The social lives of paintings in Sixteenth-Century Venice

Kessel, E.J.M. van

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A Modern Miracle

Christ Carrying the Cross *in the Scuola di San Rocco*

In his *Le Maraviglie dell'arte* (1648), the seventeenth-century Venetian painter and art critic Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658) mentioned a much venerated image of Christ, which he attributed to the most famous Venetian painter of the previous century, Titian:

> Around the same time [as he was working in the Doge's Palace], Titian made the Christ of the chapter of San Rocco, who is being pulled with a rope by a treacherous Hebrew, [a painting] which Vasari located in the life of Giorgione. Because it was painted piously, it has attracted all the City's devotion; this effect arises from devout images, which stir the faithful to frequent veneration.[1]

Indeed, in his *Lives* of 1550 Giorgio Vasari ascribed the painting to Giorgione:

[1] 'Circa lo stesso tempo oprò Titiano il Christo del capitello di San Rocco, posto dal Vasari nella vita di Giorgio, tirato con fune da perfido hebreo, che per esser piamente dipinto, hà tratto à se la divotione di tutta la Città; effetto, che proviene dalle divote imagini, che muovono i fedeli ad una frequente veneratione.' Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte ovvero Le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello Stato* (Venice, 1648), p. 141.

> [Giorgione] made a painting of a Christ who carries the cross and a Jew who pulls him, which after some time was placed in the church of San Rocco, and today, because of the devotion that many feel for it, it performs miracles, as one can see.[2]

In the century between the publication of Vasari's and Ridolfi's works, some more authors made similar references to the painting: among others the Florentine Raffaello Borghini and the anonymous Titian biographer known as Tizianello.[3] All writers referred to one and the same object, a depiction of Christ carrying the cross and being mocked by one of his executioners that is nowadays on display in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice but was originally exposed, as the sources confirm, in that same confraternity's church (fig. 9, colour plate 1).[4] It was probably painted in or shortly before 1510 by Giorgione, by Titian, or, possibly, even by someone else – this gap in our knowledge will be discussed later on. What all the sources furthermore agree on are the great powers the painting had over its public. As they all stress, the Venetian people were deeply devoted to it and believed the image to perform miracles. Yet the two authors quoted above explain these powers very differently. For Ridolfi, they spring from the piety of the artist (*per esser piamente dipinto*), while for Vasari, the painting's miraculous powers originate from the devotion felt by the public (*per la devozione che vi hanno molti*). Their diverging

[2] 'Lavorò un quadro d'un Cristo che porta la croce ed un Giudeo lo tira, il quale col tempo fu posto nella chiesa di Santo Rocco, ed oggi, per la devozione che vi hanno molti, fa miracoli, come si vede.' Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, eds. Paola Barocchi and Rosanna Bettarini, vol. IV, Florence 1976, pp. 45-46.

[3] Tizianello, *Breve compendio della vita di Tiziano (1622)*, ed. Lionello Puppi, Milan 2009, p. 54: 'Non è però di minor bellezza l'immagine di Cristo che porta la Croce, posta nella chiesa di San Rocco, tirato da un ebreo con la fune, che muove le lacrime ai pietosi riguardanti, poiché si vede con il pennello dottamente espresso il dolore che patì per l'umana generazione, opera anco di grandissima et antichissima divozione.' Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo … in cui della Pittura, e della Scultura si favella, de' piu illustri Pittori, e Scultori, e delle piu famose opere loro si fa mentione; e le cose principali appartenenti a dette arti s'insegnano* (Florence, 1584), p. 373: 'Fece [Giorgione] in un quadro Christo, che porta la Croce, e un Giudeo, che il tira, il quale fu poi posto nella Chiesa di San Rocco, e dicono che hoggi fa miracoli.' Ibid., p. 525, in a section on works by Titian: '… nella Chiesa di San Rocco, un quadro entrovi Christo, che porta la croce con una corda al collo tirata da un'hebreo, la qual opera è hoggi la maggior divotione, che habbiano i Vinitiani: laonde si può dire, che habbia piu guadagnato l'opera che il maestro.'

[4] For a historiographic review and extensive bibliography, see the catalogue accompanying the recent Giorgione exhibition in Castelfranco Veneto: Enrico Maria dal Pozzolo and Lionello Puppi (eds.), *Giorgione*, Milan 2009, in particular entry no. 49, pp. 435-438 (by Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel).

accounts raise the question, how such powers ascribed to a painting can be understood.

What was it that this painting did, precisely? The *Christ Carrying the Cross* or *Cristo portacroce*, as the painting is referred to in scholarly literature, attracted enormous amounts of visitors and became an important source of income to the confraternity. The reason for this was that it was thought to miraculously save victims of human violence. As we will see, contemporary sources claimed that the painting healed countless mortally wounded men; that it saved a baby from the jaws of a terrifying wolf; that a merchant's son who had fallen from a great height recovered because of its intervention; that thanks to the painting, two people sentenced to the gallows escaped death. Most of the time, the sources hardly distinguish between the painting in the Scuola di San Rocco and Christ himself; thus, in the capacity of miraculous healer the painting was bestowed with a person-like agency.

The *Christ Carrying the Cross* stands in a long tradition of Christian miracle-working images. The phenomenon of images performing miracles – which I would like to define as supernatural events caused by the intervention of a divine power – is generally believed to have originated in the thirteenth century and reached a peak at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries; our painting thus falls within the phenomenon's hey-day.[5] Although the scale on which miracle-working images came into being gradually diminished after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), largely because of suppression by the Roman Catholic Church, they still exist today.

Over the last decades, the miraculous image in early modern Italy has received a good deal of scholarly attention, but, unsurprisingly so, mostly from social historians rather than from those interested in art.[6] Indeed – and we will get back to this – most of these miraculous images are rather conservative or dull from an aesthetic point of view. The San Rocco *Christ Carrying the Cross*, on the other hand, has been far from neglected by art historians, as it

[5] Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Rome 2004, pp. 9-14.

[6] See, for example, Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *"Sopra le acque salse": Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du moyen age*, 2 vols., Rome 1992; Richard Trexler, 'Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image', *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972), pp. 7-41. Art-historical discussions of the topic may be found in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter*, Weinheim 1990, and David Freedberg, *The Power of Images*.

can be associated with some of the most outstanding artists of sixteenth-century Italy and is the result of an innovative, touching and intelligent design. Yet, art-historical research has largely focused on the painting's enigmatic genesis instead of on the remarkable devotion that befell it – which is a pity, for it is just this devotion, this enormous and intense response from the public, which makes it stand out among contemporary painting. In fact, as I will show in this chapter, the *Christ Carrying the Cross* unites in itself two domains that in later centuries would grow apart: the domain of the effective religious image, and the domain of painting as an art.

As we will see, the San Rocco *Christ* came to fulfil more than one role. It was a miraculous healer; but it was also a fundraiser; and in the second half of the *Cinquecento*, it epitomized what was seen as the 'miraculous' power of Titian's art. In what follows, we will examine the reception and production of the *Christ Carrying the Cross* and its miracles, in order to gain a better understanding of where the powers ascribed to miraculous paintings came from and how this situation developed when, during the later decades of the century, what it meant for a painting to be 'miraculous' was in itself subject to change. We will start with an outline of the painting's early history and then analyze its composition, style and iconography, or in other words, try to see what it was in the painting itself that triggered this particular response from the public. Most of this chapter, however, deals with the painting's social environment and will look at its miracles through the eyes of, alternately, the object's owners, the believers, and possible authors.

Genesis and Early History

Art historians have debated the authorship of the painting for decades. It is usually dated around the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century, when Titian was still at the beginning of his very long career, and just before Giorgione died of the plague – a ravaging epidemic swept through Venice in 1510. The two painters had in fact cooperated on some projects and, as is well-known, their styles were very similar in this period, which has not made the question of the attribution any easier. As to the painting's original patron, nothing is certain. Some scholars, among whom Jaynie Anderson, have proposed that the painting was meant to serve as altarpiece for one of the private chapels in the church of San Rocco, the *ius patronatus* of which was given to

the Scuola's *Guardian Grande* of that moment, Iacomo di Zuan, in 1508.[7] On 25 March of that year, Di Zuan had promised to adorn the chapel not only with a tomb for himself and his family but also with paintings, seats, and other furnishings. Yet other scholars have argued that there is no convincing evidence for the assumption that the *Christ Carrying the Cross* was meant as the chapel's altarpiece.[8] Vasari's statement that the painting was placed in the church 'col tempo' would confirm these doubts.[9] That the documents are silent on the painting's origins makes it likely, in my view, that it reached the Scuola as a gift.[10] The first conclusive piece of evidence of the painting's presence in the church of San Rocco, and, what is more, of the miraculous powers ascribed to it, is a passage in the chronicles written by the Venetian historian Marin Sanudo (1466-1536), who recorded on 20 December of the year 1520:

> I do not want to refrain from describing the current great surge of people towards the church of San Rocco, caused by an image of Christ who is pulled by Jews, which is on an altar, and which has performed and still performs many miracles, so that every day a great many people come.[11]

Not long thereafter we find references to the miraculous painting in documents from the Scuola's archives. By then, people had brought so many alms to the painting that the Scuola decided to use them to finance the construction of their new headquarters.[12] As we can learn from a document dated March 1521, the faithful not only brought alms, but also ex-votos; the Scuola had indeed received such an abundance of votive gifts that they could not think of anything but open a little shop and sell it again. Obviously, this was

[7] Jaynie Anderson, '"Christ Carrying the Cross" in San Rocco: Its Commission and Miraculous History', *Arte Veneta* 31 (1977/1978), pp. 186-188, here p. 186.

[8] Especially Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce della Scuola di San Rocco e la sua lunetta', *Atti dell'Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti* 156 (1997/1998), pp. 687-732, here p. 710.

[9] See above, n. 2.

[10] See Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 707.

[11] 'Non voglio restar di scriver il gran concorso a la chiesie di S. Rocho al presente, per una imagine di Cristo vien tirato da zudei, è a uno altar, qual à fato et fa molti miracoli, *adeo* ogni zorno vi va asaissima zente.' Marin Sanudo, *I Diarii*, ed. Rinaldo Fulin et al., vol. XXIX, Venice 1890, p. 69.

[12] See Sanudo, as quoted above: '… si trova assa elemosine con le qual si farà la scuola bellissima.'

not primarily meant to improve their financial situation, but first and foremost 'in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ'![13] From this period onwards, the object was most likely located against one of the two pilasters framing the church's main chapel, where it stood on an altar. A first notice of the kind of miracles the painting performed was also published in this period; but we will come back to all of this in due course.

'Che muove le lacrime à pietosi riguardanti': The Painting as a Trigger of Response

In each case discussed in this study we will ask to what extent something in the image itself evoked a certain audience response. In other words, we will examine if there is anything in a certain painting's style, composition, iconography, and, taking a second step, in the way it is framed and displayed, that could make an audience react the way it has. This is only a first step in our analysis, to be sure, but an important one, which has sometimes been overlooked.[14] In the end, we will be able to say something about what kind of image was likely to act upon its audiences and, conversely, what not. Such an endeavour will provide further insight into the nature of the relation between the image and its social context.

[13] 'L'è noto a tutti et l'experientia il dimostra quante cere e statue per l'inumerabili grazie et miracholi che de continuo fa el miracoloso nostro Christo a chi se raccomanda a lui si hanno offerte per le devote persone delle qual ne son piena la giexia nostra et de continuo ne super abbunda, le qual cere et maxime le statue per esser cosa fragile de continuo se rompono, cascano, perdono in ogni parte, il che vedendo el nostro dignissimo messer Bernardo de Marin fo de messer Bortholamio, al presente guardian grando et considerando esser molto a grato al Salvator del mondo, che delle cose che li sono offerte se li habbi qualche custodia hanno parlamento con quelli della sua Bancha, et fattoli intender che, benché i suoi precessori non hanno provisto a questo, saria molto a proposito et con utile della Schuola ad honor de missier Iesu Christo essendo parso molto laudabile, ha lui messo parte in Albergo, essendo congregati alla banca al numero perfetto, che li sia dato licentia et autorità al nostro guardian grando preditto di poter levar una bottegha al confin della Schuola nostra dove meglio li pererà, tenedo per insegna la imagine et depentura de messer San Rocco per vender le cere et statue che de continuo abbunda et che se perderiano, del che la Schuola ne riceverà utile et a missier Iesu Christo se li farà cosa grata quando delle offerte sue se he haverà qualche diligentia et cura, el qual per sua grazia ne' doni vita eterna. Amen!' A.S.V., *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, *Registro delle parti*, I, 1488-1543, c. 80v. Quoted after Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 716.

[14] Social historians dealing with miraculous images sometimes seem to deem formal analysis irrelevant (see, for example, the afore-mentioned study by Crouzet-Pavan, *"Sopra le acque salse"*). As has been explained above, I would like to argue that the image is itself a social agent; an analysis of this agency can therefore not neglect form.

So let us now take a closer look at the *Christ Carrying the Cross* of San Rocco. The painting shows us four half-figures on a dark background. Very close to the picture plane, we see Christ, carrying his cross, and looking over his left shoulder in the direction of the beholder. His face is shown in a three-quarter view. Opposite him is an older, fierce looking man with a sharply pointed beard, seen in profile, who seems to pull Christ by a rope around his neck. Behind the two main figures there are two others: on the left a man seen on his back, his head turned to the right so that we may distinguish the idiosyncratic outline of his face, and on the right just a part of another bearded figure. In its colouring, the painting is very modest: browns, ochres, whites and greys prevail, the red drops of blood on Christ's forehead, marks left by his crown of thorns, being the most conspicuous patches of colour that are left. This, however, may be due to the deplorable condition of the work.[15]

Can we find formal qualities that would have made this painting particularly apt to be worshipped as a miracle-working object? The size of its figures, for one, would have helped. The painting itself is 68 by 88 centimetres, which makes the figures life-size. Life-size figures were an essential element of Italian painting of the period and were meant to convey the illusion of tangible presence. The painting's dark background intensifies this effect, for the figures indeed lack a space of their own; they rise up from the darkness and enter the space of the beholder.[16]

The interaction between the figures in the painting is particularly gripping. The painting represents the moment when Christ, surrounded by his executioners, is carrying his own cross to Mount Golgotha, yet all historical context is removed and the figures thus seem to stand outside of time. The beholder tries to capture Christ's gaze and identifies with this man, who is the victim of such violence and yet remains so calm and forgiving. The man pulling the rope – in the early modern sources invariably characterized as Jew or Hebrew – equally seems to try to capture the saviour's attention. Thus one

[15] See Enrico Fiorin and Lorenza Lazzarini in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, pp. 438-439.
[16] Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400-1800*, New Haven and London 2000, chapter 5. Regarding dark backgrounds, Puttfarken discusses the example of Caravaggio's first version of *St Matthew and the Angel* (formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum). The figures stand out against the darkness, 'placed not so much within the picture as above the altar' (p. 149).

might say that the interaction between the two principal figures seems to confirm the way the beholders are relating to Christ, and makes them aware of their own role in this Passion play: the Christian viewer was on the good side, with Christ. This appeal to the beholder is one of the reasons why this painting stands out among the bulk of devotional images painted in Venice at the time, and makes it worthy of a place in the canon of Italian art.

As to the composition, the *Christ Carrying the Cross* is not unique. There are many other religious paintings made around the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries sharing the close-up half-figures and the dark background; and some of these are indeed quite moving, too. Yet, as far as we know, none of these has performed any miracles.

The San Rocco painting does not seem to depict a very specific moment in Christ's Passion. In the gospels, Christ is tormented, and then he is led to Golgotha.[17] The only person mentioned in this part of the story besides Christ himself is Simon of Cyrene, who is charged to carry the cross when Christ collapses under its burden. It is possible that one of the figures in the background of the painting represents this Simon. The executioner opposite Christ, however, who pulls him at the rope, is not mentioned in any of the gospels.[18] Thus, the painting is characterized by a lack of historical detail. If it

[17] See Matthew 27,31-32; Marc 15,20-21; Luke 23,26 and further; John 19,16 and further.

[18] The executioner seems to belong to an iconographic tradition in fifteenth-century northern European images. In Italian images, on the other hand, the appearance of such a figure seems to be rare. Works by Antonello da Messina are an exception to the extent that they often show the suffering Christ with a rope around his neck. This indeed only further supports our intuition: namely that the iconography of the *Christ carrying the cross* may be connected with a northern visual tradition rather than a southern. See Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, vol. II, Gütersloh 1968, s.v. 'Die Kreuztragung', in particular pp. 91-92. The most important study of artistic relations between Venice and the lands beyond the Alps is Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown (eds.), *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer and Titian*, Milan 1999. For Antonello's images of Christ see Mauro Lucco (ed.), *Antonello da Messina: l'opera completa*, Milan 2006.

The depiction of the carrying of the cross with half-figures in close-up view seems to have become popular in Milan from the 1480s onwards, from where it spread throughout the whole northern part of the Italian peninsula via the circle of Leonardo da Vinci: Mauro Lucco, 'Sacred stories', in: David Alan Brown and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (eds.), *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting*, New Haven 2006, pp. 99-146, here pp. 102-103 and 110. Scholars have made comparisons with several depictions of the episode by Giovanni Bellini and his workshop, as well as with a drawing by Leonardo himself, now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice: Pietro C. Marani, 'Leonardo e il Cristo portacroce', in: *Leonardo & Venezia*, eds. Giovanna Nepi Sciré, Pietro C. Marani, et al., Milan 1992, pp. 344-357, here pp. 344-345. These images all show Christ carrying his cross from the shoulder upwards; someti-

would have depicted a specific moment from Christ's Passion, albeit an apocryphal moment, one would expect to see Jerusalem in the background, as well as groups of bystanders. One would expect, in other words, a painting such as the one made by Jacopo Tintoretto for the Scuola di San Rocco in the 1560s (fig. 10). All these elements are obviously missing in our painting. The background is a dark blur and the identities of the two men on the sides remain uncertain. In other words, the *Christ Carrying the Cross* is what art historians like to call an *Andachtsbild*, in the sense that it isolates the close-up figures from their normal narrative context and is thus very suitable, in the words of Sixten Ringbom, to 'contemplative absorption'.[19]

An important feature of the *Christ Carrying the Cross* that should be mentioned here is the depiction of Christ's eyes. Although one should be cautious of making too much of them, the painting being in such a ruined state, it is safe to say they are turned towards the viewer, Christ's right eye looking directly out of the painting, his left eye turned slightly more away. The beholders, on their turn, try to capture the Saviour's gaze, aiming for that experience of privilege, recognizable to all of us, when the eyes of a painted figure seem to follow one wherever one goes.[20] An often recurring characteristic of the depiction of deities, the presence of these conspicuous eyes leads to a certain personification of the image, as Alfred Gell has argued; for the beholder gets the impression of being watched and thus enters into a dialogue with the image.[21] Apart from that, it is intriguing that the painting provides this feeling to all viewers at the same time, and in this way unites the public in a private encounter with the Redeemer. It is a personal experience collectively felt. In this sense, the San Rocco painting is not very different from

mes Christ watches the beholder, but in other examples he looks over his shoulders to something that is apparently outside the boundaries of the painting. See also Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, Doornspijk 1984, pp. 147-155.

[19] For a discussion of the concept of the *Andachtsbild*, see Ringbom, *Icon to narrative*, pp. 52-58.

[20] Nicholas of Cusa had already referred to the all-seeing eyes in this type of image and used it as a metaphor of divine omnivoyance. See his *De Visione Dei*, 'Praefatio'. This confirms he and his contemporaries were familiar with the psychological effects of images with such eyes. See Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, Chicago and London 1993, p. 127, also for other examples of such images. Regarding this effect of 'privilege', painting and print are fundamentally different from three-dimensional visual media such as sculpture, the aspect of which is fully dependent on the viewer's movements. Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, p. 20 and further.

[21] Gell, *Art and Agency*, chapter 7.7.

icons and other cult images, which are characterized by their being directed frontally and centrally at the beholder, and in which the divine figures are marked by large open eyes directly gazing into those of the viewers. It should therefore come as no surprise that these eyes were invariably copied in later adaptations of the miraculous painting.

I have already mentioned the painting's deplorable state. In many places the grey ground is showing through and the structure of the canvas is clearly visible. No brushstrokes are discernable any longer. It is not at all unlikely that it was already in bad condition as early as the seventeenth century. Indeed, as Chiari Moretto Wiel remarks, the painting seems to be consumed by popular piety.[22] So much, at least, is hinted at in a document from 1621, which clearly states that the wooden altar on which the painting was standing was ruined at the time, because of the lamps that had been burning there continuously.[23] Although we have no actual evidence of people touching or kissing the painting, it is likely that they did: such behaviour is found with other paintings during the sixteenth century, as we will see in chapter four, and, indeed, it still happens today.[24] After a century of worship, the *Christ* thus must have looked worn out and old. Tizianello's characterization of the painting, published in 1622, as 'a work of the greatest and oldest (*antichissima*) devotion' only seems to underline this.[25]

[22] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', pp. 723-724.

[23] See A.S.V., *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, *Registro delle parti*, IV, 1597-1622, c. 288: 'MDCXXI adì 2 genaro… Ritrovandosi l'altare del Cristo nella chiesa nostra dove è riposto il tabernacolo del Santissimo Sagramento tutto di legname e in molte parte di esso deturpatto, imbratatto et machiato da oglio per il continuo spander de cesendelli che atorno vi hanno atachatti, sì che rende a fatto una bruttissima vista…' Quoted after Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 718.

[24] See, for example, the case of the Madonna delle Carceri in Prato: in order to partake in its miraculous power, people would bring adaptations of this image in other media into contact with the 'original' in the shrine (Robert Maniura, 'The images and miracles of Santa Maria delle Carceri', in: Thunø and Wolf, *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, pp. 81-95). Pompeo Molmenti (1852-1928), politician, historian and great admirer of Venice's glorious past, noted that the ritual kissing of religious images was an old Venetian habit which was ultimately derived from Byzantium. The members of the Scuola di Sant'Orsola, Molmenti wrote, would fabricate miniature images of their patron saint on parchment (later on replaced by woodcuts) and kiss them on the saint's feast-day. After this '*bacio rituale*', the images would either be mounted on pieces of wood, where they could receive offerings, or be kept in prayer books. Pompeo Molmenti, *La storia di Venezia nella vita privata: dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica*, vol. I, Bergamo 1927, p. 163.

[25] '… opera anco di grandissima, & antichissima divotione'. *Breve compendio della vita del Famoso Titiano Vecellio* … (see n. 3).

Although such an hypothesis is hard to substantiate, we may imagine that the Scuola di San Rocco did not interrupt this process of decay. Those places where the paint had worn off only increased the painting's attraction, for they displayed the people's devotion, thereby giving a visible shape to the object's perceived miraculous powers. One could even draw a parallel between the damaged state of the painting and the damaged body of Christ: the 'scratches' of the painting as a material object further underline Christ's suffering; they become his very real wounds and make the image ever more lifelike.

In the pages above, we have extensively analyzed the painting, but to what extent, we may ask, does it compare to other Venetian miraculous images of the time? It turns out to be not at all easy to find many such images, which may tell us something about their current valuation as artistic objects. Nonetheless, there are some extant paintings of which we know that they were deeply venerated in this period. A first example is a *Madonna and Child* enshrined in the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli – the church was specifically built for this purpose – which was painted, we know now, in 1408 by a master named Niccolò di Pietro, and which was reported to work miracles between 1480 and 1486 (fig. 11).[26] This is a full-length depiction of the Madonna carrying her son, standing in a garden-like environment with a plain, bright red background. With its attention to decorative detail, reminiscent of the Byzantine tradition, still very much alive back then, and its moving back and forth between corporality and abstraction, it is quite representative for Venetian religious imagery from the early fifteenth century. This style remained in use for a long time, until the innovations of the Bellini brothers in the second half of the *Quattrocento*. By the 1480s, however, when the Madonna's activities as a miracle-working image were reported, it must have looked somewhat archaic.

This is even more the case for the venerated *Nikopeia* icon kept in the Basilica of San Marco (fig. 12). Part of the Venetian booty after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204, it became a miraculous cult object at least from the sixteenth century, when it was believed to be painted from life by the apostle Saint Luke and was carried around in processions.[27] Also in the church of San

[26] For an analysis of this cult, see Crouzet-Pavan, *"Sopra le acque salse"*, pp. 617-668.
[27] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 203 and further; Rona Goffen, 'Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas', *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1975), pp. 487-518, here pp. 508-509.

Marco was a painted panel crucifix which began to bleed when it was stabbed in 1290. As Hans Belting has shown, this bleeding crucifix was connected to an ampulla filled with Christ's blood also preserved in San Marco and traditionally associated with the blood flowing from a crucifix in Beirut. Despite its undeniable Italian origins, the crucifix soon came to be regarded as one of the Byzantine spoils of 1204, thus being linked to an image of Christ in the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which, according to tradition, had begun to bleed when it was stabbed by a Jew, as if it was a living person.[28] Many more references to such miraculous images can be found, for example in Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia Città Nobilissima*, but not all the images themselves seem to have survived.[29]

I have dwelt upon some of these other miraculous images in order to shed light on what I believe to be two peculiar features of the *Christ Carrying the Cross*: firstly, that it became effective a mere ten years after its most likely date of origin and, secondly, that it was unmistakably modern in its design. We don't see this with any other miraculous image that I know of, in Venice or elsewhere. Unlike the *Madonna dei miracoli*, which has only been attributed to an artist in modern times; unlike the *Nikopeia*, allegedly painted by Saint Luke; or unlike the bleeding Christ, mistakably believed to come from Byzantium, artists' names were connected to it at a time when it was still much venerated as a miraculous object. Next to that, the painting's up-to-date design seems to make it unapt to be treated the way it was: its modernity would have asked too much attention for the act of creation by a singular artist. Yet, as we will see, the situation was far more complex than we would think.

For one of its miracles, see Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XLVIII, p. 275, entry of 20 July 1528: 'Per esser grandissime secure et non piover, el Patriarcha ordinò procesion per le chiesie, et a San Marco fo portà atorno la piaza la Madona fata de man de San Lucha, sonando campane dopie, el dicendo le letanie, et cussì se farà per tre zorni continui.' See also the entry of 7 August of the same year: 'La matina, *Laus Deo*, piovete assà et quasi tutto il zorno; aqua molto a proposito per li megii et altri legumi et per l'uva, ch'è molti zorni *imo* mexi non ha piovesto. Si feva ogni dì procession etc. Idio ha provisto; sichè è stà tanto oro caduto dal cielo per ben di la povera gente; che Dio sia ringratiato.'

[28] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 195 and further.

[29] Sansovino on an image in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari: 'Vi si honora parimente il Christo miracoloso situato a mezza Chiesa, a cui piedi è sepolto quel Titiano che fu celebre nella pittura, fra tutti gli altri del tempo nostro.' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 66r.

So far, it seems problematic to attribute the miraculous painting's agency primarily to the way it looked. Quite similarly looking paintings were not effective, at least not in this way; other miraculous images, conversely, looked quite differently. The explanation may therefore rather be sought in the way the painting was framed and displayed; which will be examined in the next few pages.

Most likely the *Christ Carrying the Cross* has never been on view without some kind of frame. The frame in which the painting is nowadays set is a gilded, wooden tabernacle type; not uncommon for smaller religious paintings of the early sixteenth century (fig. 13).[30] On top of this frame a lunette is attached with a depiction of *God the Father with Angels Carrying the Instruments of the Passion*. When exactly was this elaborate frame conceived? In fact, it seems to have come about in several stages. The lunette is usually dated between 1519 and 1520 and may have been painted by Titian and his workshop.[31] The frame itself dates back to the same years, but originally looked much simpler. It was painted blue – even with the naked eye one can still discern remnants of this colour – and did not yet contain the floral decorations nor the columnettes on the sides. Early woodcuts after the painting seem to show the ensemble in this plain outlook. In 1527 the Scuola decided to further adorn the painting, in order to make it 'splendid and beautiful'.[32] The *Guardian Grande* or head of the Scuola Francesco di Zuan, who played an altogether important role in the promotion of the painting, as we will see, personally paid for part of these embellishments.[33] This was probably the moment when the ensemble came to look much as it does today, although some elements have been lost, most notably two eagles with spread wings who used to support the frame.[34] During the whole of the sixteenth century, the painting was located on a wooden altar attached to a pilaster framing the main chapel. Only during the seventeenth century was it moved to one of the side chapels and installed on a newly made marble altar (fig. 14).

[30] See Paul Mitchell, 'Italian Picture Frames 1500-1825: A Brief Survey', *Furniture History* 20 (1984), pp. 18-27.
[31] See Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', particularly p. 723 and further.
[32] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 436.
[33] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 717.
[34] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 436.

All of this suggests that the frame was growing with the painting's fame. The installation of the first frame seems to have coincided with the revelation of the painting's miraculous power. The embellishments later in the 1520s indicate the success of the painting during those years. The frame thus became a marker of the painting's miraculous power. It seems to exclaim: 'this is where you need to be!'[35]

As has been said, the Scuola di San Rocco possessed other miraculous objects, besides the painting, that it also preserved in its church. How did all these powerful things relate to each other? Chief among the miraculous objects was a processional crucifix about which we unfortunately know very little. Today, the Scuola still possesses a number of fifteenth-century crucifixes large enough to have served as processional crosses; which one of them is the miraculous one to which the sources refer is not completely certain.[36] It may be identified, however, with a late fifteenth-century wooden crucifix, 131 cm in length, which has recently been restored (fig. 15).[37] There are some archival documents mentioning the crucifix and its miracles; the first, dated 22 July 1519, expresses the need for some proper ornamentation and acknowledges the large number of visitors coming to see the object. A second document, written the same day, makes clear that the miraculous cross was used as the Scuola's *gonfalon e stendardo* and regardlessly carried around; it proposes to use two other crucifixes housed in the confraternity's church instead, like the other *Scuole* were used to do.[38]

[35] Candles and other forms of lighting will have added substantially to the effect of the golden frame; see Paul Davies, 'The Lighting of Pilgrimage Shrines in Renaissance Italy', in: Thunø and Wolf, *The Miraculous Image*, pp. 57-80.

[36] For an overview and restoration reports, see Gloria Tranquilli (ed.), *Restauri a Venezia 1987-1998*, Milan 2001, pp. 144-151; for more information on the use of processional crosses in Venice and the Veneto generally see Elisa Longo, 'Committenza, iconografia e stile nelle croci processionali del Quattrocento Veneziano', *Arte Cristiana* 90 (2002), pp. 295-302.

[37] Franco Posocco and Salvatore Settis (eds.), *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco / The Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II, Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini 2008, pp. 348-349, cat. no. 394a (by Anne Markham Schulz); Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 709.

[38] A.S.V., SGSR, II consegna, b. 45, c. 17v: 'Anchora l'è da proveder, che havendo el nostro santisimo chruzifixo el qual è nella nostra Cexia sopra el pilastro della chapella granda fato e fa de grandissimi miracholli da pocho tempo in qua chome manifestamente se vede de zorno in zorno, el qual è molltto vixittà dal popullo et exiam chore grandisime elemoxine, dove el bixogna de nezexsità far quallche ornamento a simel locho…'

Ibid., c. 18v: '… essendo sta levatto per li nostri predecessori per nostro confalon e stendardo el nostro glorioxo et miracholloxo Chrozefiso el qual resplende de mollti miracholli e quello continuamente se portta fora de chaxa con pocho rispetto, essendo cossa tanto degna

Probably the most famous miraculous cross in early modern Venice was the one owned by a rivalling confraternity, the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista. It possessed a processional cross housing a relic of the True Cross, which the Scuola had acquired in the fourteenth century from the chancellor of the Kingdom of Cyprus and Jerusalem, Philippe de Mézières. Several early miracles performed by this cross have been depicted by Gentile Bellini and others in the paintings which once adorned the Scuola's *Albergo* but are now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia. The importance of the cross and its relic is further underlined in Titian's *Portrait of the Vendramin Family* (London, National Gallery), which shows male members of the family venerating the relic, as it was, according to legend, a Vendramin, *Guardian Grande* of the Scuola, who once miraculously saved the relic from drowning (fig. 16). This and other miracles have also been recorded in an anonymous incunabulum titled *Questi sono imiracoli delasantissima croce delascola demisier san zuane euangelista* (c. 1481).[39] Although this booklet has gone through several revised editions, all of which date from 1590 or later, none of its versions contains miracle stories taking place after the fifteenth century, which suggests that, when the cross of San Rocco came to be regarded as miraculous, the heyday of its rival at San Giovanni Evangelista was over.[40]

che si doveria tegnir con maxima reverentia, ne fatto tanto divizia con perichollo de perder tanto texoro, maxime a le fiate per sinistro de queli el portano l'inverno a tempo de zazo e nebia; loro potria chaschar e quello franzer e spezzar, che a noi saria de grandissima nollgia e considerando noi che le altre fraterne ano do stendardi over penelli deli quali loro ne uxa uno le feste prinzipal e uno altro neli zorni continui, et però mette parte messer Francescho de Zuanne al presente nostro guardian grando, essendo alla bancha il numero perfetto, che di zettero el se abi a tor uno di queli doi chrozifixi li quali sono nela nostra cexia, i qual se debino portar ali nostri defonti, aziò non se inchora in perichollo chome di sopra è ditto, avendo liberttà el guardian da matin, quelo si troverà de tempo in tempo, poterllo portar a qualche persona degna e benefattori dela nostra Scholla chome melgio a lui parerà, e l'altro porttarlo come è ditto e chome zà alltre fiatte è stato portà…' Quoted after Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', pp. 710-712 nn. 54 and 56. I agree with Jaynie Anderson and others that both these documents refer to a miraculous crucifix (cf. *el nostro santisimo chruzifixo*; *el nostro glorioxo et miracholloxo Chrozefiso*) and not, as Chiari Moretto Wiel contended, that the first would refer to the painting (see Anderson, '"Christ carrying the cross" in San Rocco', p. 187).

[39] Patricia Fortini Brown, 'An Incunabulum of the Miracles of the True Cross of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista', *Bollettino dei Civici Musei Veneziani d'Arte e di Storia* 27 (N.S.) (1982), pp. 5-8; see also idem, *Venetian narrative painting in the age of Carpaccio*, New Haven 1988, p. 60.

[40] I have consulted editions from 1590 (Venice, Ventura Galuano); 1604 (Venice, Gio. Ant.o Rampazetto); 1617 (Venice, Antonio Pinelli); 1682 (Venice, Antonio Bosio). I would like to

Like the cross owned by the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, the cross of San Rocco may have contained a relic from which it derived its miraculous powers. Processional crosses in general often were receptacles of relics, and the miraculous and apotropaic powers ascribed to them can be seen in connection with their precious contents.[41] As it is put in a revised edition of the *incunabulum* (1590): 'These are the miracles which have come from the crystal cross of the Scuola of St John the Evangelist, for in there is kept real wood from the Cross on which Jesus Christ suffered his Passion and his death.'[42] The cross of San Rocco in turn may have transferred its power to the painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross*.

But there were still other miraculous objects in the church which also will have played a role. The day after Easter Friday of the year 1518, the Scuola received a miraculously flowering thorn from one of its members, a certain Zuan Maria Contarini (fig. 17).[43] The thorn was believed to have come from Christ's crown of thorns, and once it had begun to flower, its owner felt he should donate it to the confraternity. The next year, the miraculous event would happen again. This was a particularly happy occasion. For not only did it take place on Easter Friday, it also happened exactly two years after the laying of the first stone of the Scuola's new building, and, last but not least, Easter Friday of that year fell on 25 March, the day of the Annunciation to Mary, which was also the legendary founding day of Venice itself. So here we have a memory of an event that is literally loaded with meaning: a relic of the *arma Christi* came to life in the week of the re-enactment of Christ's Passion; it happened on the day of the Incarnation; and it marked both the founding of the Scuola's building and of the city of Venice.[44] In this single thorn, an object only a few centimetres in size, everything came together; and in this

thank the staff of the Biblioteca del Museo Correr for kindly bringing this material to my attention.

[41] Longo, 'Committenza, iconografia e stile nelle croci processionali', p. 301.

[42] 'Questi sono li miracoli della croce di Cristallo della Scuola di M. San Zuane Evangelista proceduti, Perche in essa è del vero legno della Croce, sopra la quale M. Iesu Christo portò Passione, et morte.' *Miracoli della croce santissima della scuola de San Giovanni evangelista* (Venice: Ventura Galvano, 1590) (no page numbers).

[43] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II, cat. no. 385, p. 340.

[44] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 437.

way it embodied the Scuola's privileged relation with Christ and with the myth of the city.

During the 1520s, the thorn was annually exposed to the public on the Friday nearest to 25 March and every year in the days before Easter it was given on loan to the basilica of San Marco, where it participated in a rite on *Giovedì Santo*. This continued until 1528, when, because it had not showed miraculous activities for years on end, the thorn was stored with the Scuola's other relics.[45] Before we go on discussing the next relic, it is important to note the Christological relationship between the thorn, the crucifix, and the painting; it has even been suggested that the figure of Christ in the painting once wore a crown of thorns.[46]

The last relic that should be mentioned is the body of the Scuola's patron saint, St Roch of Montpellier. In 1486 members of the newly founded confraternity managed to abduct his complete body from its burial place in the city of Voghera in Lombardy and take it to Venice.[47] From this moment on, St Roch became the most important plague saint of the city and it was the presence of his body that soon gave the Scuola its prominence. In the 1520s, his relics were solemnly translated from one of the side chapels to the church's high altar, which had recently been completed.[48]

All in all, it seems likely that the miraculous power of the *Christ Carrying the Cross* should be understood in the light of the group of holy objects to which the painting also belonged. There are several arguments for this assumption. Firstly, those objects were active as miracle-workers first. The body of St Roch had been present from the Scuola's very beginnings; the thorn flowered in 1518 and 1519; records of the crucifix's special powers go back as far as the summer of 1519. The first secure statement regarding the painting, on the other hand, dates from the end of 1520. Secondly, all objects were located in the church, and most likely at the eastern end of the church;

[45] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II., cat. no. 385, p. 341.
[46] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 437. This would also explain for the crown's apparent absence among the tools of the Passion in the lunette.
[47] Maria Elena Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Strategie culturali e committenza artistica', *Venezia Cinquecento* 5 (1995), pp. 5-169, here p. 52.
[48] Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Tesoro, gli apparati processionali e suntuari, i lasciti: ciò che fu, ciò che è', in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II, pp. 175-191, here p. 178.

physically very close to each other and in the most sacred part of the building. Thirdly, so far nobody has been able to explain why the first miracle of the painting took place, or, in other words, why this painting suddenly changed from a 'normal' devotional image into an agent with extraordinary powers. The presence of other miracle-working objects close-by, which then would have transferred their powers to the painting, may provide us with such an explanation. Indeed, such a course of events would be very similar to the situation in the basilica of San Marco, for there, too, all miraculous objects and relics were in some way connected and transferred their powers upon each other.[49]

Adaptations

Not unusual for miracle-working images, the *Christ Carrying the Cross* generated a large number of copies in all sorts of media.[50] Rather than as mere copies, these images may more aptly be defined as 'adaptations', for hardly any image turns out to be an exact replica of its prototype. A considerable amount of these adaptations has survived, not only paintings but also versions in woodcut and even in marble (fig. 18).[51] It is likely that smaller adaptations were also produced at the time, such as amulets, candles and statuettes, but such objects are, as far as I know, no longer extant. All these images would have functioned in the pilgrimage industry, the masses trying to obtain a reproduction in print or in another humble medium, whereas the most affluent pilgrims commissioned a painted copy. We know, for example, of what was probably a copy of the miracle-working painting in the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese; this copy may be identified with the relatively faithful replica of the San Rocco painting in the Galleria Nazionale in Parma.[52] To

[49] Belting, *Likeness and presence*, p. 195 and further.
[50] On cult images and their adaptions, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, chapter 6; for more examples, see also Thunø and Wolf, *The Miraculous Image*.
[51] For an overview see Lionello Puppi, 'Une ancienne copie du "Cristo e il manigoldo" de Giorgione au Musée des Beaux-Arts', *Bulletin du Musée National Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 18 (1961), pp. 39-49, and also Giovanna Nepi Sciré in: *Leonardo & Venezia*, cat. no. 71, pp. 350-351, here p. 351; for a survey of the many adaptations painted by the painter Niccolò Frangipane specifically, see Bert W. Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 8 (1972), pp. 151-191.
[52] Nepi Sciré in: *Leonardo & Venezia*, p. 351; also Georg Gronau, 'Kritische Studien zu Giorgione', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 31 (1908), pp. 403-436, here p. 434. Lionello Puppi,

gain further insight into the nature of such adaptations, in what follows I will pay some attention to a number of them, firstly several prints, and secondly a group of paintings by the little-known north-Italian master Niccolò Frangipane.

A first print after the painting may be found on the front-page of a booklet proclaiming the painting's miracles, *Li Stupendi et maravigliosi miracoli del Glorioso Christo de Sancto Roccho Novamente Impressa*, written by a certain Eustachio Celebrino. The contents of this booklet will be discussed later on; now, we will turn to the image on the frontispiece (fig. 19). This image, a woodcut, shows the painting set in an ornate frame with a lunette on top. There is an inscription in the frame around the lunette: 'SVPER. DORSV[M]. MEVM. FABRICAVERV[N]T. PECAT[ORES].' This is the third line of Psalm 128 and can be translated as 'the sinners built upon my back'. As part of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this line must have been well-known to large parts of the population.[53] Read in connection with the image, it is clear that the line from this psalm was read as a reference to and a prefiguration of the Passion of Christ. The inscription thus underlines what is also shown to us visually in the print, namely Christ's suffering. One thing that is interesting about it, is the fact that it is written in the first person: it is the Psalmist himself who speaks to us (we may even imagine that it is Christ). The visual representation, which is usually destined to remain dumb, thereby gets a voice. But there is more to this apparently rather unsophisticated woodcut. If we look at it a little bit better, we have to conclude it is not just a replica of the miraculous painting. It also represents the lunette on top of that painting and the tabernacle frame in which it was set.[54] Thus, the woodcut first and fore-

however, identified the copy in Parma with a painting in the Incurabili in Venice, seen by Giovanni Stringa and published in his edition of Sansovino's *Venetia Città Nobilissima et Singolare* of 1604, as well as by Marco Boschini and later by Zanetti (see Puppi, 'Une ancienne copie du "Cristo e il manigoldo"', p. 45 n. 12).

[53] The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the twelfth century onwards, often obligatory both for regular and secular clerics. Apart from that, it was at the core of books of hours, prayerbooks for laymen (see *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. William J. MacDonald, vol. VIII, Pallatine, Ill. 1981, s.v. 'Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary', pp. 854-855. This is further supported by the fact that the Little Office was printed in Italy twenty-seven times in the fifteenth, and fifty-three times in the sixteenth century (Élize Boillet, *L'Arétin et la Bible*, Geneva 2007, pp. 44-45).

[54] The version of the booklet illustrated here and the according woodcut on the frontispiece can most likely be identified with a second edition of around 1527; a first edition, no longer

most presents the miraculous painting as a material object. Here is no attempt to create an illusion of the presence of Christ; what the print aims at is to give a faithful rendering of what the miraculous, enframed object looks like, with light and shadow and all. It is an image of an image. At the same time, the perspective is constructed in such a way that the vanishing point in the part of the print representing Christ Carrying the Cross, although hard to locate precisely, seems to lie somewhere in or very close to Christ's head, and, given the fact that he is looking out of the image towards the beholder, just like he does in the painting, the viewer's eyes are drawn to those of Christ, no matter how small and constructed this woodcut is. Thus it can work as a devotional object in its own right.

The earliest known adaptation of the miraculous painting is another woodcut, this one anonymous and dated 1520 (fig. 20). Much the same things may be said of this print as has been said about Celebrino's woodcut. The print not only represents the miraculous painting, but also its frame and lunette. These two elements have a much more simple, less ornate form, though, than is the case with Celebrino. And instead of an inscription at the top of the print, there is a fictive scroll attached to its base, on which is written: 'Figura del deuotissimo et Miracoloso Christo e nella chiesia del de / uoto San Rocho di Uenetia. M.CCCCC.XX.' ('Figure of the most devout and Miraculous Christ which is in the church of the devout St Roch of Venice. 1520.'). So this print, too, is an image of the image of Christ. And again, the painting's frame partially falls outside the picture plane, so that the status of the print as a mere image receives further stress. What sets this early adaptation apart are its notable dimensions and its overall quality. While Celebrino's woodcut needed to fit onto an octavo and measures therefore a mere 7,9 x 6 cm – it is a miniature, really – the woodcut of 1520 is 39,4 x 27 cm large. This is more than the size of a big computer screen. The effect of this print, accordingly, is very different. The figures, furthermore, particularly those of the scene containing Christ, have volume, they are drawn with delicacy, and a fairly subtle chiaroscuro has been applied. Around Christ's head shines a

extant, would have been published around 1523-24. To what extent the painting's frame in the woodcut reflects the actual frame of around 1527 is uncertain (Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, pp. 483-484). There are a number of differences between the frame as it looks today and the one shown in Celebrino's woodcut: there is no inscription in the actual frame, while the columnettes are lacking in the print.

bright light, standing out in stark contrast to the cruel thorns of his crown. His gaze, once again turned towards the viewer, arouses pity and sorrow. This print, in sum, is a small 'altarpiece on paper', perfectly apt to be affixed to a wall or piece of furniture, where it could make the divine present, also in the houses of the less well-to-do believers.[55] It brings the Passion of Christ into the home but, at the same time, provides a link with another, more prestigious image, that in the church of San Rocco; and along with it, or so it was hoped, its miraculous powers.

The last print that should be discussed in this context is also the most complex one, and, I believe, the most beautiful. It shows the Scuola's patron saint, St Roch, protector of plague victims, leaning against a rock, his left leg bared so as to show the beholder the mark left by the terrible disease (fig. 21). On the saint's right, we can just see a dog walking into the picture's frame, carrying a piece of bread; the skyline of the city of Venice is in the background. In a powerful contrapposto, the saint is looking over his shoulder to the angel in the sky, who is at once greeting him and pointing upwards to a heavenly vision. It is in this vision that the complexity of the image becomes apparent, for, more than just a straightforward depiction of a popular saint, this woodcut is a multilayered representation of an altarpiece.[56]

Indeed, the central scene with St Roch is embedded in a fictional structure, flanked by narrative scenes from the saint's life. On the *predella* is inscribed a Latin text, pointing to the function of the print to work as a fundraiser for the construction of the Scuola di San Rocco's new building. Leaning against the altar is a votive tablet, showing in a simple manner how St Roch appears in a vision to a sick and praying believer. On the predella's left we see an alms box – 'alms for the construction,' the inscription says – and a child's head, an *ex voto* to thank the saint for one of his healing miracles. Just as these three objects – the head, the box, the tablet – the vision in the upper part of the image protrudes into the beholder's space; a shared vision, equally perceptible to us and the saint. The vision is the reason I discuss this print here, for it obviously is an explicit reference to the miraculous painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross*. Traditionally ascribed to Titian, who is supposed to

[55] See David Rosand and Michelangelo Muraro (eds.), *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut*, Washington, D.C. 1976, p. 10, for the popular use of early woodcuts in general.
[56] Rosand and Muraro, *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut*, pp. 108-111, cat. nos. 12A-12B.

have designed it in 1523 or 1524, the woodcut is at the same time a devotional image functioning in the world of popular piety, and the artist's comment on such images and their miraculous nature.

Indeed, Titian here takes the genre of the religious woodcut one step further, by openly exhibiting several manifestations of the religious image's agency, while creating an altarpiece that never existed. His print shows the image as vision – which, as we will see, also played a part in the miracles the painting was said to perform; the image as votive gift, or offering to a saint; the image as fundraiser, or stimulus for donating money to its owner, to which we will also return; and the image as safeguard against evil.[57]

Among adaptations of *Christ Carrying the Cross*, there is a sub-group of painted copies made by a relatively little-known north Italian artist, Niccolò Frangipane (documented 1563-1597). Frangipane painted at least nine versions of this scene; the central figures in all of them have been derived from the San Rocco *Christ*.[58] In his religious output, Frangipane worked in a remarkably archaic style and had a reproductive approach; and in his non-religious works, too, he relied heavily on the work of the earlier Venetian masters such as Titian and Giorgione.[59]

Let us take a closer look at one of Frangipane's paintings. The work I would like to discuss is a *Christ Carrying the Cross* scene with seven figures,

[57] It has often been noted that the central figure of St Roch is very similar to Titian's fresco of St Cristopher in the Doge's Palace: see, for example, Rosand and Muraro, *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut*, p. 110. Indeed, the stylistic similarity between the two figures is the most important argument for ascribing the woodcut to Titian and for dating it in this period. The *Christopher* was commissioned by Doge Andrea Gritti soon after his election, and painted right above the entrance to the Doge's private apartments. Just like the figure of St Roch, the boldly painted *Christopher* has been situated in the Venetian lagoon with the Bacino San Marco in the background. This feature provides the fresco with its political meaning: for Christopher has been depicted as protector of the lagoon and the city against military threats; a need of which Doge Gritti was more than aware, having been leading the Venetian troops during the almost fatal battle of Agnadello (1509). But St Christopher was also widely believed to offer a day of protection to those who saw him first thing in the morning; it will therefore be no coincidence that Titian has painted him so that the Doge would see him when leaving his private space. I believe we should not underestimate the actual powers ascribed to images like these; or the real fears – be they related to the Republic as a whole or to the person of the Doge – that this *Christopher* was meant to expel.

[58] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', pp. 159-161.

[59] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', pp. 159-163.

nowadays in the collection of the Museo della Città in Rimini (fig. 22).[60] As in its Venetian prototype, we see Christ from the left, his body slightly turned towards the viewer. But unlike in the earlier painting, Christ is wearing a bright red garment; his neck and elegant face are covered in drops of blood from the thorny crown on his head. His eyes, appealing to the viewer, are red with crying. On his right shoulder, his cross; around his neck, a rope, apparently held by the bearded man opposite him, who again reminds us of the painting in Venice: his crooked nose, his partially naked upper body, his age are all the same. Around those two central figures, there are five others: grotesque, uncivil looking men, wearing strange hats, laughing at Christ and pulling his clothes. The figures are all shown from their waists up – except for the dwarf on the lower right; the background seems to show the shadow of a sixth bystander, but for the rest remains dark and empty.

Thus, the painting in Rimini is a variation on the canvas of San Rocco, painted more than half a century earlier. It is also almost completely identical with a similar scene by Frangipane, nowadays in the Museo Civico in Udine, signed and dated 1572 (fig. 23).[61] And it shows very strong parallels with a number of other works with the same theme, also by Frangipane. Not all of these paintings need directly be based on the painting of San Rocco. Indeed, it seems more likely that Frangipane sometimes worked from prints, for example the woodcut discussed above, dated 1520 (fig. 20). There are a number of formal features that his paintings share with this print but not with the San Rocco *Christ*.[62] Thus, Frangipane's *Christ Carrying the Cross* paintings could be further removed from their source of inspiration than we might think.

Let us look at them again. The paintings are stuffed with figures, but there is hardly any suggestion of depth. The folds in the garments look like stone; the faces and bodies of the bystanders are awkward and ugly. As Bert Meijer remarks, only the colours and variety of the costumes enliven the otherwise static compositions.[63] If we would have to name the principal differences between Frangipane's painting in Rimini and its miraculous prototype in Venice, we could point to the rather static composition and drawing which

[60] Formerly Collection Giov. Sesto Menghi, Rimini. See also Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', cat. no. A 4, p. 177.
[61] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', cat. no. 8, pp. 171-172.
[62] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', p. 160.
[63] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', p. 160.

seems to be compensated for by the colourful and exotic clothes; and the naturalistic depiction of Christ's suffering, whose face is covered in blood, sweat and tears.

Overall, Frangipane's debt to the painting of San Rocco is undeniable, and in this context it is interesting to note that in almost all his religious works his dependence on the work of Titian is apparent; so much so that an apprenticeship with this master does not seem impossible.[64] Yet how to understand the retrospective tendency visible in his works? How to understand what I would like to qualify as the *archaism* of his *Christ Carrying the Cross* paintings? It is at least certain that his adaptations fit in very well with certain ideas on the art of painting voiced by Giovanni Andrea Gilio and other writers of the Counter Reformation. Criticizing the way the painters of his time represented Christ, Gilio, a contemporary of Frangipane, addressed '[the painters] who do not know or do not want to know how to express the deformity evident in [Christ] at the time of the Passion [...]. It would be a stronger inducement to devotion to see him bloody and misshapen, than to see him beautiful and delicate.'[65]

Now that we have seen a number of adaptations of the *Cristo portacroce* of San Rocco, both in painting and in print, it is time to take stock. For example, which of the painting's formal qualities are copied, and which are changed? Indeed, it turns out that the figure of Christ with his face turned towards the viewer is always maintained, as is the interaction with the figure of the executioner. What is more, adaptations in print show a frame around the painting and a lunette, thereby apparently stressing the nature of the image as a material object. The painting's style, on the other hand, which was very much up-to-date at the moment of production, is not copied: prints after the painting vary from artful and detailed to simple and naive; painted

[64] Meijer, 'Niccolò Frangipane', pp. 162-163. For Frangipane's relation to Titian see also Giorgio Tagliaferro and Bernard Aikema, with Matteo Mancini and Andrew John Martin, *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, Florence 2009, p. 357, and Caterina Furlan, 'Tiziano nella storiografia artistica friulana tra Sette e Ottocento', *Studi tizianeschi* 3 (2005), pp. 89-96, here p. 91.

[65] 'Un altro abuso anco io trovo circa la persona del nostro Salvatore, il quale non par che ammendare si sappia: et è questo, che non sanno o non vogliono sapere isprimere le defformità che in lui erano al tempo de la passione […]. Molto più a compunzione moverebbe il vederlo sanguinolento e difformato, che non fa il vederlo bello e delicato.' Gilio, *Dialogo nella quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori*, p. 39. Translation from Alexander Nagel (*Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, Cambridge 2000, p. 158), who has many interesting things to say about archaism in sixteenth-century Italian art, and about its relation to religious reform.

adaptations are often in an archaizing style. Thus it would seem that the painting's composition rather than its style was deemed decisive; that it was the composition that identified the prototype in the adaptations.

But what about the adaptations and the painting's miraculous power? In order to answer this question we will make a small theoretical excursion. The relation between the cult image and its reproductions has been examined by David Freedberg. Freedberg proposes a critical revision of Walter Benjamin's concept of the aura of the unique prototype and its diminution as a result of reproduction.[66] Contrary to Benjamin, he argues that reproduction leads to a power and efficacy that may come quite close to that of the prototype; in Freedberg's view, repetition through reproduction 'engenders a new and compelling aura of its own'.[67] But what does reproduction do to the prototype itself?

In his *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer discusses the relations between what he calls the 'Bild' (the work of art or picture) and the 'Urbild' (original, prototype).[68] According to Gadamer, Bild and Urbild are on a par; the Bild has a reality of its own. 'That the picture has its own reality means the reverse for what is pictured, namely that it comes to presentation in the representation. It presents itself there.'[69] So the relation between Bild and Urbild is two-sided: the two interact. Gadamer also writes: '… it is only through the picture (Bild) that the original (Urbild) becomes the original (Ur-bild: also, ur-picture) – e.g., it is only by being pictured that a landscape becomes picturesque.'[70] Gadamer's idea that the world does not exist in itself as it exists in the Bild, is illuminating. When we apply his words to our historical material, it follows that adaptations of cult images are not just passive

[66] As put forward in the famous essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (1936).

[67] Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, p. 126.

[68] See Frank Ankersmit's discussion of Gadamer's ideas on art and their connection to his larger project of dealing with experience and truth in the humanities, in *Sublime Historical Experience*, Stanford 2005, pp. 199-210.

[69] 'Daß das Bild eine eigene Wirklichkeit hat, bedeutet nun umgekehrt für das Urbild, daß es in der Darstellung zur Darstellung kommt. Es stellt sich selbst darin dar.' Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen 1975, p. 133. The English translation is from Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, London 2004, p. 135.

[70] 'Denn strenggenommen ist es so, daß erst durch das Bild das Urbild eigentlich zum Ur-Bilde wird, d.h. erst vom Bilde her wird das Dargestellte eigentlich bildhaft.' Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 135; English translation from Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 136.

reflections of their prototypes; they interact with them. All adaptations in the end again affect their prototypes.

Rephrased in the terms used by Alfred Gell, a prototype only becomes a prototype when its agency can be 'abducted from an index'; in other words, when it is depicted in paintings or other images.[71] The original prototype in our case, Christ, only takes up his role (as prototype) once he is depicted in images. The Byzantines already understood this quite well when they considered images of Christ to be evidence of his human existence on earth.[72] The miraculous *Christ Carrying the Cross*, an index of Christ, in turn became a prototype once it was reproduced and adapted. And even some of these adaptations in turn became prototypes, as we have seen in the case of Frangipane. This is potentially a process without end. What it shows us is a fine example of agency through, what Gell has coined, 'distributed personhood': through the distribution of visual adaptations, or 'secondary images,' the agency of a prototype is effectively duplicated and spread.[73]

The Scuola di San Rocco and the Initiators of the Cult

In the preceding part of the chapter, we have studied to what extent the form of the miraculous painting itself will have determined the way people responded to it. We have furthermore considered the role played by the other relics and sacred objects owned by the Scuola and analyzed derivate images and their share in spreading the cult. So far, it may therefore seem that the cult of the San Rocco *Christ* was something solely effected by, and reflected in, other images. And indeed, it sometimes seems as if the Scuola would rather have had it this way. Yet, the ultimate recipients of all these images were people, and they were also people who stood at the basis of the cult. It is this group of people that we will turn to in the second part of this chapter: who were they and what were their motives in acting the way they did?

[71] Gell, *Art and Agency*, pp. 13-16 and 25-26.

[72] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 152 and further. See Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 134: 'In der Menschwerdung Gottes erblickten [die griechischen Väter] die grundsätzliche Anerkennung der sichtbaren Erscheinung und gewannen damit für die Werke der Kunst eine Legitimation. Man darf wohl in dieser Überwindung des Bildverbots das entscheidende Ereignis sehen, durch das die Entfaltung der bildenden Künste im christlichen Abendland möglich wurde.'

[73] For distributed personhood, see Gell, *Art and Agency*, particularly chapter 7.

Before turning to those allegedly healed by the painting and, later on, to the artist, we will first address the Scuola di San Rocco and its members. What kind of attitude did the confraternity adopt towards the miraculous painting? Which of the Scuola's members took an interest in it, and why? In this context, two names have been mentioned by other authors. The first we have already seen: Iacomo di Zuan, *Guardian Grande* in 1508, who received the right to decorate one of the two side chapels of the Scuola's church and to have himself buried there.[74] It has often been supposed that he commissioned the *Christ Carrying the Cross* as an altarpiece to this chapel, yet, as other scholars have shown, there is no evidence to support such a claim.[75] And even if there was, it would still be uncertain if Iacomo di Zuan himself had anything to do with the cult business. A second name is that of Francesco di Zuan, who was mentioned in relation to the embellishment of the painting's frame.[76] Who was this man? Why was he interested in this miraculous object? And was he the only one to bother?

But first a few general remarks on the confraternity and its origins. The Scuola Grande di San Rocco was created from a merger of two smaller confraternities, one of which assembled at San Giuliano, directly behind Piazza San Marco, and the other in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. It was founded in 1486, when it took up its residence on a piece of land owned by the Frari, immediately adjacent to the Franciscans' church, and was elevated to the ranks of the *Scuole Grandi* that very year (fig. 24). The members rapidly started to build their own church – quite a rare thing for a Scuola – as well as a small club house, the so-called *Scuoletta*.[77] As we have seen, it was in this same year that they had managed to abduct the complete body of their patron saint, St Roch, from its burial place in the city of Voghera in Lombardy and take it to Venice.[78]

[74] Anderson, '"Christ carrying the cross" in San Rocco', p. 186.
[75] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 710.
[76] See Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 437.
[77] For the special relation of the Scuola di San Rocco to its own church, see Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 52 and further.
[78] See Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 52 and n. 112.

Especially this last feat immediately gave the Scuola an advantage over the other *Scuole Grandi*, which only possessed partial relics of their patron saints.[79] But the Scuola di San Rocco also had to keep an eye on its neighbours: residing in an area so dense with churches, and basically living in the shadow of the powerful Frari, its position was far from secure. Indeed, all through the sixteenth century the brothers were engaged in strife, especially with the Frari mentioned before, but also with the church of San Tomà, to which parish they belonged, and the church of San Pantalon, which sold them some land, but at the same time felt threatened by its neighbour's growing presence and popularity.[80]

It was in this particularly difficult situation that members of the Scuola were trying to strengthen the position of their young institution. The question now is: who were they? In what follows, we will investigate the roles of three men: besides the afore-mentioned Francesco di Zuan, these are Bernardo di Marin and Nicolò dalla Croce.[81]

Bernardo di Marin was a son of Bortolamio di Marin, a *drapier* or silk trader and manufacturer who had been joining the governing ranks of the Scuola right from the start: as early as 1489, he was elected *Guardian Grande* and as such he was the one to reach an agreement with the neighbouring Frari on reciprocal duties and rights.[82] In that same year, he obtained the *ius patronatus* of one of the two side chapels of the confraternity's church – which at that time still had to be built – but lost it again in 1494, when he was again *Guardian Grande*, probably because it had become the temporary resting-place of the body of St Roch.[83] In 1507, however, it was returned to the family in the person of Bortolamio's son Bernardo, with whom we are here concerned. Bernardo took on several positions in the Scuola's *Banca* (the principal gov-

[79] Adriano Prosperi, 'Solidarietà e prestigio: La Scuola di San Rocco', in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II, pp. 9-22, here p. 17.
[80] Franco Tonon, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco nel Cinquecento attraverso i documenti delle sue Mariegole*, Venice 1999, pp. 10-17. For the conflict with San Pantalon in particular see also Adriano Aymonino, 'La *Pala di San Pantalon*: immagine devozionale e manifesto politico', *Venezia Cinquecento* 15 (2005/2006), pp. 159-200.
[81] To find these men, I have made grateful use of Maria Elena Massimi's 'Indice alfabetico dei confratelli di governo della Scuola Grande di San Rocco, 1500-1600' (in: idem, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', pp. 109-169.
[82] Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', pp. 49-50.
[83] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 436; Giuseppe Tassini, *Cittadini veneziani*, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, ms. P.D. c 4, vol. III, c. 175.

erning body, consisting of the *Guardian Grande*, the *Vicario*, the *Guardian da Matin*, and the *Scrivano*) before being elected *Guardian Grande* in 1521. Apart from that, he was chosen *procuratore alla fabbrica* in 1516 and served uninterruptedly in that position until 1524.[84] This meant that he was one of the members overseeing the construction of the Scuola's new building, a process which will prove to be intimately connected with our miraculous painting. As *procuratore*, he held the opinion that the new building should become sober and simple, the way it was originally designed by *proto* Pietro Bon.[85] This had everything to do with his view on the Scuola itself: according to him, this should be a traditional confraternity, turned in upon itself, aiming first and foremost at devotional practices and charity.

Not so with Francesco di Zuan. This man, fully known as Francesco di Zuan dalla seda or, italianized, Francesco di Giovanni della seta, came from a Tuscan family of silk merchants. It was his family member Iacomo – a brother, perhaps – who, as *Guardian Grande*, obtained the *ius patronatus* of the other side-chapel to the choir of San Rocco, the so-called Cappella della Croce.[86] Francesco started his administrative career within the Scuola in 1506, and, after entering the *Banca* as *Vicario* in 1516, was elected to the highest office in 1519. He was again *Guardian Grande* in 1527.[87] Just like Bernardo di Marin, and in fact even more so, he was involved in the construction of the Scuola's new building. He, too, was elected *procuratore alla fabbrica* in 1516, and before that had already played a part in the acquisition of new land, but unlike Marin, he was not satisfied with *proto* Bon's original plans.[88] His great knowledge of construction and building was again acknowledged when he was elected in 1520 (*more veneto*) as *procuratore alla chiesa*, but also beyond the

[84] Gianmario Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco (1517-1560)', in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, vol. II, pp. 43-64, here pp. 47-49.
[85] Gianmario Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco a Venezia, 1524-1527', *Venezia Cinquecento* 14 (2004/2005), pp. 5-221, here p. 8.
[86] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', pp. 708-709; both for Iacomo and Francesco see also Tassini, *Cittadini veneziani*, vol. V, c. 152.
[87] Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 166.
[88] Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 47; idem, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', pp. 19-20.

boundaries of the Scuola di San Rocco, as *procuratore alla fabbrica* of the church of Spirito Santo.[89]

Francesco di Zuan believed that the Scuola's new building should be grand and splendid, triumphalist and majestic, and therefore he proposed, early in the 1520s, some significant changes both to the exterior and the interior of the building.[90] Clearly a powerful figure in the confraternity in these years, Di Zuan won support. But not from everyone: there remained a faction, with Bernardo di Marin as its main spokesman, which wanted to stick to the building as planned. Indeed, as one author puts it, this was not just a conflict over a staircase: the self-presentation of the Scuola was at stake.[91] Another even goes as far as speaking of an 'identity crisis': from a devotional brotherhood, based on the evangelical principles of poverty and charity, the Scuola di San Rocco – and the other *Scuole Grandi*, too, to a certain extent – became more and more an extension of the Venetian government, or, as Francesco Sansovino wrote, 'almost a Republic': an outgoing, wealthy and popular organization.[92] It may be clear by now that not every member was happy with this development; yet Francesco di Zuan was one of its most fervent supporters. After a struggle that lasted for years, his faction finally triumphed: in 1527, not coincidentally the year when Francesco became *Guardian Grande* for a second time, a new *proto* was appointed. Antonio Abbondi, known as il Scarpagnino, was, together with Jacopo Sansovino, the most important architect of Venice of his time, and responsible for both the Palazzo Ducale and Rialto; and it was Scarpagnino who, we know now, would largely determine the face of the Scuola's new building.[93]

Nevertheless, Francesco di Zuan seems to be a contradictory figure. Propagating this movement away from a sober confraternity aiming at the

[89] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', pp. 19-20.
[90] Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 47.
[91] Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 47.
[92] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 7. The concept of the 'small Republic' or 'piccola Repubblica' originally came from Gaspare Contarini, the Venetian diplomat and mythographer of the Venetian state. See also Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 99v: 'Percioche oltre che sono copiosamente fornite d'argenti, di paramenti, di sacrosante reliquie, et di altre cose appartenenti al culto di Dio, rappresentano anco un certo modo di governo civile, nel quale i cittadini, quasi in propria Rep. hanno i gradi et gli honori secondo i meriti, et le qualità loro.'
[93] Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 56.

evangelical ideals of poverty and charity, he was at the same time involved in a religious movement that advocated precisely these ideals. We know that he had relations with, and probably even held an administrative position in, the newly founded Ospedale degli Incurabili, which was visited by the later saint Gaetano Thiene.[94] In 1524, Thiene was one of the founding fathers of the Theatine Order – with, among others, the later Pope Paul IV Carafa – which stood for church reform and a return to the primitive apostolic rule, and which was about to become one of the driving forces behind the Counter Reformation. Francesco di Zuan personally knew this Gaetano Thiene. We know furthermore that other members of his family, too, were taking an interest in church reform and evangelism current in northern Italy in these years.[95]

Before we return to the miraculous *Christ*, a third man needs to be introduced, the *orese* or goldsmith named Nicolò dalla Croce. Dalla Croce first entered the government of the Scuola in 1520, the beginning of an illustrious administrative career: he would join the ranks of the governors no less than eighteen times and also served as *Guardian Grande* (this was in 1548).[96] He was buried in 1567 in the church of San Salvatore, which may tell us something about the sort of milieu he lived in and the prestige he enjoyed.[97] Documents prove that he, too, served as *procuratore alla fabbrica*; he indeed seems to have been the main financial supervisor active in the years when

[94] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 20; for the administrative position, see Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Delle inscrizioni veneziane*, vol. V, Venice 1842, p. 308, who quotes Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XXXVIII, p. 140-141; see also Tassini, *Cittadini veneziani*, vol. V, c. 152. It is remarkable that several seventeenth-century authors mention a painting that represented Christ carrying the cross and was hanging over a door in the church of the Incurabili. Thus, Giovanni Stringa mentioned in his edition of Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*: 'Vi è un quadro bellissimo di Christo, portante la Croce al Monte Calvario, sopra la porta nel fianco sinistro del famoso Giorgione.' Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia citta nobilissima et singolare descritta gia in 14. libri et hora con molta diligenza corretta, emendata, e piu d'vn terzo di cose nuoue ampliata*, ed. Giovanni Stringa (Venice, 1604), p. 193. Art historians assume the painting in the Incurabili to have been a copy of the canvas at San Rocco. See above, n. 52.

[95] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 20. For more information on the Ospedale and its relation with Thiene, see also Bernard Aikema and Dulcia Meijers, *Nel regno dei poveri: Arte e storia dei grandi ospedali veneziani in età moderna 1474-1797*, Venice 1989, p. 131 and further.

[96] Massimi, 'Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 125.

[97] Tassini, *Cittadini veneziani*, vol. II, c. 132. On San Salvatore see also Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, chapter 2.

Francesco di Zuan was the brains behind the building operation.[98] What makes Dalla Croce even more interesting, and what has heretofore never been linked up with his administrative tasks, is that he also served the Scuola in a completely different capacity: as an artist.

So far, Di Marin, Di Zuan, and Dalla Croce seem to have one striking thing in common: they were all involved in the construction of the Scuola's new building. Yet what is the relation, if any, between this building and the miraculous painting? To begin with, there is the relic of Christ's real crown of thorns – its importance for our understanding of the cult of the painting has been discussed above. When it flowered on 25 March 1519, that is, on the day of Christ's crucifixion, on the founding day of the Republic of Venice, and, what is more, during the *Guardianato* of Francesco di Zuan, it was also precisely two years after the laying of the first stone of the new building.

Then, there is a lot of evidence that highlights the role the *Christ* played in funding the Scuola's headquarters.[99] When Marin Sanudo mentioned the success of the miraculous painting in his *Diaries*, he did not forget to note its favourable effects on the confraternity's finances. A part of his remarks was already quoted above (see page 35), but I will now quote the full passage:

> I do not want to refrain from describing the current great surge of people towards the church of San Rocco, caused by an image of Christ who is pulled by Jews, which is on an altar, and which has performed and still performs many miracles, so that every day a great many people come. One comes across countless alms there, with which the Scuola will be made very beautiful.[100]

A next indication may be found in Titian's extraordinary woodcut, discussed on page 52, which depicts a fictive altarpiece with the figure of St Roch, who in a vision sees the miraculous painting, and before which is represented

[98] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', pp. 24 and 67.

[99] Again I am relying gratefully on the work of Chiari Moretto Wiel, who has brought a lot of this evidence together.

[100] 'Non voglio restar di scriver il gran concorso a la chiesie di S. Rocho al presente, per una imagine di Cristo vien tirato da zudei, è a uno altar, qual à fato et fa molti miracoli, *adeo* ogni zorno vi va asaissima zente, si trova assa elemosine con le qual si farà la scuola bellissima.' Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XXIX, p. 69.

a little box with an inscription: 'alms for the construction' (fig. 21). Then, in a document from 1527, the year of Francesco di Zuan's second term as *Guardian Grande*, it is said that, thanks to the miraculous painting, the chaplain has 'struck gold' (*un pozzo d'oro*).[101] That one was thinking of this money in direct relation to Di Zuan's ambitious building programme is extremely likely. Our most eloquent source, however, is Francesco Sansovino, who wrote in his *Venetia Città Nobilissima*:

> They made the face of their confraternity completely encrusted with the noblest marbles and rich with ornaments, resulting in incredible costs. Yet of great help was, many years ago, the image of Christ painted by Titian, which, because it performed various miracles, was visited with lavish alms and gifts, not only from all over Venice, but also from the cities in the neighbourhood.[102]

To contemporaries, as this short survey shows, the miraculous painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross* and the construction of the Scuola's new building were directly and practically related: the painting worked as a fundraiser.

Given his propagation of a majestic and opulent building, very different from the original design by Pietro Bon, but very similar to the eventual result as described by Sansovino, Francesco di Zuan is the first person whose role in all of this we should examine more closely. For it were mostly his plans that resulted in the huge costs of which Sansovino is talking; tapping this new source of money that was the miraculous painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross* was therefore, so it seems, completely in his own interest. From his first year as *Guardian Grande*, 1519, there are a number of relevant documents. Two

[101] A.S.V., Scuola Grande di San Rocco, II consegna, b. 45, cc. 55v-56r, quoted after Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, p. 437. See also below, p. 77, for a remark with similar import made by Giorgio Vasari.

[102] 'Fecero p[er] ta[n]to la faccia della loro fraterna tutta incrostata di nobiliss[imi] marmi et ricca di ornamenti, con incredibil spesa. Alla qual cosa fare gli aiutò grandemente, molti anni sono l'Imagine di Christo dipinta da Titiano, la quale facendo diversi miracoli, fu frequentata con amplissime limosine et doni, non pur da tutta Venetia, ma anco dalle circonvicine città.' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 102v. The connection between miracles and money was stressed by Giovanni Stringa when he revised Sansovino's guidebook: 'Oltre il maggiore vi sono altri 7. altari; tra questi è assai notabile, et famoso quello di Christo Signor Nostro posto a man manca immediate fuori di essa cappella, per la qual benedetto, e Santa Imagine, che fu dipinta dal gran Titiano, s'è fatta ricca, et questa Chiesa, et la fraterna insieme maravigliosamente, havendo fatto essa Imagine infiniti miracoli.' Sansovino, *Venetia citta nobilissima*, ed. Giovanni Stringa, p. 161r.

decrees dated 22 July, also mentioned above, name 'Francesco di Zuan at present our *Guardian Grande'* in relation to the miraculous crucifix.[103] A document from 27 November of the same year is more revealing. This time, the *Banca*, Francesco di Zuan at its head, decided that a man should be appointed to attend the altar of 'our Christ' (either the crucifix just mentioned or the miraculous painting), take care of the candles, and, last but not least, proclaim the object's miracles. The man elected for this job is one Zuanne de Antonio de Zorzi d'Albin who, interestingly, is said to have been 'the first to recommend and pronounce these divine miracles'.[104] I have not been able to find out to which of the two objects this document refers, nor who Zuanne de Antonio is, but that makes it no less intriguing that a single man is mentioned as the instigator of a cult, or that it was Francesco di Zuan who claimed responsibility for the man's appointment as attendant. During his second term as head of the Scuola (1527), Francesco again took measures to promote the miraculous *Christ*: its altar was embellished and further adorned, and Francesco di Zuan personally donated five ducats to the Scuola for this aim. So we get the impression that, when he was in power, he did much to promote the fame of the Scuola di San Rocco's miraculous objects, especially the painting.

The same can be said of Nicolò dalla Croce, although he did it in a completely different way. We remember that he was an artist, a goldsmith to be precise. Recently a document has turned up which strongly suggests that Nicolò dalla Croce, in this occupation, was responsible for the silver mounting of the Scuola's so-called *Mariegola maior*, consisting primarily of two plaques, the first on the front and the second on the back of the book's cover, representing Christ who is carrying his cross and is being mocked by two executioners, and St Roch with two believers, respectively (made in or before 1524; fig. 25).[105] It will be no coincidence, then, that Dalla Croce's *Christ Carrying the Cross* scene, though not a slavish copy of the painting's composition, has some striking features with it in common, like Christ's slightly crooked back, his face turned towards the viewer, and the man op-

[103] '… messer Francesco de Zuanne al presente nostro guardian grando per la Idio grazia…' Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 711.
[104] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 715 n. 65.
[105] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, cat. no. 383-384, p. 340.

posite him, his face shown in profile, with an aquiline nose. What is more, on the basis of stylistic similarities, the reliquary holding the miraculously flowering thorn has been ascribed to Dalla Croce, too (c. 1518-1521; fig. 17).[106] If Nicolò dalla Croce *orese* is indeed the author of these two objects which frame and propagate the veneration of two miraculous objects in the Scuola's possession, and, moreover, supporting Francesco di Zuan as main financial officer of the building site – as has been argued above – we have found in him an important figure.

But what, then, was the role of Bernardo di Marin, Francesco di Zuan's fervent opponent in matters of building? What was his interest in promoting relics and paintings, if any? Yet, his name, too, is mentioned in relation to these objects. When he was *Guardian Grande* in 1521, he did two relevant things: firstly, he proposed to open a shop in which all the votive gifts – mainly statuettes and candles – that the painting received could be sold. This measure was meant to avert a situation in which these gifts were just lying about, getting damaged or even lost.[107] Secondly, and most importantly, it was he who created the so-called 'Book of protocol' (*Libro di protocollo*) in which an attempt was made to codify all rites celebrated until that moment by the Scuola on the occasion of feast-days and other liturgical moments, and the role played in them by objects. In the book, Di Marin expressed his motivation for doing so: he feared that the memory of these traditions would otherwise disappear, the Scuola still being deprived of a proper headquarters.[108]

To conclude, there were at least three men who were promoting the miraculous objects owned by their Scuola, among which the miracle-working painting of Christ, and, although connected by the confraternity's new headquarters, they were doing it with rather dissimilar motives. Francesco di Zuan, as supporter of a sumptuous and costly new building, must have applauded the painting's fundraising abilities; for the professional artist Nicolò dalla Croce the objects led to new commissions and were thus a source of

[106] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, cat. no. 385, pp. 340-341.
[107] The proposal was accepted unanimously. Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', p. 716 n. 67.
[108] Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Posocco and Settis, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, cat. no. 385, p. 341.

personal income; Bernardo di Marin on the other hand may have regarded them first and foremost as objects of devotion and meditation, and, what is more, embodiments of the Scuola di San Rocco's still young and vulnerable tradition.

It is interesting to see that the behaviour of such different people with such different objectives was, perhaps not even very consciously, resulting in the very same thing: namely a flowering of the cult objects of the Scuola di San Rocco to an extent only equalled by the Basilica di San Marco.

The role played by Francesco di Zuan is particularly thought-provoking. Taking an active interest in evangelical ideas and church reform, he was at the same time propagating a metamorphosis of his own confraternity from a poor inward-looking devotional brotherhood to a splendid, triumphant quasi-Republic – which seems like a movement away from the evangelical ideal. He was actively promoting the, probably often excessive, veneration of relics and other objects thought to have miraculous powers, yet was approvingly following Giovan Matteo Giberti, bishop of Verona, who proclaimed that the people's devotion to their saints should actually be directed towards Christ himself.[109] In other words, his behaviour seems to have been at odds with what we know of Di Zuan's progressive religious beliefs; unless he, too, considered the *Christ Carrying the Cross* and related objects identical to Christ himself.

There is a final point I would like to make. It is known that Doge Andrea Gritti (1523-1538) was taking an interest in the building activities of the Scuola di San Rocco – particularly in the southern facade and its relation to the urban environment. This was Francesco di Zuan's project.[110] As Marin Sanudo relates, Gritti visited the Scuola in 1523.[111] Of course, Doge Gritti is well-known for his architectural and town planning interventions in a Ro-

[109] Prosperi, 'Solidarietà e prestigio', p. 19; also Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 20.

[110] Like every other Doge, Gritti was an honorary member of the Scuola di San Rocco. Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 18.

[111] Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XXXIV, p. 376: '… il Serenissimo nostro invidato dal Guardian dovè andarvi a messa; ma per la morte di suo zerman sier Zuan Francesco Griti rimesse di andar questo altro mexe, *etiam* per veder la Scuola, qual la fazà et portal è di le belle cosse del mondo.' The reference is from Prosperi, 'Solidarietà e prestigio', p. 18.

man, classicizing fashion (*renovatio urbis*).[112] Indeed, Gianmario Guidarelli called Francesco di Zuan's project for San Rocco a precursor of Gritti's urban renewal.[113] If he is right, then we may associate Francesco di Zuan with a particular type of artistic and architectural patronage inspired by Tuscan and Roman currents – what Manfredo Tafuri called *romanism* and what was practised by a political minority with strong ties to Rome and the papal court.[114] This sheds further light on the kind of complex social situation in which the San Rocco *Christ* was embedded; a situation shared by the other paintings studied in this thesis.

The Faithful

The cult of a miraculous image cannot flower without people who believe in it. In this case, people who believe the painting will protect them from violence and other dangers. What is known about these people and how can we contextualize their beliefs?

A vital source with regard to this problem is the afore-mentioned booklet titled *Li Stupendi et maravigliosi miracoli del Glorioso Christo de Sancto Rocco Novamente Impressa*, which was written by the north-Italian Eustachio Celebrino (fig. 19).[115] It was probably published twice during the 1520s, both times in Venice, and, besides the story of Christ's passion, it contains an elaborate enumeration of miracles performed by the *Christ Carrying the Cross*.[116] The booklet is written in stanzas of eight lines, every time concluded with an identical ninth line, 'Holy glorious Christ' (*Christo sancto glorioso*). Composed in a simple, almost naive form of verse in the Venetian dialect, it describes how no less than seventeen people, mostly victims of street violence, were saved from death thanks to the *Christ* of San Rocco. Here is one stanza as an example:

[112] See Manfredo Tafuri (ed.), *"Renovatio Urbis": Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti (1523-1538)*, Rome 1984.
[113] Guidarelli, 'Sante Lombardo e la costruzione della facciata meridionale della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 20.
[114] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 5 and further. See also Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*, New Haven and London 2006, in particular 'Venetian Epilogue: Jacopo Sansovino from *Inventio* to *Consuetudo*, pp. 219-258.
[115] For a discussion of the frontispiece, see above, pp. 49-50.
[116] See Chiari Moretto Wiel in: Dal Pozzolo and Puppi, *Giorgione*, cat. no. 107, pp. 483-484; Anderson, '"Christ Carrying the Cross" in San Rocco', p. 187.

A poor man from Padua
Was attacked by an enemy of his
Who with a knife
Slashed him in the stomach
Then, (wounded) I tell you
He turned to holy Christ
Who has given him such grace
That he is now alive and strong
Holy glorious Christ.[117]

And another, even more cruel story:

There was a poor Frenchman,
Whose fate it was
That his brains were knocked out,
His skull in bits and put to death
A strange and heavy thing to believe
For someone who hasn't seen it
He took refuge with this Christ
Now the good Frenchman is healthy
Holy glorious Christ.[118]

And these are not the only examples of violent crimes that have happy endings thanks to the San Rocco *Christ*: fourteen of the seventeen stories happen to men attacked on the streets, who are miraculously brought back to life.

When reading Celebrino's poem, the question comes up whether the booklet's author actually relates the miracles he recounts to the object in the church of San Rocco. To what extent is an intervention of the painting a prerequisite for a miracle? A quick scan already teaches us that none of the miracles reported by Celebrino took place at the shrine. We can be quite certain of this, as the author provides detailed information about the locations

[117] Eustachio Celebrino, *Li Stupendi et maravigliosi miracoli del Glorioso Christo de Sancto Rocchо Novamente Impressa*, s. l., s. a. 'Un meschino in padoana/ Fo assalta dun so nimico/ Qual con una partesana/ Lo passo ne lombelico/ Poi (ferite) non ve dico/ Lui ricorse al christo sancto/ Qual glia dato favor tanto/ Che glie vivo [e] poderoso/ Christo sancto glorioso.'
[118] 'Un francioso poverello/ C[…]omo volse la sua sorte/ Fo partito lo cervello/ Guasto el pa[n]no [e]messo a mo[r]te/ Cosa a creder strana e forte/ A chi non lhavesse visto/ Lui ricorse a questo christo/ Hora e sano el bon francioso/ Christo sancto glorioso.'

where the miracles did take place: in the region of Friuli (miles away from Venice), in the *sestiere* Cannaregio, in the parish of San Fantin, at the table in the victim's home. Neither does the author speak of related images, such as replicas in print, that did play a part in other image cults of the time. Such replicas of a miraculous 'original' might, for example, be placed on a sick person's body in order to transmit the powers of that image and accordingly heal the patient.[119] Indeed, in the case of *Christ Carrying the Cross* many such replicas were produced, as we have seen, but there are no stories that mention them. One almost feels obliged to conclude that the painting itself did not have any part in the whole miracle business.

Yet, as soon as he has recounted all his miracles, Celebrino recommends his audience to go to San Rocco and visit the painting:

> Thus, people, do not hesitate
> To come and visit him all
> For it cleans and washes you of all evil
> More than anything I could tell you about
> Come, everyone, to honour him
> And call his holy name
> That relieves the burden
> Of our every heavy load
> Holy glorious Christ

And when we carefully reread his miracle stories, we learn that people were 'healed by that Christ,' (*Da quel christo* […] *fatto sano*) 'made a promise to this Christ,' (*Lui fa voto a questo christo*) or recommended their beloved 'to that divine and holy Christ' (*a quel divino/ Christo sancto*). It is strongly suggested that, once in danger, the people in the miracle stories conjured up the *Christ Carrying the Cross* in front of their mind's eye; that they visited the painting and evoked its image when in need – like in a vision, as is illustrated in Titian's woodcut discussed earlier in this chapter (fig. 21). For those who did not have the opportunity to go to San Rocco, Celebrino thought of something too. Not completely free from commercial motives, the author recommended his own booklet as a surrogate:

[119] See, for example, the case of Santa Maria delle Carceri in Prato: Maniura, 'The Images and Miracles of Santa Maria delle Carceri'.

This praise that I have recounted
Has such virtue, oh people of mine
It is a medicine to every illness
To every hard and adverse situation
Have a perfect faith in god
And carry this [booklet] with you
Which will be your guide and escort
In every dangerous place
Holy glorious Christ

If it so happens that you have it with you
You will be joined by a good friend
He takes care that faith does not abandon you
Remember what I say to you
If an enemy of yours would come
To betray you
He cannot, even if he'd suffer a hundred times
Inflict any harm upon you
Holy glorious Christ.[120]

Celebrino is very explicit here: accept my message, buy this poem that I have been reciting, and the *Christ* of San Rocco will protect you from any harm. His concluding lines are an advertisement for the amulet that the product of his pen is said to be. Indeed, the booklet itself, adorned with a woodcut visualizing the painting, its title verbally referring to the painting, was a replica believed to be capable of transmitting the powers of its prototype.

Such a message was of course completely in keeping with Celebrino's own interests. As a professional writer, engraver and calligrapher, he was in pursuit of profit. Eustachio Celebrino's first known work is a signed woodcut from 1511; from 1523 to 1525 he was active in Venice, mainly working on publications on the art of writing and calligraphy. But he is also known to

[120] 'Questa laude ha virtu tale/ Chio narrata o popul mio/ Medicina e dogni male/ Dogni caso acerbo e rio/ Habbi fe perfetta in dio/ Poi conteco tela porta/ Che sera tua guida e scorta/ In hogni luocho periglioso/ Christo sancto glorioso// Se gliaven che adosso lhabbi/ Harai teco un bon amico/ Fa che fede non te gabbi/ Habbi ame[n]te quel chio dico/ Sel venisse un tuo nemico/ Per usarte un tradimento/ Non potra se soffer cento/ Farti male alcun damnoso/ Christo sancto glorioso.'

have written a handful of texts with a more popular appeal. How to remain healthy in times of plague; how to prepare a banquet; how to make perfumes for a beautiful woman; how to say things in Turkish: these were all topics on which Celebrino offered his readers advice. Next to that, he wrote poems on contemporaneous events, like the death of Pope Alexander VI (1503) and the Sack of Rome (1527); our miracle book, too, clearly falls within this latter category. All these books were meant to be sold to a large public, readers not too critical in questions of language and style.[121]

From the point of view of this public, Celebrino's *Li Stupendi et maravigliosi miracoli* was certainly supplying a need. His booklet gave a voice to the public's deeply felt fear of violence and aggression. Almost all the stories describe violent conflicts between ordinary people, in Venetian alleys or homes, with very severe, often fatal outcome. To us, the knocked-out brains and exposed intestines of which he speaks may be shocking; in early modern Venice, however, they were a day-to-day reality.

For although widely shared intuitions make us believe that today's societies are growing more dangerous every day, the early modern world was much more violent than ours. What is more, people of all social strata were prone to violent behaviour, which could take a variety of forms: homicide and assault, rape, riot, and domestic violence, to name just a few. Not all violence was criminalized: several types of aggressive behaviour hardly received attention from judicial authorities; interpersonal violence was a socially accepted means to solve conflicts. Overall, peoples' chances to sooner or later become either victim or witness of an attack were much higher and much more real than we would nowadays imagine.[122]

In Venice, on top of that, the first decades of the sixteenth century had generally been troubled times. The Republic's defeat in the battle of Agnadello (1509), when it had seen almost all significant European powers united against itself, almost meant the end of Venetian sovereignty. The city was struck by plague in those very same years, 1509-1510, and again in 1527-1529. In 1511, furthermore, a terrible earthquake made the city shake to its

[121] *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XXIII, Rome 1979, s.v. 'Celebrino, Eustachio'.
[122] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in early modern Europe*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 2-5.

foundations. And this is just a selection of things that happened.[123] It was, in other words, a highly insecure period, and people were terror-stricken. This is evident from the security measures taken by Venetian authorities at the celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi in the disastrous 1527, just after Rome had been sacked: as Marin Sanudo noted in his *Diaries*, the armed troops keeping away foreigners, women and children were a frightful thing to see, 'just as in 1509.'[124] And it is also evident, to cite just one other example, from the many donations and alms the Scuola di San Rocco received in these years of plague.[125]

In these difficult years, people were more than ever longing for some kind of reassurance. A miracle-working painting could offer this, and Celebrino's booklet helped to promote it. His descriptions, no matter how concise, quite precisely fit what we know of interpersonal violence in this period. Although Celebrino does not go into the individual motives of his perpetrators, it seems likely that the fights he talks about are the outcomes of already existing conflicts; that they were cases of revenge and vendetta. In sixteenth-century Venice, as we have seen, such violent situations were very real, and it is beyond doubt that Celebrino's claim – the *Christ* of San Rocco will protect you – caught on. And while it remains unclear whether people directed their veneration primarily towards Christ or to his painted image in the Scuola, Celebrino at least suggests that in daily devotional practice, the two overlapped.

Although immediate evidence is lacking, it is even imaginable that the *Christ Carrying the Cross* became a shrine to which the faithful appealed in particular for the control of urban violence and victims of excessive aggression. In a quite unexpected way, this brings us back to the painting's iconography. For is it not a scene of interpersonal violence that we see depicted

[123] For a larger overview of the years around Agnadello, see Patricia H. Labalme, Linda Sanguineti White and Linda L. Carroll (eds.), *Venice,* Città Excelentissima*: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, Baltimore 2008, pp. xxxi-xxxiv; also Robert Finlay, 'Crisis and crusade in the Mediterranean: Venice, Portugal, and the Cape Route to India (1498-1509)', *Studi Veneziani* 28 (N.S.) (1994), pp. 45-90.

[124] Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XLV, p. 355: 'sicome fu fatto l'anno 1509'. The reference is from Prosperi, 'Solidarietà e prestigio', p. 9.

[125] Guidarelli, 'La fabbrica della Scuola Grande di San Rocco', p. 56. See also Deborah Howard, who writes of 60 endowment trusts set up in the Scuola's favour between 1509 and 1516, and of new donations in 1527: *The architectural history of Venice*, New Haven 2002, p. 156.

before our eyes? Is it not, in this painting, Christ who appeals to the viewers, asking to follow him in his suffering? The viewers knew that they, in return, could count on Christ's support as well. We thus find a direct link between the painting's subject matter and the type of agency it was believed to exert.

Yet apart from believers there were also sceptics. It is Marin Sanudo, the chronicler, who left us a critical note. His remark is related to the aforementioned devastating earthquake that struck Venice in 1511.[126] Sanudo's account of the catastrophe gives much attention to the quake's material damage.[127] Regarding the Doge's Palace, he wrote the following:

> I do not wish to omit the fact that half of the battlement above the hall of the Great Council fell into the middle of the courtyard of the Ducal Palace – the half that is of marble and bears carvings of lilies. The force of the fall drove it into a piece of hard stone at the base of the stone staircase, with the head of the lily pointed down. Many took it as a good omen indicating that the lily, which is the emblem of France, will fall and be ruined. May God so will it for the good of Italy, scourged by these barbarians![128]

Sanudo's hostile statements towards France can be understood in relation to Venice's defeat at Agnadello (1509); in the continuation of the war, the patrician Sanudo himself played a role, and is is thus not difficult to grasp why he was so preoccupied with his city's defence.[129] More to the point, however, here as in other cases, Sanudo interpreted the debris of an artefact as an omen for the future.

[126] See also Labalme, White and Carroll, *Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, pp. 373-378; David S. Chambers and Brian Pullan (eds.), *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630*, Oxford 1992, pp. 188-189.

[127] In Venice, the earthquake most likely measured 7 on the Richter scale: see C. Degasperi, D. Slejko, A. Rebez, and M. Cergol, 'Earthquakes felt in Trieste from the Middle Ages to the 18th century', *Tectonophysics* 193 (1991), pp. 53-63, here p. 60, fig. 7.

[128] Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XII, pp. 79-80: '… non voglio tacer, che in corte di palazo cazete uno merlo di quelli è sopra dita salla di gran consejo, in mezo, e cazete la mità dil merlo ch'è di marmoro con ziglij suso intajadi, et cadendo si vene a impiantar lì in corte, a pe' di la scala de piera, in una piera viva, col capol dil ziglio in zoso; e molti ave questo per bon augurio, chè il ziglio, ch'è l'arma di Franza, cascherà e ruinerà, che Idio el voglia per ben de Italia flagelata da questi barbari.' Translation from Labalme, White, and Carroll, *Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, p. 374.

[129] Labalme, White, and Carroll, *Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, pp. 10-13.

Sanudo's contemporaries also regarded the earthquake itself as a sign. According to the chronicler, it was the Patriarch who first expressed this sentiment: the earthquake was 'a sign from God: it is because of our sins that misfortunes afflict us.'[130] As to these sins, he was thinking of sodomy, incest, and a general lack of religiosity. By way of remedy, 'it was ordered that all preachers assigned to churches should preach, beginning tomorrow morning. The patriarch ordered a three-day fast of bread and water and processions […].' Sanudo on the other hand was charmed, but clearly not convinced by the Patriarch's moral revival, noting that 'I applaud these measures as far as good habits and religion go, but as far as preventing earthquakes, they accomplish nothing, for these are a phenomenon of nature [*cossa natural*].'[131]

It is Sanudo's critical reflection on the nature of things which may give our analysis more relief. It makes us think: how is it possible that he believed earthquakes to be natural phenomena – just like we do, for that matter – but at the same time saw broken statues as signs of God's will – not so sceptical after all? The key is, I believe, that in Sanudo's view, the damage done to the individual artefact adds up to its meaning. An earthquake, as a natural phenomenon, does not have meaning; artefacts do; and a battlement with a lily sculpted on it that has fallen to the ground has a different meaning than a battlement with a lily that is just in place.[132]

In this view, it is clearly the artefact's prototype that matters most; which is, in case of a sculpted lily, France; but in case of a *broken* sculpted lily, a broken France. The damage becomes part of the artefact's meaning. It is the same with the miraculous *Christ Carrying the Cross*. The painting's prototype, the tormented Christ, gave this painting its meaning and made it work. Less important in this manner of thinking was the role of the artist. If the artist

[130] '… *signa Dei, et propter peccata veniunt adversa*.' Sanudo, I diarii, vol. XII, p. 84; translation from Labalme, White, and Carroll, *Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, p. 376.
[131] 'Et cussì fo ordinato a tutti li predichatori, deputati per le chiesie, dovesseno predichar, comenzando damatina; et per il patriarcha ordinato dezuni tre zorni pan e aqua et processione a torno i campi la sera, cantando le letanie et a San Marco la matina; cosse che Jo le laudi quanto *ad bonos mores et ad religionem*, ma quanto a remedij di teramoti, ch'è cossa natural, *nihil valebat*.' Sanudo, *I diarii*, vol. XII, p. 84; translation from Labalme, White, and Carroll, *Selections*, p. 377.
[132] More or less the same mechanism, but on a much larger scale still, was at work when the Doge's Palace burnt down in 1574 and again in 1577. While a sceptic might feel that it was just a building, for most Venetians the ruined Palace could all too easily be equated with a ruined State; and could even *result* in a ruined State, if nothing would be done.

would be the principal agent connected to the work, damage to that work would be lamented as the loss of a product of this singular person. But in Sanudo's view, the artist hardly mattered.

For other writers this was different, as we will see: in this chapter's final section we will discuss the increasingly prominent role of the artist in relation to the *Cristo portacroce*.

The Changing Role of the Artist

The identity of the artist responsible for the *Christ Carrying the Cross* is unknown. Yet, artists' names have been connected to the painting from an early moment onwards. Who were these artists, how do the sources figure their relation to the painting, and what may this tell us about the way the painting was believed to work?

Strikingly, debates over the painting's attribution hardly ever address the question *why* we are in doubt. An important part of the answer to this question lies in the way the painting was viewed and used in its early life. For, to those who regarded the painting as an effective miracle-working object, the question who painted it did not matter. Christ as the painting's prototype was a much more important agent than a human artisan who merely had to *copy*, rather than *invent*, the way Christ was going to look. Indeed, in documents from the Scuola di San Rocco's archives, the painting is always indicated as 'our Christ' (*nostro Cristo*), 'our miraculous Christ' (*el miracoloso nostro Christo*) or the like.[133] No author is mentioned; even the fact that the documents are talking about an object, a representation, a painting needs to be inferred by the reader. The Scuola's authorities clearly were among those who deemed the painting's authorship irrelevant. The same is true, we should add, with regard to the painting's patron and commission. Such perceived authorlessness certainly did much to strengthen the painting's miraculous aura. Efficacious images, in Venice and elsewhere, very often had an alternative myth of origin: they may have been produced at one age, but been perceived as originating from another. To give an example: many medieval images of the Madonna and Child were believed to be painted by the apostle St Luke;

[133] See for example the documents transcribed in Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'Il Cristo portacroce', pp. 715-716, nn. 65-67.

other images were not believed to be painted by a human being at all – like the *Vera Icon* (the unmediated impression of Christ's face on a piece of cloth) or the famous image of the *Annunciation* at SS. Annunziata in Florence (completed by an angel). The *Christ* of the Scuola di San Rocco was, by means of its elusive history, aspiring to the same divine, not human, origins; to the status of *acheiropoieton*, in other words.[134]

Nevertheless, from the 1550s onwards texts were written that directly mention the painting in connection with an artist's name. Giorgio Vasari's *Lives* are the first to do so, and therefore the most important source if we want to understand the profound change that the reception of the painting was undergoing in these years.[135] Let me here repeat what Vasari wrote about it:

> [Giorgione] made a painting of a Christ who carries the cross and a Jew who pulls him, which after some time was placed in the church of San Rocco, and today, because of the devotion that many feel for it, it performs miracles, as one can see.[136]

These are the words from his *Lives* of 1550. He repeated these lines unchanged in the revised and expanded edition published eighteen years later. In that second version, however, he also referred to the painting in his description of the works of Titian:

> For the church of San Rocco [Titian] painted, after the mentioned works, in a painting Christ with the cross on his shoulder and with a rope around his neck, pulled by a Hebrew. This figure, that many believe to be of the hand of Giorgione, today is the premier object of devotion in Venice, and has re-

[134] For the various stories of origin with which many Renaissance artefacts, like *acheiropoieta*, were associated, see Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.

[135] In a note from 1532 regarding the private collection of Antonio Pasqualino, Marcantonio Michiel had already referred indirectly to the San Rocco *Christ* in connection with Giorgione. See *Der Anonimo Morelliano (Marcanton Michiel's notizia d'opere del disegno)*, ed. Theodor Frimmel, Vienna 1888, p. 80: 'La testa del S. Jacomo cun el bordon, fu de man de Zorzi da Castelfrancho, ouer de qualche suo discipulo, ritratto dal Christo de S. Rocho.' Yet this is not an attribution.

[136] 'Lavorò un quadro d'un Cristo che porta la croce ed un Giudeo lo tira, il quale col tempo fu posto nella chiesa di Santo Rocco, ed oggi, per la devozione che vi hanno molti, fa miracoli, come si vede.' See n. 2.

ceived a higher offering of *scudi* than Titian and Giorgione ever earned in their whole lives.[137]

Besides the addition of a sceptical remark regarding the money the painting was bringing in, Vasari changed his attribution, claiming that, although many believe it to be painted by Giorgione, it is in fact made by Titian. Authors before me have, not unjustly I believe, sought the key to Vasari's intriguing change of mind in the first half of the 1560s; the time when he was preparing his second edition, culminating in his personal visit to Venice in 1566. Whether he actually met the painter during that visit is subject to some debate; but in one way or another, Vasari must have come to believe the miraculous painting came from Titian.[138]

While many art historians have taken Vasari's correction at face value, others have pointed to the rhetorical and literary character of his *Lives*, or their inherent constructedness; however, I would like to go one step further by drawing attention to the constructedness of his sources. For we should not underestimate Titian and his talent to fashion his own public image.

Think of the painter's age. Vasari thought he was about 66 years in 1568, or 74 at his death in 1576. Carlo Ridolfi claimed he died at age 99. Almost all ages in between have been proposed as well; what is the truth, we still do not know. As Philip Sohm writes, Titian was self-conscious of his age, unwilling to admit his true age, but apparently deliberately exaggerating it.[139] In the gerontocracy that was Venice, Titian was making himself more venerable than he really was. This reminds us of the flexible ages of many Renaissance artefacts, to which were ascribed more venerable origins than they actually had. As with these artefacts, Titian adjusted his age to a status he deemed himself worthy of.[140]

[137] 'Per la chiesa di Santo Rocco fece, dopo le dette opere, in un quadro, Cristo con la croce in spalla e con una corda al colla tirata da un Ebreo; la qual figura, che hanno molti creduta sia di mano di Giorgione, è oggi la maggior divozione di Vinezia, et ha avuto di limosine più scudi che non hanno in tutto la loro vita guadagnato Tiziano e Giorgione.' Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. VI, pp. 159-60.

[138] See, for example, Charles Hope, 'Giorgione in Vasari's *Vite*', in: Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (ed.), *Giorgione entmythisiert*, Turnhout 2008, pp. 15-37.

[139] Philip L. Sohm, *The artist grows old: The aging of art and artists in Italy, 1500-1800*, New Haven 2007, p. 83.

[140] Nor was Titian the only person to falsify his age: see the example of Alvise Cornaro (1484-1566) from Padua, a patron of the arts and writer about architecture (Lex Hermans, 'Alvise

Another myth that Titian perhaps did not create, but at least helped much to cultivate, is that of the autograph, the masterpiece created by one unique individual. With his practice in later life to sign his works 'TITIANVS […] EQVES CAES[AREVS],' even if they obviously were the product of the efforts of a whole team, he underlined his own role as the single, noble *auctor*, and thus gave rise to a misunderstanding that has only recently, but not yet completely, been eliminated.[141] We will return to this problem in Chapter Three.

Now, why did Vasari change the attribution of the miraculous painting to Titian in the second edition of his *Lives*? This question can perhaps never be answered. Another question is: who found benefit in the new attribution?

It is not very often realized that Titian, too, was a member of the Scuola di San Rocco. When exactly he was accepted for membership is uncertain, but it must have been in 1526 at the latest.[142] Think about it for a moment: the young Titian, possible author of the *Christ Carrying the Cross*, strolling through the church of his confraternity, and seeing the incredible emotions that the painting was stirring up right at that time! Nonetheless, from about 1533 onwards, Titian reduced his administrative activities for the Scuola almost to nil; which fits the image of his internationally rising star in this period. Yet, after almost two decades had passed, he returned to his confraternity in the early 1550s and again took up administrative posts. Recently it has been argued that Titian's renewed activities after this long interruption may be connected with his hope for a commission; his hope to be allowed to decorate the Scuola's new building, to be precise.[143] The artist took up his first position after his long absence in 1552. He was also active in 1553, 1554, 1557 and 1561. In that last year he attended a meeting to discuss the floor of the Scuola's Sala dell'Albergo. Three years later, it was not Titian but Jacopo Tintoretto who received the commission for the ceiling paintings in that room. Although Titian had tried to get the commission for the largest wall

Cornaro and the construction of theatrical society', in: Harald Hendrix and Paolo Procaccioli (eds.), *Officine del nuovo: sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma*, Manziana 2008, pp. 349-367).

[141] Tagliaferro and Aikema, *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, pp. 13-16.

[142] Gabriele Köster, *Künstler und Ihre Brüder: Maler, Bildhauer und Architekten in den venezianischen Scuole Grandi (bis ca. 1600)*, Berlin 2008, p. 236 and appendix no. 1311.

[143] Köster, *Künstler und Ihre Brüder*, p. 251. This contradicts the traditional idea that Titian was not interested in local commissions at this point in this career.

during the 1550s, his request had been rejected.[144] We all know, of course, how it ended: the Scuola di San Rocco would become 'a private monument to the art of Tintoretto' (fig. 26).[145]

Now, is it imaginable that the *Christ Carrying the Cross* played a role in all this? Vasari's preparations of the first edition of his *Lives* coincided with Titian's inactive period at the Scuola; this was the time when the construction of the building was still under way. Directly after 1550, year of the publication of the *Lives*, Titian showed renewed interest in commissions from his confraternity. It is perfectly conceivable that a recognition of the (alleged?) authorship of the miraculous painting would have helped him with obtaining commissions. For, if the Scuola's miraculous painting would have been his, who could have refused him the honour?

In any case, with Vasari's *Vite* the painting of *Christ Carrying the Cross* entered an early version of the canon of art. It was copiously described by Vasari, as we have seen; by Borghini; by Sansovino, Tizianello and Ridolfi. There is something paradoxical about this: every time, these authors singled out the painting for its miraculous powers or, at least, its ability to attract mass devotion. We may even wonder if we had known this particular side to the painting at all, had not these early writers mentioned it. These forebears of the art-historical discipline, among the first to write about painting as an art, were crucial in providing the San Rocco *Christ* with its status as cult image.[146] A cult image, what is more, that was produced by the most famous Venetian painter of the period, the only one worthy of making a work that was so venerated: Titian.[147]

It is well-known that the *Christ Carrying the Cross* is not the only Venetian painting from its period that resists attribution. There is a group of works that has long been the subject of heated debate among art historians, consisting of paintings now attributed to Titian, then to Giorgione, sometimes to Sebastiano del Piombo, other times to a collaboration between these masters. We

[144] Köster, *Künstler und Ihre Brüder*, pp. 246-250.
[145] Rosand and Muraro, *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut*, p. 110.
[146] See also Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 28, who go as far as to argue that the simple image is a construction of the artwork; that 'medieval art' is a construction of 'Renaissance art'.
[147] See Andrew R. Casper, 'A Taxonomy of Images: Francesco Sansovino and the San Rocco *Christ Carrying the Cross*', *Word & Image* 26 (2010), pp. 100-114, here pp. 109-110.

only need to think of the famous *Concert champêtre* in the Louvre, which, when it was first recorded in the collection of Louis XIV in 1671, was considered to be painted by Giorgione, but has later been considered as a Giovanni Bellini, a Sebastiano, a Palma il Vecchio, and a Titian (fig. 27). While the *Concert champêtre* only appeared in the seventeenth century, the attribution of other works has been unclear from a much earlier point in time. Besides the *Christ*, Vasari changed his mind with regard to two other pictures originally attributed to Giorgione: the *St John Chrysostom Altarpiece* in the Venetian church with the same name (later ascribed to Sebastiano; fig. 28) and the *Storm at Sea*, now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia (later attributed to Jacopo Palma).[148] Vasari's uncertainty makes clear that around mid-century, the authorship of several Venetian paintings, which probably all dated from around 1510, was much contested.

There may be many reasons for this situation, one of which being, I believe, that 'authorship' as such was a contested notion. It is only in the second half of the century that texts on Venetian art show a general awareness of something like a personal style; a means by which a connoisseur might tell a Tintoretto from a Veronese, a Giorgione from a Titian. To be sure, already in the first half of the century Marcantonio Michiel was keeping notes in which he sometimes ascribed a painting to a certain master; but his enterprise seems to have been relatively isolated. The way authors like Vasari and Dolce perceived it, the young Titian had revolutionized Venetian painting by infusing it with a heretofore unimaginable degree of lifelikeness. No other painter in sixteenth-century Venice, perhaps even in the whole of the Italian peninsula, was praised so widely for his lifelike representations. Yet there is a major paradox inherent in this praise: for the best painter is he whose works do not

[148] The *Christ carrying the cross*, however, is the only work with a double attribution in the second edition. See Hope, 'Giorgione in Vasari's *Vite*', p. 19. In the first edition Vasari wrote: 'Gli fu allogata la tavola di San Giovan Grisostimo di Venezia, che è molto lodata, per avere egli in certe parti imitato forte il vivo della natura e dolcemente allo scuro fatto perdere l'ombre delle figure. Fugli allogato ancora una storia […]; nella quale è una tempesta di mare a e barche che hanno fortuna, et un gruppo di figure in aria e diverse forme di diavoli che soffiano i venti, et altri in barca che remano.' Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. IV, p. 45. Yet in the biography of Sebastiano il Piombo, as published in the second edition, he wrote: 'Fece anco in que' tempi in San Giovanni Grisostomo di Vinezia una tavola con alcune figure, che tengono tanto della maniera di Giorgione, ch'elle sono state alcuna volta, *da chi non ha molta cognizione delle cose dell'arte*, tenute per di mano di esso Giorgione.' Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. V, p. 86. Italics are my own.

show his art; the best painting looks as if it is life itself, and thus ceases to look like painting.[149]

It was Titian, acclaimed master of lifelike representation, who now came to be regarded as the *Urheber* of the *Christ Carrying the Cross*, the miracle-working painting with its remarkably modern design. A situation the *St Roch* woodcut, which was discussed above, seems to anticipate, as it indeed does not show the miraculous painting as a painting, but as a vision, belonging to the viewers' real world.

Conclusion: The Pious Painter

What does it mean when a miraculous image of Christ is suddenly being connected to the performance of a single individual living in the present? This means a profound change in the conception of painting as such. As soon as Titian came to be acknowledged as the maker of this incredibly successful miraculous object, its social life changed. While heretofore the image had been the index of Christ's agency alone, now Christ had to share credits with – perhaps even became secondary to – the painter Titian. The miraculous character of *Christ Carrying the Cross* was now twofold: no longer confined to its powers to miraculously heal people, to a certain group of connoisseurs it now also comprised the admirable artistic capabilities of the principal Venetian painter. We may even speak of a new understanding of the miraculous as such: at first referring to the power of an image to act as a deity, 'miraculous' now also came to stand for the skills of an artist who managed to make paintings that looked as if they were alive. Or, in the words of Lodovico Dolce: 'And certainly one can speak of a miracle at work (*E certo si puo attribuire a miracolo*) in the fact that […] purely by a dint of that little tiny spark

[149] In his *Dialogo della pittura*, Dolce extensively discusses lifelike imitation of reality (*imitare il vero*). See, for example, the passage with the famous anecdote of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, who organize a contest in lifelike painting: Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, pp. 150-152. Regarding personal styles (*maniera*) and lifelikeness in Italian art, see also Frank Fehrenbach, 'Kohäsion und Transgression: zur Dialektik lebendiger Bilder', in: Ulrich Pfisterer and Anja Zimmermann (eds.), *Animationen, Transgressionen*, Berlin 2005, pp. 1-40, here p. 20.

which he had uncovered in the works of Giorgione, Titian discerned and apprehended the essence of perfect painting.'[150]

As a kind of afterthought we will return to the person with whom this chapter opened, Carlo Ridolfi, who, writing as late as the seventeenth century, may give us an impression of the way thinking about authorship in the field of religious art would develop. As we have seen, Ridolfi remarked that the miraculous *Christ* attracted all the city's devotion '*per esser piamente dipinto*'. Such a thought presupposes the recognition of the artist's agency, a pious artist's agency to be precise. But why exactly does Ridolfi consider the painter's piety a condition for a painting's devotional success? His statement may be clarified with an anecdote about another miraculous painting, produced not long after the San Rocco *Christ* by Alessandro Bonvicino, known as il Moretto da Brescia. In the following passage, Ridolfi relates how Moretto's miraculous *Madonna* of Paitone came into being (fig. 29):

> In the church located on top of Mount Paitone, twelve miles from Brescia, one can still admire a miraculous image of the Virgin that Moretto made at that Community's request, because a certain miracle had happened. A little peasant was gathering wild brambles in a cavity of that mountain, when to him appeared the Holiest Mary in the guise of a grave Matron, dressed in a white garment, instructing him to make his people understand that a church should be built in her name on that mountain top, and that in that way a certain misfortune that was weighing heavily on him, would come to an end. The little boy obeyed, and he recovered. And when the Church was built, the painting was ordered from Moretto, who with great devotion gave himself over to compose the figure of the Virgin in the guise that the peasant told him to; but while he was trying to do his best to no avail, he thought perhaps a grave sin of his was obstructing him in the execution, so that, after having reconciled himself with much devotion to God, he took the Holiest Eucharist, and went back to work. And the Image came to him completely similar to what the peasant had seen, whom he portrayed at [Mary's] feet, with the basket with brambles on his arm. And [the image] was visited continuously by

[150] 'E certo si puo attribuire a miracolo, che Titiano […] solamente con quella poca favilluccia, ch'egli haveva scoperta nelle cose di Giorgione, vide e conobbe la Idea del dipingere perfettamente.' Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, pp. 188-189.

the people, and, acting as an intermediary, they obtained grace and favour from the hand of God.[151]

Ridolfi's anecdote almost speaks for itself. The story of Moretto and the *Madonna* of Paitone demonstrates that the artist needs to be an exemplum of piety in order to become a vessel worthy of receiving God's grace. In the case of the artist, 'grace' not only relates to the Eucharist, but also comprises the artistic *idea*. This confirms, furthermore, that the artist is not so much thought of as an inventor but rather as a (passive) intermediary; '*e gli venne fatta l'Imagine*', as Ridolfi has it: 'And the Image came to him'. The artist, in other words, is a tool in the hands of God. Thus – and this is the final point – the utmost similarity between image and prototype is guaranteed (*in tutto simigliante*). When all these conditions are met, the image can become an intermediary who passes on God's grace to the people.

[151] 'Nella Chiesa posta nella cima di Monte Paitone, dodici miglia distante da Brescia, ammirasi ancora una miracolosa imagine della Vergine, che fece il Moretto à petitione di quel Commune, per un tale miracolo accaduto. Raccoglieva un contadinello more silvestri nel seno di quel monte, a cui apparve Maria Santissima in sembiante di grave Matrona, cinta di bianca veste, commettendogli, che facesse intendere a que' Popoli, che al di lei nome edificassero una Chiesa in quella sommità, che in tal modo cessarebbe certo infortunio di male, che gli opprimeva. Ubbidì il garzoncello, et ottenne anch'egli la sanità: Edificato il Tempio, fu ordinata la pittura al Moretto; il quale con ogni applicatione si diede a compor la figura della Vergine, nella guisa, che riferiva il Rustico: ma affaticandosi invano, pensò, che qualche suo grave peccato gl'impedisse l'effetto, onde riconciliatosi con molto divotione con Dio, prese la Santissima Eucharistia, ed indi ripigliò il lavoro, e gli venne fatta l'Imagine in tutto simigliante a quella, che haveva veduta il Contadino, che ritrasse a' piedi, col cesto delle more al braccio, onde viene frequentata da continue visite de' Popoli, mediante la quale ottengono dalla Divina mano gratie, e favori.' Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte*, pp. 248-249. The miraculous apparition is said to have happened in 1533; the painting was commissioned a year later: see Pier Vergilio Begni Redona, *Alessandro Bonvicino, il Moretto da Brescia*, Brescia 1988, pp. 266-269.