renders in the form of drapery or jewelry always reveals an expensive and rich quality. To this artist it is not how much of quality can be disclosed, but how refined and discriminating the objects are. An insight into the artist's nature is given by the intrinsic value and aesthetic delight which objects and ideas held for Boltraffio, who has revealed himself by his reserved manner of executing pictures and portraits. From his religious painting we can determine to some extent his attitude toward and the reverence he maintained for his faith. All these subjective ideas, which find concrete expression in his work, help us to attain a more pertinent idea of the type of person Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio must have been.

In all of Boltraffio's work there is exhibited a frankness and honesty of characterization of his subjects whether or not they come within the realm of portraiture or are part of a religious subject. Direct comparison with other great men of art cannot necessarily be drawn from examination of Giovanni's work for psychological meanings and revealed emotions, but as an artist he had the capability of portraying what he saw or felt was possessed by his subjects. Their sensitivity and the meaning they convey to the observer reveal Boltraffio as sympathetically responsive to the subtleties with which he intentionally endowed his works. Never are they

designed to be blatant, they are schematically calculated and accomplished so that they convey greater significance to the spectator. But it was only by Boltraffio's own honesty of approach that he competently succeeded in divulging a greater depth of meaning and the inner essence of his sitters.

Individuality, also a part of Giovanni Antonio's character, was maintained on a level of independence from others and their influences. Initially taught in the old tradition of the Milanese school of Foppa and Borgognone, developed under the tutelage and watchful eye of Leonardo da Vinci, and working within the immediate proximity of fellow students and aspirants, he demonstrates a unique individuality that illustrates independence of thought. Granted that Boltraffio was deliberately influenced by Leonardo, learning well and adapting his technique to correspond with the master's teachings, he yet possessed the strength to remain apart and separate. Boltraffio was never able to achieve the discernment and perception nor to infuse his pictures with the delicacy, feeling, and mystery which Leonardo's pictures contain; however, the pupil never became entangled with or blinded by the soft sweetness and feminine aspects of the master's art, which have become such distinguishing manifestations in mannered art of the other followers and imitators, and to which Leonardo became addicted in his late years. The charm and delight of Giovanni Antonio's art lies in his constant avoidance of the trying performance which might at times become prosaic or pedantic because of a sustained mode or mood - the resultant incorporated with the affectation of pseudo-sweetness.

Boltraffio, like Ambrogio de'Predis on occasion, exists in an unvarying strata of individuality - a plane identifiable and independent from the other followers.

A decisive and determined quality can readily be perceived in his method of drawing as distinguished from his technique of painting. Certainly we would have to agree that Boltraffio's drawing possesses a hardness in its quality; in order to pursue this topic we should overlook for a moment his masterful use of modeling and chiaroscuro. His use of line is accomplished with considerable economy; he utilizes only what is absolutely necessary to reveal the form and refrains from the multitudinous configurations that more often detract from rather than add to the delight of the rendered object. By no means can the type of line employed by Boltraffio be referred to as mechanical or labored, yet it is one that rigidly establishes the volume of the figure or object. Because of the phenomenon of subtle modeling given the entire surface, the observer is never oppressed or disturbed by either its hardness or its obvious existence. If the example of Ambrogio de'Predis is mentioned in connection with Boltraffio, it becomes apparent that in much of Ambrogio's work the evident overall hardness is created by the lack of sophisticated softness in his modeling; this is a lack very seldom noted in Boltraffio's art.

The uniqueness with which Giovanni Antonio manages to soften the adamantine effects of line can be accredited to his skillful adaptation of chiaroscuro, that subtle device so admirably learned and adopted from Leonardo. It is only on the rarest occasion that



any implasticity is detected, although the artist's desire for greater refinement often resulted in linearity. At times one wishes that the value contrasts between areas were more authoritative, yet there is satisfaction in those pictures in which it is not evident - the subtlety and delicacy of transition delight our eye in contrast to the more heavily modeled works. Regardless of contrast, an admirable quality is found in the exquisiteness of the modeling itself, the movement and beauty perceived in the reflected lights within the shadows, and the overall tonality that unites and cements the entire surface area of objects and picture into one harmonizing and integral unit. In this particular area of execution Boltraffio achieves the distinction of coming closer to Leonardo than do any of the other followers, pupils, or imitators. Yet with the golden tonality and his adaptation of chiaroscuro, he is individual in a faint trace of an ashen quality beneath the immediate surface of the rendered flesh. Apparently Giovanni Antonio found a point of equalization of contrasts in his technique of modeling; he seldom exceeded the commandments set forth by the great Florentine, yet never compromised in such a way as to endanger those harmonious qualities that reveal his individuality and style.

Subjectively, and by means of approximation, Boltraffio has revealed much of his own personality through his painting. Naturally his physical characteristics are not known, but his thought and the principles by which he labored are. Honesty and frankness underlie his motivations. He employed, even with himself, an economy in stating facts decisively which suggest a predetermined mind. He

always maintained the highest regard for aesthetic values and ideals, although a feeling of reserve tinged with a bit of austerity may be detected. Encompassing his ideas and ideals was a rarity of insight and perception although his sustained desire for idealism and perfection in many instances is resolved in a distinctly classical sense.

All these concepts, as integral parts of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's nature, inadvertently and unconsciously became a part of his art, strengthening and giving it the individuality alone. They are re-enforced by a strong sense of integrity such as that which is found in his honesty of thought and portrayal. His own constancy in painting leads us to believe that a similar consistency had a parallel and formed his own principles of life and thinking. For this we have great admiration.

Most art historians concentrating all their attention on one artist endeavor to divide and separate the artist's productions into definite areas and groups and to show those characteristics which enable the student or reader to distinguish one period from another. This is a difficult task where Boltraffio is concerned, mainly because of the limited number of his works and lack of definite dates. If such a procedure were to be suggested, the only possible solution is that which has been offered on two previous occasions. André de Hervesy and Gardner Teall both state that Boltraffio's first period extends from the beginning of his activity

to about 1499, the period when he was under the direct influence and tutelage of Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>1,2</sup> The second period commences with the accomplishment of the Casio Family Madonna, in the Louvre, Paris, dated 1500, and continues throughout the remainder of his career or 1516, a period in which he exhibits a style more personal and independent of the dominating influences of Leonardo.

The writer agrees with the divisioning, but not completely with the periods in which de Hervesy and Teall have placed certain pictures with reference to their chronological ordering. It might be appended that there is a lack of agreement between these men and the works individually assigned to specific periods. The question immediately becomes more profound and theoretical because of the lack of dates. It therefore rests upon the judgement of the individual writers to trace the evolutionary development from the few dates that exist, and with great speculation and uncertainty to attempt to suggest a chronological ordering of Boltraffio's works. To suppose any writer would consider himself so infallible as to suggest that his own chronological assignment of pictures is the correct list would be committing heresy that would result in the absolute chaos of derogatory criticism. Neither of these men has faltered here. Each carefully allows for either change of mind or for the discovery of heretofore unknown documentation; they preface

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<sup>1</sup>Andre de Hervesy, "Boltraffio et ses modeles," L'amour de l'art, (Paris: Le Brairie de France, 1932), XIII, n.8, pp.260-265.

<sup>2</sup>Gardner Teall, "Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio," International Studio, (New York: Lane & Co., Oct., 1926), LXXXV, pp.21-25.

their remarks and lists by phrases that suggest but by no means declare an adamant or absolute opinion.

If we are to accept Boltraffio's artistic career as being divided into the two periods indicated and to use the date 1500 as the pivot point, then we must determine when his activity as a painter originated. The present writer believes we can safely assume that his earlier identifiable works date from about 1490, the date usually suggested for the Two Altar Wings in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Giovanni Antonio's age would have been 23 years, but we have indicated in the first chapter that he showed influences of Foppa and Borgognone, and to some extent of Civichio which would indicate that his training began sometime before Leonardo's acquaintance with the youth. Leonardo's first entry in his Notebooks concerning Giovanni is dated August 14, 1490. This would imply that he became a student of the art of painting sometime previous to this date, but unfortunately we have no evidence of any work prior to this period which precedes his apprenticeship with Leonardo. If there are any paintings preëxistent to his first period, they are unknown and undisclosed. Limited as we are, we shall have to exclude any attempt to establish a period preceeding that of his tutelage with the Tuscan master.

Before 1500, while employing the teachings and technical aspects of Leonardo, Boltraffio continued to follow the older Milanese tradition in the placement of his figures, the static reality of their individual poses, and almost statuesque immobility of concept. Little emotion is seen, but a nervous quality is commonly

detected in the long narrow fingers and re-enforced by the ardent and attentive expression of the eyes. Because of the modeling technique of chiaroscuro, his surfaces are merely summarized in the fashion of antique flat modeling; seldom is any real proficiency for more detail or reality revealed. This is more characteristic at the beginning of the early period and continually decreases throughout the advance of this period.

A quietude, which is apparent in the greater portion of his work in the first period, would border on somberness if it were not for his use of color and the subject material. In all instances cited above these characteristics are more pertinent and discernable at the outset of his tutelary career when he was dominated by Leonardo.

In the later work of the first period a certain idealization of character entering his artistic vocabulary is reflected in the light over the entire surface of his panels. A gentility is shown in the individual heads that inevitably express a strain of pensiveness and melancholy such as that exemplified so beautifully by the two Narcissi in the National Gallery, London, and in the Uffizi. In conjunction with the obvious development in Boltraffio's art of the first period, a sensitive delicacy is noted in the delineation of the figures when, again in the Narcissi, the flat modeling prevents the sitter from emerging completely from the background. This same delineation on occasion creates a hardness in the contours of the faces. Giovanni Antonio continually strove to add greater reality in his use of chiaroscuro which at times had a tendency to

swell his forms but generally achieved an individual excellence that had its dazzling moments in the reflected light displayed within the shaded areas. The adaptation of sfumato by the artist in his tutelary period had its effect of deepening the shades which easily distinguishes him from his master.

With the advent of the second period about 1500 we witness the maturity of the artist; his classic proto-image turns from effeminate delicacy to greater masculinity of physical concept, but never, as in the St. John the Baptist or St. Sebastian in the Casio Family Madonna in the Louvre, strips the figures of their individuality and classic beauty. New proficiency and delight was achieved by the Lombard artist in the luxuriant and voluminous display of drapery which from time to time creates the major movement within his perpetually symmetrical composition. His compositions never deviate from absolute symmetry, but occasionally become a challenge for the resolution of a complex series of crossing and interlacing diagonals arranged in a multitude of parallels. The realization of how subtly and beautifully the artist conceived the intricacy that is resolved in so satisfying a conclusion is indeed exciting to the spectator.

This emphasis on movement within the composition was continuous throughout Boltraffio's career, but added to it was the greater firmness of modeling that became more lightened in its tonality of color. This was a development which sought refinement during the entire span of the second period. Boltraffio's continual use of smoky chiaroscuro enhances the volume of his figures, conversely

producing greater depth and reality in his pictures. The shape of the head is resolved in its characteristic form; it is long and oval with a relaxation of the mouth that might otherwise have developed into the mannerism of an archaic smile. Giovanni Antonio found individuality with reference to his Madonnas by lowering their glance so that the half closed lids conceal the greater part of their eyes.

His use of line was always firm but soft in the second period - never fluctuating, never harsh. From time to time in the second phase he found a new scheme, a certain exterior decorative grandeur resulting in pleasurable diversion from the dark somberness characteristic of the Milanese school. As he advanced in his style he endowed his figures and forms with the lively tints more indicative of a living quality.

Within both periods he had a tendency to cover the physical form with voluminous drapery in such a way as to sufficiently hide the bodily relationship of parts. But as in the development of the head, the hands also attain greater convincingness and an adequacy of structure, reducing the thin nervous quality that evolved to present capable hands adaptable to movement and manipulation.

To divide Boltraffio's career into two periods is a logical and easy process as we witness an obvious development throughout his artistic works. In compiling the catalogue raisonnee, the writer will order the pictures without indicating a divisioning of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's career.

### Catalogue Raisonné

All paintings listed below are those which have been discussed within the text of this study. The dates set forth merely suggest the chronological ordering of Boltraffio's works, but the writer by no matter or means believes this listing to be complete or these dates absolute in their nature. Where definite dates are known, the titles of such works will be written in upper case type.

- ca. 1490      Two Altar Wings (Saints and Donors), in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan.
- ca. 1495-1496      Saint Sebastian, Signora Euginia Scaglione Frizzoni Collection, Messina, Sicily.
- ca. 1497-1499      Madonna Nursing Her Child, Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.
- ca. 1497-1498      Madonna and Child with Book, National Gallery, London.
- ca. 1497      Head of Narcissus, National Gallery, London.
- ca. 1497-1498      Head of Narcissus, Uffizi, Florence.
- ca. 1498-1499      Madonna and Child with Book, Loeser Collection, Florence.
- ca. 1498      Madonna and Child, Willgenstein Collection, Vienna.
- Ca. 1499-1500      Portrait of Girolamo Casio, Pinacoteca Brera, Milan. (in large part - additions and repainting).
- 1500      MADONNA OF THE CASIO FAMILY, (dated), Louvre, Paris.
- ca. 1500      Youthful Christ Blessing, Carrara Gallery, Bergamo.
- ca. 1500-1501      Youthful Christ Blessing, Borromeo Collection, Milan.



- ca. 1501 Madonna and Child (tondo), Accademia Carrara, Bergamo.
- 1502 SAINT BARBARA, (dated contract), Kaiser Fredrick Museum, Berlin.
- ca. 1502 Portrait of a Woman with Gloves, Castello Sforzesco, Milan. (some reservation).
- ca. 1502-1503 Madonna Nursing Her Child, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.
- ca. 1503 Portrait of Costanza Bentivoglio, (Skull painted on reverse side), Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth, England.
- ca. 1503-1504 Portrait of Clarice Pusterla, Collection of Contessa Soranzo-Mocenzio, Milan.
- ca. 1504-1505 Portrait of a Youth, Ralph Booth Collection, National Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- ca. 1504 Madonna and Child, National Gallery, London.
- ca. 1504 Portrait of a Woman, Dreyfus Collection, Paris.
- ca. 1504 Portrait of a Young Man, William G. Mather Collection, New York.
- ca. 1504 Madonna and Child with Book, Kress Collection, National Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- ca. 1505 Madonna and Child, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.
- ca. 1505 Costanza Bentivoglio as Saint Sebastian, Lord Elgin Collection, Dumfermline, Scotland.
- Ca. 1505 Bust Portrait of a Young Man, Museum, Berne, Switzerland.
- ca. 1505 La Belle Ferronnière, L. Glen Collection, London.
- ca. 1505-1506 Fresco Panels of Episodes, Saints, and Martyres, Chiesa della Monastro Maggiore, San Maurizio, Milan.
- ca. 1506 Madonna Nursing Her Child, P.A.B. Widner Collection, National Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- ca. 1506 The Mond Portrait of a Man, Ludwig Mond Collection, National Gallery, London.
- ca. 1507 Saint Louis of France, Hermitage, Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

- ca. 1507 Portrait of an Unknown Man, Palazzo Borromeo, Isola Bella, Italy.
- 1508 MADONNA, CHILD, SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND SAINT SEBASTIAN WITH DONOR, Count Pálffy of Pressboro, Budapest.
- ca. 1508 Profile of a Youth, Collection of Julius Böhler in Monaco di Baviera.
- ca. 1508 Portrait of a Man, Count Alessandro Contini (formerly of the Frizzoni Collection) Collection, Milan.
- ca. 1509-1510 Two Devout (Praying) Persons, Pinacoteca Brera, Milan.
- ca. 1510 Madonna and Child, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan.
- 1513-1514 Madonna and Child with Donor, (fresco), Convent Church of Sant'Onofrio, Rome.

#### Questioned Paintings

Ivy Crowned Youth as Saint Sebastian, Leichtenstein Collection, Vienna. (questioned)

Nursing Madonna and Child, Demotte Collection, Paris. (questioned)

Madonna Litta, Hermitage, Leningrad, U.S.S.R., (in part by Boltraffio - a major portion by Leonardo da Vinci.)

Portrait of a Woman, Malaspina Collection, Museo Civico, Pavia, Italy. (in part by Boltraffio).

Portrait of an Unknown Man, Theodore and Mary Ellis Collection. (in part by Boltraffio).

#### Drawings Attributed

Sanguin Drawing of a Youth, Ambrosiana, Milan.

Drawing of Isabella d'Aragon, (red chalk and pastel), Ambrosiana, Milan.

Attributed to the School of Boltraffio

Madonna with Nursing Child, Poldi Pezzoli Museum,  
Milán.

Madonna and Child with Book, Bellini Collection,  
Florence.

Madonna, Child, and Saint John the Baptist, Tucher  
Collection, Vienna.

Madonna and Child with Book, (formerly of Trotti,  
Paris), Learmont Collection, Montreal, Canada.

Portrait of a Young Woman, Jacquemart-André Museum,  
Paris.

Portrait of a Woman, Count Febo Borromeo Collection,  
Milan.

Profile of a Woman, (Countess Forli - Caterina Sforza),  
Metropolitan Museum, New York.

## APPENDIX A

Direct copy of the original text of Vasari concerning the life of Boltraffio from the original edition (2nd ed.) of 1568.\*

Cfr. pp. 1-11: Vita di Lionardo da Vinci / Pittore, et sculture Fiorentino.

"Fu discepolo di Lionardo Giouannantonio Boltraffio Milanese persona / molto pratica, & intendente, che l'anno 1500 dispinse in nella chiesa della Mi / sericordia fuor di Bologna in una taula ad olio con gran filige(n)zia la nostra / Donna col figliuolo in braccio, s. Giouanni Batista & s. Sasiano ignudo, e il / padrone che la fe fare ritratto di naturale ginocchioni, opera veramente bel= / la & in quella scrisse il nome suo e l'esser discepolo di Lionardo." (p.11).

Nella prima edizione (parte III, p.576) L'accenno al Bolt-raffio si limita alle seguenti parole: "Fu discepolo di Lionardo Giovannantonio Boltraffio Milanese persona molto practica e intendente,"\*\*

\*Title: DELLE / VITE DE'PIV ECCELLENTI / PITTORI SCULTORI ET ARCHITETTORE / Scritte de M. Giorgio Vasari / PITTORE ET ARCHITETTO ARENTINO / (fr.) / Primo Volume della / Treza parte / (fr. e privil.) / In Fiorenza, appresso i Giunti, 1568.

\*\*Carlo Pedretti, Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia. (Bologna: Editoriale Fiammenghi, 1953), p.55.

## APPENDIX B

Drawings by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio are referred to throughout the text of the dissertation for the purpose of affirming a particular work as being from the hand of the artist. Only on two occasions are drawings analyzed within the formal text - this because both are done in a medium other than silverpoint and because they have been customarily discussed in the past with the general portrait production of the artist. However, in including drawings in the text as allied with specific paintings something must be said concerning the style and nature of Giovanni Antonio's drawings as separate from his technique of painting.

Boltraffio's drawing has a preciseness about it with an accompanying finish of style. The lines seem almost measured and deliberately controlled by the predetermined motivation of perfection. The drawing is not always up to the quality and power of that of his Florentine master, but it does show the sensitivity and beauty of the artist's awareness of proportion and character. Never is Boltraffio's use of line hard or mechanical, rather it is soft and varying in quality and tone with the manipulation of the line being more calligraphic. On occasion there is a tendency for the artist to employ a type of line which has a harshness about it; however, this is usually softened by the subtle gradation of shaded areas about or adjoining the line, relieving any unpleasant quality which might otherwise exist.

In most of Giovanni Antonio's drawings there is a noticeable economy and reserve, allowing the imagination full rein to interpret the living and breathing quality of the drawing. Except for the few drawings which are in a more finished state, his drawings have the same reserve and quietude as associated with his painting and the classic restraint which he enowed most of his work. This resolves itself into an attenuated and graceful style having a sculptural sense and character, while the tranquil quality lends a sophistication to the drawing illustrating the nimbleness and elegance of the artist's technique.

If there is any strong delineation of the line, it generally occurs in the vicinity of the eyelids, the mouth, occasionally in the area of the hair, and at times about the neckline of the garments. The artist also has the habit of accentuating the lineament of the face if it happens to be in profile. However, all other lines are soft and rendered with utmost sensitiveness.

Probably the most delicate and exquisite technical performance viewed in Boltraffio's drawings is the shading and use of chiaroscuro, where gradations and tonal relationships are manipulated in such a fashion that they express not only depth and reality but tactile relationships. Giovanni Antonio's drawings are executed with as much care as his paintings, suggesting that they are labored and measured. However, this is not the case as illustrated by the rapid and unvarying shaded lines which are used as summary suggestions to larger shaded areas. Yet in this aspect there is never any variation nor any suggestion of hurried execution.

There is a warmth emanating from his drawings due mainly to tonal relationships and the expressive quality of the line. This is evident in areas about the mouth and eyes. Other objects within the drawings such as clothing and other objects not only maintain their identity but also unite and harmoniously combine all elements in relationship with each other.

Boltraffio's drawings are distinctive and certainly individual from those of Leonardo da Vinci in that there is never the contrasts nor the mechanical precision and powerfully drawn manner of the master. They are perpetually softer and lighter in overall quality, lacking the crystalline clearness so often associated with the Florentine. In Boltraffio's drawings there is generally a direct source of light indicated while the entire surface of the drawing is enlivened with light. Giovanni utilizes the same light and dark relationships as noted in his paintings while the same heavy shadows created by the nose and mouth are apparent.

His style of painting and drawing run a close parallel to one another with regard to applied technique and execution. Once a painting and a drawing are established as being of one and the same person or object, it is difficult to divorce one from the other, becoming inseparable in terms of style and identity both as to artist and model.

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**





Plate I  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA OF THE CASIO FAMILY  
Paris, Louvre Museum.



Plate II  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
SAINT BARBARA  
Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich



Plate III  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
London, National Gallery



**Plate IV**  
**Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**  
**MADONNA AND CHILD (tondo)**  
**Bergamo, Accademia Carrara**



Plate V  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts



Plate VI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
FEMALE HEAD (drawing)  
Oxford, Christ Church



Plate VII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD (drawing)  
London, British Museum



**Plate VIII**  
**Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**  
**MADONNA AND CHILD**  
**Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum**





Plate IX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
HEAD OF A WOMAN (drawing)  
Rome, Borghese Gallery.



Plate X  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA, CHILD AND DONOR (fresco)  
Rome, Sant'Onofrio



Plates XI & XII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
HEADS OF FEMALE SAINTS  
Milan, San Maurizio

The photographs for the  
Heads of Two Female Saints  
are unsatisfactory for  
inclusion within the text  
as the prints were merely  
the reverse of Plates  
XI and XII.

Plates XIII & XIV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
HEADS OF FEMALE SAINTS  
Milan, San Maurizio



Plate XV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA, CHILD, SS. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND  
SEBASTIAN, AND DONOR (Lodi Altar)  
Budapest, Count Palffy - Pressboro



Plate XVI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH BOOK  
Florence, Loeser Collection





Plate XVII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MODANNA AND CHILD WITH BOOK  
London, National Gallery



Plate XVIII  
Copy after Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH BOOK  
Florence, Bellini Collection





Plate XIX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA WITH NURSING CHILD  
Milan, Castello Sforzesco



Plate XX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA WITH NURSING CHILD  
Washington, D.C., P.A.B. Widner



Plate XXI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA WITH NURSING CHILD  
Cambridge, Fogg Museum



Plate XXII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH BOOK  
Washington, D.C., Kress  
Collection.



Plate XXIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
YOUTHFUL CHRIST BLESSING  
Bergamo, Carrara Gallery.



Plate XXIV  
School of Boltraffio  
NURSING MADONNA  
Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum



Plate XXV  
School of Beltraffio  
MADONNA, CHILD AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
Vienna, Tucher Collection



Plate XXVI  
Bernardino de' Conti  
MADONNA AND NURSING CHILD  
London, Howard Young Collection





Plate XXVII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (?)  
MADONNA AND NURSING CHILD  
Paris, Demotte Collection.



Plate XXVIII  
Bernardino de' Conti  
MADONNA AND NURSING CHILD  
Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum



Plate XXIX  
no attribution  
MADONNA OF THE ROCKS AND DONOR  
New York, Hurd Collection



Plate XXX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
Vienna, Willgenstein Collection



Plate XXXI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (?)  
PROFILE OF A YOUTH AS ST. SEBASTIAN  
Vienna, Leichtenstein Collection





Plate XXXII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (?)  
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH BOOK  
Montreal, Learmont Collection



Plate XXXIII  
Bartolommeo Veneto  
HEAD OF CHRIST  
Milan, Vittadini Collection



Plate XXXIV  
School of Boltraffio  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
/ Milan, Crespi Collection





Plate XXXV  
School of Milan  
HOLY FAMILY  
Venice, Seminario



Plate XXXVI  
no attribution  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
Paris, private collection.



Plate XXXVII  
no attribution  
MADONNA AND CHILD  
England, Cambridge



Plate XXXVIII  
School of Milan  
CHRIST BLESSING  
Milan, Vittadini Collection



Plate XXXIX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
MAN AND WOMAN PRAYING  
Milan, Brera Museum.



Plate XL  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
WOMAN WITH GLOVES  
Milan, Castello Sforzesco.



**Plate XLI**  
**Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**  
**PORTRAIT OF CLARICE PUSTERLA**  
**Milan, Collection of Contessa**  
**Soranzo-Mocenizo.**







Plate XLII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF A YOUTH  
Washington, D.C., National Gallery,  
Ralph Booth Collection.



Plate XLIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (in part)  
PORTRAIT OF GIROLAMO CASIO  
Milan, Pinacoteca Brera.



Plate XLIV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PROFILE OF A MAN  
London, National Gallery,  
Mond Collection.



Plate XLV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF A MAN  
Milan, Collection of Count  
Alessandro Contini.



Plate XLVI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN MAN  
Isola Bella, Palazzo Borromeo



Plate XLVII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
BUST OF A YOUNG MAN  
Berne, Switzerland.



Plate XLVIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
SANGUINE DRAWING OF A MAN  
Milan, Ambrosiana.



Plate XLIX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN  
New York, Wm. G. Mather Collection.





Plate L  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
SANGUINE DRAWING OF ISOBELLA D'ARAGON  
Milan, Ambrosiana.



Plate LI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF COSTANZA BENTIVOGLIO  
Chatsworth, England, Duke of  
Devonshire collection.



Plate LII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
Reverse side of Plate LI  
Chatsworth, England, Duke of  
Devonshire Collection.



Plate LIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
YOUTH AS ST. SEBASTIAN -  
COSTANZA BENTIVOGLIO  
Dumfermlin, Scotland, Earl of  
Elgin Collection.



Plate LIV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
ST. LOUIS OF FRANCE  
Leningrad, Hermitage.



Plate LV  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
ST. SEBASTIAN (tondo)  
Milan, Frizzoni Collection.



Plate LVI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
YOUTH (drawing)  
Florence, Uffizi.





Plate LVII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
NARCISSUS  
London, National Gallery.





Plate LVIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
NARCISSUS  
Florence, Uffizi.



Plate LIX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
ST. SEBASTIAN  
Messina, Sicily, Frizzoni  
Collection.



Plate LX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
TWO ALTAR WINGS  
Milan, Castello Sforzesco.



Plate LXI.  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN  
Paris, Dreyfus Collection.



Plate LXII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
A WOMAN (drawing)  
Vienna, Albertina.



Plate LXIII  
School of Boltraffio  
PROFILE OF A WOMAN  
New York, Metropolitan Museum.





Plate LXIV  
School of Boltraffio  
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN  
Milan, Count Febo Borromeo Collection.



Plate LXV  
School of Milan  
PORTRAIT BUST OF A YOUTH  
Philadelphia, Johnson Collection.





Plate LXVI  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (in part)  
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN  
Pavia, Museo Civico, Malaspina  
Collection.



Plate LXVII  
Bartolommeo Veneto  
WOMAN WITH A DOG  
Budapest, Ernst Museum,  
Schloss Rohoncz.



Plate LXVIII  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (in part)  
PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN WOMAN  
Ellis Collection.



Plate LXIX  
School of Boltraffio  
PROFILE OF A WOMAN  
Paris, Jacquemart-Andre Museum.



Plate LXX  
Bernardino de'Conti  
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN  
Fonthill, England, Hugh  
Morrison Collection.



Plate LXXI  
Bernardino Luini  
FEMALE PORTRAIT  
Paris, Jacquemart-Andre Museum



Plate LXXII  
School of Milan  
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN  
Rome, Borghese Gallery.



Plate LXXIII  
Bernardino de' Conti  
LODOVICO MARIA SFORZA-VISCONTI  
Milan, Trivulzio Collection.





**Plate LXXIV**  
**Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio**  
**PROFILE OF A YOUTH**  
**Monaco di Baviere, Julius Böhler.**



Plate LXXV  
School of Milan  
PROFILE OF A MAN  
New York, J.P. Labbey  
Collection.



PLate LXXVI  
Leonardo da Vinci and Ambrogio de'Predis  
WOMAN WITH AN ERMINE  
Cracow, Czartoryski Collect .



Plate LXXVII  
Copy after Leonardo da Vinci  
LA BELLE FERRONNIERE  
Paris, Louvre Museum.



Plate LXXVIII  
Bernardino de'Conti  
LA BELLE FERRONNIERE  
Kansas City, Mm. Andrée Hahn.



Plate LXXIX  
Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio  
LA BELLE FERRONNIERE  
London, J. Glen Collection



Plate LXXX  
Anonymous  
AN IVY CROWNED YOUTH  
Milan, Borromeo Gallery

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GIOVANNI ANTONIO BOLTRAFFIO - A STYLISTIC STUDY OF HIS WORK  
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Boston University Graduate School, 1959

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The research and compilation of material for this dissertation represents a preliminary study which allows for additions and reattributions in the future if necessary. It was written because of the author's interest in the Milanese School of the Renaissance and the necessity for a comprehensive study of the life and works of the artist. Research was not confined merely to the life and works of the artist, but a thorough investigation was pursued into the life, writings, and artistic productions of his teacher, Leonardo da Vinci, as well as other Milanese artists and painters of the period. This was necessary in order that a more definitive and reasonable conclusion might be reached. Research was carried on in the customary fashion utilizing all libraries, museums, and institutions both in this country and in Europe in order to obtain all available information although documentation of a concrete nature could not be found in any quantity.

Nevertheless, the limited records had to suffice in order to establish the sparsely documented life of Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (1467-1516). The most helpful source was the writings of Leonardo da Vinci in which he recorded from time to time the activities of his pupils. There is also remaining to this day Boltraffio's

mortuary stone and the existence of a dated commission, 1502.

Other primary sources which can be considered pertinent in this instance were public documents, and the writings of Giorgio Vasari, Abate Luigi Lanzi, and A. Betti. The remaining material was secondary in nature and had to be scrutinized closely before its utilization was possible. Due to the fact that very little documentation remains little attention has been given Boltraffio, and as a result he has been relegated to a somewhat obscure position in the annals of art history.

Throughout the dissertation conclusions were drawn objectively and with established and proven works by Boltraffio an analysis was made of his style, technique and iconography in order that a style could be established to which other works might be attributed. The stylistic analysis would not have been complete had not one been done for each of the other Milanese artists of the period so as to distinguish Boltraffio from them. The study is concluded with a catalogue raisonné assigning to Boltraffio two chalk and pastel drawings, thirty-eight paintings, and five paintings questioned or in part by the artist.

The greater portion of the text deals with the examination, analysis, and attribution of individual paintings, and suggests a possible date for the execution of each. Attention was also given to the life of Boltraffio, his family and background, those with whom he associated, a suggestion as to his early teachers, and a hypothetical assertion concerning his character as revealed by his work. His artistic career has been divided into two parts: that

which existed prior to 1500, and that which followed.

Boltraffio followed the teachings of Leonardo da Vinci, but seldom lost his individuality of style or technique. Boltraffio's independence of style is readily distinguishable from the other artists', of whom the greater majority possess more adequate documentation making the recognition and separation of his artistic works considerably less arduous. Distinguishing himself by being more independent, selective, perceptive, and original in his interpretation of meaning and character, Boltraffio advances his artistic productions to a higher and more discernable level of understanding and stylistic individuality.

## Biography of Rodman Robinson Henry

Rodman Robinson Henry was born the 26th of May 1925 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the son of Rodman Cleveland and Grace Robinson Henry. He was educated in the public schools of Pittsfield entering the United States Army upon completion of his secondary education in 1943. After discharge from the Army, he continued his education at American International College, Springfield, Massachusetts, from where he received his B.S. degree in 1950. He then enrolled in the Graduate School, Department of Fine Arts of Boston University qualifying and receiving an A.M. degree in 1952. Another year of graduate work was taken at Harvard University (1952-1953), at the end of which time returned to Boston University to work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (1959).

Mr. Henry's teaching career commenced with his appointment as a Lecturer in Fine Arts at Boston University in 1954, a position held for two years. He then accepted a position of Instructor of Fine Arts at Pine Manor Junior College in Wellesley, Massachusetts - a position which he still occupies. However, for two years, (1956-1958), he also held the position of Registrar of the college.



