The Early Modern Cardinal: An Historical Appraisal

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'The Cardinal' is amongst the most visual archetypes in European History. His rich red robes and ostentatious headgear betoken the leadership which the pope vests in him; his airs of primordial authority and sacerdotal *noblesse* instinctively draw the eye. Even an art-historical layman can identify a cardinal immediately from the cut and colour of his cloth: scarlet, crimson, carmine, vermillion, ruby – even, as in the famous bespectacled portrait of Fernando Niño de Guevara, rosé – the shade of red matters not, for the association of iconography and office is so strong. Cardinals thus, ironically, would seem to enjoy a more straightforward visual identity than the popes whom they faithfully served – the pope's costume, by contrast, manifesting itself in rather more variable shades and emblematic designs than those available to his mere electors. Yet the single factor of colour has come to be so meaningful with the Cardinal that it can feel as if almost the only filter through which to glimpse him. To delve deeper into who cardinals were, and why they mattered, we have to push past this primary association to interrogate the somewhat broader palette with which this extraordinarily varied group of individuals put a gloss on their lives. Over 1,200 men became cardinals between 1417 and the end of the eighteenth century and many discharged their roles and responsibilities as *porporati* quite differently. A cardinal's core duties in this period may have been to serve as a papal elector and counsellor, but many cardinals were also pastors or politicians, inquisitors or diplomats, saints, sinners, bureaucrats, and patrons of the arts. Some cardinals even became kings; a majority were involved in governing the wider Church in other ways, for example as protectors of orders, confraternities, crowns, and nations. The complexity of the roles which cardinals adopted, and the sheer range of identities which

could flow from them, therefore make cardinals important figures of study not just for ecclesiastical historians but for scholars of culture, politics, and society at large as well. And the cardinal's positional versatility helped, in particular, to ensure that he and his peers became the subjects of a large body of portraiture, which thus needs to be interpreted and set in context. The remaining essays in the present volume do this for a specific case or cases, either in relation to a particular image, cardinal, or portrayer of cardinals. But this chapter does something different: it sets those discussions in context with an overview of the Cardinal as a phenomenon. How the concept of a cardinal developed, what issues it raised within the Early Modern Church (and society), and what implications that had for the Cardinal's portraiture in the wide variety of forms which it took are thus questions which inform discussion in the pages below.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARDINAL

What then is a cardinal? The question has never been all that easy to answer. And, indeed, one reason that we seem to recognise cardinals more for how they look than what they do is that their precise function within the Church – and the range of powers and responsibilities which flow from it – have been the subject of intense debate and complex evolution for hundreds of years, including well into the Early Modern period. The word 'cardinal' does not appear in the Early Church's lexicon, emerging only at some point towards the middle of the first millennium. Leo IX (1049-54) postulated that cardinals were the hinges (*cardines*) on which the great door of the *Ecclesia Universalis* swung, but he did not specify in detail what that meant in practice.[1] Leo's cardinals were simply those clergy who assisted him in performing his episcopal duties around Rome, and they consisted of three kinds: deacons, priests, and bishops. Cardinal deacons distributed papal alms in each of the city's districts (*rioni*), but cardinal priests deputised for the pontiff in its great basilicae, while cardinal bishops each held title to one of the seven suburbicarian dioceses subordinated to the pope's

[1] Kuttner, 'Cardinalis', 1945, p. 176.

own (Ostia, Albano, Frascati, Palestrina, Sabina, Silva Candida, and Velletri). Only in 1059, when Nicholas II elevated these three orders of clerics to the august position of papal electors, was a process by which they came together into one 'College' truly set in motion. The term 'Sacred College' was first used to signify the cardinals *as collective* only at the Council of Rheims in 1148. And yet the relationship of these three orders to each other, and to the pope himself, remained unclear even then: only in 1179, for instance, did Alexander III effectively combine them into a single body when he established that all individual cardinals would hold equal status when it came to the crucial duty of choosing his successor.[2] The question of what further rights cardinals' involvement in the election conferred on them individually nevertheless remained a matter of canonical conjecture throughout the rest of the Middle Ages.[3] In practical terms a particular cardinal's capacity to vote certainly gave him a wide opening to construct a network of patronage with himself at the centre. But did the Cardinal's role choosing the pope also give him his own legal authority within the Church independent of the pope's? There were those who argued that it did, at least as expressed at a corporate level. The matter was of no little significance since many cardinals aspired explicitly to the idea that their College formed a sort of 'senate of the Church' which could supervise the pope and perhaps even constrain him. In 1378 a group of cardinals actually put this to the test when they repudiated Urban VI's election and withdrew to Avignon to elect a replacement.[4]

Early Modernity was thus a time in which the role of the Cardinal was closely contested – something reflected in the wide variety of contexts in which the cardinal came to be visualised – but it was also the moment when that cardinalatial role was also eventually defined. The Great Schism, which followed Urban VI's election and lasted for nearly forty

[2] On the history of the cardinals' voting rights in the papal election, see Colomer and McLean, 'Electing Popes', 1998, pp. 1-22; and Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, 2017, pp. 56-67.
[3] On debates about the cardinals' status vis-à-vis the pope, see Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, pp. 13-14, pp. 21-22; and, in greater detail, Robinson, *The* Papacy, 1990, pp. 33-120.
[4] On the Western Schism and its causes see Weiß's recent survey of historiographical debate on this, 'Luxury and Extravagancy at the Papal Court', 2009, pp. 67-88.

years, pitted the pope's rights against the cardinals' – to the benefit only of Conciliarism, a rival constitutional theory for the Church to Papalism which posited that the Church was a Congregation of the Faithful and should be governed by a council of its senior members. Papal fortunes, and therefore by extension those of the cardinals, were at a low ebb when the Council of Constance (1414-1418) dissolved the then three extant papal obediences and reinstituted a new unified papacy under Martin V (1417-1431). Yet the fifteenth century saw a series of decisive developments in both cardinals' prominence and standing which paved the way for their later celebrity. The pope's return to Rome in 1420 unleashed new opportunities for ambitious men of letters and would-be administrators to prove their mettle in his service. At the same time, new elites (both within Italy and beyond) wanted access to the Church's wider wealth to aid their social advancement: they too invested in cardinals' hats as a form of papal association – with the result that the College became more dynamic (in the sense of a higher turnover of personnel) and better-connected (through its links to structures which distributed power locally through secular society). Many of the new fifteenth-century cardinals saw themselves as veritable ecclesiastical 'princes' who had a duty to exhibit, depict, and even flaunt their *magnificenza*. Jean Jouffroy (c. 1412-1473), a Burgundian French cardinal, certainly held so, arguing with no apparent irony that cardinals simply must deserve great wealth because of their heavy responsibilities.[5] Other theorists of the cardinalate – most notably Paolo Cortesi – concurred in more general terms. Cortesi's text regrettably still languishes only in its original sixteenth-century edition, a sign of the lack of attention given to study of the Cardinal's office rather than the specific men who occupied it.[6] Nevertheless, Cortesi recommended that all cardinals should enjoy an income of 12,000 ducats per annum; tellingly, he also divided his treatise *De Cardinalatu* into three books centred on each of the Cardinal's distinct spheres of activity (as *Homo Ethicus et*

[5] Märtl, *Kardinal Jean* Jouffroy, 1996, pp. 194-207.
[6] Cortesi, *De Cardinalatu*, 1510. Chambers, 'Treatises on the Ideal Cardinal', 2020, pp. 453-69.

contemplativus, *Oeconomicus*, and *Politicus*). Few contemporaries dissented – the humanist cardinal Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini (1422-1479), perhaps coming closest when he wrote a letter to his young colleague Francesco Gonzaga exhorting him to make himself learned in law, theology, and history, but never to indulge in unnecessary pomp nor ornamentation.[7] Yet even Ammannati seems to have viewed the College as fundamentally that same venerable 'senate' admired by other theorists for its collective experience and wisdom, its sanction to speak truth unto the pope, and to guide his decision-making. If we had more portraits of members from the mid fifteenth-century College, that is doubtless how they would be depicted, for it is how the cardinals of this era choreographed themselves within ritual spaces such as the conclave when they performed a solemn ceremony: signing electoral capitulations by which each promised to limit his power over the College in the event of his own election as pope.

Massimo Firpo once wrote a chapter on 'the Cardinal' as a 'Renaissance Character' in a project which set him alongside 'the Prince', 'Condottiere', 'Courtier', 'Philosopher', 'Merchant', 'Artist', 'Woman', and 'Native' as the personalities which had 'animated this decisive moment in the genesis of the modern mind'.[8] Nevertheless, fifteenth-century cardinals faced an uphill battle to realise the ideal form they had constructed for themselves *in practice* and to assert their ambitions vis-à-vis the pope's. The basic problem went back to Constance, which had set a worrying precedent for cardinals when the Council's delegates had sat alongside them to elect Martin V. Without their exclusive right choose the pope what status and power could cardinals have? But how could they hope to retain that right if they confronted the pope, as their fourteenth-century predecessors had done to Urban VI, and caused another schism? Fifteenth-century popes recognised the bind in which their cardinals now found themselves and saw little reason to honour any commitments made to them. They

[7] Ammannati, *Lettere 1444-1479*, 1997, vol. 2 no. 363, pp. 190-1202; see also Pellegrini, 'Da Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini a Paolo Cortesi', 1998, pp. 23-44.
[8] Firpo, 'The Cardinal', 1991, pp. 46-97.

used the papacy's growing resources, and the growing demand for red hats, to overwhelm dissenters within the College by sheer force of numbers. The size of the College thus rose steadily throughout this period, from a low of just sixteen in 1439 to a high of 76 in 1565.[9] Naturally, this proved a boon for those who made their living painting cardinals' likenesses, but the cardinals themselves were collectively disaffected by this development. They objected regularly, with Ludovico Trevisan's outburst to Pius II telling, if not characteristic: 'I am ashamed to sit in this place which every man thinks due him…. [for] You have named a number whom I would not have as servants in my kitchen or stable'.[10] Emily O'Brien, not unreasonably, sees this as part of a 'crisis of the fifteenth-century papacy'.[11] Later cardinals also criticised every major new promotion in similar terms and when Sixtus V announced the creation of new cardinals in 1588 the existing ones expressed such discontent that, allegedly, he could hardly make himself heard above their noise.[12] Money was still a factor in such squabbles, of course. In 1500, most cardinals derived a majority of their income from grants from the Apostolic Treasury – grants which added up to around 10% of papal income and were shared equally but were nevertheless still not sizeable enough to support the lifestyle to which many cardinals aspired.[13] Some cardinals increasingly supplemented their core collegiate income with sums derived from benefices, which Barbara Hallman has shown could be quite large. Hallman estimated that cardinals received 305,000 ducats from this source in 1523 – but the fact that cardinals could not easily discharge the duties attached to their benefice(s) increasingly brought the College into disrepute and attracted opprobrium in the fevered times of the 1520s and 1530s.[14] Many cardinals throughout the century thus remained surprisingly poor and most lived day-to-day on vast lines of credit.[15]

[9] Pellegrini, 'Il Sacro Collegio Cardinalizio', 2013, p. 322.
[10] Meserve and Simonetta, *Pius II: Commentaries*, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 29-30.
[11] O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius* II, 2015.
[12] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 1891-1953, vol. 4, p. 410; vol. 5, p. 534; vol. 6, pp. 220-222; vol. 9, p. 141 and pp. 201-202; vol. 21, pp. 239-241.
[13] Antonovics, 'A Late Fifteenth-Century Division Register', 1967, pp. 95-96.
[14] Hallman, *Italian Cardinals*, 1985, p. 64.
[15] Chambers, 'The economic predicament of Renaissance cardinals', 1966, pp. 305-308.

CARDINALS IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Historians of the College in the sixteenth century have reached a consensus that this period witnessed the slow extinction of any 'senatorial' or 'princely' status cardinals might have had before (with a concomitant impact on how cardinals sought to depict themselves and be visualised). Paolo Prodi, who remains the most notable scholar to write on this subject, argued in his *Sovrano pontefice* that the impulse to reform lay behind this: Adrian VI (1522-1523) and most subsequent popes pursued policies to subordinate the Sacred College entirely to their authority with a view to replacing it with something less open to criticism from local churches.[16] Others, notably Marco Pellegrini and Jennifer DeSilva, have seen the rise of popes' imperial and absolutist pretensions as an equally important factor, with crucial developments occurring during Alexander VI's and Julius II's 'regal' pontificates.[17] Maria Teresa Fattori has shown, in a work of detailed archival reconstruction, just how far this process had progressed by the pontificate of Clement VIII: Clement was said to dominate the College so utterly that, in the words of the Venetian ambassador Paolo Paruta, the cardinals openly 'lamented their loss of every authority.. [and] of almost every liberty'.[18] Clement, like Sixtus V before him, certainly used a range of controlling behaviours, including financial sanctions and threats of violence, to silence dissent and to reshape the role of his subordinates. Yet this did not always impact on how, or how often, cardinals were depicted – in part because it never truly rendered the College voiceless or unimportant at all: cardinals lost some corporate power but their individual agency hardly suffered the same fate (an observation with further implications for their portraiture in the seventeenth century).[19] Antonio Menniti Ippolito has made the point that popes who innovated in order to centralise

[16] Prodi, *The Papal* Prince, 1987, pp. 80-91.
[17] DeSilva, 'Senators or courtiers', 2008, pp. 154-173; Pellegrini, 'A turning-point in the history of the factional system', 2002, pp. 8-30; idem., 'Das Kardinalkolleg von Sixtus IV', 2011, pp. 399-446; idem., 'Il Sacro Collegio Cardinalizio', 2013, pp. 321-356.
[18] Paruta, 'Relazione' in Alberì, *Relazioni*, 1839-1863, vol. 4, pp. 413-414; Fattori, *Clemente VIII e il Sacro* Collegio, 2004.
[19] Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, 2017, pp. 209-210.

power in their own hands often found that their actions had the unintended consequence of dispersing it across the papal curia in ways they had not anticipated – an effect which created space for particular cardinals to establish themselves as powerful players in major congregations, for instance. The curia's long history was thus generally one of 'discontinuous continuity', in which institutions created by one pope were later adapted by his successors' cardinals for quite different purposes, or else subjected to a process of creative destruction.[20] Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cardinals were not so inconsequential after all – and, by a variety of means, wanted to show the world that this was the case.

Yet 'reform' in the mid-sixteenth century also played an important role in changing the Cardinal's role – and, after Trent, many cardinals adjusted their aspirations and images to a whole series of new realities, both ideological and political. Hubert Jedin, who thought the cardinals got more religious, wrote of a 'clericalisation of the Sacred College'.[21] Atis Antonovics, who has published a briefer assessment in English, stresses a similar strand of development in the College's membership over this time.[22] Cardinals of this generation, and the one that followed, were certainly a more pious group than those who went before them – they included such illustrious names as the future saints Michele Ghislieri (Pius V), Carlo Borromeo, Roberto Bellarmine, the venerable Cesare Baronio, and other distinguished reforming bishops like Gabriele Paleotti and Federico Borromeo, the inquisitors Giovanni Fachinetti and Giulio Antonio Santori, and the future reforming pope Gregory XV, Alessandro Ludovisi – and they were also a more 'moral' group: far fewer admitted to such sins as fathering illegitimate children than their late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century predecessors.[23] This reversion to the Cardinal as a figure of righteousness had important effects on both Curia and Church, giving a powerful push to various devout initiatives of

[20] Menniti Ippolito, *Il governo dei* papi, 2007, p. 19.
[21] Jedin, 'Analekten zur Reformtätigkeit', 1935, p. 125.
[22] Antonovics, 'Counter-Reformation Cardinals', 1972, pp. 301-328.
[23] Weber, *Senatus Divinus*, 1996, pp. 36-43.

various kinds. Treatises on the 'ideal' cardinal proliferated. Moreover, unlike earlier Renaissance texts, these new tracts depicted cardinals as functionaries and servants who needed to exemplify holiness and prudence. The Jesuit Girolamo Piatti's *De cardinalis dignitate et officio*, published in 1602, typifies this: it called specific attention to the moral characteristics a holder of this office now needed – not just prudence, but also fortitude, restraint, and erudition (especially in oratory).[24] Of course, we can push a narrative of the College's spiritual regeneration too far: the fact that Carlo Borromeo was amongst the most devout of cardinals does not, for instance, obscure the fact that he was also promoted as a callow youth of eighteen. In fact, such 'underage' cardinals were as well represented within the College in the century after 1550 as they were in the one before.[25] Yet, something surely changed, if not in how all cardinals behaved then at least in terms of the norms that were established for their behaviour. Cardinals were in general depicted differently, as a culture of post-Tridentine piety emerged within the College's membership to compete with – and co-exist alongside – those earlier developments like Italianisation and the evolution of those patron-client networks.

Scholars who study the College's changing demography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have also noted other patterns, not least one of oligarchic consolidation within the Italian group, which intensified after 1500 (and especially after 1600) in several important ways.[26] Christoph Weber, whose work ranks alongside that of Barbara McClung Hallman and Maria Antonietta Visceglia as the most important in this respect, has noted the growing intensity of social connections and relational ties which increasingly bound much of the College's membership together. 70% of cardinals from this period were Italian but 114 of

[24] Piatti, *De cardinalis* dignitate, 1602, pp. 57, 70, 77, 85, 130.
[25] DeSilva, 'Politics and Dynasty: Underage Cardinals', 2017, p. 90.
[26] Weber, *Senatus Divinus*, 1996; Hallman, *Italian Cardinals*, 1985; Visceglia, 'The Social Background and Education of Cardinals', 2020, pp. 245-59; Broderick, 'The Sacred College of Cardinals', 1987, pp. 43-47; Reinhard, 'Struttura e significato del sacro collegio', 1988, pp. 257-265; DeSilva, 'Red Hat Strategies', 2011, pp. 729-741.

them (9.9%) – a truly striking number – were direct descendants of one or more of the Renaissance popes who acknowledged children (Innocent VIII, Alexander VI, Julius II, Paul III, Pius IV, Gregory XIII).[27] Ten cardinals promoted in these centuries had members of the College for both maternal and paternal uncles and another thirteen also entered it after one of their relatives had married into the papal family.[28] A small number of important families, including the Caetani, Carafa, Colonna, d'Este, Farnese, Gonzaga, Medici, Orsini, and Savelli dominated overall. This in itself may go some way to explaining why so many cardinals acquired or inherited portraits of each other – the subject of Thomas-Leo True's chapter – and why they maintained them within broader collections. Certainly, the narrowing of the College's profile by the eighteenth century was such that, of the 56 cardinals who took part in the conclave of 1721, an astonishing 40 were related to former popes.[29]

The College's Italianisation in due course reshaped how the curia worked – and presented how it worked – in dramatic ways. Not least it meant that most cardinals arrived in office increasingly bound together by a shared training, outlook, and life experience. But it also incentivised cardinals to propagate, project, and extend wide-reaching client networks amongst the extended kin they often shared and who were also climbing up the curial *cursus honorum*. Renata Ago, Wolfgang Reinhard, and Maria Antonietta Visceglia have all studied how such networks operated.[30] Indeed, Reinhard and Birgit Emich have also both gone still further to show how they developed their own idiosyncratic rhythms and ritualised forms of interaction within the patron-client nexus.[31] These networks often made questions of place within Italy, and local and regional identities, as important to cardinals as grand ecclesiological concerns. Notoriously, they also did something else: they allowed Italian

[27] Weber, *Senatus Divinus*, 1996, pp. 243-246.
[28] Ibid., pp. 88-90, pp. 97-99.
[29] Ibid., p. 124.
[30] Visceglia, 'Factions in the Sacred College', 2002, p. 116. Ago, *Carriere e clientele nella Roma barocca*, 1990. Reinhard, 'Makropolitik und Mikropolitik', 2008, pp. 67-81.
[31] Reinhard, 'Papal Power and Family Strategy,' 1991, pp. 329-356. Emich, *Bürokratie und Nepotismus unter Paul V*, 2001.

elites to dominate papal elections so completely that no non-Italian was elected to the office from 1523 until 1978.[32] Yet later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cardinals also assumed a much wider range of duties than earlier generations had taken on before, especially when it came to personifying the interests of diverse groups and individuals at the papal court. Odoardo Farnese (1573-1626), for instance, held a wide range of protectorships during his career, including of the *luoghi pii*, of the Roman brotherhoods of the Orazione e Morte, Santa Maria del Carmine, and San Girolamo della Carità, of the Casa degli Orfanelli, and of the Carthusian, Capuchin, and Camoldoese orders. Arnold Witte has shown how seriously Farnese took his obligations to all these organisations within the Church, not only leaving them money or precious objects in his will but also visualising them symbolically in the Camerino degli Eremiti whose decoration he commissioned from Giovanni Lanfranco in 1616.[33] Some cardinals concentrated on collecting memberships of the Congregations – special ecclesiastical commissions which scrutinised or executed papal policy on the pontiff's behalf which Sixtus V formalised in 1588.[34] Maria Antonietta Visceglia has written of how essential it was for a cardinal to maximise his presence on such committees if he was to have any chance of fulfilling his obligations to nephews and clients (and thus maintaining his own status and prestige).[35] In all cases, the more memberships a cardinal had the stronger his motivation to circulate his image and the more vehicles by which he would be able to do so as he sought to put himself and his clients ahead.

CARDINALS' PORTRAITS

Portraits fit into this story because the changes described above – what we might loosely term the advent of post-Tridentine piety, of Italian identities, and of bureaucratic client-patron networks – all had major impacts on how cardinals understood their role and how they and

[32] On the profiles and identities of popes, see Reinhard, 'Herkunft und Karriere der Päpste', 1976, pp. 87-108.
[33] Witte, *The Artful Hermitage*, 2008, 178-80.
[34] Sixtus V, "Immensa aeterni Dei," 22 January 1588, *Bullarum Romanorum*, 1857-1872, vol. 8, pp. 985-999.
[35] Visceglia, 'Factions in the Sacred College', 2002, p. 116.

others wished to represent it. No doubt that is why the editors of this collection have structured two of the book's primary sections around those subjects as principal themes. But cardinals also evolved in other ways at this time as well (which explains the choices of further themes). The Cardinal's role as collector was a natural concomitant to his position as patron, we might think. But so too was his status as a figure with multiple, often divided, loyalties ('Rome versus Home', for example). Many cardinals – at times a majority – were born within the Papal States, served the pope's government, spiritual and temporal, and died in his service. But, in spite of Italianisation, the number of other cardinals, who still hailed from other parts of Italy or Europe, remained substantial: they might have been official 'Crown Cardinals', nominated by one or more Catholic princes, or servants to their second master in a subtler fashion: the holders of protection of the crown or nation at the papal court, the co-ordinator of its political faction in the conclave, or simply the extended scions of prominent nobility or the royal house.[36] All such cardinals faced inevitable questions about how they wanted to represent themselves: which loyalties and identities they should prioritise in which contexts, how they might combine them appropriately in a given representation, who should have access to, or be able to display, their portrait, where they should locate their tombs, etc. No answer to any of these questions was ever permanently fixed (for even a tomb could be moved, as Carol Richardson's essay shows).

Hundreds of portraits of cardinals survive from the Early Modern period – indeed, cardinals are surely amongst the era's most depicted figures and their portraiture could even be argued to constitute its own sub-genre. Moreover, both Renaissance and Baroque cardinals are known from a much wider variety of images than just such formal facsimiles. They feature as

[36] On crown cardinals, see Broderick, 'The Sacred College of Cardinals', 1987, pp. 48-60. Tusor, 'Prolegomena zur Frage des Kronkardinalats', 2003, pp. 51-72.

subjects of sculpted busts, effigies on tombs, likenesses on medals and miniatures; some even appear in frescos and on ceilings, alone and in groups. Printed books contain their fair share of cardinals' visages too. Henri Albi's *Eloges historiques des cardinaux illustres* (1644) is a particularly fine example of this. Unusually, its subjects are inked out onto the page in two colours: black and red.[37] The sheer quantity of visual representation of cardinals attests to two things: the technological advances of the age, which made mass production of illustrations of dignitaries possible for the first time, and also the constant contestation of the Cardinal's role described above. Nearly every image of a cardinal was purposeful: it proposed a way that members of the College should be seen, either as individuals or a collective. Many of these images were created with direct or indirect input from a cardinal himself – they were part of a discourse of self-fashioning and the creation of identity which was taking on added significance as the Catholic Church itself underwent both profound intellectual and also administrative transformations. Yet other images had cardinals simply as subjects – sometimes even incidental ones – and they can be just as revealing of how others perceived them and, perhaps, the success with which cardinals' efforts at self-fashioning were met. Of course, many portraits of cardinals are also great works of technical merit and importance to the evolving history of aesthetic tastes and deserve to be studied on those terms as well. How then should we tease out the multiple levels on which we might like to engage with them, and how we should reconcile their value to ecclesiastical historians and to art historians alike? These should be preoccupying themes and they require a dialogue between practitioners of both disciplines if they are to be realised to full effect.

The scholarly literature on images of cardinals is, naturally, large and well-established. Indeed, a broad body of scholarship acknowledges already how the College's shifting status and cardinals' multiplying range of new identities impacted both how cardinals represented themselves and also how others portrayed them. Carol Richardson's book

[37] Albi, *Eloges historiques des cardinaux illustres*, 1644.

Reclaiming Rome was a landmark for the study of the fifteenth-century College which examined how cardinals comported themselves visually through their dress and at their sites of official status. Scholarship on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been more numerous but also narrower – with a primary focus on the activities of individual cardinals rather than of the College as a collective. Nevertheless, studies such as Clare Robertson on Alessandro Farnese, Zygmunt Waźbiński on Francesco del Monte, and Lisa Beaven on Camillo Massimo all situate their subject's role in commissioning art in the larger context of cardinals' constant competition for social and political status, inside Rome and beyond it.[38] Other scholars – notably Maria Antonietta Visceglia, for ceremonial and etiquette, and Patricia Waddy, for cardinals' palaces – have pursued similar inquiries in relation to specific themes and areas.[39] Formal portraiture may not have been central to these endeavours but there has been some discussion of how to interpret images of cardinals – types, poses, costume, attributes, social and political functions, etc. Francesco Petrucci and Maria Elisa Tittoni have been at the forefront of this on account of an exhibition they curated at Palazzo Braschi in 2006-2007 and a catalogue with commentary which they published alongside it.[40] Nevertheless, Petrucci and Tittoni took change across time as their theme and we might perhaps query whether that is too broad to allow us to ruminate sufficiently on characteristics specific to the Early Modern period. The interaction of religious and dynastic considerations for the cardinalatial ideal would be one such characteristic; the tension between the need to disseminate images widely and the need to produce them to a quality that met Tridentine aesthetic expectations was another. Clare Robertson contributed a valuable chapter to the *Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal* which sets out some of the particular issues surrounding our interpretation of cardinals' portraits at this time, as well as the evolution of

[38] Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 1992; Waźbiński, *Il cardinale Francesco Maria del Monte*, 1994; Beaven, *An Ardent Patron*, 2010.
[39] Visceglia, 'Etichetta cardinalizia in età barocca', 2018, pp. 43-72; idem., *La città rituale. Roma e le sue cerimonie in età moderna,* 2002; Waddy, *Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces*, 1990.
[40] Petrucci and Tittoni, *La Porpora Romana*, 2006.

symbolism within them, and of technical aspects of style and production.[41] Nevertheless, more remains to be said, not least because how an individual cleric negotiated the constraints on him with respect to fashioning his own image was always highly variable, depending as it did on both evolving political and theological conditions and also personal preferences and skill.

PROBLEMS OF METHOD AND INTERPRETATION

The essays in this volume advance on Robertson in several important respects, not least via the questions about method and perception they engage in relation to their specific case studies. The first, and most obvious, of these questions (from the perspective of method) is what exactly constitutes a cardinal's portrait? It might seem simple to say that it should be understood to be a depiction of the cardinal's physical likeness, but that definition only invites further inquiry. Must the cardinal be recognisable as a cardinal for that to hold? Shearer West writes in her book *Portraiture* that 'portraits can be placed on a continuum between the specificity of likeness and the generality of type', and this is surely as true of cardinals' portraits as for those of any other group.[42] So when was a cardinal's portrait a representation of *a cardinal* and when was it a portrait of *the individual*? Piers Baker-Bates' essay shows the difficulties in disentangling these two identities in practice in the portraiture of the College's Iberian members. Irene Brooke's essay, on the other hand, draws our attention to quite a different dilemma: the degree to which a man's promotion to the College could obliterate his alternative identities, on a visual level: if this could happen to so celebrated a *letterato* as Pietro Bembo, then it could happen to anyone. Yet our opening presumption that there was, indeed, a particular cardinal's 'uniform' which was instantly identifiable to contemporaries is not always borne out by the evidence. Minou Schraven's excavation of the varied images of Carlo Borromeo evinces this rather neatly. And indeed,

[41] Robertson, 'Portraits of Early Modern Cardinals', 2020, pp. 557-80.
[42] West, *Portraiture*, 2012, p. 21.

our sense of the fixed nature of the cardinal's iconography is probably rather overdone, for Carol Richardson has written elsewhere of how even the Cardinal's wardrobe was always a constantly evolving collection of outfits, the precise significance of each was both changeable and subjective.[43] Fashions changed, which meant that the significance of the symbols of the cardinalate had to be affirmed regularly and repeatedly. Our conception of the cardinal may well thus still owe rather too much to a few supremely talented artists whose depictions have become rightly iconic – something which Danielle Carrabino's essay on Scipione Pulzone reminds us.

The methodological problem of defining cardinals' portraiture seems to me to be foundational within this collection of essays. Not all portraits of cardinals were grand or formal state portraits of the kind that usually get attention in discussions of papal portraiture (or even like the famous *Double Portrait of the Cardinals Domenico and Marino Grimani* which Sarah Ferrari mentions in her chapter).[44] Why not even treat the Cardinal's own body as itself a canvas on which a living portrait was constantly presented and refined to the public? Recent work on curial and papal funerals has fruitfully pursued such a line, demonstrating (for instance) how bodies could be re-imagined as highly visible props within the sacred rituals and might even be replaced by wax effigies if too putrefied to serve that solemn purpose.[45] But this question of intent too obviously also invites debate, for motivations for painting cardinals' portraits were obviously as varied as for papal portraits, if not more so. Some portraits were intended to signify the Cardinal's presence, others his ownership, still more to emphasise his political networks or to promote his cult or legacy. Representations of the Cardinal's physical body could be useful for all or any of these objectives – but, of course, other images could symbolise or substitute his identity or authority with equal – or even surpassing – clarity. The *galero*, which cardinals rarely if ever

[43] Richardson, 'The Cardinal's Wardrobe', 2020, pp. 535-556.
[44] See, for instance, Mansour, 'Prince and Pontiff', 2008, pp. 209-229.
[45] Paravicini Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, 2000, 114-49. Buttay, 'La Mort du Pape,' 2003, pp. 67-94.

actually wore in our period, remained their most recognisable material symbol. However, the Cardinal's coat of arms, often displayed within an image of the *galero*, between its tassels, also signified much about both his public and private identity. In the still semi-literate world of Early Modern Italy such images could develop powerful associations – indeed, we always need to read any physical likeness in a much wider context replete with such signs and symbols. Apropos of this, Arnold Witte reminds us in his chapter how many cardinals' portraits, even when identifiable as depictions of particular cardinals, still primarily served the same sort of ritualistic function that we might well associate with less complex or less prestigious genres of image: they symbolised the Cardinal's legitimising presence and should therefore be read accordingly. Minou Schraven's essay alerts us to further important variables, the first of which was any image's portability: were portraits designed to remain in situ or were they for circulation? If they were to be circulated, then how widely? Sarah Ferrari's discussion of the images of Grimani cardinals in the manuscript of Morosini 270 suggests they could sometimes be for only very limited private consumption. So how then did such considerations affect design or iconography? All these essays in fact repeatedly underline the presence of practical problems of production (and re-production) of cardinals' portraits: it would be fascinating to understand the economics of this particular industry as it related to all these varied outputs.

Yet the essays in this book do not only raise questions of method relating to how we study cardinals' portraits: they also engage important questions of interpretation as well. The first such questions, which would seem to frame Alessandra Pattanaro's essay, are about how we identify the subjects within each image and what importance we accord to their identification. Simply being able to state which cardinal or cardinals a given image represents may or may not be useful knowledge. It depends, for one thing, on an understanding of context and of the motives behind the image's production (on the part of painter or patron).

Per Sarah Ferrari: how did visual memorialisation of the Grimani cardinals bolster the family's status within Venice? What, specifically, do they add to the portraits of other family members accorded Venetian honours such as the dogeship? Thomas-Leo True's research into inventories of portraits shows clearly the pitfalls we might fall into assuming the reasons why cardinals owned or displayed images of one colleague or predecessor but not another. We might think questions of identity and identification only secondary where the portrait of the cardinal is clearly generic and his presence in the overall visual schema emblematic – indeed, Piers Baker-Bates believes many Iberian cardinals' portraits of the era to be, essentially, of this ilk, and Brian Maxson accepts the same for many fifteenth-century Florentine examples. Yet cases such as Leandro's *Honorius III confirms the Dominican rule*, which Pattanaro studies, show that matters were rarely so simple: this historical scene, created over three centuries after the events it visualises, was still an opportunity for both contemporary commentary and for the surreptitious inclusion of the College's current members. What we gain from being able to point to particular figures on the canvas, and from being able to identify their likeness with that of contemporary cardinals, is still debatable. In such cases, an artist may have been making a political point (at the behest of his patron or otherwise), or he may simply having been showcasing his talent or re-using a likeness he had already perfected in another context elsewhere. Danielle Carrabino's essay underlines how Scipione Pulzone, for all his contemporary fame, is not well-studied – and the same is true of many other masters of this particular genre. But even where we are reasonably certain that the choice of particular cardinals' faces was freighted with particular meaning, we still have to coax that meaning out. Whether such depictions are critical or celebratory is always a matter for interpretation, which needs to be argued closely with reference to a plausible narrative of events.

Questions about how to understand the symbols that accompany cardinals in their portraits are also just as important as identifying the cardinals themselves, as several of the other essays in this collection show. Few cardinals appeared on canvas without props to busy or bejewel their countenance. Many cardinals' portraits contain documents, the presence of which surely emphasised the cardinal's learning – and which documents they were could take on further significance, including by referring to the pope who had created him. Most also record other emblematic trappings of office: his ring, a kerchief, his *biretta* and *mozzetta*, etc. It is surely tempting to see the cardinals' mules, which Philippa Jackson rides as the subject for her essay, as a further such accessory which drew attention to both the cardinal's own onerous responsibilities to Mother Church and also his exalted but holy celibacy. Yet questions of audience still matter here every bit as much as they do with how we interpret the cardinal's own image. The finest and most thought through portraits – typically those most freighted with symbolism – were seen only by the happy few who could gaze on them inside the relevant *palazzo*. By contrast, those which enjoyed the widest circulation – hanging from the walls of confraternal buildings, staring out from the pages of seventeenth-century books, or on the obverse of commemorative medals – were far cruder in this, as all other, respects. Minou Schraven alerts us to the considerable challenges of depicting Carlo Borromeo's holiness, including navigating the tension between making him recognisable and ensuring his medals had enough commercial appeal to be successful. Moreover, the need to generate and distribute images of the saint as quickly as possible – especially in the 1590s in the context of Clement VIII's rising scepticism towards the *beati moderni* – complicated this further. And what those who owned these medals made of how they conveyed Borromeo's holiness is also pertinent: did they understand the saint's holiness or the miraculous properties of the medal in the same way as those who had produced it? Did either group really understand such

commemorative portraits in the same way as they would have done other categories of sacramentalia like an *agnus dei* or a set of rosary beads?

CONCLUSION

All this seems to have come a long way from my initial discussion of what cardinals were and how we can variegate our colouration of them. But this essay has provided a background to the fuller contributions later in this volume which elaborate on the questions set out above and, in so doing, establish credible perspectives on cardinals' portraiture as a whole. The chapters which follow, in particular – and in my view – help move on our discussion of Early Modern ecclesiastical art from a longstanding focus on prestige pieces to a view 'in the round' that accounts for context and places such pieces within the more substantial, vibrant, and ever-expanding material milieu. The scholars whose work follows mine here show, in sum, the constant processes of change and adaption in how such images were created and used; they also show how their symbols were internalised and re-imagined. Trent neither terminated nor caused any of this, but the spread of its strictures (or, at least its ideals) provided the stimulus for new waves of the depiction of cardinals which built on, but simultaneously transformed, older models and forms. One final theme which emerges from these essays – and one on which I wish to end this discussion – is that of durability: how long cardinals or those depicting them expected their portraits to last. Both Arnold Witte's and Carol Richardson's essays explain how portraits could be wrenched out of their contexts, relocated, or recycled – and that this process of repurposing has been as important to the survival of particular images as the original intentions of those responsible for producing them. Piers Baker-Bates and Brian Maxson both show how the cardinals' multiple identities – both sacred and secular, local and universal – could abet this process: more than the members of other elites, cardinals could be straightforwardly reinvented or reclaimed for new purposes, even in death. This versatility is surely an important factor in the on-going production and

circulation of their images throughout our period, and of the reappearance of old collegiate faces alongside the new. The cardinal's image has endured, above all, because it can speak in so many ways to so many different people. The many shades of red thus reflect the cardinal's disparate identities – but with an expert lens we can capture their distinct outlines and their blurred entanglements throughout the (art) history of the Early Modern Catholic Church.

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