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“Moving Mortals to Tears and Devotion”: Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini, Torquato Tasso, and the Sorrowing Virgin

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Torquato Tasso was inspired to pen his *Stanze per le lagrime di Maria Vergine santissima e di Giesù Cristo nostro* (Rome, 1593) by a painting of the sorrowing Virgin belonging to Cardinal Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini (1551–1610). A nephew of Pope Clement VIII by his sister, Cinzio took on the Aldobrandini name in a practice known as an “aggregation.” The publication of Tasso’s *Lagrime* allowed Cinzio to promote himself as a devout prelate favored by the pope, but it did not ensure his influence and a true “blood” nephew, Pietro Aldobrandini, successfully challenged his authority. This essay examines the status of the aggregated nephew, the painting that was Tasso’s inspiration, and the conception of sacred art presented in the introductory texts accompanying Tasso’s *Lagrime*. These lines of inquiry reveal the entwined histories of painting, poetry, and politics in the process of defining what was good sacred art in Counter-Reformation Rome.

“Weep with me in tearful verse, the bitter martyrdom that pierces her heart.” Torquato Tasso thus plaintively addresses the reader in the opening stanza of *Le Lagrime della Beata Vergine*, published in Rome in 1593 with a companion poem dedicated to the tears of Christ.¹ A note to readers and a sonnet that preface the verses reveal that the poems were inspired by a painting of the Virgin belonging to Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini.² The anonymous painting, praised in the note for its powerful realism, was a gift to Cinzio from his uncle, Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini (r. 1592–1605).³ Cinzio had been promoted to the cardinalate in 1592, after Ippolito Aldobrandini’s ascension to the papal throne. Despite his influential position, Cinzio did not enjoy the undivided regard of his uncle or the Curia, and was forced to contend with the keen ambition of his much younger cousin and fellow cardinal nephew, Pietro Aldobrandini. Cinzio’s bitterness

¹“piangete meco in lagrimoso canto, / l’aspro martir che le traffisse il core.” Torquato Tasso, *Stanze per le lagrime di Maria Vergine santissima e di Giesù Cristo nostro Signore* (Rome, 1593), and Torquato Tasso, *Opere*, ed. Bruno Maier (Milan: Rizzoli, 1964), 4:411–24.

²On Cinzio Aldobrandini, see E. Fasano Guarini, “Aldobrandini (Passeri), Cinzio,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (DBI), ed. Alberto M. Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960), 2:102–4, accessed 27 August 2013, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cinzio-aldobrandini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cinzio-aldobrandini_(Dizionario-Biografico)). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author’s.

³Angelo Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (Turin: Loescher, 1895), 752. See also Pasquale Sabatino, “Torquato Tasso e la letteratura sulle ‘lagrime’ della Madonna,” in *Nel mondo mutabile e leggero: Torquato Tasso e la cultura del suo tempo*, ed. Dante Della Terza (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2003), 89.

erupted in 1598 and eventually led to Pietro's eclipse of Cinzio in every aspect of life at the papal court: political, economic, and artistic.⁴

In 1593, when Tasso's verses were published, Cinzio was vying for influence in the Aldobrandini papacy. Pietro already presented a threat since he had insisted on being made a cardinal instead of marrying and carrying on the family name, a declaration of personal determination. Cinzio's status as a cardinal nephew was inherently weak: as the son of Clement VIII's sister, he was born Cinzio Passeri, and was given the Aldobrandini name in an act referred to by a contemporary as an "aggregation."⁵ Aggregated nephews were blood relatives, and yet not "blood" as defined by patrilineal kinship; a political position based on their familial tie to the pope was precarious. The publication of Tasso's *Lagrime* is evidence of Cinzio's efforts to promote himself as a pious prelate and active reformer, and to thereby overcome his uncertain position at the papal court. This essay will examine the status of the aggregated nephew, the nature and reception of the painting at the root of Tasso's verses, and the conception of sacred art that is presented in the introductory texts accompanying Tasso's *Lagrime*. Aggregation as a familial and political strategy has never been the topic of focused study, while a reconsideration of Cinzio's painting as inscribed in the publication of Tasso's *Lagrime* will provide a new basis to understand the text. Examining these three lines of inquiry as they unravel from the deceptively simple artifact at the root of this study—a booklet of verses inspired by a painting—evinces the entwined histories of painting, poetry, and politics in the process of defining what was good sacred art in Counter-Reformation Rome.

Since 2001, several scholars, including Maria Teresa Imbriani, Pasquale Sabbatino, and Matthew Treherne, have discussed Tasso's *Lagrime*.⁶ Imbriani's and Sabbatino's studies for the most part set aside larger social issues of patronage, while Treherne argues for a reading of the *Lagrime* in relation to developments in the visual arts.⁷ These studies have made inroads into the complexity of Tasso's *Lagrime*, but they have not considered the question of why Tasso composed these poems in 1593 and what larger purpose their publication served. Doing so draws Tasso's *Lagrime* into the realm of contemporary politics and calls for a reconsideration of the poems' relation to the arts and to their patron.

⁴Klaus Jaitner, "Il nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII (1592–1605): Il dramma del cardinale Cinzio Aldobrandini," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 535 (1988): 57–93.

⁵Ludwig von Pastor, *Storia dei papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, vol. 11, *Storia dei papi nel periodo della riforma e restaurazione cattolica: Clemente VIII (1592–1605)* (Rome: Desclée, 1958), 764.

⁶Maria Teresa Imbriani, "Intertestualità tra le 'Lagrime' di Luigi Tansillo e di Torquato Tasso," *Critica letteraria* 110 (2001): 15–32; Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 75–138; Matthew Treherne, "Pictorial Space and Sacred Time: Tasso's *Le Lagrime della beata Vergine* and the Experience of Religious Art in the Counter-Reformation," *Italian Studies* 62, no. 1 (2007): 5–25.

⁷Treherne, "Pictorial Space," 5–25.

The earliest and most extensive modern sources on Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini are two highly polemical eighteenth-century biographies.⁸ Their current value stems from the quantity of original correspondence the authors reproduce. In the nineteenth century, Cinzio appears prominently as patron and protector in two canonical biographies of Tasso by Angelo Solerti and Pierantonio Serassi respectively.⁹ Solerti's and Serassi's works are indispensable as they sketch the relationship between patron and poet through letters and contemporary sources. Both biographies also propagate misleading information that has colored the study of Tasso's *Lagrime*, in particular the misattribution of the painting that was Tasso's inspiration. There was no subsequent interest in Cinzio Aldobrandini until the 1980s, when Christopher Witcombe shed light on the decoration of Cinzio's Vatican apartments and Klaus Jaitner examined Cinzio's conduct during the 1598 devolution of Ferrara to the Papal States.¹⁰ Considering Cinzio's status in Rome at the beginning of the Aldobrandini papacy helps to elucidate the basis of his later actions, and allows for a consideration of the poorly understood familial strategy of aggregation.

The Aggregated Nephew

Of Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini's two cardinal nephews, Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini (fig. 1) is the lesser known, overshadowed by his considerably younger cousin, Pietro. Pietro made his mark in the history of Roman art and architecture through monuments such as the family villa in Frascati, his extensive picture collection (founded on works left to him by Lucrezia Borgia), and the Aldobrandini lunettes, the first forays into "ideal" landscape painting to be found in Baroque Rome.¹¹ Cinzio's impact is more widely recognized in the world of letters, as he was the devoted patron of Torquato Tasso and orchestrated the publication of Tasso's *Gerusalemme conquistata*.¹² Cinzio was known to his contemporaries as an intellectual and as a patron of literature; he gathered around

⁸Angelo Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche storiche critiche e letterarie del Cardinale Cinzio Personeni ...* (Bergamo, 1786); Francesco Parisi, *Della epistolografia di Francesco Parisi ...* (Rome, 1787).

⁹Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*; Pierantonio Serassi, *La vita di Torquato Tasso* (Rome, 1785).

¹⁰Christopher Witcombe, "The Vatican Apartment of Cinzio Aldobrandini: Notes and Documents," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 19 (1981): 173–89; Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 57–93.

¹¹On Pietro's artistic patronage, see Xavier F. Salomon, "The Religious, Artistic and Architectural Patronage of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (1571–1621)" (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2005), and numerous subsequent publications; Laura Testa, "La collezione del cardinale Pietro Aldobrandini: Modalità di acquisizione e direttive culturali," in *I cardinali di Santa Romana Chiesa: Collezionisti e mecenati*, ed. Marco Gallo (Rome: Edizioni dell'Associazione Culturale Shakespeare and Company 2, 2001), 38–60; Clare Robertson, "Patronage Rivalries: Cardinals Odoardo Farnese and Pietro Aldobrandini," in *Art and Identity in Early Modern Rome*, ed. Jill Burke and Michael Bury (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 95–111. On the Aldobrandini villa in Frascati, see Cesare D'Onofrio, *La Villa Aldobrandini di Frascati* (Rome: Staderini, 1963).

¹²Torquato Tasso and Angelo Ingegneri, *Gerusalemme conquistata* (Rome, 1593).



Figure 1. Detail, frontispiece of the *Tempio all'illustrissimo et reverendissimo Signor Cynthio Aldobrandini, Cardinale S. Giorgio, nipote del Sommo Pontefice Clemente Ottavo*, ed. Giulio Segni (Bologna, 1600). Courtesy of Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome.

himself a circle of writers that was esteemed by contemporaries as an elite literary academy.¹³ The cardinal's master of ceremonies, Girolamo Lunadoro, wrote after the cardinal's death that "the Cardinal S. Giorgio, of happy memory,... in the seventeen years that he was a cardinal, every morning held a roundtable that was a public Academy, and made his house a Seminary of the virtuous."¹⁴ Lunadoro mentions the literary critic and papal functionary Bonifazio Vannozzi, publisher Giovanni Battista Raimondi, Ferrarese professor Francesco Patrizi, and Tasso among Cinzio's small court. Similarly, Guido Bentivoglio stated that the cardinal "showed himself especially to be very favorable to literary types; he held a literary academy in his rooms at the Vatican."¹⁵ Cinzio's academy may also have influenced the development of art theory in early modern Italy; it was most likely there that Tasso and Giovanni Battista Agucchi discussed parallel interests in promoting Italian literature and painting without the Tuscan bias present up to that point in most critical writing.¹⁶

Many writings were dedicated to Cinzio—among them a *Discorso* by Ubaldo Domo on Petrarch, a volume of odes by Guido Casoni, a volume of poems by Isabella Andreini, and a collection of writings titled *Tempio all'illustrissimo et reuerendissimo signor Cinthio Aldobrandini*.¹⁷ Cinzio's literary circle also included Battista Guarini, author of *Il pastor fido*, and it is likely that Cesare Ripa, author of the *Iconologia*, was also connected to the group.¹⁸ The most important member of the circle was undoubtedly Tasso, who dedicated several works to Cinzio, including a *Dialogo dell'imprese* and his *Gerusalemme conquistata*.¹⁹ On Cinzio's tomb at San Pietro in Vincoli, his titular church at the time of his death, the cardinal is memorialized as a "most kind patron of literature" (fig. 2).²⁰ Cinzio's significance in literature was not, however, paralleled in politics.

¹³To date, the primary source material found regarding this "academy" is scant and the estimation of its membership is something of a patchwork based on epistolary connections. Lunadoro, a member of Cinzio's *famiglia*, records that the cardinal always had his table set for six people and that it was a "vera accademia." Drawing on Lunadoro, Solerti provides a long list of names of members of this academy without providing documentation. Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 734–37.

¹⁴Virginio Prinzivalli, *Torquato Tasso a Roma: Ricerche Storiche, con Documenti Inediti e Rari* (Rome, 1895), 59.

¹⁵Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 734.

¹⁶Testa, "La collezione del cardinale Pietro Aldobrandini," 49.

¹⁷Ubaldo de Doma and Vincenzo Colombara, *Discorso di Ubaldo de Domo, nel quale si espone la vigesima seconda canzone del Petrarca...* (Perugia, 1604); Guido Casoni, *Ode dell'illust. et eccell....* (Venice, 1601); Isabella Andreini, *Rime d'Isabella Andreini comica gelosa* (Milan, 1601/5); Giulio Segni, ed., *Tempio all'illustrissimo et reuerendissimo signor Cinthio Aldobrandini...* (Bologna, 1600). On the *Tempio*, see Luisella Giachino, "Tra celebrazione e mito: Il *Tempio* di Cinzio Aldobrandini," *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 178 (2001): 404–19.

¹⁸Christopher Witcombe, "Cesare Ripa and the Sala Clementina," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 278–79.

¹⁹Torquato Tasso, *Dialogo dell'imprese* (Naples, 1594).

²⁰"Litteratorvm Favtor Beneficentissimo." My transcription in full reads *cint hio al dobr andino s.r.e. cardinali / clementi viii pont. maximo / sangvine ac virt vt ibvs conivncto /*



Figure 2. Carlo Bizzaccheri, Tomb of Cinzio Aldobrandini, S. Pietro in Vincoli. Photo by author.

Jaitner explained Cinzio's inefficacy as a result of the cardinal's violation of standards of comportment in court culture.²¹ While this is undoubtedly true, Jaitner's approach largely leaves aside the critical issue of Cinzio's paternity.

When Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini was elected to the papal throne in 1592 as Clement VIII, it was widely assumed that Cinzio, the older and more experienced of the new pope's nephews, would take the primary role as cardinale nipote, while Pietro would marry and continue the family line.²² Clement VIII dallied in officially selecting his second-in-command. Finally in September 1592, seven months after his election, he officially raised both his nephews to the cardinalate. He named them joint Secretary of State, and, on the surface at least, accorded them equal honors and status.²³ Although Clement VIII strove to maintain an appearance of parity between the two nephews, evidence of unequal fortunes quickly emerged and in little time the two were seen to be in open conflict.²⁴ Both Cinzio's overly sensitive and thorny personality and Pietro's rampant ambition have justifiably been cited as the roots of this inequality. Insufficient emphasis, however, has been placed on the fact that Cinzio was not born into the paternal Aldobrandini line.

Cinzio was the son of Aurelio Passeri and Elisabetta (or Giulia) Aldobrandini, Clement VIII's sister; thus by birth he was a Passeri.²⁵ He spent his youth in Rome in the care of his uncles, and traveled and worked with Ippolito extensively while the latter was still a cardinal. It is unclear exactly when he took on the Aldobrandini name and coat of arms, but it appears to have been before Ippolito Aldobrandini's election to the papal throne.²⁶ One contemporary, a source of Cardinal d'Este's at the papal court, refers to Cinzio's inclusion in the Aldobrandini as an aggregation, stating that "[Cardinal] San Giorgio was born to a sister of the Pope married in Sinigaglia into the Passeri family, whose name and arms

litteratorvm favori beneficentissimo / per prospera et adversa semper invicto / io. bapt. panphilivs aldobrandinvs / medvlæ princeps et sarsinæ dux / materni generis memor / ne divtivs in obscuro præclaricineres / iacerent / in hanc templivcem transferri ivssit / a nno sal. hvmanæ mdccvii.

²¹Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 57–93.

²²D'Onofrio, *Villa Aldobrandini*, 19; Salomon, "Religious, Artistic and Architectural Patronage," 28.

²³Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 61.

²⁴Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 62.

²⁵There is a continuous debate about whether Cinzio's mother's name was Giulia or Elisabetta. The recorded confusion goes back to Personeni and Parisi, but in reality must be traced back even further, as both authors refer to a preexisting error regarding her name. She is identified as Giulia by Witcombe, "Vatican Apartment," 173; D'Onofrio, *Villa Aldobrandini*; and Salomon, "Religious, Artistic and Architectural Patronage"; and as Elisabetta by Parisi, *Della epistolografia*; Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche*; and *DBI*, 2:102–4.

²⁶In letters of 1577 and 1578 he signed his name as "Cinzio Passeri." Parisi, *Della epistolografia*, 61–62, 66.

he would carry, if the Pope had not aggregated him into the Aldobrandini.”²⁷ The term aggregate is an apt one, as it implicitly acknowledges both his blood tie to the Aldobrandini and his outsider paternity. An avviso of 1 February 1592 outlined the situation, saying that the new pope

has many relatives and the closest are his two nephews, one of which, his sister’s son, named Sig. Cintio, 28 years old, will be cardinal, to whom Our Lord has given the last name of the Aldobrandini household, since he is from the Passarini [*sic*], loving him very much; the other nephew, his brother’s son, is called Sig. Pietro Aldobrandini. He is 19 and already it is said that he will succeed in marrying Sig. Don Virginio Orsino’s sister.²⁸

The case of the two Aldobrandini nephews demonstrates that where paternal descent was fabricated, the aggregated nephew had to strive continually to maintain the benefits of filiation. It is in this sense that aggregation can be related to the practice of adoption, defined by Cesare Ripa in the 1618 edition of the *Iconologia* as “a legitimate act through which one is made a son, who is not, and that almost imitates nature.”²⁹ Ripa’s definition stresses the human, rather than natural, nature of adoption; it is a legal fiction meant to imitate the natural bond of a father and son, of which it will always fall short. Aggregation could be seen with similar ambivalence, and it put Cinzio Aldobrandini at a financial and political disadvantage with respect to his cousin.

Pietro on the other hand was Ippolito’s brother’s son, and thus firmly in the male line of Aldobrandini descent. He was also twenty years Cinzio’s junior, inexperienced in diplomatic affairs, and only twenty-one years old when he was raised to the cardinalate, despite a directive passed under Sixtus V in 1588 requiring that cardinals be at least thirty years of age.³⁰ However, he was ambitious and quickly set about gaining the upper hand over his cousin. The first indication of an imbalance between the two nephews may be found at the moment of their elevation to the cardinalate. Pietro was given the title “Cardinal Aldobrandini,” while Cinzio took the name of his titular church, becoming known as “Cardinal San Giorgio.” A papally decreed division of labor notwithstanding, within a few years of the nephews’ joint nomination to Secretary of State, all the nunzios were communicating first and primarily with Pietro, as it was perceived that it

²⁷As in Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, 11:764. The source is undated, but based on internal evidence was likely written between February and April 1600.

²⁸As in D’Onofrio, *Villa Aldobrandini*, 19. The avviso writer’s misinformation (Cinzio’s and Pietro’s ages, Cinzio’s last name, Pietro’s future) attests to the Aldobrandini nephews’ newness to the Roman political scene.

²⁹Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Piero Buscaroli (Turin: Fògola, 1986), 2:255.

³⁰A. V. Antonovics, “Counter-Reformation Cardinals: 1534–90,” *European History Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1972): 307.

was only he who had real influence with the pope.³¹ By 1598 Cinzio was already complaining bitterly to the pope about his complete usurpation by his cousin.³²

During the Aldobrandini papacy, several contemporary writers pointed to the nephews' unequal kinship relationship to the pope as one of the fundamental causes of the imbalance between them. In 1595 Venetian ambassador Paolo Paruta observed that "Cardinal San Giorgio begins to cede to Cardinal Aldobrandini, as he clearly sees that such is the will of the pope, either for the closer blood tie, since [Pietro] is of the same house and his brother's son, while [Cinzio] is his sister's son; or because he is more confident in him."³³ When Bentivoglio arrived at the papal court in 1600, he could see that Pietro's authority had grown to such an extent that "Cardinal S. Giorgio retained only a weak, and vain appearance of it."³⁴ Bentivoglio's explanation for the situation was twofold. First there was Pietro's inherent aptitude for the position, which was recognized and exploited by the pope. Secondly, Bentivoglio states that in recognizing and rewarding Pietro's abilities, the pope was "giving the just rights to blood."³⁵ While biologically the respective bond between the two nephews and their uncle was identical, in the context of contemporary family relations, Pietro's was unquestionably the stronger of the two. Cinzio's inferior position with relation to his cousin forms the backdrop against which to consider Torquato Tasso's *Lagrime* and the relationship of the poem to Cardinal San Giorgio's political interests.

The Publication of the *Lagrime*

From the outset of Clement VIII's pontificate, Cinzio Aldobrandini enjoyed a close relationship with poet Torquato Tasso. Tasso arrived in Rome in April 1592, just after Clement VIII's election, and was immediately taken in by the cardinal nephew. It is likely Tasso who is recorded as the anonymous "gentleman" living in the Vatican palace in November 1592 as part of Cinzio's *famiglia*.³⁶ At the time, Tasso was revising his *Gerusalemme liberata* in order to make it solidly and unassailably orthodox; the result would also be published in 1593 as the *Gerusalemme conquistata*. Cinzio watched over Tasso's late career quite carefully, and was closely involved in the publication of the *Gerusalemme conquistata*.³⁷ With the exception of a trip back to Naples, Tasso remained in Rome until his death in 1595 at the monastery of Sant'Onofrio on the Janiculum hill. His exception-

³¹Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 63.

³²Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 78–93.

³³D'Onofrio, *Villa Aldobrandini*, 19.

³⁴Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche*, 66–67.

³⁵"dando il giusto diritto al sangue"; Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche*, 67.

³⁶Claudio Gigante, *Tasso* (Rome: Salerno, 2007), 50. Prinziavalli, *Torquato Tasso a Roma*, 56, 79–95. Cesare Colnabrini, *Ruolo degli Appartamenti e delle stanze nel Palazzo Vaticano al tempo di Clemente VIII (1594)* (Rome, 1895), 19.

³⁷Gigante, *Tasso*, 348.

ally close ties to Cinzio were made clear in his will, where he made Cardinal San Giorgio his universal heir.³⁸

Soon after his entry into Cinzio's household, Tasso published the *Stanze per le lagrime di Maria Vergine santissima e di Giesù Cristo nostro Signore*, a set of two poems, the first dedicated to the tears of the Virgin and the second to those of Christ. In the 1593 publication, a note to readers and a sonnet by Angelo Ingegneri, Tasso's assistant, introduce the poems. These introductory materials provide the framework to understand the significance and purpose of the publication of Tasso's *Lagrime*. They connect the poems to Cinzio as a pious patron and set out the goals of the *Lagrime*: to move and delight the viewer.

The purpose of the note to readers is to inform the reader of the source of Tasso's inspiration to write the *Lagrime*.

The inspiration to compose these first twenty-five octaves came to Sig. Torquato Tasso from a painted image of our lady that is kept by the most Illustrious and Reverend Signor Cinzio Aldobrandini in his own room with much reverence; this painting is, among all other things, of exquisite style, so that the work must be of learned and expert artifice—it is for this particularly miraculous; [Mary] is depicted with palms and brow in the act of devout contemplation, shown with those holy eyes so vividly full of tears, and those cheeks hold their blessed tracks of true tears, such that it fools those seeing [the painting], [and] invites every pious hand to dry them.³⁹

The sonnet by Ingegneri follows the note to readers. Like the note, it does not name the artist but it does praise the quality of the painting and, in particular, its illusionism.

Who is he, that this weeping, and these
Tears, with such a skilled brush, expresses?
Rather, who was he? In art so sublime

³⁸Prinzivalli, *Torquato Tasso a Roma*, 106, 129–30. The 1610 inventory of Cinzio's belongings includes numerous shelves and armoires; some were specifically for books ("doi scantie di noce con suoi taffettani di tener libri"). Archivio di Stato, Rome (hereafter ASR), Notai Tribunali AC, Fuscus notai, anno 1610, vol. 3331, 4v. The inventory does not list any actual books or manuscripts, a surprising omission given Cinzio's role as a literary patron and Tasso's heir. On the legal battle for Tasso's manuscripts and the right to publish them that erupted following the poet's death, see Prinzivalli, *Torquato Tasso a Roma*, 135–36.

³⁹My thanks go to Walter Cupperi for his ever-gracious help with translations. Tasso, *Opere*, 4:411. "Ha dato occasione al sig. Torquato Tasso di comporre queste prime venticinque ottave un' imagine di nostra Donna in pittura, che dall' Ill. mo e Rev. mo Signor Cinzio Aldobrandini . . . viene con molta riverenza tenuta nella sua propria camera; la quale, come che sia per tutt' altro di maniera esquisita, onde convien ch'opra fosse di dotto ed esperto artefice, è per ciò particolarmente miracolosa; ché, essend' ella figurata con le palme e co' l' ciglio in atto di devota contemplazione, mostra havere quei suoi santi occhi si vivamente pregni di pianto, e tien quelle guance sue benedette rigate di tanto vere lagrime, che l' altrui vista ingannando, invita a rasciugargliene ogni pia mano."

It appears that today no such record remains;
 Apelles perhaps? Or Zeuxis? Ah, too quickly
 Their fi st glory disappeared.
 The work is by the one (if I judge correctly)
 Of the two, who down here had a celestial name.
 Though it is not by virtue of human talent,
 That the holy face is sprinkled with such drops;
 And the eye still made damp, and full:
 But a miracle of Heaven: because to [Heaven] is raised
 The errant soul; and its unworthy failure
 Th s wave cleanses; and this hand dries it.

Chi è costui, che questo Pianto, e queste
 Con sì dotto Pennel Lagrime esprime?
 Anzi chi fu? che d'arte sì sublime
 Par che tanta notitia hoggi non reste:
 Apelle forse? ò Zeusi? Ahi troppo preste
 Furo al mancar le costor glorie prime.
 Lòpra è de l'un (se vien ch'io dritto estime)
 De' duo, c'hebbèr quà giù nome celeste.
 Benche non è virtù d'humano ingegno,
 Che di tai gocchie il santo volto asperga;
 E l'occhio ancor ne renda humido, e pregno:
 Ma miracol del Ciel: perch'ài lui s'erga
 L'anima errante; e'l suo fallire indegno
 Lavi quest'onda; e questa man la terga.⁴⁰

The note and the sonnet can be analyzed for what they tell us about the physical object that inspired Tasso, how it was perceived, and what particular significance it held for Cinzio Aldobrandini. How the same object, an image of the sorrowing Virgin by an anonymous hand, is presented through the publication of the *Lagrime* provides rich evidence of what was considered good Catholic Reformation

⁴⁰Cited in the initial publication as “Anonymous”; in the second edition the poem is attributed to Angelo Ingegneri. See Gigante, *Tasso*, 348–50, 393–95, and A. Siekiera, “Ingegneri, Angelo,” in DBI (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2004), 62:358–61, accessed 27 August 2013, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-ingegneri_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-ingegneri_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Thank you to Giuseppe Gazzola for reviewing my translations of Ingegneri and Tasso.

painting. Both lines of inquiry further elucidate the role the 1593 publication of the *Lagrime* was intended to play in the political landscape of papal Rome.

Cinzio's Madonna

A sixteenth-century source states that the painting that inspired Tasso was a work by Albrecht Dürer, given to Cinzio by the pope.⁴¹ The connection to Dürer was noted, not without reservation, by Solerti and Serassi, and has trickled down into modern scholarship largely unchallenged. Yet, as Solerti pointed out in 1895, from the sixteenth century to his own day, there was a marked tendency to ascribe any and all so-called ancient German or Flemish paintings to Dürer, a fact that should cast immediate suspicion on such an attribution.⁴² Moreover, there is no work in Dürer's painted or printed oeuvre that truly comes close to the description of the painting, scant as it is, offered in the note to readers. Pasquale Sabbatino is the sole author to reject the attribution outright, but his assertion has not been integrated into subsequent literature.⁴³ Dürer was famed in early modern Italy for his woodcuts and graphic work and seen as virtuous, but he was comparatively unknown as a painter.⁴⁴ While the work in question was likely painted in northern Europe, it is highly unlikely Dürer painted it. An examination of the painting that inspired the *Lagrime* along with an unpublished inventory of Cinzio's possessions allows further comment on this painting, but does not identify the work or its author with certainty. The exclusion of the painter's name in the publication of the *Lagrime* can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to emphasize the devotional purity of the poems.

The note to readers provides a basic substantive description of the painting, noting that the Madonna was shown "with palms and brow in the act of devout contemplation," and that her cheeks were stained with tears. In the poem, Tasso adds that "this high Queen of heaven / in her pain bows down her eyes to the earth."⁴⁵ As Sabbatino has noted, it is also apparent that Tasso's Mary is no longer a young woman.⁴⁶ All the elements of this description—mature age, palms in a gesture of prayer, downcast eyes, and prominent tears—are in accord with the small woodcut image of the Virgin printed as part of the frontispiece of the first edition of Tasso's *Lagrime* (fig. 3). The woodcut is, however, schematic

⁴¹Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 752. See also Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 89.

⁴²Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 752.

⁴³Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 88–89. The exception is Gigante, *Tasso*, 388.

⁴⁴On Dürer and Italy, see Kristina Herrmann Fiore, ed., *Dürer e l'Italia* (Milan: Electa, 2007), and Giulia Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy: The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist* (London: British Museum Press, 2002). Paleotti included Dürer in a list of painters who were sanctified or noted for their laudable lives; Paolo Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teoria delle arti figurative nella Riforma Cattolica* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1984), 36.

⁴⁵"questa del cielo alta Reina / Gli occhi nel suo dolore a terra inchina"; Tasso, *Opere*, 4:416, 16.7–8.

⁴⁶Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 93.

and abstract. It does not provide enough clues to connect it to a particular painting or painter.

In his introductory sonnet, Ingegneri cryptically identifies the painter, saying: “the work is by the one . . . of the two, that down here had a celestial name.” To anyone involved with the arts and art writing in sixteenth-century Rome, this designation would immediately call to mind Raphael and Michelangelo, and Vasari’s biographies where he identifies these artists and their works as divine gifts to man.⁴⁷ This could also be a reference to Leonardo, whom Vasari specifically refers to with the epithet “celeste.”⁴⁸ The attempt to link the painting to any of the three High Renaissance giants was no doubt largely a rhetorical flourish, and an indirect compliment aimed at the painting’s owner, Cinzio Aldobrandini. In a final amplification, the author suggests that the image, and in particular the tears, is not a product of human talent at all, but rather “a miracle of heaven.” The painting is suggestively connected to the tradition of images of the Virgin and Christ that were not made by human hands, such as Rome’s *Salus Populi Romani* in Santa Maria Maggiore, said to have been painted by St. Luke himself.⁴⁹

The most likely source of Tasso’s inspiration was an image of the *Mater dolorosa*, or Sorrowing Madonna. In general such pictures are composed as a close-up bust- or shoulder-length portrait-like presentation of the Virgin against a dark or gold ground, her face framed by a veil. The visual formula concentrates all the emotive power of the image in the stark minimalism of a weeping woman in a void. The relatively consistent key elements of the image are Mary’s isolation, her hands held in prayer, the reddened eyes, and fat tears that sit like gems on her pallid cheeks. Distilled from narrative images of the Passion, the iconography was developed in the north, first by the Master of Flémalle (generally identified as Robert Campin) and subsequently by Rogier Van der Weyden, Hans Memling, and Dieric Bouts, among others (fig. 4).⁵⁰ It should be noted that the best-known early Flemish versions of the *Mater dolorosa* show Mary with her hands together in prayer, the fingertips lightly touching, as in the version by Bouts (fig. 4), or with her arms crossed across her chest and fingers pointing upward as in the many copies after Rogier Van der Weyden’s lost version of the theme.⁵¹ The latter form was taken up by Leonardo followers Andrea Solario and Bernardino Luini, while

⁴⁷Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (Florence, 1568), 2:64–89 and 3:715–67.

⁴⁸Vasari, *Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori*, 2:2.

⁴⁹“Benche non è virtù d’humano ingegno / . . . / Ma miracol del Ciel...” On the S. Maria Maggiore image, see Gerhard Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH Acta Humaniora, 1990).

⁵⁰Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Doornspijk, NL: Davaco, 1984); Martha Wolff and Dieric Bouts, “An Image of Compassion: Dieric Bouts’s ‘Sorrowing Madonna,’” *Art Institute of Chicago Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 121–25, 174–75.

⁵¹For illustrations of the many variations on and versions of the theme, see Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, figs. 81–82, 96, 95, 107–11, 113, 126–27.

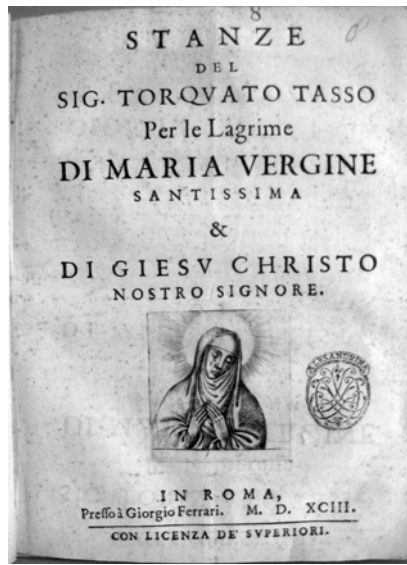


Figure 3. Frontispiece: Torquato Tasso, *Stanze per le lagrime di Maria Vergine santissima e di Giesu Christo nostro Signore* (Rome, 1593). Courtesy of Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina Roma, XIII a.13.8.



Figure 4. Copy after Dieric Bouts, *The Mourning Virgin*; *The Man of Sorrows*. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 71.156–57.

after Titian's 1554 version of the subject other Italian artists tended to show the Virgin with her hands clasped more tightly, often with the fingers woven together in a tense gesture somewhere between prayer and supplication.⁵² The woodcut that opens the 1593 edition of Tasso's *Lagrime* tends toward the earlier Flemish model, both in the position of the hands and in the visual emphasis placed on the exaggerated teardrops.

In early modern Italy, the overt emotionalism seen in the *Mater dolorosa* was particularly associated with Flemish and northern art. This truism has long been supported by a credulous reading of Francesco de Holanda's *Roman Dialogues*, in which the Portuguese author has Michelangelo say that northern painting will appeal particularly to the devout, women, the very young, and the very old, because it sets alight their own inherent piety.⁵³ As Laura Camille Agoston has shown, de Holanda's text was shaped by the author's literary and professional ambitions; the characters involved and the opinions they present are de Holanda's artful creations, their repartee meant to push the status of painting as a liberal art in Portugal and procure royal patronage for de Holanda.⁵⁴ The criticism of northern painting offered by Michelangelo in the first book of the dialogues is contradicted in the second, where the same Michelangelo supports the notion that the aim of sacred painting is "[to move] mortals to tears and devotion."⁵⁵ Whether viewed negatively or positively, sacred painting, in particular sacred painting from the north, was fundamentally seen as an emotional instigator. In his *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1586), Giovanni Battista Armenini remarks that in Lombardy he has seen matrons weep at private devotional paintings, "such was the vivacity and great excellence of [the works]."⁵⁶ Armenini links aesthetic quality and spiritual efficacy and suggests that tears are an appropriate response to such a doubly powerful work. Agoston's analysis of de Holanda's text suggests that our understanding of the reception of northern painting, and perhaps even northern Italian painting, in late sixteenth-century Italy has been skewed due to a misreading of the available primary source evidence. Cinzio Aldobrandini and Torquato Tasso's literary dissemination of a *Mater dolorosa* image with likely northern origins supports Agoston's point. Tasso's verses, inspired by a painting, implore the reader to weep with him, implying that such a response is appropriate. The reader of Ingegneri's and Tasso's poems is asked to imagine a vision of

⁵²Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, fig. 126; David Alan Brown, *Andrea Solario* (Milan: Electa, 1987), 182–83, 211–12, cats. 48–49; Angela Ottino della Chiesa, *Bernardino Luini* (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 1956), 106–7, figs. 119–20; Miguel Falomir, ed., *Tiziano, Museo Nacional del Prado: 10 de junio—7 de septiembre 2003* (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2003), 226–29, 385–86.

⁵³Francisco de Holanda, *Diálogos em Roma (1538): Conversations on Art with Michelangelo Buonarroti*, ed. Grazia Dolores Folliero-Metz (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1998), 76–77.

⁵⁴Laura Camille Agoston, "Male/Female, Italy/Flanders, Michelangelo/Vittoria Colonna," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2005): 1175–219.

⁵⁵Agoston, "Male/Female," 1192.

⁵⁶Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, ed. Marina Gorreri (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), 214.

the Virgin's pain: Cinzio's painting, a vision seen with the physical eyes, and the Virgin herself, a vision seen with the spiritual eye.⁵⁷ The viewer of sacred painting is to make the same distinction, venerating the personage depicted rather than the depiction itself. That the cardinal nephew possessed such a painting and promoted it through Tasso's verses suggests the elevated status of intensely emotional private devotional painting in Counter-Reformation Rome.

Moshe Barasch has traced the introduction and development of such "crying faces," and connected them to theological writings that interpret tears as gifts from and offerings to God, and as signs of sanctity.⁵⁸ Images of the sorrowing mother are powerful devotional works of the kind intended to inspire "empathetic meditation" as it has been discussed by Sixten Ringbom and David Freedberg; they are particularly appropriate for just the kind of use to which Cinzio and Tasso put the cardinal's *Mater dolorosa* picture, namely sustained individual meditation on the themes of Christ's Passion and Mary's suffering.⁵⁹ There was a fashion for tears in the Counter-Reformation, and Joseph Imorde has argued that crying became a standardized form of devotion precisely during the Aldobrandini pontificate.⁶⁰ The celebration of weeping in art and as a form of devotion encapsulated in Tasso's *Lagrima* would have served as a gesture of support toward Cinzio's uncle, Pope Clement VIII. The Aldobrandini pope was noted for his public and prodigious weeping, particularly during Mass and whenever in proximity to the sacrament.⁶¹ Clement VIII's contemporaries St. Philip Neri and St. Lorenzo da Brindisi were likewise known for their frequent and abundant tears, which were positively noted in their respective canonization processes.⁶² Cinzio Aldobrandini's support of the publication of Tasso's *Lagrima* acted as his own public declaration of the paradoxical joy of sorrow, and united him in tears with his uncle.

In late sixteenth-century Italy, images of the sorrowing Madonna were informally "approved" as good sacred art. In his *Discourse* on painting, Gabriele Paleotti condemned those who depicted Mary as emotionally out of control, who "have her rending her garments, scratching her own cheeks, and striking her

⁵⁷Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.12.2. For a recent discussion of the ways painters after the Council of Trent negotiated the distinction between physical and spiritual seeing, by what the author refers to as "making strange," see Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁵⁸Moshe Barasch, "The Crying Face," *Artibus et Historiae* 8, no. 15 (1987): 21–36.

⁵⁹David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 161–91; Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative* 11–72. See also James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁰Joseph Imorde, "Tasting God: The Sweetness of Crying in the Counter-Reformation," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 257–69.

⁶¹Imorde, "Tasting God," 257, 266–67.

⁶²Imorde, "Tasting God," 264–65.

own head with her fists when she sees [Christ] on the cross.”⁶³ For Paleotti, such painters fell into “ineptitude of mode,” because such a lack of restraint is “utterly unsuited to her life and wisdom.”⁶⁴ Similarly, he condemned images without a historical basis as “things imagined” only “in order to draw tears and awaken fervent devotion.”⁶⁵ Yet Giovanni Botero recommends Titian’s *Mater Dolorosa* and *Christ with the Crown of Thorns* in his 1599 *Dell’Officio del Cardinale*, as works that are “very religious and very decent.”⁶⁶ Botero also says that there are beautiful copies of Titian’s *Christ* and *Sorrowing Madonna* in many places, suggesting that the subject was accepted and seen as spiritually effective.⁶⁷ Later, Federico Borromeo, who studied with Paleotti in Bologna, owned a *Mater Dolorosa* and a pendant *Imago Pietatis* (Man of Sorrows) by Antonio Viviani (il Sordo de Urbino), and possibly another paired set of the same subjects by Scipione Pulzone.⁶⁸ Tasso’s poems thus came at a moment when the question of what was an acceptable degree of emotionalism in sacred art was in the process of being defined, and his verses argue for the efficacy of depictions of Mary’s tears. By extension, Tasso’s patron, Cinzio Aldobrandini, was a participant in the debate about the role and character of sacred art that was addressed in the writings of Paleotti, Armenini, Federico Borromeo, and others. In defining how the viewer should respond, the publication of Tasso’s *Lagrime* put the poet and the patron on the side of active reform of sacred images.

The dual format of Tasso’s *Lagrime*, with one poem dedicated to the weeping Mary and another to Christ, suggests that Tasso was familiar with devotional diptychs combining the *Sorrowing Madonna* and the *Man of Sorrows*, a canonical pairing in the north since the Quattrocento. In the *Lagrime*’s opening note to readers, it states that “the second twenty [verses, i.e. the poem dedicated to Christ’s tears] then are derived from the first, as the concepts . . . sprout one from

⁶³Gabriele Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. William McCuaig (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012), 228.

⁶⁴Paleotti, *Discourse*, 228. On art, theology, and the Counter-Reformation, see Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica* (1984) and Hubert Jedin, “Das Tridentinum und die bildenden Künste,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 74 (1963): 321–39.

⁶⁵Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica*, 39; Paleotti, *Discourse*, 162.

⁶⁶Carlo Giorda, *La vita e le opere di Giovanni Botero con la Quinta parte delle Relazioni universali e altri documenti inediti* (Milan, 1894), 2:681.

⁶⁷Giorda, *La vita e le opere di Giovanni Botero*, 2:681. On Titian’s various versions of the *Mater Dolorosa* and their replicas and copies, see Peter Humfrey, *Titian: The Complete Paintings* (Ghent: Ludion, 2007), 264–65, 288; Falomir, *Tiziano*, 228, 385; Filippo Pedrocchi, *Titian: The Complete Paintings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 229, 239; Harold E. Wethey, “Titian’s *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa*,” in *Evolution générale et développements régionaux en histoire de l’art: Actes du XXII^e Congrès International d’Histoire de l’Art*, ed. György Rózsa (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), 2:753–58; Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian* (London: Phaidon, 1969), 1:88–89, 115–17.

⁶⁸Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21, 53, 73, 124–25, 220.

the other.”⁶⁹ No second painting is mentioned, but a biological link, a sprouting, is posited between the images of the *Sorrowing Madonna* and *Christ*. Tasso may have seen or known just such a pair of paintings in the collections of the Aldobrandini family, although not with Cinzio. A “note of goods” attached to a list of items transferred to Palazzo Aldobrandini on the Corso when Olimpia Aldobrandini (1567–1637) moved there in 1621 includes a pair of eight-sided paintings showing, respectively, Christ crowned with thorns and holding a reed and the Madonna “who is crying,” “both with gilded frames.”⁷⁰ The structural basis of Tasso’s *Lagrima* may have been drawn from the binary relationship between Mary’s empathetic and Christ’s experienced pain that was established more than a century earlier in Flemish devotional paintings.

Cinzio Aldobrandini’s will was drawn up on 31 December 1610, the day before he died.⁷¹ He named Pietro his universal heir and aside from a short codicil outlining what was to be done with his ecclesiastical possessions, there is no list of his goods. Thankfully, an inventory of all of his possessions was made after his death; this unpublished document allows us to establish that the Cardinal San Giorgio did indeed own a painting similar to the one described by Tasso.⁷² The inventory was drawn up 1 March 1610 to assist Pietro in disposing of Cinzio’s things. It lists two paintings that could be identified with the work that inspired Tasso. First a “Madonna who is crying, with [an] ebony frame, red curtain, [and] silver hook,” followed, after several other entries, by a “tearful Madonna, black gilded frame, red curtains.”⁷³ As was typical for inventories from these years, no further information about the paintings is furnished nor is it possible to determine which of the two can be tied to Tasso’s poem. The inventory also lists a painting showing the dead Christ and another of Christ with the crown of thorns, but neither appears to have been paired with either of the tearful Madonnas to form

⁶⁹Comin Ventura, ed., *Nuova Raccolta di Lagrime di più poeti illustri...* (Bergamo, 1593), 4. “Le venti seconde poi sono derivate dalle prime, come i concetti (là, dove sia fertilità d’ingegno) germogliano l’uno dall’altro.”

⁷⁰Francesca Cappelletti, “Una nota di beni e qualche aggiunta alla storia della collezione Aldobrandini,” *Storia dell’arte* 93/94 (1998): 347. “74. Un quadro in ottangolo ov’è dipinto N.S. coronato di spine con una canna in mano. 75. Un altro quadro simile ov’è dipinto la madonna che sta piangendo tutti doi cornice dorate.” The paintings have not been identified.

⁷¹Archivio Aldobrandini, Frascati, 2: no. 19. Notarized Giovanni Battista Ottaviano, 31 December 1610. Officially the Gregorian calendar, decreed in 1582, moved the start of the new year to 1 January; however, the alternative tradition of calculating the new year from 25 December endured. Thus Cinzio’s will was drawn up on 31 December 1610, and he died on 1 January, also in the year 1610, as calculated in the old style.

⁷²March 1610, ASR, Notai Tribunali AC, Fuscus notai, anno 1610, 3331:1r–20v. My warmest thanks go to Antonella Fabriani Rojas for alerting me to this document.

⁷³“Madonna che piange con Cornici d’ebano taffetta rosso con attaccatore d’argento” and “Madonna lagrimante cornice negra indorata taffette rosse.” ASR, Notai Tribunali AC, Fuscus notai, anno 1610, 4r. I have maintained the orthography of the original document, which often follows Roman speech patterns rather than standard Italian.

the typical devotional pairing.⁷⁴ The structure of the inventory indicates that these images of the Madonna were kept, together with the majority of Cinzio's paintings, in a room on the first floor of the cardinal's apartment on Piazza dei SS. Apostoli. This room was also outfitted with a notable number of chairs and tables and probably served as a reception space.⁷⁵ The paintings were not kept in the chapel (whose contents are listed separately elsewhere in the inventory), but rather in what was a social space, reinforcing the suggestion that these works were endowed with an aesthetic and likely political, as well as spiritual, value. No doubt Cinzio would have sought to highlight the paintings that were personal gifts from Pope Clement VIII, as it would have acted as a sign of favor. What became of these paintings is unknown. Pietro Aldobrandini left his possessions to his sister Olimpia—it is possible that a painting owned by Cinzio and passed on to Pietro would have finished in the collection of Olimpia or one of her children. But no paintings precisely matching the descriptions of Cinzio's Madonnas appear in Aldobrandini inventories after 1610; thus it is unclear what happened to these works after the cardinal San Giorgio's death.⁷⁶

Tasso's Tears, Introduced

Tasso's poems are an example of the "lagrimoso" genre that was born around the second half of the sixteenth century and continued to be popular into the first decades of the seventeenth.⁷⁷ Between 1556 and 1586, similar works dedicated to the tears of Christ, Saint Peter, and Mary Magdalene appeared by Vittoria Colonna, Luigi Tansillo, and Erasmo da Valvasone, respectively. In 1593, a collection of such watery lines, including Tasso's two poems, was published in Bergamo.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ASR, Notai Tribunali AC, Fuscus notai, anno 1610, 4r, 4v.

⁷⁵ASR, Notai Tribunali AC, Fuscus notai, anno 1610, 3r–5r. "Un Christo morto con la sua cornice et taffetta rosso"; "Un Christo con la Corona cornice negra schillata d'oro."

⁷⁶There is documentary evidence that Pietro was selling some of Cinzio's possessions, thus it is entirely possible that the work was sold, or given back to the Apostolic Camera. For the documents and an analysis of them, see Karen J. Lloyd, "Adopted Papal Nephews as Art Patrons in Early Modern Rome (1592–1676)" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2010), 111–29. Inventories of Aldobrandini family holdings were drawn up in 1611, 1626, and 1682. These include several paintings of crying saints, including a Peter and a Magdalene, but no trace of either of Cinzio's Madonnas. For the inventories, see the following articles from *Arte Antica e Moderna* by Paola Della Pergola, "Gli Inventari Aldobrandini, parts 1–4," 12 (1960): 425–44; 19 (1962): 316–22; 21 (1963), 61–87; 22 (1963): 175–91; and Cappelletti, "Una nota di beni," 341–47.

⁷⁷Angelo Alberto Piatti, "E l'uom pietà da Dio, piangendo, impari': Lacrime e pianto nelle rime sacre dell'età del Tasso," in *Rime sacre tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, ed. Maria L. Doglio and Carlo Delcorno (Bologna: Mulino, 2007), 53–106.

⁷⁸Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 77; Gigante, *Tasso*, 388; Imbriani, "Intertestualità," 18; Vittoria Colonna, *Pianto della Marchesa di Pescara sopra la passione di Cristo ...* (Venice, 1556); Luigi Tansillo, *Le Lagrime di San Pietro* (Vico Equense, 1585); Erasmo da Valvasone, *Le Lagrime di Santa Maria Maddalena* (Ferrara, 1586); Ventura, *Nuova Raccolta*. For more examples of works in this genre see Imbriani, "Intertestualità," 18n12.

Colonna's work is a particularly apt precedent, as it too was inspired by a work of visual art, a drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti.⁷⁹ Angelo Alberto Piatti has called this genre of poetry an "icon of devotional literature in the period following the Council of Trent."⁸⁰ Yet, while the poems are deeply devotional in tone and function, there was some discomfort with the genre. Colonna's poem, the earliest of the group, was tainted by suspicions regarding her own heterodoxy.⁸¹ For the rest, there was debate as to what extent tears were an appropriate response to Christ's Passion and the saints' suffering, as the former is theologically and theoretically a source of joy for humanity as the wellspring of redemption, and the latter a positive model of extreme piety. Mary's tears, in particular, were problematic as they were apocryphal.⁸² Counter-Reformation theologians under Roberto Bellarmino attempted to restrict the veneration of Mary's suffering to precise scriptural moments associated with the Passion, for example when Mary found herself at the foot of the cross, or placing her son's body in the tomb.⁸³ There is, however, no indication that Tasso's poems were poorly received; rather, judging from the six editions that were published in the space of a year in Rome, Bologna, Venice, and Bergamo, the poems were a success.⁸⁴

A note to readers and a sonnet introduced the poems. These were initially published without an attribution (as *D'Incerto*), and in subsequent publications were given to Angelo Ingegneri.⁸⁵ Ingegneri's introductory poem can be read as an example of a subgenre with a long tradition, the poem in praise of a portrait, at the heart of which are Petrarch's two sonnets on Simone Martini's portrait of Laura (77 and 78 of the *Canzoniere*).⁸⁶ Some aspects of the introductory poem recall tropes established by Petrarch, for example, the origin of the painter's inspiration in heaven and the invocation of ancient artists in a rivalry between the poet's present and the classical past.⁸⁷ What distinguishes the poem at the opening of the *Lagrima* from this tradition is the care that is taken *not* to name the painter.⁸⁸ The painter remains anonymous even while his skill is implied at every turn. Such an eloquent excision speaks to the Catholic Reformation context

⁷⁹Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 76.

⁸⁰Piatti, "E l'uom pietà da Dio," 53.

⁸¹Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 76.

⁸²Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 82; Piatti, "E l'uom pietà da Dio," 59–60.

⁸³Sabbatino, "Torquato Tasso," 82.

⁸⁴Treherne, "Pictorial Space," 12–13.

⁸⁵See n40 above. Personeni identifies Ingegneri as one of Cinzio's "Academici commensali" (academic dining companions). Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche*, 66.

⁸⁶On this tradition, see Lina Bolzoni, *Poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento*, ed. Federica Pich (Rome: Laterza, 2008) and Federica Pich, *I poeti davanti al ritratto: Da Petrarca a Marino* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 2010).

⁸⁷Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), 109–10. "Ma certo il mio Simon fu in Paradiso, / Onde questa gentil donna si parte; / Ivi la vide, e la ritrasse in carte, / Per far fede quaggiù del suo bel viso." In the opening line of poem LXXVII, Petrarch mentions Polyclitus, while poem LXXVIII closes with a reference to Pygmalion.

⁸⁸Thank you to Una D'Elia for emphasizing the importance of this distinction to me.

of the poem. By removing a name and all of the worldly associations that might go along with it, the author is able to keep the reader's attention on the subject and content of the image, rather than the ambitions and fame of the painter.

The introductory poem opens with a question, asking who was the painter of Cinzio's Virgin. The phrasing recalls similar structures in earlier poetry inspired by the visual arts. In Canto 12 of *Purgatory*, Dante, observing images carved in a road, asks "What master of the stylus or the brush / Could draw those shadows and their lineaments / To make the subtlest genius gaze and blush?"⁸⁹ Several centuries later, in a poem dedicated to Titian's portrait of Elisabetta Querini Massola, Giovanni della Casa echoes Dante asking, "Who on so small a canvas drew the beautiful face / which my stylus tries in vain to portray?"⁹⁰ In Dante's canto (where the artist remains unnamed) the question is meant to convey the narrator's wonderment at the convincing illusionism of the images. Della Casa's sonnet is one of two dedicated to portraits by Titian and the painter is named in the preceding sonnet; the rhetorical question thus serves to avoid a needless repetition. Yet the excision of Titian's name from the second sonnet also creates a space, a distance from the writer's and the painter's present. Della Casa describes the portrait as "la meraviglia nova" (the new marvel), a modern rebirth of Venus from the waves of the sea. Omitting the name of a contemporary allows the poem to exist in a timeless space and connects it more closely to the ancient marvel of the goddess of love's birth. Tasso uses the same rhetorical strategy in the *Lagrima* when he asks

What internal painter ever painted
In the heart, which of his [Christ's] spirit is a living temple,
His victory, where Death expires,
Not just the suffering and the bloody slaughter?
And who of she that carried the Lord
Can portray, almost as if from the real model,
The tears, the thoughts, the holy feelings?
And how she waits to be carried up to Heaven?
(Qual interno pittor giamai dipinse
Nel cor, che di suo spirito è vivo tempio,
La sua vittoria onde la Morte estinse,
Non pur le pene e 'l sanguinoso scempio?
E chi di lei che nel Signor s'incinse
Potè ritrar, quasi da vero esempio,

⁸⁹"qual di pannel fu maestro o di stile / Che ritraesse l'ombre e' tratti ch'ivi / Mirar farieno uno ingegno sottile?" Dante, *Purgatory*, ed. and trans. Antony Esolen (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 12.64–68.

⁹⁰"Deh chi 'l bel volto in breve carta ha chiuso? / cui lo mio stil ritrarre indarno prova." Norman Land, *The Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 85. The translation is Land's. Giovanni della Casa, *Rime*, ed. Roberto Fedi (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993), Sonnet 34.117–18.

Le lagrime, i pensieri, i santi affetti?
E com' esser traslata al cielo aspetti?)⁹¹

Tasso's questions evoke the futility of the attempt to portray the Virgin's tears, thoughts, and emotions. The anonymity of the painter thus becomes an integral part of the meaning of Tasso's poems: the true painter is Christ, who engraves his image on the heart of the devout reader and viewer.

In his introductory sonnet, Ingegneri argues for the stature of the artist by asking, again rhetorically, if it is perhaps Apelles or Zeuxis. In early modern Italian art writing, the epithet "a new Apelles" was a standard method of praise. Zeuxis was noted for his competitions in *trompe l'oeil* with rival Parrhasius, in which the two produced illusionistic images of grapes and curtains.⁹² Their mimetic trickery is also invoked in the note to the readers, where the author observes that the painting was so vivid "that it fools those seeing it" to the point that they are compelled to attempt to dry Mary's tears in an act of piety.⁹³ The "miracle of heaven" becomes a dual one: the remarkably mimetic tears of the Virgin recorded by the artist and the true tears shed by the Virgin herself. The final line of the poem echoes the final line of the note to the readers, as both evoke a gesture of solace. Deceived by the realistic depiction of the Virgin's tears, the viewer reaches out to dry her cheeks; in Ingegneri's poem, it is the hand of Heaven that wipes the errant soul clean.⁹⁴ A Cinquecento painter whose work is so lifelike that it tricks the pious viewer into empathetic action has surpassed the famed painters of antiquity. In an ideal Counter-Reformation formulation, the paradigmatic secular response to an illusionistic painting, Zeuxis reaching to push aside Parrhasius's fictive curtain, has been transformed by the anonymous painter into an act of piety that brings the viewer closer to redemption.

Family and Individual Commemoration

The publication of the *Lagrime* is evidence of Cinzio Aldobrandini's active effort to create an exemplary reputation at the papal court. The project acted as a physical reminder to Clement VIII of the pope's affection for his aggregated nephew, and was meant to impress Cinzio's piety upon his fellow cardinals. But the challenge and limits that he faced in propagandizing his connection to the pope become clear when considering Pietro's patronage in the opening years of Clement VIII's pontificate. Pietro's first major project, begun in 1593, was the

⁹¹Tasso, *Opere*, 4:416–17.

⁹²Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 35.62–66. On the reception of Pliny in the Renaissance, see Sarah Blake McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁹³"che l'altrui vista ingannando, invita a rasciugargliene ogni pia mano."

⁹⁴"perch' à lui [Heaven] s'erga / L'anima errante; e'l suo fallire indegno / Lavi quest'onda; e questa man la terga."

decoration of the Aldobrandini family chapel in Santa Maria in Via. Dedicated to the Virgin, work on the chapel had been started in the previous generation by Pietro Aldobrandini, Ippolito's brother, and was left unfinished at his death. Pietro's son, Cardinal Pietro, had the chapel decorated with frescoes by Giuseppe Cesari (Cavaliere d'Arpino) and Jacopo Zucchi. Xavier Salomon has suggested that Zucchi was chosen for his Florentine roots, a shared heritage of patron and painter, while d'Arpino was selected because of the prestige he had accrued as a leading artist under previous popes.⁹⁵ Thus, Pietro's first significant project as papal nephew was to decorate an Aldobrandini family chapel using artists who underscored the family's Florentine background and Pietro's own newly established power. The decoration of such a family chapel was a project that Cinzio, as an honorary Aldobrandini whose paternal lineage was not Florentine, could not undertake.⁹⁶ While Cinzio turned to literary patronage that publicized his pious personal life and elite cultural connections to further his image at the papal court and elevate his status in the eyes of his uncle, Pietro undertook projects that underscored his paternal origins in the Aldobrandini family and thus closer blood ties to Clement VIII.

Pietro's campaign to link himself as closely and as publicly as possible to his uncle is glaring in the redecoration of the apse of the church of Santa Maria Scala Coeli (fig. 5). The project was begun under Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and completed by Pietro around 1598.⁹⁷ The mosaic decoration of the apse depicts the dedicatory saints of the church, flanked by Clement VIII on the left and Cardinal Pietro on the right. These mosaic portraits are a clear expression of Pietro's attempts to visually link himself to his uncle and of his desire to be the sole holder of the title of cardinal nephew. Pietro continued to explicitly evoke his blood connection to the pope throughout Clement VIII's papacy. The inscription on the exedra of the water theater at the Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati, a property given to Pietro as a gift by Pope Clement VIII, carefully indicates Pietro's relationship to the pope, identifying him as "CLEM. VIII. FRATRIS F." (Clement VIII's brother's son).⁹⁸ The importance of the paternal blood tie was not to be forgotten.

Cinzio apparently had no involvement with family artistic projects such as the chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, which was begun by Clement VIII and finished by Pietro after the pope's death. The chapel is the primary family burial site, and holds the remains of Clement VIII's parents, as well as Pietro himself,

⁹⁵Salomon, "Religious, Artistic and Architectural Patronage," 57.

⁹⁶His patria was either Senigallia, in the Marches, or Bergamo. See Personeni, *Notizie Genealogiche*, 4–8, and Parisi, *Della epistolografia*, 7–8.

⁹⁷Morton Colp Abromson, *Painting in Rome during the Papacy of Clement VIII (1592–1605): A Documented Study* (New York: Garland, 1981), 87. Salomon, "Religious, Artistic and Architectural Patronage," 68–74.

⁹⁸Ronald Martin Steinberg, "The Iconography of the Teatro dell'Acqua at the Villa Aldobrandini," *Art Bulletin* 47, no. 4 (1965): 453.



Figure 5. Apse, S. Maria ad Scala Coeli, detail of mosaic with Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini and Pietro. Photo by author.

although there is no monument to commemorate him.⁹⁹ Instead, Cinzio has an elaborate tomb located on the northern wall of San Pietro in Vincoli (fig. 2), his last titular church.¹⁰⁰ Although it is decorated with a prominent Aldobrandini coat of arms, Cinzio's tomb is located far from the venerable family funerary enclave at the Minerva. Moreover, the tomb was not erected until almost a century after his death and then only by a member of the Pamphili family, Aldobrandini heirs through Olimpia.¹⁰¹ In death, as in life, Cinzio remains conspicuously set apart from the Aldobrandini proper, an enduring legacy of his liminal status in the family.

Conclusion

In the most prominent artistic project to which Cinzio Aldobrandini can be linked following his rise to the position of cardinal nephew, Torquato Tasso's *Lagrime*, the cardinal connected himself to one of the leading poets of his time and to the prevailing atmosphere of renewed religious zeal and orthodoxy. As the decorously appreciative owner of a miraculously poignant painting, Cinzio is cast through the *Lagrime* as an ideal Counter-Reformation cardinal, and as the means through which a pious poet found his muse. As Clement VIII was said to have given the painting to Cinzio, the publication of Tasso's work underscored Cinzio's connection to his papal kin, bolstering his image as a favored nephew of the pope. It should be remembered that in early modern Rome such perceptions could have very real political ramifications.¹⁰² The heady combination of illustrious poet and powerful painting also generates an image of Cinzio as a connoisseur and active reformer in two distinct artistic spheres, even if he would not develop into a significant patron of the visual arts. Tasso's *Lagrime* can be seen as a cultural weapon intended to balance out the weaknesses inherent in the position of fabricated nephew and gain Cinzio Aldobrandini ground in his ultimately doomed struggle with Pietro Aldobrandini for dominance in papal affairs. ❧

⁹⁹Xavier Salomon, "The Contract for Giuliano Finelli's Monument to Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini," *Burlington Magazine* 146, no. 1221 (2004): 815–19.

¹⁰⁰Nina A. Mallory and John L. Varriano, "Carlo Francesco Bizzaccheri (1655–1721)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 1 (1974): 35.

¹⁰¹Olimpia Aldobrandini married Paolo Borghese in 1638 and, after his death, Camillo Pamphili in 1647. R. Lefevre, "Il patrimonio romano degli Aldobrandini nel Seicento," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 82 (1959): 22–23.

¹⁰²See Jaitner, "Nepotismo di papa Clemente VIII," 66–69.