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By one recent count, no less than 120 portraits have been attributed to the north Italian painter Giovanni Battista Moroni (ca. 1521/1524-1579/1580). Among them are three sacred portraits, paintings that depict their sitters offering devotion to holy figures. This paper considers whether or not the sacred portraits can be seen as constituting a discrete category of portraiture, as has been proposed. Additionally, it examines the degree to which each work deviates from the established norms of devotional painting, thus revealing Moroni's creative capacity, while calling on scholars to rethink the artist's contribution to sixteenth-century Italian painting.

Having trained in the workshop of Alessandro Bonvicino, known as Moretto da Brescia (1498-1544), Giovanni Battista Moroni (ca. 1521/1524-1579/1580) embarked on a career of more than 30 years painting monumental altarpieces, secular decorative programs, and, by recent accounting, more than 120 «document-like» portraits of those residing in Albino, Brescia, Trent, and Bergamo¹. Among the works in the last category, which includes the long acclaimed *Il Tagliapanni*, ca. 1570, a portrait of a self-possessed yet unidentified tailor (fig. 1), and Moroni's depiction of the pensive and dignified Lucrezia Agliardi Vertova, 1557 (fig. 2), are three striking images collectively referred to as the “sacred portraits”: *A Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna and Child*, ca. 1555 (hereafter *Gentleman in Adoration*; fig. 3); *A Gentleman in Contemplation of the Baptism of Christ*, mid-1550s (hereafter *Gentleman in Contemplation*; fig. 4); and *Two Donors in Adoration Before the Madonna and Child and Saint Michael*, ca. 1557-1560 (hereafter *Two Donors*; fig. 5)².

Notable for their melding of two established categories of painting – portraiture and traditional devotional painting – the sacred portraits have repeatedly been singled out in the scholarly literature as representative of something new, «un'importante innovazione» in the words of Mina Gregori³. What struck Gregori in 1979 was the balanced and individualized rapport Moroni structured between each picture's component parts. Others concurred. Writing in 2013, Joanna Woods-Marsden pointed to the *Gentleman in Adoration*, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., as indicative of the «potency, aura, and emotional investment» she viewed as the signifying hallmarks of Renaissance portrait painting. More significantly, this painting – and others by different artists of roughly the same date – prompted her to credit Moroni with

having «invented a new type of portrait» that she described as «the likeness of the Counter-Reformation worshipper at his or her prayers». This «hybrid genre», she contended, «functioned on two levels of reality in that it conjoined the likeness of a secular sitter with an image of a religious icon or story, which coexists in the same space»⁴. More than two decades earlier, Peter Humfrey had also singled out the *Gentleman in Adoration*, designating it as «one of the most important examples of a new pictorial type invented by Moroni». Relating the National Gallery's painting to the sacred double portrait in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, he suggested that Moroni combined «religious painting and portraiture to create a new kind of highly personalized image for private devotion»⁵. In 2019, Aimee Ng followed suit, suggesting the sacred portraits be analyzed in light of one another⁶. Despite obstacles – we do not know who commissioned these pictures, where they were initially displayed, or how they were used – this essay attempts to take up that task, first in broad terms, then through focused discussion of the individual works⁷.

“Sacred Portraits”: Justifying the Category

Without a doubt, the sacred portraits stand apart from the dozens of secular portraits Moroni painted during his career. That said, the differences between the *Gentleman in Adoration*, *Gentleman in Contemplation*, and *Two Donors* suggest the artist's invention of a new portrait type was anything but formulaically fixed. While this might be seen as evincing Moroni's capacity to meet the diverse demands of individual clients, it also suggests that viewing the three as a coherent group is worthy of reconsideration. Should they in fact be viewed collectively? Among the more compelling arguments in favor of doing so is the prayerful gesture of three of the four depicted devotees.

Typically, Moroni portrayed his sitters with something in hand: a statuette, a letter, a book, a fan. Among his dozens of portraits, only the three sacred portraits, as well as a related fragment in the University Art Museum, Princeton, feature demonstrably pious individuals⁸. This is not to say that within Moroni's *oeuvre* the gesture of clasped hands is unique to the sacred portraits. In accordance with an established practice, Moroni similarly depicted the donor of the *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Francis*, ca. 1548-1550 (hereafter *Virgin and Child with Saints*; fig. 6), a devotional painting that is now in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. But a correspondence between the Brera devotional painting and the sacred portraits ends there. Indeed, multiple differences suggest that the Brera *Virgin and Child with Saints* falls decidedly into one category of painting

and the sacred portraits into another. As scholars have repeatedly observed, this is especially obvious when the *Gentleman in Adoration* is juxtaposed with the Brera painting⁹. As Humfrey stated, Moroni abolished the stone ledge separating the devotee from the Virgin and Child in the sacred portrait thereby «uniting all three figures in the same ideological space». Moreover, in comparison with the Brera painting, «the relationships of scale [in the *Gentleman in Adoration*] have been dramatically reversed, with the donor much larger than the holy figures uniting all three figures in the same ideological space»¹⁰. But are the pictorial idiosyncrasies that distinguish the *Gentleman in Adoration* from devotional works such as the Brera *Virgin and Child with Saints* shared with the two other known sacred portraits? The unembellished answer is no. If the wall that demarcates the ideological space of the devotee from that of the holy assemblage – which is present in the Brera painting, yet absent in the National Gallery of Art sacred portrait – points to a distinction between these two works, its inclusion in the Virginia *Two Donors* muddies the analytical waters. With which painting – the Brera devotional picture or the National Gallery of Art sacred portrait – is the double portrait better aligned? If, as various scholars have suggested, the *Gentleman in Adoration* and *Two Donors* are two paintings in a distinctive group of three, which undoubtedly included others too, then what, beyond the gesture of piety, unites them?

Further complicating efforts to define a new, hybrid portrait type is the background and spatial structure in the Etro Collection *Gentleman in Contemplation*. Here, Christ's baptism takes place against a backdrop of rocky escarpments softened by atmospheric haze. Nothing could differ more from the bare interior space of the Washington portrait, a void filled by the looming, visionary presence of the Madonna and Child. Put simply, and as is considered in detail below, the differences among the sacred portraits are significant, signaling, perhaps a fusion of functions in addition to a blending of genres. If the sacred portraits can be understood as an innovative unification of portraiture and traditional devotional painting, then each integration appears to have been tasked with fulfilling a specific function in accordance with an individual client's wishes. The *Gentleman in Contemplation* visualizes spiritual meditation and thus can be seen as having assisted those who stood or knelt before it in furthering a devotional practice that scholars agree was in the mid-sixteenth century predominantly based on Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548). The *Gentleman in Adoration* seems to have worked differently. While it, like the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, may have assisted the devout who stood before it, the National Gallery of Art's sacred portrait may have performed a devotional

function that was specific to votive practices. The *Two Donors* also may have served a votive purpose, explicitly soliciting a viewer's participation in securing salvation (*pro remedio animae*), something the *Gentleman in Adoration* does not overtly do. In each case, then, Moroni can be appreciated as having carefully crafted relationships between figures within the frame and, additionally, between those he represented and the viewer, challenging the latter to focus on and engage with what their eyes and mind perceive. In other words, Moroni masterfully melded physical, or sensible, sight with imaginative insight through a creative fusion of what can be called modalities of reality¹¹.

Notwithstanding these compositional and figural differences, the sacred portraits undeniably «figure the pious self» as Woods-Marsden observed, simultaneously collapsing the secular into the sacred and integrating the present into the past. But what, exactly, is meant by «the pious self» or, to be more precise, what did piety mean to both the individuals Moroni painted and those who looked at one of these portraits? Although the breakdown of negotiations at Ratisbon (1541), the establishment of the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition (1542), the convocation of the Council of Trent (1545), and other events signaled a hardening of Rome's positions concerning faith, ecclesiastical institutions, and ritual practices, there remained in northern Italy some degree of fluidity between orthodox Catholicism and heterodox Evangelism. On the one hand, an understanding of the term was informed by the amalgamation of Italian ideas voiced in Italy prior to the initial meeting at Trent with those expressed in evangelical letters published in vernacular texts that crossed the Alps. On the other hand, and as Federico Cornaro was apprised when he entered Bergamo as the region's new bishop in 1561, the piety of the region was rooted deep in the tenets of the Roman Church. «Here», he was told, «one finds an unassuming and obedient people, and above all, a people who are Catholic, devout, and religious»¹². In truth, transalpine currents of spirituality were intertwined in the Italian experience. Accordingly, thoughts of reform developed in the «context of an ardent Catholic faith»¹³. Moreover, the Italian experience did not immediately change with either the convocation of the Council of Trent or its conclusion on 4 December 1563. Increasingly, scholars are recognizing continuities and recurrences linking cultural and religious practices before and after Trent. In fact, continuities endured well past the dates of provincial synods – including those held in Milan – that sought to interpret Tridentine decrees and enforce the “correct” circumstances in which worship occurred¹⁴.

Moroni's sacred portraits have been dated, albeit tentatively, to roughly 1555-1560, that is, prior to the third and final gathering of the Council of Trent

(1562-1563). If this dating is correct then the sacred portraits were painted before policies concerning the appearance and proper use of domestic chapels (Twenty-Second Assembly, 16 September 1562) and the veneration of relics and sacred images (Twenty-Fifth Assembly, 4 December 1563) were set forth and, hence, in advance of the writing and circulation of texts aimed at explicating how images and structures were to appear and be used in a climate of religious reform¹⁵. This is not to suggest that either Moroni or the individuals he represented were immune to Catholic calls for sobriety and decorum in the face of Protestant accusations of excess and abuse. It is merely a cautionary reminder that not only had images not been a topic of discussion at either the first (1545-1547) or second (1551-1552) sessions of the Council, but even the decisions reached at those convocations remained “dormant” until their papal confirmation on 26 January 1564¹⁶. Moreover, the implementation of those decrees «got underway in a context of uncertainty and contradiction [... that] would last for twenty years»¹⁷. That said, it also must be noted that there was nothing ambivalent about texts such as Don Bartolomeo Pellegrini’s *Opus divinum de sacra, ac fertili Bergomensi vinea* of 1553. A chronicle of Bergamo, *Opus divinum de sacra* called upon the city’s inhabitants to rout from the area the «barbarians» ravaging the Roman Church’s vineyard. On the issue of religiosity and Moroni’s presentations of his sitters’ pious selves, the sacred portraits must “speak” for themselves.

A Gentleman in Contemplation of the Baptism of Christ

Moroni was in Trent in 1548 and again in 1551-1552. During his second sojourn he painted full-length portraits of the two nephews of Trent’s prince-bishop as well as an altarpiece for the church in which Council attendees gathered for the eleventh through sixteenth assemblies¹⁸. Talk of reform reverberated through the city, but it was not ecclesiastical deliberation that informed Moroni’s *Gentleman in Contemplation*. Rather, it appears to have been Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, a popular text first published in Spanish in 1548¹⁹. Ignatius’s prescriptive meditations and, more generally the contemplative practices espoused in earlier texts of the *Devotio moderna*, directed the exercitant to follow in the footsteps of Christian soldiers, saints, and ultimately Christ through focused meditation on a specific event in the Christological narrative: Christ’s sermon on the Mount, His raising of Lazarus, and, as in the Etro Collection’s sacred portrait, the moment when John the Baptist poured a thin stream of water on Jesus’ head causing «the heavens [to] open and [...] the Spirit of God [to] descend like a dove»²⁰. While the prescribed preparatory prayers and meditations directed devotees to vividly

experience the imagined event with all of their senses, sight was privileged in Ignatius of Loyola's scheme of spiritual guidance.

Drawing upon a trove of conventionalized images impressed on memory through repeated exposure to the many fresco cycles and altarpieces that graced every church, practitioners of the *Exercises* were able to mentally wed word with image, thereby conjuring in their mind's eye a vision of a moment in the biblical past²¹. Artists worked in a similar fashion. Familiarity with established iconographies figured in their visualizations of biblical stories. In comparison, representing the edifying act of contemplation posed the greater challenge since it involved making apprehensible two coexistent visual modalities: one being that which is seen by the beholder of the sacred portrait; the other being that which is imagined by the exercitant pictured within the painting. Moroni met the challenge by demarcating spaces, varying the application of paint within those spaces, and by establishing dichotomizing sight lines.

Depicted in rigid profile against the solid surface of a ruined wall, the gentleman immersed in contemplation looks across the picture plane, his gaze bypassing the scene of baptism that fills the middle ground. By contrast, viewers standing in front of the painting look into the pictorial space. Their gaze, which bisects that of the represented sitter, takes in the scene that he appears to miss. Following logically these sight lines, the viewer and the sitter should see something different. Both, however, see the same thing; John the Baptist pouring a thin stream of water onto Jesus' head. Difference is not, therefore, in the subject seen but rather in the form of the image and the means by which sitter and viewer perceive it²². Considered in the context of this painting, the meaning of the term "form" should be understood literally as a particular way in which a thing exists or is manifested. As a vision of the imagination, that which appears to the sitter is immaterial. By contrast, that which the viewer of the *Gentleman in Contemplation* sees is material, an image of sensible sight.

Moroni distinguished one from the other by subtly altering the texture and pattern of pigment on canvas. Depicted with the artist's characteristic realism, the sitter appears palpable, an effect heightened by the gentleman's coat, a mélange of side-by-side dashes of black and gray, black stippling, and graded patches suggestive of shadowed folds. For the painting's beholder, sight verges on the haptic but only when it is focused on the exercitant and his soberly elegant attire. Notably, neither the white drapery bound around Christ's hips nor the red cloak that falls from John the Baptist's shoulders has the same tactile allure. Having been painted with broader and less varied brushstrokes, the fabrics that clothe Christ and John do not share to the same degree the sense of palpability of the

gentleman's garments. Underscoring the distinction between sensible sight and imagined vision, Moroni placed John and Jesus in a landscape that has precedents in art, for example Moretto's *Christ in Glory Delivering the Keys to Saint Peter and the Book to Saint Paul*, ca. 1540 (Rodengo, church of San Nicola), but cannot be seen in the natural world.

A Gentleman in Contemplation of the Baptism of Christ engages viewers in a complex of dynamic juxtapositions: sight and insight, material and immaterial, present and past, and here and there. Together these dualities enable viewers to grasp the exercitant's *visio imaginaria*, thus authenticating its truth. Within this compositional complex, the remnant of an architectural structure plays a key role. Replicating local stone, the low wall that runs across more than half of the painting's lower edge before rising to offset the sitter creates a visual divide. On one side is the imagined world of Christ and John. On the other are the contemplative gentleman and, by implicit extension, we, the painting's beholders. While the wall demarcates the world of sensible vision from that of imaginative vision, it does not create an impermeable barrier. The wall having crumbled, a threshold between the worlds of sensible and imaginative sight has opened. As David Young Kim has argued, Moroni not infrequently challenged the tendency to view walls as solid and immutable by detailing the effects of weathering. In doing so, Moroni recognized walls and the spaces they bound to be places of «constant mutability»²³. Worn by the elements, columns crack and walls crumble enabling, as is the case with the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, visual and physical passage between foreground and background. Drawing visual attention to this liminal point is a lone, double-budded flower²⁴. In addition to marking a place of visual passage within the fictive space of the painting, the nascent blooms embellish the pictured scene by signaling the next moment in the Christological narrative. Just as a bud inevitably becomes a blossom, so Jesus, having been baptized, will begin the journey that is his destiny, for as the Gospel states, «the kingdom of God is close at hand» (Mark 1:15).

The earliest reference to the *Gentleman in Contemplation* is in an inventory of 1637, consequently we do not know the circumstances in which the painting was originally seen nor its intended function. If it was displayed in a domestic setting and if, to use Peter Humfrey's description of another of the sacred portraits, it served as a «highly personalized image for private devotion», then the depicted act of meditation and its repeated physical validation through devotional reenactment can be understood as sanctifying a secular space²⁵. «Just as objects and rituals sanctified the ecclesiastical setting», so did pious objects within the home – such as basins with holy water, votive candles, and images

like Moroni's contemplative gentleman – generate devotions that transformed «ordinary space into an area in which interaction with the divine occurred»²⁶. Here, then, Moroni has painted an image that goes well beyond asserting the piety of the sitter. In rendering the invisible visible, it accords viewers agency even as it attests the unmediated efficacy of devotional prescriptions like the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Finally, we can ask to what degree does the *Gentleman in Contemplation* or, more pointedly, the gentleman's engagement with Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, reflect the religiosity of its time and place, a religiosity that was not yet impressed with the monolithic authority of Tridentine reform. In considering an answer, we should keep in mind John W. O'Malley's comments concerning Ignatius's text: «In the sixteenth century, the *Exercises* had severe critics who saw in them a dangerous form of mysticism that minimized or made irrelevant sacraments and other usages of the church in favor of God's direct communication with the individual. [...] Even after they were published [...] with the approbation of Pope Paul III, they were not immune from criticism and suspicion»²⁷. Of the three sacred portraits, only the *Gentleman in Contemplation* can be related specifically to Ignatius's instructive book. Nonetheless, O'Malley's recognition of the unease caused by practices that seemed to circumvent clerical mediation «in favor of God's direct communication with the individual» can be said to resonate with both the *Gentleman in Adoration* and the *Two Donors*.

A Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna and Christ Child

The provenance of the sacred portrait now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., extends back no further than the early nineteenth century; thus, we are again left without documentation concerning a painting's original function and site of display and, therefore, must allow the *Gentleman in Adoration* to speak for itself. As one of the most discussed works within Moroni's *oeuvre* and certainly the most frequently examined of the three sacred portraits, the painting has indeed been eloquent through scholarly surrogates. While considering this work, for example, Gregori noted Moroni's inventiveness (*invenzione*), Humfrey credited the artist with creating «a new pictorial type», and Woods-Marsden, similarly focused, took note of the artist's development of «a new type of portrait». Although each recognized the painting's novelty and associated it with one or two of the other sacred portraits, none took the next step of placing the *Gentleman in Adoration* in critical dialogue with both the *Gentleman in Contemplation* and *Two Donors*. Is it right to do so?

Differences between the Etro Collection painting and that in the National Gallery of Art are not inconsequential. Although the latter, in contrast to the former, cannot be tied to a particular devotional text, the more striking difference between the two is the viewer-to-image relationship Moroni structured in each. In the *Gentleman in Contemplation* Moroni contained the holy figures within a narrative situated within a landscape, leaving the viewer's presence unacknowledged by both the biblical figures and the gentleman who contemplates them. By contrast, the Madonna and infant Christ in the Washington painting look past the represented devotee to visually connect with the beholder. To emphasize the immediacy of this eye-to-eye contact, Moroni positioned – almost squeezed – the divine pair into an ambiguously defined and seemingly shallow space that cannot contain them. Mother and Child appear on the verge of exiting the pictorial space in order to enter that of the viewer. This incipient translation from one space to another befits the paradoxical presence of the Virgin and Christ Child. On the one hand, and as is the case with the holy figures in the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, Moroni suggested the otherworldliness of the Madonna through the application of paint, overlaying the blue of her cloak with nebulous patches of white and marking her red sleeve with gold striations that convey her exalted status as a heavenly being. On the other hand, he conspicuously darkened the back wall with a cast shadow that asserts the holy pair's material substance. Together with the implied elision of spaces, the visual play between substance and immateriality allows ambiguity and certitude to collide in a particularly affecting manner. Humfrey described it this way: «It is as if the donor, while praying to the Virgin and Child, has been granted a vision of them, as creatures of flesh and blood who share his humanity, while at the same time the use of stylized yellow highlights for the Virgin's sleeve, echoing the gold of her hem and halo, provides an indication of her separate, divine status»²⁸. I would go further. The represented donor is not singular in having been «granted a vision». The gazes of the Madonna and Christ Child that are so purposely directed to the viewer, together with the close proximity of the holy pair to the picture's frontal plane, make the person standing before the painting – the viewer – an agentic participant in this visionary encounter. An engagement of this kind is the foundation of votive culture.

Humfrey's depiction of the Virgin and Child echoes centuries-old descriptions of the Madonna recorded in dozens of miracle books written in the wake of professed apparitional visitations by the Mother of Christ. Appearing «as creatures of flesh and blood who share [their devotee's] humanity», Moroni's Madonna and Child can be seen as visualizations of verbalized experiences,

namely, the notarized testimonies of those privileged with a visionary encounter. Without exception, these testaments describe a benevolent Holy Mother in touch – sometimes literally – with human need and suffering. She speaks reassuring words to the dispossessed and comforts the anguished with a gentle touch²⁹. Most often miraculous sightings were one-on-one occurrences that took place on isolated roads and in empty fields far away from the scrutiny of Church authorities. Efforts by Rome to direct popular access to the supernatural through orthodox channels not only demanded official review of all claimed sightings, but placed restrictions on the acts of piety, including votive behaviors, that attended the meteoric rise of sites made sacred by Marian presence. Authorities in the city of Brescia, where Moroni learned the art of painting from Moretto in 1543, clamped down hard. Without proper review and official sanctioning, the construction of new sanctuaries and chapels on the pretext of miraculous incidents was prohibited. Alterations to existing structures, both within the city and in surrounding villages, were similarly barred³⁰. Removal of votive paintings from church walls and prohibitions against future additions followed decades later³¹. There is no way to prove whether or not the *Gentleman in Adoration* can in fact be tied to votive culture, but there are reasons to entertain the possibility, and these extend beyond the widespread popularity of votive practices in the region.

Votive culture had no demographic boundaries. Not less than simple folk, the monied and titled were eager to secure God's future blessing (*pro remedio animae*) and, if already bestowed – most often with the assistance of the Virgin Mary – assure continued favor by acknowledging a grace already received (*per grazia ricevuta*). Within this culture, objects were significant, functioning as a *quid pro quo* in a negotiated transaction of faith³². Votive forms varied in cost, material, and quality of craftsmanship – inventory records list items, such as a tattered cloak, a crutch, a gold ring, a small cast wax figure, a rudimentary painting illustrating a life-threatening incident that was miraculously survived, or, albeit far more rarely, a finely painted, carved, or cast image³³. Regardless of their differences, all of these things referenced the donor, in some instances with astounding intimacy. A ragtag cloak, for example, might have been all that sustained the votary through a harsh winter, crutches would have assisted the pilgrim on a health-seeking journey to a solicited saint's shrine, a wax hand or leg identified the injured or diseased part of the donor's body that learned physicians were unable to heal but that a munificent saint could restore, while portraits of a votary in adoration before the Madonna, not unlike the sacred portrait in Washington, testified to his/her righteous devotion. Although popularly donated votive panel paintings lack in all but a handful of examples the visual complexity and stylistic virtuosity

of the *Gentleman in Adoration*, the likeness between Moroni's canvas and more than two dozen popular votive panel paintings preserved in the church of the Madonna dei Miracoli, Lonigo (Verona), is too striking to ignore. In these simple pictures a single figure kneels within an empty room to offer prayers to the beneficent Madonna.

Balancing these rudimentary works are myriad texts referencing votive practices, including inventories, miracle books, histories, and travel diaries. While these texts tend not to describe a votive painting beyond its basic form, they make it abundantly clear that Moroni's client was not alone in commissioning a high-quality image. In some cases, the offering is a representation of the Virgin, the donor himself enacting the type of pietistic communion that Moroni captured in the *Gentleman in Adoration*³⁴. In other examples, Michel de Montaigne's votive offering being one, a donor was pictured in the company of the Holy Mother. Suffering from kidney disease, the famed French essayist visited the great Marian sanctuary at Loreto in 1581. There he purchased an inscribed silver plaque «set with four figures: that of Our Lady, myself, my wife, and my daughter» that he nailed on an interior wall of the Madonna's Holy House³⁵. It is tempting to read the sacred portrait in the National Gallery in light of votive images of this kind. Even the size of the *Gentleman in Adoration*, which is approximately half that of the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, allows the possibility. That said, it must be admitted that votive pictures invariably include some detail that enables viewers to identify which miracle-working Madonna interceded on a devotee's behalf. Lonigo's Madonna dei Miracoli is recognized by the hand she raises to staunch the blood flowing from a wound inflicted by a blasphemous thief, while the Madonna of Loreto is always seen with her Holy House, which had miraculously translated itself from Nazareth to the Marche at the end of the thirteenth century. The Madonna Moroni pictured in the *Gentleman in Adoration* is no less referentially specific. Here, however, the Madonna's appearance does not denote a miraculous occurrence, but instead reveals an artistic transformation. She is a variant of Albrecht Dürer's engraving of the *Virgin and Child on a Crescent Moon* (1516; fig. 7). The identification calls for one final observation.

The gentleman portrayed in the Washington painting seems to look through, if not past, the Madonna and Child; thus he, like the meditative man pictured in the Etro Collection sacred portrait, appears to see – and share with the viewer – figures imagined in the mind's eye. Arguably, then, here too Moroni has juxtaposed types of vision – the sensible and the imaginative – to signal modalities of reality. Moreover, and as is the case with the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, it is obvious that Moroni drew upon existing imagery in representing envisioned figures.

But if the scene of baptism in the Etro portrait can be said to reflect text-based iconographical convention absorbed by the artist through repeated exposure to a wide variety of works of art, the Madonna and Child in the sacred portrait of the National Gallery of Art re-envisioning a very specific image – an engraving by Albrecht Dürer. As “re-presented” by Moroni, Dürer’s small, black and white representation of the Virgin and Child (the image measures slightly less than 3 x 5 in.) has been significantly amplified. Not only are the enlarged sacred figures too big to fit within the pictorial space, they are vividly colored. As Peter Humfrey rightly claimed, they have metamorphosed into «creatures of flesh and blood who share [the gentleman’s] humanity» as well as that of viewers. There is, however, an additional aspect to this metamorphosis worthy of consideration. In “re-figuring” Dürer’s *Virgin and Child* in this way Moroni evoked not the miracle-working Mary known through the testimonial accounts of apparitional encounters, but rather the miracle-working Virgin known through transformational images: marble sculptures that changed position in response to verbal and physical assault; carved figures that spoke comforting words to passersby; and painted depictions of her that descended from walls, rematerializing as flesh and blood to sweep clean a dilapidated building or chastise the blasphemous who fouled public places with irreverent utterances and actions³⁶. This, perhaps, explains the otherwise inexplicable shadow cast on the back wall.

Two Donors in Adoration before the Madonna and Child and Saint Michael

Having an illusionistic stone ledge as its metaphorical center, the *Two Donors in Adoration before the Madonna and Child and Saint Michael* is arguably the most challenging of Moroni’s known sacred portraits. To understand the painting, one must understand the painter’s use of a pictorial device that was formulaic on Roman funerary monuments and, centuries later, was used by artists on both sides of the Alpine divide to masterful effect³⁷. Moroni clearly recognized the visual value of the illusionistic ledge, having employed it in his *Portrait of Lucrezia Agliardi Vertova* (see fig. 2), dated 1557, and in the Brera *Virgin and Child with Saints* (see fig. 6). In the former, it provides a horizontal surface on which the pious widow rests a prayer book and a vertical plane on which the painter could affix a protracted inscription carved on a fictive tablet. In the latter, it offers the Holy Mother a supportive ledge on which to safely place her Child, thus functioning as a bridge, if you will, to underscore Christ’s identity as the intermediating “Way” that leads the faithful to God the Father³⁸. In the *Two Donors* Moroni again placed an open book on a stone ledge. It is possible that here the prayer book serves

an intermediating function similar to the figure of the Christ Child in the Brera's painting. That said, the supporting parapet in the sacred portrait seems more a barrier than a bridge. How then are we to understand the male donor who addresses those standing or, perhaps, kneeling in front of his portrait? Answers to the question are necessarily subjective but must reflect the figurative relationships Moroni structured between the two donors on one side of the parapet and the assembly of saints he placed on the other.

As with the ruinous wall in the *Gentleman in Contemplation*, the stone ledge in the Virginia sacred double portrait situates the donors, presumably husband and wife, in the company of viewers. Moroni heightened this sense of shared space by suggesting active communication between the pictured man and those who look at his portrait. While this encounter is singular among the sacred portraits, it has parallels within the artist's *oeuvre*. As is the case with the gentleman depicted in the Virginia painting, Leone Cucchi, the represented donor of the *Madonna and Child in Glory, Saint Martin, and an Impoverished Man*, ca. 1575 (Cenate Sotto, church of San Martino), as well as the unnamed patron of *A Gentleman in Contemplation before the Crucifixion with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Sebastian*, ca. 1575 (Bergamo, church of Sant'Alessandro della Croce; fig. 8), look out from the pictorial space enjoining viewers to enter the *envisioned* world of the *visio imaginaria*. While this guiding gesture is not unique to the *Two Donors*, it seems to have added significance, a significance that surely must relate to the woman.

Differences between the male and female donors in the Virginia sacred portrait are striking. The man looks out of the painting, the woman across it. He is enlivened by gesture; she is deadened by the strictness of her pose. His face is vivified by a varied blend of pinks and rose, hers is distinctly pale in comparison. Moreover, and in keeping with a practice visible in the other sacred portraits, Moroni varied his application of paint, giving the man's face tactile dimension while smoothing hers to a flat, inert finish³⁹. Are these differences explained by early modern concepts of gender identity, as has been suggested⁴⁰, and was the decision to present the woman in static profile prompted by a donor's desire to revive a convention that had long been abandoned, or is her stasis conveying something else? Could the *Two Donors* be a portrait that also served a votive function, an image that solicited prayers from the living in order to advance the spiritual journey of the dead as she moved from this world to the next, crossing, if you will, the stone wall that separates one from the other? Is the male donor asking viewers to pray *pro remedio animae* for a deceased wife?

Arguments can be made in favor of and against the supposition. The placement of the woman on the viewer's side of the stone ledge, which is a living space,

disputes the idea. So, too, does the angled position of the book. It is turned so that she, not he, might read its pages. Finally, there is the challenge of the narrow sliver of parapet visible behind the female donor's back. Here, the light gray of the stone ledge beneath the prayer book gives way to a darker, shadowed tone that implicitly identifies the woman as its cause. As the *Gentleman in Adoration* demonstrates, Moroni did not use shadow indiscriminately. Are we then to understand that the woman, like the Madonna and Child in the Washington sacred portrait, is a substantive presence? The question cannot be answered definitively. However, Saint Michael's inclusion in the sacred assembly amid the clouds casts doubt on the likelihood and lends weight to the possibility that the *Two Donors* was a votive *pro remedio animae*.

The positioning of the Madonna, Christ Child, and Saint Michael cannot help but bring to mind the most defining characteristic of votive paintings, namely the mandatory presence of intercessors who invariably are represented among heavenly clouds. But this form of presentation was by no means unique to votive paintings. It is also commonly seen in traditional devotional altarpieces. In fact, here, as in the *Gentleman in Adoration*, Moroni drew upon existing imagery in representing envisioned figures. He reprised the Holy Mother and Child in Moretto da Brescia's altarpiece of the *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints Onuphrius and Anthony Abbot*, ca. 1540-1545, for the church of Sant'Eufemia, Verona, just as he had inserted Albrecht Dürer's engraved Madonna into his own work⁴¹. In the *Gentleman in Adoration*, Dürer's figures are repeated, but in the *Two Donors* Moroni added Saint Michael to Moretto's grouping. Why? Did Michael figure as an onomastic reference, as has been suggested, or was he invested with another function? At the very least, we should recall that Michael was tasked with weighing the souls of the dead, a duty made clear by the scales in his right hand. In addition to Michael's symbolic scales it is notable that the archangel inclines his head towards the Madonna and places his left hand over his heart. The gesture is one of reverence for and deference to the Queen of Heaven, who, among her other responsibilities, served as humanity's advocate before God⁴². If, as I am suggesting, the *Two Donors* memorialized a departed spouse and reminded viewers to pray for her eternal salvation, then it, more than the *Gentleman in Contemplation* and the *Gentleman in Adoration*, underscores the validity of Peter Humfrey's assertion. Moroni combined «religious painting and portraiture to create a new kind of highly personalized image for private devotion»⁴³.

Taking stock of the impressively large number of portraits painted by Moroni and reviewing the critical literature concerning them, Aimee Ng acknowledged two distinct aspects of the artist's full corpus. One was Moroni's production of

«many seemingly formulaic works». The other was his virtuosic enhancement of «the effects of vivacity, immediacy, and apparent truth using close crops, dynamic poses, nuanced facial expressions, and dramatic lighting»⁴⁴. Additionally, she noted that praise of the artist has routinely been focused on his masterful rendering of the tangible world of affluence – its array of textured fabrics, reflective metals, and gems, and its many and varied physiognomies. In fact, scholarship has privileged Moroni's ability to replicate over his capacity to create, or, to put it in the theoretical language of the day, his skilled *ritrarre* (to replicate, accurately reproduce, portray) has been seen to prevail over his inventive *imitare* (to emend, copy creatively). This does not mean the latter has been overlooked. Among Moroni's portraits, *The Tailor* (see fig. 1), which blurs «the boundary between portraiture and genre painting»⁴⁵, and *A Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna and Child*, which repeatedly has been heralded as innovative and described as a «hybrid genre» that «conjoined the likeness of a secular sitter with an image of a religious icon or story», have been singled out⁴⁶. Where, then, does that leave us with respect to the sacred portraits? Do *A Gentleman in Contemplation of the Baptism of Christ*, *A Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna and Child*, and *Two Donors in Adoration before the Madonna and Child and Saint Michael* constitute a new and coherent category of painting? And when considered in light of one another, do these images – seeming anomalies among the dozens of portraits painted by Moroni – reveal a level of creativity deserving of greater scholarly attention?

An answer, at least a tentative one, is implicit in the literature that focuses on *Il Tagliapanni* and the *Gentleman in Adoration*. In discussing both works, scholars have recognized synthesis – a blurring of boundaries, an unprecedented conjoining of types – as the distinguishing characteristic: a blending of portraiture and genre painting in the case of *Il Tagliapanni*; a melding of portraiture and devotional image in that of the *Gentleman in Adoration*. Although both the *Gentleman in Contemplation* and *Two Donors* merged portraiture and devotional painting to different effect, they too reveal Moroni's capacity to create. Indeed, the differences between the sacred portraits underscores the artist's *invenzione*, his skill in balancing *ritrarre* and *imitare*, a deft ability to at once record the ambient world of material things and the immaterial world of faith.

1 A. Ng, *Moroni and the Invention of Portraiture*, in Moroni. *The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture*, exh. cat., New York 2019, ed. by A. Ng, S. Facchinetti, A. Galansino, New York, 2019, pp. 31-57, esp. p. 32. According to Ng, Moroni's production of portraits, which includes attributed works, stands at «nearly one hundred twenty-five». As she notes, that number

is «rough» and might well change with Simone Facchinetti's forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* on Moroni. The «document-like» quality of Moroni's portraits was observed by Roberto Longhi; R. Longhi, *Dal Moroni al Ceruti*, in «Paragone», 41, 1953, pp. 18-36, esp. p. 21; reprinted in *id.*, *Studi e Ricerche sul Sei e Settecento (1929-1970)*, Firenze, 1991, pp. 1-16, esp. p. 5. Longhi encapsulated Moroni's ability as a «fedeltà al documento umano», adding that his portraits are «so true, so simple, so document-like that they even convey to us the certainty of having known» the sitter. I am indebted to Aimee Ng for her insightful critical reading of earlier versions of this essay.

- 2 For the most recent literature and an extensive bibliography on *Portrait of a Tailor* (London, The National Gallery) and that of *Lucrezia Agliardi Vertova* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), see S. Facchinetti, A. Galansino, *Il Tagliapanni*, in *Moroni*, cit., pp. 144-149, cat. 23; pp. 90-95, cat. 10 (Vertova); and for the sacred portraits in the order cited: pp. 31-57, esp. pp. 31-36; pp. 60-65, cat. 1; pp. 68-71, cat. 3; pp. 76-79, cat. 6. Because scale is a factor worthy of consideration, the dimensions of the sacred portraits are: *Gentleman in Adoration* (59.7 x 64.8 cm); *Gentleman in Contemplation* (104 x 113 cm); and *Two Donors* (89.5 x 97.8 cm). A fragment in the University Art Museum, Princeton, which preserves an image of a bearded man with his hands clasped in prayer, suggests there was at least a fourth image in this group.
- 3 M. Gregori, *Giovann Battista Moroni: tutte le opere*, Bergamo, 1979, p. 312. In her catalogue entry on the *Gentleman in Adoration* (cat. 209, pp. 311-312) Gregori states, «Questi dipinti moroniani – ci riferiamo anche alle *Coppia di devoti in preghiera davanti alla Madonna col Bambino e S. Michele*, al *Devoto in contemplazione del Battesimo di Cristo* e al *Cristo crocifisso e i santi Giovanni Battista e Sebastiano con donatore* – rappresentano un'importante innovazione che privilegia il ritratto e conferisce carattere soggettivo al rapporto con l'immagine sacra». Although Moroni's *A Man in Contemplation before the Crucifixion with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Sebastian*, ca. 1575, Bergamo, church of Sant'Alessandro della Croce (see fig. 8), has similarities with the sacred portraits, most notably, the gesture of the donor with that of the male donor in the Virginia Museum painting, it cannot be counted among the sacred portraits. Not only does the picture's size imply preclusion, so does the composition. In representing the donor gesturing toward an image of paradigmatic, saintly piety as opposed to a biblical narrative, as in *Gentleman in Contemplation*, Moroni laid obvious stress on the act of devotion.
- 4 J. Woods-Marsden, *The sitter as "guest": reception of the portrait in the Renaissance*, in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, ed. by M. Israëls, L.A. Waldman, Firenze-Milano, 2013, vol. 1, pp. 152-158, esp. pp. 158, 153, respectively. Although focused on the *Gentleman in Adoration*, Woods-Marsden added, «Examples of this type include Moroni's *Portrait of a Man and Woman with the Virgin and Child and Saint Michael* (Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), and the *Portrait of a Man with the Baptism of Christ* (Milan, Private Collection)», which is now in the Etro Collection (Milan).
- 5 P. Humfrey, J. Bridgeman *Giovanni Battista Moroni, Renaissance Portraitist*, exh. cat., Fort Worth 2000, ed. by P. Humfrey et al., Fort Worth, Tex., 2000, p. 61, cat. 4.
- 6 Ng, *Moroni and the Invention of Portraiture*, cit., p. 34.
- 7 The literature on Moroni includes acknowledgments of the influence Northern European art had on the artist, including, as discussed below, his appropriation of Dürer's engraving in the *Gentleman in Adoration*, his obvious awareness of fifteenth-century Flemish diptychs and developments in *trompe l'oeil* and landscape. It is not the aim of this paper to examine

that influence nor, more significantly, is it to discuss that exerted by Lorenzo Lotto, who, as Andrea Bayer, Deputy Director for Collections and Administration at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, noted in a discussion at the Frick Collection on 8 April 2019, Moroni «is absolutely haunted by the works of Lotto from the twenties that were in Brescia».

- 8 See note 2.
- 9 Humfrey, Bridgeman, *Giovanni Battista Moroni*, cit., pp. 61-62, cat. 4; Woods-Marsden, *The sitter as "guest"*, cit., p. 153; *Moroni*, cit., p. 61.
- 10 Humfrey, Bridgeman, *Giovanni Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 62, cat. 4.
- 11 I extend my thanks to Keith Christiansen, Chair, European Paintings Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, who kindly discussed the sacred portraits with me as we stood in front of all three at the Frick Collection's exhibition on the afternoon of 8 April 2019. The phrase «modalities of realities» must be credited to him.
- 12 D. Zardin, *La forza pacifica degli "affetti". Giovan Battista Moroni e la scena religiosa lombarda del Cinquecento*, in *Giovan Battista Moroni. Lo sguardo sulla realtà 1560-1579*, exh. cat., Bergamo 2004-2005, ed. by S. Facchinetti, Milano, 2004, pp. 63-85, esp. p. 66. Giampiero Tiraboschi discusses the climate of reform in which Moroni and his influential teacher, Moretto, worked; see G. Tiraboschi, *Giovan Battista Moroni, l'uomo e l'artista*, Albino-Bergamo, 2016.
- 13 A. Brundin, M. Treherne, *Introduction*, in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, conf. proc., Leeds 2007, ed. by A. Brundin, M. Treherne, Aldershot, 2009, pp. 1-8, see esp. pp. 2-3.
- 14 Carlo Borromeo's efforts were especially intense with his initiation of not less than 6 provincial councils, 11 diocesan synods, and 15 minor Northern Italian assemblies, the proceedings of which were circulated in C. Borromeo, *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Brixiae, 1603. See Stefano d'Amico, *Spanish Milan. A City within the Empire, 1535-1706*, New York, 2012, p. 101. Milan is roughly 45 km from Bergamo.
- 15 For the cited decrees, see *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. and intro. by H.J. Schroeder, Rockford, Ill., 1978, pp. 152-154, 218-220. Subsequent councils (Congregatio Sacri Concilii) convened at Cambrai (1565), Milan (1565-1576), and Malines (1607). In issuing this caution and without refuting the impact of the first provincial synod of Milan, 1565, I go against the tendency to discuss the religious climate of reform in Brescia around the 1540s as similar to the revitalization of spirituality in the wake of Trent. See, for example, Tiraboschi, *Giovan Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 28.
- 16 The bull of confirmation, *Benedictus Deus*, was published on 30 June 1564, six months after Pope Pius IV's verbal approval, universally and without reservations. See G. Alberigo, *From the Council of Trent to "Tridentism"*, trans. by E. Michelson, in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. by R.F. Bulman, F.J. Parrella, J. Raitt, Oxford, 2006, pp. 19-38, esp. p. 20.
- 17 *Ivi*, pp. 21-22.
- 18 Moroni's altarpiece of the *Madonna and Child in Glory with the Doctors of the Church*, ca. 1551, was painted for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, the site of the Council's assembly. For payments concerning the altarpiece, see the timeline in *Moroni*, cit., p. 212. The portraits of *Gian Ludovico Madruzzo* (Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago) and *Gian Federico Madruzzo* (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) are dated ca. 1551-1552.
- 19 Gregori was the first to make the connection, which has universal acceptance. See M. Gregori, *Note storiche sulla Lombardia tra Cinque e Seicento*, in G.A. Dell'Acqua et al., *Il*

Seicento Lombardo, Saggi introduttivi, exh. cat., Milan 1973, pp. 19-46, esp. p. 32. Most recently, see Moroni, cit., pp. 68-71, cat. 3. Although scholarship frequently states that an Italian translation of *Spiritual Exercises* was circulating in Bergamo by 1551, «in fact, the earliest known Italian translation of the text was published in Milan in 1587, though the question remains disputed»; *ivi*, p. 81, cat. 7.

- 20 The subject was prescribed for the fifth day of the Second Week in Loyola's course of spiritual meditation. The moment pictured here visualizes Matthew 3:16. With varying degrees of detail but with parallel phrasing, Christ's baptism is found in each of the Gospels: Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; and John 1:26-34. The Second Week of Loyola's *Exercises*, which is the longest of the so-called "weeks" of prescribed prayer, includes meditations on the Incarnation and the public ministry of Jesus as well as some urging the exercitant to heed Christ's call with appropriate behaviors. Although unrelated to Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, Lorenzo Lotto's *Portrait of Fra Gregorio Belo de Vicenza*, ca. 1547 (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) deserves consideration in this context. Portrayed with an open book in his left hand and with his right clenched into a fist in order that he might pound his chest in penitence, Fra Gregorio confronts the viewer with forceful directness. With his eyes fixed on the spectator, the *frate* visualizes with his mind's eye the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John the Evangelist lamenting Christ on the Cross, a vignette Lotto represented in the upper left of the canvas. Although influenced by Lotto, Moroni in all likelihood did not know this work, since payments suggest it was painted in Venice. Striking, however, is the juxtapositions of types of discernment visualized by both Moroni and Lotto. For the *Portrait of Fra Gregorio Belo de Vicenza*, see P. Humfrey, *The Later Works in Venice and the Marches*, in Lorenzo Lotto. *Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance*, exh. cat., Washington, D.C. 1997-1998, ed. by D.A. Brown, P. Humfrey, M. Lucco, Washington, D.C.-New Haven, 1997, pp. 157-219, esp. pp. 216-217, cat. 50.
- 21 The idea is rooted in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, bk. II, chap. xix, lines 104a-110a: «Thus sense perception gives rise to memory, as we hold; and repeated memories of the same thing give rise to experience. [...] And experience, that is the universal when established as a whole in the soul [...] provides the starting point of art and science: art in the world of process and science in the world of facts». In an explication of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Augustine put forth his classic formulation of the way in which the sensible surfaces of things seen facilitates a contemplation of divine things distinguishing three types of vision; sensible, intellective, and imaginative; see *Oeuvres de Saint Augustine. De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, vol. 49, 7e série, VIII-XII, Exégèse. *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres*, Paris, 1970, esp. bk. XII, chap. vi. David Summers has defined Augustine's concept of vision types as follows: «The first apprehended presents corporeal things; the second, absent corporeal things; and the last, intelligible things without images», which «was essential to the superiority of spiritual over corporeal sense»; see D. Summers, *The Judgment of Sense. Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 112-114. Later, ca. 1561-1563, Moroni would reference the background scene in his altarpiece of the *Baptism of Christ* for the church of Santi Sette Fratelli Martiri, Rome.
- 22 For the influence of Augustine's tripartite scheme of vision during the early modern era, see M.J. Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: Art and Philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo*, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 125-147.
- 23 For David Young Kim's provocative lecture «Moroni's Gray Grounds» (8 May 2019), see <https://www.frick.org/interact/david_young_kim_moroni_gray_grounds>. His principal

focus was on the relationship Moroni forged between architectural elements and the subjects he painted.

- 24 I extend thanks to Maria Loh for drawing my attention to this interesting detail.
- 25 Humfrey, Bridgeman, *Giovanni Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 61, cat. 4.
- 26 M.A. Morse, *Creating sacred space: the religious visual culture of the Renaissance Venetian casa*, in «Renaissance Studies», 21, 2, 2007, pp. 151-184, esp. pp. 156-157, 169; p. 163 for religious objects other than paintings listed in sixteenth-century inventories; and pp. 174-175 for domestic altars in the wake of Trent.
- 27 J.W. O'Malley, S.J., *The Jesuits: A History from Ignatius to the Present*, London, 2017, p. 10.
- 28 Humfrey, Bridgeman, *Giovanni Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 62, cat. 4.
- 29 By no means unusual, the *Madonna del Fonte* of the town of Caravaggio, just south of Bergamo, can stand as an example. According to her testimony, Gianetta, a middle-aged woman of the area, was walking alone in a field when she noticed a stately woman dressed in blue coming towards her on 26 May 1432. When they were face-to-face, the apparitional Madonna placed her hand on Gianetta's shoulder, then directed her to speak of the encounter to everyone she met. For the foundational story and the site's subsequent efficacy, see P. Morigia, *Historia & origine della famosa Fontana della Madonna di Caravaggio*, Brescia, 1618.
- 30 *Constitutiones et edicta observanda in sancta brixienſi ecclesia et eius tota dioecesi noviter [...] promulgata*, 1545, cited in *Lo straordinario e il quotidiano. Ex voto, santuario, religione popolare nel Bresciano*, ed. by A. Turchini, Brescia, 1980, p. 26, note 7.
- 31 *Reformatio constitutionum peracta in synodo dioecesana anni 1668*, cited in *ivi*, p. 27, note 10.
- 32 The point is made especially clear with respect to an object's materiality in H. van der Velden, *The Donor's Image. Gerard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold*, Turnhout, 2000, pp. 247-285. For an insightful case study, see T. McCall, *Bramante's coro finto, Ex-votos, and the Cult Practice in Sforza Milan*, in «Renaissance Quarterly», 72, 2019, pp. 1-53.
- 33 For a 1585 description of a votive display in Brescia, see F.H. Jacobs, *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 36.
- 34 Several examples in different mediums (silver casts and paintings) can be found in *Il 'Libro dei Miracoli' della Madonna di Tirano*, ed. by S. Masa, Sondrio, 2004, pp. 72, 107, 118.
- 35 M. de Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage en Italie in Oeuvres complètes*, Bruges, 1962, p. 1248.
- 36 Perhaps the best-known example is Santa Maria delle Carceri of Prato, an image that detached itself from the walls of a ruined prison, placed her child on the ground, then proceeded to tidy-up the place. For the site's foundational story and rich history, see R. Maniura, *Art and Miracle in Renaissance Tuscany*, Cambridge, 2018, pp. 95-117.
- 37 For an interesting proposal of the inverted use of the prototype, see N.T. De Grummond, *VV and Related Inscriptions in Giorgione, Titian, and Dürer*, in «The Art Bulletin», 57, 3, 1975, pp. 346-356. It has been suggested that in adopting the parapet as a visual device, «Italian painters were almost certainly quoting ancient predecessors»; see R. Goffen, *Crossing the Alps: Portraiture in Renaissance Venice*, in *Renaissance Venice and the North. Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*, ed. by B. Aikema, B.L. Brown, New York, 1999, pp. 114-131, esp. pp. 122-123. That said, Goffen also noted rightly, «Jan van Eyck was among the earliest masters to exploit the parapet's illusionism» in making it «the point (or plane) of the beholder's greatest proximity to the subject and a barrier between them».

Relevant to any study of Moroni, and with pointed reference to his *Portrait of a Lay Brother with a Fictive Frame*, ca. 1557 (Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum), is Goffen's further observation: «Petrus Christus transformed the lower edge of the fictive frame of his *Portrait of a Carthusian* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) into a narrow parapet» on which he painted a fly, thereby insisting on the actuality of the ledge.

- 38 John 14:6: «I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through me».
- 39 There has been no intervention by restorers to explain this.
- 40 Y. Le Gall, *L'anziana: iconographie de la vieillesse féminine dans l'Italie de la Contro-réforme*, Limoges, 2016, pp. 293-295. Considering Moroni's many portraits of self-possessed women, ladies who do not shrink from steady-eyed engagement with viewers, this seems a forced rationalization.
- 41 *Moroni*, cit., p. 76, cat. 6, notes that Moroni's quotation of his master was observed by Barbara Maria Savy in 2009.
- 42 See, for example, P. Morigia, *Santuario della città e diocesi di Milano, nel qual si contiene il numero, e nome de tutti corpi Santi, teste, e reliquie, che sono in tutte la Chiesa della città [...] di Milano*, Milano, 1603, p. 5, who describes the Virgin Mary as «avvocata e protettrice fedelissima».
- 43 Humfrey, Bridgeman, *Giovanni Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 61, cat. 4.
- 44 Ng, *Moroni and the Invention of Portraiture*, cit., p. 32.
- 45 *Ivi*, p. 33.
- 46 Gregori, *Giovan Battista Moroni*, cit., p. 312; Woods-Marsden, *The sitter as "guest"*, cit., p. 153.



Fig. 1: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *The Tailor (Il Tagliapanni)*, ca. 1570, oil on canvas, 99.5 x 77 cm.
London, The National Gallery. Photo: National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 2: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Lucretia Agliardi Vertova*, dated 1557, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 68.6 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Theodore M. Davis Collection, 1915. Photo: Public Domain.



Fig. 3: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna and Child*, ca. 1555, oil on canvas, 59.7 x 64.8 cm. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1939.1.1. Photo: Public Doman.



Fig. 4: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Gentleman in Contemplation of the Baptism of Christ*, mid-1550s, oil on canvas, 104 x 113 cm. Milan, Etro Collection.
Photo courtesy of the Etro Collection.



Fig. 5: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Two Donors in Adoration before the Madonna and Child and Saint Michael*, ca. 1557-1560, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 97.8 cm. Richmond, Virginia, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund.
Photo: Creative Commons CC-BY-NC.



Fig. 6: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Francis and a Donor*, ca. 1548-1550, oil on canvas, 102 x 110 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera.
Photo: Mondadori Portfolio / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 7: Albrecht Dürer, *Madonna and Child on a Crescent Moon with a Starry Crown and Scepter*, dated 1516, engraving, 11.6 x 7.4 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1919. Photo: Public Domain.



Fig. 8: Giovanni Battista Moroni, *A Man in Contemplation before the Crucifixion with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Sebastian*, ca. 1575, oil on canvas, 160 x 100 cm. Bergamo, church of Sant'Alessandro della Croce.
Photo: Moroni. *The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture*, exh. cat., New York 2019, ed. by A. Ng, S. Facchinetti, A. Galansino, New York, 2019, p. 63.