

THE ALANA COLLECTION

ITALIAN PAINTINGS FROM THE 14TH TO 16TH CENTURY

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Mandragora

VITTORE CARPACCIO (SCARPAZO, SCARPAZZA)

Venice, c. 1465-1525/1526

Son of the furrier Pietro Scarpaza, he was probably born in Venice at a date generally taken to be between 1455 and 1465, but more probably in the latter year or shortly afterwards.

He is mentioned for the first time in the will of 21 September 1472 of his uncle Giovanni Scarpaza. This does not necessarily mean, as some have assumed, that he was then about fifteen. On 8 August 1486 he made a rental payment on behalf of his father. The conclusion has been drawn that he was still living in his father's house.

On 16 November 1488 the brethren of the Scuola di Sant'Orsola undertook to pay for the large canvases celebrating the titular saint that were to adorn the confraternity's premises near the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The first painting supplied was signed in Latin and dated 1490. From this we may infer the professional esteem enjoyed by the young artist as early as 1488, the probable date of the contractual agreement for work not concluded until 1495. Youthful works signed in the vernacular are the *Madonna and Child* in the Museo Correr in Venice and the *Salvator Mundi with Four Saints* formerly in the Contini Bonacossi collection and now in the Sorlini collection in Carzago di Calvagese (Brescia). Also signed is the polyptych commissioned by the canon Martino Mladošić for the cathedral of St Anastasia in Zadar, Croatia (now in the Museum of Sacred Art), undoubtedly to be included among these early certain works. It should be recalled that Boschini called the painter "almost Gentile Bellini's brother".¹ It has been hypothesised in fact that he trained with Bellini and took part in the diplomatic mission to Constantinople between 1479 and 1480 and that he worked as an apprentice for Gentile and Giovanni Bellini on the canvases for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Doge's Palace, between 1483 and 1488 (Rearick 2003). A training with the Bellinis is most likely, and would leave room for the influence of Antonello da Messina, as interpreted for instance by Alvisé Vivarini in the investigation of colour and light, and as discernible in the rigorous perspective of the narrative scenes. On these principles Carpaccio founded a well-regulated narration, monumentally conceived. With skilful harmony he established the relationship between figures and settings that include every aspect of reality. In a descriptive spirit he investigated every figurative element in its autonomy and inserted it into the compositional logic in accordance with the requirements of the narrative. By this method he broadened in outstanding fashion the horizon of vision to multiple aspects of life, often drawing inspiration from, and idealising, the urban nature of Venice also in its relationship with the lagoon and the sea.

Carpaccio was the painter of the 'Scuole', of the religious confraternities and guilds. Between 1494 and 1495 he worked on the cycle of the *Relic of the True Cross* for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, planned and directed by Gentile Bellini (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia). In 1496 he signed and dated the *Christ with the Instruments of the Passion* painted for the church of San Pietro Martire in Udine (now in the Museo Civico). Of the same period is the well-known panel showing *Two Venetian Ladies and a Boy on a Balcony* (Venice, Museo Correr) completed in the upper part of the scene by the *Hunting on the Lagoon* (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum). In 1501 and 1502 payments are recorded for a painting in the Sala dei Pregadi in the Doge's Palace. The cycle of the Scuola Dalmata dei Santi Giorgio e Trifone has the earliest canvases dated 1502, while the latest is dated 1507 (*St George Baptises the Inhabitants of Selene*). In this cycle narrative interest gives way to the capacity to depict a specific event and its significance through architecture and the grouping of figures. There is also an attempt to define a humanist identity and the message carried by an individual personage. In the scene showing the *Vision of St Augustine* we identify, for example, the idealised portrait of the Scuola's benefactor, the celebrated Cardinal Bessarion. Close to the end of the cycle is the canvas showing *Meditation on the Passion of Christ* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). For the Scuola degli Albanesi he painted between 1502 and 1504, with assistance, the cycle of *Scenes from the Life of the Virgin*. The *Holy Family with Two Donors* (Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga) dates from 1505; the *St Thomas in Glory, with St Mark, St Louis of Toulouse and a Donor* is dated 1507 and was painted for the church of San

Pietro Martire on Murano (Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie); the *Dormitio Virginis* painted for the church of Santa Maria in Vado in Ferrara (Ferrara, Pinacoteca Nazionale) is from 1508.

Following the death of Alvise Vivarini, in 1507 Giovanni Bellini was commissioned to complete one painting and to execute two new ones (destroyed by fire in 1577) for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Doge's Palace, and he indicated the Maestro Carpaccio as his assistant. In 1508 at the instigation of Bellini he was appointed together with Lazzaro Bastiani and Vittore Belliniano as assessor of the frescoes by Giorgio da Castel Franco for the façade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Signed and dated 1510 is the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* painted for the Franciscan church of the Osservanza di San Giobbe in Venice (now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia), and the *Portrait of a Knight* (Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), an early example of a full-length portrait. On 15 August 1511, describing himself as state painter, he sent a letter in two copies to the marquis Francesco II Gonzaga, offering him a large canvas showing a *View of Jerusalem*, now lost. From 1511 to 1520 he was engaged on the four canvases with *Scenes from the Life of St Stephen* for the "Scuola" at the church of Santo Stefano in Venice, now in several public collections. A fifth canvas, showing the *Trial of St Stephen*, is known from a drawing.

Also of the latter part of the second decade of the century is the *Preparation of Christ's Tomb* (Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie) from the Canonici collection in Ferrara. Dated 1514 is the *Glory of St Vitalis and Eight Saints* painted for the church of San Vitale in Venice and the dismembered polyptych from the church of Santa Fosca. The altarpiece of the *Ten Thousand Crucified on Mount Ararat* for the church Sant'Antonio a Castello (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia) was painted in 1515 to a commission from Ettore Ottobon, nephew of the church's prior Francesco Ottobon who in 1511, in the time of plague, had experienced a salvific vision of this episode. Of the same date is the panel with the *Meeting of St Anne and St Joachim at the Golden Gate, with St Louis IX of France and St Libera* painted for an altar in the church of San Francesco in Treviso (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia). Signed and dated 1516 are the *Lion of St Mark* for one of the offices of Palazzo dei Camerlenghi a Rialto (now in the Doge's Palace in Venice), and the *St George and the Dragon* in San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, Sala del Conclave. The altarpiece for the cathedral church of Capodistria is from 1515, while of the following year is the *Entrance of the Podestà Contarini into Capodistria* (Trieste, Civico Museo Sartorio). Signed and dated 1518 is the altarpiece for the church of San Francesco in Pirano, a city that it clearly depicts in its mountain context (now in Padua, Museo Antoniano). In 1519 he painted the unusual polyptych for the church of San Tommaso Apostolo in Pozzale di Cadore, and at the same time the *Madonna and Child Enthroned with St Faustinus and St Jovita* for the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Brescia, possibly to a commission from the bishop Altobello Averoldi (lost in 1869). He painted *St Paul the Apostle* for the church of San Domenico in Chioggia in 1520. For 1522 and the following year payments are registered for works commissioned from him by Antonio Contarini, patriarch of Venice. In this period he continued working in Capodistria.

Carpaccio's late production, including a great many works intended for private devotion, raises the problem of the participation of assistants, and of the identification of the style of his sons: Pietro and the better-documented Benedetto. Vittore Carpaccio has left a richer corpus of drawings than any other Venetian painter of his time, helping us to understand his creative procedure, which involved the repetition at a distance of time of many figural compositions.

Vittore Carpaccio figures in Venice as a witness to notarial deeds in 1523. His death can be dated on documentary grounds to the period from late 1525 to early 1526.

NOTES

Boschini 1660, p. 33: "quasi fratello di Gentile Bellini".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boschini 1660, p. 33.
Ludwig, Molmenti 1906
Rearick 2003, pp. 179-192

36. The Dead Christ Supported at the Sepulchre by Two Angels

c. 1489

Panel, 53 × 32.2 cm

Provenance: London 2010, lot 2.

The composition is set inside a lunette so that the field of the figures is clearly distinct, while the spandrels are left unpainted as they were to be concealed by the frame. It is supposed that the panel has been slightly cut down on all four sides, though somewhat more on the upper edge (c. 1-1.5 cm), in view of the dark painted band still to be seen on the other three edges. The panel's state of conservation is good. The flesh-tones of the Christ are slightly abraded, to the point of revealing *pentimenti* in the profile of the right arm and the back of the hand, and even more clearly in the foreshortened left arm. The major abrasions or losses of pigment affect areas close to the edges, especially along the lower one. Other losses are of small dimensions and were caused by alterations in the fibre of the wooden support, constrained by the old cradling. These are mostly found along a vertical trace corresponding to the left angel and the arm of Christ, or to the wing and arm of the other angel.

The Christ is shown supported at the edge of the sepulchre in the foreground, overlapped by the loincloth. The body is turned to the right and arched, so that the head rests on the left shoulder, in allusion to the moment of death on the Cross (Jh 19:30). The face is seen from below, with the eyes closed and the lips parted. Two angels are shown weeping and physically supporting the body of Christ, holding the slender arms, in a gesture expressive of pity. They have dark red wings and their long fair hair is fixed by a symbolic diadem with a triangular termination adorned with pearls. One wears an ample yellow tunic, with a blue band decorated with pearls on the upper arm; the other has a green dress fastened at the flanks with a girdle, beneath a pink cloak.

Compared with the versions of the theme of the *Imago pietatis* in which the *Cristo passo* rises from the tomb supported by two mourners or as an isolated figure, in this case the image comprises an *Engelpietà*. This is a subject with complex implications based on scriptural considerations even more than on me-

dieval iconographical ones, on the basis of which the angelic presence in this devotional subject has its specific formulation.¹ It owes its popularity to its adoption in circles linked to the *devotio moderna* which made the most of its power to arouse intense spiritual feeling, and to move to tears: hence the close-up view of Christ's body, permitting direct contemplation, as in our panel.

The formulation of this image was developed also in Venetian circles, especially by Giovanni Bellini in the 1450s, seeing the development of the "icon-portrait" from the Byzantine-style *Man of Sorrows*,² until it assumed an aspect of modern naturalness in regard to the expressive features, often with the introduction of narrative or contextual elements.³ This development absorbed the iconographic model of Donatello as represented by the *Engelpietà* on the tabernacle door for the altar of the Santo in Padua, and the Eucharistic significance continued to be maintained. This is evidently connected with the use of such images for private devotion, and in particular with the practice of reciting Vespers in front of them (*Vesperbild*).

If Bellini is to be recorded for his fundamental contribution to the development of the image of *pietà*,⁴ we need also to recall that the specific subject of the *Engelpietà* is found at the apex of the polyptych of St Vincent Ferrer made for the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice; in the lunette of one of the triptychs of the Carità now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia (*Madonna and Child with St Jerome and St Louis of Toulouse*), where the angels are presenting red garments alluding to the liturgical colours of Passiontide; and in the panels in Berlin inv. no. 28, in the National Gallery in London inv. no. 3912 and in the Pinacoteca Civica in Rimini, to restrict ourselves to examples dating from the 1470s. On the basis of conceptual significance and of the two precedents by Bellini that we have cited (the St Vincent Ferrer polyptych and the one from the church of the Carità), there are multiple possibilities for the iconographic reconstruction of the complex to which Carpaccio's lunette originally belonged, for it was obviously intended

as the upper element of a not very large altarpiece.

More customary is the iconographic link set up in these circumstances between the representation of the Madonna and Child, that is, the incarnate Word made manifest by Mary, often contemplated by saints in a *Sacra Conversazione*, and the mystery of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Christ that is proper to the *Imago pietatis*. As has been observed, this refers in particular to its actuation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that what we have in the now-identified upper element is the elevation of the Host on the part of angels.

On the basis of these iconographic considerations, it is especially the stylistic features of the *Engelpietà* presented here that allow us to make a concrete proposal for a reconstruction. This proposal – it should be noted – is made in the absence of any documentation whatsoever regarding the original provenance or later ownership. Moreover, the only statements made about this work (all of them exclusively oral and circumstantial) are those gathered in the sale catalogue (London 2010). Peter Humfrey cautiously proposed a dating of around 1490, with reference to Carpaccio's *Lamentation* formerly in the Contini Bonacossi collection (fig. 36a), while Mauro Lucco assigned a dating of about 1520, on the basis of a comparison with the polyptych of Pozzale di Cadore, signed and dated 1519, of which Lucco suggests it might have been the apex or an upper panel, albeit undocumented.⁵

There is no doubt that from the stylistic point of view it is a work to be ascribed to the small group of Vittore Carpaccio's earliest productions, in the second half of the 1480s, with which it presents the most precise correspondences. Thus, also for its undoubted stylistic qualities it helps to corroborate the highly personal interpretation of the fundamental influence exerted on the young painter by Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, but also his marked interest in the legacy of Antonello da Messina, especially as elaborated by Alvise Vivarini. In particular, the *Imago pietatis* illustrated here has unmistakable stylistic affinities with two small panels



Fig 36a. Vittore Carpaccio, *Lamentation*. Formerly Contini Bonacossi collection.

in the Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona, one showing *St Catherine of Alexandria* and the other *St Dorothy* (each 54.4 × 21.5 cm; (figs. 36b-c).⁶ The formal and typological aspects of the figures of the female saints and of the angels in the lunette discussed here assure not only the location of all three panels in precisely the same unrepeatable creative moment in the career of the young Carpaccio, but also allow us to ascertain that they all belong to the same complex, evidently a not very large polyptych. Corroboration comes also from the proportions between the figures and from other data such as the characteristics of the support, the pictorial technique and the chosen palette. The

proposed reconstruction allows us to calculate that the base of the entire complex, which would seem to have been a kind of *altarolo*, must have been about 70 or 80 cm wide, taking account of possible variations in the typology of the pilasters on the lost original frame, and that the central compartment could have been about a third wider than the surviving lateral ones in Verona, so as to maintain the proportions. This proposal solves the problem of the function of these latter panels, which has given rise to various hypotheses in the past, for instance that they were the doors of a cupboard or the wings of an *altarolo*.⁷ So all that is missing is the central compartment of the principal reg-

ister which, on the basis of the iconography discussed above, would have shown the Madonna and Child enthroned.

With the reconstruction, albeit partial, of this devotional complex, the lunette offers the opportunity to verify the formal and qualitative values discerned in the two Veronese panels, within the limitations imposed by their more problematic state of conservation, on account of the greater degree of abrasion they have suffered.⁸ Moreover, it allows us to appreciate the importance of the background of luminous sky traversed by thin white clouds, conceived as a continuous or unitary background between the principal register and the lunette. In this scheme Carpaccio strives for a modern naturalism that is expressed in atmospheric and pictorial values, in accordance with the lessons of Giovanni Bellini. Such lessons are discernible also in the monumental planning, achieved in this case in the relatively small dimensions and actuated on the expressive plane by the ability to stir the emotions in solemn and participatory fashion. On the other hand we may refer to Gentile Bellini the typologies of the faces of the angels and of the two saints, which appear slightly simplified and idealised, with a characterised expressivity that is found later in the *Scenes from the Life of St Ursula*. Gentile may also have influenced the taste for minute and brightly painted details, such as the diadems.

The personal gifts of the young Carpaccio can be discerned in the notable executive skill, in the subtle rendering of details, and in the search for unusual colouristic effects. The violet-red of the angels' wings is uncommon in its modulation; in its density it makes possible a minute description of surfaces, through very fine brushstrokes lighter in hue, as though the light fell on the plumage almost imperceptibly. Markedly characterised is the elaboration of the yellow garment worn by the angel on the left, providing a powerful sculptural quality, such as can be seen also in the rosy liqueur of the cloak worn by the angel on the right, evident in the fall of the drape, which is loose and even virtuoso in treatment. These results are superior to those attained in the two Veronese saints





Fig 36b. Vittore Carpaccio, *St Catherine of Alexandria*. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio.



Fig. 36c. Vittore Carpaccio, *St Dorothy*. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio.

where the design of the garments is as though crystallised. Also the loincloth of the Christ, hemmed in blue, is rendered with the greatest care, so that in the soft chromatic material we perceive the subtle interplay of shadows.

The acquisition of this *Engelpietà* and the partial reconstruction it has made possible are of sufficient importance as to occasion a new overall evaluation of Carpaccio's earliest period with respect to the critical positions assumed in the past on the basis of a smaller number of works. In this delicate operation an authoritative contribution has recently been made by William R. Rearick.⁹ His interpretation is based in particular on Carpaccio's close relationship first with Gentile Bellini (who returned from Istanbul in 1481) and later with Gentile's brother Giovanni, while the latter was carrying out major projects together with his workshop in the Doge's Palace. The fulcrum of this thesis lies in the ascription to the young Carpaccio, with a dating of around 1487-1489, of the painted organ doors in the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice with the *Annunciation* (visible as customary when the doors are open) and with the *St Peter the Apostle* (the only one to survive of the 'ante feriali'), now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia (nos. 796, 959, 954), formerly assigned to Giovanni Bellini and his assistants, as the present writer believes will be confirmed.¹⁰ According to Rearick, on the contrary, Bellini entrusted his young pupil with the entire execution, reserving to himself only the head of the apostle. This proposal is supported by the attribution to Carpaccio of other devotional panels, some of them with an inscription assigning paternity to Bellini (as a "trademark"), which in Rearick's view indicate Vittore's direct participation in Giovanni's workshop from the mid-1480s.¹¹ In my opinion, such a situation is at first sight incompatible with the modalities of Carpaccio's relation with the lessons of Giovanni Bellini in the works that one can confirm as being early, substantially of the same period as in Rearick's hypothesis, even though there is no dated work, and no work dateable on secure documentary evidence, prior to the can-

vas signed and dated 1490 and showing the *Arrival of St Ursula in Cologne*, part of the above-mentioned cycle now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice.

In effect, at no point are the works attributed on stylistic grounds to Carpaccio prior to that date so scholastically dependent on Bellini, or such as to suggest this attitude on the part of Carpaccio in the past. In particular, the *Salvator Mundi with Four Saints*, a work that is signed but not dated and is generally regarded as an early one (now in the Sorlini collection in Carzago di Cavallgese near Brescia), shows a highly characterised and personal style of Carpaccio's, even though undoubtedly inspired by the two Bellinis.¹² The strong portrait-like characteristics of the four saints call for a comparison with the *Portrait of the Doge Barbarigo* (1486-1501), a work by Gentile close in date (Newark, Del., Alana collection).¹³ This same comparison, valid at the compositional level, underlines the prevalence of Giovanni's lessons, which is also proved by, for example, a comparison with the portraits in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin no. S12, and in the Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, OK., inv. no. K1710, to choose those with dark background and distracted gaze, dateable to the earlier 1480s.¹⁴ In relation to such models Carpaccio manifests entirely original expressive capabilities, whose polarity one notes especially in the two saints on the right. The young man with the introspective gaze (St John the Evangelist?) and wearing a white garment is very evidently Bellinesque, but the other one, alert and curious, manifests an inclination to psychological mobility such as distinguishes Carpaccio's sensibility in absolute fashion.

This observation on the ways in which Carpaccio freely conforms to the manner of Giovanni Bellini may also be thought pertinent to a second case, concerning the figurative tradition proper to the *Virgin Annunciate* on the above-mentioned organ doors in the church of the Miracoli. It is re-proposed in the panel with the *Madonna and Child with the Infant St John* in the Museo Correr (inv. no. CLI 356), recently attributed to Carpaccio by Rearick, who argues that it was painted in 1489-1490, namely at the same time as the or-



Fig 36d. Vittore Carpaccio, *Madonna and Child*. Venice, Museo Correr.

gan doors, and prefigures the well known version of the subject in the Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt (inv. no. 38), which is rightly dated to between 1493 and 1495.¹⁵ This other work in the Museo Correr now happily added to the oeuvre allows us to introduce an important evaluative element on the development of Carpaccio's practice and drawing style. Rearick confirms the link with the Frankfurt painting by means of a drawing on the verso of a sheet now in the Courtauld Institute in London (from the Wildenstein collection) which, on the strength of the new attribution, he is able to judge as the compositional re-elaboration of the Museo Correr discovery, in view of the replica, obviously more developed, as too is the variant of this subject on the recto of the same sheet.¹⁶ There thus appeared, from c. 1488-1489 to 1493-1495, a particular style of drawing: that of the compositional 'concept' fixed only in pen and ink, but over a drawing in black or red chalk.¹⁷ This technique can in general be ascribed to Carpaccio's earliest phase, which is the one that interests us here.

Carpaccio's Bellinesque beginnings are documented, in a configuration different from the widened one envisaged

with other new attributions by Rearick, by the unexpected recent discovery of the *Madonna and Child* in the Museo Correr in Venice (inv. no. CL. I. 216), the restoration of which has brought to light the signature VETOR SCARPAÇO OPV(S) (fig. 36d).¹⁸ At last we have a certain work that evidently derives from the models of Giovanni Bellini, those that had a great fashionable and commercial success. Carpaccio condescends to that taste and out of correctness spells out his signature in capital letters. One could specify the Bellinesque iconographical sources for this highly personal elaboration of his, though it is not impossible that he reproduced a lost prototype by his master or made use of a drawing available to him in the workshop. One might for example mention the panels by Bellini in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin (inv. no. 157) and in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (inv. no. 10), especially as regards the theme of the Child wearing a

white tunic and being in the act of blessing.¹⁹ Even more evident is the fact that Carpaccio studied, this time directly, the Madonna in the celebrated San Giobbe altarpiece (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia), also as regards the position of the Virgin's right hand; any possible doubt is dispelled by an examination of the folds of the veil. It is intriguing, especially, that this latter feature also fixes the chronological anchoring to shortly before 1487, on the basis of the dating – debated though it be – of the Bellini masterpiece.²⁰ The real surprise is the fact that, just when we are able to document in this way his direct and unequivocal links with Bellini, Carpaccio's highly personal interpretation is evident in every aspect: in the typologies and their sculptural simplification in the presence of a clear light (perhaps more in the manner of Alvisse than in that of Antonello); in the articulated study of the blue cloak, which is another signature

motif; in the atmospheric qualification of the rosy sky; and even in the occasional tree described with somewhat shapeless brushstrokes, certainly not in the master's impeccable manner. To all this we may add the announcement of an expressive sensibility attuned to seizing a contingent moment, as we see in the interchange of glances, a kind of 'historical record', as opposed to a solemn sacrality fixed for ever despite being 'natural', as we would find in Bellini.

This recent addition to the œuvre, which in date is the earliest so far known, being dateable to the mid-1480s on the basis of the Bellini parallels, allows us to date to a little later – towards the end of the decade – the examples that evince a more advanced stylistic development. In order, we begin with the complex comprising the lunette of the *Engelpietà* illustrated here and the two saints in Verona; then the Correr *Madonna and Child with*

Fig 36e. Reflectography.







Fig 36f. Vittore Carpaccio, *St Dorothy* (reflectography). Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio.

the Infant St John (inv. no. CLI 356); then the Sorlini *Salvator Mundi with Four Saints*.

Further fortunate additions, even more recent, to the exiguous catalogue of Carpaccio's works in this early phase help us to define the terms of his stylistic development, in a way that hitherto has not been possible. We refer to the *Pietà* on panel (60.1 × 82.2 cm) no. 1088 in the Museo Correr, highly significant despite its state of conservation.²¹ It allows us to ascribe to Carpaccio also another small *Pietà* (25.5 × 21.5 cm), formerly in a private collection

in Bergamo, which had been ascribed to Bellini beginning with Georg Gronau, an attribution authoritatively maintained by Rodolfo Pallucchini in 1959 with a dating to around 1460.²² Related to the latter is the much discussed drawing showing the *Dead Christ Lying on a Rock* in the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, which was also attributed in the past to Bellini.²³ This drawing is to be considered neither preparatory nor commemorative but was probably an initial idea good for both versions, in which Carpaccio showed himself interested in the pictorial tradition of the northern European *Vesperdild*, a widespread model in Italy especially in sculpted form. This first case of a possible link with a pictorial work reflects that character that has been judged typically Mantegna-like in the use of the pen and highlights of white lead, though less methodically, on blue paper.²⁴ In the two paintings linked to it we find for the first time an interest in landscape, of noticeably northern aspect (the view of Jerusalem), or else "still in the Mantegnaesque manner", such as the typology of the pointed rocks of Golgotha that reappears in the backgrounds to the *Scenes of the Life of St Ursula*.²⁵

The *Engelpietà* discussed here and the two Veronese female saints are therefore to be dated to between the two versions of the *Pietà*, and the panel with the *Madonna and Child with the Infant St John* in the Museo Correr (no. CLI 356), at the end of the 1480s, while the group is closed by the Sorlini *Salvator Mundi and Four Saints*. The references to drawings by Carpaccio in connection with these works is justified in the present context by the many helpful comparisons that are possible between them and the underdrawings which have been revealed by infra-red reflectography both in our panel (fig. 36e) and in those of the Veronese saints (fig. 36f).²⁶ What we find is clear essential drawing carried out with firmness and continuity, especially in the outlines of the figures. As for the lunette, as well as these features there are a few *pentimenti* noticeable in the profile of Christ's hair and in the left profile of the torso as well as those already noted in the rendering of the foreshortened arm. On the head

of *St Dorothy* the hairstyle envisaged a circlet crossing the forehead, replaced by the crown. In these aspects there is an undoubted correspondence between the style of the above-mentioned drawing in the Courtauld Institute, both on the verso and on the recto of the sheet, but also with what must have been different technique thought also to have derived from Mantegna (typical but 'secondary' in Rearick's opinion), used from the outset of Carpaccio's career and exemplified in the Berlin drawing. Investigation of the lunette and the two Veronese panels shows that there is more sporadic use of the parallel hatching, for the most part diagonal, that characterises the drawings of the Courtauld sheet to indicate the areas in shadow. As in the latter, which above all fix the 'concept', there is a sketchy indication of the physiognomies which resolves itself into a single decisive stroke, without continuity, or with a sequence of dots as, for example, at least once in delineating the oval of Christ's face beneath the thin beard. Perfectly compatible for economy and firmness of line, as well as for refinement of chiaroscuro, is the underdrawing of the Sorlini *Salvator Mundi and Four Saints* that has been revealed by reflectography.²⁷

A rare testimony to Carpaccio's working method is supplied by the autograph indications of the colours to be used for the clothing of the two Veronese saints, features now revealed by reflectography in the case of the lunette. On the elegant sleeve of *St Catherine* we read "lacca ...", and another word can be glimpsed on the green gown. On the figure of *St Dorothy* we read "paona(zzo)" in the area near the book, while other words can be identified on the yellow-orange corset ("rancio"), and on the cloak where they are partly overlapping ("rosso/paonazzo").²⁸ That these are indeed autograph annotations is confirmed by a graphological comparison with the identifying notes on the Louvre drawing no. 437 verso.²⁹

Finally, an important contribution to our evaluation of the *Engelpietà* illustrated here, within the economy of Carpaccio's earliest phase as an artist, is provided by a comparison with the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* formerly in the Con-

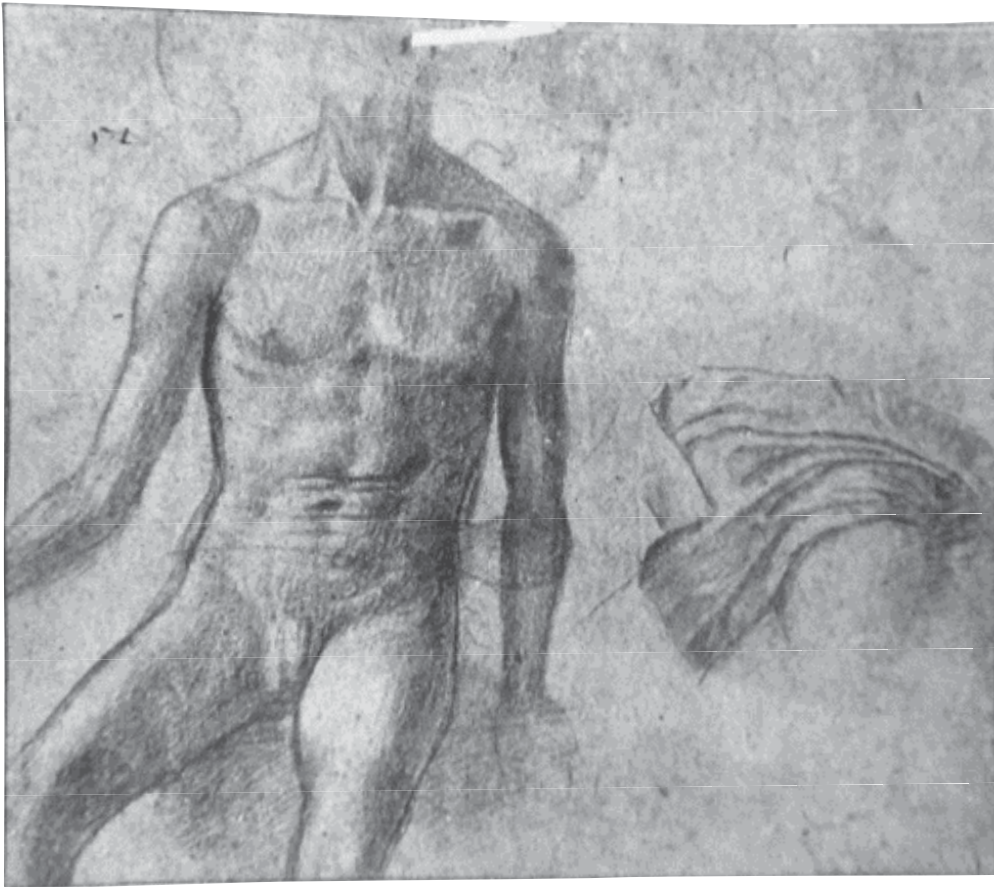


Fig 36g. Vittore Carpaccio, *Male Nude with Study of Loincloth*. London, British Museum, inv. no. 1946-13-3 verso.

tini Bonacossi collection, a painting that is very well known but has only recently entered the US collection that has facilitated its study (fig 36a).³⁰ Prior to the formation of a new group of early works by Carpaccio, including the *Engel Pietà* illustrated here, it could have been regarded as the most convincing if not the only witness. In fact, correspondences at the level of typologies and more in general at the stylistic level are evident, as is the link in these respects with the Correr *Pietà* and with the one formerly in the collection in Bergamo, so that for this phase there is also a consistent feeling for landscape. The more precise treatment of the sky finds its correspondence in that of the *Madonna and Child with the Infant St John* in the Museo Correr.

We have thought it best to consider the important comparison with the *Lamentation* formerly in the Contini Bonacossi collection after having dealt with those with the paintings that imply a corre-

spondence with aspects of Carpaccio's drawing style. In fact, the dating a little later than them is suggested by the drawing of a *Male Nude with Study of a Loincloth*, in the verso of a sheet in the British Museum (inv. no. 1946-13-3), which is to be seen in relation to the figure of Christ (fig. 36g).³¹ This sheet has on the recto the study of the *Three Bishops* that is linked to the canvas showing *Pope Cyriac Meeting the Betrothed before the Gates of Rome* from the cycle of *Scenes from the Life of St Ursula* dated to around 1493, that is, half way between the first and the last of the series to be consigned.³² In these drawings we find a different technique characterised by a soft treatment of plastic values and highlighting, also through the intensifying of a more marked chiaroscuro.

It should be emphasised in this connection that in several respects this was a different stylistic moment even though chronologically close, as we deduce also from the close connection already not-

ed with the polypych in two registers now comprising six panels (one of them signed) painted for the cathedral of St Anastasia in Zadar, which has been plausibly dated to 1493.³³ From the ensemble of correspondences with the new group of works by the young Carpaccio of the late 1480s to those with the former Contini Bonacossi *Lamentation* of around 1493, the *Engel Pietà* illustrated here together with the two female saints in the Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona helps significantly to clarify the painter's complex initial phase.

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NOTES

- ¹ See Keck 1998, pp. 204-207, note 41.
- ² See Belting 1981; Belting 1985; Belting 1986; Belting 1996.
- ³ See Ringbom 1965, [ed. 1984]; Ringbom 1983.
- ⁴ See De Marchi 2012a.
- ⁵ On this late work by Carpaccio, see Fossaluzza 2012c.
- ⁶ Inv. no. 870-1B126. The two panels are attributed to Francesco Bissolo in the inventory of the Bernasconi collection, whence they came to their present location in 1871. See Ferrari, *Catalogo*, MS, 2629, ff. 46v-47r. Later they were included - beginning with the modern study of Carpaccio initiated in the early 20th century by Gustav Ludwig and Pompeo Molmenti - in the problematic of the artist's youth, still unresolved as regards his apprenticeship, which some thought had been with Lazzaro Bastiani, others with the Bellini brothers. See, for a convinced attribution to Vittore Carpaccio, Molmenti, Ludwig 1903, pp. 10-11, fig. 1; Molmenti, Ludwig 1906, p. 273. In a review of the earlier article by these two scholars, their attribution is rejected in favour of a closer association with Bastiani by Laudedeo Testi (1904, pp. 96-137). The attribution is accepted, but with a dating shifted to 1510-1520, by Mary Logan (1903-1904, p. 317). Later we find critical positions expressed in resumptive terms: Venturi 1907, p. 308: imitator of Carpaccio; Von Hadeln 1912, pp. 35-38: Vittore as a young man; Trecca 1912, p. 122: Carpaccio? - he is the first to reveal that the panel "was once in two pieces which perhaps served as cupboard doors, and were then united"; Gronau 1924, pp. 59-65: Vittore as a young man. Later still there has been no lack of different and sometimes contradictory judgements on the two Veronese panels, although there still prevails a tendency to recognise them as autograph and as dating from shortly before 1490, together with very few other examples. In this connection we might recall the discordance between the position assumed by Giuseppe Fiocco (1931, pp. 17, 59), who on different occasions favours a dating to the artist's youthful phase, and that of Roberto Longhi (1932, p. 4; now in Longhi 1968, p. 75), who is convinced of a

late dating. Such a discordance is nothing but an example of the difficulties that perpetuate themselves in attempts to reconstruct Carpaccio's career through many other works. The comment of Fiocco (1931, p. 17) on the two Veronese panels, expressed with a somewhat rhetorical flourish, is pertinent in discerning "the painter's first figures, I should say, of truly Carpaccesque type. Where, that is to say, the artist succeeds, albeit with crude forms, in giving that tender and resigned expression of his to the necessary victim, which is the charm of the sulky and far from physically beautiful faces of these very blonde virgins". Fiocco seems already to have in mind, for comparison, the faces of St Ursula and her 11,000 companions in the celebrated and extremely crowded cycle, painted later (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia). After the comparison of Fiocco and Longhi, see Berenson 1932, p. 135: only in part autograph, a position repeated later in the *Indices*; Berenson 1936, p. 117; Berenson 1957, p. 59; Van Marle 1923-1938, XVIII, p. 326, note 1: Benedetto Carpaccio? The paternity of Vittore Carpaccio is asserted several times in Avena 1937, p. 31; A. Avena, in Verona 1947, p. 80, no. 129, fig. 38; Avena 1954, p. 19. Others affirming Vittore's paternity, specifying a dating to his youthful phase, are Giuseppe Fiocco (1942, pp. 19, 61; 1958, p. 32); Angelo Aldrichetti (1960, p. 62); Guido Perocco (1960, pp. 21, 51). Of a different opinion is Jan Lauts (1962): late work by a follower. A different dating is asserted by Pietro Zampetti (in Venice 1963; 1966, p. 69, no. 30): Vittore in the late 1490s or early years of the following century. Later we find the following positions in Muraro 1966, pp. LXXII-LXXIII: compared with the polyptych of Grumello de' Zanchi, and dated to the mid-1490s; Perocco 1967, p. 94, no. 18: Vittore, dateable to 1500. In more recent studies there has been a consolidation of the autograph opinion and the dating to the artist's youthful phase, though with different solutions regarding the composition and chronology of the oeuvre in the 1480s. See especially Pesenti 1977, p. 573; Sgarbi 1979, p. 22; Marinelli 1983, p. 63; Heinemann 1991, p. 80; Humfrey 1991, p. 17, no. 3; Marinelli 1991, p. 43; Sgarbi 1994, p. 26; G. Pinna, in Sgarbi 1994, pp. 196, 197-198, no. 4; Gentili 1997, p. 531: Vittore between 1485 and 1490. For a more detailed account of the articulation of these latter positions, see the catalogue entry by the present writer: G. Fossaluzza, in *Museo di Castelvecchio* 2010, pp. 182-184, no. 129.

⁷ They were thought to have been the doors of a cupboard by Giuseppe Trecca (1912, p. 122) and Giuseppe Fiocco (1931, p. 59).

⁸ The restorations that have dealt with this situation were those carried out by Ferruccio Bragantini in 1949 and by Giovanni Pedrocco in 1963, on the occasion of the monographic exhibition at the Doge's Palace in Venice (Venice 1963). It was necessary to separate the two panels, which had been united for purposes of display. In the catalogue the reproduction documents the panels' state prior to restoration.

⁹ Rearick 2003, pp. 185-190.

¹⁰ For these works, their critical fortune and the attribution to Carpaccio, see Rearick 2003, pp. 184 ff, esp. p. 185, note 23, pls. 220-222.

¹¹ These are the *Madonna and Child with Two Female Saints* in a private Bolognese collection, the *Madonna and Child* in a private New York collection, the *Madonna and Child with St Peter and St Margaret* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the *Madonna in Adoration before the Child* in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge (Winthrop collection), and the *Madonna and Child with St Mary Magdalen and St Ursula* in the Prado, Madrid. For the one in a private collection, see R.B. Simon, in New York 1998, p. 18. For the one in Washington, the most recent evaluation is by David Alan Brown (in Boskovits, Brown 2003, pp. 84-87): follower of Giovanni Bellini.

¹² Dal Pozzolo 2010. The recent restoration described by the scholar has conferred new legibility on the painting.

¹³ Meyer zur Capellen 1985, pp. 132-133, no. A. 16, fig. 32; M. Minardi, in *The Alana Collection* 2011, pp. 55-61.

¹⁴ For portraits by Bellini of the 1480s it is sufficient to see Pallucchini 1959, pp. 90-94. The modalities of recovery from Bellini's model are not very different in the *Madonna and Child between St Cecilia and St Ursula* formerly in the Morosini collection, to be dated to the early 1490s. See Sgarbi 1978, pp. 31-35; Humfrey 1991, pp. 62-63, no. 15; Rearick 2003, p. 186, note 28.

¹⁵ For the panel in the Museo Correr, see Rearick 2003, pp. 187, 188, note 36 (with bibliography and critical fortune); *Save Venice*, 2011, pp. 356-357.

¹⁶ Rearick 2003, pp. 182, fig. 42, 189. For the description and reproduction, see Muraro 1977, pp. 64-65, figs. 20, 21.

¹⁷ See Rearick 2003, pp. 187-188.

¹⁸ Panel, 56.6 × 42.4 cm. It was found in the deposits of the museum and was attributed to its true author by Giandomenico Romanelli and Andrea Bellieni. It was put on public display on 25 August 2011. The restoration that brought the signature to light was by Antonio Bigolin. The present writer was fortunate enough to illustrate the work for the first time, thanks to the generosity of the conservator of the Pinacoteca del Museo Correr, Andrea Bellieni (Fossaluzza 2012a). See Bellieni 2012, pp. 58-59. The style of the painting is comparable to that of the *Christ with a Landscape Background* (panel, 45.7 × 39.5 cm) presented as the work of a follower of Giovanni Bellini in London 1997 [a o b?], lot 209.

¹⁹ See Pignatti 1969, p. 96, nos. 86-87.

²⁰ For the question of dating, see the reconstruction in Finocchi Ghersi 2003, esp. pp. 19, 50-53.

²¹ Attributed by the present writer, Fossaluzza 2012c, who published it for the first time after the restoration carried out by Antonio Bigolin (2013). All there is on this work is the internal inventory entry by Giovanni Mariacher dating from 1955, assigning it to the Venetian School of the Bellinis, with the hesitant addition that it might be a copy after Basaiti, referring to the painting in the Gallerie dell'Accademia. See Moschini Marconi 1955, pp. 45-46, no. 43. The work is ascribed to Francesco Rizzo by Fritz Heinemann (1962, I, p. 53, no. 173b), and to Luca Antonio Busati by *Anchise Tempestini* (1993, pp. 36, 63, fig. 47).

²² It was recorded as being in the Volterra collection in Florence and then at Thomas Agnew in Lon-

don. The literature on this painting includes the following: Gronau 1926: Giovanni Bellini; Gronau 1930, p. 96; Bellini; Fiocco 1934a, p. 244; Carpaccio; Fiocco 1934b, pp. 114-117; Dussler 1949, p. 69: who denies it to Bellini and excludes a connection with Carpaccio; Berenson 1957, p. 37, pl. 265: "close follower of Giovanni Bellini"; Fiocco 1958, p. 33: associates it with the compartments of the polyptych in the parish church of Grumello de' Zanchi (Bergamo); Pallucchini 1959, pp. 26, 130, fig. 19: "it has all the characteristics for confirmation, especially after its recent cleaning"; Heinemann 1962, I, p. 280, no. V. 429, II, fig. 574; Bottari 1963, II, p. 42: among the works attributed; Pignatti 1969, p. 87, no. 23: for the most part rejected, 1460.

²³ Berlin, Staatliche Museen Kupfertichkabinett, inv. no. 5034. Pen and ink, with highlights in white lead, on blue paper, 155 × 260 mm. See the following critical positions: N. Barbantini, in Ferrara 1933, p. 197, no. 238: preparatory drawing for the *Pietà* by Ercole de' Roberti in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool; Gamba 1933, p. 14, pl. 14: Carpaccio; Gronau 1934, p. 427: Carpaccio; Fiocco 1934a, pp. 244-245, fig. 9: Carpaccio in his last years, with a reference to the Agnew painting; drawn "from the life", or rather "probably made from a drowned corpse"; Longhi 1934, p. 139, [ed. 1968], p. 104: accepts Gamba's attribution of the drawing to Carpaccio, but adds: "non conveniamo però con Fiocco («L'Arte», 1934, p. 244) nel ritenerlo proprio uno studio per il quadretto di Pietà presso la Casa Agnew di Londra, sia perché la posa è parecchio diversa, sia perché l'attribuzione al Carpaccio di quell'operina abbisogna di altre conferme" ("we cannot however agree with Fiocco («L'Arte», 1934, p. 244) that it is a study for the little panel of the *Pietà* at Agnew of London, both because the pose is very different, and because the attribution of that little panel to Carpaccio is in need of further confirmation"); Tietze, Tietze Conrat 1944, p. 148, no. A588: copy by a Venetian artist of a model by the school of Ferrara, and therefore the attribution to Carpaccio of the Agnew panel is also open to debate; Lauts 1962, p. 280, no. 64: among the rejected attributions; Pignatti 1963, p. 48: "probably a workshop variation after the ex-Agnew picture now generally given to Giovanni Bellini"; Muraro 1966, p. 111; Pignatti 1972, p. 17; Muraro 1977, p. 30, fig. 120: circle of the de' Roberti; Ruhmer 1978, pp. 65-66, Abb. 9: possibly a copy of a lost work by de' Roberti, but hesitantly ascribed to Tullio Lombardo; Manca 1992, p. 166, no. R2; Molteni 1995.

²⁴ Technique and style correspond to what we find in the drawing of a *Messenger* in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich (n. 2947), in the sheet with *Studies for Three Figures of Saints* (recto) in the manner of Bellini and for "Compagno della calza" and *boy in profile* (verso) in the Albertina in Vienna (n. 20). See Muraro 1977, pp. 61-62, 79-80, figs. 1, 4, 75.

²⁵ The expression is that of Pallucchini 1959, p. 26.

²⁶ Reflectography on the painting presented here was carried out by Anna Pelagotti and Manuela Massa (Art-Test Arte e Diagnostica, Florence) during a careful restoration executed by Lucia Biondi under the supervision of Serena Padovani.

Reflectographies of the Veronese panels were carried out in 2003 by Giovanni C.F. Villa and Gianluca Poldi after the panels had been made available by Paola Marini, director of the Museo di Castelvecchio.

²⁷ The complex of data on underlying drawings of early works by Carpaccio, the new and concrete discoveries on his relations with Bellini, in connection with these very same Veronese female saints, induce us to reconsider the attribution of the drawing of a *Female Martyr* in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (inv. no. C501 verso), which shows on the recto the figure of *Baby Jesus Lying down*, compared to the one in the above-mentioned panel formerly Winthrop, now in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Mass., assigned to Bellini but included among those attributed to the young Carpaccio by William Rearick (2003). Judgement on the paternity of the painting is suspended in view of its state of conservation as documented in the photo published by Fritz Heinemann (1991, p. 2, fig. 43). See Robertson 1968, pp. 48-49, pls. XXXIII, XXXIVa. That the verso of the Oxford drawing might be by Carpaccio according to his initial manner was the hesitant opinion of Fiocco 1949, p. 51. The various later critical positions are summarised in Muraro (1977, pp. 66-67) who rejects links with Carpaccio. As regards the Veronese panel's, Carpaccio's paternity is defended by Giuseppe Pinna (in Sgarbi 1994, pp. 197-198, nos. 4ab.) The attribution to Carpaccio is however questioned by the present writer, see G. Fossaluzza, in *Museo di Castelvecchio* 2010, pp. 182-184, no. 129. The squaring of the drawing of the *Female Martyr*, which is rare in the corpus of Carpaccio's drawings, indicates that the design was prepared with a view to being transposed onto a different scale, so this is not a preparatory drawing properly so called for one of the two female saints in Verona. The structural composition of the figure is more complex than in those by Carpaccio, so the drawing may be confirmed as belonging to the circle of Bellini. It is not impossible that the figurative model that it expresses constituted a point of reference for Carpaccio, who in the two Veronese saints interpreted it with a dry and personalised formulation both in terms of design and of spatial intuition. The was reflectography carried out by Paola Artoni of the Laboratorio Laniac of the University of Verona, hand published in Dal Pozzolo 2010.

²⁸ The reddish violet colour corresponds to the "pagonazzo" that Cennino Cennini [ed. 1993] chap. XLII attributes to a pigment he calls "rosso amatista". I thank Lucia Biondi for this information, and for her help in deciphering the annotations.

²⁹ See Muraro 1977, pp. 69-70, fig. 59.

³⁰ Panel, 43 × 38 cm.

³¹ See Muraro 1977, p. 54, fig. 16.

³² Ibid. 1977, p. 54, figs. 3, 3a.

³³ For the question of the dating of the Zadar polypych, in the past often assigned to between 1480 and 1487 (but even to as late as c. 1520), in relation to its commissioning by the canon Martin Mladošić, differently interpreted, we refer on this occasion only to the various critical positions assembled by G. Pinna, in Sgarbi 1994, pp. 237-238, no. 59. A recent consideration of the problem of

dating, bearing in mind documentation on the making of the frame by the woodcarver Giovanni da Curzola, is that of Ivo Petricoli (2003, pp. 217-219); Petricoli 2005, pp. 207-216. For the dating to 1493, see Kukuljević Sakcinski 1873, p. 36. For the illustration after the restoration of some compartments (for others the restoration is still in progress), the critical reconstruction and a corroboration of the dating to 1493, see R. Tomić, in Zagreb 2011, pp. 101-108, no. 13.

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- 2010 London, lot 2
- 2012a Fossaluzza, p. 41
- 2012b Fossaluzza, pp. 21-29
- 2012c Fossaluzza, pp. 54-57