



**Lorenzo Lotto: Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance; Lorenzo Lotto;
Lorenzo Lotto; Lorenzo Lotto e l'Immaginario Alchemico: Le "imprese"
nelle tarsie del coro della basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo**

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must search for an illustration each time a work is discussed—usually without finding it.

It is worth considering, by way of conclusion, who the audience might be for each of these books. The main appeal of *The Renaissance Print* will be to print connoisseurs: curators, collectors, and perhaps dealers. In addition, there will be a number of historians with sufficient interest in the print media or in Renaissance art to purchase the book. But the technical bias of the book and its self-imposed restriction to the *peintre-graveur* will detract from the book's general appeal.

By contrast, *Court, Cloister and City* will have a broad appeal. It should attract professional and amateur historians of art in general, of early modern European history, and of central or eastern European studies. In addition, the book's broad coverage, readability, and grounding in cultural history should make it appealing to that ever-dwindling group known as the well-educated public.

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Notes

1. Timothy Riggs and Larry Silver, *Craven Images: The Rise of Professional Printmakers in Antwerp and Haarlem, 1540–1640* (Evanston, Ill.: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery of Northwestern University, 1993), 114–18.

2. Stephen Perkinson, "Reproductive Engravings at the Mary and Leigh Block Gallery," *Block Points 2* (1995): 70–73.

3. *Ibid.*, 89; and Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (1980; reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 86. Kaufmann cites two quotations from Baxandall; the first, on p. 86, is followed by a second that this reader does not find in his 1990 edition of *The Limewood Sculptors*. Nevertheless, Kaufmann's characterization of Baxandall's point is accurate.

4. Kaufmann's previous book is *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

5. Kauffmann's personal attention to detail can be seen in the numerous changes and corrections he has made to the text that will appear in the forthcoming German edition of his book. A mere sampler of these corrections includes the following: p. 110, last line, and p. 169, second paragraph, fifth line: Christoph, not Hans, Weiditz; p. 209, second paragraph, third line from bottom: 1609, not 1610; p. 229, third paragraph, third line from the bottom: Wohlmut, not Wolgemut; p. 251, caption: Santi Galli, not Santino Bussi; p. 387, second paragraph, fifth line, in parenthesis: Cheb, not Erlau; and so forth.

DAVID ALAN BROWN,
PETER HUMFREY,
AND MAURO LUCCO ET AL.

Lorenzo Lotto: Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
272 pp.; 80 color ills., 100 b/w. \$55.00

PETER HUMFREY

Lorenzo Lotto

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
224 pp.; 78 color ills., 86 b/w. \$45.00

JACQUES BONNET

Lorenzo Lotto

Paris: Adam Biro, 1996. 208 pp.; 118 color ills., 2 b/w. \$55.00

MAURO ZANCHI

Lorenzo Lotto e l'Immaginario

Alchemico: Le "imprese" nelle tarsie del coro della basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo

Clusone: Ferrari, 1997. 210 pp.; 45 color ills., 40 b/w. 60,000 lire

The Lorenzo Lotto exhibition that opened in November 1997 in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and that traveled to Bergamo and Paris in 1998, hailed Lorenzo Lotto as a "rediscovered master of the Renaissance." Lotto certainly has a long way to go in achieving recognition among the general populace, but among Renaissance scholars he has for some time been appreciated as one of the most engaging artists of the 16th century and, since the publication of Bernard Berenson's pioneering monograph in 1895, has attracted a sizable body of scholarship. The latest wave of book-length publications, under review here, brings together many recent findings and offers a newly integrated picture of the artist's work. Jacques Bonnet's book is the first monograph on the artist to appear in French, and the monograph by Peter Humfrey and the exhibition catalogue make a significant contribution to English-language scholarship, which since Berenson has lacked a comprehensive treatment of the artist.¹ One can almost hear the gears of canon-formation at work, slowly installing Lotto among the ranks of the major masters. In his introduction to the catalogue, David Alan Brown looks to a future when "Lotto may occupy a more central place in Renaissance art than he has hitherto been granted." One of course sympathizes with the sentiment, and yet it is worth wondering whether a central position is suited to an artist who spent most of his career devising willfully eccentric and unconventional alternatives to more classical statements. Giving Lotto the attention he deserves might, instead, lead us to ask how the very question of center and periphery took shape in the artistic culture of 16th-century Italy and, further, to ask what this question had to do with the emerging historical and regional awareness of artistic tradition that marks the period.² It is the sort of question that has preoccupied literary historians of the period especially since Carlo Dionisotti, and if that body of scholarship is any indication it might prove the best means of asking what connects these artistic matters to the critical religious climate of early 16th-century Italy.

The catalogue, written by David Alan Brown, Peter Humfrey, and Mauro Lucco, follows in the best tradition of recent catalogues, offering a substantial essay on each work rather

than the traditional small and all-too-often unsatisfying entry. The volume also includes essays by several respected scholars in the field on important aspects of Lotto's work, and one can only wish they were longer (they average five illustrated pages). Mauro Lucco's essay on Lotto's figurative sources is filled with valuable suggestions and confirms one's impression of Lotto's novelty in this regard. If most artists, even the most original ones, are stamped by their initial training, Lotto's training remains mysterious, and was in any case quickly superseded by an active fashioning of stylistic choices from a variety of available traditions. Lucco expands the repertoire of potential northern influences beyond the familiar references to Albrecht Dürer, making apposite suggestions of Lotto's responsiveness to Matthias Grünewald, Hans Holbein the Younger, and Jan van Scorel, as well as Urs Graf, Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, and Hans Leu. In a later catalogue entry on the Allentown *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 11), Lucco also aptly invokes Albrecht Altdorfer. Lotto's lifelong responsiveness to the art of the north helps to explain his somewhat oblique relation to the masters of the Italian High Renaissance. Lucco points out evidence of Lotto's awareness of Michelangelo and Raphael, especially in the Roman works (evidence supplemented in David Alan Brown's excellent entry on the Castel Sant'Angelo *Saint Jerome*, cat. no. 8), to make the important point that Lotto's avoidance of these models and their "formidable pride in the human figure" was a deliberate choice—a choice, one might add, for which the *Recanati Transfiguration* can stand as a manifesto. Perhaps this explains why Lotto seems consistently to have found stronger inspiration in artists at some remove from the principal High Renaissance masters and, as it were, one step closer to him: Fra Bartolomeo, not Raphael, Antonio da Pordenone, not Michelangelo. Somewhat surprisingly, Pordenone does not appear in Lucco's essay, and neither does Cima da Conegliano.

In an essay on Lotto's patrons, Louisa Matthew assembles evidence to put to rest the received view that Lotto worked for members of the artisan class and for rustic provincials. Only 20 out of 116 documented works of all types, she shows, were made for artisans. Among his altarpieces, of which only one was made for an artisan, one-third were made for confraternities, placing him, as Matthew notes, "in the mainstream of altarpiece patronage in the sixteenth century" (p. 30). She also contests the notion that Lotto's patrons living in smaller cities and towns were necessarily less sophisticated than those in larger cities, but has space to mention only a few of the more illustrious names, such as Bernardo de' Rossi, bishop of Treviso (whose portrait in Naples is in the exhibition), and Niccolò Bonafede, bishop of Chiusi, for whom Lotto painted the magnificent *Crucifixion* in Monte S. Giusto (sadly, not in the exhibition). A deft assessment of Lotto's activity while in Venice between 1525 and about 1532 disproves the view that Lotto lacked for commissions or that his painting was not to the taste of sophisticated

Venetian clients. Throughout, Matthew is at pains to point out that Lotto left Venice most often as a result of altarpiece commissions and not because he could not hold his own in the artistic capital. She does concede, however, that Lotto was unusual in choosing to live for years in outlying places, and that it is likely that Venice was not congenial to him, thus leaving the question somewhat open. Matthew also stops short of addressing the root of the theories she disproves, which lies of course in the unusual qualities of many of Lotto's paintings. She succeeds in closing off any recourse to facile external explanations (Lotto painted in a noncanonical way for marginal patrons), but this makes the unconventional aspects of his work, and his clients' receptivity to them, a more rather than less pressing issue. It means that the question of patronage must move from matters of production to matters of reception.

No one appears to be more interested in reconstructing the highly personal transactions between Lotto's paintings and their owners than Augusto Gentili, who provides a short and passionate précis of his mode of reading Lotto's pictures in one of the introductory essays. Gentili sees the portraits as biographical emblems of the sitters, incorporating their deepest wishes and engaging crucial moments in their personal histories. These readings quickly take him beyond what the known documents are able to prove, and accordingly they have been strongly contested in the past as well as in the catalogue entries of this volume. The portraits formed the heart of the exhibition, and the debates swirl most violently around them in the catalogue. The differences in interpretation go beyond the much debated details. Where Gentili sees encapsulated stories, the writers of the catalogue tend to see general, that is, "static" allusions to the character or status of the sitter. For Gentili, revising an interpretation proposed by Diana Galis, the portrait of the elegant and sensitive young man in the Venice Accademia (cat. no. 32) marks a juncture in his life: in the wake of a disappointment in love he has given up youthful pleasures, symbolized by the horn and lute, and has assumed his responsibilities in the family business, symbolized by the ledger in his hands and the safe behind him. For Humfrey, who has provided the entry, "all this has gone too far." It is a portrait of a sensitive and melancholy young man, and the elements arrayed around him refer to this condition. The rose petals scattered over the desk represent not the transience of worldly pleasures but a well-known remedy for melancholy. (It may be added that the hunt [the horn] and music [the lute] were also classic remedies.³) For Gentili, Lucina Brembate's portrait (cat. no. 15) reveals a no-longer-young woman facing a difficult pregnancy. The moonlit night alludes to the eponymous goddess Lucina, invoked since classical times for protection in childbirth, the marten and the horn-amulet to the dangers she faces and the deliverance she seeks—and these emblematic references are given human poignancy in the gesture of her

hand protecting her belly. Lucco's response, in the catalogue entry, is that this is a circular and unproven argument, not supported by any evidence of a late pregnancy for Brembate. The luxurious marten stole is a common feature of contemporary female portraits, as is the gesture of the hand, and the "horn" hanging around her neck is an elegant toothpick, an accessory common enough for Giovanni della Casa to single it out for censure in the *Galateo*. Again, no story, no critical juncture; instead, a portrait of a woman who "exhibits confidently the emblems of her social status" (p. 115).

In these two cases Gentili's hypotheses prove not very convincing, but though he may have gone wrong it is not at all certain that he has gone too far. Both the *Young Man* in Venice and *Lucina Brembate* are something more than portraits with attributes, and reductive readings risk projecting back into this period an overly modern and rational attitude toward images. Superstitious uses of images in Lotto's time were hardly confined to the uneducated. Aby Warburg pointed to the connection between the portraits in Ghirlandaio's frescoes, so often interpreted as little more than cynical prestige seeking, and the quasi-magical uses of wax effigies.⁴ (Marsilio Ficino, who figures in one of these portraits, was given to beating on drums and chanting in order to induce mystical trances.⁵) Edgar Wind showed that allegorical portraiture of the period involved forms of identification that go well beyond playful masquerade.⁶ Such uses of portraits corresponded to beliefs held about images generally, and again not simply by "popular" viewers. The eminently sensible Leon Battista Alberti entertained the idea that paintings with beautiful figures helped women conceive beautiful offspring.⁷ Closer to Lotto's milieu, the able statesman Doge Leonardo Loredan carefully inspected old images for auguries that impinged on current political events, and dictated policy accordingly.⁸ The use of astrology was rampant among the classes for which Lotto worked, and the lure of alchemy seduced many of the humanists and artists in Lotto's ambient. It was natural in this context to expect portraits to carry symbolic meaning, if not to perform some sort of propitiatory function.

Both Humfrey and Lucco allow for this dimension in the portraits to a degree. Following up a very promising suggestion of Humfrey's, Lucco sees the rebus in the Brembate portrait—where the moon inscribed with the letters CI designates LU-CL-NA—as an infiltration of the heraldic devices usually reserved for the panels that covered the portraits into the picture field of the portrait itself. The purpose of the covers was not only to provide physical protection for the portraits underneath but also, in a more figurative sense, to put the sitters under the beneficent sign of edifying and auspicious mottoes, emblems, and symbols.⁹ By introducing these elements into the picture field Lotto threw a traditional allegorical language into volatile relationship with a newly intensive mode of naturalistic description. Lotto's purpose in doing so was

no doubt to make these elements "work" more effectively, to focus their significance and influence more intensely on the individual sitter. This is one case where the cleaning of the painting has truly illuminated its meaning and function, for now Lucina's face shines with a lunar brilliance, and her expression, sometimes construed as somber or anxious, is radiant, even enchanted, and yet, as Lucco notes, notably unidealized. What might have been a standard symbolic allusion is here, through the descriptive effects of oil painting, made powerfully personal.

The portrait of *Lucina Brembate* is still close to the relatively "static" early bust-length portraits, such as *Bernardo de' Rossi* (cat. no. 2) or the *Youth with a Lamp* in Vienna, but in the portraits of the 1520s and later these restrictions are abandoned. Humfrey's suggestions about generic contamination, in other words, help to explain that innovation at the level of format universally noted by Lotto critics: the expansion of the portrait to a larger horizontal field, which allows the inclusion of a circumstantial setting and symbolic elements. The portraits of the 1520s and later thus acquire a larger symbolic and historical dimension, and yet, just as importantly, the larger language they invoke is now splintered, keyed to very personal stories. As a result, the symbolic elements and mythic allusions can no longer be simply referred to a stable code. They take on pointed, unpredictable meanings in relation to precise personal circumstances—and this, finally, is what makes the portraits hard to read now, because the life thread that held the elements together is almost entirely lost to us. Gentili may go astray in the hazardous enterprise of reconstructing these stories, but he is not wrong in believing that this is what the portraits ask us to do.

Lucco himself seems to agree, at least for the wide-format portraits, since he offers just this sort of ingenious and risky reading in his entry for the St. Petersburg portrait of a married couple (cat. no. 25). Lucco's interpretation involves the identification of the sitters as Gian Maria Cassotti and Laura Assonica (suggested as one possibility by Humfrey in his monograph, p. 71) and the corollary assertion that what we see here is a grieving widower shown with a posthumous portrait of his dead wife (circumstantial evidence indicates she was dead by 1525). On the face of it I find the identification difficult to accept: this man simply looks too old to be the "not much older" brother of Marsilio Cassotti, who was twenty-one in 1523 (for his marriage portrait, also in the exhibition, see cat. no. 21). But the more important question is what this identification of the sitters has to do with Lucco's very original reading of the inscription (HOMO NUMQUAM: "man never") and of the man's gesture of pointing to the sleeping squirrel. Citing Pliny and Vincent de Beauvais, Lucco notes that the squirrel was known to sleep through storms, such as the one seen through the window in the portrait.¹⁰ Man, however, is not permitted such a luxury, and must suffer through the storms of his life, such as the death of a beloved spouse. In his presentation

Lucco is careful to offer this interpretation before proceeding to the identification of the sitters, but in reality it is very difficult to conceive and sustain important aspects of this reading—for example, that the woman is not really “there” but is a posthumous effigy—without such an identification in mind, and this of course leaves Lucco open to his own charge of circularity. The more common way to read the painting, first articulated by Galis and largely espoused by Gentili and Humfrey, is as the image of a couple that has passed through a stormy time, the husband’s gesture seen as a vow never again to “fall asleep” in the duties of good husbandry. Such an interpretation gives the inscription an altogether different—indeed, nearly opposed—tone and significance.

Great erudition and diligence will no doubt continue to be poured into one or another interpretation, but it is worth stopping to consider what the existence of these wildly divergent readings tells us about the nature of Lotto’s portraits. It is clear enough that no amount of research into, say, the lore of squirrels is going to establish what this one means here; on the contrary, it will continue to multiply the possibilities. The inscription, an element traditionally adopted for its denotative stability, remains, as we have seen, open to radically different readings. Lucco sensitively observes that the man is crying, a highly unconventional feature that pleads for precise understanding, and yet even this does not confirm any one interpretation over another. In short, a strenuous effort to marshal all of the resources of pictorial expressiveness and clarity fails to yield a communicable message. The diverse interpretations and the debates will, instead, continue to multiply until some unusually informative new documentary evidence about these people and these portrait commissions comes to light—an unlikely eventuality, to say the least. We are faced with a similar situation in the *Young Man* in Venice, as we have seen, and also in the other wide-format portraits of the period, such as *Lucrezia Valier* (cat. no. 38) and *Andrea Odoni* (cat. no. 28), which, again, despite the overt mythological references and the emphatic gestures, have provoked a wide variety of interpretations. To argue that traditional procedures of iconographic investigation will never alone succeed in resolving the meanings of these portraits, however, is not to claim that Lotto was interested in ambiguity for its own sake. It is to acknowledge that his portraits embody a fractured moment in the history of portraiture, in which a newly intense engagement with the personal situations of the sitters is interpreted through the elements of a larger, traditional symbolic language, now reduced to highly equivocal fragments. And perhaps this precarious situation explains why the gestures become so urgent, the compositions so abrupt, the symbolism so emphatic, and the use of inscriptions so declarative.

Related issues arise in Wendy Stedman Sheard’s essay, which celebrates the singularity of Lotto’s portraiture viewed in light of the innovations of Giorgione and Titian. Sheard

is surely correct to emphasize the degree to which Lotto’s portraits make claims on their viewers, but this also inclines her toward rather dramatized readings that some viewers may not share. In the *Man Holding a Glove* at Hampton Court, for example, she sees a man who “reacts angrily,” his turning head communicating “bilious rage” at the intrusive viewer; I see a piqued but thoughtful gaze directed not at us but somewhere to our right. And yet Sheard is certainly right in stressing the difference that separates Lotto’s portraiture from Titian’s, and in finding the key to the difference in the instability of Lotto’s portraits. Titian’s *Young Man* in the Frick may be sentimental and dreamy, but at the semantic level the portrait is quite stable, clearly establishing an identity and a type. Though some of the ingredients are the same, it is a far cry from the precarious and personal world of Lotto’s melancholy *Young Man* in Venice, discussed above. Similarly, the rapacious *Jacopo Strada* has little to do with the searching ambivalence of *Andrea Odoni*, and the blunt confrontation of the so-called *Schiavona* is a world away from the tilted and inquisitive challenge of *Lucrezia Valier*.

A similarly unsettled quality has often been perceived in Lotto’s religious subjects, and Gentili points to what might be called figural disruptions that reveal an urgent exegetical strain in the artist’s work. In the extraordinary *Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Nicholas of Tolentino* in Boston (cat. no. 24), for example, the Child is everywhere confronted by figures of the Passion: the cross held by Saint Jerome, the cross-handed gesture of Nicholas, from which the Child recoils in fear, and, most obviously, the coffin on which the Child stands. As Gentili points out, the coffin is *small*, it is for the Child—a fundamental incongruity that disrupts a rational historical time scheme and refers the message of sacrifice to the here and now.¹¹ The entire point, one might add, is brought directly home in the gaze that the Virgin casts toward us, in which we discern an uncomfortable knowledge tempered by a trusting assurance, a maternal instinct absorbed by a larger solicitude, a complex theological awareness concentrated in a simple and direct appeal—in short, an owl-like quality that is in many ways emblematic of Lotto’s art in general. And although nothing about this is heterodox, Gentili is right to see in these highly individual and intimate interpretations, and in the demands they make on their viewers, a connection to Lotto’s undeniable affinity for persons of a reform-minded persuasion. In this sense his observations supplement Adriano Prosperi’s essay on Lotto’s relation to the religious crisis of early 16th-century Italy.

Prosperi begins with a contrast between the image of the vine (the direct link to Christ) and the vineyard (where the Church’s work is done). Lotto’s Oratorio Suardi frescoes place him firmly in the vine-dominant reading and reveal him to be “one of the most perceptive exponents of a vast and widespread trend in the Italian religious life of the first part of the sixteenth century: the restoration of Christ as

the sole foundation and intermediary of the entire ecclesiastical structure and practice” (p. 21). Prosperi is careful to point out, however, that a direct relationship to the promise of salvation in Christ could be cultivated within a Catholic milieu without necessarily coming into open conflict with Catholic institutions. He also shows that Lutheran influence in Italy could be combined with a Franciscan spiritual tradition emphasizing love and mystical perfection through union with Christ, producing a situation where the line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy becomes very difficult to draw—a situation that, Prosperi warns, should not be simplified in retrospect by the application of distinctions framed in the Counter-Reformation. Prosperi’s proposals regarding specific works by Lotto remain tentative, but this framing of the problem offers a valuable guide for future research, because it will tend to discourage the quasi-inquisitorial hunt for heterodox iconography and turn attention instead to issues of rhetoric and address.

This carefully selected exhibition offered several experiences that will be difficult to repeat. The portraits of Bernardo de’ Rossi from Naples and the portrait of a woman, sometimes identified as his sister Giovanna, in Dijon were reunited with the panels in Washington that once served as their covers, and are admirably treated in David Alan Brown’s catalogue entries (cat. nos. 2–5). To see the Washington covers in the same room with the Louvre *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 6) strongly confirmed the suspicion, first voiced by Berenson, that the latter is also a cover for a portrait that remains to be identified. It was also a special privilege to see the small *Madonna and Saints* (cat. no. 7) from Kraków and the *Saint Jerome* from Bucharest (cat. no. 10). The latter work has been given perhaps the most varying dates of any in Lotto’s oeuvre. Lucco favors an early dating (ca. 1514), pointing to various apparently fresh references to Lotto’s Roman experience. He also draws attention to the grasshopper at the bottom of the picture, whose scale and treatment, Lucco correctly observes, reveal it to be perched on the frame rather than “in” the picture, not unlike the fruits and cartello that sit “in front” of the picture in the *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* from Berlin (cat. no. 17).¹²

The exhibition also brought together the Boston *Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Nicholas of Tolentino* (cat. no. 24, discussed above), with the variant in Costa di Mezzate (cat. no. 18). Lucco is strongly committed to defending the Costa di Mezzate version and argues, quite convincingly, that it is the prototype for the Boston version as well as for the version in the London National Gallery (not in the exhibition). Generally, it is very risky to assign dates within a two-year time frame on the basis of style; one must instead judge on the basis of quality, and this puts the Boston version firmly at the head of the pack. Another painting in the exhibition, a recently discovered portrait of a *Man with a Felt Hat* (cat. no. 44), was a new sight for everyone, and an unusual addition to the corpus in that

it portrays a man of modest social station. Humfrey sensitively observes in his entry that the pose and face imply a person “ill at ease with the unaccustomed business of having his portrait painted,” and indeed everything about the portrait suggests that it was not executed, in the traditional way, for the sitter, making it an important early example of a kind of ethnographic or genre-like portraiture that was to become common only in later times. The sense that this is an experiment with the genre of portraiture is reinforced by the fact that it is painted on paper, mounted on canvas, which leads Humfrey to connect it, plausibly, to a commission of eight “life-size heads, colored in oil on paper” recorded by Lotto in March 1541. Another feature of the exhibition was the display of Turkish carpets very close to those meticulously described in Lotto’s paintings. An illuminating essay by Rosamond Mack in the catalogue shows Lotto to have possessed an exacting understanding of the techniques employed in the making of these textiles, confirming one’s impression of the artist’s strong admiration for fine craft work, including jewelry and precious stone carvings.

The catalogue contains many implicit disagreements among its authors, and its naturally disparate structure allows them to stand without resolution. It is therefore fortunate that 1997 also saw the appearance of a new monograph on the artist by Peter Humfrey. It was clearly Humfrey’s intention to produce a book that, while comprehensively informed, would keep the scholarly debates to a minimum and remain reader-friendly and relatively brief. Humfrey has succeeded admirably: one can easily take in the book as a fluent whole and be rewarded by a newly cohesive vision of the artist, and yet the book repays close second readings with understated insights, discoveries, and pointed questions for debate. Many of Humfrey’s changes to the traditional corpus—such as the dating of the Recanati *Annunciation* and the Brescia *Adoration of the Shepherds* to the second Marchigian period rather than to the Venetian period—are of the kind that come naturally upon taking the large view, and are unlikely to be seriously questioned. Perhaps Humfrey’s most consistent strength is his finely attuned ability to see the paintings through the eyes of the people who commissioned them, an expertise no doubt engrained in him through his long study of Renaissance altarpieces. Following up early reports of a connection between the Brescia *Adoration* and the ruling family of Perugia, the Baglioni, for example, Humfrey observes that the emphasis on Joseph and the Holy Family would have been especially appropriate for Perugia, home of a cult to the relic of the Holy Ring, as would the fact that the Virgin, somewhat unusually, is shown wearing a ring (pp. 133–34).

Humfrey makes similarly insightful observations in the case of the *Saint Nicholas in Glory* in the church of S. Maria dei Carmini in Venice, noting, for example, that while the patron saint of one of the two confraternity officers who commissioned the altarpiece,

Giovanni Battista Donati, is shown in the upper register, the patron of the other, Giorgio de’ Mundis, is shown at tiny scale slaying the dragon in the landscape below (and is not this world-landscape the appropriate setting for the patron of a man named de’ Mundis?). At a less particular level, Humfrey also observes that the extraordinary depiction of the storm system that fills the entire bottom register, shown just as it is beginning to pass and leave behind the first view of clear sky, would have been charged with significance to the members of this confraternity of merchants, whose livelihood depended on the safe transport of goods by sea. Humfrey tends to favor this more concrete sort of reading, but it need not exclude a reading of the passing storm as a more general symbol of salvation and deliverance. We find support for the larger reading if we turn to Humfrey’s entry on the painting in the exhibition catalogue (cat. no. 29), where he proposes a very compelling link to Jan van Scorel’s *Crossing of the Red Sea*, in Venice at the time and possibly owned by Andrea Odoni, where a passing storm is overtly linked to a theme of deliverance. Lotto himself makes a very similar statement in his own panel of the same subject in S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, which he designed shortly before the *Saint Nicholas in Glory*. Humfrey rightly reads the disparaging remarks about the painting made some decades later by Ludovico Dolce as part of a “polemical eulogy” of the art of Titian rather than as evidence of negative opinion about Lotto’s work. Indeed, one might go further and claim, as Berenson did, that the comment actually registers anxiety in the Titian camp that he was being “outmatched, or at least equalled, on his own ground.”¹³ Titian’s later *Gloria* in Madrid certainly indicates that Lotto’s altarpiece made a lasting impression on him.

The catalogue entry on the *Saint Nicholas in Glory* is just one instance where we find Humfrey having a good deal more to say than what appears in the pages of his book, making one wish that he had had the inclination (or the editorial sanction) to write a much bigger, more unwieldy book than he did. Many works that appear in the book, although beautifully reproduced, are hardly given more than passing mention, and one feels throughout an impetus to move on rather than to dwell. Humfrey avoids as much as possible getting into nettlesome debates, and while one is grateful for his clarifying application of Ockham’s razor, it is also true that he tends to give relatively short shrift to those areas of Lotto’s work that are thick with iconographic puzzles. One such area is the cycle of intarsia panels in the choir of S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. This is a pity not only because of the inherent interest of the panels, but also because this means that Humfrey does not give sustained attention to the surviving letters that Lotto wrote to the Consorzio della Misericordia, the confraternity in charge of the commission, which are some of the most fascinating artistic documents of the period. Because they are difficult to interpret and bristle with many still

unresolved questions, it would have been very helpful to have Humfrey’s expert guidance through them. A final small note, for the sake of future editions: the reference to a *Saint Jerome* in Bergamo on p. 153 should say Bucharest, and Giovanni Bologni on p. 7 should read Girolamo Bologni.

Although working very much within the same format, Jacques Bonnet has produced a book that is the very opposite of Humfrey’s. Where Humfrey is measured and authoritative, Bonnet is enthusiastic and avowedly subjective—and also, it must be said, often unreliable on points of fact. The assassination attempt against Bishop Bernardo de’ Rossi occurred not in 1513 but in 1503 (p. 25). The saint to our right in the Boston painting discussed above (cat. no. 24) is not, we now know, Anthony of Padua but Nicholas of Tolentino (p. 86).¹⁴ The Virgin in the Recanati *Annunciation* is not barefoot (p. 109). In the St. Petersburg portrait discussed above Bonnet reads the second word of the inscription as a non-Latin “nunquam.” These are of course small matters, but they are indicative of a looseness that also affects Bonnet’s interpretative style. Bonnet believes, for example, that the Doria-Pamphili *Thirty-seven-year-old Man* is a self-portrait, and reproduces it as his frontispiece. Since Lotto was born near 1480 Bonnet must do some resourceful hypothesizing: he pulls the date back to 1527, earlier than that given by most scholars, and proposes that another “X” is hidden by the ivy on the wall, making this a portrait of a forty-seven-year-old man (p. 137). This is highly questionable as it is, but what makes it seem positively whimsical is the fact that elsewhere in the book (p. 96) Bonnet accepts Francesca Cortesi-Bosco’s much more convincing identification of Lotto’s self-portrait in the bird hunter holding eight (*otto*) sticks and an owl in the Oratorio Suardi frescoes. The date of these frescoes, 1524, puts them but three years away from Bonnet’s proposed date for the Doria-Pamphili portrait, and yet he does not address the obvious discrepancy in appearance between the two figures.

These problems arise in part from the book’s aggregate organization, which proceeds chronologically and work by work, with very little in the way of synthetic analysis and thematic development. The best thing about the book is Bonnet’s infectious excitement about the paintings, and his corresponding willingness, at his best moments, to go through them detail by detail. And yet the larger points to which these observations lead are rarely developed and most often perfunctorily thrown off just before the close of the subsection. In the end one cannot help feeling that the highly traditional structure is simply at odds with Bonnet’s speculative style of presentation, and that he should have gone one way or the other. The voice is very much that of the gentleman-amateur, but the book in the end offers neither of the two things—compendious erudition or high-flying essayistic flair—that have marked the most valuable examples of this type of contribution. One cannot rely on Bonnet’s subsections as authori-

tative catalogue entries, and yet neither does one find in them anything approaching, say, the undisciplined originality and wide-ranging erudition of Roberto Calasso's *morceaux*.

In this sense, Bonnet's book can be contrasted with Mauro Zanchi's, which instead channels its enthusiasm into a sustained investigation of one of the more recondite corners of Lotto's work: the intarsia covers for the choir of the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, designed by Lotto and executed by Giovanni Francesco Capoferri largely in the late 1520s. In her fundamental study, Francesca Cortesi-Bosco discussed Lotto's relation to alchemical traditions, to which he would have been exposed at least from the time of his early association with the circle of humanists grouped around Bernardo de' Rossi in Treviso, and she also pointed to the presence of alchemical themes in the intarsia panels, particularly in those panels, the *Nosce te ipsum* and the *Nourishing of the Stone*, that stand at the entrance to the choir and do not serve as covers for biblical subjects.¹⁵ Zanchi sees the alchemical themes not as an intermittent reference but as the unifying key to the entire program. Zanchi, himself a poet, writes less like a 20th-century academic than like the inheritor of a hermetic tradition; he is not here to make an argument but to perform an exegesis. So, for example, the rocks hanging in a sling in the cover for the *David and Goliath* panel occasion an extended disquisition on the functions of stones in alchemical theory, initiating a reading of the entire story of David's battle in an alchemical key—his extraction of the stone not from the earth but from the stream is read as the stone purified by liquid mercury, his firelike redness as the purifying fire, the decapitation of Goliath as the breaking open of matter and the extraction of its quintessence, the entire tale as the victory of the fire of faith over the obdurate resistance of false belief. But this is not all: the crossing of the palm leaves in an X form provokes a sequence of meditations on the ubiquity of chiasmatic structures in hermetic thought, as well as on the significance of the number ten, and, of course, on the symbolism of the palm.

Without claiming that these meanings are in fact all "in" the work, it is clear that many of these associations were well within the reach of esoterically minded humanists of Lotto's day and would have been generally very much to the taste of people close to Lotto, even to certain members of the Consorzio della Misericordia such as Battista Suardi. And yet the fact remains that Zanchi uses alchemical lore from all periods as if it were an unchanging and perennial body of knowledge, and this is hardly a reliable means of putting Lotto's panels in their intellectual context. At the opposite pole, Humfrey's reluctance to see "any typological reference" to Christian themes or any "wider moralising message" in the panels (p. 92) seems altogether too restrictive. The interpretation of Old Testament subjects in relation to Christian theology and morality was the daily stuff of the sermons that Lotto attended, and we

know that beyond listening, quite attentively, to these sermons Lotto actually cultivated "extracurricular" exchanges with theologians.¹⁶ I do not in the end think there is such a leap between Humfrey's view, which sees the covers as "distillations" of the elements of the Old Testament story, and the possibility that precisely such distillation opens the panels to a much wider range of what could be called "figural" associations, with the novelty that the traditional references of biblical hermeneutics have been inventively refashioned, made more universal, and in typical Christian humanist fashion opened up to extra-Christian strains of wisdom. Lotto was perhaps alluding to the inventiveness and freedom with which he handled these associations when he wrote to the members of the Consorzio della Misericordia: "As for the designs of the covers you should know that since they do not follow a written program they must be brought to light by the imagination."¹⁷ Rather than limiting the semantic range of the panels, the absence of a program might well have given it greater freedom.

Nonetheless, it is generally the case that there is too little of the Bible in Zanchi's interpretations. In the case of the panel covering *David's Mourning of Absalom*, for example, a very thin thread takes us to Saturn, which leads to an extended discussion of the alchemical sublimation of lead, while the elements of the biblical story, admirably read in relation to the panel by Galis, recede from view.¹⁸ (Indeed, the book is virtually untouched by Galis's work, which would have helped to promote a more strongly biblical focus.) If Zanchi tends to separate the covers from the underlying biblical subjects, he also tends to see them in isolation from the rest of Lotto's work. So, for example, in the commentary on the *Nosce te ipsum* panel, nowhere is mention made of the two paintings (the *Doria-Pamphili Thirty-seven-year-old Man* and the *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Rome) where the motif of the winged putto with his feet on the balance also appears. In cases like this, Zanchi's readings are, paradoxically, not open enough. Zanchi's book is a tour de force of alchemical thinking in action, inspired by Lotto, and it can be appreciated on this level. Lotto had heterodox admirers in his own day, and will continue to have them in the future.

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Notes

1. The most notable wide-ranging studies of the artist in English in recent times are dissertations: Diana Galis, "Lorenzo Lotto: A Study of His Career and Character, with Particular Emphasis on His Emblematic and Hieroglyphic Works," Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1979; Louisa C. Matthew, "Lorenzo Lotto and the Patronage and Production of Venetian Altarpieces in the Early Sixteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1988.

2. Although they are not all acceptable, the proposals of Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, "Centro e Periferia," in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, pt. 1, vol. 1, ed. Giovanni Previtali (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), 285–32, deserve to be addressed and debated. A reassessment of the problem seems opportune in the wake not only of the recent literature on Lotto but also of the recent spate of important publications on Pordenone, Romanino, and Bassano: Charles E. Cohen, *The Art of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone: Between Dialect and Language*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alessandro Nova, *Girolamo Romanino* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 1994); Alessandro Ballarin, *Jacopo Bassano*, 2 vols. (Cittadella: Bertonecello, 1995–97); Bernard Aikema, *Jacopo Bassano and His Public: Moralizing Pictures in an Age of Reform, ca. 1535–1600*, trans. Andrew P. McCormick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Paolo Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

3. See, for example, Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), ed. Floyd Bell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor, 1927), 441 (pt. 2, sec. 2, memb. 4, for hunting), and 478–81 (pt. 2, sec. 2, memb. 6, subsec. 3, for music). Both discussions are rich in citations of previous authorities.

4. See Aby Warburg, "Francesco Sasseti's letztwillige Verfügung" (1907) and "Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum" (1902), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike*, ed. Gertrud Bing (Berlin: Teubner, 1932), 127–63, 353–65, and 89–126, 340–52, respectively.

5. See Daniel Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953): 100–120.

6. Edgar Wind, "Studies in Allegorical Portraiture, I: i. In Defence of Composite Portraits; 1–2. Albrecht von Brandenburg as St. Erasmus," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1–2 (1937–39): 138–62.

7. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, bk. 9, chap. 9.

8. Luigi da Porto, *Lettere Storiche*, ed. Bartolomeo Bressan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1857), 92–95; English translation in *Venice: A Documentary History 1450–1630*, eds. David Chambers and Brian Pullan, with Jennifer Fletcher (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 396–98.

9. See Angelica Dülberg, *Privatporträts: Geschichte und Ikonologie einer Gattung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Mann, 1990).

10. A reference earlier explored by Marzia Di Tanna, "Dal bestiario lottesco: Lo *Scivurus vulgaris*," *Osservatorio delle Arti* 5 (1990): 44–50.

11. The size of the coffin was also observed, but not interpreted, by Bonnet (p. 86). Several of Gentili's points develop observations first made by Rona Goffen, "A *Madonna* by Lorenzo Lotto," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 76 (1978): 34–41.

12. Lucco is not correct in asserting that this detail "does not seem to have stimulated the curiosity of scholars." See Patrizia di Mambro's effort to interpret "in problematic terms the presence of the large grasshopper in the foreground" in *Il San Girolamo di Lorenzo Lotto a Castel Sant'Angelo*, ed. Bruno Contardi and Augusto Gentili, exh. cat., Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome, 1983, 115. I will only mention that in his *Libro di spese diverse* Lotto records a loan made to him by Zuan Geronimo Grillo (whose name incorporates references to both the saint and the insect), together with another one made to him by Grillo's son Giacomo. See Lorenzo Lotto, *Libro di spese diverse (1538–1556)*, ed. Pietro Zampetti (Venice: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1969), 83–85. This transaction occurred in 1541, a date that need not correspond to that of the painting. The transaction suggests a relationship of friendship, and the participation of the son suggests a friendship of some standing, not unlike the sort of friendship that Lotto had with people such as Bartolomeo Carpan and Giovanni del Saon and their families. And if those

relationships are any indication, it would be surprising if Lotto had *not* painted at least one picture for Grillo at some point in his life.

13. Bernard Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto: An Essay in Constructive Art Criticism*, 2d ed. (London: Bell, 1901), 185.

14. David Eskerdjian, "A Note on Lorenzo Lotto's *Virgin and Child with Saint Jerome and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino*," *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 3 (1991): 87–91.

15. Francesca Cortesi-Bosco, *Il coro intarsiato di Lotto e di Capoferri per Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo* (Bergamo: Silvana, 1987), esp. 175–80, 340–52.

16. See, for example, Lotto (as in n. 12), 272, 286.

17. Lotto (as in n. 12), 286: "Circha li disegni de li coperti, sapiate che son cose che non essendo scritte, bisogna che la imaginatione le porti a luce."

18. Diana Galis, "Concealed Wisdom: Renaissance Hieroglyphic and Lorenzo Lotto's Bergamo *Intarsie*," *Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 373–74.

RÉGIS MICHEL, ED.

Géricault

Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996.
2 vols.; 1094 pp.; 430 b/w ills. Fr 550.00
paper

STEPHEN BANN

Paul Delaroche: History Painted

Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1997. 304 pp.; 35 color ills., 132 b/w.
\$49.50

BETH W. WRIGHT

Painting and History during the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1997. 269 pp.; 8 color ills., 60 b/w. \$70.00

The 1995–96 blockbuster exhibition at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes and the Grand Palais in Paris and its accompanying catalogue, *Les années romantiques: La peinture française de 1815 à 1850* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1995), testify to the growing popularity of early 19th-century art and underscore some of the difficulties in studying this period. Despite several excellent essays, a wealth of primary materials, and exceptional illustrations, the catalogue presents the period as an eclectic assemblage of individual painters and styles created during the nebulous "romantic era." In contrast, Michel, Bann, and Wright have produced significant interpretative works in the rapidly expanding historiography on history painting and Romanticism.

A self-styled "post-historian of art," Régis Michel prefaces his edited volumes of papers from the Théodore Géricault colloquium held in 1991 with a highly polemical tract against art history. Thinking of projects similar to *Les années romantiques*, he criticizes art history as a positivist discipline that focuses on artist, intention, and style and that reaffirms its ideology through constant reproduction. Of course, it is with great irony that Michel uses a publication issuing from the Géricault retrospective to attack conventions of art history—a kind of official discourse of the state, in his view.

Invoking poststructuralist critic Jean-François Lyotard, Michel mobilizes a metaphor of rupture with Géricault's *Severed Heads* (1818) and *Anatomical Fragments* (1818) to call for a break in the metadiscourse of art history; he employs these fragments to double as a symbol of a new interpretative strategy, one that allows for "an infinity of possible readings for Géricault" (xxviii). Despite a disclaimer against relativism, postmodernist Michel seems to ignore the reality that some readings are more convincing than others.

If Michel's iconoclastic ambitions appear overstated, his volumes present thirty-three articles that challenge conventional assumptions, offer novel readings, and expand knowledge on Géricault and Romanticism. For instance, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer rejects the longstanding tradition that Géricault's severed heads and limbs were studies for the *Raft of the Medusa* (1819) and asserts they were autonomous works complexly related to abolitionist tracts against the guillotine and the cult of horror during the Restoration. Albert Boime addresses a transformation in Géricault's liberalism in his study of the *African Slave Trade* (ca. 1820–24), which he reads as a paternalist expression of "the white man's burden." The neglected popular origins of Géricault's art and his subjects' relationship with sensationalist crime and catastrophe are the focus of Robert Simon's two excellent essays. Another important aspect of the collection is the posthumous reception of Géricault; Bruno Chenique, who continues to uncover important unpublished materials on Géricault, chronicles the efforts to raise a memorial to the painter frustrated in part by a legal battle over his family's wealth. Michel's two edited volumes will prove indispensable for further scholarly investigation of Géricault and Romanticism.

In his book *Paul Delaroche: History Painted*, Stephen Bann argues for the importance of Delaroche to a study of early 19th-century art, not to dethrone the primacy of J.-A.-D. Ingres and Eugène Delacroix, but as a relatively "more faithful index of the ambiguities and tensions of that elusive epoch than [provided by] his great contemporaries" (p. 30). Bann wishes to shift the paradigm applied to Delaroche from characterizations as either a facile artist who pandered to public taste or a conservative and academic painter to a consideration of the artist in the visual culture of early 19th-century Europe. Delaroche's painting, for Bann, represents a rupture with tradition growing from the artist's distinctive background and response to an early modern visual culture of prints, paintings, panoramic displays, and photography. Bann argues that the artist also contributed uniquely to visual culture. He develops this symbiotic relationship throughout his text, exploring the inscription of the self, structural aspects of painting, the generation of political meaning and history, and the creation of visual types.

In chapter 1, Bann interprets Delaroche's apprenticeship and early work as a "struggle to *inscribe the self*, that is, to achieve authority as an artist in relation to, and in response to, the

social, cultural, and familial determinants of his career" (p. 35, emphasis in the original). Paul Delaroche was initially sent to train with Louis-Étienne Watelet in the inferior genre of landscape, as his father, an art dealer, wished to avert any possible sibling rivalry between Paul and his older brother Jules, who apprenticed as a history painter in the competitive environment of Antoine Gros's studio. With parental consent, Paul eventually followed Jules to Gros's studio, where he continued to face the difficult task of separating himself from his brother. For Bann such a personal stake "seems to reside particularly in the oblique gaze of the male child" (p. 55) in several early works stressing the theme of hierarchy and legitimacy. The history of Delaroche's signature actually supports such a speculative reading. Until 1824 Paul signed his surname followed by the diminutive *jeune* (the younger) to recognize the priority of his brother, but by 1826 he had settled definitively on *DelaRoche*—with an uppercase R. These issues—the gaze of male children and his signature as surrogates for the self—coalesce around a series of eight watercolors that interpret in personal terms an incident from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's youth described in the *Confessions* (1782). At the end of the series, signed *DelaRoche* and dated 1825, the artist transformed the text's image of a writer actively searching to find a patron into a picture of a seated artist absorbed in his own thoughts—"the inward experience of the trials of selfhood and their outward manifestation" (p. 69).

In an effort to make a name, according to Bann, Delaroche withdrew from the emulative discipline of academic training and began to exhibit at the Salon. Nineteenth-century biographers report that he competed only once and unsuccessfully for a grand prix at the École des Beaux-Arts; Bann adds that he sought models other "than the Davidian orthodoxy represented (albeit in a diminished form) by the studio of Gros" (p. 44). But what do the archives say of his involvement in the many other competitions at the École? A close examination of the archives, absent from Bann's account, reveals, for example, that Delacroix, a rebellious student according to Romantic biographers, participated in no fewer than eight competitions. As for orthodoxy, a report coauthored by Gros in 1816 reveals that the master warned students not to "fall into a spirit of imitation and . . . the mania of making pictures with pictures."¹ Overlooked by Bann, Gros's progressive view of academic tradition saw the first duty of the master to teach the language of the body and then develop the student's power of invention. Bann also opposes the Salon to the prizes of the academic world as an alternative path of advancement and argues persuasively that Delaroche adjusted his exhibited work to such different models as Pierre-Narcisse Guérin and Géricault. Yet, Delaroche was not new in this. Advanced students typically looked beyond the studio for models and exhibited at the Salon during their apprenticeship, practices followed by Guérin, Géricault, and Dela-