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Female self-portraiture in early modern Bologna

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This essay examines female self-portraiture in Bologna during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, focusing in particular on the seventeenth century, and considering these works in relation to self-portraits by male contemporaries. Bologna became a centre for women artists, culminating during the seventeenth century, when at least twenty-two female artists were active in the city. It is also the only Italian city with extant self-portraits by five different women artists during 1577–1678, although a forty-year gap, between 1614 and the 1650s, interrupts an otherwise continuous tradition. The richest and most concentrated group of self-portraits by Bolognese women dates from 1658 to 1678, a period that yielded nine painted and drawn self-portraits by Elisabetta Sirani and two of her female pupils. This uniquely substantial and diverse body of material provides an anomalous opportunity for reflection on issues of gender in artistic self-fashioning, testifying to the professional achievements of Bolognese women and to some key aspects of Bolognese culture that promoted their accomplishments.

Both male and female self-portraiture will be considered and related to the context of early modern Bologna. The increased incidence of self-portraiture by men and women in Bologna may be related to several factors, including the new emphasis on the executive power of the will; the emergence of art collectors interested in self-portraiture; changes in the social status of the artist; and the increased secularism of painting for private patrons, who were influenced by Bologna's humanistic culture.

For women artists, several other factors were influential in promoting the incidence and variety of female self-portraiture. One key phenomenon was the patriotic pride of many Bolognese citizens in the city's women and their exceptional accomplishments. For Malvasia, the biographer of the Bolognese artists writing in 1678, Bologna's exceptional group of female artists constituted one of the city's most notable accomplishments.[1] This view co-existed, paradoxically, with the early modern notion of female artists as oxymoronic exceptions to the natural female incapacity for creativity, making them curiosities that might be possessed by enterprising collectors in the form of

[1] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice, Vite de' pittori bolognesi*, ed. G. P. Zanotti (Bologna, 1678 and 1841), II, 385.

self-portraits. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the example of Lavinia Fontana as a successful professional artist in the public sector provided an important precedent for women's participation in a profession that had previously been dominated by men. The example of Caterina Vigri, a local nun-painter, after her beatification in 1592, was crucial in shaping Bolognese views of women artists and their self-imagery. During the seventeenth century, Bolognese attitudes towards female sanctity and local traditions for engraved depictions of religious women influenced the evolution of historiated self-portraits by women artists, which were also impacted by the strongly Marian orientation of Seicento Bologna. The increasing variety in self-portrait types, including images of artists as gentlemen/women, depictions that allude to artistic vocation, and historiated portraits, was shaped by all these aspects of Bolognese culture.

Self-portraits from early modern Italy provide a fascinating interpretive challenge to scholars. Autonomous artistic self-portrait paintings first appeared in Italy around 1500,[2] and they became increasingly common during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since most self-portraits from this period were evidently neither commissioned nor documented, they often pose problems of identification and dating. Nevertheless, they can provide unique insights into artists' self-images and aspirations, reflecting what Stephen Greenblatt has termed 'a new stress on the executive power of the will'.[3] The proliferation of artistic self-portraits during the early modern period in Italy reflects changes in the social status of the artist, the increasing secularization of art, changes in artistic patronage, and alterations in the public personas of women artists.

Female self-portraiture poses particular interpretive challenges. The increasing proliferation of female self-portraiture in Italy from roughly 1550 to 1700, beginning with Sofonisba Anguissola during the mid-sixteenth century, provides evidence of women's unprecedented success in the artistic sector. Nevertheless, excessive identification of self-portraits by women can eliminate or obscure female agency, transforming women artists from active subjects to passive objects of the gaze.

Artemisia Gentileschi provides a case in point: in contrast to her father Orazio, by whom no self-portraits are known,[4] some three-quarters of Artemisia Gentileschi's works have been identified as images of the artist. It strains the limits of plausibility to suppose that Artemisia would have relied so consistently upon herself as a model if her father and teacher never employed such a procedure, suggesting that art historians have too readily transmuted

[2] Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven and London, 1998), 111 and 117 suggested that Raphael and Giorgione produced the earliest autonomous Italian self-portrait paintings.

[3] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London, 1980), 1.

[4] See R. Ward Bissell, *Orazio Gentileschi and the Poetic Tradition in Caravaggesque Painting* (University Park, 1981).

women's art into autobiography. Recent suggestions that Artemisia portrayed herself as a courtesan, equipped with a lute and revealing decolletage,[5] militate against the notion that Artemisia was a professional artist who wished to be taken seriously by her male colleagues and patrons. The idea of such self-deprecating self-fashioning is contradicted by a considerable body of evidence from Artemisia's extant letters and works,[6] and we run the risk of profoundly misunderstanding the artist, in pursuing such a line of interpretation. The unsettling example of Artemisia Gentileschi points up the importance of considering questions of artistic intention, reception, and cultural context before identifying images of male or female artists as self-portraits, while examining the revolution in artistic self-portraiture that occurred in early modern Italy.

The tendency to interpret women's art too autobiographically touches Bologna as well. In 1550, in the first edition of his *Lives*, Giorgio Vasari became the first writer to identify a self-portrait by a Bolognese woman artist. In his biography of Properzia de' Rossi, Vasari claimed that her marble relief of *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, made for a portal of San Petronio in 1525–6, included a self-portrait as Potiphar's wife. In Vasari's account, de' Rossi was attempting to exorcise, through this sculptural means, her frustration from her unrequited passion for a young man.[7] Vasari's explanation of the artist's personal agenda seems inconsistent with the public venue of the relief, on the portal of a basilica in Bologna's main square. Moreover, an examination of the generalized, classical, and distinctly unportrait-like figures in Properzia's relief (Fig. 1) supplies little support for Vasari's story, which has the unmistakable flavour of a romanticized topos, rather than a factual report.[8] As with the identification of Artemisia Gentileschi's alleged self-portrait as an erotic courtesan, this interpretation seems inconsistent with an historical record that testifies to the professional aspirations of the artist in question. As we shall see, when Bolognese women depicted themselves in historiated self-portraits,

[5] The so-called *Self-Portrait as a Lute Player* (Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis) was called a self-portrait by Sotheby's (London, 9 July 1998, lot 68). It has been connected with a painting described in a 1638 inventory as a self-portrait of Artemisia playing a lute. See Keith Christiansen and Judith Mann, *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi* (New Haven and London, 2001), no. 57. However, as Elizabeth Cropper remarked (Artemisia symposium, St Louis Art Museum, 13–14 September 2002), this erotic self-presentation seems unlikely, a view arguably supported by Mann's comments on the problems with identifying Artemisia's self-portraits.

[6] See the twenty-eight letters written by Artemisia Gentileschi in Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, 1989), 373–401 and the letter to Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici in R. Ward Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art* (University Park, 1999), 164–5.

[7] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, Gaetano Milanesi ed. (Florence, 1880), v, 76. The story was not repeated by Properzia's early Bolognese biographers, including Antonio di Paolo Masini, *Bologna Perlustrata* (Bologna, 1650), 734; and Marcello Oretti, *Notizie dei professori del dissegno cioè pittori scultori ed architetti bolognesi e de forestieri di sua scuola raccolte da Marcello Oretti bolognese*, unpublished manuscript in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna (n.d.), B 124, fol. 249.

[8] Vasari's proclivity for unreliable autobiographical interpretations was discussed by Fredrika H. Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance 'Virtuosa': Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge and New York, 1997), 68–72.

Fig. 1 Properzia de' Rossi, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (sculpture), 1525–6 (Museo di San Petronio, Bologna)

those images conveyed a sense of virtue and accomplishment, positive features intended to embellish a professional woman's public presentation of self.

The earliest known Bolognese artist to depict himself at least twice in autonomous painted self-portraits was Bartolomeo Passarotti (1529–92). The two self-portrait paintings that have been convincingly ascribed to Passarotti are typical of most Italian sixteenth-century self-portraits, in that they portray the artist as a gentleman, without any identifying tools of his trade.[9] As Woods-Marsden has argued, the long disinclination to portray manual execution in artistic creation, and the emphasis on nobility rather than labour, should be understood as part of the struggle to classify painting as a 'liberal' art. This struggle had been ongoing in Italy since the early fifteenth century, when Alberti argued that the intellectual *istoria* was the greatest work of the painter.[10] In Bologna, for an artist of Passarotti's generation, there was

[9] A third self-portrait painting ascribed to Passarotti, in the Uffizi, does not resemble the others and is too painterly to be Passarotti's work. Angela Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti Pittore (1529–1592)* (Rimini, 1990), no. 53.

[10] Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Rome and Bari, 1975), paragraph 33.

little official recognition of intellectual status for painting, since there was no autonomous Bolognese painter's guild during the artist's lifetime. The Bolognese painter's guild was separated from the *Arte de' Bombasari* only in 1598, six years after Passarotti's death. Most Bolognese painters were slow to relinquish the emphasis on nobility rather than labour in their painted self-portraits for a good half-century after this landmark event of recognition for painters in the city.

The social aspirations expressed in Passarotti's self-portraits were linked to his intellectual undertakings. He was a pioneer in the struggle to elevate the social and intellectual status of the artist in Bologna, and created a teaching manual on anatomy that was intended to teach the art of *disegno* and to demonstrate how to incorporate anatomical study into one's work.[11] Passarotti's intellectual orientation was also expressed in his avid collecting of both antique and contemporary works. Malvasia noted the high quality of these art works, which included:

> . . . i più singolari disegni de' più valentuomini, . . . tutte le stampe più rinomate, quantità di romani rilievi, infinità d'antiche medaglie, numerosità di libri singolari in ogni professione, mostri secchi e conservati, animali, frutta ed altre cose impietrite, idoletti, camei, gioie e simili curiosità . . .

Later, in Malvasia's account of the Carracci's art academy, founded in the early 1580s, he noted that the Carracci assembled casts of Roman sculptures and antique medals, which were useful and well chosen, although not equal, as the biographer reluctantly admits, to Passarotti's collection.[12] Passarotti's collecting, intellectual interests, and approach to self-portraiture all confirm his desire to elevate the artist from craftsman to gentleman.

Passarotti's self-portrait paintings convey his concern with social status. The earliest, of *c.* 1580–2 (Fig. 2),[13] is particularly striking in this respect. It depicts the artist in elegant, dark clothing, holding a sword – the attribute of an aristocrat, not an artisan. He wears a ring and holds gloves – further aristocratic accoutrements – in his right hand, presenting himself as a nobleman from the leisure classes, not a working artist.[14] Such portrayals of the artist as gentleman, without allusion to his vocation, are typical of most sixteenth-century Italian self-portraits.[15]

[11] Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, ed. Mario Rosci (Venice, 1584 and Milan, 1967), 566.

[12] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 378.

[13] Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti*, no. 81.

[14] The later self-portrait, of *c.* 1590 (Collezioni d'Arte della Cassa di Risparmio, Bologna), is a small oval with a striking depiction of the artist's lined and distinguished face, set off by a white collar and dark tunic. See Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti*, no. 118.

[15] These works derive from prototypes by Raphael and Titian. Two examples attributed to Raphael, in Hampton Court (*c.* 1505–and the Uffizi (*c.* 1520), are illustrated in Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, figs 77 and 81. Titian's self-portrait in Berlin from the early 1550s (fig. 103) represents the height of this trend, with the artist splendidly dressed in fur, rich clothing, and gold chain.

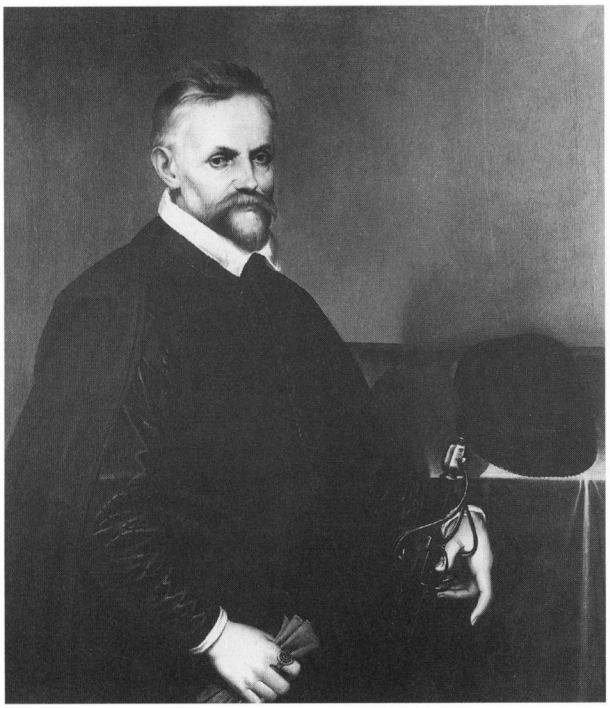

Fig. 2 Bartolomeo Passarotti, *Self-Portrait*, *c.* 1580–2 (formerly Newhouse Galleries, New York)

Due above all to the struggle of artists to elevate their social and intellectual status, and to establish painting as one of the liberal arts, it is less common to find sixteenth-century artistic self-portraits that explicitly identify their subjects' artistic vocations. A small group of exceptions by Baccio Bandinelli, Titian, Alessandro Allori, Luca Cambiaso, Palma Giovane, and Annibale Carracci depict male artists with palette, brushes, drawings, or mahlstick.[16] Sofonisba Anguissola also produced at least two painted self-portraits during the 1550s that refer explicitly to her artistic vocation. In one, she is painting an image of the Madonna and Child on an easel, a formula that may suggest her association with St Luke; in the other, she portrays herself as a portrait being painted by her teacher Bernardino Campi.[17]

[16] On Bandinelli's half-dozen self-portraits in various media, see Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 139 and plate 93. The first known self-portrait with the artist at an easel was Katharina van Hemessen's *Self-Portrait* of 1548 (plate 148), a work probably unknown to Italian artists. Giovanni Britto's woodcut after a self-portrait by Titian of 1550, showing the artist drawing, may be the first instance of an Italian artist portraying himself labouring at his art, soon followed by Alessandro Allori and Sofonisba Anguissola (225–40).

[17] Woods-Marsden argued that Sofonisba's *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (Muzeum Zamek, Lancut, late 1550s) does not allude to St Luke, since the artist is the wrong gender and lacks Luke's ox. On Anguissola's *Self-Portrait as a Portrait Being Created by Bernardino Campi* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, *c.* 1559), see Mary Garrard, 'Here's looking at me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the problem of the woman artist', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47 (1994), 556–622.

Fig. 3 Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait* (drawing), *c.* 1585 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum)

In Bologna, few artistic self-portraits before 1650 allude to artistic labour. This must be attributable particularly to the low social status of painters in the city before the development of a separate guild for painters in 1598, and the consequent desire of painters to elevate their social and intellectual status in self-portraits.[18] An exception to this disinclination to allude to manual labour is provided by Annibale Carracci, who produced three such works. A self-portrait drawing (Fig. 3) from the early 1580s depicts the artist holding a pen or brush and tablet.[19] Annibale included skeletons and fish in the enframement, playfully alluding to the ephemerality of both the artist and

[18] Documents pertaining to the *Arte de' pittori*, which succeeded the *Arte de' Bombasari* that included the painters through 1597, are in the Archivio di Stato Bologna and in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna. This material has been published by various authors, beginning with F. Malaguzzi Valeri, 'L'arte dei pittori a Bologna nel secolo XVI', *Archivio storico dell'arte* (1897), 309–14. See, most recently, Gail Feigenbaum, 'Per una storia istituzionale dell'arte bolognese, 1399–1650: nuovi documenti sulla corporazione dei pittori, i suoi membri, le sue cariche e sull'accademia dei Carracci', in *Il restauro del Nettuno, la statua di Gregorio XIII e la sistemazione di Piazza Maggiore nel cinquecento* (Bologna, 1999), 353–77.

[19] J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California, inv. no. 96.GA.323, in pen and brown ink, 134 × 104 mm. Nicholas Turner, 'The Gaburri/Rogers series of drawn self-portraits and portraits of artists', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 5 (1993), 204–5. As Turner observed, the drawing's appearance suggests that it was the design for an engraving, but no such print survives.

his works. Although this image, as a drawing, is admittedly a private, rather than a public, work, its elaborate frame suggests that it was a design for an engraving destined for the public sector.

Two painted self-portraits by Annibale also refer to his vocation. A painting of *c.* 1585 shows the artist, accompanied by three other figures, holding his palette before an easel (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan).[20] The casual cropping of canvas and figures, the immediacy of the artist's figure close to the picture plane, and the straightforward depiction of Annibale's stocky features and broad nose seem deliberate assertions of the unidealized, quotidian labour of painting. In a second self-portrait painting of about 1600 (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg), Annibale portrayed himself as a portrait on the canvas on an easel.[21] Like Sofonisba Anguissola some fifty years earlier, Annibale collapsed the dichotomy between the artist as subject and object, although without providing an alternative subject-painter as Anguissola had done. Instead, the viewer is confronted directly by Annibale's penetrating gaze, close to the picture plane and with no intervening obstacles between viewer and artist.

Apart from these examples by Annibale, only five male Bolognese self-portrait paintings before 1650 allude to artistic vocation.[22] Agostino Carracci's *Self-Portrait Painting his Brother Annibale* (Stonor collection, London) is contemporary with Annibale's self-portrait of *c.* 1600.[23] A painted copy after a self-portrait of Ludovico Carracci (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) shows the artist holding a palette and brush.[24] A picture by an anonymous artist of the Carracci school (Galleria Davia Bargellini, Bologna) depicts a young artist holding a brush and painted canvas. Both Simone Cantarini (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome, *c.* 1630) and Giacomo Cavedone (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, after 1630) referenced their vocation with drawings: Cantarini draws on a small tablet; and Cavedone holds a drawing in his right hand.[25]

[20] See Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting around 1590* (London and New York, 1971), II, 13, no. 25 and Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 241–3. Giovanna Perini, 'L'effigie di Ludovico: Contributo all'iconografia del Carracci maggiore', *Accademia Clementina: Atti e Memorie*, 32 (1993), 369–70 suggested that the Brera self-portrait was by Ludovico.

[21] This painting (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) was not mentioned in the early literature but provided the source for Ottavio Leoni's drawing of Annibale (Biblioteca Marucelliana, Florence). Posner dated the painting *c.* 1604 (*Annibale Carracci*, I, 22 and II, 65–6, no. 143). A work in the Uffizi may be a studio replica, but see Andrea Emiliani *et al.*, *Bologna 1584: Gli esordi dei Carracci e gli affreschi di Palazzo Fava* (Bologna, 1984), 222–3, no. 158.

[22] This group does not include Guercino's self-portrait holding a palette and brushes, of *c.* 1624–6 (New York, Richard L. Feigen & Company), since Guercino was neither Bolognese nor living in Bologna at this date. See Sir Denis Mahon *et al.*, *Giovanni Francesco Barbieri: Il Guercino 1591–1666* (Bologna, 1991), no. 62.

[23] See T. Mullaly, 'A self-portrait of Agostino Carracci painting his brother Annibale', *Burlington Magazine*, 93 (1951), 88.

[24] Perini, 'L'effigie di Ludovico', fig. 3 suggested that the picture was a copy of a lost original by Ludovico, possibly by Ludovico's student Bertusio.

[25] On the Cantarini, see Andrea Emiliani *et al.*, *Simone Cantarini detto il Pesarese 1612–1648* (Milan, 1997), 83, no. I.8. On the Cavedone, see Emilio Negro, Nicosetta Roio, and Carlo Giovannini, *Giacomo Cavedone 1577–1660* (Modena, 1996), 152–3, no. 107.

Despite Annibale's strong influence in Bologna, most Bolognese artists before 1650 ignored the examples of his Getty, Brera, and Hermitage self-portraits in favour of the traditional emphasis on gentlemanly status without reference to labour. A self-portrait painting attributed to Agostino Carracci (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) depicts the artist in an elaborate white ruff and voluminous black jacket, while gesturing affectedly with his right hand, which catches the light as it motions towards the viewer.[26] Agostino's painting influenced self-portraits by Tiburzio and Ventura Passarotti, in which the artists are dressed similarly in black with a white ruff and also gesture rhetorically, although Ventura's gesture indicates a dog, a frequent accessory in portraits of gentlemen.[27] Self-portraits as gentlemen without reference to artistic labour ascribed to Ludovico Carracci, Antonio Carracci, and Francesco Carracci, although not autograph, are probably replicas that reflect the designs of their original models.[28] Self-portrait paintings by Annibale Carracci,[29] Guido Reni,[30] Giovanni Andrea Sirani,[31] Lanfranco (Fig. 4),[32] the earliest of two painted self-portraits by Alessandro Tiarini (Galleria Savelli, Bologna, *c.* 1625–30),[33] and the earliest of two by Francesco Albani (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)[34] all depict gentlemen without reference to painting. Lanfranco's bust-length portrait (Fig. 4) typifies this group. Brightly

[26] This portrait, in the Corridoio Vasariano of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, has been ascribed to Agostino since at least 1655, when it was acquired by Leopoldo de' Medici. See Evelina Borea *et al.*, *Pittori bolognesi del Seicento nelle Gallerie di Firenze* (Florence, 1975), 36–7, no. 26 and Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 245. A copy of the head and chest is in the Brera Gallery, Milan; see *Pinacoteca di Brera: scuola emiliana* (Milan, 1991), 156–7, no. 68.

[27] Both are in the Corridoio Vasariano of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence; *Gli Uffizi*, nos A671 and A672 and Corinna Höper, *Bartolomeo Passarotti (1529–1592)* (Worms, 1987), II, 209, no. F13 and II, 223, no. F88. Höper, *Bartolomeo Passarotti*, II, 222, no. F85 also cited a self-portrait painting by Passarotto Passarotti that is no longer known.

[28] Borea, *Pittori bolognesi*, nos 33, 38, and 39 published these three self-portraits from Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici's collection of self-portraits, now in the Uffizi Gallery, as a copy after Ludovico Carracci and questionable self-portraits of Antonio and Francesco. An arguable self-portrait of Ludovico (Faenza, private collection) was published by Adolfo Venuri, 'La Scuola bolognese alla mostra del ritratto italiano a Firenze', *L'Arte* 14/1 (1911), 215.

[29] Annibale's *Self-Portrait* in Parma (Galleria Nazionale) is inscribed '17 di Aprile, 1593'; Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, II, 32, no. 75. Posner published several other alleged self-portraits that do not all seem to represent the same person (nos 1, 61 bis, and 62).

[30] Reni's *Self-Portrait* in the Collezione Lodi, Campione d'Italia, was termed a work of *c.* 1638–39 by D. Stephen Pepper, *Guido Reni. L'Opera Completa* (Novara, 1988), appendix I, no. 53 and plate 39. Pepper argued that Reni's alleged *Self-Portrait* in the Uffizi was a studio replica and doubted Reni's authorship of a *Self-Portrait* in the Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome. Richard E. Spear published the Lodi picture as 'Guido Reni and studio?' in *The 'Divine' Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven and London, 1997), 23. Reni also produced a self-portrait drawing (Accademia di San Fernando, Madrid; illustrated in Veronika Birke), *Guido Reni Zeichnungen* (Vienna, 1981), 10, but his features are best known from Simone Cantarini's portrait of Reni in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, of *c.* 1635–8.

[31] Sirani's self-portrait, which is modelled on Reni's, is in the Corridoio Vasariano of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence; *Gli Uffizi: Catalogo Generale* (Florence, 1979), no. A885.

[32] Lanfranco's self-portrait (Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH, Museum Purchase, Derby Fund, no. 62.74) of *c.* 1629–30 was probably made to commemorate his title as Cavaliere dell' Ordine di Gesù Cristo, conferred on 11 October 1628. See Erich Schleier *et al.*, *Giovanni Lanfranco: Un Pittore barocco tra Parma, Roma e Napoli* (Milan, 2001), 268–9, no. 78.

[33] Daniele Benati *et al.*, *Alessandro Tiarini: La grande stagione della pittura del '600 a Reggio* (Milan, 2002), no. 26.

[34] Catherine R. Puglisi, *Francesco Albani* (New Haven and London, 1999), no. 82, as 1636–8.

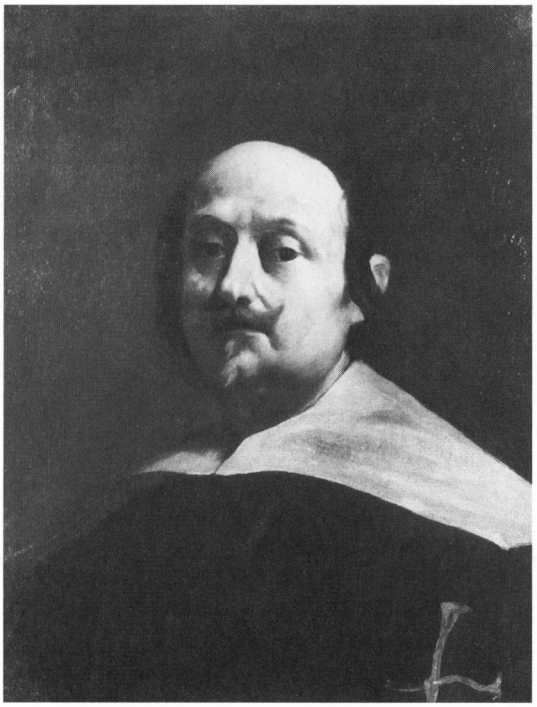

Fig. 4 Giovanni Lanfranco, *Self-Portrait as a Cavaliere in the Order of Christ, c.* 1629–30 (Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio: Museum Purchase, Derby Fund, 1962, 074)

illuminated against a dark background, the artist is dressed austerely in black clothing and large white collar, relieved only by the red cross of the noble order to which he had just been appointed, the Ordine di Gesù Cristo. In sum, these twelve examples, dating between 1580 and 1630, all depict their subjects as gentlemen with no tools of their trade. This disinclination to promulgate the labour of art during the late Cinquecento and early Seicento is understandable in Bologna, where the painter's guild had been separated from the *Arte de' Bombasari* only in 1598.

It was only after the mid-seventeenth century, in Bolognese self-portraiture, that references to artistic labour became more common. After 1650, Tiarini, Guercino, and Albani, who had avoided allusion to artistic labour in their earlier self-portraits, shifted their iconography to include such references. In Albani's self-portrait painting of *c.* 1655–60 (Camera dei Deputati, Rome), he holds a palette, brushes, and wiping cloth.[35] Tiarini's late self-portrait of *c.* 1661 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) portrays the artist holding brushes.[36]

[35] See Puglisi, *Francesco Albani*, no. 155[A] and plate 281.
[36] Benati and Mazza, *Alessandro Tiarini*, no. 108.

But if male self-portraiture in Bologna before 1650 usually depicted the artist as gentleman, rather than as working artist, female self-portraiture in Bologna from 1577 to 1678 was far less homogeneous. The diversity of Bolognese women's self-fashioning during this hundred-year period is illustrated in a group of extant self-portraits that includes five drawings and ten paintings by five different women artists, in addition to one lost painting described in some detail by the early writers and recorded in a print. These works include both traditional and innovative approaches to every type of self-portrait, including depictions of the artist as gentlewoman, portrayals of the artist explicitly identified with her craft, and historiated self-portraits.

The more traditional type of self-portrait, depicting the artist as gentlewoman with no explicit reference to her vocation, is surprisingly rare among female self-portraits in Bologna. Not a single painted self-portrait in this category is known. However, a remarkable drawing by Elisabetta Sirani (1638–65) provides the sole extant example of such a work. Since Sirani was the daughter of an artist, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, she was surely familiar with local traditions of self-portraiture. Her *Self-Portrait as a Lady* (Fig. 5) belongs in the traditional category of the artist portrayed as gentlewoman/man, without reference to artistic labour, but she takes an entirely new approach to this genre. Sirani portrays herself in full length, sumptuously dressed, and mounting an imposing stairway, with a page carrying the train of her dress below a dramatic swag of drapery. Her hands are occupied, not with painting, but in raising up the abundant draperies of her elegant dress. In the distance, an elaborate mirror augments the opulence of the setting. The mirror may allude to the art of self-portraiture, which normally employed a mirror to provide the artist with access to his/her own image. But even if such an interpretation is likely, it exists on the connotative, rather than the denotative, level; and the image is otherwise untouched by any reference to artistic labour. This work is anomalous, to my knowledge, among Italian self-portraits of the seventeenth century in its full-length format and pretentions to high social status. It falls squarely, however, within the tradition of artistic self-portraits as gentlemen/women that eschew explicit reference to artistic labour.

The Oxford drawing is so unusual for a self-portrait that one must ask, is it demonstrably a self-portrait of Sirani? An affirmative answer is indicated by several factors. First, the arched eyebrows, long nose, and elaborate coiffure clearly identify the artist's features. Secondly, like Annibale Carracci's self-portrait drawing discussed above, Sirani's drawing was part of the great collection of self-portraits and portraits of artists assembled by the Florentine collector Francesco Maria Niccolò Gaburri between about 1720 and 1742. Gaburri's collection, which was probably meant to illustrate his never-published *Vite de' pittori*, was influenced by the vogue for artistic portraiture in Florence initiated by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici in the mid-1660s, with the collection of painted self-portraits now in the Corridoio Vasariano, of which Gaburri was custodian. The inscription in a cartouche below Sirani's drawing, which identifies it as her self-portrait, resembles other labels on

Fig. 5 Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait as a Lady* (drawing), *c.* 1660 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

drawings from Gaburri's collection and must date from this time. Sirani's self-portrait, like Annibale's, was purchased after Gaburri's death by the eighteenth-century English collector Charles Rogers, who also described it as a self-portrait in his biographical notice on Sirani.[37] Thus the sheet's identification as Sirani's self-portrait dates back at least to the early eighteenth century. Was Sirani's portrait drawing originally made for a collector interested in acquiring a self-portrait of Sirani, who quickly became a famous and often visited celebrity in Bologna? Since the provenance of the sheet prior to its acquisition by Gaburri is unknown, we can only speculate on the probability of such an inception for this anomalous creation. Although we no longer know whether there were early Bolognese collectors with a

[37] Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. no. 953, in brush and brown wash, 237 × 171 mm; see K. T. Parker, *Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1972), no. 953. On Gaburri and Rogers, see Nicholas Turner, 'The Gabburri/Roger series', 179–216; Salvadori Borroni, 'Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri e gli artisti contemporanei', *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa, classe di lettere e filosofia*, ser. 3, 4 (1974), 1503–55; and Antony Griffiths, 'The Rogers collection in the Cottonian Library', *Print Quarterly*, 10 (1993), 19–36.

Fig. 6 Lavinia Fontana, *Self-Portrait at the Keyboard*, 1577 (Accademia di San Luca, Rome)

particular interest in drawn self-portraits,[38] an interest in painted self-portraits by Bolognese collectors during the seventeenth century can be demonstrated, as will be seen below.

Although Sirani's drawing is an exception, most self-portraits by Bolognese women during the early modern period depict the artist engaged with her craft. This tendency begins with Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), who, like Sirani, was the daughter of an artist. As Caroline Murphy has demonstrated, Fontana was the first successful professional woman painter in Bologna,[39] who became best known as a portrait painter, although she also produced history paintings.

Given the scarcity of Bolognese self-portraits before 1650 that incorporate either references to artistic labour or historical iconographies, the diversity of Lavinia Fontana's self-portraits is striking. Four painted and one drawn self-portrait by Fontana are known; and all four paintings are signed and dated, providing more secure identifications than are usual with self-portraits. The earliest is the *Self-Portrait at the Keyboard* of 1577 (Fig. 6). The

[38] Most Bolognese inventories from the period in question do not identify the subjects of drawings and often do not even identify the author.

[39] Caroline Murphy, 'Lavinia Fontana: the making of a woman artist', in Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Maujke Huisman (eds), *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in 17th-century Holland, England, and Italy* (Hilversum, 1994), 171.

Fig. 7 Lavinia Fontana, *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo*, 1579 (Uffizi Gallery, Florence, su concession del Ministero dei Beni e le Attività Culturali)

second, a small tondo from 1579, is the *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo* (Fig. 7).[40] Both these works refer directly to the artist's vocation, making them the earliest known Bolognese self-portraits that allude to artistic labour. Two later self-portraits adopt an historiated approach: one autonomous self-portrait and one that was incorporated into a religious painting. The first, depicting the artist as *Judith* (Fig. 8), is signed and dated 1600. Although the picture's patron is unknown, Caroline Murphy has suggested that it might have been commissioned by Costanza Bianchetti Bargellini, a widowed noblewoman for whom Judith might have provided an exemplum of the virtuous widow.[41] The second historiated self-portrait by Fontana portrays the artist as St Barbara, in a *Madonna and Child with Five Saints* (Fig. 9). This work, which is

[40] The two later self-portraits are discussed below. Fontana's self-portrait in the Accademia di San Luca, Rome (inv. no. 743) is inscribed at the upper left: 'LAVINIA VIRGO PROSPERI FONTANAE / FILIA SPECULO IMAGINEM / ORIS SUI EXPRESIT ANNO / MDLXXVII'. Her self-portrait in the Uffizi (inv. 1890, no. 4013) is inscribed at lower left: '. . . AVINIA FONTANA / TAPII FACIEB. / . . . DXXVIIII'.

[41] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 152. Murphy also noted that Judith was viewed as a model for widows by such writers of prescriptive literature as Giulio Cabei, *Ornamenti della gentildonna vedova* (Venice, 1574) and Agostino Valerio, *Instruttione alla donna christiana* (Venice, 1574).

Fig. 8 Lavinia Fontana, *Self-Portrait as Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, 1600 (Museo Davia Bargellini, Bologna)

signed and dated 1601, was painted for the church of San Michele in Bosco, Bologna. It was identified by Malvasia in 1678 as a self-portrait of the artist,[42] who resembles her youthful self-portraits in both these later pictures, despite her being 48 and 49 years old when she painted these two works.

It is significant that the two earliest Bolognese self-portrait paintings that allude directly to artistic labour, predating even Annibale Carracci's works, are by a woman. Although both of Fontana's early painted self-portraits refer to her trade, there are key differences between the two pictures that resulted from differences in their intended audiences, as Fredrika Jacobs has eloquently explained. The *Self-Portrait at the Keyboard* from 1577 (Fig. 6),[43] painted for Fontana's future father-in-law, Severo Zappi, portrays the artist in rich clothing and jewels, accompanied by a servant, and playing music – all

[42] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, I, 21.

[43] See Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa*. On the Rome self-portrait, see Maria Teresa Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana bolognese 'pittora singolare' 1552–1614* (Milan, 1989), 72–4, no. 4a.12; Vera Fortunati (ed.), *Lavinia Fontana 1552–1614* (Milan, 1994), 181, no. 33 and *Lavinia Fontana of Bologna 1552–1614* (Milan, 1998), 52–3, no. 24.

Fig. 9 Lavinia Fontana, *Madonna and Child Appearing to Five Saints*, 1601 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)

attributes that attest to her social and economic stature. Such pretensions were pertinent considerations for the artist at this time, since shortly thereafter, she married a man of higher social status than her own. She wears a red dress, a traditional colour for wedding dresses in Bologna, and a love knot rests on her musical instrument.[44] Both the format of her self-portrait, with a musical instrument, and her signature, which notes her virginal status, were probably influenced by Sofonisba Anguissola. The easel in the background provides a clear but discreet reference to Fontana's vocation.

The small tondo on copper from 1579 (Fig. 7), in contrast, emphasizes Fontana's professional and intellectual identity more than her socio-economic status. This work was painted for Alfonso Ciacón, a Spanish Dominican theologian and scholar who lived in Rome. Ciacón wrote to Fontana on 17 October 1578, to request her portrait as the model for an engraving to be included in his collection of 500 portraits depicting famous men and

[44] I am grateful to Caroline Murphy for generously sharing with me portions of her book in advance of its publication. See Caroline P. Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana: A Painter and her Patrons in Sixteenth-century Bologna* (New Haven and London, 2003), 41–3.

women.[45] The nature of this commission explains why, in this work, Lavinia, still richly dressed, portrays herself as both an artist and an intellectual, with books, statues, and paper before her, holding a pen in her right hand, poised above a blank sheet of paper. As both Woods-Marsden and Murphy have argued, here Fontana is engaged in the concept that precedes drawing (or, ambiguously, preceding the act of writing), surrounded by the artifacts of a humanist scholar that testify to both her artistic and intellectual interest in the classical world.[46]

A finished self-portrait drawing by Fontana (Fig. 10) was evidently a preparatory study for this self-portrait of 1579. This exquisitely detailed drawing in the Morgan Library, measuring about 16 cm in height, is in red and black chalk, and is thus similar in scale, subject, and media to most of Fontana's extant drawings, which are generally small portraits in chalk.[47] No previous writer has commented on the similarities between Fontana's drawing and the painted self-portrait of 1579.[48] The poses of both works are similar, with the face in a three-quarter view to the left and the left arm bent across the waist. The only significant difference is that in the drawing, the artist holds up a sheet of paper, whereas in the painting, the sheet is on the table. The coiffure and clothing, with ruff at the neck, raised decoration at the shoulders, lace at the cuffs, and slashed sleeve, are also very similar. Finally, the drawing and painting are almost identical in size. The small discrepancies in Fontana's appearance can be explained by the differing inceptions and purposes of the two works: the drawing, made from a mirror, was probably a more faithful record of Fontana's appearance, whereas the painting, destined for a collection of famous figures, was idealized.[49] Such idealization, like the elegant clothing, was typical of female artistic self-portraiture during the period; and Fontana herself pursued another type of idealization in her two later self-portrait paintings, when she depicted herself as a much younger woman.

[45] Ciacón's letter to Fontana and her response were published by R. Galli, *Lavinia Fontana pittrice 1552–1614* (Imola, 1940), 80 and by Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 219–20. The portrait is in oil on copper and measures 15.7 cm. (diameter). See also Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 86–7, no. 41/18; Angela Ghirardi, 'Lavinia Fontana allo specchio. Pittrici e autoritratto nel secondo Cinquecento', in Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1994, 43–44; and Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1998, 58–9, no. 5.

[46] Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 220; Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 73–6.

[47] Fontana is the first woman artist known in more than a handful of autograph drawings. Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 226–45 ascribed thirty-eight drawings to her.

[48] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 41 suggested that the drawing prepared Fontana's self-portrait of 1577, but this figure is reversed in the drawing, and the raised hand in the drawing seems more likely to have been intended to elevate an object than to play a keyboard instrument.

[49] The Morgan drawing (acc. no. IV, 158, f. 2, in red and black chalk, 16.2 × 14.5 cm) is inscribed in brown ink at upper right: 'Ritrar di Lavinia / propria'. It was published by Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 237; Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1994, 208; and Ghirardi, 'Women Artists', in Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1998, 35. This sheet is in a book, bound during the late seventeenth century, of nineteen portrait drawings by the artist. Most extant drawings by Fontana are in the Morgan Library and the Uffizi. The latter includes ten sheets that have been together since the seventeenth century, when Baldinucci catalogued them in Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici's collection. These collections suggest that Fontana's drawings were collected from an early date. See further Babette Bohn, 'Elisabetta Sirani and drawing practices in early modern Bologna', *Master Drawings*, forthcoming.

Fig. 10 Lavinia Fontana, *Self-Portrait* (drawing), *c.* 1579 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York)

Female self-portraits from the seventeenth century often followed Lavinia Fontana's example in including references to artistic vocation in their self-portraits.[50] The earliest recorded example after Fontana is by Antonia Pinelli (d. 1644), the only other Bolognese woman who is known to have painted self-portraits during the first half of the seventeenth century. Pinelli, wife of the artist Giovanni Battista Bertusio, was described by the early writers as a disciple of Ludovico Carracci. She is known today in only a handful of extant works, including a much-damaged picture that is her sole autonomous self-portrait (Fig. 11).[51] Pinelli's portrait was described by Jacopo Alessandro Calvi, who in 1780 wrote a book of poems praising fifty paintings in the

[50] Since one of Lavinia's early self-portraits was owned by her father-in-law, in Reggio, and the other was shipped to Ciacòn in Rome, the originals may not have been known to Bolognese artists, although the *Self-portrait at the Keyboard* was replicated in a copy now in the Uffizi. The *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo* was intended to be reproduced in engraving for Ciacòn, although this print is not known to me; but sometime between 1599, the year of Ciacòn's death, and 1713, the painting was acquired by Ferdinando de' Medici in Florence. See Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 86–7, no. 41.18.

[51] Pinelli's *Self-Portrait* is in the Conservatorio del Baraccano, Bologna. Irene Graziani first connected this picture with Pinelli (noted by Ghirardi, 'Women artists of Bologna', 36 and note 15). On Pinelli, see Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 270; Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 26; and Oretti, *Notizie*, B124, 2:127–29.

Fig. 11 Antonia Pinelli, *Self-Portrait, c.* 1614 (Conservatorio del Baraccano, Bologna)

collection of Filippo Hercolani in Bologna. According to Calvi, Pinelli's self-portrait showed the artist drawing in pencil on a small canvas,[52] a description that corresponds to the portrait in Bologna. Despite the ruined condition of this picture, the meticulous, linear handling of folds and general features of Pinelli's appearance resemble Pinelli's other self-portrait, which was incorporated into a large altarpiece, the *Miracle of St John the Evangelist* (Fig. 12). In both works, the artist depicted herself with a round face, broadly spaced, deepset eyes, long nose, and protruding lower lip. According to the early writers, the signed and dated *Miracle of St John the Evangelist,* an altarpiece for the Sampieri chapel in the SS. Annunziata, Bologna, included her self-portrait as the young woman in a tall hat.[53] Thus Pinelli produced both an

[52] Jacopo Alessandro Calvi, *Versi e prose sopra una serie di eccellenti pitture posseduta dal Signor Marchese Filippo Hercolani Principe del S.R. I.* (Bologna, 1780), 98–9. I have found no information on the painting's subsequent provenance.

[53] The painting is signed and dated 1614, and was based on a drawing by Ludovico Carracci in a private collection. Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice,* I, 209 noted that the altarpiece was based on Ludovico's design, and included a self-portrait and portrait of her husband. Although Bertusio is unidentifiable, Pinelli is certainly the young woman at left, wearing a tall, plumed hat, who looks out at the viewer, as Ghirardi noted in Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana,* 1998, 36. See Babette Bohn, Ludovico *Carracci and the Art of Drawing,* no. 281, in press.

Fig. 12 Antonia Pinelli, *A Miracle of St John the Evangelist*, 1614 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)

autonomous self-portrait expressing her vocation as a painter and a self-portrait within a history painting. The latter is a subject to which we shall return in due course.

The next known Bolognese female painter, active nearly half a century after Fontana and Pinelli, was Elisabetta Sirani (1638–65), the brilliant but short-lived painter who revolutionized the prospects for women artists in Seicento Bologna. Sirani was the first Bolognese woman to specialize in history painting and produced only about fifteen portraits, in contrast to a production of at least 145 religious pictures and some fifty subjects from ancient history, mythology, and allegory. Most of her production is recorded in the list she compiled of nearly 200 paintings, a document that, like her frequent tendency to sign her pictures, testifies to her concern with posterity.[54]

[54] The list of Sirani's works was published by Malvasia, who knew the artist and her father personally: Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 393–400.

Fig. 13 Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait* (drawing), *c.* 1660 (private collection, Geneva)

Sirani produced a number of painted and drawn self-portraits,[55] and at least one of these works followed the examples of Fontana and Pinelli in directly asserting the artist's vocation. Sirani's lost *Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Father* is known today only from written descriptions, a preparatory drawing (Fig. 13), and a reproductive engraving of 1833 (Fig. 14).[56] Curiously, like all

[55] Several paintings have been wrongly considered Sirani's self-portraits. A so-called *Self-Portrait as La Pittura* (formerly Heim Gallery, London) does not resemble Elisabetta and may not even be her work, but is known to me only from a photo. A small painting on copper in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna portrays Sirani but is not her work. It is probably the portrait by Barbara Sirani mentioned by Malvasia (*Felsina Pittrice*, II, 403); see below. Two paintings (in the Uffizi, Florence and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC) that were called Sirani's self-portraits (Liana De Girolami Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-Portraits by Women Painters* (Aldershot, 2000), 79–80) are not by the artist. The Uffizi painting is a replica of a self-portrait by Lucia Casalini Torelli, another Bolognese *pittrice*, and the Washington picture, in my opinion, is by Giovanni Andrea Sirani and does not portray Elisabetta. A lost painting was described by Luigi Lanzi as a self-portrait of Elisabetta Sirani, crowned by an amorino, in the Pagave collection in Milan; Luigi Lanzi, *Storia pittorica della Italia* (Milan, 1825), IV, 130–1.

[56] This drawing, now in a private collection, is in black and red chalk and measures 230 × 155 mm. It was formerly in Alessandro Maggiore's collection, and is inscribed 'La Sirani fece' on both the recto and the verso. The engraving, by Luigi Martelli, was published in O. Mazzoni Toselli, *Di Elisabetta Sirani pitttrice* (Bologna, 1833).

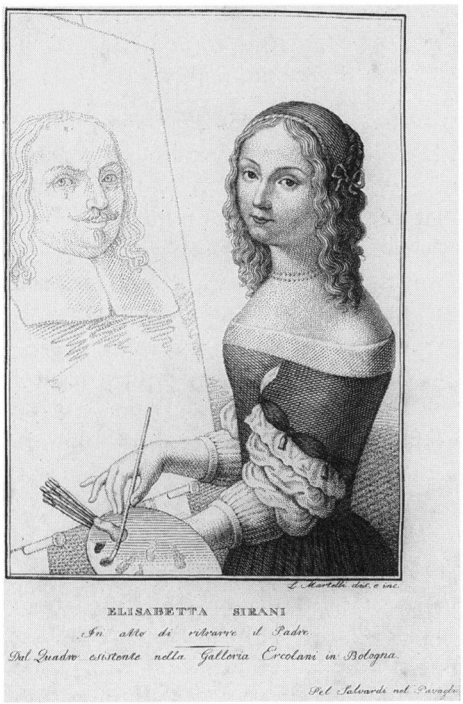

Fig. 14 Luigi Martelli, *Engraving after Elisabetta Sirani's Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Father*, 1833 (Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

but one of Sirani's self-portraits, the work was not mentioned by the painter in her list of works. The painting was described by Jacopo Alessandro Calvi in a poem of 1780, in the same collection of poems that commemorated Pinelli's autonomous self-portrait. Calvi's poem celebrated Sirani's skill, which elicited envy but produced immortal works:

> Od' industre Pennel ben degna impresa!
> Queste non son le vaghe forme oneste
> De la vergine Elisa? E non son queste
>
> Le sembianze di Lui dond' ella è scesa?
>
> Perchè contro costei, di tosco accesa,
> Armasti, Invidia rea, le mani infeste?
> Ma da l'infidie tue crude, e funeste
> L'opra vivrà del dotto ingegna illesa:
>
> E vivrà pinto il Genitor pur' anco,
> Il Genitor, che tutte a lei di Guido
> Spiegar le nobil' arti ebbe diletto.

Vola per Ciel, qual leve augello, e bianco,
D'Elisa, il nome; e in ogni estraneo lido
Di stupor fassi, e d'altre laudi abbi etto.[57]

The envy to which Calvi refers alludes to the popular belief that Elisabetta had been poisoned by a jealous maidservant, who was allegedly competing with her mistress for a young man. This melodramatic explanation of her premature death at the age of twenty-seven has since been revised by modern scientific writers, who have concluded that her death was more likely to have been the result of stomach ulcers.[58] The story thus provides another example, reminiscent of Vasari's *favola* on Properzia De Rossi, of a romance fabricated without foundation by the biographers of a woman artist.

Significantly, this lost picture was Sirani's most famous self-portrait painting for two centuries, due both to its location in a prominent Bolognese collection and to its eloquent exposition of the woman painter at work. Until the nineteenth century, the picture was in the Ercolani collection in Bologna. Although Sirani's patron for the work is not known, it may have been the Contessa Clemenza or Clementina Ercolani Leoni, daughter of Count Girolamo Ercolani and wife of Carlo Andrea Leoni. Clementina was recorded by Malvasia as the patron of both Elisabetta and her sister Barbara Sirani.[59] The Ercolani collection was notable for its interest in women painters and in sixteenth- and seventeen-century Bolognese art. In addition to the self-portraits by Pinelli and Sirani, the collection included six other paintings by Sirani, thirteen works by Lavinia Fontana, four portraits by Sofonisba Anguissola, and one picture by Chiara Varottari, a seventeenth-century Veronese painter. Despite the range of the Ercolani collection, which included works by most of the major Bolognese painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the only male artist represented by a self-portrait in the collection was Annibale Carracci.[60] Women artists were much more unusual than their male counterparts, making female self-portraits intrinsically interesting as visual records of natural curiosities.

[57] Calvi, *Versi*, 106–7. Sirani's self-portrait was not in her list or cited by Malvasia but was described by Oretti and others during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Marcello Oretti, *Le pitture che si ammirano nelli palazzi e case de' nobili nella città di Bologna e di altri edifici in detta città*, unpublished manuscript in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna (n.d.), I, 138.

[58] This story was first recorded by Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 402. See Andrea Bianchini, *Prove legali sull'avvelenamento della celebre pittrice bolognese Elisabetta Sirani* (Bologna, 1854); Ottavio Mazzoni Toselli, *Racconti storici estratti dall'archivio criminale di Bologna* (Bologna, 1868), II, 475–599; and Giovanni Baldi, *La farmacia nella breve mortale malattia della pittrice bolognese Elisabetta Sirani* (Pisa, 1958).

[59] Clemenza's father and husband were identified by Pompeo Scipione Dolfi, *Cronologia delle famiglie nobili di Bologna* (Bologna, 1670), 452. Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 411 noted that Barbara painted several works for the Contessa, although he specified only one, an *Ecce Homo*. Elisabetta Sirani's list included one painting from Clementina, an *amorino* in 1662 (Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 396). The 1699 inventory of Clementina's collection included the latter as well as a painting of *Charity* by Elisabetta (Getty Provenance Index, inv. no. I-2140).

[60] The Hercolani collection is described in *Descrizione di molti quadri del Principe . . . Filippo Hercolani Marchese di Florimente . . . publicata in occasione delle sue nozze con S. licenza alla Signora Marchese D. Corona Cavriani*, unpublished manuscript in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna (n.d.), B. 384.

Sirani's Ercolani self-portrait portrayed its subject triumphantly as a painter. Holding her palette and brushes, standing before the canvas on which her father's effigy appears, she was depicted as the pictorial creator of her parent, a conceit that parallels Sofonisba Anguissola's *Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Teacher Campi* of a century earlier, although it is not clear how Sirani might have known Anguissola's picture. Although the date of Sirani's lost painting is not known, it was probably created around 1660, after a half-century of an autonomous painter's guild had helped to make references to artistic vocation more popular in Bolognese self-portraits.

Sirani's self-portrait asserts the astonishing fact of her professional achievement. She was a child prodigy who began producing public altarpieces at the age of seventeen, to the admiration and amazement of her compatriots. Her biographer Malvasia reported that the young woman's studio was visited by skeptics who wished to see her painting as confirmation that the stories of her skill were true, and that her father, who was also a painter, was not actually responsible for the impressive canvases. Malvasia noted that the paintings were certainly more rare and admired as the work of a woman.[61] Thus Sirani's lost *Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Father* portrayed artistic vocation to assert an achievement that contradicted the supposed limitations of both her gender and her age. As Malvasia remarked, 'she worked never like a woman and more like a man'.[62]

During the course of her brief career, of scarcely more than a decade, the disadvantage of being a woman was effectively reversed. Elisabetta's paintings came to be more valued than those of her father, at least partially because she was a woman, turning the disadvantage of gender into an asset. This privileging of Elisabetta's works over Giovanni Andrea's is illustrated in the extensive correspondence between Prince Leopoldo de' Medici and his two Bolognese agents, Ferdinando Cospi and Count Annibale Ranuzzi. Although both Giovanni Andrea and Elisabetta were discussed and esteemed, it was Elisabetta for whom they reserved the highest praise, terming her 'the best brush now in Bologna'.[63]

Given its importance as a statement of her achievement, it is not surprising that Sirani's *Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Father* became the best known of her self-portraits, providing a model for the printed portraits of the artist that were produced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The earliest was Lorenzo Tinti's engraving (Fig. 15),[64] which substitutes the Virgin Mary for

[61] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 402. In a letter to Prince Leopoldo de' Medici, Ferdinando Cospi alluded to two drawings by Elisabetta Sirani that he was sending to the prince. In marvelling at their beauty, he observed that her father's hands had been deformed for some time, so there was 'no reason to suspect that he has helped his daughter at all'. See Edward L. Goldberg, *Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage* (Princeton, 1983), 42.

[62] '. . . non oprò mai da donna, e più da uomo . . .'; Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 402.

[63] Giovanni Andrea's skill was impaired by his crippled hands (probably the result of gout), a condition on which both Cospi and Malvasia remarked. This ailment helped to eliminate the suspicion that he might have produced Elisabetta's paintings. See Goldberg, *Patterns*, 42–3.

[64] Lorenzo Tinti's engraving (Bartsch XIX, 134, no. 2) measures 279 × 186 mm and is inscribed around the oval: 'ELISABETH SIRANA CELEBER^{a}. PICTRIX BONON. OBIIT ANNO MDCLXV. AETATIS SVAE XXVI'. A second inscription in the cartouche dedicates the print to the Bolognese Senator Saulo Guidotti and ends with Tinti's signature.

Fig. 15 Lorenzo Tinti, *Portrait of Elisabetta Sirani* (engraving), *c.* 1665 (Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

the portrait of her father, thereby transforming Sirani's vocation from portrait painter to history painter, a more highly regarded specialization and one more appropriate to the artist's actual production. Tinti's engraving probably dates from around the time of Sirani's death, in 1665, and it portrays her as slightly older, as does Sirani's self-portrait drawing in Liverpool (Fig. 16), a work that may have been made to prepare another (now lost) self-portrait painting.[65] Tinti's print was the model for subsequent images of the artist, such as the wood engraving that appeared in Malvasia's biography of Sirani in his *Felsina Pittrice* of 1678 (Fig. 17). This portrait may be by Sirani's student Veronica Fontana (1619–90), who provided other portraits for Malvasia's biographies.[66]

[65] Walker Art Galler, Liverpool, inv. no. WAG1995.345, in red chalk on beige paper; 218 × 173 mm, formerly owned by Gaburri and Rogers. See Turner, 'The Gaburri/Rogers collection', 213 and Xanthe Brooke, *Mantegna to Rubens: The Weld Blundell Drawings Collection* (London, 1998), 104–5, no. 52.

[66] Fontana was mentioned by Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 407; Masini, *Aggiunte*, 1690, 34'; Oretti, *Notizie*, B129, 125 and 637; and Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 249. Her wood engravings include portraits of Francesco Brizio and Ferdinand III de' Medici and illustrations in Lorenzo Legati's *Museo Cospiano* (Bologna, 1677). See Silvia Urbini in Fortunati, *Lavinia Fontana* (1998), 148–9.

Fig. 16 Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait* (drawing), *c.* 1664 (National Museums, Liverpool, The Walker)

These prints provide two examples of Elisabetta Sirani's fame in Bologna after her death, which grew into something of a romanticized cult. She was seen by her compatriots, with some inaccuracy, as Guido Reni's true artistic heir, and was buried in the same tomb as her predecessor, in the church of San Domenico, so that the two might be united in death as they had allegedly been in life.[67] Although as early as the eighteenth century, Bolognese biographers were quick to qualify the connection between Sirani and Reni, noting that Guido had died when Elisabetta was only four years old and could thus never have served as her teacher, other writers blurred this distinction, erroneously crediting Reni as Sirani's instructor.

Another type of historical inaccuracy that developed in the wake of Sirani's fame was the confusion of her works with those of her students, most of whom are entirely or largely unknown today in extant works. A small portrait

[67] Although the original inscription is no longer extant, it was transcribed by Amico Ricci, *Iscrizione Sepolcrale di Guido Reni ed Elisabetta Sirani esistente in S. Domenico di Bologna* (Bologna, 1842). Today, a second, more recent plaque, marking Sirani's home on the Via Urbana, describes her as an 'emulatrice di Guido Reni'. On the relationship between Sirani and Reni, see Babette Bohn, 'The antique heroines of Elisabetta Sirani', *Renaissance Studies*, 16 (2002), 55–7.

Fig. 17 Veronica Fontana (?), *Portrait of Elisabetta Sirani* (wood engraving), 1678 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)

of Elisabetta Sirani on copper, for example (Fig. 18), has long been attributed to the artist at the Pinacoteca Nationale, Bologna, although it has little stylistic similarity to her other works and corresponds with descriptions of a painting produced after Elisabetta's death by her sister Barbara. Barbara's portrait was one of several painted to honour the now-famous painter after her premature death in 1665, which also elicited a number of poetic elegies to her accomplishments. Barbara's portrait and its subject were praised in a contemporary poem by Giovanni Luigi Piccinardi, in which he called Elisabetta Sirani a female Apelles, whose luminous pictures were painted with the rays of the sun.[68] This appropriation of notables from classical antiquity to celebrate the accomplishments of contemporary figures was a common

[68] The poem was published by Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 403, who also noted other poetic elegies to Sirani and other portraits of her that were produced to commemorate the famous painter after her death. The portrait in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, inv. no. 368, in oil on copper, 15.5 × 12.5 cm, was acquired by the museum in 1896. Ann Sutherland Harris pointed out the likelihood of Barbara's authorship of the portrait in Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (New York, 1976), 148, n. 9. I am grateful to Piero Cammarota for his generous assistance with this and other paintings by Sirani in the deposits of the Pinacoteca.

Fig. 18 Barbara Sirani, *Portrait of Elisabetta Sirani*, 1665 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)

rhetorical strategy in the humanist environment of seventeenth-century Bologna. In his biography of Sirani, Malvasia compared her both to famous female figures from antiquity, like Zenobia and Semiramis, and to such male luminaries as the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis, to whom, Malvasia noted, Elisabetta did not concede the palm.[69]

Sirani's influence on later women artists in Bologna was profound, both because of her conspicuous success and because she founded a school in which she trained about a dozen other women artists. Although extant works by Sirani's students are rare, two produced self-portrait paintings that are still known today. Both Ginevra Cantofoli (Fig. 19) and Lucrezia Scarfaglia (Fig. 20) adopted the format employed by Sirani in her *Self-Portrait Painting the Portrait of her Father* in showing the artist at work, posed before a canvas on an easel, and holding a palette and brushes.

Cantofoli (1618–72), although a generation older than Sirani, was described by Malvasia, Masini, and Oretti as Elisabetta Sirani's student. She was primarily a history painter and produced several altarpieces for Bolognese

[69] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 388 and 390.

Fig. 19 Ginevra Cantofoli, *Self-Portrait Painting the Madonna of St Luke, c.* 1665? (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Altività Culturali)

churches, although none of the latter are still known. In addition to her self-portrait, Cantofoli is known today in at least two extant paintings and two extant drawings, including a self-portrait that portrays the artist holding a palette and brushes before an easel (Fig. 21).[70]

Scarfaglia (active *c.* 1678) is known today only in her signed and dated self-portrait of 1678 in the Galleria Pallavicini (Fig. 20), although she too is recorded by the early writers as having produced a number of history paintings. Malvasia mentioned her among Sirani's students, although Masini characterized her as a disciple of Domenico Maria Canuti (1626–84), a

[70] Masini, *Aggiunte*, 1690, fol. 17'; Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 407 and *Pitture*, 88, 217–18, 243, 249, and 257; Oretti, *Notizie*, B129, 119; and Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 75–6. The painted self-portrait was first identified in a 1902 inventory of the Brera's paintings as Cantofoli's work (*Pinacoteca di Brera: Scuola emiliana* (Milan, 1991), no. 66). Sabbatini, 1995, 99 calls it Cantofoli's only secure work. In my view, a *Portrait of a Young Woman* (sold Christie's South Kensington, 15 December 2000, lot 211) and the so-called *Beatrice Cenci* (Rome, Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Barberini), sometimes attributed to Guido Reni, are by the same hand. D. S. Pepper, *Guido Reni: opera completa* (Novara, 1988), 352 rejected the attribution of this work to Reni, but suggested Elisabetta Sirani's authorship for the *Cenci* and for another picture in the Hermitage. The drawing is in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice (inv. no. 31253, in black chalk, with touches of white heightening; 148 × 111 mm). The attribution to Cantofoli of this sheet and one other (inv. no. 31252) date back to the Certani collection.

Fig. 20 Lucrezia Scarfaglia, *Self-Portrait Painting the Madonna of St Luke*, 1678 (Galleria Pallavicini, Rome)

contradiction that was later resolved by Giordani, who claimed that Scarfaglia worked first in Sirani's school and later with Canuti.[71]

Sirani's impact is discernible in these self-portraits in several respects. Both artists utilized their *maestra*'s basic format, with the artist portrayed in half- or bust-length, holding brushes and palette before a canvas. Both Cantofoli and Scarfaglia conspicuously asserted their identity as history painters. In each picture, on the canvas is a modernized rendition of Bologna's miracle-working *Madonna of St Luke* (Fig. 22), a famous icon that became a focus for Bolognese Mariology after its arrival in the city in 1160. A twelfth-century painting that was popularly considered to have been painted by the evangelist St Luke, Bologna's *Madonna of St Luke* inspired an annual religious ritual, beginning in 1433. That year, it was decreed that the icon would make an annual processional descent from its hilltop sanctuary overlooking Bologna down into the city, an event that became a key aspect of Marian devotion in

[71] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 407; Masini, *Aggiunte*, 28'–29; Oretti, *Notizie*, B129, 121; Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 119; Gaetano Giordani, *Notizie delle donne pittrici di Bologna* (Bologna, 1832), 29. The self-portrait is signed on the book at left: 'LVCRETIA SCARFAGLIA F. 1678'. See Federico Zeri, *La Galleria Pallavicini in Roma* (Florence, 1959), 242, no. 451. Both Crespi and Oretti mentioned a self-portrait by Scarfaglia that was sent, with two drawings, to the Empress Eleonora Gonzaga (Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 119; Oretti, *Notizie*, B129, 121), wife of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III, who was also Elisabetta Sirani's patron.

Fig. 21 Ginevra Cantofoli, *Self-Portrait* (drawing), *c.* 1665? (Giorgio Cini Foundation, Venice)

early modern Bologna.[72] Popular devotion to the *Madonna of St Luke* remained strong in the seventeenth century, when the Dominican nun and abbess Diodata Malvasia wrote a book on the history of the icon and its annual procession.[73] The claimed authorship of an image allegedly painted by St Luke identifies Cantofoli and Scarfaglia with the patron saint of painters, a common conceit for male painters but unusual for women.[74] Moreover, as women whose portraits are juxtaposed to images of the Virgin Mary, they are also identified with that archetype of female virtue. Scarfaglia also reinforced her role as a history painter, with Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* conspicuously positioned at her side.

[72] See Mario Fanti, 'La leggenda della Madonna di San Luca di Bologna. Origine, fortuna, sviluppo e valore storico', in *La Madonna di San Luca di Bologna* (Bologna, 1993), especially 69–83; and Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay confraternities and civic religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge and New York, 1995), 19–23.

[73] Diodata Malvasia, *La venuta e i progressi miracolosi della SS. Madonna dipinta da S. Luca posta sul monte della Guardia dall'anno che si vienne 1160 sin all'anno 1617 dalla malto Reverenda madre Suor Diodata Malvasia nell'ordine di S. Domenico in S. Mattia* (Bologna, 1617). On Suor Malvasia, daughter of Count Annibale Malvasia and member of a noble Bolognese family, see Giovanni Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi* (Bologna, 1781; reprinted Bologna, 1965), v, 163–4 and Fr. Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi, *Notizie degli Scrittori bolognesi e dell'opere loro stampate e monoscritte* (Bologna, 1714), 98.

[74] Anguissola's *Self-portrait Painting the Virgin and Child* arguably anticipated this paradigm.

Fig. 22 Anonymous twelfth-century painter, *Madonna of St Luke* (Madonna di San Luca, Bologna)

This espousal of history painting, the highest ranking and most intellectual type of painting in early modern Italy, was unusual for women, who were considered biologically incapable of the capacity for invention required for such works.[75] Although Fontana was the first to produce a significant body of history paintings,[76] Sirani was the first Bolognese woman to specialize in history painting, and her example was followed by her students, almost without exception. It is striking that just as Bolognese women proudly identified themselves as working artists in their self-portraits, claiming their achievement of a skill associated with men, they simultaneously expressed their association with the highest and most intellectual form of painting, synthesizing the social and vocational aspirations of their predecessors. In early modern Italy, where the woman artist was still regarded as an exception to the natural order, the portrayal of a woman artist-as-history-painter was a particularly unexpected and dramatic assertion. This aspect of female self-portraiture in early modern Bologna demonstrates that in contrast to male self-portraiture, which reflects a more consistent concern with the social

[75] See Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa*, 40–7.

[76] Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, catalogued some fifty history paintings with plausible attributions to the artist.

status of the artist, female self-portraiture in Bologna attempted both to claim a place for women artists in the professional sector and to attach the intellectual imprimatur of history painting. That such intellectual aspirations developed in Bologna, home of the oldest university in Europe, is not surprising. The university's presence in the city promoted both a tradition for scholars' portraits and and a series of university scholars who patronized women artists, beginning with Lavinia Fontana.

The issue of history painting brings us to a third type of self-representation: the historiated self-portrait, which portrays its subject in the guise of a figure from history, mythology, allegory, or religion. Woods-Marsden has suggested that this type began in early sixteenth-century Italy with Giorgione, whose lost *Self-portrait as David with the Head of Goliath* is recorded in a drawing of 1627.[77] Many later Italian artists produced this type of self-portrait, as exemplified by Caravaggio's *Self-portrait as the head of Goliath held by David* and Cristofano Allori's *Self-portrait as the head of Holofernes held by Judith*;[78] although, understandably, the difficulties in identifying such works as self-portraits have often led to a lack of consensus.[79]

Before autonomous self-portrait paintings in Italy are known, artists had incorporated historiated self-portraits into narrative works, as in Sandro Botticelli's self-portrait in his *Adoration of the Magi* (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, early 1470s) and Benozzo Gozzoli's clearly labeled self-depiction in his *Procession of the Magi* (Florence, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, 1459).[80] These two Medici commissions exemplify the popular Quattrocento practice of incorporating portraits of the artist, patron, and patron's family into religious paintings whose portrayal in this context expressed a concern with salvation. Another compelling interpretation of such self-portraits has been suggested by Ames-Lewis, who remarked on the connection between Gozzoli's self-imagery and the artist's intellectual interests.[81]

In Bologna, the earliest known example of such a self-portrait may be Caterina Vigri's mid-fifteenth-century manuscript illumination, representing a nun who has been identified as the artist, kneeling before the crucified

[77] Giorgione's *Self-Portrait as David with the head of Goliath* was in the collection of Andrea Vendramin, where it was recorded in 1627, in the illustrated inventory of Vendramin's painting collection (now in the British Library, London, Sloane MS 4004). Carlo Ridolfi identified David as a self-portrait. See Ridolfi, *Le meraviglie dell'arte*, ed. D. Von Hadeln (Berlin, 1914–24). The composition is also recorded in three painted copies. See Jaynie Anderson, *Giorgione: The Painter of 'Poetic Brevity'* (Paris and New York, 1997), 319.

[78] See Friedrich Pelleross, 'Between typology and psychology: the role of the identification portrait in updating Old Testament representations', *Artibus et Historiae*, 24 (1991), 75–117.

[79] For example, two alleged historiated self-portraits by Savoldo, the *Self-Portrait as St Jerome* and the *Self-Portrait as an Apostle or Prophet*, have been questioned. See Creighton Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo. The 1955 Dissertation, with a Review of Research, 1955–1985* (New York and London, 1986), 46, 192 no. 46, 421–8, 538–9, and 555; and Bruno Passamani *et al.*, *Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo* (Milan, 1990), 16, 156, and 180.

[80] On Gozzoli's self-portraits, see Francis Ames-Lewis, 'Reconstructing Benozzo Gozzoli's artistic identity', in Mary Rogers (ed.), *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art* (Aldershot and Brookfield, 2000), 33–50.

[81] Ames-Lewis discussed the relationship between Gozzoli's self-representation and intellectual interests, drawings after the antique, and the ideas of Alberti ('Reconstrucing Benozzo Gozzoli's artistic identity', 34–8).

Fig. 23 Caterina Vigri, *Self-portrait (?) before the Crucified Christ*, before 1463 (Corpus Domini, Bologna)

Christ (Fig. 23). In this painting on vellum, an illustration in St Caterina's best-known treatise, *Le sette armi spirituali*, a Poor Clares nun who may be Caterina herself expresses her devotion to Christ. Although not demonstrably a portrait in any conventional sense, the image initiates a series of female self-depictions in Bologna that realize female agency by rendering women as active participants in historical narratives. In Vigri's depiction, the nun kneels reverently beside her Saviour, whose body is inscribed within the letter 'd' of the manuscript.[82]

Caterina Vigri (1413–63) was not a professional artist, but the abbess and founder of Bologna's Poor Clares convent, the Corpus Domini. Both she and her earliest biographers understood her paintings in the context of her religious vocation, rather than an artistic one, and few of Vigri's works were specified by the early writers, making identifications of her autograph paintings problematic.[83] Nevertheless, her example as a saintly woman who

[82] The identification of this image as a self-portrait was suggested by Jeryldene M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge and New York, 1996), 128–9 and 195. For Caterina's *Le Sette Armi Spirituali*, see Cecilia Foletti, *Santa Caterina Vegri. Le sette armi spirituali* (Padua, 1985).

[83] On Vigri as an artist, see Wood, *Women, Art and Spirituality* and Stefania Biancani, 'La leggenda di un'artista monaca: Caterina Vigri', in Vera Fortunati (ed.), *Vita artista nel monastero femminile. Exempla* (Bologna, 2002), 217–19.

painted began, after her beatification in 1592, to influence the *pittrici* who succeeded her in the city.

When did Bolognese artists begin to make historiated self-portraits as independent works? The first known example is Annibale Carracci's *Self-Portrait as Bacchus*, datable to about 1585.[84] Like Lomazzo before him and Caravaggio after him, Annibale referred in his self-portrait to the classical tradition that associated creativity with the ancient Roman god of wine.[85] It is likely that Annibale's small self-portrait was owned by a private collector whose pictures were not easily accessible to other artists, so it is not surprising that Annibale's example was not followed by his compatriots for a decade and a half. Moreover, no other autonomous historiated self-portraits are known by any of the other major male artists in Bologna during 1550–1650.

Although historiated self-portraits by male painters were evidently unusual in Bologna during this period, historiated self-portraits by women artists were more frequently produced during the seventeenth century. Lavinia Fontana, Antonia Pinelli, and Elisabetta Sirani all produced historiated self-portraits, five works that range in date from 1600 to 1658.

Lavinia Fontana's *Self-Portrait as Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (Fig. 8), of 1600, is the earliest known independent historiated self-portrait by a Bolognese woman. Richly dressed, as in her two earlier self-portraits, she holds a sword aloft, extends the decapitated head of Holofernes before her, and stares out defiantly at the viewer, as if daring us to object to her audacity in representing herself as the biblical heroine who killed a man. Perhaps Fontana's *Self-Portrait as Judith* was meant to convey an analogy between Judith's triumph over a man and Fontana's own success as a painter, both unusual female victories in traditionally male realms. Fontana's self-fashioning as a violent protagonist in this work contrasts significantly with Pinelli's self-portrait, fourteen years later, as a secondary figure, rather than a principal, in her *Miracle of St John the Evangelist* (Fig. 12). Whereas Fontana's *Self-Portrait as Judith* personifies female agency, Pinelli's self-representation portrays a spectator in a narrative enacted by men.

A second historiated self-portrait by Fontana, as St Barbara, was not an autonomous portrait but was incorporated into a religious picture, the *Madonna and Child Appearing to Five Saints* of 1601 (Fig. 9). Just above the signature and date, the artist looks out at the viewer, in a portrayal that

[84] Carracci's *Self-Portrait as Bacchus* was in the Stonor collection in Henley-on-Thames before being sold by Christie's on the 6 July 1990, lot 58. Its present location is unknown to this writer. It was cited in a 1725 inventory as Annibale Carracci's work. It was called a self-portrait of Ludovico Carracci by Perini, 'L'effigie di Ludovico', 355–6. I concur with D. Stephen Pepper's view that the painting is by and of Annibale; see D. S. Pepper, 'Some comments on the Annibale–Ludovico relationship and related problems', *Accademia Clementina: Atti e Memorie*, 33–4 (1994), 66–7. The sitter resembles the youthful portrait of Annibale in a sheet of studies by Ludovico Carracci (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 85.GB.218, in black chalk with stylus [recto]; 277 × 207 mm); see Babette Bohn, *Ludovico Carracci and the Art of Drawing*, no. 50, in press.

[85] G. P. Lomazzo's self-portrait in the Brera is dated 1568; Caravaggio's *Bacchino Malato* (Rome, Borghese Gallery) is datable to *c.* 1593. See John T. Spike and Michele K. Spike, *Caravaggio* (New York and London, 34).

closely resembles the Judith from the preceding year. In both historiated self-portraits, the artist identified herself with exemplars of female virtue. Barbara, an early Christian virgin martyr-saint, was, like Judith, associated with chastity. The large book she holds does not pertain to Barbara's iconography, but is a sketchbook that refers, instead, to the artist's vocation.

Although a half-century passed between these two historiated self-portraits by Fontana and the next self-portraits of this type by a Bolognese woman, Fontana's example was influential for her successors in later seventeenth-century Bologna. As a successful professional artist, who fashioned her own image many times and in various guises, and who made the first forays into the realm of history painting and historiated self-portraiture, Fontana provided a model for Sirani and her students.

Elisabetta Sirani produced two historiated self-portraits, one clearly inspired by Fontana's example. In 1658, Sirani painted a *Judith Showing the Head of Holofernes to the People of Bethulia* (Fig. 24). This large work, with life-sized figures, was made for Andrea Cattalani, a Bolognese businessman and art collector who owned seven pictures by the artist. The *Judith* was described by Sirani in her list of paintings; and it is signed and dated, at the lower right.[86] Although Judith's face is idealized and rounded, she has the same curving eyebrows, deepset eyes, and small lips that appear in Sirani's other self-portraits, suggesting that this image is an idealized and historiated self-portrait.

Sirani was surely influenced by Fontana's picture of 1600, which must have been known to her, in choosing to depict herself as Judith, who provided a particularly attractive heroine with whom to identify at this time in Bologna. In 1665, only seven years after Sirani's picture was painted, the Bolognese poet Giovanni Luigi Piccinardi published a poem on Judith. In this poem, Piccinardi argued that Judith's achievement was due equally to her beauty and to her eloquence.[87] This crediting of Judith's accomplishment to almost antithetical features – one traditionally identified with women and the other invariably associated during the early modern period with men – must have appealed to Sirani, whose skills as a painter were also talents traditionally associated with men. The masculine character of Sirani's skills was acknowledged by Piccinardi in his poem on the artist, in which he compared her to the sun (the masculine *sole* in Italian) and identified her with the masculine word *pittore*, rather than the feminine *pittrice*.[88]

More strikingly than Fontana's *Judith*, Sirani's heroine avoids feminine delicacy and eroticism. She is a solid, weighty figure; she is unemotional; and

[86] Sirani described the picture among her works painted in 1658 as a Judith showing the head of Holofernes to the people of Bettuglia at night, with the nurse and two pages with lit torches that make light, with life-sized figures, for Signore Cattalani: 'Una Giuditta mostrante la testa di Oloferne al Popolo di Bettuglia di notte tempo, con la nutrice, e due paggetti con torci accesi che fanno lume, figure del naturale per il sig. Cattalani', Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, II, 394. It is signed and dated, 'ELISAB.TA SIRANI. F. 1658'. On the *Judith* and its companion piece, see Bohn, 'Antique heroines', 60–6.

[87] Piccinardi, *Poesie*, 30–1. See Bohn, 'Antique heroines', 66.

[88] Piccinardi, *Poesie*, 51. See Bohn, 'Antique heroines, 78–9.

Fig. 24 Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait as Judith Showing the Head of Holofernes to the People of Bethulia*, 1658 (Burghley House Collection, Stamford, UK. Photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art)

although beautifully dressed in rich clothing, her garments are transfigured by the medallion depicting Medusa on her bodice, an image suggesting ferocity and power in lieu of traditional female beauty and delicacy. As I have discussed elsewhere, this image conveys a sense of physical power and chastity that is at once faithful to the biblical text and congruent with the artist's preference for eliminating the sexuality typical of such heroines in most contemporary Italian paintings of this subject.[89] Seen in conjunction with the picture's self-fashioning, this elimination of emotionality and sensuality takes on added significance as an aspect of Elisabetta's own public presentation of self.

Judith's synthesis of male with female qualities, of masculine warrior characteristics with female beauty, is also found in examples of self-fashioning

[89] Bohn, 'Antique heroines', 64–6.

by early modern women writers. The courtesan-poet Veronica Franco, for example, wrote:

> As if jolted awake from sweet sleep all at once,
> I drew courage from the risk I'd avoided,
> though a woman, born to milder tasks;
> and, blade in hand, I learned warrior's skills,
> so that, by handling weapons, I learned
> that women by nature are no less agile than men.[90]

If warrior characteristics metaphorically empowered Franco in a verbal duel with Maffio Venier, against whose outspoken misogyny she was defending herself and her gender, in Sirani's self-portrait the warrior imagery conveys female agency in a very different context. As Judith, a symbol of female virtue and a prefiguration of the Virgin herself, Sirani associated herself with a woman who, like the artist, was empowered to perform great deeds, but was connected nevertheless to a tradition of female virtue and purity.

These examples by Franco and Sirani, which assimilate masculine warrior qualities to convey a sense of strength and empowerment not usually associated with women, are part of a small group of works by early modern women that include but are not limited to self-depictions. Such warrior imagery occurs, for example, in a seventeenth-century poem about Queen Elizabeth by Anne Bradstreet, who termed Elizabeth 'our dread Virago', and connected her with Minerva and Pallas in poetic celebration of her military accomplishments.[91] In these poems and paintings, female agency is portrayed through association with virtues and actions usually attributed to men.

Sirani's second historiated self-portrait (Fig. 25) is the only self-portrait described by the artist in her list of paintings. In her list, she noted the self-portrait that abutted her painting of the *Baptism*, her largest public commission, painted in 1658 for the Bolognese church of San Gerolamo della Certosa (Fig. 26).[92] This self-portrait, which was cut down from a full-length

[90] This translation is from Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal (eds and trans.), *Veronica Franco: Poems and Selected Letters* (Chicago, 1998), xvi, 31–6. The original Italian text is as follows:

> Quasi da pigro sonno or poi svegliata,
> dal cansato periglio presi,
> benché femina a molli opere nata;
> e in man col ferro a essercitarmi appresi,
> tanto ch'aver le donne agil natura,
> non men che l'uomo, in armeggiando intesi. . . .

See also Rogers, *Fashioning Identities*, 98–9, who argued that the warrior imagery might have been inspired by women in contemporary epic poetry and Venetian painting.

[91] Anne Bradstreet, 'In honour of that high and mighty princess, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory', in Joseph R. McElrath, Jr and Allan P. Robb, *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet* (Boston, 1981), 156. In her poem, 'To the thrice-sacred Queen Elizabeth', Mary Sidney Herbert also employed masculine associations for Elizabeth, identifying her with King David; see Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (eds), *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: the Tradition in English* (New York, 1996).

[92] Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, ii, 394.

Fig. 25 Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait as a Nun-Saint*, 1658 (Palazzo Pepoli, Bologna, on deposit from the Pinacoteca Nazionale)

to a half-length figure during the nineteenth century, when it was also heavily restored,[93] depicts the artist in monastic garb, framed by an aureole of light, consistent with Sirani's description of the self-image as a saint who looks up at the sky. Her characteristic facial features – round face, deepset oval eyes, perfectly curved eyebrows, slightly overlarge nose, and small lips – correspond closely to those in the self-portrait drawing in a private collection discussed above (Fig. 13).

Sirani's decision to depict herself in San Gerolamo is particularly significant at this moment in her life. Although the *Baptism* was not the twenty-year-old

[93] Gaetano Giordani reported that the self-portrait was cut down from a full-length figure whose lower portion was ruined, in *La Pinacoteca Bolognese ovvero catalogo dei quadri che si conservano alla Pontificia Accademia di Belle Arti* (Bologna, 1853), 53. Its original appearance may be adduced from the companion picture of *Beata Rossellina*, which is still intact and in its original location, to the right of the *Baptism*. Whereas Sirani looks up, Rossellina looks down; otherwise, the nun's flat, asexual body is similar to Sirani's figure.

Fig. 26 Elisabetta Sirani, *Baptism*, 1658 (San Gerolamo della Certosa, Bologna)

artist's first public painting, it was her first major work for a church in Bologna itself and thus represented a turning point in her career.[94] The site of the *Baptism* was also notable, since San Gerolamo della Certosa was a repository of major works by many prominent Bolognese painters of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including Ludovico and Agostino Carracci, Francesco Gessi, Guercino, and Bartolomeo Cesi. Sirani's *Baptism* was the left lateral picture flanking Agostino Carracci's famous altarpiece of *The Last Communion of St Jerome* (now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna); and her father, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, produced the other lateral for the chapel, representing the *Supper of the Pharisee* (signed and dated 1652). Both of the Siranis' pictures were presumably commissioned by Daniele Granchi, the Ferrarese prior of San Gerolamo from 1644 to 1660, who had already

[94] Sirani described the *Virgin and Child with Saints Martin, Sebastian, Roch, and Anthony of Padua* as painted in 1655 for the comune of Trasasso; Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 393. Today it is in what was probably its original location, the high altar of San Martino, in Trasasso di Monzuno. Her vagueness over the patron and location for several early commissions leaves unclear how many early works in provincial churches were originally commissioned for those sites. Several early works were commissioned by an individual and placed in a church, including her first listed picture (1655), the lost *Saints Gregory the Great, Ignatius of Loyola, and Francis Xavier*, made for the Marchese Spada and given to a congregation in Parma (*ibid.*). A *Virgin of the Rosary with Saints Dominic and Catherine of Siena*, painted for the villa of Coscogno sul Modanese in 1657 (*ibid.* 394), is now in the parish church of Coscogno, possibly its original location. It is signed and dated 1657, confirming the accuracy of Sirani's chronology, as is the case with all dated paintings that can be connected with pictures described in her list.

commissioned a small painting of *San Bruno* from Elisabetta in 1657. If the *San Bruno* was done as a trial piece, it must have pleased Granchi, who commissioned the *Baptism* from the artist on 28 February 1657 and promised a generous fee of 1000 lire for the work.[95] The artist, producing the largest canvas of her career, signed and dated the *Baptism*, providing a second reference to her identity to complement the self-portrait. Her original signature, however, was originally much more modest than the gleaming white capital letters, some two feet high, that are now silhouetted conspicuously against the dark landscape background.[96]

Sirani's *Self-Portrait as a Nun-Saint* should also be understood in the context of the Italian tradition for portrayals of religious women, a tradition that in Bologna was particularly extensive in prints. Bologna had a remarkably rich history of nuns, tertiaries, and saintly secular women, dating back to the late Middle Ages. As Gabriella Zarri has eloquently discussed, Bolognese notions of sanctity during the early modern period were shaped by the presence of numerous charismatic, pious women, and by an increasing number of monastic women in the city. Although the monastic community had declined in Bologna during the mid-fifteenth century, the number of female monasteries in the city rose from twenty to twenty-five between 1490 and 1574, continuing to rise until 1621, when the number reached twenty-nine.[97] Moreover, changes in the representation of female sanctity during the Renaissance, inspired by female 'living saints' during the Quattrocento and early Cinquecento, yielded more positive portrayals of women, with an affirmation of their special relationship to the divine. This development was realized most famously in painting by Raphael's *St Cecilia*, painted in *c.* 1514–16, which honours 'another

[95] Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 20 noted a record in the monastery documents recording the commission, but the document can no longer be found in the Archivio di Stato, Bologna. On Granchi, see Paolo de Toth, *Il Beato Cardinale Nicolò Albergati e i suoi tempi 1375–1444* (Viterbo, 1934), I, 83–4, who also refers to the document (I, 33). Sirani's *San Bruno* is an unpublished work on copper, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, where it is wrongly ascribed to Giovanni Andrea Sirani, despite Elisabetta's signature and date (1657), and despite its inclusion in the artist's list of works carried out in 1657; Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 394. On the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings in San Gerolamo, see Alessandro Brogi, 'Dall'età dei Carracci all'arrivo dei Francesi', in Giovanna Pesci (ed.), *La Certosa di Bologna: Immortalità della memoria* (Bologna, 1998), 57–71.

[96] The original inscription was revealed in a recent restoration by Maricetta Parlatore Melega, to whom I am profoundly grateful for her generous collaboration. The original inscription is close to the large white letters that were added later and reads: 'ELISAB. TA SIRANI. F. / 1658'. Sirani signed some 66% of her extant paintings, and the *Baptism* is one of her earliest extant signed and dated pictures. A picture of the *Ten-thousand Crucified Martyrs* (private collection) is signed and dated 1656. Six paintings from 1657 are signed, but only three are also dated: the *Madonna Addolorata*, in the Palazzo Pepoli, on deposit from the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna; the *Ten-thousand Crucified Martyrs* (Bologna, S. Maria dei Servi); and the *Samson* (private collection). Four works from 1658 are signed and dated: the *Baptism* and the *Judith* (discussed below), the *Penitent Magdalen* (private collection), and the *Ten-thousand Crucified Martyrs* (Warsaw, National Museum of Poland). On the significance of artists' signatures, see Creighton Gilbert, 'A preface to signatures (with some cases in Venice)', in Mary Rogers (ed.), *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art* (Aldershot and Brookfield, 2000), 79–90 and Louisa C. Matthew, 'The painter's presence: signatures in Venetian Renaissance pictures', *The Art Bulletin*, 80 (1998), 616–48.

[97] Gabriella Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città (secoli XV–XVIII)', in Giorgio Chittolini and Giovanni Miccoli (eds), *Storia d'Italia Annali 9: La Chiesa e il potere politico dal medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Turin, 1986), 363 and 420.

Cecilia' of similar virtues in Bologna, Elena Duglioli.[98] In Bologna, Imelda Lambertini (who lived during the fourteenth century, but whose cult was stimulated when her relics were transferred to San Domenico in 1582), Caterina Vigri (1413–63), Elena Duglioli (1472–1520),[99] Pudenziana Zagnoni (1583–1608), Flaminia Bombace (d. 1624), Lucrezia Michelini (d. 1662), Francesca Maffei (d. 1662), and Maria Cajetana Scholastica De Muratorijs (1647–1726) are examples of such female luminaries. Their local reputations for sanctity apparently superseded even Roman authority: Lambertini (beatified 1826), Zagnoni (sanctioned 1682), and Duglioli (beatified 1820) were all included in 1645 in a list of Bolognese *beate*, although none of them were yet officially beatified.[100] Several of these women, including Vigri, Zagnoni, and Bombace, produced religious writings; and all of them were immortalized in engravings honouring their spiritual achievements.

The first influential printed image to honour one of the religious women of Bologna is a depiction of Caterina Vigri (Fig. 27). Published in 1502 and inscribed 'BEATA KATHERINA', although it predates her beatification by ninety years,[101] the woodcut portrays Vigri in what became her canonical representation. Wearing her Poor Clares habit and seated upright, but with closed eyes to indicate that she is deceased, she holds a cross and a book, alluding to her treatise, *Le Sette armi spirituali*. The woodcut, like later prints of Vigri, testifies to her miraculously uncorrupt body, which is still preserved in the Corpus Domini and remains a popular focus of religious worship in Bologna. Bolognese paintings of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often depicted miracles that occurred during Caterina's lifetime, as in Lorenzo Pasinelli's painting of the *Virgin and Child appearing to St Caterina Vigri* (sacristy, Madonna di Galliera, Bologna, *c.* 1687), a miraculous visitation reported in Caterina's writings that accords with Bologna's strongly Marian orientation.[102] However, the early printed depictions of Vigri invariably focused on the central miracle of her cult: her miraculously preserved body. Vigri's incorrupt body identifies her with the Virgin Mary, the prototype for such incorruptability, placing Caterina's cult squarely into the context of

[98] Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: cultura e religiosità femminile nella prima età moderna* (Turin, 1990), 12–30.

[99] As Zarri noted, Duglioli (1472–1520) was listed among the 'beati bolognesi' by Archbishop Paoleotti in 1594, but her cult was officially sanctioned only in 1828 (Zarri. *Le sante vive*, 98).

[100] G. Bombaci, *Memorie sacre de gli homini illustri per titoli e per fama di santità della città di Bologna e de santi suoi protettori* (Bologna, 1640) and *Memorie venerabili susseguenti i bolognesi illustri per santità* (Bologna, 1645), discussed by Gabriella Zarri, 'Il libro e la voce. Santi e culti a Bologna da Caterina de' Vigri a Clelia Barbieri (secoli XV–XX), in Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (eds), *Storia della chiesa di Bologna* (Bologna, 1997), 53–6. On Caterina Vigri's canonization in 1712, see also Serena Spanò Martinelli, 'La canonizzazione di Caterina Vigri: una problema cittadino nella Bologna del Seicento', in Sofia Boesch Gajano and Lucia Sebastiani (eds), *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale* (L'Aquila and Rome, 1984), 719–34.

[101] The print appears in the 1502 edition of Vigri's biography, written by the literary courtier Sabadino degli Arienti, *Catherina beata de Bologna* (Bologna, first published 1472).

[102] The later representations of Vigri, including Pasinelli's, are discussed by Irene Graziani, 'L'Iconografia di Caterina Vigri: dalla clausura alla città', in Fortunati, *Vita artistica*, 221–43, although Graziani does not discuss the early, printed representations of Caterina.

Fig. 27 Anonymous Italian artist, *Caterina Vigri* (woodcut), 1502 (Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

Bolognese Mariology. The woodcut's simple, frontal depiction of a woman's body whose purity is signalled both by her nun's habit and by the absence of feminine features like breasts, augmented only by the two small props of book and cross, created an influential model for later printed depictions of religious women in Bologna.

One example of a print influenced by depictions of Caterina Vigri is Francia's *Portrait of Pudenziana Zagnoni*, which is dated 1657, the same year Sirani's *Baptism and Self-Portrait as a Saint* for the Certosa were commissioned (Fig. 28). Zagnoni, a Franciscan tertiary who died at the age of 25 in 1608, was reported, like Vigri, to have performed miracles and produced written works.[103] Like Vigri, Zagnoni typifies the mysticism that often characterized female religious figures in Bologna during the early modern period: she

[103] She is described as a nun in the third order of San Francesco, who performed miracles and wrote a book, *Effetti divoti alle piaghe del Crocefisso* by Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, VIII, 220 and Orlandi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, 240.

Fig. 28 Francia, *Portrait of Pudenziana Zagnoni* (engraving), 1657 (Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

experienced ecstasies and visions throughout her short life. If Vigri provided a model for female sanctity in Bologna, her printed depictions also provided a model for portrayals of other religious women like Zagnoni. In Francia's engraving, Pudenziana is clothed in her Franciscan habit, her body flat and sexless beneath her draperies and her eyes modestly lowered, holding a crucifix and a branch of roses. The roses refer to Suor Pudenziana's best-known miracle: a beautiful boy gave her a branch of roses that had been sent by a nun-friend who had died some days ago.[104] In the framework of Francia's print, the rose branch appears again at the right, matched at left with a stalk of lilies that alludes to Suor Pudenziana's chastity and links her with the Virgin Mary. Like Vigri, Zagnoni is depicted with austere iconographic

[104] On Zagnoni, see G. A. Rota, *Vita di suor Pudenziana Zagnoni Vergine Bolognese* (Bologna, 1650); Valerio Dehò, *La chiave del cielo: lettere di suor Pudenziana Zagnoni mistica e visionaria bolognese del XVII secolo* (Bologna, 1995); Orlandi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, 240; Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, VIII, 220; and Zarri, 'Il libro e la voce', 63–4.

simplicity and is characterized by complete purity and a capacity for miracles, both qualities that link her to the Virgin Mary.

One impression of Zagnoni's engraved portrait is found in an extraordinary unpublished manuscript, housed today in the Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna. Two volumes compiled between 1769 and 1785 by Baldassare Antonio Maria Carrati feature 385 engraved portraits of illustrious male and female *bolognesi*, including eighteen different engraved portraits of Caterina Vigri and the printed portraits of another eighteen Bolognese religious women, including all the names cited above. This group includes tertiaries, virginal women who never took orders, nuns, *beate*, and saints; and most of them are similar in format to the simple depictions of Vigri and Zagnoni reproduced here.[105] One notable exception to this format is an engraving of Imelda Lambertini, signed and dated in 1620 by the Bolognese printmaker Oliviero Gatti (Fig. 29). Lambertini was a young Dominican novice who lived in the fourteenth century, but her bones were moved to the church of San Domenico in 1582, during a wave of reliquary translations in Bologna that began under the Bolognese pope Gregory XIII (1572–85).[106] In lieu of the half-length portrait format, Gatti's print depicts a narrative scene, to show Lambertini's most famous miracle: a miraculous reception of the Eucharist. Although she was not officially beatified until 1826, Gatti's print, consistent with local Bolognese views, identifies her as a *beata*. Depite the full-length format, Imelda's depiction is consistent with the images of the other religious women discussed above. She wears her Dominican novice's robes, which successfully conceal all feminine characteristics of her body; she kneels in prayer, with folded hands and eyes raised to heaven; and she is surrounded by an aureole of divine light. As Zarri has observed, the emphasis on the Eucharist expressed here is typical of Bolognese Counter Reformation theology.[107]

The proliferation of such images in early modern Bologna provides an essential context for understanding Sirani's self-fashioning as a female nun-saint, a year after the Zagnoni engraving was produced. In contrast to the frontal Zagnoni, Sirani portrayed herself in three-quarter view, a necessary compositional concession to the site, which originally featured two figures flanking the *Baptism*, with both turned worshipfully towards the latter. All other features of her painting seem directly related to the religious images discussed above. The black veil and white collar of Sirani's habit conform to the Poor Clares habit of Caterina Vigri, with whom the painter may have intended to identify. Like Vigri, Zagnoni, and Lambertini, Sirani's hair and body are completely covered in eloquent renunciation of corporeal sin; and like Vigri, Zagnoni, and Lambertini, Sirani also repudiated full naturalism in

[105] The portrait of Michelini, for example, is also half-length and depicts its subject holding a book. Maffei's portrayal is similar, although her hands are not included.

[106] See Zarri, 'Il libro e la voce', 54–6. Zarri noted that Lambertini was listed among the Bolognese *beate* during the year that her relics were transferred to San Domenico, in 1582.

[107] Zarri, 'Il libro e la voce', 55–6.

Fig. 29 Oliviero Gatti, *Miracle of the Blessed Imelda Lambertini* (engraving), 1620 (Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

eschewing any indication of breasts beneath her draperies. Like the nuns, Sirani's chest is flat and asexual, in accordance with her spiritual demeanour. Sirani's spiritual sensibility is reinforced by her uplifted gaze and the divine light that falls on her face, reminiscent of Gatti's depiction of Lambertini. If the painter's self-image accords with local traditions for depictions of female sanctity, it also clearly repudiates any taint of female eroticism, the favoured sin attached to 'daughters of Eve' during the period. As an unmarried virgin, Sirani's claims were warranted, although unlike Lavinia Fontana, who identified herself as such in signatures before her marriage, Sirani never alluded to her virginity in signatures. Instead, she employed visual means to link her self-image to a Bolognese pictorial tradition in which virginity and purity were concomitant attributes of female virtue.

Was Sirani making a deliberate connection between herself and Caterina Vigri? Although there is no conclusive evidence for this hypothesis, several circumstantial factors make it plausible. Elisabetta Sirani was born and lived

on the Via Urbana, around the corner from the Corpus Domini, Vigri's convent. Sirani would surely have visited Caterina's incorrupt relics and seen engravings of her. Although there is no record of Sirani's having produced either a depiction of Vigri or a painting for the Corpus Domini, her sister Anna Maria Sirani (1645–1715) painted a picture of Vigri, and her student Lucrezia Scarfaglia painted a San Pasquale for Vigri's convent.[108]

I would argue that first Elisabetta Sirani, and later her students, identified with Vigri, who was canonized and became the patron saint of the Bolognese artist's academy during the early eighteenth century.[109] Returning to the self-portraits of Scarfaglia and Cantofoli, discussed above, it seems likely that another factor in inspiring these women to fashion themselves painting the *Madonna of St Luke* was the example of Caterina herself. One of her famous visions was a visit from the Christ Child, as depicted by Pasinelli in *c.* 1687. In 1713, the year after Vigri's canonization, Marcantonio Franceschini depicted Caterina utilizing this vision as the inspiration for a painting of the Christ Child (Fig. 30).[110] Bathed in divine light, painting her miraculous visitor like a female St Luke, Caterina portrays Christ on a small tablet held by an angel. The image on the tablet corresponds to a painting in the Corpus Domini that is ascribed to St Caterina herself, an attribution that has been doubted by modern writers but was generally accepted in Bologna during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[111]

Following Caterina Vigri's example, and building upon precedents established by Lavinia Fontana in her self-portraits, Sirani, Scarfaglia, and Cantofoli were all inspired to connect themselves as painters with a tradition of female sanctity and literacy that offered unprecedented agency and stature to the women artists of the city, a positive association for the female painter that was unavailable in any other Italian city during these years. Following Fontana's lead but moving beyond the professional accomplishments of their predecessor by defining themselves unequivocally as history painters, Sirani and her followers reinforced their claims to virtue by identifying themselves with the most intellectual branch of their art. The self-portraits of these Bolognese women record more than the anomaly of their professional achievements and desire for fame: they also testify to a peculiarly Bolognese view of women, which allowed for intellectual and spiritual accomplishments to a degree that was not obtainable in other Italian cities for another century. Bologna's 'numerous group of remarkable women, who distinguished

[108] Anna Maria's lost work was painted 'for Malta', according to Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, II, 412; Masini, *Aggiunte*, 2'–3; and Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, 75. Scarfaglia's lost San Pasquale was cited by Oretti (*Notizie*, B.129, 121) and Crespi (*Felsina Pittrice*, 119) as a work for the nuns of the Corpus Domini.

[109] Vigri was canonized in 1712 and was proclaimed the patron saint of the Bolognese Accademia Clementina in 1710, while the canonization process was in its final stages. See Biancani, 'La leggenda', 209 and Giampietro Zanotti, *Storia dell'Accademia Clementina di Bologna* (Bologna, 1739), I, 31.

[110] On Franceschini's painting, see Dwight C. Miller, *Marcantonio Franceschini* (Turin, 2001), 110, no. 10.

[111] Biancani, 'La leggenda', 206–7 rejected the attribution of the picture to Vigri and discussed its widespread acceptance as her work during the early modern period.

Fig. 30 Marcantonio Franceschini, *St Caterina Vigri painting the Christ Child*, *c.* 1713 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, deposit)

themselves in the art of painting'[112] promulgated their accomplishments, both directly and metaphorically, in an extraordinary group of self-portraits that testify both to their own achievements and to the anomaly of their city. In Bologna, it was especially female self-portraiture that anticipated both the fuller acceptance of painting as a liberal art and the greater diversity of self-representation that became common in eighteenth-century self-portraiture, as exemplified in Bologna by the works of Luigi Crespi, the Gandolfi, Giuseppe Maria Crespi, and Lucia Casalini Torelli. By integrating history painting and portraiture in these images, Bolognese *pittrici* brought a new legitimacy and dignity, both to the art of painting and to their gender in early modern Italy.

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[112] Giordani, *Notizie*, 5 (my translation).