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**[p.28] Count Saverio Marchese (1757-1833):
his Picture-Gallery and his Bequest
to the Cathedral Museum**

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Picture collecting in Malta as elsewhere was the favourite pastime of the Knights, the nobility, wealthy people and a few scholars and art lovers centuries ago. Local and foreign artists commissioned to decorate our churches and palaces were also asked to decorate private houses and furnish them with portraits and other paintings. Two art collectors in the 18th century, Marquis Carlo Antonio Barbaro (1721-1793) and Marquis Testaferrata are known to have organized private museums at Valletta and Marnisi, limits of Zejtun respectively, following the example of Gian Francesco Abela (1582-1655) who in the 17th century organized a five-room archaeological museum at Marsa, known as *Cabinetto San Giacomo* which he later left to the Jesuits and which was the corner stone of the *Cabinetto di Antichità*, the predecessor of our National Museums.¹

Inventories of the many art collections in private houses may have been compiled by their respective owners in their own lifetime but they were certainly compiled in the interests of heirs and claimants immediately after their death. Many of these inventories are scattered in private archives but the public archives, namely the Notarial Archives, the Archives of the Law Courts, the newly organized Archives of the *Fabrica di San Pietro* and the *Acta Civilia* of the Maltese Inquisition and the volumes of the *Spogli* of the members of the Order of Malta contain many inventories of property including works of art. A study or even a list of these inventories would enormously contribute to our knowledge of art history in Malta.

An important art collection in the early 19th century was that of Count Saverio Marchese, fourth son of Cavaliere Giuseppe Isidoro and Serafina Marmier.² Born in Valletta on 12 September 1757, Saverio was educated in Rome at Collegio Novo, run by the Padri Scolopi. On 12 January 1784 he [p.29] married Anna Maria Camilleri Bianchi of Senglea: the nuptial mass was celebrated by the Inquisitor himself in the chapel of the Holy Office.³ Saverio was greatly respected by the Order and the Church. On 8 March 1793 Grandmaster De Rohan invested him with the personal title of Count of Maimon.⁴ For four years — between 1805 and 1809 he directed the Public Works Department as *Commissario Generale dei Beni Pubblici*. On 9 February 1833, shortly before his death, the companionship (Cavaliere) of St Michael and St George was bestowed on him.⁵ The Count kept his art collection at his

¹ *G.F. Abela: Essays in his honour by Members of the Malta Historical Society on the Third Centenary of his death (1655-1955)*, Malta 1961 and especially article by R. Bonnici Cali (pp.70-81), *The Cornerstone of the Malta Museum*.

² Two manuscripts in the National Library of Malta provide a lot of information on the Marchese family: Ms 658, part 6 entitled *Vita di Giuseppe Isidoro Marchese scritta dal Dottor Vincenzo di lui figlio*, 1791 and Ms 724 entitled *Carte attinenti alla Famiglia Marchese. Amministrazione dell'Eredità del fu Giuseppe Isidoro Marchese*. 1.4.1791.

³ The marriage contract was stipulated on 4 January 1784 in the acts of Notary Michelangelo Portelli.

⁴ Archives of the Order of Malta, *Liber Bullarium Minutarium*, Vol. 615, ff 134v. and 135r.

⁵ *Malta Government Gazette*, n.1163, 15 May, 1833 p. 160. In the revised Constitution of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, awardees of the C.M.G. (the third grade in the Order)

residence in Merchants Street, Valletta corner to St. Dominic Street.⁶ He also had a country house, Villa Marchese, at Attard.⁷ He died on 25 November 1833 and is buried in the family tomb at Attard Parish Church.

Marchese's main contribution was in the field of Culture and Education. In 1823 he was appointed a member of the Committee set up to make a minute investigation into the system of education in the University of Studies and on 13 September 1824 he was appointed a member of the newly formed General Council of the University under the chairmanship of the Hon. John Hookham Frere.⁸

Count Saverio Marchese cultivated literature, especially poetry,⁹ the arts, history and especially local art history,¹⁰ archeology,¹¹ and also the [p.30] Maltese language.¹²

An obituary note in the Malta Government Gazette referred to his death as a public loss and said of him:

were referred to as *Companions* if they were natives of Great Britain and *Cavaliere* if they were foreigners. Saverio Marchese belonged to this grade. (Information kindly supplied by Major Claude Gaffiero).

⁶ A description of the house with all its furnishings, drafted on 24 November 1833 by Maresciallo Pietro Spiteri, is preserved in the Archives of the Law Courts, *Mandati di Elevazione*, Pentecoste e Vittoria 1833, V, item No. 51.

⁷ The country house at Attard was designed by Giuseppe Isidoro and constructed between 26 January 1751 and 15 February 1752 at an expense of 1264 scudi. A canvas at the Cathedral Museum, painted by Schranz, probably depicts the country house.

⁸ *Acta Aeademiae Melitensis*, Vol. III, 1-2 as quoted by A. Vella, *The University of Malta — A Bicentenary Memorial*, Malta 1969, pp. 65-67.

⁹ Some of his sonnets are preserved in the Preziosi family. Among these is one composed on 5 March 1776 in honour of Grandmaster De Rohan on the occasion of his election and another one, commissioned by the Cathedral Chapter composed in honour of the Marquis of Hastings on the occasion of the latter's visit to St John's Co-Cathedral on the feast of St. John the Baptist. Ms 659 of the National Library consists of a literary essay describing the Count's voyage to Monte Libano in 1776.

¹⁰ Count Marchese transcribed and annotated a long text by a Capuchin Friar (? Padre Pelagio Mifsud) on Maltese painters and sculptors. The Ms is preserved in the National Library as Ms 1123. A few pages on Maltese art history, drafted on the occasion of a visit to various parishes in Malta, entitled *Belle Arti*, are preserved in a miscellany which also contains the Count's register of purchases.

¹¹ Marchese was fond of copying archeological finds of foreign or local interest. Drawing No. 528 in the Cathedral Museum collections records a Punic inscription discovered at Tal-Virtù in 1816. The drawing is reproduced in *The Earliest Description of Malta (Lyons 1536) by Jean Quintin d'Autun*. Translation and Notes by Horatio Vella, Malta 1980, after p. 46.

¹² During the French occupation, Saverio remained in Valletta and was active in preparing a sort of Maltese dictionary. His unfinished notes are preserved as Ms 662 of the National Library, entitled *Principio di Vocabolario Italiano-Maltese per necessario supplemento al Vocabolario Maltese-Italiano del Ch. Michele Antonio Vassallo sive Vassalli, Maltese, stampato a Roma nel 1796 incominciato nel Blocco della Valletta del 1798-1800 per Conte Saverio Marchese per aiuto di chi vuol dal Italiano conoscer le parole Maltesi e da lui non finito*. Incidentally Count Marchese was one of the Maltese who on 10 June 1798 signed a petition to the Order in favour of capitulation to the French troops. On 20th June 1798, the French Commission appointed him an administrator of the Floriana Ospizio; Cfr. C. Testa, *Miż-żewġ Naħat tas-Swar*, vol. 1, Malta 1979, pp. 50 and 137.

‘As a nobleman of great erudition and well versed in ancient and modern literature no less than for the urbanity of his disposition and pleasing manners, his friendship was always sought and valued, by the most distinguished residents in Malta, both native and English. In Italian poetry, his compositions have been read in public and private circles, with delight and admiration and his taste for the fine arts attracted to his house visits from the most distinguished foreigners that have from time to time landed in our islands and who never failed to express their high sense of his accomplishments and political refinement.’¹³

Above all Saverio Marchese was a connoisseur of art and a collector of paintings, drawings and especially prints. He was enough fortunate to acquire at moderate prices a part of the precious collection of old prints belonging to Cavalier Francesco Seratti of Tuscany.¹⁴ The history of this rare collection is worth recounting. Francesco Seratti was the Grand Prior of the Order of Santo Stefano in Florence. Between 1793 and 1795 he was Governor of Livorno, then in 1796 Secretary of State in Florence. Following the French Invasion he fled to Sicily where he stayed at the service of King Ferdinand but on his way back he was attacked by pirates and taken (with his collection) to Algiers where he died in 1811.¹⁵ His precious collection of prints¹⁶ was [p.31] acquired by a Turk and sent to Malta to the Jews Cesana and Fano.¹⁷ These two gentlemen sold the collection to Canon Bellanti¹⁸ who resold a good part of

¹³ *Malta Government Gazette*, 27 November 1833, f. 393.

¹⁴ The name of Cavaliere Francesco Seratti is unfortunately omitted in the standard biographical dictionaries. Nor is his collector’s mark included in the standard work by Fritz Lugt, *Les Marques de Collections*, La Haye 1956.

¹⁵ Information on this episode of Seratti’s life may be gleaned from Duchesne Ainé, *Essai sur Les Nielles, gravure des orfèvres florentine du XV siècle*, Paris 1826 p. 32: ‘Cet amateur distingué, voulant suivre le Roi de Naples à Palerme, lorsque ce monarque fut obligé de changer sa résidence, emporta avec lui tout sa fortune. Sa mauvaise santé ne lui ayant pas permis de rester long-temps en Sicile, il obtint la permission de retourner à Livourne; mais un événement malheureux le priva de revoir sa patrie. Lors de son retour, il fut pris et mené à Alger, où il mourut en 1811. La prise fut vendue en partie dans ce pays; mais la collection d’estampes fut apportée à Malta, et acquise en 1813, par un capitaine anglais, qui la transporta à Londres; les estampes suivirent alors la chance ordinaire du commerce.’ Count Saverio Marchese completes the episode furnishing some missing links; ‘la collezione preziosissima di stampe di Sua Eccellenza il Signor Francesco Seratti Toscano Cavaliere e gran Priore di Santo Stefano e Governatore già di Livorno, dopo esser stato fatto schiavo depredato mentre da Sicilia passava in Toscana nel ritorno ivi dal suo Sovrano venduta ivi ed acquistata da un Turco e mandata in Malta agli Ebrei Cesana e Fano quivi da essi venduta All’Abate Bellanti Bibliotecario e da questi rivenduta al Signor Roberto Steward Negoziante Inglese.’ *Register of Purchases*, p. 49.

¹⁶ Seratti’s collection is described by Saverio Marchese as follows: “collezione, che non travavasi più scelta se non più completa in Italia, di stampe antiche e moderne, ed in ambedue le forme le più ricercate.”

¹⁷ A gravestone of an unnamed member of the house of Fano has been traced in the Jewish Cemetery at Kalkara. Mr. Derek Davis of London, who gave me the information, suggests that the slab belongs to the cemetery’s final period (1831-1835).

¹⁸ Canon Giuseppe Giovanni Bellanti (1787-1861) was Librarian of the National Library and Dean of the Cathedral Chapter. Like Marchese he was a member of the University Council and he also cultivated the Maltese language. On 5 October 1817 Marchese bought from Filippo Benucci for 60 scudi two volumes with 82 engravings of Gothic Cathedrals and Abbeys but these volumes, originally forming part of the Seratti collection, had been acquired

it to John Robert Steward of the Commercial Firm Struthers Steward and Co.,¹⁹ residing at 61, St Christopher Street, Valletta. Besides being a close friend and neighbour of Count Marchese, Steward was also a collector and connoisseur of old prints and drawings.²⁰ Before leaving Malta in 1815 Mr Steward ceded at moderate prices a part of his collection to Count Marchese, a second part he auctioned at his residence on 2 and 3 March 1815²¹ and a third part he conveyed to London.²²

[p.32] Of all the old collectors Saverio Marchese was one of the earliest, to my knowledge, to have left his collection of paintings, drawings, prints and art books as a legacy to a public institution — the Cathedral Church.

Moreover the Count kept a most detailed register of all his purchases from 1793 till his death in 1833. The register, running into forty manuscript pages, is entitled *PRIMO COSTO. Spesa della Raccolta di Stampe, Quadri e Disegni ed anche argenti e d'altri giocali fatte dal Conte Saverio Marchese fin dal anno 1792*. The purchases over a span of forty years amounted to about four hundred (an average of ten each year). About a hundred persons are documented to have provided art treasures: including painters and artists, second hand

from Canon Bellanti. In the same year Marchese provided Bellanti with a big frame receiving in return 12 prints.

¹⁹ The firm Struthers Steward was still active in Malta in 1847 when Mr Peter Steward became a founder member of the Malta Chamber of Commerce. Besides John Robert, Marchese recalls a Henry Steward who in 1815 provided a volume with 100 drawings for 71 scudi, a canvas with a marine view by Volaise for 12 scudi and an oval on copper with a landscape by Van Bloemen for 61 scudi. *Op. cit.* f. 48 v.

²⁰ “Signor Gio Roberto Steward Negoziante Inglese mio amicissimo ed il piu intendente da me conosciuto nel riconoscere stampe e disegni originali.” *Op. cit.* f. 50v.

²¹ “Parte a me cedute amichevolmente a prezzi discreti e parte comprate dal incanto pubblico fatto di alcune di detta raccolta nella di lui casa in Strada San Paolo, sopra la statua di Sani Giovanni Battista, li 2 e 3 Marzo 1815.” (*Op. cit.*, f. 50v.)

The auction was advertised in the *Malta Government Gazette* on 22 February 1815 (n.69, p.278) as follows: “Da vendersi li 2 e 3 marzo 1815 al numero 69 Strada San Paolo alle ore 2. Una: scelta collezione di stampe antiche e moderne ecc. ecc. proprietà d’un Signore che lascia l’Isola, fra le quali si trova la ‘Morte del Generale Wolfe’ di Woollett, ‘Santa Ginevra’ di Balechou, la mappa di Masson, e molte altre come verrà specificato nel Cataliogo che si potrà avere nel luogo della vendita; tutto da vedersi il giorno prima e le mattina della stessa al sopradetto luogo” (reference kindly supplied by architect Michael, Ellul). Count Marchese registers the acquisition of lots 34, 49, 50, 88, 91 and 104 of this auction (*op. cit.*, 51v.)

²² Among the prints conveyed to London was a XV century sulphur representing the Coronation of the Virgin and attributed to Maso Finiguerra. In 1814 Mr Steward sold the sulphur to Colinaghi for £150; the latter resold it to the Duke of Buckingham for £250. In 1818 the sulphur was acquired from Mr Grenville for £270 by the British Museum (Inventory No. B.6) Details in A.M. Hind, *Nielli, Chiefly Italian of the XV century, Sulphur Casts and Prints preserved in the British Museum*, London 1936, No. 151. Two estate sales of Count Seratti’s collection are recorded to have taken place by Mr Stanley of 29 St James Street, London. Cfr. Fritz Lugt, *Repertoire des Catalogues de Vente Publiques*, Vol I (1600-1825), La Haye 1938: sale no. 9009 held between 12 and 19 november 1816 and sale no. 9182 held in July 1817. The first sale comprised 693 rare prints; the second one comprised six paintings, 226 drawings, various prints and 52 curiosities. The Victoria and Albert Museum owns a copy of both catalogues, annotated with prices and names of purchasers. Information kindly supplied by Mr John Spike of U.S.A.

dealers, local craftsmen as jewellers, sculptors, builders, silversmiths and occasional sellers.²³ Through agents or intermediaries works of art were also [p.33] received from Paris, Munich, England, Rome, Livorno, Venice, Milan and Florence.²⁴ Objects acquired included paintings, drawings, prints, maps, frames, books, manuscripts, handmade paper, furniture, silverware, some jewellery, coins and medals, ceramics and even a relic. Entries are registered by date of acquisition, and give details of name, surname, at times nickname and location of seller, description of object, artistic attribution and occasionally a few artistic comments, older provenance when available and any eventual disposal by donation, sale or part exchange. Sincere thanks are due to Dr. John A. Cauchi who brought the register to my attention, thus giving me the opportunity to document the provenance of many paintings, old master drawings and especially engravings and etchings.

This register records 85 acquisitions of paintings and these pictures must have formed a substantial, if not the main part, of Count Saverio Marchese's picture-gallery.

The 85 paintings acquired include 26 religious subjects, a good number of still life paintings and landscapes, some battle-pieces and one portrait of Grandmaster Perellos. Only a few of the religious paintings are of a devotional character; the greater part includes popular biblical scenes as well as saints pictured in the background of a landscape. Among the religious subjects are some of a high artistic quality as *Scourging of Christ* by Palma il Giovane, *St Jerome* and *St John the Baptist*, both coming from the circle of Adam Elsheimer and *Adam and Eve* by Bernardo Strozzi.

All the pictures, with the exception of 18, are given an attribution — the attributions given are as good as those of their contemporaries. The collector scrupulously distinguishes between an original and a copy, between a fairly certain and a dubious attribution, between an artist or his pupil or his style. In four cases he gives an alternative attribution (Guido or Sirani, Baciccio or Cangiagio, Locatelli or Van Falens, Correggio or Turchetti). In three cases of landscapes he records that the figures were added by another artist. Placido Costanzi completed a landscape of Van Bloemen, Filippo Lauri completed a work by Agostino Tassi and the elder son of the painter Schranz completed a landscape by Giuseppe Grech.

²³ *Painters*: Alingham, Busuttill Michele, Busuttill Marcantucciolo, Busuttill Salvatore, Benucci Filippo, Falzon Giuseppe (from Floriana), Farrugia Giovanni Francesco, Grech Antonaci Pullicino Giorgio, Schranz - the father and his eldest son.

Craftsmen: Cannataci, Ittard Salvatore, Létard, 'Mondo,' Pivini, Serafini.

Second hand dealers: Cabaretta Antonio, Celestre; Mattio il Guap, Mustaccia, Michele di Dobson, Nato, an unnamed dealer holding a shop in front of Barone d'Amico.

Inheritances: 1806 Ball Belmont, 1814 Bruno, 1819 Bishop Labini, 1819 Mr Corner, 1821 Antonaci Grech, 1822 and 1831 Marchesa Anna Barbaro, 1824 Marchese Carlo Barbaro.

Occasional sellers (incomplete list): Abate Emanuele del Pilar, Canon Bellanti, Notary Benedetto Falzon, Canon Gelsomino of Birkirkara, Notary Gobbo, Giuseppe Giaccheri, Madame Jeanne, Sac. Francesco Pullicino, Mr. Raffer — officer of Regiment 90, Don Martino Zerafa, Parish Priest of Attard.

²⁴ Munich: agents - Vincenzo La Pira, Mr Ross, Fontana of Trieste; seller - Benucci.

Venice: agent - Antonio de Pares.

Milan: agent - Fr. Saviour Farrugia; seller - Giovanni Farrugia.

Florence: agent - engraver Giovanni Farrugia.

Livorno: agents - Paolo Sciortino and Domenico del Negro.

Rome: agents - Michele Gusman, Alessandro Gauci; Canon Seychel; sellers - Sgombati, Bracacci, Ricci, Zamboni.

England: agent - Mr Ross; Seller - Comm. Bigli.

Paris: Seller - Comm. Le Tromblait.

Fifty nine names of artists are recorded — thirty four of these are of an [p.34] Italian origin. Seven artists have a Flemish or a Dutch origin, namely Jourdaens, Wadder, Sadeler, Snyders, Bernaerd, Van Falens and Van Bloemen. Another five artists belong to the French school, namely Volaire, Petignon, Bisson, Perelle and of course Favray. The Maltese interest is limited to two Maltese artists, Michele Busuttil and Giuseppe Grech and three others who had settled in Malta, namely Favray, Schranz and his elder son.

An analysis of Marchese's register of purchases reveals that the main bulk (sixty out of eighty fine paintings) was acquired in the first decade of the 19th century and more precisely between 1813 and 1817 when no less than 50 paintings were purchased. Those were also the years of the acquisition of the Serratti collection.

Acquisitions are recorded from the painters Giorgio Pullicino, Busuttil, Schranz and the Roman landscape painter Filippo Benucci, who lived for some time in Malta. Ghita Grech, sister of the painter Antonaci Grech, provided one of the finest paintings in the collection, *Adam and Eve expelled from Eden*. Four acquisitions were obtained from the Diana Hotel. The Parish Priest of Attard Don Martino Zerafa, Salvatore Ittar, Mastro Antonio Ebanista, Signor Ricci Romano, Signor Zamboni Romano, Signor Medeschini. Mr Henry Steward (possibly another member of the Commercial Firm Struthers Steward & Co) and the second hand dealers Mattio II Gaup, Celestre, Mustaccia and Cabaretta all provided Saverio Marchese with pictures. An acquisition is also recorded from the inheritance of a certain Mr Bruno.

The largest group (sixteen paintings) was acquired from Marchese's great friend Filippo Benucci who was himself a painter and designer of lithographs.²⁵ It is curious that

²⁵ Information on Filippo Benucci, unlike Seratti, is included in various biographical dictionaries, among which Nagler and Thieme-Becker. His monogramme (F joined to a B) is also included in George Caspar Nagler, *Die Monogrammisten.....* ed. Naples 1966, vol 1, n. 2031a. Benucci was a disciple of George Wallis and a landscape and marine painter. Born in Rome in 1779, he settled in Malta from 1810 to 1825 and in Munich from 1825 to 1836. He died in Rome in 1848. The year of Benucci's arrival in Malta is recorded in an inscription on the back of a watercolour by the artist, depicting Count Saverio and annotated by the Count himself. Benucci was an artist as well as a dealer. Over a span of 21 years (1812 to 1833) Marchese records no less than 26 purchases from Benucci covering mainly prints (including 14 by Albrecht Dürer) but also including paintings, coins and medals, jewells, terracotta figures and art books. Benucci was also a lithographer. His lithographs include a group of six views of Gibraltar and its neighbourhood drawn from nature in 1824 and published in 1825. He also executed a series of 12 Malta views published by P. Lacroix in Munich in 1826, with text in English and French. The first of these views, depicting St Paul's Harbour, carries the words: 'Twelve of the most interesting and picturesque views in the islands of Malta and Gozo drawn from nature by Ph. Benucci and Ant. Schranz and executed on stone by Ph. Benucci, Munich 1816.' The group includes: The Catacombs at Città Vecchia, St. Paul's Chapel at Wied il-Għasel, Mushroom Rock at Gozo, Marsamuschetto's Harbour, Casal Birchircara and Emtahlep (the latter designed by J. Schranz). Count Marchese was certainly involved in the connection between Benucci and Schranz: about november 1826 he sent to Benucci in Munich, through Signor Fontana di Trieste, 6 costumes of Malta executed in watercolour by Schranz the younger at an expense of 10 scudi. Besides this group of twelve views, Benucci designed other views of Malta. Among these was one representing *Il-Ġnien tal-Milorda*, designed by Benucci and engraved in Rome in 1818 by Filippo Giuntotardi. It carries a dedication to Major General J.T. Layar and a text in English and Italian (illustration, without text, in Heritage, no. 16, p. 19). A companion engraving depicts the Santa Liberata Capuchin Friary at Kalkara.

Benucci's lithographs of Malta and his drawings, [p.36] engraved by Filippo Giuntotardi, do not figure in what is left of Marchese's collection of prints. Benucci arrived in Malta in 1810. Later he settled in Munich but through his agent Lapira continued to provide Marchese with prints including some by Dürer, Callot, etc. Marchese also provided Benucci with ceramics and other objects.

A group of nine paintings was acquired from the Maltese painter Giorgio Pullicino whereas a total of eight pictures was purchased from the second hand dealer Mattio.

Only three pictures were bought at what may be considered an excessive price: a *Wolves and Dogs*, attributed to Snyders, bought for 250 scudi, a canvas showing *David* purchased for 150 scudi a *Still Life* painting by Nicholas Bernaerd, also acquired for 150 scudi. The last one is not known to be extant; the first one preserved in the Cathedral Museum has turned out to be a copy — although an excellent copy — of an original by Snyders preserved at the Brera Gallery, Milan; the second one, *David*, is preserved in the Museum stores.

The great majority of Saverio Marchese's collection was indeed acquired at very moderate prices. To quote a few examples: two fine 16th century oils on copper, *St Jerome* and *St John the Baptist*, both coming from the circle of Adam Elsheimer, only cost ten scudi; the *Scourging of Christ* by Palma il Giovane was acquired for fifteen scudi whereas the famous *Expulsion from Eden* by Bernardo Strozzi was only bought for 10 scudi (three times that amount was paid to Schranz for the picture's relining and restoration).

A few valuable items, however, received a fair estimate of their true value. These include the fine oval on copper by Orizzonte and Placido Costanzi (51 scudi) and the two grand harbour scenes by Antonio Schranz each costing 60 scudi.

Not that all these purchases were paid for in cash. Thirteen pictures were paid in kind or partly in kind. Exchanges were accepted especially by Benucci and Mattio, the second hand dealer. Marchese offered in exchange other pictures, prints, ceramics, books (included one on the Index), manuscripts, a silver clock, an ivory pax and a stock of old linen tassels.

Marchese's register does not fail to note a few subsequent donations and [p.36] sales. The donations included a Nativity by Michele Busuttill. Baroncino Sceberras D'Amico bought from Marchese a few paintings, namely two landscapes by Locatelli. A *Head* on panel by Correggio or Turchetti purchased for three scudi and four tari was restored in Rome by the painter Candida for 10 scudi and two tari and resold to an Englishman, Mr Corner, for the value of 102 scudi: the exorbitant profit of 86 scudi and 6 tari being taken care of by Marchese's friend, Benucci.

Although the main bulk of the Marchese collection was presumably obtained by purchase, the collection certainly included other items acquired by inheritance from the family. These included the family portraits and a number of canvases painted by a great friend of the Marchese family, Antoine Favray.²⁶ Several members of the family had been portrayed

²⁶ The close friendship of Favray with the Marchese family is described in the manuscript biography of Giuseppe Isidoro Marchese (National Library, Ms. 658, ff. 17r and 18v). The passage has been transcribed as document no 3 in *Antoine de Favray: An exhibition of paintings and drawings*, Malta 1982 pp. 60-61. Giuseppe Isidoro was one of Favray's patrons and friends in Rome and in Malta. He also received a copy of Favray's last will prior to the latter's departure to Constantinople. Favray painted several members of the Marchese family: Giuseppe Isidoro (1784), Serafina (two portraits), Agostino (two portraits), Saverio, Anna Maria née Camilleri Bianchi and Maria Amalia née Grognet. More details in John Gash, *Antoine De Favray's first Maltese period (1744, 1761) and its Roman prelude (1738-1744)* in *op. cit.*, pp. 24-36 and J. Azzopardi, *Paintings and drawings by Favray in the Cathedral Museum Collections* in *The Times*, 4 June 1982.

in Rome by Batoni,²⁷ while others were portrayed by Favray, including Saverio himself and his wife Serafina.²⁸ The collection also included a portrait or self-portrait of Favray.

The collection also included 26 pictures acquired from the side of his wife Anna Maria, all listed in an appendix to their last will and including originals by Francesco Zahra, Giuseppe Arena, Manno of Palermo and Melchior Roos as well as copies by Stefano Erardi. The group included 6 still life paintings, 8 religious subjects and 8 family portraits.

Finally the Count's collection also included a small group of copies on canvas in the Count's own hand. Saverio was fond of documenting pictures of historical interest and also fond of drawing on paper objects of archeological [p.37] value. Detailed descriptions of historical interest accompanied these copies.²⁹

In his last will stipulated in the acts of Notary Cristofano Frendo on 2 May 1831, Count Marchese made detailed provisions regarding the fate of his priceless collection of paintings, drawings, prints and art books. He did not want to let the collection disperse but tied it up with the conditions of a pre-legacy, except for the family portraits, the paintings belonging to his wife and the pictures located in his country villa. He himself had no children and his preference for the male line induced him to limit the safe keeping of the legacy to the line of his only extant brother Vincenzo, to the exclusion of his two sisters Maria Amalia married to Giovanni Baptista Grognet and Marcella Ferdinanda married to Dr Gioacchino Bencini. The collection was only to be preserved by the Count's nephew Dr Giuseppe Maria Marchese and his sisters Teresa, Serafina and Irene as well as their children.³⁰

²⁷ Pompeo Batoni executed portraits of two members of the Marchese family. In 1740 he designed a small oval of Giuseppe Isidoro done entirely in pencil except for the face which is touched with red crayon. In 1766 he painted a rectangular portrait of Don Gio. Batta Raimondo, in tempera on paper pasted on canvas. Cfr Edward Sammut, *A Link with the Stuarts, in the margin of XVIII century art history* in *Times of Malta*, 14 July 1946.

²⁸ Favray's portrait of Saverio is preserved in the Bencini family. Benucci's watercolour, referred to above, is kept in the Preziosi family. A modern relief of the Count, executed in fibreglass by sculptor Tony Pace, is extant at the Cathedral Museum

²⁹ Annotations of local interest are found on the back of drawings nos 386, 414 and 425 of the Cathedral Museum collections. Drawing no 386 is a landscape executed in pen and wash by the French knight Jean Marie Bosredon Vatange (who designed Dolomieu's book of Italian travels). First-hand information on the assassination of Vatange by the Maltese insurgents is recorded with minute detail on the back of the drawing. Nos 414 and 425 are two companion drawings by Ciccio da Capua. A note on the back informs us that these two drawings as well as several prints were forgotten by Luciano Bonaparte when he was detained in Malta in 1810 and the folder was purchased by Marchese from Stamparo Facchini on 28 January 1815. (On Luciano Bonaparte's Maltese imprisonment see O.F. Tencajoli, *Luciano Bonaparte a Malta* (1810) in *Mediterraneo*, Ottobre 1934 — photocopy, donated by Major Claude Gaffiero, available at the Cathedral Museum). Count Marchese also tried his hand at drawing: many of these abound in private collections as well as at the Cathedral Museum. They reflect his erudition and wide cultural interests and include designs of archeological finds, drawings after the great masters, a collection of colour drawings of birds, tromp d'oeil and caricatures. A caricature of Favray drawn on the occasion of a meal in the Count's country-house is preserved in a private collection. A tromp d'oeil designed by the Count in 1789 was engraved by Perelle and published in Paris by Pierre Mariette.

³⁰ Saverio's brothers and sisters were: *Maria Amalia*, born 25 May 1747, married to the noble Gio. Batta Grognet de Vassé 28 April 1771, died 4 November 1830; *Ferdinanda Marcella*, born 14 April 1753, married to Dr Gioacchino Bencini 7 November 1780; *Pietro Paolo*, born 26 March 1755, died in infancy 24 January 1756 and *Vincenzo Maria*, born 9 April 1763,

[p.38] But Saverio Marchese also contemplated a situation that was likely to happen and that in fact did happen 63 years later; the extinction of the four lines of his brother Vincenzo. In that eventuality he had determined: ‘I want to have the above mentioned paintings, drawings and prints deposited and preserved for ever in the hall and library of the Cathedral Chapter.’³¹ Count Marchese’s gesture is certainly one of the earliest examples of a legacy of a substantial art collection to a public institution. Saverio’s example, however, was followed at the turn of this century by a few others who donated other collections, even though less significant in number and value. Donations or bequests to our national museums were made by Dr Edgar Parnis in 1912-1913, Mrs Zammit Clapp in 1918, Count Messina in 1920 and Mrs Salvina Zahra of New York in 1965. Important collections were also donated by Prof. John Borg (1873-1945), Antonio Sciortino (1879-1947), Chev. Edward Caruana Dingli (1877-1950), Olaf Frederick Gollcher (1889-1962) and George Borg (born 1906). In 1960 notary Francesco Catania bequeathed his complete collection to the Parish Church of St Paul’s, Rabat. The twenty-fifth day of November 1983 marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of Count Saverio Marchese. His fine and generous gesture deserves to be commemorated. His example too deserves to be followed.

[p.39] APPENDIX I

Paintings acquired by purchase. Source: Count Marchese’s Register of purchases, entitled *Primo Costo*.

married to Elena Ellul Preziosi 11 May 1816, died 10 August 1831. Count Saverio survived his brother Vincenzo by about two years: the latter passed away just three months after Saverio enacted his last will. The Count left his collections to be safeguarded ‘in titolo di prelegato’ by Vincenzo’s four children. Their names and dates are here listed by seniority: *Dottor Giuseppe Carmelo*, a bachelor, born 12 May 1803, died 17 June 1872; *Teresa*, born 5 February 1806, married to Fortunato Caruana, died 11 April 1896; *Serafina*, born 8 January 1809, married to Paolo Mallia, died 19 June 1880 and *Irene*, a spinster who died on 7 July 1879. Following the Count’s death in 1833, the legacy was first preserved by Dottor Giuseppe Carmelo: his immediate concern for the fate of the legacy provoked a preliminary joint inventory on the collection of prints by two artists, Petro Paolo Caruana and Giuseppe Hyzler. Giuseppe retained the collection for about 40 years, and was followed by his sister Teresa for another 24 years till 1896. Teresa lived long enough to survive not only her other two sisters Serafina and Irene but also her only offspring, Vincenza, who had passed away a long time before, in 1847.

³¹ Teresa’s executors were her brother-in-law Paolo Mallia and Canon Giovanni Ebejer. On 4 May 1896 they asked the Cathedral Chapter to deputise two members to receive the Marchese legacy. The collections, received by the Chapter’s deputies, Canon Vincenzo Vassallo and Canon Antonio Cordina, formed the first nucleus of a Cathedral Museum. Canon Vassallo soon attempted to compile an inventory of the prints’ collection as contained in each volume. Active consideration to open the Museum to the public was on the Chapter’s agenda in 1917 (cfr the newspaper *Malta*, 5 June 1918, referred to me by A. Espinosa Rodriguez). For further details on the Marchese legacy see J. Azzopardi, *A Legacy to the Cathedral Church* in *The Times*, 11 June 1982.

- 1-2 1796. Purchased from the painter Antonie Favray at the price of 11 scudi two canvases executed by Favray himself representing (1) *Greek Costumes* and (2) *Turkish Costumes*.
- 3-6 1804. From painter Giorgio Pullicino for 25 scudi: (3) *Two Putti* by Cangiagio; (4) *Two Putti* by Baciccio; (5) *Fair of Frascati*, artist unknown and (6) *Conspiracy of Masaniello*, artist unknown. Item no 4 later included, at an estimate of 50 scudi, in a part exchange with a canvas depicting *Wolves and Hounds* (see item 45).
- 7 Before 1806. From painter Giorgio Pullicino for 12 scudi and 6 tari (7) *St Francis* by Jourdaens. The picture was preserved in the Count's country house at Attard.
- 8-9 1807. From the second-hand dealer Mattio nicknamed Il Guapp for 4 scudi 6 tari (8) *Flowers and Monkey*, artist unknown and (9) *Hunting Scene with Dogs*, copy after Castiglione. The former was kept in the Count's country house, the latter not pleasing the purchaser was resold to the Russian Mr Frederick, through the dealer Sigismondo Dimech, for 18 scudi, 9 tari.
- 10 1808. The *Christ Child carrying the Cross*, on copper, for 3 scudi. Artist and seller unknown.
- 11 1808. From Mattio for 7 scudi a Flemish Landscape by Wadder.
- 12-13 1808. From Mattio estimated at 46 scudi 8 tari, *Two Battle-pieces* by Antonio Tempesta. Paid for by other objects. Placed in the Attard Country house.
- 14 1809. From Mattio for 20 scudi *Mocking of Christ* attributed to Carracci. Placed in the country house.
- 15-16 1811. From Mattio for 2 scudi 8 tari two unattributed paintings. (15) *Venetian Flowers* and (16) *Portrait of Grand Master Perellos*.
- 17-18 1811. From Diana Hotel: (17) *Job mocked by his wife* by Sadeler for 7 scudi 6 tari and (18) an unattributed *Landscape* for 2 scudi 6 tari. Item 17 was damaged in 1817 by a Venetian restorer through over cleaning.
- 19-22 1812. From painter Pullicino for 35 scudi (19) and (20) two unidentified paintings by Rosa da Tivoli and (21) and (22) two smaller unidentified paintings by Bison. Payment carried out through an exchange with a series of books by Algarotti.
- 23 1812. The *Virgin with two Saints* for 3 scudi. Artist and seller unknown. Later donated to the whitewasher Ciccio, nephew of the [p.40] decorator Mro Michele Grech, from Lija.
- 24-25 1813. From the painter and dealer Filippo Benucci: (24) *Mitridates* by Castiglione. Benucci, who had brought the painting from Palermo, received a payment of 80 scudi partly in cash and partly through an exchange with two small unidentified paintings, (25) *Head of St Francis de Paule* by Luca Giordano for 40 scudi.
- 26-27 1813. From Zamboni of Rome for 75 scudi *Two Landscapes*, in a fine gilt frame, by Locatelli. The canvases were later sold to Baroncino Sciberras D'Amico for 120 scudi.
- 28-29 1813. From Diana Hotel for 20 scudi two small *Battle-pieces* by Simonini. Later exchanged with other paintings: see items 65-69.
- 30 1813. Acquired on the open market for 1 scudo an unattributed *St Francis de Sales*.
- 31 1813. From Signor Ricci, from Rome for 150 scudi *Triumphant David* by Guido or Sirani.
- 32-34 1814. Acquired on the open market from two dealers from Pesaro for 8 scudi 4 tari: (32) *Landscape with animals by moonlight* by Micco Spadaro, for 2 scudi 6 tari; (33) *Head*, a fine panel by 'Correggio or at least Orbo di Verona Turchetto,' for 3 scudi 4 tari. The panel was taken by Benucci to Rome for relining by the painter Candida and later resold in Malta by the same Benucci on behalf of Count Marchese to an Englishman, Mr Corner, for 102 scudi. (34) *Holy Family* by a pupil of Canterini for 2

- scudi 6 tari. This canvas was later included in an exchange deal with other paintings (see items 65 to 69) where it was attributed to Pasquale Manfredi.
- 35-36 1814. From Felice Delicata, part of the inheritance of Signor Bruno: (35) *Portrait of Commendatore Almeyda in a Hunting Scene* by Favray for 15 scudi. Though referred to as a beautiful original by Antoine Favray, the painting has not been accepted by modern art critics as a work by the artist. (36) *Nativity* by Michele Busuttill for 15 scudi. Later removed from its frame and donated to builder Giovanni Mamo for services rendered. Referred to as a large canvas.
- 37-38 1814. From a sale by Mr Henry Steward: (37) *Landscape with figures*, a small fine oval on copper for 51 scudi. The landscape is said to have been painted by Orizzonte, the figures added by Placido Costanzi. A gilt frame for the picture purchased for 10 scudi. (38) *Marine Scene by moonlight*, by Volaire, in a fine English frame, for 12 scudi.
- 39 1814. *Study of a Structure* by Petignon, also in a fine English frame, for 10 scudi.
- 40-41 On 15 October 1815 from Benucci for 5 scudi two small unidentified ovals in the style of Perelle.
- [p.41]**
- 42-44 On 21 October 1815 from Benucci in exchange for a metal gilt 'Pax' with a representation of the three Magi, formerly in the possession of the Count's uncle Agostino Marchese: (42) *Hunters* by Locatelli a small oval in a fine Roman frame, for 7 scudi 6 tari; (43) *Landscape by moonlight* for 5 scudi — artist unknown, picture unframed and later exchanged (see items 65 to 69); (44) *Marine view with arches and ships*, in the style of Canaletto, for 7 scudi 6 tari — sold on 8 January 1816 to Baroncino Sciberras D'Amico for 12 scudi 6 tari.
- 45 On 25 November 1815 from Benucci for 250 scudi *Wolves and Hounds* by Snyders. Paid through an exchange with various objects: paintings, prints, two Etruscan vases and a 50 volume series of books on Greek History. N.B. In spite of its high price, based on the assumption that the canvas was an original, the picture has been proved to be a copy, although an excellent copy, of an original preserved at the Brera Gallery, Milan.
- 46-48 On 7 February 1816 from Don Martino Zerafa, parish priest of Attard, for 30 scudi: (46) *King David*, after Guercino; (47) *Daughter of Herodias holding Baptist's Head*, soon relined and discovered to be a copy and (48) *St Cecilia*, also discovered to be a copy.
- 49 On 11 June 1816 *Holy Family and Saints*, attributed to Pietro Novelli. Seller not indicated and canvas in a bad state of repair.
- 50-52 On 28 July 1816 from Medeschini, a miniaturist from Meschi (?) for 92 scudi 6 tari *three large Landscapes* by Ignazio Bavarese. Payment partly in cash and partly through an exchange with a silver watch estimated at 75 scudi.
- 53-56 On 30 July 1816 from painter Busuttill four paintings representing *Fish* by Paolo Porpora, pupil of Agnello Ascione, for 25 scudi.
- 57-60 On 5 August 1816 from Benucci four paintings, the former two for Roman scudi 10.30: (57) *Ruins*, a large canvas by Pannini; (58) *Horses*, a small canvas by Mastro Stendardo, later exchanged (see items 65 to 69); (59) *Animals and Fruit*, unattributed, for 7 maltese scudi 7 tari 10 grani and (60) *Fish*, also unattributed, for 7 scudi 7 tari 10 grani.
- 61 On 20 January 1817 from Benucci for 52 scudi *Fruit and Flowers* paid for partly in cash and partly through an exchange with three prints. Though unattributed, the picture is described as a very fine canvas in a gilt frame and once forming part of the picture-gallery of the Prince Santa Groce in Rome.

- 62 On 6 March 1817 from a second hand dealer for 10 scudi a *Deer* with other animals by Antonio Tempesta.
- 63-64 On 20 March 1817 from Benucci for 60 scudi two fine unidentified [p.42] canvases by Locatelli or Van Falens.
- 65-69 On 20 March 1817 from the gilder Mastro Agostino an acquisition of 5 paintings estimated at 60 scudi 6 tari and paid for through an exchange with other paintings including items 28, 29, 34, 43, 58 above: (65) *Bacchanal* by Mola and its companion picture (66) *Death of Procris* by the same artist, both estimated at 30 scudi; (67) *Finding of Moses in a landscape* — landscape painted by Agostino Tassi, figures painted by Filippo Lauri, canvas estimated at 20 scudi; (68) *Head of St Paul* by Solimena, estimated at 7 scudi 6 tari and (69) *Sampson in the Temple*, unattributed, estimated at 3 scudi.
- 70-71 On 26 March 1817 bought on the open market for 3 tari two identical copies of the *Head of the Virgin* after Sassoferrato.
- 72 On 2 May 1817 from second hand dealer Mustaccia an unattributed *St Cecilia* for 2 scudi 6 tari.
- 73 On 28 February 1818 from William Stevens through Filippo Benucci a fine and costly picture by the Dutch artist Nicasio Bernaert, pupil of Snyder, representing *Fish, Oysters and Crabs against a market background*. First brought from Rome by Mirri, later acquired by Stevens and through Benucci sold to Marchese for 150 scudi. Payment through an exchange with 2 volumes of prints, a soup-toureen and similar objects.
- 74 On 21 March 1818 from the German painter Schranz an oil painting representing a *Grand Harbour View with the vessel Albion*. Commissioned to the seller, signed and dated by the artist and costing 60 scudi.
- 75 On 21 September 1818 from the same artist a companion picture showing the other side of *The Grand Harbour*, also for 60 scudi.
- 76 On 22 January 1820 from the second hand dealer Celestre *A Country Villa in Rome* by the Maltese painter Giuseppe Grech. Previously owned by the painter's brother Antonaci, it was acquired by Marchese, together with other paintings and prints, for 4 scudi. Restored by Schranz (the elder son of the painter) who also added the figures.
- 77-78 On 25 May 1820 from a foreign resident in Malta for 10 scudi two small paintings on copper by a Flemish artist, (77) *St Jerome* and (78) *St John the Baptist*. Both restored by Schranz.
- 79 On 31 June 1820 from Salvatore Ittard a canvas by Bassano representing *The Shepherds awoken by the Angel* (Surgite Pastures) for 15 scudi 4 tari. Previously owned by Count Preziosi.
- 80 On 20 December 1821 from an unnamed seller found by the second hand dealer Cabaretta a superb panel by Tintoretto, a bozzetto said to be for an altar-piece in Venice, for 15 scudi. N.B. Though [p.43] undescribed, the panel referred to is probably *The Scourging of Christ* by Palma il Giovane.
- 81 On 1 June 1822 from Ghita Grech, sister of the painter Antonaci Grech, for 10 scudi 8 tari *Expulsion from Eden* by Francesco Fracanzani. Relined and restored by Schranz for 36 scudi 9 tari.
- 82 On 13 July 1823 bought on the open market for 5 scudi a *Deposition* by Coriolano. On copper. The picture is painted on the back of a copper-plate engraved by the same artist. The engraving is described by Bartsch.
- 83 On 12 February 1826 from the cabinet maker Mastro Antonio for 23 scudi and 1 tari an *Allegory* by Benedetto Castiglione. The price includes the picture's restoration.

84-85 On 17 August 1826 from a second hand dealer for 1 scudo two unattributed oblong pictures of still life showing *Fruit*.

APPENDIX II

Paintings, owned by Marchese, coming from the Camilleri and Preziosi families.
Source: Count Marchese's last will.

- 1 *St Jerome holding the Cross*, a copy by Stefano Erardi.
- 2 *Judith and Holofernes*, another copy by Stefano Erardi.
- 3 *Ecce Homo* with two angels by Giuseppe Arena called Il Romano.
- 4 *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, a nice small canvas bought from Rome.
- 5 *Immaculate Conception* by Manno, the Palermitan painter.
- 6 *St Andrew venerating the Cross*, a fine copy of an original by Guido Reni in San Gregorio, Rome.
- 7 An unidentified large painting, a fine copy after Raphael, donated to Count Marchese by Signora Eustachia.
- 8-9 Two horizontal pictures presenting *Dead Game*, donated by Canon Vittorio Gristi.
- 10-13 Four companion pictures depicting *Animals*, by Melchior Roos, kept in the Count's country house, acquired from the sale of Filippo Camilleri.
- 14 *St Jerome*, whole length, a large canvas of poor quality.
- 15 *Our Lady of Succour and St Nicholas of Tolentino*, a large canvas of poor quality, probably removed from a Church.
- 16 *Bethrotal of the Virgin*, another large canvas of a very poor quality.
- 17-25 Nine family *Portraits*, depicting members of the Bianchi, Gristi and Camilleri families.
- 26 Portrait of Monsignor Durini, formerly Inquisitor in Malta, by Francesco Zahra.