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Giovanni Bellini, the San Giobbe altarpiece, and the *imitatio Christi*

Terence Dawson

C. G. Jung had an extraordinary ability to see what others miss. He spent his life writing about how individuals could dispel “the darkness of unconsciousness” by learning “the art of seeing” (1912/1950, ¶539; 1944, ¶14). In his view, this entailed “establishing a connection” between the outer and the inner images that fascinate them and “their own psyche”. That is, he was interested in the psychological implications of the “equivalent” *inner* images (1944, ¶14):

“... the psyche consists essentially of images. It is a series of images in the truest sense, not an accidental juxtaposition or sequence, but a structure that is throughout full of meaning and purpose; it is a “picturing” of vital activities.” (1926, ¶618)

Almost all his written work is concerned with trying to understand the implications of inner images. He considered such images not as signs, but as symbols. In his view, whereas a *sign* indicates a *known* meaning, a symbol is “the best possible” representation of a meaning still unknown – or incompletely known – to us and which we are thus unable to express adequately in words. Although his goal is to understand this unknown factor, he also insists that one should not try to get “behind” the image, for to do so leads to woolly generalizations about its *generic* properties. He prefers to “stick” with the specific image, for the image harbours its “whole meaning” (1934, ¶519-520). To understand the implications of an image, one has to look at it closely: that is, to see and take note of each and every detail and how every component part contributes to the meaning of the whole.

[Fig. 1]

1. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child with Six Saints*, oil on wood panel, 471×258 cm. c.1478-1485 (Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice)

John Ruskin, the eminent Victorian art critic and social reformer, had a similar ability to see what others miss and he too spent a large part of his life trying to help others to develop “the art of seeing”.¹ But he was interested in the aesthetic properties of images. He was in his fifties and Slade Professor of Fine Art when he decided to write a number of travel guides in order to

help the British privileged classes to better appreciate the cultural sites they visited. One of these is his *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877), in which he describes, with scalding irony, how visitors to the first room of the Accademia will know when they are standing before one of the masterpieces of early Venetian Renaissance painting:

On the left of [the window] hangs a large picture which you will have great difficulty seeing at all, hung as it is against the light; and which, in any of its finer qualities, you absolutely cannot see; but may yet perceive what they are, latent in that darkness, which is all the honour that the kings, nobles, and artists of Europe care to bestow on one of the greatest pictures ever painted by Christendom in her central art-power. Alone worth an entire modern exhibition-building, hired fiddlers and all; here you have it jammed on a back wall, utterly unserviceable to human kind, the little angels of it fiddling unseen, unheard by anybody's heart. It is the best John Bellini in the Academy of Venice [...]
(Ruskin 1906, 151-152)

Although hung in a dark room and almost impossible to see against what little light came through the small windows, Ruskin realized that Giovanni Bellini's painting is "unspeakably good" (152). His praise helped to arouse interest in the work and it was not long before it was moved. In the third edition of his *Guide* (1891) he was delighted to report that it had been given "a place of honour" in the second room, where it still hangs today (Ruskin, 151).

The painting that Ruskin so admired, and which he helped to rescue from neglect, is *Madonna and Child with Six Saints*, a large *pala* (altarpiece) that Giovanni Bellini produced sometime between 1478 and 1485. It was intended for the Observant Franciscan church of Santi

Giobbe e Bernardino da Siena (Saints Job and Bernardino of Siena), a small, asymmetrical church at the isolated, north-western end of the Cannaregio usually known simply as San Giobbe.² It was painted in the new medium of oil, on panel, and designed to be seen in a tall, imposing, but decorative triumphal arch frame of Istrian marble specially erected in the second bay on the right side of the church and embellished with blue paint and gilding. The frame can still be seen in San Giobbe; in 1815 the painting was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia. It is the first altarpiece in Venetian art to place the figures of the Madonna, her Child and accompanying saints within a church interior (Goffen 1989, 143).

Recent scholarly debate about the *pala* has been dominated by two issues: one, its relation to the plague of 1478; the other, the implications of the Byzantine interior and of the figure of the Madonna suggested by the bold inscription that runs around the inside of the cupola: “+ AVE VIRGINEI FLOS INTEMERATE PUDORIS” (+ Hail, undefiled flower of virgin modesty).³ Critical views have been generally convincing in their claims about these issues. In contrast, scholars have been considerably less successful in bringing them together in a persuasive reading of the work as a *whole*. In other words, we still do not have a clear explanation why a work designed to celebrate *Job* should place quite such an emphasis on the *Madonna's* “virgin modesty”.

These pages propose a possible answer to this question. They have three objectives. The first is to illustrate how, by looking closely at the component parts of this complex image, one can arrive at a surprising and moving reading of its psychological implications. This article explores some of the unexplored details of Bellini's composition: the *choice* of the six saints depicted, the emphasis on the *gaze* of each, the unusual *expression* of the Christ-child, the curious gesture that the Madonna makes with her *left* hand, and the *function* of the eye-catching

angel-musicians. The second objective is to suggest that the resonance of his *pala* stems from a complex of meanings that gather around the related notions of blameless innocence and the *imitatio Christi*. And the third is to argue that an artist's struggle to realise his inner vision is *also* about being able to "see" and understand intuitions that others miss. That is, a work of art can harbour a struggle with "meaning" that is just as intense as that which faces the analysand who wrestles to understand the deepest implications of their dreams and fantasies.

The Context

No documentary evidence referring to the commission of either painting or frame has come to light. Nevertheless, the story probably begins with Cristoforo Moro, who was Doge of Venice from 1462 until his death in 1471, and who was a great admirer of Saint Bernardino of Siena (Goffen 1986, 62, 68; 1989, 154-55). His will stipulated that he was to be buried in the chancel of San Giobbe, directly in front of the high altar, and the high altar was to be re-dedicated *only* to Saint Bernardino of Siena. He also left a bequest sufficient to cover the cost of rebuilding work. This was entrusted to Pietro Lombardo, whose renovations made San Giobbe one of the first churches in Venice to show the influence of the Florentine Renaissance.⁴ Even allowing for Lombardo being busy with other commissions, the renovations progressed unusually slowly,⁵ which suggests they may have been the subject of heated disputes.

Rona Goffen has proposed that the commission for an altarpiece to *San Giobbe* may have been intended to counter Moro's high-handed assumption that he had a right to have the high altar re-dedicated.⁶ If so, plans may have been initiated in the early 1470s and only allowed to proceed after the plague of 1478. It is not known who commissioned the work: possibly the

Scuola di San Giobbe, perhaps in association with a wealthy patron.⁷ The frame is the work either of Lombardo or someone working in his style.⁸ Although it is not known who decided on the unusual height, given that Bellini very carefully replicates its decorated pilasters in his painting, the two men must have collaborated closely.⁹ If so, this is *in spite of* their very different styles.¹⁰ Although both frame and painting were in place by about 1485, it was not until 1493 that the church was finally consecrated to *both* saints.

The right side of San Giobbe consists of a flat wall. Bellini made the background to his painting a deep barrel-vaulted chapel in *trompe l'œil* that would have echoed the *real* vault of the Cappella Martini, on the opposite side of the aisle, which is decorated with colourful majolica tiles from the Della Robbia workshop.¹¹ Bellini thus invites the viewer to see into his imagined chapel as if into a *temenos* or “sacred space”.¹² By making the cupola of his apse recall the basilica of San Marco, he emphasises a specific kind of “sacred space”.¹³ As Goffen points out, the identification of San Marco with Venice and Venice with the Virgin is written into its legendary history (Goffen 1989, 153). But this is not a painting about “nation”. Something else may be involved here. The *ombrello* that hangs above the Madonna is reminiscent of the one associated with the “privileges” that Pope Alexander III granted to Doge Ziani in 1177 (Goffen 1989, 155-57). It implies that even if Moro can choose where his body lies, ducal authority belongs with the *spiritual tradition* represented by the Madonna and San Marco: it cannot decide to rededicate a church for personal reasons.

At the back of the *trompe l'œil* chapel, at the entrance to the apse, the Madonna with the Christ-Child sits on a marble throne, on the steps of which are three seated angel-musicians. The six saints stand to either side of them. Although the vault above tells us that the length of the imagined chapel separates them from the viewer, their feet almost touch the bottom of the

painting. Bellini sets his figures in the *middle distance*, as if part of a tableau, but he paints them as if they stood in the *foreground*.¹⁴ Standing or kneeling before this large altarpiece in a small church, they would have seemed very close indeed (Goffen 1989, 153).

[Fig.2]

2. *Madonna and Child with Six Saints*, detail.

The Six Saints

The two pairs of three saints form an unusually satisfying harmony. To the viewer's left, Saint Francis and Saint Job stand in the foreground; John the Baptist stands slightly behind and between them. To the right, this scheme is inverted: the central figure, Saint Sebastian, is in the foreground; Saint Dominic and Saint Louis of Toulouse stand behind him. The brown habit of the Franciscans contrasts with the white undergarment and black habit of the Dominicans. John's simple green mantle contrasts with Louis' rich episcopal robes. And the elderly figure of Job, dressed only in a loincloth, contrasts with the youthful nude of Sebastian. As Goffen usefully comments, "Bellini seems to have been concerned here with the depiction of different kinds of individuals, each the perfect exemplar of his type".¹⁵ She sees Sebastian as a sensuous nude; Job as a personification of his affirmation: "I know that my Redeemer lives"; Dominic and Francis as *exempla virtutis* of faith (1986, 57, 60). One can hardly disagree with these groupings, but they do not help to explain the emotional impact of the painting.

By pairing the figures differently, I wish to foreground a much more coherent series of concerns. Dominic and John the Baptist are both *preachers*: that is, they personify very different responses to the Word. Dominic embodies the man who follows *existent* teaching. The Order of Preachers, which he founded in 1216, saw its duty as the correction of all forms of ignorance and heresy. He is shown facing the Madonna and Child, but he is not looking at her: he is immersed in reading a large Bible covered in bright red leather. He is committed to the truth of tradition, but is oblivious to the living truth before him. That he faces left suggests that he looks to the past: he is unconnected with both the present and the future. That his black habit allows us to see only his head and hands suggests that he lacks bodily form, as if he hasn't quite discovered the fullness of his individuality.

All we see of John are his head of thick brown curls and a thin slice of his green mantle and bare legs. He too seems not to have assumed his potential, which suggests that he will not live to enjoy the fulfilment of the truth he prophesies. Our attention is drawn to the intensity with which he gazes in awe at the Christ-child. He personifies the ability not only to recognise, but also to prepare others for the *imminent* constellation of a new truth, the Word made flesh (John 1:14; cf. Matthew 11:11). That is, while Dominic embodies study of the eternal Word of God, John embodies an intuition of a truth that has yet to be formulated. That is, he embodies the dynamism of an emergent and living truth.

Because the light falls on their carefully painted flesh, the two most striking figures in the painting are Job and Sebastian. Both were associated with the plague. Satan afflicted Job with “painful sores” (Job 2:7 NIV) that were associated with the buboes produced in the lymph glands by the bubonic plague. The arrows shot at Sebastian were associated with the arrows of Apollo, which were also associated with the plague; for example, in the opening book of Homer’s *Iliad*. In the *Annals of the Lombards* is an account of how a virulent plague once raged through Italy, especially affecting Rome and Pavia, until “it was divinely revealed that the plague would never cease until an altar was raised in Pavia in honour of Saint Sebastian” (Voragine 1993, I, 101).

Sebastian was the commander of Diocletian’s First Cohort and a member of his personal retinue. He enjoyed this position because it allowed him to comfort Christians who were condemned to death. He did this by exhorting them to welcome martyrdom. Upon discovering that Sebastian was a Christian, Diocletian had him tied to a post and shot with arrows. Miraculously, Sebastian survived and a young woman tended his wounds.¹⁶ As soon as he was well again, he sought an opportunity to rebuke Diocletian for the misery that he brought upon Christians, whereupon the Emperor had him *beaten* to death (Voragine, I, 99-101). In Bellini’s

pala, Sebastian stands a little forward of Dominic, his hands presumably tied behind his back. As was already customary, his pose is languorous, but instead of looking up, he looks down.¹⁷ He is not just a soldier; he is a *contemplative* and a willing *martyr* for Christ.

Job is the antetype of Sebastian. Both men embody the power of faith to withstand their respective trials. These trials, however, have very different outcomes: Job ends his in renewed prosperity; Sebastian's corpse is thrown into a sewer (Voragine, I, 100). Satan destroys everything that Job loves and cares for and covers him with "painful sores", but Job never loses his faith in God's justice. His suffering is the antetype of Christ's suffering. In Bellini's *pala*, however, there is no sign of Job's tribulation: the strength of his faith has allowed him to come through his ordeal. He is shown side on, with a grey beard and an expression of simple humility. He faces the Christ-child, his hands raised in prayer¹⁸—but he is not looking at Christ: his eyes are fixed on Sebastian. This is because Sebastian is shown only half-way through *his* trial, a trial so well-known that it has engulfed the shocking end to his story. Sebastian's courage is admirable, but it is the courage of *passive* endurance. Job embodies a similar courage, but his happier outcome is the reward for having *actively* championed the true God.

The two outer figures not only frame the row of saints, they also provide the key to their significance. Both are Franciscans who renounced the world for a life of the spirit. Both chose a life of extreme simplicity, and each embodies a different aspect of the imitation of Christ. On the right side of the painting is Louis of Toulouse. The great-nephew of St Louis of France and the second son of Charles of Anjou, he was incarcerated as a hostage for his father. As soon as he was released, he renounced his claim to the crown and entered the Franciscan order. Although usually depicted as Bishop of Toulouse, he held this office for only a short time before his premature death. He personifies a total *surrender* to Christ. Bellini shows him leaning yearningly

toward the Madonna and Child, and yet his gaze passes across them to alight on Job, presumably because Job personifies a total submission to God.

On the left side of the painting, Francis turns to face the viewer. His head is tilted to one side. His right hand, marked by the stigmata reminiscent of the injury Christ received when his right hand was nailed to the cross, reaches out as if inviting the viewer to share his suffering. His left hand is laid across his chest, indicating the stigmata identical to the wound that Christ received when his side was pierced by a soldier's spear (John 19:34). He embodies both the physical and the spiritual imitation of Christ; in other words, he personifies a complete physical and spiritual *identification* with Christ.¹⁹

The altarpiece was intended to honour Job: his presence is a given. The choice of the other saints is significant. They each embody a different facet of the imitation of Christ. Dominic and John the Baptist embody two equally necessary approaches to the Word of God: the willingness to study it and the need to be always *actively* searching for its living incarnation. Sebastian and Job embody different phases in the ordeals that await those who commit themselves to Christ. Louis of Toulouse and Francis embody different forms that this commitment might take. The emphasis, in each case, is on the totality of the commitment. And in each case, a little unexpectedly, the eye has to move from right to left. Given the tendency in western culture to do the opposite, this suggests a yearning for a metaphorical past, for the antetype, for an introversion that will lead to the archetypal goal. That is, the figures on the right represent a present *tendency*; those on the left, a desired *ideal*. The light falls more heavily on Sebastian, but the eye is led to Job.

The Madonna and Child

At the centre of the painting the Madonna sits on a marble throne raised a few steps above the six saints. She is shown with a vermillion bodice heavily embroidered with gold thread and a white headscarf that winds around her shoulders. Her striking ultramarine mantle tumbles in rich folds to the base of the throne on which she is seated. Her significance is usually interpreted in the light of the inscriptions in the cupola: the emphatic reference to her being “the undefiled flower of virgin modesty”, as well as the greeting, “AVE GRATIA PLENA (Hail, Full of Grace)”, on each of the shields carried by the five angels or seraphim in the lower part of the cupola.²⁰ Both inscriptions need to be understood in the context of the *pala* as a whole; that is, in relation to the issue that links the saints who stand at her feet: the *imitatio Christi*.

[Fig.3]

3. *Madonna and Child with Six Saints, detail.*

In her right arm, she holds the Christ-child, who sits bolt upright, his right hand gripping tightly at His mother's mantle. His body is that of a baby; his head belongs to a slightly older child. He is staring fixedly ahead, as if trying to see something behind the viewer. His left arm reaches across his chest at exactly the same angle as the left arm of Francis. That is, he is shown anticipating the wound that he will receive, on the cross, from the soldier's spear. It is clear that he is staring apprehensively into the future where he intuits or *sees* the death that awaits him.

This is the key to the Madonna's expression. Like her son, she is gazing ahead of her, dispassionately and slightly to her left, which draws the viewer's eyes toward Sebastian, who still has much to bear and who will *not* survive his next ordeal. On the one hand, her expression suggests an innocent alarm unexpectedly similar to that of Diana when discovered by Actaeon. On the other, the gravity of her down-turned mouth suggests that, *like her son*, she too has suddenly become aware of the fate that awaits him—but not only him. She is depicted at the moment when, in her perfect purity and innocence, she realises that she will have to endure an agony as unthinkable and unbearable as his: the pain of watching him die. As the inscriptions on the shields of the seraphim make clear, the Madonna is “highly favoured”. God is “with” her. She *will* come through her trial. In a sense, she already has, for she has understood the essence of suffering, and she *accepts* it: hence her alarm; hence, too, the distance in her expression as she adapts to her new and richer sense of self. She is now ready to understand the self-discipline and, sometimes, also the suffering that is required of those who commit themselves to Christ. As suggested by her gaze leading us to Sebastian, she has learned *compassion*. Bellini's *pala*

suggests that if the embodiment of “virgin modesty” cannot escape suffering, all others must expect to have to endure it. It is part of God’s holy plan.

The Madonna’s *left* hand is raised, palm outward, fingers slightly spread and curled. Goffen suggests that it “recalls the praying gesture of the orant” (1986, 57; 1989, 153); Bättschmann, that it indicates a “greeting or welcome”.²¹ It is not customary, however, to greet friends with one’s left hand and the orant, who usually spreads both arms, has an enthused certainty that Bellini’s Madonna does not. She raises her left hand with a mixture between an instinct to hold off an unbearable thought and a serene acceptance that anticipates her son’s *later* request: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39). The momentary shadow that crosses the Madonna’s mind is the perfect counterpart to the theme of the *imitatio Christi*.²²

The Angel-Musicians

Sitting on the steps of the Madonna’s throne, between the two groups of saints, are three angel-musicians arranged in a pyramid. They are not merely decorative; they embody an important metaphor. Each of the angel-musicians represents a typical association with music. The music of the yellow angel rises from within her/him, both as self-expression and as self-understanding. That of the blue angel is designed to communicate, to affect the viewer.²³ And that of the green angel fuses supplication, joy, and praise. Along with Cecilia, Job was recognised as a patron saint of music.²⁴ The association rests, one assumes, on the two moments in the Book of Job that refer to music. The first is the moment when Job tells his friends: “... because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. / The man who was dying

blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing" (Job 29:12-13). Here music symbolises the nature of the joy experienced by someone whose human suffering has been alleviated by an unexpected act of compassion—as Sebastian's is by the prayer of Job and the concern of the Madonna. The second is God's description of the response in Heaven when he laid the cornerstone of the earth's foundations: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7). Here music is associated with the Creation, i.e. a new order or truth, which is a metaphor for what happens every time an individual turns to God; that is, re-lays the "foundations" of her or his life.

The lower figure on the right, half hidden by Dominic's habit, wears a yellow mantle and plays the lute. Like Sebastian, she looks downward, as deeply-involved in her music-making as the two saints who stand behind her are in their respective thoughts: Dominic, whose thoughts are on the Word of God, and Sebastian, who must continue to find the *inner strength* to endure his trial. The blue and red clothes of the lower musician on the left reflect those of the Madonna. She plays a rebec and gazes dreamily but directly at the viewer (Bätschmann, 191). In this painting of significant gazes, this is carefully calculated. Sebastian's lowered, meditative gaze rests on her and she looks at the viewer. That is, the blue angel makes the viewer *share* both in Job's prayer for Sebastian and in Sebastian's prayer for an inner faith as constant as that of Job. Bellini's *pala* suggests that in order to discover an inner faith as humble and unshakeable as that of Job one must prepare oneself to endure a trial that might be as cruel as that of Sebastian, or of Christ, or of the Madonna.

An angel with a green mantle that echoes the colour of John the Baptist's cloak sits on a step higher than her peers. She is playing a lute and, as she plays, she looks upward as if toward Heaven, but her gaze leads us instead to Job's hands, clasped in prayer. They are a reference to

that sublime moment in the last chapter of the Book of Job, when God tells Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar: “My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has” (Job 42:8). Job’s prayer is a reminder that everyone harbours some wrong-headed notions about God. It is no accident that the artist has placed his signature – IOANNES BELLINVS – on a *cartellino* attached to the step on which the green angel sits, looking up at Job. Bellini thus identifies with her gaze, which suggests that he trusts in the intercession of both Job and the Madonna to excuse his follies and help him turn truly to God, when he will hear the morning stars sing as they did when God laid the earth’s foundations.

Conclusions

Bellini’s *pala* illustrates the reason why Jung insisted on “sticking” with the image: for doing so compels the viewer to look carefully at its every detail, its every gesture, the direction of every gaze. It was almost certainly intended as both a thanksgiving for Venice’s deliverance from the plague and a prayer that the city will never again have to suffer a similar ordeal. But it is more than this: the work also harbours an unexpected personal meaning – a *personal* meaning explored in *collective* terms – and it hinges on a complex of distinct but associated meanings attached to the notion of blameless innocence.

The Book of Job declares that God values blameless innocence above righteous behaviour. Both the inscriptions in the cupola of Bellini’s *pala* foreground the blameless innocence of the Madonna: her “virgin modesty” and her state of “grace”. And Saint Francis also personifies blameless innocence—and because he is the only one of the eight principal figures to

appeal to the viewer, the viewer is invited to consider his example. Job's prayer of intercession on behalf of his three friends is the antetype of the compassion of both the Madonna *and* Saint Francis toward all human beings—including the undeserving. This is the heart of the painting, and it provides an insight into the artist's religious convictions. The *pala* is infused with an Observant Franciscan message. Even so, it is not a sermon in paint.²⁵ The scene it depicts is a striking devotional image whose extraordinary calm invites the viewer to ponder the implications of its tightly-knit exploration of various facets of the *imitatio Christi*. It suggests that Bellini identified with Job's friends: that is, he humbly acknowledges that he too is guilty of the "folly" of assuming that his conscious opinions represent "the truth" (and which of us is not?). And he realizes that his best hope for salvation lies in the intercession of three models of *blameless innocence*: Job, the Madonna, and Saint Francis. The *pala* is not only a hymn of praise, but also a deeply moving confession of faith.

In analysis, Jung placed considerable emphasis on the importance of "confronting" the images in one's waking fantasies. Through active imagination, he expected his clients to actively engage with the figures they encountered in their dreams and fantasies (see Chodorow 1997). He encouraged those of his clients who instinctively wanted to use their dreams as the starting point for creative works. But he also thought this would prevent them from being totally committed to the challenge of wrestling with the deepest implications of their dreams, or waking fantasies (1916, ¶172ff.). For Jung, a person intent on trying to better understand their inner life should not allow themselves to be distracted by any other consideration. Bellini's *pala* suggests that the artist was as deeply engaged with the meaning of his painting as with his art.

Nothing survives to give us any hint as to how Bellini arrived at his composition, and yet one can be forgiven for wondering. On the one hand, his *pala* has the intensity of something

vividly imagined. It corresponds to Jung's definition of a dream as "a structure that is throughout full of meaning and purpose" (1926, ¶618). On the other hand, as suggested by its balance of intricate oppositions and its carefully calculated use of the telling detail, it is also the product of an artist's masterful control of his material. One suspects that Bellini played with a great many possibilities in his mind, and possibly over a considerable period of time, before arriving at his final solution. Everything about his work suggests that he was very much aware of the "connection" between the images he was painting and his own "soul" (or psyche). The emphasis on the significance of the gaze of each of the eleven figures suggests that he more or less "dialogued" with them until he had them *where* he wanted and *gazing at* the person he wanted them to look at. In other words, he must have been engaging with them in a way more or less equivalent to what Jung would describe as active imagination. If this is so, Bellini's *pala*, which is self-evidently a work of art, is also the fruit of an intense engagement with the archetypal figures (the eight major figures) and archetypal concerns (the *imitatio Christi*) that fascinated him. When we stand before the San Giobbe *pala* today, it is not just Bellini's artistry that we admire; it is a sense that the work harbours "the best possible" representation of a deeply held conviction that Bellini had raised from the "darkness" of his unconsciousness in order to share with others.

ENDNOTES

¹ As attested by his best-known publications: *Modern Painters*, 5 vols. (1843-1860), which began as a defence of J.M.W. Turner, and *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols. (1851-1853), his appreciation of Venetian art and architecture from the Byzantine through to the Renaissance.

² This large work (471×258 cm.) is painted in oil with gold-leaf on a wood panel made up of fifteen horizontal planks of poplar: the top two planks, about 60cm, are missing, possibly since the time when the *pala* was moved to the Accademia in 1815 (Dunkerton 2004, 211-12). The small oratory/church in Cannaregio was associated with *both* saints from at least 1461 (Goffen 1989, 311-12). Both were associated with the plague. Because of his “painful sores”, Job was venerated in many places that had experienced the plague and thus became the titular “saint” of several churches. As a young man during the epidemic of 1400, Bernardino da Siena had caught the plague while helping victims, and almost died. Humfrey includes a ground plan of San Giobbe (1993, 43).

³ For example, the inscription has been related to the Immaculate Conception (Goffen 1989, 154); to the Annunciation (Schmidt Archangeli 1998, 42-43); and to “the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of the mother of Jesus” (Bätschmann 2008, 168).

⁴ Humfrey lists the major renovations made and notes the influence of the Renaissance (1993, 43-44). Schmidt Archangeli discusses Lombardo (1998, 14-18; see also Howard 2004, 152-53).

⁵ During these years, Lombardo was also engaged on the tomb to Pietro Mocenigo in San Giovanni e Paulo (c.1476–81), the Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli (1481–89), and the tomb of Dante in Ravenna (1482).

⁶ See Goffen (1986), 64-65; (1989), 155; Humfrey (1993), 347; Howard (2004), 152.

⁷ Bättschmann has suggested the patron may have been Marco Cavallo (2008, 164); doubt, however, remains: see Goffen (1986), 64.

⁸ See Goffen (1989), 159-60; Tempestini (1999), 124-6; Howard (2004), 152; Bättschmann (2008), 164.

⁹ See Humfrey (1993), 204; Howard (2004), 153-54; Pincus (2004), 126-30.

¹⁰ See Goffen (1989), 157-59; Howard (2004), 153. Lombardo's renovations privilege the cool, balanced aesthetic of Florence. The size and rich colours of Bellini's *pala* would have immediately drawn the eye of every churchgoer. It is quite possible that two distinct, if overlapping disputes lie behind the work's commission and possible delays in its execution: the first, between those who were glad to champion San Bernardino and others who resented the slight to San Giobbe; another between those in favour of Lombardo's modern but "foreign" (Florentine) design and others who held that the traditional style of Venice, represented by Bellini's Byzantine cupola, harboured a more authentic spirituality.

¹¹ See Goffen (1986), 70; Howard (2004), 153; Macadam (1989), p.175.

¹² This is perhaps why it *needed* to be "a completely closed architectural space", see Goffen (1989), p.154.

¹³ As Humfrey notes: the cupola may not refer specifically to San Marco: "In the later fifteenth century medieval mosaics were still to be seen in numerous other Venetian churches" (1993, 207).

¹⁴ This tableau in close-up effect is emphasised by the fact that the figures in the *pala* occupy only a third of the painted surface or considerably less than a quarter of the altarpiece as a whole: see the "virtual reconstruction of the San Giobbe altarpiece in its frame" in Bättschmann (2008),

167. Bellini employs a similar tableau in close-up for the figure of the Virgin in the slightly later Frari triptych.

¹⁵ Goffen sees Sebastian as a sensuous nude; Job as a personification of his affirmation: “I know that my Redeemer lives”; Dominic and Francis as *exempla virtutis* of faith (1986, 57 and 60).

¹⁶ Sometimes identified as Irene of Rome: this aspect of the tradition became popular in the seventeenth century: e.g. Hendrick ter Brugghen, *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene*, 1625, in the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio; Georges de la Tour, *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene*, c.1649, in the Louvre, Paris. Both works seem to associate the tending of Sebastian with the lamentation over the dead Christ: see Conisbee (1996), 129.

¹⁷ Bellini may have seen Antonello da Messina’s painting of 1476, now in Dresden.

¹⁸ Joan Richardson argues that Bellini’s Job is intended to remind the viewer of Job 38 and 19:25-26 (1979, 24).

¹⁹ As young men, both Dominic and Francis were involved in military expeditions. Between 1203 and 1213, Dominic was an enthusiastic participant in the military campaigns against the “heretic” Cathars in the south of France. He was a friend of Simon de Montfort, and therefore must hold some responsibility for the cruelty of the latter’s reprisals, for example after the two-month siege of Lavaur in 1211, at which Dominic was present for at least some of the time. In contrast, Francis was sufficiently shocked by his two brief spells of almost comically undistinguished campaigning, in 1201 and 1205, to prefer a life of poverty. This may be a contributing factor in Bellini’s foregrounding of Francis. Even so, following his death in 1516, he was buried in the Dominican basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo (usually called San Zanipolo), perhaps to be with his brother Gentile, who had died in 1507 and was buried there.

²⁰ See Luke 1:28: “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you”. The *pala* was painted while Pope Sixtus IV, a Franciscan, was in the process of trying to expand popular interest in celebrating “the Conception of Immaculate Mary ever Virgin”. That Bellini was familiar with the views of Sixtus IV is evident from the cupola of the Frari triptych, where he cites from the office the pope approved not for “the feast of the Immaculate Conception”, as Goffen has it (see 1986, 66; 1989, 154), but for the feast of “the Conception of the Immaculate Mary, ever Virgin”. See Denziger, old numbering, 735: see on-line edition at: <http://denziger.patristica.net/enchiridion-symbolorum.html>; Kunzler (2001), 434-35. The differences between Dominicans and Franciscans regarding the Immaculate Conception of Mary were not resolved until Pope Pius IX decided in favour of the Franciscan view and pronounced it dogma in the papal bull, *Ineffabilis Deus* (8 Dec. 1854).

²¹ Bätschmann (2008), 168; quoting Baxandall (1972), 67-71. Baxandall’s examples, however, are all of the *right* hand making the welcoming gesture.

²² The large decorated disc above the Madonna’s throne may be a *patera* and, as such, might have Eucharistic overtones. See Pincus 2004, 135-138.

²³ The first to note that Bellini’s paintings have a marked “effect on the viewer” was Carlo Ridolfi in his biography of 1648; see Christiansen (2004), 24.

²⁴ For the association of Job with music, see Meyer (1954), 21-31.

²⁵ See Ruskin’s observation: “Not inspired with any high religious passion; a good man’s work; not an enthusiast’s” (1906, 151-52).

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ABSTRACT

This article explores some of the unexplored details of Giovanni Bellini's justly famous altarpiece for San Giobbe: the *choice* of the six saints depicted, the emphasis on the *gaze* of each, the unusual *expression* of the Christ-child, the curious gesture that the Madonna makes with her *left* hand, and the *function* of the eye-catching angel-musicians. Its purpose is to illustrate Jung's insistence that one should "stick" with the image; to suggest that an artist's struggle to realise his inner vision is about being able to see and understand intuitions that others miss; and to propose that a work of art can harbour a struggle with "meaning" that is just as intense as that which faces the analysand who wrestles to understand the deepest implications of their dreams and fantasies.

KEY WORDS

Waking fantasy, Giovanni Bellini, San Giobbe altarpiece, Job, Virgin Mary, *imitatio Christi*.