BARTOLOMEO MARANTA

Discorso all’Ill.mo Sig. Ferrante Carrafa Marchese di Santo Lucido in materia di pittura. Nel quale si difende il quadro della capella del Sig. Cosmo Pinelli fatto per Titiano, da alcune oppositioni fattegli da alcune persone (c. 1562)

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Bartolomeo Maranta’s ‘Discourse’
on Titian’s *Annunciation* in Naples: introduction

Figure 1: Titian, *The Annunciation*, c. 1562. Oil on canvas, 280 x 193.5 cm, Naples: Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali e del turismo – Fototeca del Polo Museale della Campagna

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Overview

The ‘Discourse’ on Titian’s Annunciation is the first known text of considerable length whose subject is a painting by a then-living artist. The only manuscript of this text is held in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Naples. The translated title is: ‘A Discourse of Bartolomeo Maranta to the most ill. Sig. Ferrante Carrafa, Marquis of Santo Lucido, on the subject of painting. In which the picture, made by Titian for the chapel of Sig. Cosmo Pinelli, is defended against some opposing comments made by some persons’. Maranta wrote the discourse to argue against groundless opinions about Titian’s Annunciation he overheard in the Pinelli chapel. Expert judgement, in his view, requires that the viewer understands the artist’s intentions as they are conveyed in the painting.

The Annunciation was painted by Titian (Tiziano Vecellio, c. 1480, Pieve di Cadore – 27 August 1576, Venice) for the altar of the Pinelli chapel in the Neapolitan church of San Domenico Maggiore. Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ appears to be the only sixteenth-century consideration of this painting, and the circumstances of obtaining Titian’s painting, the date of its installation in the chapel, and even the date of Maranta’s ‘Discourse’, can be determined from texts relating to the author.

According to Maranta, Cosimo desired to have the Annunciation painted by ‘the hand of Titian’, and Cosimo’s son Gian Vincenzo began the process of procuring it for the chapel after his relocation to Padua (that is, some time after 3 August 1558). On 11 October 1558, Ferrante Carafa inherited the noble rank of the ‘Marchese di Santo Lucido’, and Maranta refers to him as such in the title of his ‘Discourse’, so the year 1558 can be firmly established as the terminus post quem for both the commission of the painting from Titian and the composition of the ‘Discourse’. The relation of the Pinelli Annunciation to the painting by Titian in the Venetian church of San Salvador that bears the same title (though it lays emphasis on the Incarnation) establishes August 1563 as a terminus ante quem for the creation of this work for the Neapolitan church. It is most likely that the painting was installed in the Pinelli chapel by March 1562."
similarities of style between the Angel Gabriel in this painting and the Goddess Diana in the *Death of Actaeon* (London: National Gallery), whose *terminus ante quem* is 1559, enable this date to be given as a *terminus post quem* for the Pinelli altarpiece, a date that fits neatly with other works Titian painted in the early 1560s.

This essay suggests that a more precise *terminus post quem* for the ‘Discourse’ is April 1562. The ‘Discourse’ originated as a consequence of a heated debate on the painting between Maranta and Scipione Ammirato that probably took place on 25 March 1562 after they had heard Mass – as Maranta himself reports – in the Pinelli chapel, consecrated to the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 25 March is the Feast of the Annunciation. Maranta describes an uncommon event in his life, because he usually attended Franciscan services and rarely came to San Domenico Maggiore to celebrate major feasts.

The text of the ‘Discourse’ is catalogued in the Brancacciana section of the Biblioteca Nazionale, whereas all his other manuscripts are held in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. It was almost certainly included in the collection of Don Camillo Tutini (1594–1670), given to his patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria Brancaccio. The son of the governor of Apulia, Brancaccio collected texts relevant to the Kingdom of Naples and bequeathed his library to the church of Sant’Angelo a Nilo, which stands opposite San Domenico Maggiore. Tutini was on familiar terms with Francesco Imperato, a son of Ferrante who collaborated with Maranta in the 1560s. Tutini’s notes accurately refer to Titian’s painting in the Pinelli chapel. After Maranta’s ‘Discourse’, these notes are the earliest reference to the painting. The latest date of a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the ‘Discourse’ must be before 24 March 1571, when Maranta was buried in the Franciscan church of San Bernardino in Molfetta. In light of documents relating to the author, a scrutiny of certain passages in the ‘Discourse’ suggests that after April 1562, Maranta left the text in the present form – notwithstanding some stylistic lapses. It was written on the eve of the Tridentine inquiry into the artistic liberty to create images for family chapels.

The ‘Discourse’ offers insights into several topics: Neapolitan patronage and court etiquette, the meaning of the figures’ postures and gestures, the comparison of painting to

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*statement that Titian painted the San Salvador Annunciation between August 1563 and March 1566. Alabiso, ‘L’Annunciazione di Tiziano’, in *Tiziano*, 11-33, does not mention the article.*

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10 Bernardo de Domenici, *Vite de’ pittori, scultori, ed architetti Napoletani*, Naples: Ricciardi, 1743, 4 vols, 1:51, 78, 97, 240, mentions that Tutini’s collection of manuscripts was given to Brancaccio.


13 Alabiso, ‘L’Annunciazione di Tiziano’, in *Tiziano*, 24, cites two seventeenth-century witnesses: Pompeo Sarnelli (1688) and Carlo Celano (1692), but does not mention Tutini.

poetry and music, anatomy and physiognomy as aids to understanding the message of a painting, the concept of beauty as an objective criterion in judging a specific work. Further, the citations from Luke 1.28–38 are pertinent for determining the precise moment of the sacred story Titian portrays. The ‘Discourse’ may also be appreciated as an historical document on cultural life in mid-sixteenth-century Naples. It reports Ferrante Carafa’s highly refined courtliness in life and poetry; relates the artistic taste of the chapel owner, Cosimo Pinelli, a silk merchant and banker; and adds a biographical note about the broad interests of his illustrious son Gian Vincenzo, bibliophile and intellectual. It mentions musicians: ‘Filippo di Monte’ (Philippe de Monte, employed by Cosimo Pinelli from c. 1540 to 1554), ‘Nolano’ (Giovan Domenico Del Giovane da Nola, 1545), ‘Lando’ (Stefano Lando, from 1559 to 1571) and ‘Pietro Vinci’ (c. 1560), who, as the dates indicate, then worked in Naples. It praises Ludovico Ariosto’s ‘unfinished’ cantos. It recounts Giorgio Vasari’s activity in Naples (1544–45); criticizes the paintings of Leonardo Grazia, called il Pistoia (1502–c. 1548); and commends the Neapolitan painter and sculptor Giovan Bernardo Lama (1508–79). Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ is perused by art historians interested in Vasari, il Pistoia and Lama, but it is barely mentioned by scholars of Titian. One possible reason for this neglect may be that the text provides no biographical data about Titian, nor does it mention his other paintings. Several art historians nonetheless recognize that Maranta provides significant points of sixteenth-century criticism, thanks precisely to his meticulous attention to the use of gesture, his adaptation of metaphorical device in discussing painted figures, his interpretation of Titian’s particular colour range, his interest in the relation of portraiture to religious art, and his mention of the Pinellis as patrons of Titian. For these and other reasons, Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ merits closer study. The present essay purposefully offers an introduction to the text and an English translation to call the attention of a wider audience.

16 On Maranta’s list and for information on each of the mentioned musicians, see Keith Austin Larson, ‘The unaccompanied madrigal in Naples from 1536 to 1654’, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1985 (1229 pages), 260-2, 43-4 and 85; 170, 232 and 382n405.
Bartolomeo Maranta: his activities, trial and publications

In his ‘Discourse’, Maranta proudly declares himself a compatriot of Horace. He mentions this not only because he was a native of Venosa, but also because his mother, Viva Cenna, belonged to one of the city’s most ancient, though not most aristocratic, families. Her family boasted that they could trace their origins back to ancient Rome to the time of the author of *Ars poetica*, on which Maranta lectured before Neapolitan men of letters. Giacomo (Iacopo) Cenna (1560–after 1640), a chronicler of Venosa, records that Lodovico Dolce (1508–68) – the prolific Venetian writer, translator and editor – spoke of Horace as a poet-philosopher, whose natal city is ‘Venusio’ [sic]. Maranta was born c. 1504 (probably after the bubonic plagues that ravaged the city in 1501 and 1503). Together with his three younger brothers – Pomponio (future lawyer), Lucio (future Bishop of Lavello in 1561) and Silvio (future soldier) – Bartolomeo began his

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25 Cenna, *Cronaca*, 330. Dolce’s biographical sketch of Horace prefaces his translation of Horace’s poetry, published in 1559; the biography mentions Ariosto as the only contemporary poet who is compared with Horace and Ovid. The message of the biography differs from the message of the dedication Aretino prefaced to Dolce’s publication of *Ars poetica*, printed in 1535, in which Ariosto is mentioned along with Jacopo Sannazaro and Pietro Bembo as the poets worthy of Horace. See Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, 2 vols, 1:101-2, and 143-4, for the preface to the *Ars poetica*.

education at home where all four brothers were schooled by their father, Roberto (1476–1539), an eminent lawyer, the author of basic treatises on jurisprudence, a Neo-Latin poet of regional repute and a founder of the law school in Salerno in 1524. Bartolomeo continued his education in Naples, where he studied medicine, as had the grandfather in whose honour he was named. According to Cenna, Maranta was an extraordinary physician who could assess a patient’s health even before checking his pulse, just by looking at his face. He was appointed medical doctor to the court of Charles V in Spain, possibly after 1535 (when Charles V visited Naples) and some time before 1539. Cenna does not give the dates for Maranta’s medical service in Spain but records that afterwards he returned to Naples, where he helped establish an academy. By 1555 Maranta had been employed for some time in the ‘ancient academy of Salerno’ (according to Piero Andrea Mattioli’s epistle to Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo). It is not clear when he started his lectureship in Salerno, nor is it known how long Maranta taught medicine there. In 1568, Nicola Andrea Stigliola (also Stelliola), a medical doctor, was reported to be a pupil of Maranta at this university.

From c. 1550 to 1554, Maranta was at the University of Pisa, where he furthered his studies of medical plants with Luca Ghini, the first appointed professor of medicinal botany and founder of the university botanical garden. In July 1554 Maranta returned to Naples. It is likely that at this time he established the botanical garden on the Pinelli estate, which became the prototype for the future botanical garden at the University of Naples. Based on this garden, Maranta wrote Methodi cognoscendorum simplicium libri tres, which he dedicated to Gian Vincenzo in 1558 and published in 1559 in Venice. However, Maranta’s stay in Naples was interrupted by a call to serve (from early autumn 1556 to late spring 1557) as physician to Vespasiano Gonzaga, a favourite of Philip II, during the Ostia campaign. Later, Maranta

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27 Nigro, Poeti, 61; the book cites Roberto Maranta’s Latin poetry and praises addressed to him by local poets; hence by studying his writings Nigro reconstructs the Lucanian culture.
28 Cenna, Cronaca, 347.
30 Cenna, Cronaca, 343: ‘fu chiamato in Spagna per medico di Sua Maestà’. Aurelio Espinosa, The Empire of the Cities: Emperor Charles V, the Comunero Revolt, and the Transformation of the Spanish System, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 184, mentions that by 1539, Charles V had the services of twelve medicos, one of whom could well have been Maranta.
31 Cenna, Cronaca, 343.
32 Pier Andrea Mattioli, I Discorsi (...) ne i sei libri della materia medicinalia di Pedacio Dioscoride Anazarbeo, Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1557, ‘messo con honoratissima conditione à leggere & insegnare nella antica academia Salernitana’ (n.p.; the letter to Madruzzo is dated 20 January 1555; in this letter Mattioli calls Maranta ‘medico Pugliese’).
35 Francesco S. Minervini, Didattica del linguaggio poetico in un retore del Cinquecento: Bartolomeo Maranta, Bari, Editrice Adriatica, 2012, 11, states that Maranta was in Naples in August 1554, but in his letter of 5 August, Maranta lets Aldrovandi know that he was in Naples in July and that he received his letter on 22 July. See G. B. De Toni, ‘Nuovi documenti sulla vita esul carteggio di Bartolomeo Maranta, medico e semplicista del XVI secolo’, Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 71, 1911–12, 1516 at 1505-64. For the location of the garden, see Pietro de Stefano, Descrittione dei luoghi sacri della città di Napoli (Napoli, 1560), eds, Stefano D’Ovidio and Alessandra Rullo, Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli “Federico II”, 2007, 240. On the importance of this garden for the history of Naples, see Fiona Colucci, ‘L’orto botanico di Napoli i progetti di urbanistica e di architettura (1807–1936)’, PhD dissertation, Università degli Studi di Napoli “Federico II”, 2007, 258-60.
complained to Ulisse Aldrovandi that his real work had remained neglected for an entire year.\textsuperscript{36} As Maranta’s second letter to Gabriele Falloppio suggests, in early August 1558 he accompanied Gian Vincenzo to Padua. During December 1558, in Naples, Maranta finished writing an epistle on some local thermal sources and on medical treatment with mineral waters, *De aquae Neapoli, in Luculliano scaturientis (quam ferream vocant) metallica materia, ac viribus* (published February 1559 in Naples).

On 20 April 1561 Maranta informed Aldrovandi that he had been delighting in writing a book on Virgil for the past three months: he had already finished four parts and would complete the fifth in twenty days. He had embarked on this enterprise because law and medicine did not reveal the world to him in the same way as did poetry.\textsuperscript{37} Between 1561 and 1563, except for the summer of 1562, Maranta remained in Naples, writing on poetry and art. In July and August 1561, he delivered five lectures in Italian on Horace’s *Ars poetica* at the meetings of the Accademia Napoletana, which were held in the monastery of San Pietro a Maiella,\textsuperscript{38} near San Domenico Maggiore. On 4 March 1562 he expressed his hope of publishing these lectures by Easter of that year, but, as Cenna states, the hefty volume was never sent to a publisher.\textsuperscript{39} In the same month, following the feast of the Annunciation, while he was occupied by ‘cose poetiche’, Maranta must have started writing on Titian’s altarpiece because his ‘Discourse’ mentions the fact that two days later, he and Ammirato visited Carafa in his house as he was lying in bed, suffering from ‘serious catarrh’: in winter and early spring of 1562, an epidemic of catarrh afflicted Naples.\textsuperscript{40} The mention of Carafa’s illness strengthens the hypothesis for April 1562 as the date of the ‘Discourse’. Maranta reports that the discussion of the painting with Carafa prompted him to write down his thoughts to address ‘some other people who, it seems to me, speak about it [the painting] more from a certain habit than from true and firm reasoning’.

In the summer of 1562 Maranta’s life suddenly changed. The Inquisition returned to the city on the orders of Pope Pius IV, who convened the conciliar meetings in Trent on 18 January 1562. On 13 June 1562 Maranta was transferred from Naples to Rome, where he was incarcerated, together with ten other persons, all of whom were accused of attending the gathering at which Giovanni Francesco Alois had recited Francesco Maria Molza’s poem about Christ, interpreted as having Lutheran sympathies.\textsuperscript{41} In the trial it became clear that the Bishop of Montepeloso, the Pontifical Vicar in Naples, believed Maranta had written an oration for his...
brother Lucio, who, having arrived in Trent in February 1562 as Bishop of Lavello, participated in the twenty-first session of the Council’s meeting (convened on 16 July 1562), which opened to question the way bishops performed their duties. The lawyer Vincenzo Mancini succeeded in convincing the tribunal judges that the Bishop of Montepeloso harboured a prejudice against Maranta, because he suspected that Lucio’s oration would put him in a bad light. Maranta was released from prison, having left a security payment of 500 ducats, with the agreement that he would undergo an additional trial. Cenna, however, presented a different version of Maranta’s entrapment by inquisition. According to Cenna, Maranta had composed an *impressa* for a gentleman enamoured of a lady, and the rivalry between their families brought him, slandered as a heretic, before the Office. Cenna was convinced that Maranta escaped punishment thanks to his brother’s intervention. Yet the documentation on Maranta’s trial makes no mention of his brother acting on his behalf (see Appendix I). The trial document reports that at some time Alois confessed torture had caused him to libel Maranta. Others in attendance at Molza’s recital, including Alfonso Cambi and ‘the Provincial of San Pietro a Maiella’ (under whose auspices Maranta lectured on Horace), gave contradictory evidence. At the additional trial, sixty-five witnesses attested to the fact that the Pontifical Vicar was afraid of the decisions (and the consequences of those decisions) to be reached at the conciliar meeting, and their testimonies enabled the lawyer to prove that Maranta was imprisoned unjustly. He returned to Naples certainly before 3 October 1562. The records surrounding the Council of Trent provide additional clues that confirm Maranta’s association with Neapolitan men of letters, his interest in poetry and even the date (April 1562) of his reflection on Titian’s painting.

Between the autumn of 1562 and the autumn of 1563, Maranta was engaged in the study of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, lecturing and writing Latin paraphrases; in December 1562 he engaged in polemics with Pietro Vettori, a Florentine aristocrat and authority on Aristotle. The year 1563 was dedicated to four lectures, influenced by Aristotle, including one in Italian on the *Aeneid* and one in Latin on the distinction between the poet and the philosopher. Maranta might have met with Joannes Sambucus in Naples before he left the city on 18 January 1563. The following year, in Antwerp, Sambucus published *Emblemata*, in which he dedicated an emblem to Maranta with the title ‘Virtute duce’ (‘Under the guidance of virtue’). Also in 1564, Maranta

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42 Cenna, *Cronaca*, 361, stresses that Lucio was the only author of all the orations. See also Giovanni Caserta, *Storia della letteratura lucana*, Venosa: Edizioni Osanna, 1995, 77-8.
43 De Toni, ‘Nuovi documenti’, 1560 (Maranta mentions, on 4 March 1562, being busy with his brother on the eve of his departure).
44 De Toni, ‘Nuovi documenti’, 1560 (Maranta mentions, on 4 March 1562, being busy with his brother on the eve of his departure).
46 Cenna, *Cronaca*, 363. See, for example, the reference to Cenna in Solimene, *Umanista*, 10, repeated in Minervini, *Didattica*, 16.
48 Amabile, *Santo officio*, 266 and 266n2.
50 See Weinberg, ‘Bartolomeo,’ 115, for the list of texts and their dates, and 124-5, for the chronology of his works. See also Weinberg, *History*, 2:1135. The latter lecture was published by Francesco S. Minervini, “Imitazione narrativa perfetta”: una lezione accademica di Bartolomeo Maranta’, *Annali della facoltà di lettere e filosofia*, 46, 2003, 415-43.
52 Johannes Sambucus, *Emblemata: cum aliquot nummis antiqui operis*, Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1566, 156; Visser, *Joannes Sambucus*, 270 (this emblem appears in all the editions, whereas the emblem dedicated to Mattioli is not included in the edition printed in 1564).
published with an eminent printmaker, Johannes Oporinus of Basel, his *magnum opus* in the field of literary criticism, *Lucullianae quaestiones*, a discussion in five books of the poetic quality of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, written in the form of colloquy with other gentlemen (including Ammirato and Cambi, both of whom are mentioned in his ‘Discourse’).

After the autumn of 1563 there is no certain record of Maranta in Naples; it is unlikely that he witnessed the shocking beheading of Alois on 4 March 1564 in the Piazza del Mercato.\(^52\) Maranta was in Rome, quite possibly in 1565, but most definitely in the summer of 1568, when he established a botanical garden, probably for Cardinal Castilioni della Trinità;\(^53\) his service to the cardinal was interrupted in the autumn of 1569. In a letter to Aldrovandi, on 9 April 1570, Maranta explained he had planned to remain in Rome permanently, but at the behest of his brothers he had returned to his native region.\(^54\) At the request of the protophysician Gianantonio Pisano, and inspired by the Neapolitan apothecary Ferrante Imperato, Maranta wrote *Della Theriaca e del Mithridato*. It earned him fame as a specialist on antidotes.\(^55\) Written on 30 October 1570, the book was published posthumously in Venice on 9 October 1571. Maranta moved to Molfetta, where his brother Pomponio could provide for his care, not least because he had been raised to nobility by his marriage to Beatrice Monna.\(^56\) That Maranta meant to be buried in Venosa is attested by his purchase of the chapel in the Franciscan church of San Andrea after its consecration as the local cathedral in 1531; he dedicated the family chapel to the Nativity and adorned it with its beautiful *Presepe*.\(^57\) The chapel served, in the autumn of 1571, as the burial place for Silvio, who fought at Lepanto.\(^58\)

**The Pinellis as patrons of Titian**

Cosimo Pinelli, born in Genoa into a noble Ligurian family,\(^59\) followed the path of his business partner and future father-in-law, Germano Ravaschieri, who by marriage and purchase of property (c. 1520) had become a citizen of Naples.\(^60\) Cosimo took up residence in Naples in 1523, became a prominent citizen and was appointed one of the governors of the Annunziata church in 1530.\(^61\) Most of the information about Cosimo pertaining to Titian’s altarpiece is drawn from Maranta’s dedicatory letter to his book on the methods of recognizing simples (1559) and from the ‘Discourse’. Cosimo is described as a deeply pious man, devoted to the Virgin Mary, and as

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\(^52\) Amabile, *Santo officio*, 364.
\(^53\) De Toni, ‘Nuovi documenti’, 1514 and 1514n5.
\(^54\) De Toni, ‘Nuovi documenti’, 1563: ‘io pensava di dovere starmene per sempre in Roma, e poi a esortazione de miei fratelli venni a queste parti, donde spero partirmi, e con far quanto sono obligato a fare’.
\(^56\) Romano, *Saggio*, 133-4. Beatrice was a daughter of the lawyer Gasparo, a distant relative of Isabella of Aragon.
\(^57\) Cenna, *Cronaca*, 165, on the cathedral consecration, and 176, on the chapel embellishment.
\(^58\) Cenna, *Cronaca*, 362.
\(^59\) Uberto Foglietta, *Clarorum Ligurum elogia*, Rome: Antonio Bladio, 1573, 259. In the title of the ‘Discourse’ his name is spelt ‘Cosmo’, but in the rest of the text he is called ‘Cosimo’; ‘Cosmó’ is a variant in the Genoese dialect.
someone who appreciated art. Maranta’s comparison of Luke’s dialogue between the Angel and
the Virgin and its representation by Titian is intended to gratify the devout Cosimo, who is
mentioned as admiring this work of art and asserting ‘that nothing can be added to it or taken
away from it’. Even if this statement is possibly Maranta’s rhetorical addition,62 the phrasing is
typical of that used to praise crafted objects, and for this reason fits Cosimo, who owned the
magnificent palace across from San Domenico Maggiore,63 designed in 1544 by the Neapolitan
architect Giovanni Francesco di Palma. In 1547 Cosimo bought a chapel in San Domenico
Maggiore and in 1557 obtained its consecration to the Annunziata, recorded thus on the portal.64
Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ attests that Cosimo assigned the chapel decorations to the care of Lama.65
The four ceiling pictures showing scenes from the Virgin’s life can therefore be securely
attributed to him.66 Cosimo, whom Maranta describes as an admirer of Lama, could easily have
chosen him to paint the Annunciation for the chapel altar, yet he preferred Titian. Lama was a
well-established painter in Naples, but in 1557 he did not have Titian’s status as official painter
to Philip II, King of Spain and also of Naples and Sicily. The royal connection was of great
importance to Cosimo for at least two reasons: in 1557 he was appointed by Philip II to serve as
Chancellor of the Kingdom, and from a young age his firstborn son Galeazzo had been on
several battlefields with the imperial armies.67 This may explain why the Virgin Titian painted
in the Pinelli chapel closely resembles her figure in his Annunciation of 1537, which he offered to
Charles V, who decided to give it as his gift to his Isabella; it became known outside Spain from
Jacopo Caraglio’s engraving.68 (Maranta’s awareness of this similarity might have provoked his
more intense focus on Gabriel. As he remarks: ‘it is not our intention to discuss the Madonna,
but only the Angel’.)

The Pinelli chapel served as the burial place for Cosimo who died in 1568, in Padua, as
noted on his tomb in the chapel.69 His death most probably occurred during a visit to Gian
Vincenzo, who lived in Padua from 3 August 1558 until his death on 3 August 1601. Gian
Vincenzo fulfilled his father’s wish to have Titian’s Annunciation for his family chapel; the
painting was meant ‘to heighten its grace and decoration’. According to Maranta, Gian
Vincenzo was pleased with the work as he confirmed that ‘he likes the invention and the art
and all that can be considered in this painting immensely’.

62 Compare Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, trans. Joseph Rykwert et al., Cambridge, MA,
and London: The MIT Press, 1988, 302: ‘I myself believe that form, dignity, grace, and other such qualities depend on
it, and as soon as anything is removed or altered, these qualities are themselves weakened and perish’.
63 Pinelli’s palace is mentioned as early as 1560 by Pietro de Stefano, Descrittione, 43.
66 Zeeza, ‘Giovanni’, 5, fig. 8 on 6 and 26n20.
67 Biagio Aldimari, Raccolta di varie notitie historiche non meno appartenente all’historia del Summonte, che curiose …,
Naples: Antonio Bulifon, 1675, 104 (in 1557 Cosimo senior could not be the Duke of Acerenza). On Galeazzo, see
Foglietta, Clarorum Ligurum elogia, 260; Paolo Gualdo, Vita Ioannis Vincentii Pinelli, Patricii Genuensis, in qua studiosis
bonarum artium, propositur typus viri probi et eruditi, Augsburg: Markus Welser, 1607, 7-9.
68 Valcanover, in Siècle de Titien, 668, observes the similarity between the works.
69 Raffaello Causa, IV mostra di restauri, catalogo, Naples: Palazzo Reale, 1960, 59. The epitaph attests to Cosimo’s
frequent dealings with the Veneto.
From his childhood in Naples, where he was born in 1535, Gian Vincenzo showed great passion for his studies. In Padua, he created a library so encyclopaedic that it gave rise to a kind of academy. Of a fragile constitution, he hardly travelled, so he hosted visitors from all over Europe and encouraged them to discuss matters of language, scientific discoveries and natural sciences, with a special emphasis on botany. He also copied Leonardo’s notes on painting in 1575. No doubt Maranta’s lengthy discussions on physiognomy, on the language of gestures and, especially, on the anatomy of the Angel’s right arm were directed to Gian Vincenzo. Maranta’s first letter to Fallopio describes Gian Vincenzo as a man of acute judgement, erudite in the Greek and Latin languages. The ‘Discourse’ characterizes him as ‘learned and competent no less in painting than in philosophy, law and other sciences’. In August 1558 Gian Vincenzo went to Padua to please his father, who insisted on his reading law. Titian had painted portraits of two illustrious lawyers, Sperone Speroni from Treviso and Marco Mantova Benavides from Padua. Speroni, a frequent visitor to Pinelli’s library, was in Padua from 1558 to 1560. Benavides encouraged Pomponio – in 1545 – to publish his father’s treatise on procedural jurisprudence, written between 1520 and 1525. This book became the

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70 Gualdo, *Vita*, 11, cites both Maranta’s introductory letter and his dedication to Pinelli.
75 There is no doubt about Pinelli’s acquaintance with Speroni; on Pinelli’s collections of manuscripts labelled ‘Sperone’, see Angela Nuovo, ‘Manuscript writings on politics and current affairs in the collection of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535–1601)’, *Italian Studies*, 66, 2011, 203 at 193-205. For Speroni’s visits to Padua at the time of Pinelli’s early sojourn, see Francesco Cammarosano, *La vita e le opere di Sperone Speroni*, Empoli: R. Noccioli, 1920, 132-3.
standard manual for jurists dealing with prosecutions for libel at the Inquisition trials.\textsuperscript{76} These two lawyers may well have helped the twenty-three-year-old Gian Vincenzo persuade Titian to paint the \textit{Annunciation} for the family chapel in Naples. This painting is the only work that Titian made for a Genoese-Neapolitan nobleman.

**Poets, critics and painters**

Maranta mentioned several persons in the ‘Discourse’, discussing their taste in art, as it related to aspects of Titian’s painting. Ferrante Carafa (1509–87), the addressee of the ‘Discourse’, was a scion of a Neapolitan family of ancient origins.\textsuperscript{77} Proud of his noble ancestry and his native city, he used his wealth and connections to foster studies of poetry. In 1546 he established the academies of the Sereni and of the Ardentì, both of which continued the tradition of the Accademia Pontaniana. In 1547, however, following a confrontation with the viceroy, who was intent on introducing the Roman Inquisition into the Kingdom of Naples, the academies were closed.\textsuperscript{78} Discussions of literary topics continued outside the academy framework.\textsuperscript{79} Carafa not only patronized poets, he also wrote poetry himself. His poems are included in Dolce’s \textit{Rime di diversi illustri signori napoletani}, whose third and fifth editions, published in 1552 and 1555, were dedicated to Carafa.\textsuperscript{80} He also published thirty-one sonnets under the rubric of \textit{Lode della santissima Vergine Madre della vittoria e Reina del Cielo}.\textsuperscript{81} His memoirs, the epic poem \textit{Dell’Austria} celebrating the victory of John of Austria (the illegitimate son of Charles V) at Lepanto, and even his Italian paraphrases of books Nine and Ten of the \textit{Odyssey} – all express Carafa’s chivalric ideals of virtue.\textsuperscript{82} In his ‘Discourse’, therefore, Maranta mentions love poetry, accentuates the Virgin Mary’s humility and links the Angel’s deportment to the ideal conduct of a young nobleman. All of these issues were dear to Carafa. Maranta’s playful tone in several passages of his ‘Discourse’ and his praise of Ariosto’s ‘unfinished’ cantos and innovations in Neapolitan music are ideally matched to Carafa’s poetic style with its play on words and sounds.\textsuperscript{83} This wittiness creates an auditory effect, not unlike the impression produced by Maranta’s description of the Angel’s voice.

Carafa is said to have always talked ‘honourably both about that painting and about Titian’. His praise of Titian’s \textit{Annunciation} is far from incidental, as Dolce, Titian’s long-standing...
friend, was responsible for publishing Carafa’s poems with Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari in Venice. In 1561, a year before Maranta wrote his ‘Discourse’, Carafa contributed to the anthology of poems mourning the untimely death of Irene di Spilimbergo (1540–59), a poet and painter who had been trained by Titian. This anthology was published by Dionigi Anatagi, a colleague of Dolce’s.

The ‘Discourse’, written in defence of Titian’s Angel, was primarily an expression of Maranta’s debates with Scipione Ammirato (1531–1601), who claimed to voice Carafa’s own criticism of the painting. Ammirato descended from a noble Florentine family on his father’s side and from the aristocratic Caracciolo family of Naples on his mother’s. Ammirato, born in Lecce, was sent by his father to Naples to study jurisprudence, but instead followed his own literary inclination and chose to write about poetry. He published his first work, Il Dedalione, overo, del poeta dialogo, in 1560. Two years later, he published Il Rota, overo, delle imprese dialogo, once again in Naples. This work had been begun on ‘the beautiful day’ of 10 April 1561 and is constructed as a Platonic dialogue: a sequence of provocative questions and objections. He names Maranta and Cambi among the interlocutors in this discussion of imprese. The style of Ammirato’s two books may explain Maranta’s decision to address his defence of Titian’s Annunciation not so much to Carafa as to those individuals of the Neapolitan public who boorishly commented on this painting in the chapel after Mass. Ammirato had stayed for six months in 1554 in Padua and Venice, where he had met Speroni and Pietro Aretino. In his ‘Discourse’, Maranta comments on the similarity of Ammirato’s opinion of Titian’s painting to Carafa’s. Ammirato knew Carafa’s way of thinking quite closely, because on several occasions Carafa allowed him to use his house across from San Domenico Maggiore for his literary studies. Ammirato spent most of 1563 in Lecce at his father’s request; in August he visited Genoa at the invitation of Galeazzo Pinelli, but in September, he briefly visited Rome on his way back to Lecce. A letter from Annibal Caro in Rome to Cambi in Naples (8 April 1562) documents that both Ammirato and Cambi were then residing in Naples. It praises Ammirato’s book on the imprese to Cambi, and Caro asks Cambi to show the letter to Ammirato.

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84 Carlo Dionisotti, ‘Tiziano e la letteratura’, in his Appunti su arti e lettere, Milan: Editoriale Jaca, 1995, 117-27, at the end of his article singles out Dolce’s dedication to Titian of his paraphrases of Latin authors, in which he addresses the artist as ‘messer Titiano pittore e cavaliere’ (1538).
88 Umberto Congedo, La vita e le opere di Scipione Ammirato (notizie e ricerche), Trani: V. Vecchi, 1904, 10 and 15. See Nigro, Poeti, 9-10, on the Caracciolo family as patrons of Roberto Maranta.
91 Congedo, Vita, 19, 80n2 and 111 (frequent visits to Carafa’s house).
92 Congedo, Vita, 109 (Gian Vincenzo’s brother Galeazzo sought his help in 1563 for acquiring the feudality of Acerenza).
93 Congedo, Vita, 106. For the full text of the letter, see Annibal Caro, Lettere familiari, ed. Aulo Greco, Florence: Le Monnier, 1957–61, 3 vols, 3:104-6 (no. 657).
Little documentation is available on Alfonso Cambi (1535–70). His father, Tommaso (1492–1549), a Florentine merchant and banker, was a patron of Tuscan artists in Naples. In 1533 Tommaso settled near San Giovanni Maggiore, where he bought a family chapel for which, c. 1550, Francesco Salviati painted an *Annunciation*. In this painting the Angel is shown in the manner typical of this artist: a lean youth. This circumstance helps clarify the objections to Titian’s presentation of more corpulent Angel. The presence of Salviati’s painting in Naples could explain why, in the ‘Discourse’, Maranta repeatedly mentions the lack of consensus regarding Titian’s depiction of the Angel. Tommaso, as fiscal manager of the d’Avalos court, could foster important commissions for Tuscan artists in Naples; he is praised by Vasari for his love of paintings.

Tommaso’s close relations with distinguished scholars are documented in his son’s correspondence with Paolo Manuzio, with whom he discusses his family collection of letters, several of which were selected for the third volume of the anthology, *Lettere volgari di diversi nobilissimi luomini, et eccellentissimi ingegni, scritte in diverse materie* (1564). Cambi’s letter of 3 October 1562 to Manuzio, then in Rome, records his own presence in Naples and relays Maranta’s regards. Between 1562 and 1564 Cambi exchanged letters with Luc’Antonio Ridolfi, then in Lyon, centring on a discussion about the precise day and hour when Petrarch fell in love with Laura. Cambi’s focus on this issue can be better understood in the light of his sonnet of 1563 addressed to the ‘Astrologo eccellente’, Giovanni da Bagnuolo, and of a sonnet by an anonymous poet addressed to Cambi, in which the author jokes about the latter’s penchant for astrology. Cambi’s predictive interpretation of nature’s influence on human life is reflected in Maranta’s description of Titian’s psychological contact between the two characters of Luke’s Gospel.

In his ‘Discourse’, Maranta mentions Cambi as especially competent in the analysis of paintings. The reason for this assertion lies in Cambi’s Florentine origins, for in that city ‘more than in any other this art has always flourished’. Hence Cambi’s praise of Titian’s painting is particularly valuable. Maranta emphasizes that Cambi ‘gives a detailed reasoning about it, highlighting quite minutely each single aspect on which the artist has focussed’. He praises Cambi for showing that the work can be understood only after considering those details that express the artist’s intention. Cambi’s attitude to works of poetry, as his letters on Petrarch’s sonnet attest, is inevitably transferred to his discussion of Titian’s painting. The ‘Discourse’ intimates that Maranta is prone to argue that an artist’s work should be appreciated as representative of both the individual and the region. This stance merits closer attention, for art

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95 Marina Picone, ‘Una *Annunziación* di Francesco Salviati a Napoli’, *Arte Antica e Moderna*, 2, 1960, 290–3, identified the painting; Leone De Castris, *Pittura*, 123 and 133n74 argues for c. 1550 as the date of the painting against Picone’s 1555–60.
99 On publication of this epistolary exchange, see Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: the Editor and the Vernacular Text*, 1470–1600, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 146.
historians usually compare Florentine and Venetian artists strictly according to Vasari’s frame of reference, based on the binary opposition of *disegno* and *colore*. A few words of explanation then need to be offered about Maranta’s discerning criticism of Lama, il Pistoia and Titian.

When Maranta says that Lama is ‘felicitously versed in anatomy and perspective’, he reveals his familiarity with the major artistic criteria accepted in Florence. For Vasari, as stated in the *Proemio* to his *Vite*, only those artists who were experts on anatomy and perspective excelled in *disegno*, but Maranta shows that Vasari’s application of these criteria is too general. In his view, Titian exhibits an expertise in the anatomical structure of the arm by his correct depiction of it in the Angel’s gesture of greeting, which ultimately derives from the Roman *adlocutio* seen on imperial reliefs and coins. Maranta might have known about Titian’s experience in depicting this type of gesture, as it features in the portrait-istoria of Alfonso d’Avalos, so enthusiastically described by Aretino in 1540. This same gesture was adopted by Titian’s Flemish pupil Jan Stephen van Calcar in one of his engraved illustrations for Andreas Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, based on the lectures he gave at the University of Padua. Maranta’s praise of Titian’s use of perspective was probably influenced by Paolo Pino’s comment on Titian’s innovation in representing his settings (*paesi*, which foreshadow the modern *paysage*). In his comment on the background in Titian’s Neapolitan painting, Maranta attributes to perspective the same significance it has in Pino’s *Dialogo di pittura* (Venice: Pauolo Gherardo, 1548). Maranta thus differentiates between Titian’s methods of assimilating the sciences of anatomy and perspective, judging the first to accord with the arts of Florence and the second – quite strangely in view of Alberti’s exposition – with the arts of Venice. He thus reconciles Florentine *disegno* and Venetian *colorito*.

Aretino and then Dolce praise Titian for the *colorito* of his paintings, or for his skill at mixing and distributing the range of hues. Maranta extends their praises, examining the reasons for Titian’s mixture of red and white in the Angel’s vestments and the rainbow range of colours in the plumage of his wings. He sees Titian’s mode of laying colours on the Angel’s figure not as an acclaimed aspect of his art, but as an expedient for highlighting the painting’s meaning – the theological message, in this case. By contrast, Maranta disparages the use of colours by il Pistoia, which are devoid of any meaning whatsoever.

Information on the work of il Pistoia in Naples is found in Vasari’s biography of Gianfrancesco Penni. Maranta could not have been familiar with Vasari’s *Vite* of 1568, where il Pistoia is characterized as a good colourist but a bad draughtsman. (He is not mentioned in the *Vite* of 1550.) This opinion cannot be interpreted as a positive judgement from Vasari, in view of the artist’s Tuscan origins and his Roman education under Penni, a pupil of Raphael.

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103 Panofsky, *Problems*, 75, thinks that this resemblance indicates the close cooperation of Calcar and Titian.
104 Barocchi, ed., *Scritti*, 899n3.
106 Leone De Castris, *Pittura*, 88 and 95.
Vasari refers to il Pistoia in his *Vite* because this Tuscan artist received commissions from Tommaso Cambi and his circle.\(^{108}\)

In the early 1560s, when il Pistoia’s painting, *The Stoning of St Stephen* (now lost), was to be seen in San Domenico Maggiore,\(^{109}\) Maranta could contrast its colours with those of Titian’s *Annunciation*. Notwithstanding the patronage given to il Pistoia, Maranta finds his works appealing only to ‘the mob merely because he had a certain charm in his colours’. He further claims that the artist’s paintings convey no profound meaning, nothing beneath the surface, so that ‘once seen, his works did not leave the viewer with any desire to see them again’. The artist, who invested no thought in his art, surely used ‘ritratti dal naturale’ (‘portraits from life’) for his saintly figures. Maranta cites an example of il Pistoia’s art, *The Circumcision of Christ*, painted for the Benedictine abbey of Monteoliveto, which portrays Antonio Barattuccio in the character of Simeon.\(^{110}\) The abbot and monks removed the painting and commissioned a new one from Vasari, who completed it during his sojourn in Naples. Maranta explains the reasons for the decision to remove this painting and to commission a new work. Vasari merely mentions that he painted *The Presentation in the Temple* ‘with new invention’ (‘con nuova invenzione’).\(^{111}\) Maranta disapproves of il Pistoia’s recourse to ‘ritratti dal naturale’, not only because Barattuccio was a reprehensible tax attorney in his view, but primarily because using the artist’s contemporaries as models was a discreditable practice in itself. Similarly he disapproves of another painter, whom he does not name, for rendering his contemporaries in *The Adoration of the Magi* (also in the same abbey), including the Count of Oppido, even though he considered the count a good man. Maranta’s disapproval was possibly influenced by Girolamo Savonarola’s sermons, in which the Dominican friar spoke vehemently against those people who, while hearing Mass, looked at the paintings and took delight in recognizing familiar faces in the figures of the Magdalene or St John.\(^{112}\) Maranta is of the firm opinion that familiar faces in church paintings deprive the images of their main function, which is to inspire devotion. He admits that Titian had recourse to this practice but only upon the request of his patrons, remarking that this practice facilitates the painter’s task. However, the painter abstained from it when he was working on the Pinelli altarpiece, as he wished to bring out ‘the personality of the one he depicts according to the mystery’. Titian’s Angel, therefore, ‘will occasion more devotion since he was formed only by an idea in his mind’.

The way Maranta spells the names of Vasari, Michelangelo and Titian – painters whom he never met – points to his conversations about them with Cambi, Aldrovandi and Carafa. He calls Vasari (whose first name was Giorgio and who was born in Arezzo) ‘Giorgino di Arezzo’, an affectionate appellation that he could hear from Cambi, whose father was one of the

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\(^{108}\) Leone De Castris, *Pittura*, 86.

\(^{109}\) Vasari, *Opere*, 4:648 (see Milanesi’s note on 648); Leone De Castris, *Pittura*, 88.

\(^{110}\) Antonio Barattuccio (1486 – 9 May 1561) is an interesting historical figure. See Michele Broccoli, *Teano Sidicino antico, e moderno*, Napoli: Pasquale Tizzano, 1822, 2 parts, part 2:235-6. It would be worth investigating Maranta’s reason for characterizing him merciless. In any event, the year of his death serves as more evidence suggesting that Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ could not have been written long before 25 March 1562.


painter’s most important patrons. Writing the name of Michelangelo, Maranta is not consistent in its spelling. He calls the artist ‘Michel’ Angelo’, ‘Michelagnolo’ or ‘Michelagnelo’. This lack of consistency has its own logic when the contexts of these references are considered. Maranta uses the first form when he refers to the statues in the Medici chapel; this may indicate that he is deriving information from Aldrovandi, as he often corresponded with him. In his book about ancient statues seen in Rome in 1550, Aldrovandi uses only this form to spell Buonarroti’s given name. The second form suggests a Tuscan influence, though it might have been used by Carafa, as Maranta indicates by his statement about St Michael in the Last Judgment. He says that the saint is often represented as holding ‘a balance or steel yardstick’ (stadera), laying emphasis on the object because it stirred up associations with the ‘Stadera’ branch of the Carafa family, to which Ferrante belonged. However, in Michelangelo’s fresco, St Michael is holding the Book of the Chosen Ones, and not the balance. Hence Maranta’s emphasis on this object might have been intended as a cautious plea to Carafa for a balanced judgement of Titian’s painting. This plea was heard as Maranta’s statement at the end of the ‘Discourse’ indicates. Maranta uses the third form – ‘Michelagnelo’ – twice, both in reference to his allegorical interpretation of the youthful Christ. In contemporary writings on Michelangelo, this rare spelling is found in Vincenzo Borghini’s comments to Cicero’s De oratore (c. 1560–64). The comments characterize the artist as one who surpasses nature, indicated by the resourcefulness of the art so fully demonstrated in the Sistine Chapel. Through Cambi, Maranta could be familiar with Borghini’s opinion of Michelangelo, because in defending the Pinelli Angel – in the section on ‘disposition’ – he applies Borghini’s judgement of Michelangelo to Titian.

In his uniform spelling of Titian’s name as ‘Titiano’, Maranta followed Dolce, rather than Vasari, who adheres to using the spelling ‘Tiziano’ in the two versions of his Vite printed in 1550 and 1568. More likely, however, Maranta paid attention to the artist’s signature on the Pinelli painting bearing the Latinized form of the name – ‘Titianus’. His ‘Discourse’ acclaims Titian as one who knows how to give ‘charm to colours’, adding that this is ‘especially apparent in his portraits from life (of which, more than any other, he made a particular profession)’.

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115 See Barocchi, ed., Scritti, 878n1.


118 See Congedo, Vita, 168, for the letter and the reference to the source.

119 For the numerous references to ‘Titiano’ in Dolce’s writings, see Lodovico Dolce, Diálogo de la pintura, titulado Aretino, y otros escritos de arte, ed. Santiago Arroyo Esteban, Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2010, 218, 220, 224, 226, 230, 234, 236 and 242.

120 Luba Freedman, Titian’s Portraits through Aretino’s Lens, University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1995, 12, points out the disproportion between the number of portraits and other types of paintings, in the period between 1537 and 1557.
Maranta points out Titian’s fame as the astonishing portraitist, so widespread outside Venice, aiming to put additional emphasis on Titian’s Gabriel as a figure shaped conceptually, rather than as a figure drawn from real life.

The tradition of description

Maranta’s detailed description of Titian’s Annunciation (c. 1562) follows epistolary precedents of letters dedicated to a discussion of just one work of art but these earlier discussions are never as exhaustive as is his in the ‘Discourse’. In his published letters, as early as 1531, Aretino describes in detail certain contemporary works – not only Titian’s, though they hold central place in his writings. By contrast, only one letter of Dolce describes an artwork: Titian’s Venus and Adonis, seen in the painter’s studio before it was sent to England in 1554. Although the descriptions written by Aretino, Dolce and Maranta share a common vocabulary, Maranta is the only author who raises the question of the critical approach to an artwork, setting assessments in the context of the contemporary culture of Naples, thus anticipating a modern-day trend in art criticism.

After Maranta, Francesco Bocchi wrote (1571) and published (1584) his thoughts on Donatello’s statue of St George, commissioned by the Florentine armourers’ guild (c. 1416) for their niche in the façade of Or San Michele. The remarkable difference between the two texts, both devoted to a single artwork, is reflected in the choice of discourse versus exposition of arguments. In his Ragionamento sopra l’eccellenza del San Giorgio di Donatello, Bocchi mentions the location of the statue but does not describe any particular feature of Donatello’s sculpted image of the saint. His goal was to present the saint to his Florentine contemporaries as an exemplum virtutis. His text leaves the impression that Bocchi never looked at the statue. This is in stark contrast to Maranta’s description of Titian’s painting. Even Maranta’s text does not escape a certain lack of precision, for example, in his description of the Angel’s legs, as he claims: ‘it even seems that the distance between the pubis and the knee may be a little less than twice as long as the distance from knee to heel’. Bocchi’s Ragionamento contains rhetorical exclamations to convey the excellence of Donatello’s figure of St George as expressive of the warrior’s virtues. Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ transmits his experience of the work when he viewed it in the chapel. Maranta’s criticism was novel in that his description both renders the painting visible and raises pertinent questions about what constitutes a critic’s expertise, as he suggests to ‘make the most accurate study and subject our doubts to people who are competent in this matter’.

Maranta seems to be the only sixteenth-century writer who requires a critic to have a firm grounding in the theory of art prior to evaluating a painting, as he sets as his goal the understanding and explanation of Titian’s intentions. For this purpose he not only familiarized

himself with Dolce’s *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l’Aretino. Nel quale si ragiona della dignità di essa Pittura, e di tutte le parti necessarie che a perfetto Pittore siaconvengono: con esempi di pittori antichi e moderni; e nel fine si fa mentione delle virtù e delle opere del Divin Titiano* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari, 1557), but also sought advice from experts who could help him to judge Titian’s painting, among them Lama, who frescoed the Pinelli chapel 1557–58. Unlike Dolce, whose interlocutors did not include any artists, Maranta wants to learn about art from a painter of repute in Naples. Maranta’s appeal to Lama may have been influenced by Aretino’s letters on works of art, which demonstrate that their author learned from Titian and other artists mentioned in the letters which aspects of the paintings should be highlighted. Moreover, unlike Aretino and Dolce, Maranta lacks first-hand acquaintance with Titian’s paintings and thus relies on others when he says, for example, that ‘in giving charm to colours […] Titian, according to all those whom I have heard reasoning on this, is awarded the palm in our day’. The sentence reflects Maranta’s emphasis on ‘reasoning’ rather than relying upon groundless opinion. Many passages in Dolce’s book (dedicated to Aretino) and in Maranta’s oration reflect the contemporary principles of art criticism as they were articulated not only in the Venetian but also in the Florentine milieu. His text illustrates how a description, the purpose of which is to interpret a painting, integrates knowledge of the theory that was current in the artist’s ambience.

**Innovations in discussing Titian’s Annunciation**

Maranta’s invocation of contemporary art to justify his praise of Titian’s painting was unusual for his time, when it was more common to consider only examples from ancient art to judge the achievements of living artists. Maranta juxtaposes the fleshy Angel Gabriel in Titian’s *Annunciation* and the youthful Christ in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment.* In so doing he brings a new perspective to Titian’s Angel, one which makes clear the artist’s intentions.

Maranta might have seen Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* in 1556/7, while he was at Ostia in the service of Vespasiano Gonzaga (grandnephew of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, future papal legate to the Council of Trent). Or he might have had a chance to see an engraving of it. Notwithstanding his familiarity with the fresco, Maranta directs attention to a few bearded figures, one of whom represents a bishop who so annoyed the artist that he placed him in hell. This character is identified as Biagio da Cesena, the papal master of ceremonies from 1518 to 1544, not a bishop and clean-shaven. (Bishops customarily wore beards in Maranta’s time.) This description shows that rather than caring for accuracy with regard to Michelangelo’s fresco as the work that does not hold the central place in his ‘Discourse’, Maranta uses references to it

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127 Bernadine Barnes, *Michelangelo in Print. Reproductions as Response in the Sixteenth Century,* Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010, 106, refers to Giulio Bonasone’s print, 57.2 x 44.2 cm, dated c. 1546.
– which left none of his contemporaries indifferent – for all kinds of purposes. In another
passage of the ‘Discourse’, Maranta observes that painters usually show St Michael holding a
steel yardstick, even though this object is absent in the Vatican fresco. The remark may have
served as an oblique reference to Carafa. Here he mentions a bearded bishop, perhaps a veiled
reference to the events that had agitated him in the spring of 1562. His notice of a condemned
bishop, in light of the Pontifical Vicar’s accusation of his having written a speech directed
against ecclesiastical officials, strengthens the hypothesis that his ‘Discourse’ was written before
he was summoned by the Holy Office (June 1562) and that his experience with the Inquisition
cased him to leave the text in its present condition.

The focus on Michelangelo’s Christ reveals Maranta’s attention to the figure in the
fresco, central as it is, that gave rise to heated debates on the decorum of images in churches.
Michelangelo’s fresco was criticized shortly after it was unveiled on 31 October 1541, just before
the Feast of All Souls, on 2 November.129 Responding to Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga’s request for a
copy of the fresco, his secretary, Nino Sernini – an admirer of Michelangelo’s work – felt
compelled to caution the cardinal that it contained more than five-hundred figures. He also
pointed out that there was ‘no lack of those who condemn it’. Among the criticisms levelled
was that the Christ appeared to be so young that ‘He does not possess the majesty that [should]
become Him’.130 Although the biographers of Michelangelo, Ascanio Condivi (1553) and Vasari
(in both versions of the Vite, 1550 and 1568), passed silently over this critical feature, the
youthful, beardless Christ continued to disturb Maranta’s contemporaries. The clergyman
Giovanni Andrea Gilio considered this detail to rank among the most troubling errors in the
fresco. In the winter of 1561, he wrote down his thoughts on painters’ errors with a focus on
Michelangelo’s Last Judgment;131 these were published in 1564 as Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli
errori e degli abusi de’ Pittori circa l’istorie. Con molte annotazioni fatte sopra il Giudizio di
Michelagnolo et altre figure, tanto de la nova, quanto della vecchia Capella del Papa. Con la dechiarazione
come vogliono essere dipinte le Sacre Imagini. Shortly thereafter, in a letter to the Archbishop of
Milan (6 September 1561), Scipione Saurolo (nephew of Ercole Severoli, future Procurator of the
conciliar proceedings) remarked that no painting and no sculpture had ever represented Christ
in such a youthful aspect.132 These critics reproved Michelangelo for representing Christ as
beardless or exceedingly young. However, except for Saurolo, who wished to see Christ
portrayed exactly as he appeared while living on earth, they offered no justification for their
discomfort. Maranta dares to offer his own interpretation of the detail to justify Michelangelo’s
choice.

Maranta makes the provocative statement that because this detail in Michelangelo’s
fresco is so unusual it is impossible to consider it an error; rather, it should be treated as a
wonder. Maranta makes the point that of those who reproved the artist for Christ’s looks being

129 Paola Barocchi, ed. and comm., Giorgio Vasari, ‘La Vita di Michelangelo’ nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568, Naples-
Milan: Ricciardi, 1962, 4 vols, 3:1254-68, collects the texts relating to the fresco, not necessarily with a focus on
Michelangelo’s Christ, as Vasari does not comment upon the figure’s youthful appearance. Sernini’s letter, dated 19
November 1541, is cited, 1260-1.
130 Cited from Melinda Schlitt, ‘Painting, criticism, and Michelangelo’s Last Judgment in the age of the Counter-
113-49.
131 Barocchi, ed., Scritti, 866n1, quotes Gilio’s enraged statement.
132 Saurolo’s letter is cited by Barocchi in Vita, 1264-5.
‘much younger (…) than would be appropriate for his age of thirty-three years’, no one actually called the artist’s choice a mistake. Apparently, at the time Maranta wrote his ‘Discourse’, he was not aware of Gilio’s austere critique. He expresses his conviction that Michelangelo’s central figure was a deliberate choice of the artist, arguing that ‘famous painters very often do this sort of thing in order to provoke people’s thought’. He claims that Michelangelo ‘did what he did because in that way he wanted to express a glorified body and make it appear somewhat different from the body as it was when it lived among us in hardship’. This deviation from artistic convention, strange and novel, causes him to warn against any literal interpretation of the youthful appearance of Christ, and, by implication, of Titian’s Angel. Just as Michelangelo could not have believed Christ to be as young as he is represented in the Last Judgment, so Titian could not have believed angels to be as plump as Gabriel is represented in the Pinelli altarpiece. Maranta here expresses an implicit disapproval of the rhetorical exclamation in Dolce’s Dialogo della pittura intitolato l’Aretino: ‘What mystical meaning can one extract from his [Michelangelo’s] having depicted Christ without a beard (…)?’ The scepticism of Dolce’s Aretino prompted Maranta to consider a deviation from the established canons of representation as a basis for proposing symbolic interpretations of unusual details in paintings. He explains that the youthful look of Christ signifies ‘perpetual youth with the force of glory and grace’. In the same manner, he interprets the plumpness of Titian’s Angel as indicating ‘the abundance of the house of God’.

In his exposition, Maranta introduces the pseudo-science of physiognomy and the art of reading gestures as critical to understanding the link between the original narrative and the selected scene. Although Pomponio Gaurico introduced a chapter on physiognomy in his De sculpture, paraphrasing the pseudo-Aristotelian Physiognomonica, Maranta is the only author at the time who applies the general discussion of physiognomy to the analysis of a figure in a specific painting. Departing from established convention, he does not rest his observations on the Aristotelian theory of physiognomy, which is founded on the resemblance of human beings to animals and birds, but rests them on the principles of Salernitan medicine, which, in the tradition of Hippocrates and Galen, based itself on the system of relationships between four humours and the corresponding four seasons, four elements, four qualities and four ages. The characteristics of the four temperaments could be easily memorized thanks to the verses known as the Regimen sanitatis Salernitatum. The distich on the sanguine temperament – ‘Largus, amans, hilaris, ridens, rubeique coloris, / Cantans, carnosus, satis audax atque benignus’ (‘Generous, loving, joyful, merry, of ruddy complexion, singing, fleshy, rather daring and friendly’) illustrates, among other matters, that medical doctors commonly used the word coloris in the meaning of ‘complexion’.

Maranta interprets the Angel’s figure as full and fleshy, a body type corresponding to a person of the sanguine humour. His account of his appearance – ‘the colour of the whole body is between white and red, yet a little more red than white; the hair is thick and blonde, with a

medium curliness’ – fits the image of a sanguine. So well does the painter transmit all the proper qualities of this temperament, Maranta concludes, that one may think that the Angel is acting under the planetary influence of Jupiter. He finds a correspondence between people who are jovial by nature and Titian’s Angel, as he is sure it was the jovial type of person ‘whose nature and complexion Titian had in his mind while he was painting him’. Through this association, Maranta sees the Angel as an ideal youthful courtier, a characterization he develops at length. The Angel bears himself so gracefully and reverently in relation to the Virgin that Maranta advises that a Neapolitan youth ‘imitates angels’ to improve his manners so that these might become ‘more moderate and less impetuous’. He then explains by negation why Titian could not represent the Angel as a lean person of the melancholic temperament, influenced by the planet of Saturn. A notion circulated long before Maranta is that man before corruption was of a sanguine temperament. As Maranta knew well, every discussion of angelology stresses that an angel appears before a virtuous person in the image of the perfect man. So the connection between the angel and a man of the sanguine humour is realized in Titian’s Gabriel, who then could serve as an example to the well-bred young man of the sixteenth century.

In his judgement of the painting, Maranta applies the science of physiognomy, auxiliary to him in his daily medical practice, to justify the fleshiness of Titian’s Angel. He strives for the maximum of precision in establishing the components of the painted figure – age, temperament, colour of hair, facial expression – all of which belong to the image of an incorporeal being, the Angel Gabriel. Titian’s rendition of the Angel was so precise that Maranta could imagine even the melodious timbre of his voice, and Maranta validates his claim by describing the position of the head in relation to the neck, the wavy line of the throat and the slightly open mouth. In his view, the timbre of the Angel’s voice fits his sanguine temperament and jovial nature. He creates a verbal image of the Angel from his observation and examination of Titian’s painting even if he seems to read too much into it.

Equally striking is Maranta’s analysis of the Angel’s arm raised to announce the great mystery to the Virgin. In describing the Angel’s arm, Maranta makes deliberate use of anatomical terms to illustrate how the surface figure contains hidden elements. His account of the right arm – bare from the elbow to the back of the palm – is medical in its detail. He specifies that the muscle of the elbow is firm and that of the radius soft. This is an important point for Maranta: only if the radius muscle is soft does it avoid the impression of fatigue, which the arm may express in this suspended position, flung forward with its radius stretched upwards. Titian shows the radius muscle to be soft by hiding the thumb, and Maranta extols Titian for this contrivance, calling it a ‘wonder’ that Titian performs. Maranta underscores the precise position of the arm as a whole, suspended neither too high so as to express inappropriate pride, nor too low; but rather, decent and appropriate in its location relative to his body. The imperial gesture of forceful allocution is transformed into one that expresses the mystery of the Annunciation. Although writers dealing with painting consider the question of gestures, only Maranta offers a detailed description of just one gesture. He bases his observations on Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* and is aware of the difficulty in finding the perfect gesture to articulate both the figure’s character and its role. In Titian’s painting, Maranta

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136 Panofsky, Klibansky and Saxl, *Saturn*, 103.

137 Indeed, not even Celsus’s description in his *De medicina* (VIII.i.18–21) is as accurate and detailed as Maranta’s.
observes, the Angel’s arm looks energetic and, at the same time, sensitive and delicate, appropriate to his mission of revealing the sacred words.

Maranta is able to speak authoritatively about Titian’s *Annunciation* not only because he is familiar with the methods of the contemporary criticism, but also because he uses a wider selection of theoretical tools (among them the five-fold concept of beauty) to produce an objective judgement of an artist’s mastery as expressed in a specific work. Maranta proceeds logically, first establishing general tenets, then applying them to a particular example. This thread of Maranta’s thought makes his ‘Discourse’ a meaningful guide on how to look at and judge a painting. Maranta, however, is aware of the difference between general discussions of paintings, as contained in Dolce’s *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l’Aretino*, and the specific discussion of one particular painting. He pleads for different approaches to works made by artists of different statures. He stresses the necessity of taking into account the fact that the painting discussed is known *a priori* as the work of the great master, whose fame will last forever and who preserves ‘the reputation that he and his talent acquired many years ago’. Titian’s fame singles him out from among contemporary painters and adds authority to his representation of the Annunciation in the Pinelli altarpiece. His emphasis on the singular genius of Titian is a central feature of the ‘Discourse’, for he pioneers the consideration of a painting in relation to its artist. The artist, in turn, knows its determined location. Maranta applies the concept of beauty as the objective criterion of judgement to the examination of the painting, once visible to those who entered the church of San Domenico Maggiore, one of the most important religious institutions of Naples. And yet, he describes the painting, encased by Lama’s marble frame and seen above the altar, from various aspects: visually artistic, poetic, musical, theological, medico-anatomical, physiognomic, social and aesthetic. He evidently considered Titian’s altarpiece as involving the many-faceted expertise of an urbane gentleman.

**The text as a document on sixteenth-century aesthetics**

The term ‘aesthetics’ in reference to the perception of beauty in general and the virtue of an artwork in particular was not used before 1750, when Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten gave the title *Aesthetica* to his book. And yet by 1562, Maranta had already offered the reasons he judged Titian’s Angel Gabriel to be beautiful, applying tools of critical evaluation to the concept of beauty. He knew, from Leon Battista Alberti’s highly influential *De pictura*, that the human figure was at the centre of a well-composed painting. For his part, Alberti was following Pliny (*Naturalis historia*, XXXV.64) when he advised contemporary artists to learn from Zeuxis the device of creating a beautiful figure. Alberti believed that this could be achieved only by a

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painter who has ‘the idea of beauty’. However, Alberti did not consider the philosophical concept of beauty for its own sake; rather, he said that in any attempt to create a beautiful figure, a contemporary painter should emulate the ancients. Writing a century later, Maranta focussed on the beauty of the human figure and defined it by examining a particular figure in a specific painting. This special feature of his exposition – the recourse to the concept of beauty to justify the appearance of the painted figure – was motivated by the criticisms of Titian’s painting overheard in the chapel. Maranta uses the definition of beauty – an objective criterion for the evaluation of the human figure – as the tool for refuting subjective criticisms of Titian’s Angel, based simply on personal tastes and preferences. He repeats several overheard statements expressing some speaker’s displeasure about the painting: the dullness of colour, the partial concealment of the face and the wrong proportions of the Angel’s figure. Maranta advises the viewer to ponder the traits of the figure and base his judgement on well-grounded reasons. In his opinion, the philosophic concept of beauty is the only objective criterion by which to judge the figures in Titian’s painting.

Maranta argues the figure of the Angel is not only as beautiful as it should be, but it embodies the very ideal of beauty. Beauty, in Maranta’s judgement, is based on five conditions (‘condizioni’), a successful blend of which is found in the figure of Titian’s Angel: (1) ‘proper proportion’ (‘debita proporzione’); (2) ‘proper quantity’ (‘debita quantità’); (3) ‘appropriate vividness of colour’ (‘convenevole vivacità del colore’); (4) ‘grace’ (‘grazia’); and (5) ‘posture’ (‘disposizione’). His ‘Discourse’ applies the general concept of beauty to the particular form of the beautiful figure – hence his stress on the adjective ‘proper’ to underline the particularity of his application. Here Maranta draws from several philosophical schools: the first three conditions were developed by scholastic thinkers; the fourth was supplied by the Platonists; and the fifth is Maranta’s own concept, resulting from his awareness that his subject is the figure in the painting. He discusses each condition separately and shows how it is embodied in the depicted Angel. Herein lies the ingenuity of his ‘Discourse’: although Maranta’s predecessors and contemporaries discussed the concept of beauty, they had never applied it to a particular painted figure.

Before expounding upon his judgements of how the Angel’s figure responds to the concept of beauty, Maranta reviews the first condition – the figure’s proportions. This beginning shows the influence of Thomistic aesthetics, according to which proportion, the properly determined relation of one member to another, is the major condition without which no figure can be considered beautiful. He states that a well-proportioned body ‘is divided, among many other divisions, into four equal parts’. The number four is chosen by Maranta as the clue to the figure’s proportions because its symbolic significance was known in his time, as he casually credits the recipient of his ‘Discourse’ with this knowledge. His system of proportions starkly contrasts with the Varronian and Vitruvian systems, mentioned in treatises

141 Alberti, On Painting, 78 (3.56): ‘This idea of beauty, that is scarcely perceived by the best, eludes incompetents’.
on visual arts that applied them chiefly to figures standing upright.\(^{145}\) In Maranta’s view, the quaternary system of proportions fits the painted Angel all the more because his figure is shown inclining towards the kneeling Virgin.

The second condition of beauty is ‘quantity’ – the size of the figure, which makes it visible to the audience. The source is Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1450b), but Maranta does not limit his discussion to Aristotle, for whom the ‘magnitude’ of the figure signifies perceptible Beauty. Maranta suggests that the visual figure must justify its actual form. The figure of the Angel has a child-like quality, prompting enquiry about the age of the human figure chosen to represent the Angel Gabriel. According to a long-standing tradition, the Virgin was a fourteen-year-old maiden at the time of the Angel’s salutation.\(^{146}\) The similarity in age between Gabriel and Mary strengthens the visual correspondence of the two painted figures and implies the angelic nature of the Virgin. Maranta refutes the critics to whom the Angel looks like a seventeen-year-old boy, as if his figure were similar to Mercury’s.\(^{147}\) Ancient theologians spoke of Mercury as a more mature youth ‘and made him the father of wisdom and eloquence’. Maranta appeals to the authority of Dionysius the Areopagite (*De coelesti hierarchia*) whose relevant statement about an age range of angels is ‘pubescentem vero aciuuenilem etatem’ (‘of pubescent or juvenile age’).\(^{148}\) He concludes that the Angel does look like a fourteen-year-old boy because his reverential demeanour is associated with purity and obedience – qualities not to be expected from seventeen-year-old boys, midway between pubescence and adolescence.\(^{149}\)

While Maranta is familiar with Thomistic considerations of colour as the third condition of beauty,\(^{150}\) he is mindful that his account of colours should relate to a specific painting, and so reflects contemporary discussions, influenced by Alberti.\(^{151}\) Maranta focusses on colour as the artist’s tool to designate the separation of light and shadow and to imitate the texture of flesh and cloth. He praises Titian’s ability to achieve the golden mean in applying colours to the painting, remarking on this artist’s selection of colours as imbued with significance relevant to the sacred scene it represents.


\(^{148}\) Dionysius the Areopagite, *Theologia vivificans, cibus solidus; Dionysii celestis hierarchia; Ecclesiastica hierarchia*, trans. Ambrose Traversari, Paris: Jacobus Faber Stapulensis, 1498, 17v. Compare with the translation of the same phrase by Johannes Scotus Eriugena, *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*, ed. J. Barbet, Turnhout: Brepols, 1975, 198: ‘iuvenilem vero et adultam aetatem’. The commentary to *De coelesti hierarchia* by Thomas Aquinas was treasured by the particularly good library which was housed in the monastery of San Domenico Maggiore; see Pietro de Stefano, *Descrittione*, 136.


\(^{151}\) Alberti, *On Painting*, 31-2 (1.9).
In the tradition of ancient *ekphrasis* adapted by Aretino, who flamboyantly describes the *Annunciation* received by Empress Isabella, Maranta notes the mixture of white and red colours but, unlike Aretino, who sees the cheeks trembling ‘under the flesh-tints of milk and blood’, Maranta interprets the two colours in the Angel’s clothing as the agency for creating the illusion that ‘the light does not seem to come from the outside, but rather to be born from within and from the Angel’s illuminated person’. This description illustrates that Maranta observed the painting in the chapel, and not in the painter’s studio, as did Aretino. Maranta mentions the light coming from the Angel’s figure, whereas Aretino’s extraordinary selection of descriptive words evokes ‘the refulgent light shed by the rays of Paradise’ and calls attention to the Holy Spirit ‘surrounded by the light of his glory’ – standard feature of any painting on this subject. Whereas Aretino notes the texture of plumage in the Angel’s wings, Maranta’s account of the colour range in the Angel’s wings contains allusions to the ancient forerunners of the Christian messengers. Maranta recalls Iris, the daughter of Thaumas, ‘whose name, as Plato says, means precisely “wonder”’. (He cites Plato’s *Theaetetus* [155d].) The Angel’s wings are the visible reflection of the concept of ‘meraviglia’ (‘wonder’) so often discussed in treatises on poetics. For contemporary literary critics, the inclusion of novel figures and unexpected actions that evoke ‘meraviglia’ constitutes the essence of epic poetry, with its combination of the real and the imagined. His perception of the blush on the Angel’s cheek leads him into the discussion of the nature of fire and its theological relation to angels, a discussion which is poetically beautiful and particularly fascinating in light of Titian’s depictions of fire in several of his paintings.

Maranta believes that colour has, at the least, a three-fold function: the presentation of an image that is in essence incorporeal, though angels are conventionally given human form, the accentuation on the fiery nature of angels, and the connection of the visible figure, by means of wings radiating like the rainbow, to the upper spheres of the celestial abode.

‘Grace,’ the fourth condition of beauty, is the ineffable quality that must be included in all other conditions for the human figure to be defined as absolutely beautiful. Maranta may have borrowed the function of this concept from Marsilio Ficino’s *De amore* (V.6), wherein beauty is identified with ‘a certain lively and spiritual grace infused by the shining ray of God, first in the angels, and thence in the souls of men, the shapes of bodies, and sounds’. In his application of the concept of grace to Titian’s Angel, Maranta defines it as ‘elegance’ (‘leggiadria’). This suggests Albert the Great’s qualification of the relation of beauty to proportion by the adjective ‘elegans’, meaning that the form is legible to the eye. Maranta combines the Thomistic qualification of beauty with Ficino’s addition of the Platonic concepts of


divine beauty and Aristotle’s discussion of the perfect type of beautiful human figure. For Maranta, grace is visibly present when the figure is created from ‘an idea formed in his [Titian’s] mind’. In his opinion, this precious quality of grace is conveyed in the aura (aria) of the Angel’s expression, which lies ‘between joy and astonishment’. Grace, then, is the mysterious quality that, as ‘the Platonists say’, is received from God alone. For Maranta, it is revealed in God’s messenger through the expression of his countenance, appropriate to the message brought by the Angel to the Virgin: ‘Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te’, rather than the salutation ‘Ave gratia plena’, usually transmitted in art, and Maranta explains at length the reasons for his conclusion.

The fifth condition is ‘posture’, which Maranta sees as a specific trait of a painting since it has the ability to condense an entire narrative into one episode, centring on one action or scene. To illustrate his statement, he cites Albrecht Dürer (‘Alberto Durero’) whose series of prints representing the mysteries of Christ’s Passion illustrate that one print (Maranta calls it a ‘picture’) could show only one action. Similarly, Maranta claims, a viewer knows the scene rendered in Titian’s altarpiece by the way of describing the figures’ postures and gestures.

The ‘Discourse’ sets an example of just such a diligent description: from reviewing each figure’s posture in relation to each other, Maranta moves to the account of their mutual interaction, which is the core of the composition. He examines the relation of the swiftly moving Angel to the kneeling Virgin (the general composition) and the gesture of Gabriel as he communicates the divine message (the specific composition of one figure). The ‘posture’, or ‘disposizione’, aspires to bridge the disparity between the absolutely beautiful human figure and the specific beauty of a human figure set in the context of the rendered subject. He explains that it means ‘the placement, or the position or the attitude of the body in which the artist has shown the man he has depicted’. He cites an example of Michelangelo, who in the Last Judgment took care that ‘every figure had a different placement and posture’, not an example of the ancient artist from Pliny. This condition, therefore, is the crowning quality of the beautiful painting fulfilled by the artist in representing the subject in gracefully related human figures.

Thus, when each of the five conditions of a beautiful figure is applied to a specific figure in the painting – here, the Angel in Titian’s painting of the Annunciation – the meaning of the work is clearly illustrated: (1) ‘proper proportion’ refers to the four equal divisions of the figure as the units which can be assessed by the viewer, who, like Maranta, is familiar with the symbolic connotations of its four-fold division; (2) ‘proper quantity’ signifies the physical appearance of the Angel, shaped to accord with a pubescent boy; (3) ‘the appropriate vividness of colours’ reveals the luminescent nature of the Angel and his sanguine temperament; (4) ‘grace’ is conveyed by the appropriate expression of the face (aria) and the lifelike impression (leggiadria) of the figure’s movements; and (5) ‘posture’ relates to the interaction between the two figures as revealed by their respective positions and their gestures. Maranta links the concept of beauty to the careful viewer’s informed examination of the specific painting in general and of the Angel Gabriel in particular. He states, ‘if one is capable of producing only one beautiful thing, when this reaches its perfection, he is seen by everyone many times with

great pleasure and is admired. And this is one of the main reasons why painting, like poetry, is required to have extreme perfection, and mediocrity in them is nowise acceptable.

*ut pictura poesis* as a tool in judging Titian’s Gabriel

Claiming that judging a painting is not his profession, Maranta, who is a physician, botanist and literary critic, takes recourse to the ancient authority of his compatriot by recalling the famous dictum, *ut pictura poesis* (Horace, *Ars poetica*, v.361). Horace’s dictum is evasive (not least because of ambiguous use of one conjunctive – ‘ut’),\(^\text{158}\) with his disapproval of the idea that poetry should resemble painting, made clear from subsequent (usually not cited) verses of his poem. In Maranta’s time, as Dolce’s translation indicates, the dictum was understood as the straightforward comparison between poems and paintings.\(^\text{159}\) To add a positive flavour to the Horatian dictum, Renaissance humanists appealed to the equally famous precept of Simonides: ‘A poem ought to be a painting that speaks; a painting ought to be a silent poem’.\(^\text{160}\) Rather than citing Horace or Simonides directly, Maranta states: ‘And it is already perfectly clear to everyone that poetry and painting, despite the speaking nature of the one and the mute exterior of the other, are one and the same thing, and that what is said of the one may be applied to the other’.\(^\text{161}\) He thus proposes this comparative analogy as the guiding principle that can justify Titian’s choice to depict the Angel as having a fleshy figure. ‘The essence of analogy’, as Quintilian defines it in the *Institutio oratoria* (I.vi.4), ‘is the testing of all subjects of doubt by the application of some standard of comparison about which there is no question, the proof that is to say of the uncertain by reference to the certain’.\(^\text{162}\) Maranta applies concepts from the field of poetics to the field of visual art. His interpretation of the Angel’s figure in metaphorical terms (a concept incomparably rich in connotations) suggests that he defends Titian’s painting as if it were a poem. His defence is based on the method of allegorical interpretation, which, from the fourteenth-century apologetics of Giovanni Boccaccio and Colluccio Salutati, had been exerted to protect poetry against accusations that it tells lies and has a corrupting influence on the audience.

While arguing with critics of Titian’s Gabriel, Maranta turns to the unusual depiction of Christ in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*. In this discussion he intentionally blurs the distinction between metaphor and allegory, writing that the painter transforms Christ’s glorified body into ‘a kind of metaphor, or should we say allegory, tacitly identifying perpetual youth with the force of glory and grace’. In this statement, Maranta, like other humanists of the time, shows the influence of Cicero, who, in discussing different figures of speech – all of which he calls


\(^{159}\) See Lodovico Dolce, *I dilletevoli sermoni, altrimenti satire, e le morali epistole di Horatio, illustre poeta lirico, insieme con la poetica*, Venice: Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari, 1559, 303: ‘Qui voglio comparer nostri Poemi / A le Pitture’, which is the translation of the ‘ut pictura poesis’.

\(^{160}\) See Trimpi, ‘Meaning’, 31, about the Renaissance application of Simonides’s precept for understanding Horace’s dictum.

\(^{161}\) See Barocchi, ed., *Scritti*, 259-63; the excerpts illustrate that, in contrast to Equicola and Varchi, Maranta looks only for similarities between the arts of poetry and painting.

‘transferred words’ – remarks in the Orator (xxvii.94) that ‘Aristotle, however, classifies them all under metaphor’.

Maranta adapts Cicero’s approach when he analyses Titian’s Annunciation as illustrating the artists’ use of these figures of speech, considering allegory as an extended metaphor precisely for its play with visual images.

Maranta proposes viewing Titian’s Angel as ‘a certain pictorial metaphor’ (‘una certa metafora pitturale’). None of the contemporary writers on art, not even Varchi and Dolce in their discussion of the affinities between the two arts, ever had recourse to metaphor (or any figure of speech) as the key to interpreting figures in religious paintings. Maranta does not aim at transferring the metaphor to the painted figure, but suggests that its form veils the meaning that has its place in the artist’s intent to make the viewers go beyond the surface of his painting. Maranta’s appeal to ‘metaphor’ as justifying Titian’s choice to render the Angel as a corpulent figure becomes clearer in light of his discussion of artistic error and the effect of wonder, two points that were raised in his lectures on Aristotle’s Poetics and Lucullianae quaestiones.

Metaphor is most easily subject to error, because it may so easily be misread. As Aristotle writes in Metaphysics (IX.10, 1052a), only ‘about unchangeable things there can be no error’, and he underscores, in his Poetics (22, 1459a), the difficulty with which a poet finds an adequate metaphor, because ‘[i]t is the one thing that cannot be learned from others’. By appealing to metaphor, Maranta hopes to prove that the unusual appearance of this figure will elicit admiration, once the viewers become aware of the theological meaning, as it shows forth ‘in his face the abundance of heavenly food; that is to say, of love, grace, splendour and the other supreme gifts in which others participate in greater or lesser measure’. The theological message is the key to the corpulent figure of the Angel.

Maranta considers the artistic licence of the poet and the artistic licence of the painter, in inquiring about the degree of liberty accorded to works of art. This is an important point not least because the very concept of artistic licence was challenged in the course of the sixteenth century. At the Council of Trent, debates over the degree of liberty to be allowed to painters were preceded by discussions on visual arts by literary critics. In 1557, Dolce had cautiously remarked that a painter may enjoy a certain liberty, akin to a poet’s, on condition that ‘he does not fall into iniquity’.

Maranta, however, does not consider the question of whether a painter

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164 Francisco Pérez-Carreño, ‘Looking at metaphors’, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 58, 2000, 373-81, draws attention to the concept of ‘metaphorical paintings’ with reference to Richard Wollheim’s Painting as Art and his rejection of linguistic interpretations of paintings. However, no mention has been made of the concept of ‘pictorial metaphor’; a special study should be given to Maranta’s reading of Aristotelian interpretations of metaphors, especially when he relates Aristotle’s Poetics to his Rhetoric. Graziella Travaglini, ‘La metafora, l’analogia e le figure dei sensi in Aristotele’, Rivista di estetica, 49, 2009, 121-48, comes close to the Aristotelian emphasis on putting ‘things before the eyes’, primarily by reason of her polemic with Paul Ricoeur’s La Métaphore vive. The author confirms in private correspondence that she has not yet seen mentioned the concept of ‘una metafora pitturale’.

165 For references to their work, see the name index to Rensellaer W. Lee, ‘Ut pictura poesis’: The Humanistic Theory of Painting, New York: W. W. Norton, 1967.

166 See Weinberg, History, 493, and Maranta, Lucullianae quaestiones, 89.


may be permitted artistic licence. Rather, he asks where in the painting of the Annunciation such licence can be expressed.

Classical antiquity bequeathed to Renaissance humanists the concept of the poet as a maker. In his notes on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, addressed to Vettori, Maranta probes the question of whether the poet is making or simply imitating. Maranta offers a rare interpretation of the painted figure as the result of a series of changes made by the artist during the creative process. Maranta reminds the critics that ‘Titian chose to portray the Angel with such a full face, since he could have decided to make it just middling or thin’. In this way Maranta says unequivocally that the figure’s visual aspect in the discussed artwork results from the painter’s own choice. He stresses the point by repeating and expanding his observation: ‘He may, in fact, choose to show the Announcing Angel still suspended in the air, or he may make the Angel’s feet rest on the floor of the room; he may change his figure and make it either full, or gaunt or middling or some other way’. Titian’s choice causes the viewer to ponder his Angel rather than permitting the viewer’s hastening to rebuke the figure for its fleshy look. Maranta warns against groundless opinions by demonstrating that Titian invested thought in every aspect of the figure – fleshiness, childlikeness, colouring, posture, gestures – because each could be changed at the artist’s will and each is rendered the way he thought right.

Literary critics and artists of the time customarily cast their theories of *istoria* as treatises on art in general, and not as accounts of specific works. Accustomed to Pliny’s presentation of ancient works to illustrate his tenets, they regard the figures from a theoretical point of view, and do not consider the figures as a unique product of a unique artist working in response to unique circumstances. Maranta, however, unlike Aretino and Dolce, sees the figures in Titian’s *Annunciation* as coming into being by virtue of the painter’s own method of working. Maranta boldly reconstructs the painter’s creative process, seeing him as a maker, or a ‘poet’ in the ancient sense of the word, rendering the comparison explicit by saying that Titian ‘may vary the manner, as this is analogous to episodes in poetry’. He then discusses a traditional distinction between the fable (‘favola’), or plot, and the episodes (‘episodi’), or sections, which explain and expand the main action of the plot. Relating the notions of ‘fable’ and ‘episodes’ to Titian’s painting, Maranta specifies that it was not in the artist’s power to change anything in the representation of his main subject of the Annunciation as it is stipulated by the theme of the Pinelli chapel: he was obligated to show the Angel in the act of announcing the mystery to the Virgin. Possibly for Maranta, ‘fable’ has the same connotation as Alberti’s *istoria*, but with regard to ‘episodes’, he relates them to the implied movement of the Angel, that is, he hovers over the ground or swiftly enters the room. The same notion of ‘episodes’ applies to the changeable aspect of the Angel: whether he is plump or lean. Maranta concludes: ‘these features, because of their variety, differ from painter to painter, as do the episodes from poet to poet’. According to Maranta, the painter’s poetic licence may be expressed by introducing variations only in the ‘episodes’, which, in this context, are interpreted as minor details of pictorial composition. Maranta’s discussion of variations in a picture has nothing to do with

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172 The relation of the episodes to *fabula* or *favola* is discussed in every literary treatise. For Maranta’s discussion in his lectures on *Ars poetica*, see Weinberg, *History*, 1:471-2.
Alberti’s request for variety, which is advocated as an important condition for the well-made historia (the fundamental purpose of which was to imitate nature). According to Maranta, the Angel belongs to an invented representation rather than to a portrayal born of imitation of nature – even if, being an ethereal entity, the Angel is conventionally pictured in the form of the perfect man. This convention does not preclude artists from individual conjecture of this form, thus inevitably admitting variations in representations of the Announcing Angel from painting to painting. In this sense, variety, as Alberti promotes it, is not relevant to Titian’s painting. Maranta, therefore, has every justification for changing the requirement of variety in the painter’s methods to the question of the extent to which variation may be admitted in the representation of the traditional subject.

Maranta’s exposition of the notions of ‘fable’ and ‘episodes’ is intended to show where precisely in the altarpiece artistic errors may be permitted. An ‘error’ is permissible on condition that it is the outcome of the painter’s quest for an effect of wonder, resulting from his search for new modes and forms. So Maranta underlines that the ‘accidental’ error occurs in the episodic part of the painting, that is, in the physical portrayal of the figure, and results from the painter’s wish to diversify his forms. To quote Dolce, ‘without it [diversity] beauty and artistry become cloying’. The need to diversify, which Maranta associates with artistic licence, allows him to justify Titian’s rendering a plump Angel of the Annunciation. Aware of the temptations for an artist to think only about the glory of his art and thus to overlook the necessity of conveying the significance of the sacred subject, Maranta draws constant attention to the meaningful messages that Titian allotted to colours and postures of the figures. Only ignorant viewers fail to ‘realize that everything is done with great art on purpose’.

**The occultatio in poetry, music and painting**

In his consideration of another severely scrutinized detail, Maranta contemplates the objection that ‘a good painter should not have shown only half of the Angel’s face, when he could have made him in such a way that the full face were visible, thereby filling the eyes of the viewers much more’. This so-called error results from Titian’s decision to render the Angel’s face in what Theophile Gautier felicitously called ‘profil perdu’. Maranta sees Titian’s device in terms of Quintilian’s figure of ‘occultatio’, or ‘concealment’ (IX.iii.98), which creates a moment of suspense, whose task it was to draw the viewer further into the painting. He approves the artist’s choice, because it induces him to see beyond the surface of the painting. Titian employs this device to convey the idea that the Angel’s visible image lies between the visible and the invisible realms. Maranta’s fascination with ‘occultatio’ reveals itself in a marginal note, in which he states: ‘if sometimes it happens that in painting a certain thing is obscure, this is so in order that it may eventually speak as poetry does’. Maranta evidently planned to incorporate

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174 Roskill, *Dolce’s ‘Aretino’*, 145.

175 For an example of application of Gautier’s phrase to paintings, see Peter Humfrey, ‘Fra Bartolommeo, Venice and St Catherine of Siena’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 132, 1990, 481 at 476-83: ‘Very daring is the way in which Fra Bartolommeo shows his principal saint not frontally or in a three-quarter view, but with her face virtually in *profil perdu*’. 
these observations into his text at some future date. Responding to the critics, Maranta exclaims: ‘I do not see how one can blame the fullness and fleshiness of that Angel’s face, or the position that shows only half of it, since a very cautious artist made all this with so much care’. He sees how Titian created the persuasive image of Gabriel by combining in his face the features of fullness, fleshliness and contrivance in showing only half of the face. However, the painter does not simply exhibit the Angel with his face partially obscured, ‘but in such a beautiful way did he emphasize the mouth in the act of speaking that, even if we see just that half, it causes us to see also all that is hidden’. The more Maranta is engaged in describing Titian’s Angel, the more he is moved to see that the figure ‘show[s] the greatness of his [Titian’s] talent’.

Maranta recognizes a similar device at play in the apparent fragmentation of Ariosto’s cantos and in the evaded cadences of musicians who were then working in Naples: Philippe de Monte, Nola, Lando and Pietro Vinci. These poetical and musical compositions all appeal to the listeners’ imagination, causing them to complete in their minds some part of the work that, intentionally, has been left unfinished. Maranta’s juxtaposition of Ariosto and Titian may seem quite conventional: Ariosto praises Titian in Canto 33.2 of the *Orlando furioso*, and Dolce remarks that in colouring Alcina’s cheeks (7.11–15) Ariosto becomes a Titian.\(^{176}\) Ariosto was reprimanded by literary critics for the discontinuity in his narration of chivalrous tales and for creating suspense in the readers by sudden interruptions in his cantos. Yet, just as some literary critics were blaming Ariosto for using the rhetorical device of ‘occultatio’, composers in Venice, and especially in Naples, set to music several of Ariosto’s stanzas from the *Orlando furioso*, employing the evaded cadence. In 1558 Gioseffo Zarlino explains this device in his treatise on music, *Le istitutioni harmoniche*: ‘a cadence is evaded (…) when the voices give the impression of leading to a perfect cadence, and turn instead in a different direction’.\(^{177}\) The message of his exposition is that the ‘evaded cadence’ is required when the composer needs to make a transition and avoid harsh tones, while arresting the listener’s attention. Among the composers whom Maranta mentions, Lando and Nola created madrigals based on the verses from Ariosto’s romance.\(^{178}\) In poetry and in polyphony, interrupted cantos and evaded cadences caught the listener’s mind. By analogy with poetry, the partially obscured face of Titian’s Angel has the same effect. In Maranta’s eyes, the invisibility of half of the Angel’s face not only leads the viewer to see his corpulent figure as a pictorial metaphor of God’s abundance, but also to imagine his voice.

Maranta does not confine himself to examples of ‘occultatio’ from poetry and music. He also recalls the effect of partially hidden faces in some ancient paintings. He has three such pictures in mind. Two of them were often recommended to contemporary painters; the third is mentioned in the post-classical period only by Maranta, attesting to his first-hand knowledge of Pliny’s notes on artists.

The first picture is Apelles’s *Portrait of King Antigonus*, in which the artist, contriving not to show the king’s wounded eye, presents him in profile (Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, XXXV.90). The

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\(^{178}\) Larson, ‘Unaccompanied madrigal’, 233 (Lando) and 281 (Nola).
inclusion of the description in Alberti’s book on painting caused this work to become the
standard example of an artist’s recourse to ingenious expedients. 179 Maranta observes that
Apelles hid the king’s deformity by portraying him in a pure profile, insightfully commenting
that the resulted portrait resembles an ancient medal. (It is worth noting that Maranta does not
apply the word ‘profile’ to the position of the Angel’s face.)

The second picture is Timanthes’s *Immolation of Iphigenia* (Pliny, XXXV.74), in which the
suffering father is shown with a veiled face. Alberti and subsequent authors refer to it: among
them are Pino, Dolce and Gilio, who mention it in their discussions on the art of painting. 180 This
is not truly an example of a partially hidden face, since Iphigenia’s father, Agamemnon, had his
face fully covered, but it is recalled here by Maranta because of the different responses it
provoked: was Agamemnon’s face covered to express the intensity of his paternal grief, or was
it covered because Timanthes had reached the limits of pictorial expression? Maranta suggests
that Timanthes ‘wanted his [Agamemnon’s] moan to be heard rather than seen’. He obviously
trusts the intelligent viewer’s ability to perceive the drama and to imagine hearing the
protagonists of the familiar tragedy, *Ifigenia*, which Dolce set to verse, based on the plays by
Euripides and Sophocles. 181 In turn, Maranta creates a poetic description, allowing the audience
to imagine the protagonists’ emotions. Considering painting to be akin to poetry, he triggers the
technique of synaesthesia.

The third picture is Apelles’s *Averted Hercules*, which Pliny (XXXV.95) praises as a
difficult achievement because it shows the nude hero from the back but in such a way that the
viewer can ‘see’ the figure’s face. 182 This picture is explicitly referred to in post-classical times
only by Maranta. 183 It is possible that Jacopo Sannazaro had the picture in mind when, in his
pastoral romance *Arcadia* (Prosa 3, 78; Venice: Pietro Summonte, 1504), he had Sincero describe a
painting of Venus that displayed the goddess from the back, because her beauty was so perfect
that the artist found it impossible to represent her figure in full face. 184 Apelles’s *Averted Hercules*
is the only work known from antiquity that shows the figure with its face intentionally turned
completely away from the viewer. As in the case of Timanthes’s *Immolation of Iphigenia*, Maranta
suggests a positive interpretation of the *Averted Hercules*. He praises Apelles for the courage to
represent Hercules in a novel way, one requiring viewers to engage faculties of imagination. He
goes as far as to suggest that this is the artist’s achievement, ‘which [when it] was not
appreciated by the crowd roused the greatest wonder in the most famous painters of that
century’. The painting merited the attention of Pliny, who praised it highly. Thus this work
became a model for future generations of artists, a fact noticed only by Maranta, even if
implicitly, in a note he left on the margin:

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180 Alberti, *On Painting*, 61 (2.40); see Barocchi, ed., *Scritti*, 1:872n4. See also John F. Moffitt, ‘Sluter’s *Pleurants* and
Timanthes’ *tristia velata*: evolution of, and sources for, a humanist topos of mourning’, *Arthribus et Historiae*, 51, 2005,
78-81 at 73-84.
181 Lodovico Dolce, *Ifigenia*. Tragedia, Venice: Gabriele Giolito de Ferrari, 1551, 33r and 50r.
Heinemann, 1968, 10 vols, 9:331.
University Press, 2013, 325, lists cited works of Apelles, among which she mentions the *Portrait of King Antigonus* but
not the *Averted Hercules*, which further attests to Maranta’s original approach to the use of classical sources. This
painting, however, is reconstructed in Caraglio’s print [B.38], c. 1524/25.
So, as in Tragedies not all the events take place on the stage but between one act and the other, one sometimes imagines much more than what can be done in an act; and this makes the poem more solemn and dense; likewise in painting the highest minds always considered it a greatly desirable thing that many things should be hidden, but in such a way that they might be understood easily and with wonder.

The reference to Apelles’s painting of Hercules allows Maranta to distinguish between artists who avoid erring because they fear censure and therefore create works that satiate most of viewers and those artists who, being ‘indifferent to pleasing the mob, make all their compositions in accordance with the dictates of art’. Maranta approves the latter category of artists, among whom are Titian, Ariosto and the musicians of Naples who aimed at deepening emotional sense of their compositions by using elided cadence. Maranta observes that an artwork, be it painting, poetry or music, meets with harsh criticism when its significance is not immediately accessible. He blames critics for a lack of interest in cogitation. Titian’s Annunciation, Ariosto’s Orlando furioso and madrigals based on Ariosto’s stanzas were of course accessible to all the more-or-less educated public in Naples, but this does not mean that these works could be equally appreciated: appreciation depends on cultural taste, knowledge of artistic, literary and musical devices and awareness of works created by ancient and modern artists.

Subsequently, Maranta distinguishes between viewers who, like himself and his addressee, enjoy the works that engage their imagination and those viewers who want the works to give them immediate satisfaction. Competent viewers savour the details of works, longing to understand the artists’ intentions, whereas unsophisticated, even if relatively educated, viewers tend to form an opinion of works facilely, without considering the artists’ reasons and without respecting the taste of these artists’ patrons, who turned to them specifically to commission works on the desired subject. The ‘Discourse’ contrasts amateurish and sophisticated viewers, and these are not equal in number, for ‘those who enjoy real craftsmanship are few indeed’. Whereas Alberti and then Dolce claim that painting can be understood equally by the ignorant and the educated as each finds something attractive in this art, Maranta objects to the idea of equal perception of art between the distinct groups, and raises questions about what makes a viewer a competent critic.

The proper way to judge a painting

Maranta’s approach to the theme of critical assessment is innovative and unusual. Even when he cites the familiar anecdote of Apelles’s remark to the cobbler, he interprets it in a new and sophisticated way. The opinion, prevalent in Naples, that Titian’s altarpiece contains faults – the most prominent of which were the fleshy figure and the partially obscured face – resulted from the lack of the viewers’ wish to ponder the details of Titian’s work. Maranta admonishes people

185 Larson, ‘Unaccompanied madrigal’, 255-61, with a citation from Maranta’s ‘Discourse’.
186 Alberti, On Painting, 48 (2.28); Barocchi, ed., Trattati, 1:156.
who boorishly criticize the painting to be more cautious in voicing their opinion lest someone—not necessarily the artist—repeat to them what Apelles said to the cobbler. This saying: ‘Ne sutor ultra crepidam’ (‘Let a shoemaker stick to his last’) in the form of the proverb became common in post-classical times thanks to Giovanni Battista Gelli’s inclusion of it in La Circe, published in 1549. Maranta addresses this anecdote to critics, because he knew that those whom he overheard in the chapel were familiar with its story, *inter alia*, from Pliny (XXXV.85). Similarly, in his *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l’Aretino*, Dolce pleads to distinguish ‘between the learned and the ignorant’ and, like Alberti, implicitly refers to Cicero’s *De officiis* (I.47). He interprets Cicero’s instructions to his son Marcus (I.65) as a caution to distinguish among opinions so as not to fall into traps set by ignorant critics. In this context Dolce mentions Apelles as the exemplary painter who exposed ‘his figures to the criticism of all comers’ in the hopes of getting some expert opinion. Dolce realizes that not all critics are professionals; he is clearly suggesting that a painter is not required to pay attention to every judgement.

Dolce believes that, notwithstanding the pitfalls, a painter should learn from the critics of his works. Maranta does not even raise this question; rather, he questions the critics’ qualifications. He takes at face value Aristotle’s statement in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I.3, 1094b) that it is necessary for a good critic to be educated in a subject, for ‘each man judges well things he knows’. Maranta warns his readers against a petty and narrow approach to art. In this, Maranta’s attitude differs drastically from that of Gilio, who praises Apelles’s prudence in accepting the cobbler’s remark, but who, significantly, omits any mention of the artist’s reprimand. Maranta explains that for the proper judgement of Titian’s work, one should consider it from many different angles. For his part, Maranta uses several resources: the comparison between painting and poetry, the comparison between Titian and Apelles, the juxtaposition of Titian’s Angel and Michelangelo’s Christ as most controversial figures discussed c. 1562, the interpretation of Titian’s Angel according to the canon of the beautiful figure, the rules of physiognomy and the rhetorical art of gestures. He also searches out the advice and opinion of the people who know about Titian and appreciate his art. Among them are Cosimo Pinelli, a cultivated patron; his son Gian Vincenzo, a philosopher-scientist; Cambi, an esteemed gentleman, who was Florentine in culture; and Lama, a Neapolitan painter, who was chosen by Cosimo to fresco his family chapel. At the end of his ‘Discourse’, Maranta concludes that, to judge a work of art properly, it is necessary to obtain the judgements of experts from diverse fields. Thus, the old question of the importance for a painter to consider the opinions of his public receives a new twist, centring on a critic’s capacity to assess a painter’s work.

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189 Compare with Cicero, *De Officiis*, 67: ‘he who depends upon the caprice of the ignorant rabble cannot be numbered among the great’. For the different reading of Dolce, see Roskill’s note in *Dolce’s ‘Aretino’*, 244.

190 Roskill, *Dolce’s ‘Aretino’*, 103.


Maranta brings together the opinions of experts in diverse fields, helping him form a composite judgement of Titian’s painting which, Maranta believes to be an objectively correct evaluation of the work. He then has recourse to his own medical background when he considers the Angel’s complexion and assesses, from the standpoint of anatomical structure, the appropriateness of the speaking hand’s gesture to the scene represented. In his wish to communicate admiration for Titian’s Annunciation, he also calls on his experience as a literary critic to highlight similarities between poetry and painting.

The ‘Discourse’, then, argues that the painting can be correctly judged only if the critic aims at a comprehensive consideration of all its aspects. The points he emphasizes are worthy of repetition as statements of Maranta’s credo: valid criticism evaluates artwork according to tenets found in contemporary writings on the art of painting; it takes into account other contemporaneous works of art; it goes beyond the commonplace recitation of ancient examples from Pliny; it considers the subject represented in the painting; it studies the painting in relation to its specific location; it strives to explain the artist’s intentions. Only when Titian’s Annunciation is studied in relation to the context for which it was created – a family chapel in a church – and through the comprehension of reasons that influenced it aesthetically and theologically, can this painting be evaluated objectively.

Art historians and Maranta’s ‘Discourse’

The manuscript of the ‘Discourse’ was first noticed in 1902 by Angelo Borzelli, a literary scholar and art historian, who summarized its contents in a small book of twenty-four pages. His objective was to use the text as a way to focus on mid-sixteenth-century Neapolitan culture. Borzelli’s initiative was taken up in 1952 by Giuseppe Solimene, a historian of Basilicata, who paraphrased the ‘Discourse’ in forty-two pages, with annotations on historical figures, offering biographical information on the Pinelli and Maranta families and adding reproductions of Maranta’s portrait and Titian’s painting (then located in the Pinelli chapel). When, in 1956, Tommaso Pedio, also a historian of Basilicata, reviewed Solimene’s publication, he corrected the information on the Maranta family. Both Solimene and Pedio missed some inaccuracies concerning the Pinelli and Maranta families, primarily the result of a confusion of grandfathers with their namesake grandsons. This current essay corrects those mistakes to the extent possible and attempts to establish more precisely the circumstances surrounding the production of Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ and the date of its composition.

The ‘Discourse’ received new life in 1971, with its publication in Paola Barocchi’s monumental collection, Scritti d’arte del Cinquecento. Barocchi deliberately used Solimene’s annotations and made clear that the questions raised by Maranta were familiar to his contemporaries. The spellings of the names of Italian artists (e.g., ‘Titiano’ for ‘Tiziano’, ‘Michel’ Angelo’ for ‘Michelangelo’) as well as some Greek and Roman names (e.g., ‘Orazio’ for ‘Horatio’, ‘Omero’ for ‘Homero’ and ‘Ercule’ for ‘Hercule’) were changed for the sake of consistency within the three volumes of the Scritti. In the current translation of the text, the names of Michelangelo, Giorgio Vasari and Albrecht Dürer (as well as the word ‘Angel’, spelled

193 The review is published in Archivio storico pugliese, 9, 1956, 167-72.
with capital ‘A’) accord with the original spellings of the manuscript. The rest are given in the standardized English form, including of course ‘Titian.’

Barocchi overlooked Maranta’s marginal note (c. 262r), which sheds light on his interpretation of the paragone between poetry and painting. The note in the present transcription and translation is appended to the text of the ‘Discourse’ translated by Viviana Tonon. A paperback reprint of the Scritti followed in 1978, published in separate sections: the section ‘Pittura’ contains the ‘Discourse’. In 1985, the present author, then working on the topic of Titian’s portraiture, took note of Maranta’s ‘Discourse’. Her published study sets Maranta’s art of description in the context of the ancient and modern ekphrastic tradition, suggesting to see the ‘Discourse’ as pioneering in its descriptive interpretation of Titian’s painting. Some imprecision of facts regarding the circumstances that led Maranta to discuss Titian’s Annunciation have been corrected in the present essay.

In 2002, Ulrich Pfisterer brought together a series of excerpts from treatises on art to form a history of Kunstliteratur. For the introduction Pfisterer chose to discuss Titian’s two Annunciation paintings. In “Fleischwerdung”: Tizians Verkündigungs-Bilder und die Macht des Wortes’, Pfisterer presents the first Annunciation, reporting some historical facts – its price, its initial commission and its final destination – and recalls the relief of the Annunciation related to by Dante in the mode of the ‘visibile parlare’. Pfisterer then discusses the second Annunciation and draws attention to Maranta’s ‘Discourse’, familiar to him from Barocchi’s edition. He is particularly impressed by Maranta’s expression ‘una certa metafora pitturale’, which leads him to recall salient points of the topic of ‘ut pictura poesis’. In his view, Titian’s Neapolitan Annunciation does much to enrich discussions of the beholder’s perception of the painting, for artworks are rarely perceived through the lens of their contemporaries. Ulrich Rehm’s review of Pfisterer’s book concentrated on the expression ‘pictorial metaphor’ as applied to the interpretation of the Angel’s corpulent figure; this shows Rehm’s admiration for both sixteenth- and twentieth-century authors in their use and exposition of this attractive concept.

In 2007, Caroline van Eck concentrated on Maranta’s description of gestures, which converted the flat plane of the picture into the three-dimensional stage of the theatre. This is in keeping with the theme of her book, Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe, a discussion of the tangible devices borrowed from rhetoric by visual artists to transform a painting into the representation of a mental image. In drawing an analogy between the works of poets and painters, Maranta, as van Eck claims, applies the orator’s art of gesticulation, described by Cicero and Quintilian, to the analysis of depicted postures, seeing its expressive power as the link between the two arts.

In 2008, Marcel Grosso found Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ on Titian’s painting attractive, as a consequence of his interest in Titian’s connections with the Neapolitan milieu under the rule of the Spanish viceroys. He later expanded this article, based on his dissertation research, into the book (Per la fama di Tiziano), but the original article, first published in 2004 and reprinted in 2008, remains the most detailed study of the background that shaped Maranta’s aesthetic

194 The handwriting and syntax leave no doubt that this note is Maranta’s.
196 Marsel Grosso, ‘La fama di Tiziano nella cultura artistica meridionale (tra letteratura e scienza)’, in Dal viceregno a Napoli: arti e lettere in Calabria tra Cinque e Seicento, ed. Ippolita di Majo, Naples: Paparo, 2004, 71-112; Marsel Grosso,
evaluation of Titian’s painting. According to Grosso, Maranta’s attention both to Titian’s use of
the rainbow colours in the Angel’s wings and to the artist’s representation of vivid and lifelike
figures was indebted to Bernardino Telesio’s philosophical doctrines. Grosso, independently of
Freedman and van Eck, suggests that Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ may be read as a response to
Dolce’s analysis of Titian’s art. In 2008, the Pinelli painting was shown in an exhibition that
focussed on Titian’s late style. In the entry on this painting to the exhibition catalogue, Late
Titian and the Sensuality of Painting, Grosso mentions Maranta’s text as evidence of the history
and provenance of the painting; he also updates the information about some earlier literature
that questioned the attribution of the painting to Titian, arguing for the workshop intervention.
Grosso, highlighting Titian’s innovative approach to the representation of the sacred scene, is
convinced that this Annunciation is indeed by the master himself.

Grosso’s use of Maranta’s text, in his study of Titian’s fame in Spanish Naples,
stimulated an interest in both the painting and the ‘Discourse’. Grosso’s article (2004) provided
the background for Marco Ruffini’s exposition of a sixteenth-century document on the
provenance of Titian’s Neapolitan Annunciation. Ruffini came across a copy of Vasari’s Vite of
1550 (in the Beinecke Library at Yale University) that had been annotated by an anonymous
reader sometime between 1560 and 1568. As Vasari mentions Titian in several passages of his
book, the annotator, most likely of Paduan origin, decided to add a biographical note on Titian.
This note contains precious information about the painter’s works, though not without some
imprecision. For example, regarding the Neapolitan Annunciation, the anonymous author writes
that it was located in Santa Maria Maggiore (which incidentally houses the Pontano chapel and,
for this reason, would have been more familiar to him). It also says that the painting was
commissioned by the King of Spain, Philip II, as the only altarpiece ever made for him by
Titian. Ruffini makes use of Maranta’s text to explain that the work was actually commissioned
for the family chapel in San Domenico Maggiore by Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, who, as Ruffini
learns from Grosso, moved to Padua in 1558. Ruffini confuses Cosimo senior and junior,
thinking wrongly that Cosimo senior was granted the noble rank of the Duke of Acerenza. It
was Galeazzo who, in 1563, purchased the feudality of Acerenza, and received the title of
Duke of Acerenza on 12 April 1593; his eldest son, Cosimo, inherited it in 1600. Ruffini
supports his information with a reference to a text by Carlo De Lellis that cites a sepulchral
epitaph in the Pinelli Chapel. The Cosimo mentioned in this epitaph, however, is the
grandson, not the founder of the chapel. Ruffini mentions that Cosimo senior was Great
Chancellor of the Kingdom of Naples in 1557; but it was Cosimo junior who, in March 1601,

‘Per la fama di Tiziano nella cultura artistica meridionale tra letteratura e scienza’, Venezia Cinquecento, 36, 2008
(2009), 5-42.
197 See Marcel Grosso’s detailed entry to Late Titian and the Sensuality of Painting, exhib. cat., ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden,
Vienna and Venice: Marsilio, 2008, 254 and 256, no. 3.3.
200 For the document regarding the conferment of the dukedom on Galeazzo Pinelli, see ‘Secretarías Provinciales,
Libro 152, folios 90 vº y ss’, Departamento de Referencia, Archivo General de Simancas (Valladolid).
201 Carlo De Lellis, Aggiunta alla Napoli sacra dell’Eugenio Caracciolo Napoli, entro il 1689. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale
acquired the office of Great Chancellor. Ruffini perceptively notes that the Paduan annotator knew well that Titian’s painting of the Annunciation was familiar to Philip II, because in 1537 this work belonged to the king’s mother, and for this reason the annotator states that Philip II commissioned Titian’s Annunciation. At the same time he indicates Naples as the location of the painting on this subject, to be identified, as Ruffini observes, with the altarpiece in the Pinelli chapel.

By 2010, the Pinelli Annunciation had been fully restored, revealing the colours as they undoubtedly were intended to look by Titian. This is noted by Grosso in his catalogue entry as the restoration was begun prior to the exhibition of 2008. The book on the Pinelli Annunciation, edited by Anna Chiara Alabiso, though dedicated primarily to the restoration of the work, includes a brief account of the historical and artistic context that led to the creation of the painting. Bruno Arciprete gently corrects Valcanover, Freedman and Grosso in pointing out that Titian’s signature on the base of the Virgin’s lectern reads ‘Titianus P’, and not ‘Titianus F’. Arciprete’s description of the painting after its restoration indirectly highlights Maranta’s accuracy in writing his impressions about the Angel’s hair, face, arm and wings. Arciprete and the painting’s restorers, Marco Cardinali and Maria Beatrice De Ruggieri, date the work to the early 1560s.

In her study, Alabiso derives most of her information on the Pinelli family from Grosso’s article of 2004 and his entry to the catalogue of 2008, using Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ merely as testimony to the commission of Titian’s work for the altar in the chapel. Alabiso speculates that it was through Fulvio Orsini that Gian Vincenzo became acquainted with Titian. Pierre Nolhac, whose classic study on Orsini Alabiso cites, suggests that their connection could not have existed before 1565. Gian Vincenzo would have needed a mediator to facilitate the task of procuring the painting, given Titian’s social standing. As shown here, it was the lawyers Benavides and Speroni who could help him in fulfilling this task. Only Benavides, who had connections with the Spanish court and the Maranta family, and Speroni, who was a friend of Aretino, could have assisted Gian Vicenzo in urging Titian to find time to paint the Annunciation for his family chapel. It is sufficient to recall the Venetian case of the Massola chapel, in which the altarpiece of the Martyrdom of St Lawrence was installed in 1559 – almost ten years after it was commissioned on 18 November 1548 – to appreciate the relative

202 Jacopo M. Paitoni, *Lettere d’uomini illustri, che fiororono nel principio del secolo decimosettimo*, Venice: Baglioni, 1744, 1n1, includes the letter from Lorenzo Pignoria in Padua, dated 8 October 1602, to Paolo Gualdo in Venice, and Paitoni mentions in the note Cosimo Pinelli, the Duke of Acranza, Marquis of Galatina and Great Chancellor of the Kingdom of Naples, who was the eldest son of Gian Vincenzo’s brother Galeazzo (Gualdo wrote Gian Vincenzo’s biography). See Rodella, ‘Fortuna’, 91 and 91n29.

203 Bruno Arciprete, ‘Il restauro dell’Annunciazione di Tiziano a San Domenico Maggiore’, in *Tiziano*, 50 at 49-60. In this regard, see E. H. Gombrich’s useful observations on the inscriptions in paintings indicating the patron who makes the work by commissioning the painter or giving him an idea of his work, and the painter who paints it. See his ‘The early Medici as patrons of art’, in *Norm and Form. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, London: Phaidon, 1978, 40 at 35-57. Maranta notes that Gian Vincenzo is ‘Egli che di far fare quell quadro ha avuto il pensiero’ (Gian Vincenzo is ‘He, who had the thought of having this picture made’). See Michele Polverari, ed., *Tiziano. La pala Gozzi di Ancona. Il restauro e il nuovo allestimento espositivo*, Bologna: Grafis Edizioni, 1988, 100, for the inscription which states that this work is made by Alvise Gozzi and painted by Titian.


efficiency with which Titian completed the painting for the chapel of the Pinelli family. Alabiso mentions an important fact relating to the presence of the painting in the city: when Pietro de Stefano described the sacred places of Naples in his book, published in 1560, he mentioned neither the Pinelli chapel, nor the presence of Titian’s painting in San Domenico Maggiore. He did, however, mention Cosimo Pinello [sic] as the magnificent nobleman from Genoa in front of whose garden stood the Franciscan monastery of San Girolamo (on the Pinelli botanical garden, see above).

In 2014, Isabelle Bouvrande, in a short separate chapter of her book on Venetian colour, emphasizes that Maranta includes ‘the appropriate vividness of colour’ as a necessary characteristic of a ‘beautiful’ painting. Bouvrande lays stress on Maranta’s medical profession and his Aristotelian background. Maranta, however, was no less a Platonist than he was an Aristotelian, as his literary studies confirm. She links the notion of the celestial rainbow, mentioned in Aristotle’s Meteorology and discussed by Anne Merker, to Maranta’s analysis of the Angel’s wings. Bouvrande suggests that his mention of the celestial rainbow is meant to underline the ‘spiritual and incorporeal nature’ of Titian’s Angel. Inspired by his ‘Discourse’ and Barocchi’s annotations, Bouvrande names Maranta in several passages of her book – for example, in the passage about the fleshiness of Titian’s figures, previously noted of course first by Aretino and then by Dolce. She draws attention also to Maranta’s pairing the two terms ‘complexion’ and ‘physiognomy’. Her book demonstrates how Maranta’s text can be used to enhance understanding the contemporary assessments of Titian’s art. It is quite likely that other art historians will follow suit, for the ‘Discourse’ is an exemplary text, not just for the commentary on Titian’s Annunciation, but for the analysis of the aesthetics of painting in general.

Luba Freedman

207 Bouvrande, Coloris, 88n2.
Bartolomeo Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ on Titian’s Annunciation in Naples: translation

Note on the state and language of the manuscript

The prose of Maranta’s ‘Discourse’ sustains the vividness and immediacy of oral delivery. Maranta gives his opinion on Titian’s painting and often addresses Ferrante Carafa (‘Your Lordship’ or ‘Signor Marquis’), appealing to his sophisticated sense of life and art. The oration contains arguments for and against the painting, and raises questions that, on the one hand, express amazement at the witlessness of the outspoken critics of the painting whom he overheard in the Pinelli chapel, and, on the other hand, offer for consideration new approaches to, and salient aspects of, Titian’s Annunciation. The formulation of these questions attests to Maranta’s initial education as a lawyer and reflects the language of his father’s treatises on jurisprudence concerning libels at court.1

The style is often unpolished, to the point of containing sentences that start with a long subordinate clause and continue without producing a main clause. Yet, the logic of Maranta’s exposition is such that these plaited sentences do not prevent understanding the text. By way of example here is one such problematic passage:

But since man has not been permitted to see a more beautiful appearance than the one he has himself, and (knowing that angels are exceedingly beautiful) has, in depicting them, made them similar to the most beautiful things that have ever been seen in the world and so has given them a human aspect, connoting by their wings not only speed and a ready willingness to serve with all celerity, but also the Angels’ nature, by virtue of which, being free from all corporeal weight and having no such admixture as the earthly body has, they, who are far from this inferior part, climb ever up the path of celestial life towards that high and sublime seat where the Creator of all things dwells.2

This passage reflects Maranta’s frequent structure of concatenating long clauses without a main clause and weaving one descriptive clause with another. The syntax also indicates a desire to persuade the reader or listener that by looking at the represented Angel, one should go beyond the visible surface to the theological discussion of angelic nature and thus grasp the meaning of the beautiful human features and the wings as auxiliary to the ladder that leads to the higher, celestial realms. For Maranta, Titian’s painting could be perceived as theological doctrine on the subject of the Annunciation made visible – the doctrine to which the Pinelli chapel was dedicated. Maranta’s vocabulary in the description of the painting was intended for the reader and listener to understand the excellence of Titian’s transmission of the mystery so significant for Cosimo Pinelli, the patron of the chapel. Hence, the prose resembles a sermon when Maranta translates the visual image into the theological message. This is why the effort was made to

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2 Barocchi, ed., Scritti, 1:867-8: ‘Ma perché all’uomo non è stato conceduto di veder più bella vesta di quella dell’uomo istesso, e sapendo che li angiolii sono bellissimi, gli hanno nel dipignierli rassembrati alle più belle cose che nel mondo si siano vedute e così gli hanno dato figura umana, denotando per le ali non solo la velocità e la prontezza del voler con ogni celerità servire, ma eziandio la natura loro, la quale è che, liberi da ogni corporal peso e senza mescolanza di terrena salma, lontani da questa nostra inferior parte s’inalzino sempre per lo camino della celeste vita a quell’alta e sublime sede, nella quale il creator del tutto dimora’.
respect the author’s phrasing, his lexicon, his syntax, his complexity, even his stylistic flaws, as much as possible.

The text contains blank spaces. These lacunae have their own consistency: they relate to the lack of precise information about some works and their location. There are three such lacunae. Two relate to Michelangelo’s allegorical statues Night and Day, as the sculptor actually called them, wrongly named by Maranta Sleep and Night. Saying that both are in the shape of masculine figures, he reveals that he is unfamiliar with the visual aspect of these statues in the Medici chapel. The third lacuna relates to the chapel of the Magi in the abbey of Monteoliveto. In this case Maranta fails to record the name of the chapel’s owner, Antonio Phiodo. Nor does he mention Girolamo Marchesi da Cotignola, who painted the altarpiece c. 1515 and who was also patronized by Tommaso Cambi. The placement of the lacunae in the text indicates that at the time of composing his ‘Discourse’, he hoped to fill them in at some future date. Notwithstanding the blank spaces, there is no reason to suspect that Maranta left the text unfinished, as the last page of the manuscript contains the calligraphic triangle turned with the upper angle towards the bottom of the page, marking the end of his ‘Discourse’.

Its language is Tuscan Italian set in accordance with the standards established by Pietro Bembo, similar to Dolce’s in Dialogo della pittura intitolato l’Aretino, with Latin quotations from Jerome’s Bible and Horace’s Ars poetica. Rarely was a sixteenth-century treatise on visual art composed in Latin. In his dialogue on painting, Pino notes that Gaurico wrote his book on sculpture in Latin, but it was composed c. 1500. Dolce recommends Alberti’s book, noting that it was translated from Latin into Italian by Lodovico Domenichini (in 1547), typical of the vernacular trend of writing treatises on visual art. Latin was the language of serious scientific, philosophical or literary treatises; hence Maranta wrote the book on botany and the hefty volume on Virgil in the poet’s native language. His Italian book on antidotes was translated into Latin in 1577 by Stigliola precisely because his authority came under question, not least because of his choice of the vernacular for a scientific study. Nonetheless, it is not clear why Maranta wrote the ‘Discourse’ in Italian, though he also delivered lectures on Horace in Italian. It may well have been that Carafa, an ardent Petrarchist, set the style in Naples by writing poetry only in Italian. Also, although Gian Vincenzo was an expert in ancient languages, the language he chose for his correspondence, at least in his surviving letters, is Italian. Maranta could then have been expected by his upper class patients and patrons to write on Titian’s Annunciation in Italian. The ‘Discourse’ is a pleasure to read, because it reflects various tones: it is solemn when Maranta

5 Vasari, Opere, 5:184.
6 See Carafa’s poem dedicated to the memory of Bembo in Lodovico Dolce, Rime di diversi illustri signori napoletani: e d’altrì nobiliss. intelletti: nuovamente raccolte et non pio stampate, Venice: Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari, 1552, 70. Maranta, Lucullianae quaestiones, 32, cites Bembo as the authority on the subject of language, as he claims that the vernacular style should match in excellence the Latin.
8 Roskill, Dolce’s ‘Aretino’, 159. Alberti has the text in Italian, dated 1436, but the manuscripts were poorly circulated versus manuscripts of the Latin text, on which he worked till 1460.
10 See Minturno, Arte poetica, 282-451, for the fourth book which discusses Tuscan poetry with Carafa. See Maranta, Lucullianae quaestiones, 31, on Bembo as the authority on Petrarch.
discusses the religious mystery represented in the painting, humorous when he writes on the power of love and on contemporary mores, ironic when he comments on the results of hasty judgement, furious when he attacks the attitude of the witless mob, elated when he discusses the Angel’s sanguine temperament and the gesture of his speaking hand.

Maranta is consistent in using certain Italian words in different contexts to indicate, for example, nuances of beauty: bellezza (beauty), venustà (loveliness), leggiadria (elegance) and vaghezza (charm), while some other words, like grazia (grace) and aria (aura), designate nuances of grace, with the second visible only in faces. He adheres to the meaning of some other words, among them, ingegno (ingenuity), meraviglia (wonder), quadro (picture), variare (vary) and volgo (mob). As much as possible, this consistency has been kept in the English text.

On the whole, the effort was made to preserve Maranta’s voice faithfully, while at the same time to phrase his thoughts in English. The author’s lexicon has been respected as much as possible, but not to the detriment of the meaning in the translation, which is deliberately literal. Some liberty, however, is inevitable in rendering important nuances. Although the language of the translation is modern English, attempts have been made to avoid anachronistic words like ‘genre’ and ‘model’. Because the translation is largely based on Barocchi’s printed transcription, the page numbers from her edition are kept to help the reader navigate between the original manuscript and the translated text. Digital scans are now obtainable for study upon request from the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (Ms. Branc. II C 5, cc. 260r-70v).

Viviana Tonon with Luba Freedman

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12 The synonyms for beauty can be found in Agnolo Firenzuola’s Discorsi delle bellezze delle donne, Florence: Bernardo di Giunta, 1548, but Maranta’s interpretation of them deviates from Firenzuola’s.
Bartolomeo Maranta

Discorso all'Ill.mo Sig. Ferrante Carrafa Marchese di Santo Lucido in materia di pittura. Nel quale si difende il quadro della capella del Sig. Cosmo Pinelli fatto per Titiano, da alcune oppositioni fattegli da alcune persone

It so happened, my most illustrious Lord, that the day before yesterday, while I was with Signor Scipione Ammirato at San Domenico's to hear Mass, we found ourselves in the chapel of Signor Cosimo Pinelli. Having embellished it with most precious marbles and most exquisite works and other ornaments of that kind, he decided to heighten its grace and decoration with a painting that, owing to his special devotion, was to represent the wonderful and amazing mystery of the Virgin Mary receiving the Angel's annunciation, which should be made by the hand of Titian, whose name and fame are so well known to everybody that there is no need for me to elaborate on them. And discoursing on that painting and debating various things about it (as so often happens), we found ourselves to be of opposite opinions on some points, for he could not endorse with a serene mind the highest praise that I bestowed on that painting, and he more than just mildly showed his disapproval of it, invoking in his support, to invigorate his arguments, Your Lordship's authority and opinion, which he claimed to be like his own. On hearing this, I remained silent for a good while, yet in the end I regained my courage and, being...

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Ritrovandomi, ill.mo Signor mio, l'altrieri per udir messa a San Domenico col signor Scipione Ammirato, capitammo nella cappella del signor Cosimo Pinelli, la quale avendo egli di preciosissimi marmi e di finissimi lavori e d'altre leggiadrie a ciò appartenenti adornata, per più di grazia e più di ornamento le dare, ha voluto che 'l quadro nel quale dovea il meraviglioso e stupendo misterio di Maria Vergine annunziata dall'angelo per sua particolar devozione mostrarsi, fusse fatto per mano di Tiziano, il cui nome e la cui fama, come quella che è assai ben conosciuta dagli uomini, non richiede che io altrimenti ne favelli e. Ragionando di quella pittura e varie cose (come si fa) intorno ad essa discorrendo, fummo di contraria opinione in alcune cose, perciò che non potea egli con tranquillo animo sostener l'estreme lodi che io a quella pittura assegnava, e più che mezzanamente dimostrava dolersene, allegando per ingagliardir le sue ragioni la autorità e giudicio di V. S., il quale col suo diceva esser conforme. Il che quando io udi', ancorché per buono spazio mi rimanessi sospeso, alla fine ripreso ardire e credendomi...

13 The transcription of the manuscript and footnotes base on: *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, a cura di P. Barocchi, Milano 1971, I, p. 863-900.

14 Cfr. G. TIRABOSCHI, *Storia della letteratura italiana* [1787-93], secondo l'edizione Venezia 1824, VII, 4, pp. 1244 sg.: «L'ultimo in questo secolo a scrivere la storia fiorentina fu Scipione Ammirato, nato in Lecce nel regno di Napoli verso il 1531 ... L'Ammirato dopo aver fatti in diverse città del regno i primi suoi studi, fu dal padre mandato a Napoli, perché vi studiasse leggi. Ma lo studio della giurisprudenza ebbe anche nell'Ammirato quello sfavorevole accoglimento che da tant'altri uomini di raro ingegno abbiam veduto ad esso fatto nel decorso di questa storia. Le riprensioni del padre non ebber forza bastevole a fare ch'ei non anteponesse al frequentare la scuola de' severi giureconsulti il trattenersi in erudite e piacevoli conversazioni...».


16 The dull phrase 'most exquisite works' stands for ‘finissimi lavori’ meaning all kinds of works done in the process of the chapel construction.
di certo che egli, non tanto perché ciò vero fusse, quanto per voler vincermi in ogni modo (per ridersene possa con meco) avesse in sua difesa oppostomi lo scudo dell’autorità vostra, gli dissi: “Vedi bene già, Ammirato mio, di quinci ciò che tu dì, peroché io non so quanto stia bene, per dar riputazione ai tuoi detti, far dire una così strana opinione al signor Marchese. Ma quando per aventura pure così fusse, assai volontien ascoltare le ragioni per le quali Sua Signoria si muove a dir che errore o pecca si possa a quella pittura attribuire. Che dove altre, di quelle che voi dette mi avete, non si ritroveranno, mi darebbe l’animo di pienamente alle sue proposte rispondere.”

Venuti insieme dunque due di appresso a visitar V. S. allora che da un grave catarro oppresso in letto giacea, e rientrandosi di quella pittura in ragionamento, trovai esser vero quanto l’Ammirato riferito mi avea. E perché era motteggiando et ora con piacevole sorriso favoreggiandomi andò V. S., e del mio primo proponimento non dipartendomi, ho fatto, e tuttavia a me si fosse un così valoroso, che ora l’avresti stimato un Adone ora un Marte” [BOZZELLI, 1891, p. 30].

Ma dura cosa pare a me il credere che ambedue voi, che intendenti siete e giudiciousi, vogliate per brutto tenere un fanciullo che da tutti più considerati cavalieri e più accorte signore di questa città è stimato di comune parere la più bella creatura fra tutte quelle che oggi si veggono in Napoli di così tenera etade. Se pure a ciò fare pungimento di modestia non la inducesse per non dimostrare di essere un di quelli che, ingannati et adombrati dalla paterna affezione, le proprie fatture, quali che elleno si siano, sovra modo lodano et in loro trabocchevolmente si compiaccione. Percioché, lodando lei convinced for certain that he had proposed the shield of your authority in his defence, not so much because he was telling the truth, but rather because he wanted to get the better of me at all costs (to laugh with me afterwards about it), I said to him: ‘My dear Ammirato, be careful from now on about what you say, since I do not know that it is a good thing to attribute such a strange opinion to the Signor Marquis merely to give more importance to your words. However, should it by chance be as you say, I would quite gladly listen to the reasons motivating His Lordship to say that either error or defect may be attributed to that painting. And if no others are found in addition to those you have reported, this would give me the heart to answer his arguments in full’.

Two days later, the two of us having come to visit Your Lordship, who in consequence of a serious catarrh had taken to your bed, I found, having re-opened the discussion on that painting, that what Ammirato had told me was true. And since Your Lordship, now rallying me, now favouring me with a genial smile, mentioned many things about that painting, I, who would not leave off my first opinion, was firmly convinced and am still glad to believe even now that whatever you said was meant rather to provoke the opinions of others and above all to jest with me (and this to express your favour towards me as is your wont) than because you yourself did so reason. And of this I was quite convinced on learning that one of the main defects attributed to that painting was the Angel Gabriel’s excessive plumpness; if this must be deemed unsightly, I feel truly sorry for your Federico,18 because I am sure you would never say that he is not plump and full in countenance. But it is quite hard for me to believe that both of you, who are so competent and sensible, should think unsightly of a child who by all the most esteemed gentlemen and wise ladies of this city is unanimously considered to be the most beautiful creature of all persons of such a tender age to be seen in Naples today. Unless it was the stimulus of modesty that induced you to this, to show that you were not like those who, mislead and mystified by paternal love, overpraise their own offspring, whatever they may be, and take immoderate pleasure in them. In fact, were you to praise


18 Federico, named after his grandfather, who died on 11 October 1558, was born from Ferrante’s marriage to Beatrice della Marra (his previous wife, Beatrice di Loffredo, died childless in October 1554). See Aldimari, Historia, 340. The year of Federico’s birth is not mentioned in any text, but it is suggested here on the basis of the tradition of naming the firstborn male children in honour of paternal grandfather.
la pienezza nell’angelo, tacitamente verrebbe a loda l’amore Federico suo, che pieno è. Ma se gli è vero che maggiore è la grazia e la venustà sua che non sarebbe se così pieno non fusse, e quello, onde ciascuno che una sola volta il vede stupisce et impazza, è il non avere variazione alcuna delle parti che egli ha, so che si contenterà di non tener per bruttezza l’esser grasso negli angeli et intanto schiverà di provocarsi incontro tutta la nobiltà di questa città, la quale ammira questo suo terreno angelo.

Et io, ripetutandomi a segnalati favori gli scherzi che intorno a questa materia ha V. S. meco usati, me ne resterò contentissimo. Ma perciòché questo medesimo ho inteso da alcuni altri dire, non già per burla, ma perché così da vero si credono, i quali, per quanto a me ne paia, più per una certa consuetudine che per saldo e vero giudicio ne parlano, mi sono risoluto con questa occasione, più con loro che con V. S. parlando (la quale so bene quanto onoratamente dall’altro canto e di quella pittura e di Tiziano sempre ragioni, sì come quanto mi pare in difesa di l’Amirato, che il medesmo ancor egli sente, ne ha pittura et i particolari et sottilissimi riguardi che in quella pittura e di Tiziano sempre ragioni, sì come quanto mi pare in difesa di l’Amirato, che il medesmo ancor egli sente, ne ha

And I will most contentedly accept the pleasur... on this subject that Your Lordship has addressed to me, construing them as special marks of your favour. But since I have also heard this, not in jest but seriously, from some other people who, it seems to me, speak about it more from a certain habit than from true and firm reasoning, I have decided on this occasion, speaking more to them than to Your Lordship (who on the contrary, as I very well know, always talks so honourably both about that painting and about Titian, as Ammirato, who feels the same way, has since testified), to say all that I think in defence of Titian. And though the judging of painting has never been my profession, I am not completely without hope (since I am speaking with persons who are no better experts than I am) that, by putting the truth in front of their eyes, it will be easy for me to undo the tangles they have made.

And, in the first place, I am displeased that these people do not have any regard for what the wisest men did know: namely that what might appear to us to be an error, must not, in men of great talent, be so easily faulted or dismissed, for the fact that we do not understand it might proceed from our ignorance. And since Titian’s fame is bruited not only throughout Italy, but throughout the world, we, who are not so learned in his art, must not find fault with him if at first we do not make the most accurate study and subject our doubts to people who are competent in this matter, thereby avoiding being told what Apelles said to the cobbler: that he had no business making comments above the shoe. And whoever accurately considers the wonderful craftsmanship of that painting and the special, extremely subtle, care evident in even the most minute of its details, will unquestionably judge that it was for some good reason that Titian

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volutò far nell’angelo quella faccia così piena, potendola egli fare di mediocre abito o magra. La quale se da per noi non siamo bastevoli a trovarla, sia molto meglio andarla cercando di sapere, che riprendere l’opera e la diligenza dell’arteefice. Come è avenuto eziandio in quella miracolosa dimostrazione del Giudizio Universale dipinto da Michelagnelo nel Vaticano, nella quale ha fatto Cristo, giudice de’ buoni e de’ cattivi, molto più giovane di quello che alla età di trentatré anni per avenuta non si converrebbe e che da ciascun altro famoso pittore, anzi da lui stesso, altre volte non è stato dipinto. La qual cosa ancorché sia paruta strana solo a diverse genti, ma a tutti quasi tutti pittori che di ciò hanno avuto notizia, non di meno niuno si è assicurato di dire che quello sia error, avendo egli in tutto il rimanente pieni gli occhi di ciascuno d’infinita meraviglia. E non pare verisimile che nella persona più segnalata di tutta l’opera avesse fatta minor considerazione che nelle altre. Fanno ciò ben spesso i famosi pittori per dar da pensare alle genti; per esser stata sempre celebrazza quella pittura, nella quale più vi si intende che non vi si dimostra, ancor che assai eziandio vi si dimostri. E si come nella poesia sono le similitudini, le metafore, le figure e l’allegorie, così ancora sono queste medesime cose nella pittura, benché in un modo tacito et alla mutola, come in quella col parlare e con l’azioni.

E di già è cosa chiaramente che la poesia e la pittura, dall’esser l’una parlante e l’altra mutola per fuori, sono una cosa medesima, e ciò che dell’una si dice si può all’altra applicare. Saranno dunque la grassezza di quell’angelo e la giovanezza del Cristo

20 Sul Cristo michelangiolesco del Giudizio Finale cfr. la lettera di NINO SERNINI a Ercole Gonzaga del 19 novembre 1541: «Altri dicono che ha fatto Cristo senza barba e troppo giovane e che non ha in sé quella maestà che gli si conviene», in L. v. PASTOR, Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters, Freiburg i. Br. 1885 sg., V, pp. 842 sg.; DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], p. 822; GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 72 sg.: «Un altro capriccio anco io noto, il quale è Cristo senza barba, il che, se è ben fatto o no, insino a’ ciabattini lo sanno giudicare… Ben mi maraviglio che non l’abbia voluta edemendare, ché intendo esserli stato detto da molti, imitando in ciò il grande Apelle, che poneva le sue opere in publico per conoscere gli errori et ammendarli, caso che fossero stati notati da chi conoscessi veramente gli avessi per professione, come fu quello d’una scarpa, notato da un calzolaio».

21 I censori (cfr. la nota precedente) parlano di capriccio più che di errore.


23 Cfr. VARCHI [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 263 sg.; DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], 290 sg.; GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], 303 sg., e le note relative.
di Michelangelo due allegorie della pittura mutole, le quali non si possono ancora scioccare da ciascuno. Ancorché si potrebbe per aventura dire che Michelagnolo abbia ciò fatto per voler così esprimere un corpo glorificato e farlo parere alquanto diverso da quello che fu mentre tra noi visse a disagio, riducendo quel fingimento in una certa qualità di metafora, o vogliamo dire di allegoria, chiamando tacitamente perpetua giovanezza la forza della gloria e della grazia. Ché se di quella istessa figura che ebbe mentre fu patibile l'avesse dipinto, lo avrebbe di facile ridotto nella mente di alcuno patibile ancora; il che era fuor della sua intenzione. Da questa somiglianza potremmo noi andar cercando qual sia il discioglimento di quest'altra fizione di Tiziano, e potremmo dire che abbia voluto per questo dinotarci figuratamente che grassi e pieni debbon esser coloro che secondo il profeta godono nell'abondanza della casa di Dio, e per far conoscere alle genti che quello agno era dei più cari al Signore, dimostrando nel volto quella abondanza del cibo divino, cioè l'amore, la grazia, lo splendore e gli altri supremi doni, de' quali altri più altri meno sono partecipi.24 Ma quando questa soluzione non fusse accettata, non per questo biasimaremo l'artefice, ma di ragione siamo tenuti a gir pensando se meglio di questo si può dire in esplicazione della mente di Tiziano.

Consiste la pittura, come eziandio la poesia, nella imitazione; et imitar non si possono se non le cose che abbiamo vedute. E perché non si ritruova pittore alcuno che si vanti di aver veduto un angelo, segue che niuno potrà dipinngerlo come sta, non essendo gli angeli corporei se non quanto, pigliando un corpo, se ne servono.25 Ma perché all'uomo non è stato conceduto di veder più bella vesta di quella dell'uomo istesso, e sapendo che li angeli sono belissimi, gli hanno nel dipingiuerli rassembriati alle più belle cose che nel mondo si siano vedute e così gli hanno dato figura umana, denotando per le ali non solo la velocità e la prontezza del voler con ogni celerità servire, ma eziandio la natura loro, la quale è che, liberi da ogni corporal peso e senza mescolanza di terrena salma, lontani da questa nostra inferior parte s'inalzino sempre per lo

24 Nell'abbinamento delle presunte allegorie di Michelangelo e di Tiziana gioca una scherzevole ironia, riduttiva delle censure dei teologi (cfr. ancora GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 186 sgg.).

25 Il medico e botanico Maranta, nonostante la sua inclinazione alla sperimentazione, è costretto ad accettare la distinzione tra pittore storico e pittore poeta (cfr. GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], pp. 303 sgg.).
camino della celeste vita a quell’alta e sublime sede, nella quale il creator del tutto dimora. La faccia puerile, non solo perché è più bella, ma eziandio per dimostrare la purità loro e la ubbidienza, per le quali sono accetti a Dio. Per queste cagioni et altre simili è stato già da tutti accettato che gli angoli così si abbian a dimostrare.26

La qual pittura non sarà vera imitazione, ma finta, accettata però per vera, perché migliore non si può fare.27 Come è la imagine della Guerra, o vogliamo dire la idea, la quale era un uomo feroxissimo con le mani legate dietro le spalle; descrissela Virgilio aggiugnendo la bocca sanguinosa e cento catene che li stringevano le mani di dietro con cento nodi, e facendola tutta terribile e fiera, sedente sopra molte armi offensive.28 Aristide fu il primo che dipinse l’animo et i cinque sensi, cosa certo assai difficile a imaginarsi, non che a farsi, ma come si facesse non ritrovo io scritto; e quando altri volesse far questa pruova, potrebbe sicuramente farlo a suo modo e di nuovo fingere la pittura, per non ve ne essere altra per inanzi accettata. 29 Michelangelo scolpi in marmo il Sonno e la Notte…

26 Sugli attributi dell’angiolo cfr. GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 111 sg.: «L’antica consuetudine è di dipingergli [le ali] per dimostrare la sua velocità e la prestezza in eseguire i precetti di Dio; e poi così sono ne la Scrittura figurati [cioè secondo Isaia ed Ezechiele]... E per non voler allegare tutte l’auttorità de la Scrittura che in molti luoghi si prova e specialmente ne lo Apocalisse, basta a concluire che per ogni rispetto si deve agli angeli far l’ali, sì perché non paiano puri uomini, sì per mostrare la loro velocità; e si deve dipingerla anca giovini bellissimi, perché così sono appariti e per farli differenti dai demoni, che vogliono essere bruttissimi, acciò spairentino, sì come quelli consolano».

27 Cioè una pittura vera per tradizione; cfr. anche G. PALEOTTI, Discorso intorno alle imagini sacri e profane, Bologna 1582, in Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento, a cura di P. Barocchi, Bari 1960-62, II, p. 246: «Noi diciamo che in due modi, cioè con due intenzioni, si possono formare le imagini degli spiriti beati e sostanze celesti: l’una per is primere la divinità come è in sé stessa, e questa saria pazzia, non essendo capace materia alcuna di simile espressione, né sendo la divinità cosa che si possa ritrarre; l’altra è per figurare quelle cose ne le forme che ritroviamo nella sacra Scrittura o che dai santi nostri Padri a noi sono state lasciate, come seria il dipingere lo Spirito Santo in forma di colomba et Iddio Padre con faccia di vecchio e gli angeli giovini et alati con diadema o altri misteri che se li convengono ». Cfr. anche COMANINI [cfr. la nota 22], p. 398.


ma in imagine di uomini, che più tosto si ponno
dire l’uno uomo che dorme e l’altro… ma così
anticamente furono accettati, come anco la
descrizione della Fama appresso Virgilio, la qual
dice essere uni mostro orribile e grandissimo con le
ali e con el corpo pieno d’infinito piume, infiniti
occhi aperti, infinite bocche, lingue e orecchie. E
come di molti altri si può vedere nell’inferno di

30 I punti di lacuna, esistenti nel manoscritto, indicano nello scrittore una incertezza poi non superata. Il Sonno è un
evidente fraintendimento del Giorno che, tra l’altro, non dorme. Si ricordi che la prima descrizione delle due Allegorie
maschili della Cappella Medicea risale al La Belezze della città di Firenze. Scritta già da M. FR. BOCCHI ed ora da a M.
GIOVANNI CINELLI, Firenze 1677, pp. 524 sg., 529 sgg. (cfr. G. VASARI, La Vita di Michelangelo, curata e comentata
da P. BAROCCHI, Milano 1962, III, pp. 983 sgg.), mentre la Notte era già famosa prima delle Vite torrentiniane (cfr. ad
esempio la lettera di ANTON FRANCESCO DONI a Michelangelo del 12 gennaio 1543: «Ho visto poi in quella Notte
il più saporoso sonno che si gustasse gia mai, o leggiadramente vedessi dormire a creatura vivente: e pur l’ho trovata
pietra, se ben mille volte io mi son messo, come per una Dea che dormisse formata in Paradiso, a destarla», in Le tre di
lettere del DONI, Venezia 1552, p. 6). Cfr. anche Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori, scritte da M.
GIORGIO VASARI, Firenze 1550, p. 977: «E che potrò io dire della Notte, statua unica o rara? Chi è quello che abbia
per alcun secolo in tale arte veduto mai statue antiche o moderne così fatte? conoscendosi non solo la quiete di chi
donne, ma il dolore e la manconia di chi perde cosa onorata e grande… Nella qual figura quella sonnolenzia si
scorge che nelle imagini addormentate si sde».

31 Per la Fama virgiliana cfr. Aen., XV, 173-90: «Fama malum qua non aliiud velocius allum: mobilitate viget viresque
adquirit eundo, / parva metu primo, mox sese attolit in auras / ingediturque solo et caput inter nubila condit. / Illam
Terra parens, ira inritata deorum , / extremam, ut perhibent, Coeo Enceladoque sororem / progenuit pedibus celerem
et territat urbes, / iam facta praevide tenax quam nuntia veri. / Haec tum multiplici populos sermone replebat / gaudens
et pariter facta atque infecta canebat» (CARO, I V, 171-90: «È questa fama un mal di cui null’altro / è più veloce; e com’
più va, più cresce, / e maggior forza acquista. È da principio / piccola e debbola cosa, e non s’arrischia / di palearsi;
poi di mano in mano / si discuopre e s’avanza e sopra terra / sen va movendo e sormontando a l’aura, / tanto che ‘l
sen capra le nubi asconde. / Dicon che già la nostra madre antica, / per la ruina de’ giganti irata contr’ a’ celesti, al
mondo la produsse, / d’Encelado e di Ceo minor sorella; / mostrò orribile e grande, d’ali prest a / e veloce di pié; che
quante ha piume, / tanti ha sotto occhi vigilanti, e tante / (meraviglia a dirid) ha lingue e bocche / per favellare e per
udire occhi. / Vola di notte per l’oscur tenebre / de la terra e del ciel senza riposo, / stridendo sempre e non chiude
occhi mai. / Il giorno sopra tetti e per le torri / sen va de le città, spiando tutto / che si vede e che s’ode; e seminando, / non
men che ‘l bene e’l vero, il male e’l falso, / di rumori: empie e di spavento i popoli. / Questa gioiosa, bisbigliando
in prima, / poscia crescedo, del seguito caso / molte cose dicie vere e non vere»).
Virgilio simili a questi, come la Fame e la Egestà, che chi vi va ben considerando, troverà questa esser quasi una prosopopeia della pittura.  

Ho voluto dire questo perché sappiamo dove può il pittore aver la licenza di variare a suo modo e dove no, e così vediamo quanto abbia Tiziano errato. E ciò dall’esempio della poesia si può pigliare, nella quale (come Aristotele ne insegna) sono gli errori appartenenti all’artificio, i quali scenano la riputazione al poeta, et altri sono accidentali, de’ quali se ne fa passaggio. E come un poeta non può alterare né variare la favola già così accettata da tutti, come per caso che Laio sia stato ammazzato da Edipo suo figliuolo, ma ben può variare gli episodi, cioè il modo come questa morte sia accaduta, così il pittore non può dipignere l’angelo in altro modo che in quello che è stato accettato di tutti.  

Ma il modo il può variare, ché ha proporzione con l’episodii della poesia. Imperocché può a sua posta far che l’angelo mentre annunzia stia ancor sospeso in aria, può farlo toccare il suolo della camera co’ piedi, può variar la sua figura di farla piana o scarna o mediocre et altre cose simili, le quali per la varietà loro fanno differenza da pittor a pittore, come gli episodii da poeta a poeta. E quando in queste cose si pecca, sono errori accidentali e che non guastano la sostanza della invenzione. 

In modo che non diremo che Tiziano abbia errato altresì per aver dimostrato questo mistero in una loggia e per avervi fatta dimostrazione di uno edificio molto più soperbo di quello che alla bassa condizione di Maria per sventura non si convenisse; da che queste cose il poeta et il pittore le possono variare e mutare à suo modo. 

Per Apelle dipinse l’image della Guerra aggiugnendovi Alessandro trionfante in un carro, senza metterle le armi sotto; ma non per questo fu da lui diverso Virgilio, senon nel modo. 

Così dunque diremo che non si può Tiziano riprendere perché abbia di volto pieno dipinto quell’agnolo: primo,  

like the Fame and the Poverty, so clearly that, if one thinks well about it, he will find that this is almost a prosopopeia in painting. 

I have decided to say all this so that we know where the painter has the licence to vary as he likes best and where he does not; we will thereby be able to see the extent to which Titian has erred. In this case poetry can serve as an example: in it (as Aristotle teaches) errors pertaining to craftsmanship are those that lessen the poet’s reputation, while others, the consequence of accident, are passed over. And just as a poet cannot alter or vary a universally accepted story (for example the killing of Laius by his son Oedipus) yet may vary the episodes (for instance, the manner in which this death occurred) similarly the painter cannot depict the Angel in a way that is not already accepted by everyone. However, he may vary the manner, as this is analogous to episodes in poetry. He may, in fact, choose to show the Announcing Angel still suspended in the air, or he may make the Angel’s feet rest on the floor of the room; he may change his figure and make it either full, or gaunt or middling or some other way; and these features, because of their variety, differ from painter to painter, as do the episodes from poet to poet. And when someone errs in these things, the error is accidental and does not spoil the substance of the invention. So that we will not say that Titian erred by setting this mystery in a loggia or by depicting an edifice much more superb than one suitable to the low condition of Mary, since both the poet and the painter can vary and change these things as they wish. Likewise, Apelles presented the image of War, adding to it a triumphant Alexander in his chariot, without pinning War’s arms under it; but not for this reason was Virgil any different from him, except in the manner of his representation. So we shall say that Titian cannot be reproved for painting that Angel with a full face: first because,
che non essendo egli inventore della forma, ha potuto variare quello che è accidentale; appresso, che quando bene fusse errore (il che io non confesso già), sarebbe nondimeno di quelli che si concedono ai pittori, de' quali parlava Orazio quando dicea: «Sunt delicta tamen quibus ignovisse velimus».

L’altro di che è ripresa quella pittura, è che non par loro cosa da buon pittore avere mostrato dell’angelo mezzo volto solo, potendolo fare di modo che tutta la faccia paresse, perciò non mette molto più gli occhi de’ riguardanti. Ma di qua si può accorgere V. S. quanto costoro nelle loro ragioni (si come quelli che nel buio dimorano) vadino a tentone. E certamente che l’essere a ltrui ragioni (si come quelli che nel buio dimorano) non una composizione di un valent’uomo, come empie volto ignorante, perché empie l’orecchie, che non essendo egli inventore dell’angolo, ha del debito conoscimento; il che forse a questi è in qualche giudizio intravenuto, i quali errore battezzano quello che a somma lode attribuir si deve.

Perciocché, avendo Tiziano voluto mostrare la grandezza del suo ingegno, non volle mostrare dell’angelo se non mezzo il volto, ma di si bel modo fe’ spiccar la bocca in atto di parlare, che in vederne quel mezzo solo vi par vedere anco tutto quello che si nasconde; e parmi portarsi costoro da volgari che non si fidano di penetrare più ad dentro di quello che il senso li mostra sulla superficie: simili del tutto a quelli i quali a guisa di sissies, 

41 When Maranta characterizes these listeners as ‘i quali a guisa di feminelle’, he thinks least of all about women, as

38 

Ars poet., 347 (‘Ci sono tuttavia difetti che vorremmo perdonare’); cfr. GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 61 sg.


40 Philippus de Monte (Malines 1521-Praga 1603), uno dei maggiori maestri della scuola fiamminga, compose polifonie sacre e profane. Pietro Vinci (Nicosia 1535 circa-1584), maestro di cappella nella chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore a Bergamo dal 1568 al 1580, autore di madrigali, motetti, messe e altre composizioni sacre.

41 When Maranta characterizes these listeners as ‘i quali a guisa di feminelle’, he thinks least of all about women, as he juxtaposes them and priestlings. See, however, Larson, ‘Unaccompanied madrigal’, 261, who thinks the opposite.
fannolo per alquanto sodisfare al popolo, poiché vedono che ben pochi sono coloro che gustino il vero artificio, et in questo a me piace molto lo stile di quelli i quali, non curandosi di piacere al volgo, fanno tutte le loro composizioni secondo l’arte richiede, percioché senza dubbio veruno queste saranno più durabili et eterne. Et Aristotele biasma i poeti che compongono i loro poem a compiacenza del popolo, e questo li dispiacque eziandio in Omero, il quale nella Odissea mescolò con le persone illustri ancora quelli di bassa fortuna; la qual cosa è fuora del vero artificio tragico et epico. Apelle dipinse Ercole mostrando del capo solo la parte di dietro, ma così ben tirato, che patta a chi lo mirava anco di vedere tutta la faccia intera; e quello che non piacque alla turba, diè meraviglia estrema a’ più famosi pittori di quel secolo. Parimente per cosa assai rara e di bel soggetto fu la Ifigenia posta al sacrificio, dipinta da Timante; il quale avendo con diverse effigie di mestizia dipinti tutti i circostanti e per voler mostrare maggior dolore nel padre, il dipinse col viso velato, volendo che ’l pianto suo s’intendesse piú che non si mostrasse. Quelli adunque che in tutte le loro pitture si sforzano di mostrare tutto il volto, dimostrano di aver poco animo e, mentre che han paura di non inciampare, si cautelano solo con lo astenersi dal non errare. Ma questi, se bene fuggono la colpa, non per questo meritano lode. Et in questo pensiero fu sempre il Pistoia, pittore de’ nostri tempi, il quale fu stimato per uomo raro dal volgo, per aver solo una certa vaghezza they do so to satisfy the crowd, as they see that those who enjoy real craftsmanship are few indeed. For this reason I very much like the style of those who, indifferent to pleasing the mob, make all their compositions in accordance with the dictates of art, since without question, such works will be more durable and eternal. And Aristotle blames the poets who compose their verse according to the taste of the mob; he even disliked this trait in Homer, who in his Odyssey mixed the illustrious and the base, a practice that is alien to the real art of tragedy and epic. In depicting Hercules, Apelles showed only the back of his head, but he made it so perfectly that those who looked at it felt as if they saw the full face as well, and that which was not appreciated by the crowd roused the greatest wonder in the most famous painters of that century. Likewise, an extremely rare thing and a beautiful subject was Timanthes’s Iphigenia poised for sacrifice; in it the artist, who had painted all the surrounding characters with different mournful faces, chose to express a greater sorrow in the father by showing him with a veiled face, as he wanted his moan to be heard rather than seen. Therefore, those who in all their paintings strive to show the entire face reveal their lack of courage and, being afraid of stumbling, they protect themselves only by refraining from erring. But the fact that they avoid censure does not make them worthy of praise. This was always the attitude of il Pistoia, a painter of our time, who was esteemed a great man by the mob merely because he had a certain charm

43 Diversamente GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], p. 89: «Del che [del pittore misto] l’esempio potiamo pigliare da Omero e da Virgilio, i quali ne’ lor poemi fecero si dolce, vaga, leggiadra e bella mescolanza…»; PALEOTTI [cfr. la nota 27], p. 450: «Il verisimile conceduto a pittori e poeti, si come dichiara Aristotele, si intende secondo il senso popolare e certa capacità del vulgo; e però dice egli che il sapere fingere accomodatamente non è impresa di ciascuno, ma ricerca gran perizia, giudizio et intelletto, e per questo effetto egli propone Omero da imitarsi, come quello che ha servato grandemente il decoro et accomodatosi graziosamente al verisimile».
44 Cfr. PLINIO, XXXV, 94: «Eiusdem arbitrantur manu esse et in Dianae tempio Herculem aversum, ut, quod est difficilimum, faciem eius ostendat verius pictura quam promittat» (FERRI [cfr. la nota 29], p. 171: «Pensano che sia di mano dello stesso artista, nel tempio di Artemis, anche lo Herakles visto di dietro in modo che, cosa difficilissima, la pittura mostrì in realtà il viso di lui, piuttosto che lasciarlo immaginare»). Il commento all’esempio antico convalida nel Maranta la carenza di quegli interessi pedagogici che invece prevalgono negli scrittori controriformistici.
45 Esempio ben più famoso del precedente: cfr. VARCHI [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 266; GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], p. 315 sg.
46 Cfr. DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], p. 807.
nel colorire. Ma nelle sue pitture non vi s’intendeva più di quello che mostrava, e di loro potean ugualmente dar giudizio il volgo e gli artefici; e, veduta una volta, una sua opera non lasciava desiderio alcuno di ritornarvi, non altrimenti che fanno quelli che con empir una volta ben bene il corpo di qualche cibo, l’hanno dopo per lungo tempo in abominazione. E fu di bell’arte eziandio appresso l’Ariosto il finire i suoi canti con lasciar il lettore sempre con desiderio di leggere appresso. Ma chi sarà stato innamorato (come credo che sia V. S.) non gli parrà strano il non vedere nelle pitture tutto quello che si potrebbe vedere; ché ben sanno loro come col pensiero si passi ad entro, malgrado delle vesti, in quelle parti che si nascondono, col vederne solo alcune di quelle che si mostrano; la qual cosa dona loro maggior diletto e fa più crescere le fiammelle amorose, che non farebbe se ogni parte mirassino. Ché, come non si comporta senza affanno il lungo digiuno delle cose dell’anima, così la sazietà nelle cose belle si schifa e si fugge da ogni nobile spirito. Non vedo dunque come si possa in quell’angiolo biasmare né quella pienezza e carnosità di volto, né quel sito in mostrarne il mezzo solo, poiché tante avertenze vi ha avuto un così cirscopetto artefice.

Ma quello che per aventura si potrebbe in esso riprendere è che non par che abbia Tiziano bene intesa la proporzione di tutto il corpo dell’angelo: perciòché dal ginocchio insino al piede è così poco spazio a rispetto di tutto il corpo, che pare una cosa assai fuori della naturalità. E se in altri soggetti si deve osservare la proporzione, molto più necessaria pare a doversi osservare negli angeli, i quali sono di tutta bellezza e più simili a lddio di tutte le altre cose visibili a invisibili. E come mi rendo certo che V. S. Ill.ma sappia molto bene, il corpo ben proporzionato si divide, infra

in his colours. But in his paintings nothing was understood more than what was shown, and they could be judged both by artists and the mob; and once seen, his works did not leave the viewer with any desire to see them again, just as it happens with those who, having stuffed themselves to the gills on a certain food, hold it long afterwards in abomination. And it was indeed great artistry in Ariosto to finish his cantos by always leaving the reader with a desire to go on reading. But anyone who has been in love (as I believe Your Lordship has) will not find it strange not to see in a painting all that could be seen; lovers, in fact, know only too well how, just by seeing some of the parts that are revealed, they can, in spite of the clothes, go with their thoughts into those parts that are hidden, which gives them greater pleasure and feeds the flames of love more than if they could see all the parts. Because, just as a long abstinence from the things of the spirit does not come without some suffering, so every noble mind loathes and shuns satiation with beautiful things. Therefore, I do not see how one can blame the fullness and fleshiness of that Angel’s face, or the position that shows only half of it, since a very cautious artist made all this with so much care.

But something that might possibly be blamed in it is the fact that Titian does not seem to have correctly understood the proportion of the Angel’s whole body: from the knee to the foot there is, in fact, so little distance in comparison with the whole body that this seems something quite unnatural. And if proportion must be respected in other subjects, so much the more necessary is it to respect it in angels, who are absolutely beautiful and closer to the likeness of God than any other visible or invisible thing. And a well-proportioned body, as I am certain that Your Illustrious Lordship knows very well, is divided

47 Cfr. Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori, scritte da M. VASARI, Firenzena 1568, II, p. 147 [IV, pp. 647 sg.]: «Fu discepolo di Giovanfrancesco [Penni] Lionardo, detto il Pistoia, per esser pistoiese, il quale lavorò alcune cose in Lucca, et in Roma fece molti ritratti di naturale, ed in Napoli per il vescovo d’Ariano, Diomede Caraffa oggi cardinale, fece in San Domenica una tavola della Lapidazione di Santo Stefano in una sua cappella; ed in Monte Oliveto ne fece un’altra, che fu posta all’altare maggiore e levatane poi per dar luogo a un’altra di simile invenzione di mano di Giorgio Vasari aretino. Guadagnò Lionardo molti danari con que’ signori napoletani, ma ne fece poco capitale, perché se gli giocava di mano in mano: e finalmente si morì in Napoli lasciando nome di essere stato buon coloritore, ma non già d’avere avuto molto buon disegno».

48 L’Ariosto torna ad essere esemplare per i pittori (cfr. DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 298 sgg., 830), dopo i rigori tridentini.
molte altre divisioni, in quattro parti uguali: 49 l’una è dalla sommità della testa insino al mezzo delle mammelle, l’altra insino alla infima parte del pettignone, e da questa parte alla fine del ginocchio sotto la padella è la terza, e l’ultima poi insino alla stremità del tallone. Dovendo dunque lo spazio che è dalla inferior parte del ginocchio insino al basso del piede essere uguale a quello che è dal medesmo luoco del ginocchio alla piegatura della coscia, chi ben consideri, in quell’angelo non par che truovi questa corrispondenza, anzi par che sia poco meno che doppio intervallo quello che può essere dal pettine al ginocchio a quello che è dal ginocchio al calcagno. O se pure no veissimo imaginare questa misura ben proporzionata (perciòché il corpo è vestito e per congettura giudichiamo il segno dell’intercoscio), ne segue poi un altro disordine: che lo spazio che è da questo intercoscio alla parte di dietro, dove l’angelo viene a piegarsi, sarebbe assai più di quello che il suo dritto richiede. Questo medesimo difetto par che sia nella Madonna, la quale, oltre al ginocchio, poco più di niente le resta per denotare là lunghezza della gamba, oltreché, col stare inginocchiata su quel taglio dello scabello, par che poco più di niente le resta per denotare là lunghezza della gamba, oltreché, col stare inginocchiata su quel taglio dello scabello, par che sia nella Madonna, la quale, oltre al ginocchio, poco più di niente le resta per denotare là lunghezza della gamba, oltreché, col stare inginocchiata su quel taglio dello scabello, par che stia molto a disagio, né potrebbe uno dur arvi così senza sentir estremo dolore. Ma questo non é di molto momento, ché chi è rapita dallo spirito e posta in un certo modo fuori di sé, non é meraviglia che non miri come si ponga a ginocchione e che non senta dolore, ancorché vi sia la cagion di esso. Il braccio dritto ancora dal gomito insino alla estremità della mano par che pechi del troppo lungo, perciòché tre di quei gomiti sopravanzerebbono la lunghezza del corpo suo dal capo al ginocchio, dovendo il gomito essere di uguale spacio che è una delle misure dette di sopra, che fanno la quarta parte di tutto il corpo. Ma perché non é l’intento nostro ragionare della Madonna, ma dell’angelo solo, per questo non starò a dilungarmi in essa, riserbandomi solo nella fine di questo mio discorso rispondere a tutti questi dubbi.

Ora, tornando all’angelo, per esser la pittrura una di quelle cose che si lodano co l’epitetetto del bello, vediamo quante cose si richiegano a far la bellezza, acciò possiamo conoscere se in quell’angelo vi siano. La bellezza umana (perché di questa é il nostro ragionamento) alla sua perfezione richiede debita proporzione, debita among many other divisions, into four equal parts: one, from the top of the head to the middle of the breast; another, down to the lowest part of the pubis, or rather, should we say, to the joint of the thigh and the hip; the third one extends from this place to the bottom of the knee under the patella, and the last one goes to the extreme end of the heel. Then, if the distance between the lower part of the knee to the bottom of the foot must be equal to the distance from the same spot in the knee to the connection of the thigh, on close observation one does not find this correspondence in that Angel: it even seems that the distance between the pubis and the knee may be a little less than twice as long as the distance from knee to heel. Now, supposing we were willing to think that this distance is indeed well-proportioned (since the figure is clothed and we imagine the spot of the thigh-joint only conjecturally), then another disproportion emerges: in fact, the space from this thigh-joint to the back of the Angel, there where he bends, is much wider that it ought to be. This same flaw seems to be present in the Madonna, on whom little more than nothing, apart from the knee, is left to give an indication of the length of her leg; moreover she appears to be in great discomfort, in consequence of her kneeling on the edge of the stool, and no one could maintain this posture for long without feeling extreme pain. This is not so important, however, since if a woman is rapt by the Spirit and is in a certain way out of herself, it is no wonder that she is unaware that she is kneeling and she does not feel any pain, though there may be a good reason for it. The right arm, from the elbow to the end of the hand, seems faulty by being too long, since three of those elbows would surpass the length of her body from the head to the knee, as the length of the elbow should be equal to one of the divisions mentioned above, each of which is the fourth part of the whole body. However, it is not our intention to discuss the Madonna, but only the Angel. Therefore I will not elaborate upon her, though I reserve the option to give an answer to all these doubts at the end of my discourse.

Now, returning to the Angel, if painting is one of those things that are lauded with the epithet ‘beautiful’, let’s see how many things are required to make up beauty, so that we may know whether they are present in that Angel. In order to be perfect, human beauty (for this is what we are talking about) requires proper proportion, proper

49 Divisioni semplicistiche rispetto a quelle vitruviane o pseudo-varroniane (cfr. PINO e DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 104 sg., pp. 800 sgg.).
questo uno basta a darli bell’aria e far la parer membri, non può la pittura mostrarne più di uno, e consistendo la grazia negli atti e ne’ movimenti de’ membri, non può la pittura mostrarne più di uno, e questo uno basta a darli bell’aria e farla parer meravigliosa. Ma nei viventi la leggiadria è in più atti e più movimenti, perciòché, se uno che nel resto fusse bello faccesse una sola azione con grazia, ancorché sempre quell’una dimostrasse e non altra, non per questo si terrebbe nel numero de’ graziosi, ma più tosto de’ goffi, e la cagione è che una sola cosa bella in un soggetto che è atto a poterne avere infinite belle, sarebbe in guisa che non si desidera di vedere spesse volte. Ma chi non può darne se non una, ogni volta che sia giunta alla sua perfezione, si vede da ciascuno volentieri spesse volte e si ammira, e questa è una delle cagioni principali perché la pittura, come la poesia, si richiede di estrema perfezione, e la mediocrità in loro in niun conto è tolerabile, come suole essere nelle altre scienze e professioni, e, per dirla col mio cittadino: «Si paulum summo discessit, vergit ad imum». Imperòché, dovendo quella mostrare un atto solo di una favola o di una storia, e questa azione sola di favola e non più, se non sarà scelta e senza pecca alcuna, ancorché menoma, non si comporta né si si tiene per buona. E questo tanto più nella pittura si richiede, quanto che nelle azioni è molto più semplice della poesia. Come, per esempio, Alberto Durero
volendo dipingere tutti i misterii della Passione di Nostro Signore, gli fu forza fare dicesette quadri per mostrare altrettante azioni, perciocché un quadro non potea esprimere se non una azzione.  

Metteremo dunque la disposizione nella pittura per quinta condizione e per cosa diversa dalla quarta, et intenderemo per essa il sito, o vogliamo dire la posizone o l’attitudine del corpo, nella quale l’arte fice ha fatto l’uomo dipinto. La quale, quando è fatta con arte e con grazia, acquista lode grandissima al pittore piú che di altra cosa che vi sia, et in questo modo diremo che Michelagnolo nella pittura del Giudizio fra l’altre meraviglie abbia osservato che tutte le figure sono di vario sito e disposizione, e questa viene a essere parte della grazia, la quale contiene molto piú, come da quello che appresso di essa diremo si potrà comprendere. 

Tornando dunque a quel che dicevamo, perché la proporzione di quell’angiolet se ne è detto quello che ne potea far dubio, diremo ora delle altre condizioni della bellezza, e primo considereremo la quantità, la quale in tutte le cose (come ne ammonisce Aristotele) deve essere né così grande e smisurata che al primo incontro della vista non se ne possa vedere il principio et il fine, né cosí picciola che le parti sue appena si discernano et in esse non si possa fare conveniente discorso; e questo non solo per la quantità apparente, ma eziandio per rispetto di quello che in quella quantità si può vélatamente intendere, come mi dichiarerò or ora. E come che a prima vista l’angelo di quella pittura mostrì di avere questa condizione, per essere tutto il suo corpo né molto grande né estremamente picciolo, nondimeno il discorso che si può fare sopra di quelle grandezza può ricevere alcun dubbi. Tra’ quali sarà che, dipingendosi l’angiolet in forma puerile, come disopra abbiam detto, per denotar frall’altre cose la purità sua, bisognerebbe pigliar quella parte di puerizia che non potesse generar nella mente di chi ’l riguarda imaginazione alcuna d’impurità, da che questo corpo di angelo è una certa metafora pitturale di quello che nel vero non wanting to depict all the mysteries of Our Lord’s Passion, was forced to make seventeen different paintings in order to show as many actions, since one picture could show only one action. 

Therefore, in painting we will add posture as a fifth condition, distinct from the fourth, and by it we will mean the placement, or the position or the attitude of the body in which the artist has shown the man he has depicted. This, more than anything else, when done with art and grace, earns the painter the highest praise. Accordingly, we shall say that Michelagnolo, in his painting of the Judgment, among all its other wonders, saw to it that every figure had a different placement and posture, and the latter is part of grace, which contains much more, as it will be clear from what we shall say below. 

Returning then to what we were saying, since we mentioned all that might seem perplexing about the proportion of that Angel, we shall now speak about the other conditions of beauty. And to start with, we shall discuss quantity, which in all things (as Aristotle warns) must neither be so large and outsized that one cannot at the first sight of it see both the beginning and the end, nor so small that its parts are barely discernible and it is impossible to make a proper comment about them. And this is true not only regarding the visible quantity, but also regarding what we may covertly perceive, as I shall say hereafter. And I shall say how at first glance the Angel in that painting shows to have that quality, as his body is neither very large nor extremely small, although the comments that can be made about that size may raise some doubts. One of these doubts will be that, since the Angel was depicted with a childlike aspect (as we said above) in order to denote his purity, among other things, we should focus on that part of childlikeness that cannot cause the viewer’s mind to imagine any impurity, as this Angel’s body is a certain pictorial metaphor of something that 

54 Per le stampe del Dürer cfr. VASARI [cfr. la nota 30], p. 658; DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19] qui pp. 794 sg. 
55 Cfr. p. 875 e qui le note 50 e 51. È evidente il disagio con cui il dilettante Maranta cerca di orientarsi sulla teories figurativa del tempo. 
56 Maranta è quindi d’accordo col VASARI [cfr. la nota 30], p. 984. 
si può con pittura esprimere, cioè della natura e dell’esser suo. Ma chi ben guarda l’età che dimostra quell’angelo, ciascuno il judicherà di dicessette anni poco più o meno, nella quale età può l’uomo essere impuro e disonesto. Per levar dunque questa rappresentazione dalle menti di ciascuno era forse più convenevole mostrarlo in età da quattordici anni in giù, nella quale età si mostra la securzezza e la semplicità più chiara senza pur un picciolo sospetto di disonestà. Ma a questo dubio si può facilmente rispondere, concedendo che così si debba fare ogni volta che cosa di maggior importanza non ne forzi a fare il contrario, come è avenuto in questo disegno. Imperché, dovendosi esprimere uno ambasciatore del supremo e glorioso Iddio e che abbia in commessone da rivelare il più esprimer uno ambasciatore del supremo e glorioso Dio. Ma la pubescente età è più conforme per altro motivo: la giovinezza è più stabile, discordevole e stracurata, e che potrebbe fare star sospeso il signore se sappia fare l’imbasciata di quello istesso modo ch’egli gliel’ha commessa.  
E per questa cagione gli antichi teologi l’imbasciata di quello i stesso modo ch’egli gliel’ha commessa in far ambasciatore degli dèi Mercurio, il feciono di commessa.  
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58 Dalla quantità aristotelica si passa a divertite preoccupazioni controriformistiche, degne dell’ironia dello stesso GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], pp. 859.

59 Cfr. invece V. CARTARI, Le imagini, con la spositione de i dei de gli antichi [1556], Venezia 1647, p. 166: «Nel libro delle anticaglie raccolte da Pietro Appiano si vede che fu già fatto per Mercurio un giovane senza barba, con due alette sopra le orecchie, tutto nudo ... ». Gli antichi teologi sembrano uno scoperto espediente per porre in luce il senno dei habitatori del cielo, dimostrata principalmente a d

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si dimostra la spirituale et incorporea natura loro, perciò che quasi da ognuno è stata dipinta l’anima in forma puerile, o sia stata di vecchio o di giovene barbato o senza barba, e ciò non solo per le ragioni dette, ma ancora per darci a intendere che dopo morte non è differenza di persone, ma tutti siamo uguali senza eccezione. Così le ha depinte Michelagnolo nella pittura del suo Giudizio, così tutti quelli che fanno l’angelo Michele contrapesare le anime nelle bilancie o nella statera. 64 E se alcune ve ne sono nel Giudizio di Michelangelo con la barba (che ben pochi sono), sonosi così da lui dipinte per altre cagioni che a così far lo ritraevano, come fu il ritratto di quel Vescovo, il quale, mentre era a Michelagnolo importuno, si vide ritratto nell’Inferno che appena se ne accorse. 65

Della grandezza della Madonna non vo’ ragionare a pieno. Ma perché alcuni altri dicono lei essere troppo piccola di persona, risponderò solo che così molto meglio si esprime la umiltà, la quale fu sempre sopra ogni stato esaltata da Nostro Signore, che, come non volle nascere in Roma o in altro paese celebre e soperbo, ma nella umile e bassa Giudea, così era da credere anco che volesse fare elezione d’un chiostrò virginal ove, disegnato così della piccola statura, la quale non è però estremamente piccola, dimostrando in essa la età di quattordeci anni o poco più. Oltre che le donne generalmente, per rispetto del sesso, sono molto più degli uomini picciole, senzaché il sito in che ella sta viene a farla parere molto più bassa di quello che, se così piegata non fusse per umiliarsi

their spiritual and incorporeal nature is more openly evident, so that the soul, whether it was that of an old man or of a bearded youth or of a beardless one, was painted by almost everyone in a childish form, and not only for the reasons I have mentioned, but also to make us understand that after death there is no difference between one person and another, as we are all equal without exception. This is how they were depicted by Michelagnolo when he made his Judgment and by all those who show the Angel Michael weighing the souls on a balance or on a steel yardstick. And if in Michelagnolo’s Judgment some (very few) are depicted with a beard, they are portrayed like this for other reasons that pushed him to do so, as is the case of the portrait of that Bishop who, being bothersome to Michelagnolo, found himself put in Hell, almost without being aware of it.

Of the size of the Madonna, I do not want to speak at length. But, since some say that her person is too small, I will only respond that this so much better represents her humility, which was always lauded by Our Lord above every other virtue. And since He chose to be born not in Rome or in some other superb and celebrated place, but in low and humble Judea, it is also to be believed that His preference would be for a humble virginal vessel, indicated by the small size, which, however, is not extremely small, since in her it indicates an age of fourteen or a little older. Moreover women, because of their sex, are generally much smaller than men are, not to mention the fact that the way in which she is positioned makes her seem much smaller than she would be were she not so bent over in order to humble

64 Sulle caratteristiche della risurrezione cfr. GILIO [cfr. la nota 19], p. 66: «L’istesso Agostino tiene che tutti risuscitieranno ne l’età di trenta tre anni e ne la grandezza di persona che fu vivendo, o sarebbe stato; ne la quale età morì il Salvator nostro, la quale da Paolo è chiamata età d’uomo perfetto. Quanto a la grandezza de la persona, già v’ho detto e di più vi dico, che a’ fanciulli piccoli, ancora a quelli che con l’anima sono morti nel corpo de la madre, si accrescerà la statura tanto, quanto fussero morti di trenta tre anni; a coloro che sono morti vecchi e decrepiti si scereranno gli anni tanto, che mostrino quella istessa età ne la quale morì il Salvator nostro; il quale è stato il primo a darci la regola et a mostrari il modo de la resurrezione. E si come esso risuscitò immortale, immortali anco noi risuscitaremo». La immagine dell’arcangelo Michele con le bilance è naturalmente estranea all’affresco michelangeloesco e può essere stata suggerita dal ricordo di opere anteriori. San Michele pesatore di anime ebbe infatti una fortuna mediash e fu scelto quale patrono dei commercianti e dei farmacisti.

65 Cfr. VASARI [cfr. la nota 30], 1550, pp. 981 sg.: «In questo tempo Sua Santità volse vedere la cappella [Sistina], e perché il maestro delle cerimonie [Biagio da Cesena] usò pressunzione et entrovvi seco e biasimóla per li tanti ignudi; onde volendosi vendicare Michele Agnolo lo ritrasse di naturale, nell’inferno, nella figura di Minos fra un monte di diavoli». 
alla volontà divina, mostrare non potrebbe. E con questo sarà risposto forse a quel dubbio che noi lasciammo insoliti di sopra della proporzione della Madonna.

Ma torniamo all’angelo e poiché abbiamo detto a bastanza delle due condizioni necessarie alla pittura: cioè della proporzione e della quantità, diciamo delle altre. Era la terza cosa la vivacità convenevole del colore. Veggonsi i lumi e le ombre di quell’angelo così attamente poste che danno meravigliosa vivacità all’opera per la rassombranza che hanno le parti ignude con la carnatura umana, e parimente le vestite con li panni naturali. Talmente che, non già colori o pur tela colorita par vedere, ma veri e vivi membri umani, verissimile naturalissimi panni. E, quel che pochi ponno asseguire, sono i colori svegliati e vivi, ma non tanto lucenti che offendano la vista; della qual cosa solo si gloriò a’ suoi tempi Apelle, il quale, dopo aver finita ciascuna sua opera, quella con una certa tintura nera dolcemente copriva per affievolire i colori troppo lucidi et eccitare gli smorti, oltre che li defendeva dalla polve. La qual cosa gli riuscì così felicemente che da niuno fu mai saputo imitare. E per venire più al particolare, sono i capelli dell’angelo di sì bel colore e con tanto artificio adombrati e di così vaga disposizione, che fanno parere il capo fuor del quadro e paiono i capelli di potersi da vero con le mani appendere; oltre che, con averli fatti spessi e

66 Anche per la Madonna il Maranta propone una interpretazione simbolica (cfr. pp. 866 sgg.), non senza accennare alle proprie conoscenze mediche.

67 A modo suo il Maranta riecheggia la triplice ripartizione della pittura del PINO [cfr. la nota 50], pp. 757; e del DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], 792 sgg.

68 La scarsa adesione all’opera d’arte induce lo scrittore a ricorrere ad uno dei soliti esempi pliniani; cfr. PLINIO, XXXV, 97: «Inventa eius et ceteris profuere in arte, unum imitari nemo potuit, quod absoluta opera atramentoinlinebat ita tenui ut id ipsum, repercussum, claritatis colorum album excitaret custodiretque a pulvere et sordibus, ad manum intuenti demum appareret, sed et tum ratione magna, ne claritas colorum aciem offendere veluti per lapidem specularem intuentibus, et e longinquo eadem res nimiris fioridis coloribus austeritatem occulte dare» (FERRI [cfr. la nota 29], pp. 173 sgg. : « Le sue [di Apelle] invenzioni giovarono anche agli altri artisti; una sola cosa nessuno poté imitare, l’uso cioè di verniciare le opere ultime con una mano di atramentum così leggiera, che esso stesso atramentum, costituendo una superficie riflettente, provocava un color bianco di luminosità e custodiva la pittura dalla polvere e dal sudiciume; lo si vedeva, se uno guardasse da vicino, ma anche allora, con grande accorgimento, serviva a che lo splendor dei colori non offendesse la vista – pareva di vedere la pittura dietro una lastra di talco –; invece, per chi guardava da lontano, questa vernice dava inavvertitamente una certa austerità ai colori troppo vistosi e accesi»). Cfr. anche DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], p. 812.
focò è luminosissimo, semplice, immescolabil e, e sustanzia eterna, immateriale, e di nulla forma o per farne le menti de’ mortali capaci, hanno la sua cosi ne sia lecito il parlarne. Come, per esempio, il somiglianze et immagini delle proprietà di Dio, se disegnata; perciòché il fuoco contiene in sé molte figura rieetto, con le varie proprietà del fuoco dianzi si abbia rasciugato il sudore. Non perché considera quel volto, gli rassemblerà uno che pur prestissimo il mandato dell’eterno Iddio. E chi ben particolarità del misterio. Ma se vorremo noi più ma per esprimere con questi umani accidenti le angioli si affaticino per lo camino e si angoscino, verisimile ch’usasse l’angelo per eseguir intendere con questo la velocità grande ch’era apparenza nel volto di chi per un buon tratto di via arà con gran frett a caminato o corso, per darci ad intendere con questo la velocità grande ch’era verisimile ch’usasse l’angelo per eseguir prestissimo il mandato dell’eterno Iddio. E chi ben considera quel volto, gli rassemblerà uno che pur dianzi si abbia rasciugato il sudore. Non perché angoli si affatichino per lo camino e si angoscino, ma per esprimere con questi umani accidenti le particolarità del misterio. Ma se vorremo noi più adentro passare nella profondità delle cose divine, troveremo che quel rossore non ne dimostra altro se non il fuoco, il quale da’ teologi figuratamente è attribuito agli angoli.69 Anzi gli troni e gli serafini dicano essere di fuoco et a loro assegnano le istesse proprietà che ha il fuoco, e vogliono per questo farci conoscere che la faccia deli celesti spiriti sia per lo fulgore della faccia di Dio illuminata a guisa di fuoco. Percioché (come l’Areopagita ne insegna) coloro che santissimamente hanno di Dio parlato, per farne le menti dei’ mortali capaci, hanno la sua susanzia eterna, immateriale, e di nulla forma o figura racettò, con le varie proprietà del fuoco disegnata; perciòché il fuoco contiene in sé molte somiglianze et immagini delle proprietà di Dio, se così ne sia lecito il parlare. Come, per esempio, il foco è luminosissimo, semplice, immescolabile, e ciò che tocca converge nella sua natura. Va sempre in alto velociissimo, ogni cosa abbraccia et esso abbracciar non si può, si comunica a tutti senza patir diminuzione alcuna, et altre infinite proprietà possiede, simili alle azioni divine. In quanto alle sembianze umane, è lecito il rassemblerle a quelle. Fingono dunque i celesti spiriti essere di fuoco per farci conoscere che la natura loro divina non fa altro che imitare (quanto per loro possibile è) Dio eterno e santo, il quale è attamente al fuoco assomigliato; e per questa cagione anco si suol fare negli angoli vestiti la vesta di color rosso e luminoso.70 Il che da Tiziano, abundant, he wanted to show its charm to be artless and undyed. The face, then, he has coloured with a mixture that expresses neither lasciviousness nor effeminacy (as we shall soon say at greater length, when we discuss the physiognomy), but rather veneration and respect; he has in fact coloured the whole of it with the kind of blush that is wont to appear on the face of one who has walked or run for a goodly distance with great urgency. This is to convey the great velocity that very likely the Angel used to accomplish the mandate of the eternal God as swiftly as possible. And whoever studies this face will be reminded of one who has just wiped off his sweat. Not because angels are fatigued by a journey or are grieved, but to express by means of these human accidents the particularities of the mystery. But if we want to penetrate more deeply into the profundity of divine things, we will find that this blush represents nothing other than the fire that theologians figuratively attribute to angels. The thrones and the seraphim are rather often said to be of fire, and to them are assigned the same properties that fire has, and they in this way want to let us know that the visage of a celestial spirit is illuminated in the guise of fire by the refulgence of the face of God. In fact (as the Areopagite teaches us), in order to make the humans’ minds capable of understanding, those who have spoken about God in the holiest way have used the various guises of fire to portray His eternal and immaterial substance, which has no form or figure, because fire contains in itself many likenesses and images of God’s properties, if we are allowed to speak in this way. As, for example, fire is extremely luminous, simple and unmixable, and what it touches is transformed into its nature. It always rises upwards very swiftly, it embraces all and cannot be embraced, it can give its substance to all without diminishing itself, and it possesses an infinity of other properties similar to the divine actions. As for human features, it is licit to liken them to those. Celestial spirits, then, show that they are of fire so we may understand that their divine nature does nothing but imitate (insofar as they are capable of doing so) the holy and eternal God, who is appropriately likened to fire; and for this same reason it is usual to choose a luminous, red colour to make the robes of the angels that are shown wearing clothes, which Titian,

69 Dalle notazioni naturalistiche a quelle simboliche, con una certa predilezione o fiducia per queste ultime. Sul valore della corsa cfr. BRUNO [cfr. la nota 61], pp. 48 sg., sul valore del fuoco cfr. BRUNO [cfr. la nota 61], p. 39.

70 Cfr. ancora BRUNO [cfr. la nota 61], pp. 33 sgg., 39 sg.
ricordevole di quanto bisognava, assai bene osservato; nella quale vesta ha di tal maniera il bianco col rosso mescolato, che non pare che venga dall’esterior lume, ma più tosto nasca di dentro e dalla persona sua illuminata, il qual lume, riflettendo anco nelle ali, fa nascere quella varietà di colori nelle sue penne di giallo, azurro, verde e rosso e discambianti a similitudine del’arco celeste, la cui varietà de colori si fa dalla istessa causa. E quei colori nelle ali ne danno una certa meraviglia, per non gli aver noi veduti ancora in animale alcuno volatile; e ben conviene ciò, poiché la Iride fingono i poeti essere figlia di Taumante, che non vuol dir altro che »meraviglia», come esponde Platone.71

Delle altre parti dell’angelo e della Madonna, per quello che alla vaghezza de’ colori appartiene, io vo’ tacere, tra per fuggire la lunghezza del dire e perché è cosa che chiaramente appare a ciascuno quanto ben sia stata fatta. E venendo alla quarta condizione, la quale è la grazia, dico che, come nel dar vaghezza a’ colori, se bene non avanza ogniuno, non cede però a niuno, così in questa sola cosa in tutte le sue opere Tiziano, a giudizio di quanti ne ho udito ragionare, ottiene la palma in tutte le sue opere Tiziano, a giudizio di ogniuno, non cede però a niuno, così in questa sola cosa in tutte le sue opere Tiziano, a giudizio di quanti ne ho udito ragionare, ottiene la palma ne’ nostri tempi.72 Questo si vede specialmente ne’ suoi ritratti dal naturale (di chi egli ha fatta particolar professione, più che di altro). A’ quali, oltre il fargli i membri alla viva imagine similiissimi, gli dà poi l’aria di così bella maniera, che vi par esser dentro lo spirito. Altri pittori somigliano il naso al naso, la bocca alla bocca, gli occhi agli occhi del vivo, et in somma ogni membro da per sé considerato dimostra rassemblanza col vero. Ma riguardando poi tutta la composizione di tutti i membri, dalla quale nasce e risulta varia, no so come non par dessa, ma alquanto diversa et a punto si somiglia a colui, il quale, non avendo per diece anni veduto un suo amico, vedendolo poi sta tra si e no che sia desso e non si assicura di fargli motto. Percioché, se bene gli pare che abbia quelli istessi membri e quei medesmi segni che

71 Dalla simbologia biblica a quella mitologica. Su Iridé cfr. CARTARI [cfr. la nota 59], p. 199.

guarda e ammira, e ben pare che non da altro possa procedere che da Dio. Percioché questa sappiamo come ella sia fatta e quale sia la sua sede nei volti umani a chi più e a chi meno, e noi non dalle altre perturbazioni che ne sogliono accadere, altrimente, ancorché in essa non abbiano fatta sarà paruta bellissima che ora pare si noi mi più dalla età. Percioché un anno fa tal donna ne e con grandissima sodisfazione dell'animo la visi e l'occhio più che ogni altra cosa se ne rallegra principale, ma solamente la conosciamo negli altrui immediatamente viene dal volto di Dio e si sparge diceno Platonici che è uno influsso che ho voluto dire per dichiararmi che cosa io intendo è diversa e che noi chiamiamo aria, è dono di Dio e da Dio solo a noi s'influisce non altrimente che è diversa e che noi chiamiamo aria, è dono di Dio e da Dio solo a noi s'influisce non altrimente che l'anima che ne dà la forma e l'essere, senza che la natura vi abbia parte come ha nelle altre tre parti dette di sopra, le quali risultano dall'ottimo temperamento naturale, così di divino spirito bisogno è che sia quel pittore, il quale nelle sue opere la saprà attimamente dimostrare, imitando in questa una cosa il magistero ch a Dio solo (eccettuandone eziandio la natura) è conceduto a poter fare. Questa leggiadria o si ritrae da qualche vivente, et allora il pittore ha quell'obbligo di farla somigliare particolarmente

he bore, nonetheless, since he does not see in him the same aura that he once had (which, however, usually changes with the passing of the years), he is unsure whether to call him and embrace him. Precisely this aura is the very thing that is alternatively called ‘elegance’, which in beautiful bodies produces more beauty, and sometimes in a body we can see all the three conditions that I have mentioned earlier, i.e. the quantity and proportion of the features and the charming quality of the colours, but, because this fourth (i.e. elegance and loveliness) is not present, the body seems in some way insipid and the sight of it is cloying to us right away. And this is the thing that is lost or damaged in consequence of the slightest accident, such as sickness, melancholy, choler or some other unbalance that may usually occur, but most of all in consequence of age. Thus, that woman who might have looked very beautiful a year ago now appears to us quite different, though neither the quantity nor the correspondence of her limbs nor the colour have changed or altered at all. I have wanted to say this to make it clear what I mean by grace or loveliness in the painting,75 which the Platonists say is an influx that comes directly from the face of God and spreads over human faces, to some more, to some less, and we do not know what it is like and which is its principal site; we only experience it in the faces of others and the eye, more than any other thing, rejoices at its presence and looks at it with the greatest satisfaction of the soul and admires it, and it does indeed seem that it can proceed from nothing else but God. Thus this divine part hidden in the face of an ordinary woman of humble origin forces the hearts of kings and emperors not only to love her, but also to revere and worship her as if she were a holy thing. We very often see this happen in true and courtly lovers.

Then, just as this grace, which is different in each person and which we call ‘aura’, is a gift from God and only from God flows into us, not unlike the soul which gives it form and being, without nature having any role in it as it has in the other three parts mentioned above, which result from an optimal natural mixture, so it is necessary that the divine spirit be a quality of that painter who in his works will then be able to reveal grace in the appropriate way, imitating in this one thing the mastery that God alone (also excepting Nature) has the right to have. This elegance is either depicted by looking at a living person, in which case the painter has the obligation to make the portrait resemble

73 Sui ritratti di Tiziano cfr. VASARI [cfr. la nota 30], p. 581; DOLCE [cfr. la nota 72], p. 145.
74 Sul valore della grazia in senso platonico cfr. VARCHI [cfr. la nota 50], pp. 88 sgg.
75 Maranta clearly refers to the Annunciation painting in the Pinelli chapel.
a quello, o si fa a beneplicato dell’artece nell’e

dico che egli da sua posta ha fatte ritraendo un

d sought for a man enough to a idea formatted in the mind sua;\textsuperscript{77} et in questo si

mostra maggior ingegno, perciocché quivi ha da far

grazia de’ riguardanti. Et è ciò di

movimenti si possono fare con una certa leggiadria

Asclepiodoro e nella diligenza a Protogene, \textsuperscript{79}
disposizione ad Anfione e nella pro\nopzione ad

dalla tavola. \textsuperscript{80}

richiede, dove si mostrì o persuasione o

diligenza, dicendosi che non sapea levare la mano

ancora che in costui fosse ripreso quella soverchì a

mostra maggior ingegno, perciò che quivi ha da far

idea formata nella mente sua; \textsuperscript{76} et in questo si

figura che egli da sua posta ha fatte ritraendo una

di lui o peraltro, però in una cosa egli lo superava, nel saper mettere la parola “fine” a un

883

Vinegia 1544, p. 228.


78 PLINIO, XXXV, 79: «Praecipua eius in arte venustas fuit, cum eadem aetate maximii pictores essent. Quorum opera cum admiraretur, omnibus conlauatatis, desesse illam suam Venerem dicebat, quam Graeci Charita vocant: cetera omnia contigisse, sed hac sola sibi neminem parem» (FERRI [cfr. la nota 29], p. 163: «Superò tutti in arte per la sua

venustà e grazia, pur vi vendo in quell’epoca i pittori più famosi. Egli mentre ammirava le loro opere, dopo averli

lodati tutti diceva che mancava loro o quella sua speciale leggiadria, che i Greci chiamano charis; potevan possedere

tutte le altre qualità, ma in questa sola nessuno era pari a lui»). Cfr. anche DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], p. 829.


simplicità fu pari all’arte sua: riconosceva di essere inferiori a Melantios per le composizione delle figure, ad

Asclepiodoros in proportione a Protogene,\textsuperscript{79}

ancora che in costui fosse ripreso quella soverchìa
diligenza, dicendosi che non sapea levare la mano
dalla tavola.\textsuperscript{80}

that person in particulars, or it is represented at the

artist’s pleasure in those figures that he has made to
give shape deliberately to an idea formed in his

mind. And in this he shows greater talent, since in

that case he must make many more considerations

in bringing out the personality of the one he depicts

according to the mystery, the tale or the story that

the place and time require, and in showing

persuasion or dissuasion, acceptance or rejection,

and these with either anger or sympathy, gentleness

or rigidity, joyfulness or sadness, and so on, or

showing two or more of these things at the same
time. These things must be made apparent not only

in the face, but also in all the other parts of the

body. And human beings may talk with grace, walk

with grace, or with grace they may look, laugh, eat,
drink, sleep and die; in short, any movement can be

accomplished with a certain elegance that mellows

the eye of the viewer. And this is of such a great

importance that from it alone Apelles derived

special renown and triumphed over all the other

most famous painters, an achievement of which he

used to boast, saying that the works of those

famous contemporary painters might well deserve

great admiration and praise, but they lacked that

appeal and that grace of [which] we have been

speaking, and in this he vaunted that he had no

peer, although he admitted that in the other aspects

he was equalled and even, perhaps, surpassed.

Indeed, he yielded to Amphion in posture, to

Asclepiodoros in proportion and to Protogenes in
diligence, whom however he blamed for an excess

in that diligence, which, he said, prevented him

from ever taking his hand off his work.
E quando io volesse far comparazione di Tiziano con alcuno degli antichi, non saprei a chi meglio somigliarlo che ad Apelle, perciocché l’uno e l’altro fu felicissimo nel ritrarre dal naturale i viventi. E fu così proprio ad Apelle, che Alessandro Magno vietò per publico editto che nino altro lo potesse ritrarre, ancorché in quel tempo fussino valentissimi uomini, come Protagone, Asclepiodore, Anfione, Aristide, di chi si legge che Attalo re comprò un quadro, dove era dipinto il padre Libero, semilata sesterzii. Vi furono eziandio degli altri, co’ quali postosi a gara a dipignere un cavallo, fu il suo così meraviglioso, che ad esso solo i cavalli annitrirono. Ma che Tiziano sia oggi nel ritrarre il primo, è noto a ciascuno; l’uno e l’altro nel colorire felicissimi, et amendue hanno avanzato nella grazia et venustà tutti i pittori del suo tempo. E se non fussse ch’io temo di non offender qualcuno che per famoso si tiene, direi delle altre somiglianze che fra questi due possono cadere.

Ora vediamo quanto riluca in quell’angelo questa leggiadria et aria, e credomi che quel volto non sia ritratto da persona alcuna viva, ma formato nella mente sua e poi posto nella tela, ancor che abbia alle volte Tiziano (per quanto da altri mi è stato riferito) fatto ciò forse a cominciata di chi ha fatta far l’opera, perocché, come questa è più facile, così anco nelle pitture religiose non genera molta devozione; perciocché il vedere il volto di uno uomo da noi conosciuto per peccatore e forse anco per cattivo, e vestito dell’abito di un santo, ne rappresenta la vita sua et in un certo modo ne fa parere quel santo di mala vita, o vero ne parrà un ritratto della ipocrisia, e par che in guardar lo vi dà cagione di dubitare che d’ora in ora non siate da lui dannificato. E per questa cagione quei reverendi padri di Monte Oliveto levorno

And if I wanted to compare Titian to one of the ancients, I would not know who better to compare him to than to Apelles, as both of them were excellent in portraying living persons from life. And this is so true in the case of Apelles that Alexander the Great decreed that none other else should paint a portrait of him by a public edict, even though in those days there were many excellent painters around, such as Protagenes, Asclepiodorus, Amphion and Aristides, from whom, we read, King Attalus purchased a picture in which Father Liber was depicted at the price of six thousand sesterces. There were also others, against whom he placed himself in competition for painting a horse, and his was so wonderful that before it alone the horses neighed. But that Titian today excels in portraiture is known to everybody; both the one and the other are excellent in the use of colours, and both have surpassed all the painters of their times as regards grace and loveliness. And if I were not afraid of offending someone who thinks himself famous, I would mention some other similarities that might exist between these two.

We now see how this elegance and this aura shine in the Angel, and I believe that this face was not painted from a living person, but took shape in the mind of the painter, who then put it on the canvas, though Titian has at times done that (so have I heard from others), perhaps to please him who ordered the work, but, although this is easier, in religious paintings it does not inspire great devotion. In fact, when we see that the face of a man whom we know to be a sinner and maybe even a very evil sinner, marked out as such among men, is wearing the robes of a saint, as a matter of fact he is representing his own life, and in a certain way he makes that saint appear as a bad man himself, and he will seem a portrait of hypocrisy, so that in looking at him we have a good reason to fear that he might any moment bring about our damnation. And for this reason the reverend fathers of Monte Oliveto removed

81 Ancora una volta la casistica pliniana sembra soccorrere lo scrivente. Su Apelle ritrattista cfr. PLINIO, XXXV, 89.
83 Cfr. qui la nota 79.
84 Cfr. PLINIO, XXXV, 24; PINO [cfr. la nota 19], p. 111; e DOLCE [cfr. la nota 72], p. 160.
85 Cfr. PLINIO, XXXV, 95; e PINO [cfr. la nota 19], p. 111: «Dipinse Apelle un cavallo a concorrenza di alcuni fatti da altri pittori, e volendo quelli giudici conoscere il più perfetto tra quelli, fecero condurre alcuni cavalli vivi al cospetto de’ dipinti e, vedendo quello d’Apelle, comincerono a nitrire, et alterarsi, ma per gli altri non fecero alcun segno».
86 Il Maranta ha per il ritratto una divertiata difidenza, che sarà seriamente avvalorata dai controriformisti (cfr. soprattutto PALEOTTI [cfr. la nota 27], pp. 332 sgg.).
87 The phrase ‘in portraying living persons from life’ stands for ‘nel ritrarre dal naturale i viventi’.
88 Maranta’s reference remains unclear.
89 The word ‘that’ refers to the widespread practice of using a real person as a model for a figure in a painting of a sacred story.
dall’altar maggiore quel quadro della
Circoncisione nel quale era ritratto il Barattuccio in abito di Simeone, e fu in quel tempo che, essendo egli avvocato fiscale, interveniva a dar fune, fuoco, ceppi et altre sorti de tormenti. Facea scopare, strascinare, impiccare et altre specie di pene, et ancor che fusse di aspetto venerando per quella gran barba canuta, nondimeno era per crudel uomo tenuto, e non per misericordioso, come richiedeva la grandezza del misterio. La levorno dunque quei buoni padri dal maggiore altare e da Giorgino di Arezzo feciono farvi quell’altra che ora vi sta. Nel medesimo luoco è la cappella de… de’ tre Magi, dove tutte le figure sono da uomini viventi al natural ritratte, tra’ quali colui che proferisce l’oro è la imagine della buona memoria del conte di Oppido. Quell’angelo dunque maggior devozione daranne, poiché sarà formato solo dalla idea della mente sua. Il che si può conoscere all’aver from the main altar that picture of the Circumcision in which Barattuccio was portrayed in the guise of Simeon; this happened at the time when he, being tax attorney, meted out such punishments as the rope, the fire, the stocks and other kinds of torture. He ordered flogging, dragging, hanging and other types of punishments, and even though he had a venerable appearance (owing to his large, hoary beard), yet he was held to be a cruel man, not a merciful one, as was actually required by the grandeur of the mystery. So those good fathers removed it from the main altar and commissioned Giorgino di Arezzo to make the one that stands there now. In the same place there is the chapel of (…) of the Magi, where all the figures are painted from living men, portrayed from life; among them, the one who offers the gold is the image of the good Conte di Oppido, God rest his soul.

The Angel, then, will occasion more devotion since he was formed only by an idea in his mind. We can realize this from the fact that
egli una aria et una grazia, con tante circostanze che non par che sia possibile a potersi ritrovare in corpo vivente. Percioché e mostra uno aspetto mezzano fra lieto et attonito; lieto per la buona nuova che recava, aspettatissima per le migliaia di anni addietro da tutto il genere umano e particolarmente da Maria istessa; attonito e stupefatto per l’importanza del meraviglioso misterio, quasi all’improvviso a lui rivelato e commesso a rivelarsi a Maria. Mostrasi in quel volto non solo ubbidienza grandissima di eseguire il mandato di Dio, ma eziandio non piccola riverenza mentre fa l’imbasciata. Anzi a chi ben mira, vi vedrà una attenzione grande per far che non si dimentichi e varii in qualche modo quello che aveva da dire, et insieme con la attenzione una sicurezza et un esser certo di non poter in parlando inciampare, et questo vuoi significare quella fronte alquanto corrugata e l’occhio renitente a bene aprisi contra el moto del ciglio che, calando giù, il faceva mezzo serrare; motivo commune di tutti coloro che di cosa di gran momento ragionano. E mentre sta in atto di dire Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te e quel che segue (perciòché in dire queste parole lo ha dipinto, come diremo), par che pensi se altro gli resterà da sopragiungere. Ha oltre queste cose un certo che di divinità nell’aspetto, la quale non si può bene con le parole esprimere, ma l’occhio solo di chi attentamente il considera lo conosce et in un certo modo oscuro lo comunica al pensiero; perciòché insieme con la umiltà e rivereza vi si vede una certa maestà et una imagine d’imperio che trae i riguardanti a farsi riverire e temere. E par che nasca da dentro un certo spirito che mostri la divinità in lui naturale et innata e la umiltà volontaria et (per così dire) artificiale, che così bene si possono insieme mostrare, perciòché l’artificio non può covrire affatto la naturalità. Un simile atto si vedea nell’aspetto della felicissima memoria di D. Pietro di Toledo, al quale, per festevole et allegro che e' he has such an aura and such grace, as well as many other features that do not seem possible to find in a living body. This is why his expression is between joy and astonishment: joy for the good message he was delivering, awaited for thousands of years by all of mankind and especially by Mary herself; astonishment and bewilderment for the importance of the wonderful mystery, almost suddenly revealed to him and commissioned to reveal to Mary. His face shows not only the greatest obedience in fulfilling the commands of God, but also no small reverence while he delivers his message. And even, whoever looks carefully will see his great concern not to forget or change in any way all that he was to say, and together with this concern a confident certainty that it would be impossible for him to stumble in his speech; this explains his furrowed brow and the reluctance of his eye to open wide, counteracting the movement of the eyelid which, dropping down, causes it to half close, a feature common to all those who are speaking about something of great moment. And while he is in the process of saying ‘Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te’ and that which follows (because he has been depicted in the act of saying these words, as we shall say below) he seems to be wondering whether there is not something else he must add. Moreover, there is in his aspect a certain divinity that words cannot very well express; only the eye of someone who observes him intently will perceive it and in a certain obscure way will pass it on to the thought; because, in addition to humility and reverence, one sees also a certain majesty and an image of authority that inspire awe and reverence in the viewer. And it seems as if inside him a certain spirit is born that reveals his natural, innate divinity and his voluntary, artificial (so to speak) humility, which can both appear together so well, since artifice can in no way cover over what is natural. A similar effect can be seen in the countenance of the blessed late Don Pedro of Toledo, in whom, as festive and cheerful as he

95 L’interesse per i contenuti induce il letterato ad una minuta ricognizione psicologica e sentimentale.
96 Cfr. SOLIMENE [cfr. la nota 17], p. 30 nota I: "... il poeta Luigi Tansillo ritiene don Pietro di Toledo anche incarnazione delle virtù politiche spagnole e di lui scrisse: "S’io desio di saper come si regga / un regno ed un esercito e impararne / ciò che nei libri antichi se ne legga, / come s’orni una terra, come s’arme, / come possa un signor, s’egli è discreto, / farsi immortale, ancor che cessin Tarme, / mirerà l’opre del maggior Toletto, / ne le cui man può Cesare deporre / mile regni non che uno, e star quieto". E altrove, nell’indirizzarsi a lui notava: "Perché tutte le cose di voi nate / elle son con misterio et la prudenza / guida ciò che voi dite a ciò che fate”.
97 Maranta refers to the viewer’s mind.
conveniva per avere a Madonna, postasi in quell’atto di umiltà che viene appresso; e mentre questo diceva l’angelo, la sola allegrezza, che né anco sarebbe convenuto far ma che tutto il misterio fusse da dinotarsi con la considerazione alcuna di stupore e di meraviglia, dico che, quando ben non vi fusse richiesto col suo signore, ché così mostrerebbe soperbia e non deve il servitore ridere di cosa alcuna insieme l’angelo tutto allegro e con ridente faccia, percioché è abominevolissimo a tutti signori et altri alla domestica e dar mostra di fratellanza, il qual mala creanza, parendo di volere con lui trattare perciò che con l’atto dell’allegrezza sola non si dava saggio veruno dell’altezza del misterio. Anzi di più cosí allegro.

Superiore. Fu dunque con arte fatto l’angelo non inferiorità che aveva, ma farsi di gran lunga meritava per questo non solo spogliarsi della colui che signoreggia gli angioli e tutto il mondo, e salutandola a parlare, divenne chiostro e ricetto di meno in quel punto che l’angelo cominciò mortali sono da meno che gli immortali, non di stato agli angioli inferiore, in quel modo che i mortali sono da meno che gli immortali, non di meno in quel punto che l’angelo cominciò salutandola a parlare, divenne chiostro e ricetto di colui che signoreggia gli angeli e tutto il mondo, e meritava per questo non solo spogliarsi della inferiorità che aveva, ma farsi di gran lunga superiore. Fu dunque con arte fatto l’angelo non così allegro.

Ora resta a veder l’artificio che nella disposizione dell’angelo ha Tiziano usato, che è la quinta et ultima condizione della pittura, avendo di sopra a bastanza mostrato quel che sia essa disposizione. Egli l’ha fatto col piè manco avanti, in forma di uomo che camini con la mano dritta cacciata in fuori e che egli giunto da quella parte dove tenea la Madonna rivolte le spalle, era per andar e a incontrarla dalla parte dove avea il viso rivolto. Ma ella, sentito il rumore, lasciò l’orazione e rivoltossi verso quella parte donde l’angelo veniva. Il quale, vedendosi già da faccia a faccia con lei in quel modo che in quel punto si ritrovò fermandosi, la salutò, et aspettata et intesa già la risposta, che fu Quomodo fiet istud e quel che segue, sta in atto di dire Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te con quel che viene appresso; e mentre questo diceva l’angelo, la Madonna, postasi in quell’atto di umiltà che conveniva per avere a

98 Cfr. p. 875 e qui la nota 51, p. 876 e qui la nota 55.
dire Ecce ancilla Domini con el rimanente, aspettava con le braccia in forma di croce, e con quel maggior inchino che in quella postura, così all’improvviso e quasi in fretta presa, le fu lecito a poter fare, che l’angelo finisse. In maniera che Maria in quella pittura non parla e per questa cagione è fatta con la bocca serrata. L’angelo sta con la bocca aperta, e dal segno della mano sua e dalla disposizione in che sta Maria et anco dall’aria del volto d’amendue detta di sopra, si può agevolmente comprendere che egli stia dicendo Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te etc. Percioché, s’egli stesse dicendo Ave gratia piena, non conveniva che il braccio stesse in quel modo che si suol fare quando si dice cosa di grande importanza. Percioché il saluto non ha seco né poca [né] molta importanza e nella pronunzia o non richiede atto veruno di mano o almeno un altro che dia segno di maggior piacevolezza. Conoscessi, come ho detto, eziano dal sito o disposizione di Maria, perciocché, avendo due volte parlato l’angelo e due volte Maria, ciascuna delle volte in amendue richiedeva diverso atto, et essendo la prima risposta di Maria tutta piena di meraviglia e di stupore in dicendo Quomodo fiet istud etc., altro gesto di mani e di braccia e di tutto il corpo richiedeva, che non quello in che ella sta, come ciascuno può da sé conoscere. Percioché, quando alcuno si meraviglia, ritira ambedue le braccia in sé stesso e mostra le palme verso il luoco dove egli guarda, sta ritto con la vita, abbassa le ciglia e comprime la bocca e corruga la fronte. Non ci essendo dunque veruno segno di meraviglia in essa, segue che stia apparecchiata per dire la seconda risposta; e se ciò è (come veramente è), necessariamente si conchiude che l’angelo stia anco esso dicendo la seconda sua proposta.99

Da questo si possono accorti rendere dell’error suo coloro a’ quali non piace che la Vergine stia in atto di non parlare alcuna delle due risposte, perciocché richiegono dalla pittura l’impossibile; ché non potendo ella mostrare se non uno atto solo (come più a lungo di sopra abbia detto),100 vorebbero che ne mostrasse due. E ancora che sia vero che in quel misterio l’angelo parlasse e Maria parlassse, non di meno non conveniva far ambedue parlanti, ché così sarebbe fatta mostra che tutti due parlassero in un tratto. Ma essendo cosa ragionevole che, mentre l’un parla, l’altro taccia et intend, bisognava, the words she was to say (‘Ecce ancilla Domini’) with all the rest, waited until the Angel had finished his speech, keeping her arms in front of her in the shape of a cross and bending as deeply as in that posture, so unexpectedly and almost hastily assumed, allowed her to do. So in this painting Mary does not speak and for this reason she is shown with her mouth closed. The Angel stands with his mouth open, and from the gesture of his hand and from the posture of Mary, as well as from the looks on both of their faces, as we said above, it is easy to understand that he is saying ‘Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te’ etc. In fact, if he were saying ‘Ave gratia plena’, there would be no reason for his arm to be stretched out in the way it usually is when one says something of great importance. Since the greeting in itself has neither little [nor] great importance, and the pronouncing of it requires no motion whatsoever of the hand or, if any, one that would express greater pleasantness. One knows this, as I have said, also from the placement or posture of Mary; because, since the Angel had spoken twice and so had Mary, each of the two times necessitated in both of them a different motion, and, as Mary’s first response, full of wonder and astonishment, when she said ‘Quomodo fiet istud’ etc., it required another gesture for the hands and the arms and the posture of the whole body to be different from the posture she has, as everyone can understand for himself. Because, when you are wondering, you press both your arms to your body and open the palms towards the direction in which you are looking, you keep your torso erect, lower your eyelids, close your mouth tightly and wrinkle your brow. Since there is no sign of wonderment in her, it follows that she is preparing to make her second response; and if that is so (as it truly is), one inevitably concludes that the Angel is himself speaking his second proposal.

From this, those who do not like to think that the Virgin is not making either of her responses can realize their error; in fact, they ask the impossible of the painting, since, though it can only show one single action (as we explained at greater length above), they would want it to show two. And even though it is true that in this mystery the Angel spoke and Mary also spoke, nonetheless it was not appropriate to show both of them in the act of speaking, for in that way both of them would have appeared to be speaking at the same time. But since it is more rational that while one speaks, the other is quiet and listens,

99 Minuziosa didascalia scenica di Luc., I, 28-38.
100 Cfr. p. 875 e qui la nota 53.
introducendo l'angelo a parlare che la Vergine mostrasse d'intendere. Ma la grandezza dell'ingegno di Tiziano, in questa particolarità senza dubio veruno meravigliosa, fè che ancor che la Vergine stesse cheta, non di meno si comprendesse dall'atto in che ella stava non solo che già le restava a rispondere, ma eziandio che cosa, subito che l'angelo tacesse, a rispondere avesse. Ora, tornando all'angelo, dico che sta con quel piede inanzi per la cagion detta, et insieme ancora vi sì vede una riverenzia senza molta arte, fatta col piè destro, perché in quel sito si trovò al ancora vi si vede una riverenzia senza molta arte, quel piede inanzi per la cagion detta, et insieme avesse. Ora, tornando all'angelo, dico che sta con che già le restava a rispondere, ma eziandio che comprendesse dall'atto in che ella stava non solo la Vergine stesse cheta, non di meno si apparente di sua arte non è certo che ella di tutti i membri la più eccellente si può nomare, perché per la struttura de le mani l'uomo è sapientissimo giudicato, laonde si pare le mani altro non essere a l'uomo che ministre de la sapienza e de la ragione et ornament e accrescimento insieme de l'universo».

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inevitably, having introduced the Angel in the act of speaking, the Virgin was to be shown in the act of listening. But the greatness of Titian’s ingenuity, undoubtedly wonderful in this particular case, is that, even though the Virgin remains quiet, it was nonetheless apparent from her posture not only that it would soon be her turn to respond, but also what she would respond, as soon as the Angel left off speaking. Now, turning back to the Angel, I will say that he is shown with his foot forward for the reason that I mentioned above, and also we see a reverence made rather artlessly with the right foot, because he found himself in that posture as the Virgin turned round, and because he wanted to point out that showing the intention of avoiding art is just as good an artifice as art itself. Now let us speak about the hand, which is so important to the action that not without great labour and ingenuity can it be placed in the required gesture to accompany with it the kind of speech and voice appropriate to the situation. And this stems from the variety of gestures that can be made with it; and where there is a great number of options, it is difficult to choose the one that is suitable in that particular case. Since, even though it is a usual practice to accompany speech with the movements of the other parts of the body, there is no limb, if not the hand, capable of adapting its gestures to all the variety of statements (which is infinite), so that we can, in a certain sense, say that the hands actually do speak. This can be seen in mute persons, who clearly express every concept by the use of their hands. And I remember having read that someone (I do not know who) said that more could, in a certain sense, be attributed to the hands than to the words, because words are so different from language to language that one cannot understand the other. The hand, on the contrary, uses a language common to all tongues, and with it any barbarous nation could make itself understood by the Greeks and the Latins, and the latter by the former. It is then so difficult to select the appropriate gesture for the hand that even famous orators and actors, who to this aspect devote greater study than to any other, often fail in their choice. Now, how much more difficult will it be for a painter to find it with precision and care? And so much the more difficult because it is not enough to choose a good position for the hand and the arm, if there is no correspondence between the way they are placed and

101 Per l'elogio della mano cfr. ad esempio il Dialogo di M. NICOLÒ FRANCO, dove si ragiona delle bellezze, Venezia 1542, s. p.: «La degnità delle mani è tale e tanta, che poscia che a dirne tanto son qui trascorso, ardire mi porge a dirvi ch'ella di tutti i membri la più eccellente si può nomare, perché per la struttura de le mani l'uomo è sapientissimo giudicato, laonde si pare le mani altro non essere a l'uomo che ministre de la sapienza e de la ragione et ornament et accrescimento insieme de l'universo». 70
di tutto il corpo. Ma se noi ne ridurremmo a memoria quali parole ha in bocca l’angelo, e tutto quello che della grazia e dell’aria fu detto di sopra, conosceremo che non in altro sito potea porsi il braccio e la mano, che in quello. Percioché, avendo l’angelo annunziato alla Vergine che già avea da ingavardarsi del Signor del mondo, fu assai poca meraviglia rispetto a quello che ne traea con seco il saperne il modo come s ella doveva essere ingradata. Il perché quando questo le discuopre, era necessario scegliere quella disposizione nella mano, la quale può accompagnare un parlare pieno della maggior meraviglia fra tutte le meraviglie passate, presenti e future. E questo mostra il braccio dritto cacciato in fuori, e non il sinistro, come a quello che è più debole e nel quale non si può mostrare quella forza e quella veemenza di pronunzia che nell’altro si vede.\footnote{Il medico non tralascia l’occasione per una minuziosa divagazione anatomica, con la quale cerca di avvalorare l’artificio del pittore.} Il dito grosso similmente, ragiunto con l’indice nella mano alzata un poco verso l’esterior parte del braccio, accompagna quel medesimo atto et in questa collocazione apunto ha l’angelo il braccio dritto, lasciando il sinistro in ufficio di poca importanza, che è il tenere il giglio; e per questa disposizione, quella mano, la quale può accompagnare un parlare pieno della maggior meraviglia fra tutte le meraviglie passate, presenti e future. E questo mostra il braccio dritto cacciato in fuori, e non il sinistro, come a quello che è più debole e nel quale non si può mostrare quella forza e quella veemenza di pronunzia che nell’altro si vede.\footnote{Il medico non tralascia l’occasione per una minuziosa divagazione anatomica, con la quale cerca di avvalorare l’artificio del pittore.} E per questo osso non è coverto da muscolo alcuno, ma solo dalla pelle, e volendolo così esprimere Tiziano, vi si vede una certa sodezza in quella parte, come nell’altra una morbidezza, dove i muscoli si richieggon, e l’altro osso che soprasta a questo quasi della medesima lunghezza, che per name de anatomici vien detto radio, resta nella parte che riguarda il cielo. Il qual osso non avendo più che un muscolo per covertu, se ben rende il braccio in quella parte di vista non così sodo come il gomito, resta nondimeno in una mezzana morbidezza, avendo rispetto al resto del braccio. E perché la distensione delle quattro dita, (non intendendo il pollice) vien fatta dal maggior muscolo de’ tre che hanno origine da quella esterior parte dell’osso detto umero o braccio, la quale si congiunge con las parte suprema dell’osso del gomito, e questo muscolo è, superficiale et ingombra quasi tutto il mezzo per lungo dell’ulna, the rest of the body. But if we bear in mind the words that are coming from the Angel’s mouth, with all that has been said about grace and aura above, we will know that it would have been impossible for the arm and the hand to be positioned in any other way than in this one. In fact, since the Angel had already announced to the Virgin that she would become pregnant with the Lord of the world, compared to what this implied, knowledge of the way in which she would become pregnant created very little wonder. When he revealed her the reason for this, it was then necessary to choose that disposition of the hand that could accompany explicit speech about the greatest wonder of all wonders, past, present and future. And this is what the thrusting forward of the right arm signifies – the right, not the left, since the left is weaker, and in it one cannot show the force and the vehemence of speech that are evident in the other one. Similarly, the thumb, joined with the index finger of the hand that is slightly raised towards the external part of the arm, accompanies this same action, and in precisely this configuration the Angel has placed his right arm, while leaving his left one in a role of little importance, that of holding the lily; and for this reason he [Titian] has not taken the trouble to show it entirely. The right arm, then, is shown bare from slightly above the elbow down to the back of the hand, and the long bone that extends from the elbow joint to the first part of the hand, to which the anatomists have assigned the name of ‘elbow bone’, remains face down, towards the ground and is quite visible in this arm, as this bone is not covered over by any muscle, but only by the skin, and since Titian wanted to show it this way, one can see a certain firmness in this part, just as there is softness in the other, where muscles are required, while the other bone, which lies above this one and is almost the same length, the one that the anatomists call ‘radius’, remains in the part that faces upwards towards the sky. If this bone, which is covered by one single muscle, prevents the arm from being as firm in this part as it is in the elbow, nonetheless it preserves a medium softness in comparison with the rest of the arm. And since the stretching of the four fingers (I am not counting the thumb) is produced by the largest of the three muscles that originate from the external part of the bone called ‘humerus’ or ‘arm bone’, which joins with the upper part of the ‘elbow bone’, and since this muscle is on top and covers almost the whole half occupied lengthwise by the ulna,
e dapoi, diviso in quattro tendini, ciascuno alza in su il suo dito, fu necessario che questo muscolo apparisse, poiché la mano dell’angelo sta con le quattro dita distese e per così dire risupinate. E per questo si vede nel mezzo di quel braccio spiccicare un muscolo dolcemente dal principio del gomito, ma più spiccante poi quanto più verso il lato. E la mano si va e massimamente verso la parte del dito. Percioché, avendo alcuanto calato l’indice, la quale mozione si fa da uno de’ muscoli interiori dell’ulna, e questo per accoppiare insieme l’indice col pollice, come sogliono quelli che di cosa di molta importanza hanno a ragionare, venia necessariamente a mostrare maggior concavità verso quella parte dove questo dito s’abbassava. E perché quel muscolo che muove il pollice obliquamente e l’accoppia all’indice, avendo la origine dalla suprema parte di tutto l’osso del gomito, obliquamente passa per disotto all’altro già detto muscolo, genera maggior concavità e divisione verso il corpo, e per questa cagione si vede in quel braccio quella obliquità di muscolo più apparente. E di qua nascono due meraviglie di vista in quel braccio quella obliquità di muscolo. E di qua nascono due meraviglie di pittura nasconde, cioè che il pollice sia accoppiato a un muscolo dolcemente dal principio del gomito, avendo alquanto calato l’indice, la quale gli parve bene a non far vedere, ma solo far intendere l’atto della mano. Dal che si mostra ancora chiaramente quanto sia maggior artificio il nascondere alle volte i membri che il non mostrarli.

Questa fu invenzione di Apelle, di nascondere le brutture et i vizii della persona o de’ gesti, perciocché ritrasse dal naturale Antigono re, il quale era privo di uno occhio. Ma egli il dipinse in gesti, percioché ritrasse dal naturale Antigono re, il nascondere le brutture et i vizii della persona o de’ gesti, perciocché ritrasse dal naturale Antigono re, il quale era privo di uno occhio. Ma egli il dipinse in gesti, percioché ritrasse dal naturale Antigono re, il nascondere le brutture et i vizii della persona o de’ gesti, perciocché ritrasse dal naturale Antigono re, il quale era privo di uno occhio. Ma egli il dipinse in profile a uso di medaglia e mostrò solo la parte dell’occhio sano, nascondendo il cieco, acciò paresse che quello che mancava per difetto del vivo paresse che fusse nascosto per ragion della pittura. Mostra dunque quel braccio quei muscoli soli che bastavano a fare quell’atto di stendere le cinque dita nel modo che abbiam detto, e non era necessario fargli apparere tutti, perciocché questo si fa quando la mano fa maggior forza e fatica. Et ancor che vi siano gli altri che alzano l’articolò di tutta la mano o vogliam dire metacarpo, non di meno, perché quelli sono non così superficiali and is then divided into four tendons, each of which raises its respective finger, it was necessary that this muscle should be apparent, as in the Angel’s hand the four fingers are extended and, so to speak, re-supinated. And because of this we see a muscle flexing mildly in the middle of that arm from the beginning of the elbow, but becoming more evident as it reaches closer to the hand and bulging markedly towards the part occupied by the radius. So, having let the index finger droop clearly down, a motion that is produced by one of the inner muscles of the ulna in order to join the thumb with the index finger, as those who have something very important to discuss are wont to do, it inevitably happened that a greater concavity was shown in the place towards which this finger moved down. And since the muscle that moves the thumb obliquely and joins it to the index finger (because it originates at the very top part of the elbow bone) passes obliquely under the other muscle we have already mentioned, it generates a greater concavity and division towards the body, and for this reason we see in this arm that more apparent obliqueness of the muscle. And in this there are two wonders performed by Titian: the first is that with this arrangement of the muscles he puts before the eyes that which the painting hides, i.e. the joining of the thumb with the index finger, although of the thumb there is not the slightest trace. The other wonder is that the joining of these two fingers might show in them some sort of ugliness, which he judged a good thing not to display, but he chose to give only the intuition of such a movement of the hand: from which we see again quite clearly that sometimes there is greater artistry in hiding a limb rather than in showing it. This is something Apelles invented, to hide the ugliness and defects of a person or a gesture, because he made a live portrait of King Antigonus, who was missing an eye. He depicted him in profile, as one does in a medal, and only showed the side with the healthy eye, hiding the blind one, so that it seemed as if the one that was missing, due to a defect of the real person, was hidden because of the demands of the painting. In the arm, then, only those muscles are shown that were needed to make that extension of the five fingers in the manner we have described, and it was not necessary to show them all, which is done when the hand is using greater force and making an effort. And even though there are the others that raise the articulation of the whole hand, or we could say of the metacarpus, nonetheless, because they are not so superficial

103 Sulle abbreviazioni dell’artista cfr. p. 871 e qui la nota 39.

104 Uno degli esempi pliniani più celebri; cfr. VARCHI [cfr. la nota 19], pp. 265 sg.; GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], p. 78.
et il moto non è forzato e l'angelo è grasso, non si mostrano spiccanti, ma solo per una certa aria et a vista da’ periti della notomia si possono considerare.

Né lascierò di dire un'altra bella avertenza intorno a quel poco che si mostra ignudo del braccio dal gomito in su: che, avendo da far parere il distendimento del braccio nella piegatura di esso, il qual moto si fa da due muscoli dei quattro che sono destinati a piegare e stendere questo articolo, i quali due nascono dall'umero et obliquamente passando si piantano all'osso del gomito, volse mostrarne solo una parte, cioè quei capi che s'inseriscono a questo articolo, accioché dal processo di quel poco si andasse col pensiero nell'altra parte di essi, e sono così attamente et al suo loco posti che ogni perito anatomista se ne può contentare. E perché abbiamo detto che, se il motivo e la disposizione del braccio non è accompagnata da quella di tutto il corpo, non ha punto dell'artificioso; dico questo solo, che in order to show greater humility it was not necessary for the Angel to bend more than he does, because great bows, which immoderately bend half of the body forward, inevitably cause an immoderate jutting out of the parts behind also. But then the act of raising oneself up again is much uglier, since, if one wants to recover the uprightness of the standing posture, he must use remarkable force to make a movement no less inappropriate than the first one. This is why, my dear Signor Marquis, I would like these manners which are now common in Naples among gentlemen and gallants (especially in this class and among women) to be more moderate and less impetuous, knowing for certain that no error can possibly be committed when one imitates angels.

Della disposizione del collo e della testa vorrei dire molte cose, ma mi accorgo che la grandezza dell'opera mi ha tirato a dir molte cose che io non credevo di dire, e perciò me ne passerò leggermente; e lasciando da parte la ragion de' muscoli, è degno di considerazione e di meraviglia insieme il veder la testa talmente dal collo rilevata, che par che la voce ne possa uscir chiara e ritonda e senza veruno impedimento. Ché quando ella fosse più china, si sarebbe suffogata in gran parte, come fanno alcuni che fan sentir la voce più nel gorgozzule che nella bocca, cosa molto fastidiosa a sentire; and the motion is not forced and the Angel is plump, they are not visibly shown, but they can be recognized only because of a certain aspect and by the eye of an expert in anatomy.

Nor shall I omit to mention another beautiful expedient used in that small bare portion of the arm visible above the elbow: since he had to show the extension of the arm in the bending of it, which motion is made by two of the four muscles that are capable of flexing and extending this articulation, which two take their origin in the humerus and, crossing obliquely, anchor the elbow bone, he chose to show only a part of them, and precisely those ends that fit into this joint, so that from the process going on in this small part one could think of the other part, and they are so appropriately and correctly placed that an expert anatomist would be satisfied with them. And since we have said that, if the motif and posture of the arm is not accompanied by that of the whole body, there is nothing contrived in it at all. I say only this: that in order to show greater humility it was not necessary for the Angel to bend more than he does, because great bows, which immoderately bend half of the body forward, inevitably cause an immoderate jutting out of the parts behind also. But then the act of raising oneself up again is much uglier, since, if one wants to recover the uprightness of the standing posture, he must use remarkable force to make a movement no less inappropriate than the first one. This is why, my dear Signor Marquis, I would like these manners which are now common in Naples among gentlemen and gallants (especially in this class and among women) to be more moderate and less impetuous, knowing for certain that no error can possibly be committed when one imitates angels.

On the position of the neck and the head I would like to say many things, but I realize that the greatness of the work has led me to say many things that I did not think I would, and therefore I will touch only lightly on these aspects; and, leaving aside the question of the muscles, what is worthy of both consideration and admiration is seeing the head emerge so much from the neck that one has the impression that the voice is issuing forth, clear and round, without any impediment whatsoever. Now, if the head had been more bent over, the voice would have been much more strangled, as happens with some people who make their voices come from the throat rather than from the mouth, a most irritating thing to have to hear,
o come altri, che risuonano a guisa di coloro che minacciano. E se fusse il capo collocato più alto overo col collo distorto, sarebbe la voce come di quelli che la fanno uscire così acuta e sottile, che par una punta di ago che penetri altrui nel cervello; overo sarebbe interrotta, disuguale et oscura et effeminata. Quella dunque pare che in quel sito possa con facilità uscire e con fermità articolata poi dalla bocca, che non gli dà grande iato et apertura, si che paia che primo sia come suavità che intesa, né così chiusa che le parole riflettano di nuovo alla origine loro, overo (come si vede in molti) che non se ne sentano le ultime sillabe, ma si dimostra che il suo parlare sia uguale, uniforme e corrente, le labbra che non molto si muovano, ma (come il decoro richiede) la bocca par che pigli l'ufficio del parlare più che non esse, le quali stanno uguali e non distorte, né mostrano i denti. Et in somma par che sia un vivente che parli di lontano e che per la lontananza non si senta la voce; e la respirazione par che sia facile e senza fatica. E nella gola, a chi ben vi mirerà, parrà dalla bocca, che non gli dà grande iato et apertura, sì che paia che primo sia come suavità poi dalla bocca, che non gli dà grande iato et apertura, sì che paia che primo sia come suavità

dietro al mezzo, schivare in parte e l'uno e l'altro. E tra tante cose che mi si rappresentano nella mente una cosa pigliandone, di quella vedrò cercarne meno che distesamente, e sarà la fisionomia, delle cui regole par che s'abbia Titiano curiosamente servito in questa dipintura per mostrare ai segni del viso e della complessione, et anco di tutta la vita dell'angelo e della Madonna,
or with those other people who sound as if they were threatening you. And if the head were held more highly, with a twisting of the neck, then the voice would come out as it does from those who make it so thin and piercing that it has the effect of the point of a needle penetrating into the brain; or it would be broken, uneven, obscure and effeminate. It seems, on the contrary, that in that position this voice may issue forth easily and be then articulated with firmness by the mouth, which does not give it too wide a hiatus and opening, so that one seems to hear a melodious sound, nor is the mouth so closed that the words will be reverberated back to their point of origin, or (as we see in many cases) that the last syllables will remain unheard: instead his speaking is shown to be even, uniform and fluent: his lips do not move too much, but (as decorum demands) the mouth seems to assume the office of speech more than the lips, which are even and undistorted, and do not let the teeth be seen. In sum, it seems as if a living being were speaking from some distance away and, because of that distance, his voice could not be heard; and his breathing seems to be easy and effortless. And in his neck whoever looks attentively will sort of see that gentle vibration of the skin that occurs on the surface with the reverberation of the voice, which is undoubtedly almost impossible to imagine, much less actually to depict.

Shall I also talk of the configuration of the nose? of the eye? of the ear? of the hair? of the forehead? of the feet? of the wings? of the clothes? of the other hand and of another thousand things? In truth, Signor Marquis, this is a subject for which, however easy it was to find the beginning, I cannot see where I would ever find the end. For, hardly have I finished saying one thing, when a thousand others come to assail me, so that I feel as if I were myself between two evils, one of which I will never, perforce, be able to avoid: in fact, if I say about this everything I can, I will be so long that not without enormous nuisance will Your Lordship succeed in getting through; on the other hand, if I do not speak about it, I feel that, having embarked on this enterprise, I am doing wrong to Titian by leaving it imperfect. But I will force myself, by taking a middle course, partly to avoid both the one and the other. And among the many things that come to my mind, I will choose one, which I will try to treat less than in full, and that thing is physiognomy, of whose rules Titian seems quite curiously to have availed himself in this painting to show through the traits of the face and the complexion, and also the whole bodies of the Angel and the Madonna,

106 La solita iperbole della resa pittorica; cfr. VASARI in Scritti d’arte del Cinquecento, a cura di P. Barocchi, Milano 1971, I, pp. 496 sg.; DOLCE [cfr. la nota 19], 814 ss.

107 The phrase ‘having embarked on this enterprise’ stands for ‘pigliata questa impresa’.
i costumi e l’animo loro punto non discordante da quanto di sopra abbiamo detto.108
E per voler dire della complessione, o vogliam dire temperamento, il quale dimostra di avere l’angelo, in prima degno di considerazione è che non è da ottimo artefice fare i segni nel viso o nella persona, per li quali si possa conoscere l’intrinseco dell’animo, se non vi si accompagnano anch’essi con i segni della temperatura che abbiano corrispondenza con quelli. Percioché quei primi nascono da questa, e secondo la variazione di questa, che può essere infinita, così variano quelli. Onde i medici, che della fisionomia non molto si curano, col conoscimento della complessioni sola, se non così minutamente, almeno in gin parte possono dell’animo di ciascuno congetturare. 109 I poeti illustri nel descrivere qualche persona segnalata s’hanno alle volte servito dell’una e l’altra sorte de’ segni, acciò più credibili fussero stati i movimenti e le azioni a loro assegnate. Alle volte dalla fisionomia sola i segni prendendo, come quelli che ogni minuzia ne possono dell’animo palesare, dell’altra non si sono curati; come fece Omero, il quale descrisse Tersite gueriero di un occhio e zoppo di un piede, di capelli rari col capo nella sommità acuto e lungo, stretto nelle spalle e quasi nel petto rinchiusi. Laonde non era meraviglia se nel suo poema, dovunque di lui accade parlare, il finge poi un uomo che assai parla e poco sappia, sporco, contenzioso e senza considerazione; perciòché a quei segni queste azioni corrispondono, si come ciascuno che della fisionomia s’intenda può tra sé stesso discorrere.110 Ma Tiziano, al qual non meno ch’ei poeti fu bisogno questo osservare, non contento dei segni della fisionomia nell’angelo, vi ha eziandio dimostrato quelli che dalla complessione pigliar si possono e ciò ha fatto di sì bel modo, che questi dichiarano quelli, e quelli corrispondono a questi felicemente, di maniera che non vi si vede discordanza veruna. Percioché, se noi miriamo alla complessione che ne dimostra, si vedrà esser quella che dal predominio del sangue sanguigna vien detta, la quale sè calda et umida. Percioché, come ne insegnano i


109 Una fisionomia quindi non meramente teorica.

medici, questo temperamento fa gli uomini nell’abito mediocri o alquanto all’essere carnosi inclinati; e quella pienezza non viene da soverchio grasso, ma da soverchia carne. Il colore di tutta la vita è tra bianco e rosso, ma un poco più rosso che bianco; i capelli folti, biondi e mezzanamente crespi. Da questa complessione ne nasce un animo pronto e audace, irascibile ma non furibondo. Ora, chi ben mira quell’angelo, non vi vedrà egli tutti questi segni? E se noi vorremo parlare della inclinazione de’ pianeti, che hanno sugli umani corpi, ritroveremo esser quell’angelo sotto il pianeta di Giove, dal quale gioviale verrà la sua natura detta.111 Percioché questi dicono i fisonomi essere di carnatura fra la durezza e la morbidezza mediocre; di bello e grato aspetto, di color bianco, di folti capelli, di occhi vaghi et allegri; anzi loro tutti allegri, e festevoli, politi e netti; i quali segni, senza che io ne favelli, ciascun può vedere ritrovarsi tutti in quell’angelo, la qual natura e complessione avea Tiziano nella idea della mente sua quando il dipingeva. E discorrendo poi della natura ove questi segni si ritrovano, dicono che tali uomini essere di grande e pellegrino animo, liberalissimi sopra le lor forze, desiderosi di regnare, disprezziatori della mediocrità, gentilissimi, onesti, avidi di gloria e di fama, fedeli, amici veri e senza frode, pacifici; e per lo più amatori della sapienza, di grande consiglio et eloquenti, e in somma di tutte le cose buone imitatori diligentissimi. Ora, ve dete se questa natura e non altra doveva Titian eleggere, per intenderla in uno angelo. E ritornando a quel dubbio già con altri snodamenti disciolto prima,112 chi sarà colui che voglia l’angelo più allegro di quello che egli mostra, e quale altro sarà che’ il desideri manco rosso o manco pieno? Non conosceva egli che non vi si potranno intendere gran parte di queste virtù? Perciocché l’esser solamente bianco senza niente rossore, e soverchiamente

111 Sulle caratteristiche della natura gioviale cfr. Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scultura et architettura, di GIO. PAOLO LOMAZZO, Milano 1585, pp. 121 sg.: «La disposizione ch’egli [Giove] da e gli affetti, overo moti, che causa sono la faccia allegra et onesta, i gesti d’onore, congiunger di mani, come suoi chi fa festa et allegrezza, overo chi loda alcuno, inginocchiarsi con la testa elevata, a guisa di chi adora. Quanto alla disposizione del corpo fa l’uomo di color bianco, mescolato coi rosso, di bellissimo corpo, di buona statura, calvo, cioè di fronte alta, g’occhi alquanto grandi, non del tutto neri, la pupilla larga, le nati brevi et ineguali, i denti interiori un poco grandi, la barba crespa; fallo d’animo grato e di buoni costumi. Queste corrispondenze tra le qualità dell’animo e la constituzion del corpo et i moti esteriori, se saranno considerate e ben intese da’ pittori, gli saranno di gran dilettto e faranno grandissimo onore alla sua professione».

112 Cfr. qui pp. 886 sg.
allegro e ridente, conviene a coloro che, stando sotto il dominio di Venere, sono perciò venerei chiamati, in maniera che, così facendolo, ne sarebbero nati due errori: l’uno, che arrebbe fatta una mescolanza di due nature sotto due pianeti inchinate, donde ne nascerrebbe confusione et oscurità; l’altro, che per quei segni dovendosi intendere la natura de’ venerei (i quali sono a giuochi e balli et alle vanità e disonestà deditissimi), arrebbe di queste qualità l’animo dell’angelo dimostrato. 113 Ora, quanto più grave errore sarebbe stato se, con averlo dipinto smagrito, avesse in lui dinotato la malignità e tardanza delle azzioni che ne viene dall’influsso di Saturno,114 o la garrulità e le bugie che ne apporta Mercurio,115 se bene eloquente e d’ingegno versatile ve lo avesse per questo dimostrato, o la crudeltà di Marte,116 o la istabilità e pigrizia della Luna117 E chi non arrebbe poi (penetrando sempre col suo pensiero più adentro) imaginatosi che, mentre l’angelo parlava, come essendo egli gioviale la voce necessariamente dovea uscire sonora, chiara, lieve et uniforme, degna veramente di uno angelo – worthy indeed of a god – whereas from Venus it would have been effeminate, soft, enervated and lacking in vigour, and likewise would it have been from Mercury and from the Sun? And that from Saturn it would have been sluggish and similar to the hoarse and obstreperous voice of a goose? And that from Mars it would have been shrill and boring? Now, shall I have to go into the physiognomy of each part individually? And if I venture into this other field, which is so vast, when shall I find the ford to come out? It will be better, then, to say nothing on those aspects, since I am more than sure that this can suffice not only for knowledgeable men, but also for minds of a coarse and material stuff.

Ora vegnano coloro che, senza più considerare, dicono: «Questa pittura non mi piace. Quel colore è troppo smorto; quel viso non si mostra tutto; la proporzione di quell’angelo non è giusta», e altre cose dette più a caso che con conveniente discorso. E perché,

and excessively cheerful and smiling is only appropriate for those who, being under the dominion of Venus, are therefore called ‘venereal’.

So, had he depicted him in this way, two errors would have resulted: first of all, he would have created a mixture of two natures subjected to two planets, which would produce confusion and obscurity; secondly, since those signs are referred to the nature of the venereal type (who is very much dedicated to games and balls and all sorts of vanities and deceits), he would have shown the Angel’s nature to have these traits. Now, how much graver would the error have been if he had shown a leaner angel, implying in this way the malignant nature and tardiness in actions that come from the influence of Saturn, or the garrulous and untruthful character deriving from Mercury – even if, in this case, he would have shown in him eloquence and a versatile ingenuity – or the cruelty of Mars, or the instability and indolence of the Moon! And who would not then have imagined (penetrating even deeper with his thought) that, while the Angel was speaking, his voice, since he was jovial, was to be inevitably sonorous, clear, light and even – worthy indeed of an angel – whereas from Venus it would have been effeminate, soft, enervated and lacking in vigour, and likewise would it have been from Mercury and from the Sun? And that from Saturn it would have been sluggish and similar to the hoarse and obstreperous voice of a goose? And that from Mars it would have been shrill and boring? Now, shall I have to go into the physiognomy of each part individually? And if I venture into this other field, which is so vast, when shall I find the ford to come out? It will be better, then, to say nothing on those aspects, since I am more than sure that this can suffice not only for knowledgeable men, but also for minds of a coarse and material stuff.

Now let those come forward who, without pondering more deeply, say: ‘I do not like this painting. That colour is too dull; that face is not shown entirely; the proportion of that Angel is not right’, and other things said more at random than with suitable reasoning. And since,
se ben si ricorda V. S., circa la proporzione dell’angelo e della Vergine lasciammo certi dubbi insoluti, basterebbe, per coloro che pienamente le ragioni apprendere non panno, dire: «Poché Tiziano ha in quella pittura avute tante e tali avertenze, noni è da credere che quella proporzione buona non sia, e doverebbe invece di ragione sodisfar loro l’autorità di Tiziano». Ma per non parere che questo fusse un trafugire lo sviluppanento dei dubbi, dico che, per esser cinto l’angelo alquanto più sopra del mezzo, inganna la vista e fa parere molto più lungo quello che è dalla cintura in giù di quel che per avervenza non par che si convenga, e perciò non pare uguale l’intervallo che è dal piede al ginocchio a quello che è dal ginocchio alla piegatura della coscia. Ma chi vorrà di ciò chiarirsi, troverà con la misura in mano che, con altri tre tanti quanto è dal ginocchio al piede, giungerà alla estremità della testa, con tanto più di avanzo quanto l’inchino ne potea ragionevolmente nascondere. Del gomito della Vergine, che par troppo lungo, dirassi che quel dubbio nasce dal non considerar bene la disposizione nella quale ella sta. Percioché, essendo inchinata quasi tutta su l’umero diritto et il manco quasi tutto ritirato in su, e cacciando in fuori quasi tutta la dritta parte, viene il braccio a essere aiutato nella lunghezza d’essa. Onde il gomito diritto si mostra tutto quanto è, e il sinistro non tutto; e se bene pare che quel gomito triplicato avanzi la lunghezza del corpo dalle ginocchia in su, ciò nasce dall’essere ella molto inchinata, ma imaginandocila noi alzata, ogni buon giudizio dirà che possa a misura giusta cadere. Devrò anèa rispondere a quel che ne dicono, che una certa

118 Cfr. qui pp. 873 sgg.
119 La giustificazione si vale di fanciullesche ipotesi naturalistiche, prescindendo da più pertinenti notazioni stilistiche.
piega grande, che è nella inferiore parte della vesta dell’angelo, non sta attenatamente fatta, né accompagna il sito de’ piedi, et è quella che comincia dal piè dritto nel basso e va attraversandosi in sé verso il sinistro. Come se l’angelo non avesse avuto altro pensiero che di mirar che piegatura facea la vesta mentre che con la Vergine ragionava! E non s’avesse tutto esser fatto con arte grande, per mostrare l’attenzione che l’angelo dovea tener in quello che importava. Il che con la stravaganza delle pieghe si può bene in un certo modo accennare. 120

Ma lasciando le ragioni da parte, che mi hanno oggimai stracco se bene non ancora sazio, vediamo quel che veramente se ne giudichi da persone intendenti. E non saprei per uomo di questa professione scegliere in Napoli miglior giudicio di quel di messer Giovan Bernardo Lami;121 il quale, oltre che dipinge tutto ciò che vuole meravigliosamente e nel ritrarre dal naturale non ritrova pari, come ne fanno fede la maggior parte de’ signori e signore di questa città, che di sua mano e non d’altri han voluto ritrarvisi, è anco sottissimo intagliatore in rame, le cui stampe fra poco spazio di tempo appariranno, et in nuovo modo scolpisce in creta et in stucco lavori da far istupir le genti, né trova chi nell’opera di miniatura l’aggiunga, senzaché nella notomia e nella perspettiva e nelle altre parti rare alla pittura appartennenti è felicemente versato. Et il signor Cosimo Pinelli, il quale non mira in altro, se non in far tutte le sue cose perfettissime122 e che migliorar non si possano, ha voluto che il cielo di questa cappella e le altre parti dove pittura conveniva, fusse tutto di sua mano lavorato; e quanto bene gli sia riuscita quest’opera, ciascuno che di sano giudicio è potrà in vedendola saperlo. Costui dunque non solo loda estremamente quella pittura, ma non si sazia giamai di ammirarla e di stupirla, confessando et alla libera sgridando con alte voci che in essa non vi si può né aggiugnere, né diminuire. E dove lascio io il giudizio del signor Giovan Vincenzo Pinelli, figliuolo del signor Cosimo? le cui rare parti, già bene agli uomini conosciute, non si possono da ogni gentile spirito gliamai bastevolmente lodare. Egli, che di far fare quel large pleat, which is in the lower part of the Angel’s robe, is not properly made, nor does it accord with the placement of the feet, and this is the one that starts at the right foot, at the bottom, and rises across and upwards towards the left foot. As if the Angel had had no other thought than to see what kind of pleat his robe would form as he was speaking to the Virgin! And he does not realize that everything is done with great art on purpose, to show the attention that the Angel had to pay to what was really important, which can in a certain sense be quite well alluded to by the peculiarity of the pleats.

But leaving aside the reasons, which have already exhausted me, without yet satisfying me, let us see how this is really judged by competent people. And I would not know what better judgement I could choose in Naples than the one of Master Giovan Bernardo Lami, a man of the requisite profession, who, besides painting most wonderfully anything that he likes and having no equal in portraiture from life, as will be attested by most ladies and gentlemen of this city,123 who have wanted their portraits to be made by him and by none other, is also an exquisite copper engraver, whose prints will appear very shortly, and he sculpts in clay and plaster in a new way that is absolutely astonishing to people, nor can we find anyone capable of equaling him as a miniaturist, if he is not felicitously versed in anatomy and perspective, and in the other special skills pertaining to painting. And Signor Cosimo Pinelli, who has no other aim than doing all his things in the most perfect way so that they can nowise be improved upon, has willed that the ceiling of this chapel as well as the other parts that could be appropriately covered by paintings should all be made by his hand. And anyone who has a healthy judgement will realize, on seeing it, how well he has succeeded in his work. Not only does he heap praise upon this painting, but is never tired of admiring it and being amazed by it, acknowledging and asserting unrestrainedly in the loudest voice that nothing can be added to it or taken away from it. And do I leave aside the judgement of Signor Giovan Vincenzo Pinelli, son of Signor Cosimo? His rare qualities, already well-known to men, can never be enough praised by every noble spirit. He, who

120 La stravaganza diviene in tal caso una efficace dimostrazione e non altera la consuetudine (cfr. GILIO [cfr. la nota 22], p. 861).
122 Cfr. qui p. 863.
123 Maranta means Naples.
quadro ha avuto il pensiero, per ritrovarsi negli studi di Padova, ove per lo molto suo valore è divenuto a tutti riguardevole e meraviglioso, et è non meno della pittura che della filosofia e delle leggi e d’altrc scienze ammaestrato et erudito, dice e conferma piacerli sovra modo l’invenzione et l’artificio e tutto ciò che consideri si può in quella pittura.124 Ne posso tacere il signor Alfonso Cambi, il quale in ogni sorte di lettere in sin da fanciullo è profittevolmente versato. Ma nel dar giudicio della pittura ha fatta particolar professione, per essere egli gentiluomo di quella città nella quale più che in qualsivoglia altra è sempre fiorita quest’arte. Costui non manco degli altri detti di sopra inalza insino al cielo quell’opera e di essa dà particolar ragione, segnando minutamente ogni avertimento che in essa è stato dall’artece considerato.

Conchiudiamo dunque che gran torto aranno coloro che di essa meno che onoratamente parlaranno. Ché io per me dirò sempre che, mentre Tiziano in questa pittura (a guisa de’ poeti che scrivono) era tutto trasformato, come quelli dal furore assaliti125 si scordano di loro medesimi mentre scrivono, così questi ispirato da Dio, e non tanto dalle sue forze aiutato, ha ridotto questo misterio in quella estrema perfezione che par cosa impossibile a potersi da umana industria imitare.

Or che sarebbe stato s’io avesse nelle regole della perspettiva voluto entrare, le quali ha sì bene osservato Tiziano, che bene ha dimostrato essere in quella scienza dottissimo maestro?126 Ma di quelle io non vo’ parlarne, sì per fuggir il lungo dire e sì perché, per esserne cose che richieggono grande astrazione di mente, sarebbero fastidiose a udirle nella fine di così lungo discorso. Anzi di molte altre cose mi restarebbe a dire molto più di

124 Giovan Vincenzo Pinelli (1535-1601), nato a Napoli da famiglia genovese, si stabilì a Padova nel 1558, dove attese a studi di scienza e di letteratura. Famoso erudito e bibliofilo formò quel museo scientifico e quella biblioteca che fu poi acquistata dal cardinale Federico Borromeo per l’Ambrosiana (1609).


127 The phrase ‘in all sorts of humanities’ stands for ‘in ogni sorte di lettere’.

128 Maranta means Florence.
quanto ho detto, e massimamente s’io volessi entrare nelle parti-colarità della Madonna. Della quale più per trascorso di parlare che per volerlo pensatamente ne ho quelle poche cose accennato; di maniera che mi pare assai più convenevole tacerne, che fastidirla più di quello che ho fatto con una lunga dicenza. Basterammi solo, da quel tanto che ho di quell’angelo ragionato, aver risposto, in quanto per me si è potuto, all’opinioni di coloro i quali niuno altro prezzo mercano, niuno altro appagamento, che biasmare le cose buone, e Dio voglia che, del loro ardimento ravedutisi et in loro stessi ritornando, comincino a confermare il vero, sbandite già le vanità, delle quali hanno si grande et infinita dovizia che per ogni piazza le dispensano e distribuiscano a larga e capevole misura.

V. S., che con ischerzar con meco per provar le forze del mio ingegno ha voluto prendersi noia di così lungo volume, temperi il fastidio della lezione con la buona volontà che io ho dimostrato di favoreggiare la verità, della quale ella è in tutte le cose oltremodo vaga et amica, rendendomi seco che, si come nell’opera della poesia ha quel gusto che ciascuno sa, così avendolo purgato et eccellente nella pittura, non potrà se non commendare il mio buon animo, et allo ‘ncontro biasmare la semplicità e [po]co sapere di coloro che, di tutto il lor senso di quella pittura questionando, non han per aventura saputo che cosa sia pennello. Così durerà la fama di Tiziano appresso lei con quella reputazione che egli e la virtù sua si ha acquistato molti anni fa et io, vedendomi con si dolci e leggiadri modi favorito, potrò a me stesso et al mondo chiarire che io sia uno de’ suoi più cari. Il che ho, molti anni sono, più di tutte le cose desiderato.

what I have said, especially if I wanted to enter into the details of the Madonna. About whom, more in consequence of my speaking so long than from a deliberate decision, I have mentioned only few things, so that I judge it more appropriate now to remain silent than to trouble you more than I have done with my long chatter. It will be enough for me if, with what I have said about the Angel, I have responded, insofar as I was capable, to the opinions of those who aim at no other price, no other payment except the chance of criticizing things that are good. And would to God that they, repenting of their boldness and coming to their senses, may start confirming the truth, once they have given up all the vanities that they have in such great, infinite abundance that they dispense and distribute them in every square in a large, capacious measure.

Will Your Lordship, who has benevolently taken the trouble for such a long time to joke with me in order to test the strength of my ingenuity, please temper the tedium of this lesson with the good will I showed to favour the truth, which you pursue and love to the highest degree in everything, leaving me secure in the conviction that, just as in poetry you have taste as everybody knows, so, having the same, purified and excellent, in painting, you can only commend my good intention and blame, on the contrary, the simplicity and limited knowledge of those who, while discussing that painting with all their intellect, did not even know what a paintbrush was. So Titian’s fame will last with you preserving the reputation that he and his talent acquired many years ago, and I, seeing that you grant me your favour with such sweet and elegant manners, will be able to make it clear to myself and to the world that I am one of your dearest. This is what I have, for many years, above all else desired.
Appendix:

I. Maranta’s Trial

... Alois mentioned Maranta’s name ‘because of an impious sonnet by Molza that was recited in front of him by the above-mentioned Alois and that contained the justification of Christ made in the Lutheran fashion, and also because he was suspected of some other similar matters concerning Religion: some time later they recanted their depositions spontaneously, saying they had been made for fear of the torture, with which they were threatened by the Ministers of the Inquisition, and the Provincial of San Pietro a Maiella, as well as the other witnesses, Don Bernardino de Bernardini, Alfonso Cambi, Gabriele Mercurio, De Blasio, Raimo and Paduano were considered unreliable and false in their depositions. And the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office admitted that it was on account of some personal resentment that the Bishop of Montepeloso, then Vicar of our city, had proceeded against Maranta, appropriating this case on the strength of only one suspicion that he had, namely that Maranta had possibly written an Oration, which was read at the Council of Trent by the Bishop of Laviello (sic), against the ecclesiastical Officials of the Kingdom and, consequently, against the Vicar himself, for which reason Maranta was taken here by order of the said Congregation with his own assent and a security payment of only five hundred ducats: and when the trial was repeated with the examination of a number of witnesses up to sixty-five, it revealed the excessive zeal of the denouncer, the resentment of the Vicar and the unreliability of the witnesses, as testified in a deed drawn up already in that year MDLXII by the lawyer Vincenzo Mancini in favour of the said Maranta, in which information is given about the reported facts, and the names of the above-mentioned witnesses are published’.129

II. Maranta’s note on the margin

‘So, as in Tragedies not all the events take place on the stage but between one act and the other, one sometimes imagines much more than what can be done in an act; and this makes the poem more solemn and dense; likewise in painting the highest minds always considered it a greatly desirable thing that many things should be hidden, but in such a way that they might be understood easily and with wonder. And if sometimes it happens that in painting a certain thing is obscure, this is so in order that it may eventually speak as poetry does’.

In Italian:

‘Percioche come nelle Tragedie non tutto cio che si fa si produce in scena ma tra l’uno atto et l’altro, vi si presuppone alle volte molto più di quello che in uno atto si può fare; et questo rende il poema più grave et più pieno; così nella pittura di grande auspicio fu sempre tra svegliati ingegni molte cose nascondere: ma in guisa che facilmente et con meraviglia si possano comprendere. Et se alle volte aviene che alcuna cosa sia oscura nella pittura, è che ella riesca parlar come la poesia’.

129 For the original text see Amabile, Santo officio, 266.