THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

CARPACCIO'S NARRATIVE SERIES

ON

THE LEGEND OF SAINT URSULA

THE 'ESSENCE' OF NOBILITY, FEMININITY AND CHRISTIANITY

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will deal with nine paintings by the fifteenth century Venetian painter, Vittore Carpaccio which are known collectively as the Cycle of the Legend of St. Ursula. The story of Ursula is taken from the Legenda Aurea or Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voraigne. This book was first published in 1469, and gives the lives of all those who became martyrs for Christianity. Like Ursula, most of these martyrs were of 'noble' birth. The book was widely used by artists not only in Italy but also in Northern European countries. It provided painters of Christian themes with a format dealing with each Saint's life which would be the same in all countries.

These paintings are considered to be Carpaccio's first major achievement. His first dated painting in fact forms part of this St. Ursula Cycle. (1) It is dated 1490, and is called "The Arrival of St. Ursula at Cologne". I do not intend to deal with either his earlier or his later works, but will concentrate solely on the St. Ursula series. If I do refer to any other paintings it will be merely to emphasize a point using a visual reference, and the work itself will not be elaborated on. But before discussing the actual format of the thesis, I will first write about the artist.

That very little biographical information exists on the life of Carpaccio is unimportant to this work. In fact, it is an advantage in the sense that in dealing with a painter so long dead, I haven't got the, by now, almost obligatory task of reiterating his life saga. Instead, I can

concentrate on his work, uninfluenced by the writings of those historians, who might have felt tempted to attribute certain features of his work to his personality. (Van Gogh is the most obvious example that comes to mind, of an artist, where too much emphasis is placed on reading his work as an expression of his derangement.) The following brief section on Carpaccio suits the purpose of this thesis, as a biographical approach is not within its scope.

Vittore Carpaccio was the son of a furrier and he is though to have been born in Venice around 1460/65. This date is arrived at because his name then first appears in the will of his uncle Zuane. His uncle was a monk, known in religious life as Fra Ilario. Fifteen was the age at which children could legally inherit and so most historians have agreed that Carpaccio must have been younger than 15 in 1472. (2) Using as a guide the immaturity of handling, evident in his early paintings, which historians say must have been produced in the 1480's, as in 1490 he had already completed his first painting in the St. Ursula series and the quality of this work is far superior to all previous works, they arrived at the birth date 1460/65.

Carpaccio's name was originally Vetor Scarpazo. At that period in Venice, there was a wide-spread fondness for things Roman, and it was due to this that he changed his name to the latinized form, Carpathius. And the name Carpathius, through general usage, gradually became the more melodic Carpaccio. He was married to a woman called Laura and they had two sons, Pietro and Benedetto. But neither of his children had any real creative ability. Lacking an intellectual purpose of their own, they were totally dependant on

their father's drawings for their own works. As Lauts says they are artists ".....best left to local research and interest." (3)

Very little information is available on Carpaccio's apprenticeship years. Pignatti thinks that his early works betray a close study of Antonello da Messina which may have been acquired in the workshop of Alvise Vivarini, an ardent admirer of Antonello. Among the artists being trained in Vivarini's workshop at that time, were Cima da Conegliano, the Venetian Marco Basaiti, and Montagna and Buonconsiglio, who were both natives of Vicenza. Pignatti says that Vivarini guided their work in the direction of Antonello da Messina. But if one looks at the works of these artists, there appears to be a variety of possible influences other than Antonello.

Among the most important of these would Mantegna and his brother in-law, Giovanni Bellini. Mantegna's work itself betrays a variety of influences including that of his pupil, Carlo Crivelli, a court painter. Mantegna, himself had a great influence on Giovanni Bellini, but it was Giovanni who became the major influence on Venetian painting. To complicate matters, Steer points out that Alvise Vivarini was, in fact, very much influenced by Giovanni Bellini. (4) He also points out that in 1488, Alvise Vivarini was granted permission to work in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, along with the Bellinis. (5) If Carpaccio was the pupil of Alvise Vivarini, this may have been where he first came into direct contact with Giovanni Bellini. But to examine all of the possible influences during Carpaccio's apprenticeship and the importance of Giovanni Bellini, is a complex study in itself. The fact that Giovanni Bellini was in contact with Carpaccio is all that we need

ascertain. But there is no real evidence of personal contact between them until 1507, when Carpaccio was working with Giovanni on the decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. But, by that stage, he had already completed the St. Ursula series, and was considered an accomplished painter. And he was so well thought of that along with Giovanni and two other painters, he had to put a value on some frescoes that Giorgione had painted on the facade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. (6)

The area of Carpaccio's apprenticeship and who influenced him, is, as of yet, a very grey one. It presents an opening for investigation in itself. His paintings contain elements found in many contemporaneous North Italian painters, but no direct sources can be pinpointed. As Beck says :-

> "Since in the first dateable picture, from the St. Ursula cycle, Carpaccio appears as a fully mature, independant, and original painter, his training and the identification of his teacher or teachers remain guesswork. Any number of suggestions have been brought forth, ranging from Jacopo Bellini (which is chronologically impossible) Gentile Bellini, or Alvise Vivarini among the Venetians, to Mantegna from Padua and, further afield Perugino, Ghirlandaio and Signorelli. A possible youthful trip to Ferrara has also been suggested. This confusion concerning Carpaccio's artistic origins reflects difficulties that can occur where the lines among the "schools" of Italian painting are rigidly drawn. Carpaccio shared many qualities with his contemporaries from different regions, including a devotion to linear perspective and the pictorial possibilities of daring solutions achieved by Antonello da Messina, a gifted southerner, who had a singular influence in Venice .....but Carpaccio was certainly not Antonello's pupil." (7)

What may appear to be the influence of other painters in Carpaccio's series on the legend of St. Ursula, will not be dealt with in any extensive way. As has been pointed out, there is not yet enough concrete evidence to develop the subject. Discussion on influence, as

such, will be restricted to instances where available evidence reasonably warrants such conclusions to be drawn.

Most historians would agree that Carpaccio's paintings, on the legend of St. Ursula, were produced between the years 1490/1500. (8) The paintings were commissioned by the Scuole di Sant'Ursola to decorate their chapel. Produced in the last decade of the fifteenth century, the paintings belong to a very exciting period in Venetian history. The Italian states were slowly developing from a fuedal type economy to an open market capitalist system. Science was also adopting a more materialist approach and discarding the shackles of metaphysics. The emphasis was on rationalism. Executed by Carpaccio, these paintings on the legend on St. Ursula were commissioned by a religious society of lay people known as a Scuole, a group whose members would have been very much aware of the changing society that they were living in. The paintings are set in a late fifteenth century Venice that has been slightly idealised by the artist. The different events in the story are supposed to take place in England, France and Italy, but Carpaccio retains a Venetian like setting throughout. Besides narrating a medieval legend, the paintings contain an abundance of informative material relating to life in fifteenth century Venice.

> "True, the people wear Venetian or Oriental dress of the artists period, and their existence belongs to a definite historial epoch. This can be seen in a thousand details - but in details only: as a whole this world is lifted out of its time; it is a Venice of dreams....like a fairy story, like a consummate creation of the imagination, it convinces us and compels us to believe in its own special reality." (9)

The above paradoxical statement occurs in Jan Lauts' book on Carpaccio,

and is a passage so cleverly ambiguous that it is guaranteed to leave the reader 'nearly' understanding what he means. Lauts first accepts and then denies the values of a historical and therefore a materialist approach to Carpaccio's paintings. But how innocent is the type of writing that is more certain to confuse the reader than declare the author's position? (10)

Lauts dismisses both the imaginative and historically true details of Carpaccio's paintings as irrelevant. He says the value of the paintings lie elsewhere, on a much higher plane, to which we, the readers, can be transported, if we ignore the details, and just look at the paintings! Then the paintings themselves will 'convince' and 'compel' us as we immerse ourselves in their own special reality.

While not denying the values of aesthetic appreciation, I feel that the author's claim that by ignoring the 'details' one's appreciation of the paintings thereby soars to a higher plane, to be a sad display of a brain fogged by the uncritical use of modernist ideology. (11) To ignore what Lauts calls 'details' moves the paintings into the realms of myth and one thereby abdicates as an historian:-

> "Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all history. In it, history evaporates. It is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from. Or even better; it can only come from eternity... Nothing is produced, nothing is chosen; all one has to do is to process these new objects from which all soiling trace of origin or choice has been removed." (12)

On a simple level, these details Lauts speaks of operate as those elements through which the story is related to the viewer. But just as the paintings

were not made purely,to serve as a resting ground for the tired eyes of the 'connisseurs', so too, they are not here just to relate, in picture form a medieval legend. These 'details' are not to be dismissed,as either being at face-value and all at once, innocent and opaque, or only read aesthetically as the 'mark-makings' of an ancient 'realist' painter! The paintings signify more than their overt display of signs, or the dreamy mellowness of their colouring.

These paintings, are designed to operate on the viewer at an idealogical level, reinforcing certain viewpoints and ideas. While appreciating the values of aesthetic analysis, Carpaccio paintings on the legend of St. Ursula can only be understood as historical products when they are subjected to examination at an ideological level. This desmystification can only enrich our historical knowledge,while removing them from the realms of reason and viewing them as ethereal objects, worthy only of veneration, dilutes their historical richness and produces much poetry but little of any historical value.

And when Lauts speaks of the 'Venice of Dreams', the reader should understand that he is not speaking from a neutral platform. (13) It is an approach dependant on 'taste' which shrouds history in the ornamental cloak of rhetoric. But with good reason, for as Barthes said:-

"....it is well known that history is not a good bourgeois...." (14)

That such an aesthetic approach results in poor historical facts is testified to by Pignatti, who points out that the main reason for Carpaccio's 'rediscovery' is that 'tastes' have changed.

Carpaccio was not to the taste of Vasari in the sixteenth century, who as a lover of the 'monumental' glossed over his works as those of a merely 'diligent' painter. Considered a primitive in the eighteenth century by the lovers of neo-classicism, he was later hailed by Ruskin in the nineteenth century as having a:-

"....painters faculty of the supremest...."(15)

I find the fact that Pignatti is gratified by this belated recognition, now that tastes have changed in Carpaccio's favour, very alarming. (16) Surely with hindsight, a method that produces 'facts' which are so subject to the vagaries of the tastes of the times, should immediately be held suspect. Why accept those same methods for use again just because one is using them in an approving manner this time 'round?

However, such writings in themselves, while leaving a lot of ground untouched, do provide a good introduction to art works. And where two renowned writers such as Vasari and Ruskin can differ, lies plenty of scope for further investigations. This brings us back to the intentions of this thesis.

As I have already pointed out, these paintings were commissioned by the Scuole di Sant'Orsola. In Italy, Scuole were unique to Venice and were lay Catholic religious organisations whose members had to belong to the Citizen class. Although by the late Quattrocento, many Patricians had managed to become honorary members of these Scuole by agreeing to pay large sums of money annually. The Patricians were exempt from having to do charitable works and wanted to be members for prestigious reasons only. It was good in the eyes of others to be known to belong to a charitable

organisation and as a member they were eligible to share in the pool of merits, accumulated in the eyes of their God, for the charitable deeds performed. The first chapter of the thesis will deal with these Scuole and their place within Venetian society. It will also mention briefly, the Venetian political situation.

The subsequent nine chapters will each be divided into two parts. The first section of each chapter will deal with the paintings as narrators of a legend. The principal characters will be pointed out and the paintings will be examined on a purely formal level. Through form, we recognize the 'style' of a work, and so an immediate connection is made with the work of art which gives the initial impetus towards further investigation.

But, I do not believe that any analysis can be complete (or of much value), if it begins and ends with investigation of the formal structures of a work. If only examined on a purely formal level, i.e., in relation to colour and structure, however poetically described, the paintings can only remain obscure and abstract objects.

I think that to examine paintings for the meanings they may hold is to bring them to life again for the reader and viewer. They are placed in history and can be understood in relation to the period that produced them. They will not have the same force of meaning for us, as they had for the people of the period they were produced in, but we have the pleasure of looking into the past objectively (hopefully) and trying to understand the reasons why such paintings were produced.

The Scuole members were all Roman Catholics. As Citizens, they would have

been well educated and fully aware of the changing society which they were living in. The paintings on the legend of St. Ursula were commissioned to decorate their chapel, and I am sure that as their employee, Carpaccio would have been very sensitive to any suggestions which they may put forward. And so, the second part of each chapter, will examine the paintings as the ideological products of a definite historical period and place.

What would such an narrative series have been saying to the Renaissance woman and man? The real story of Ursula's crusade was long lost. The legend that is left, is that of a woman who dies rather than lose her virginity to a heathen prince. She is presented as the chaste and feminine woman. Joan of Arc, another fifteenth century martyr, was burned by the Roman Catholic Church. Even though Joan was chaste in accordance with their ideals, she was not the submissive feminine woman; she cut her hair like a man, and wore men's clothes. She was burned as a heretic. There was no place for a woman such as she within their limited definitions of womanhood.

In the fifteenth century, feminist issues were very much alive in the educated circles of the upper-classes. Joan of Arc who died in 1431 can be viewed as part of the early stirrings of such ideas. In the knowledge of her fate, one can view with scepticism, Burkhardt's statement that :-

> "....at this period, we must keep before our minds the fact that women stood on a footing of perfect equality with men." (17)

Neo-Platonist ideas on the equality of women were constantly attacked by the Catholic Church for whom woman was 'Eve', the cause of the downfall of

man. The Church did not declare war on such ideas or openly hand out statements of objection. It operated through the many insidious routes that were available to it, including paintings, poetry, stories, and educational institutions. Leman said of the Church of this period :-

> "As long as she maintained her empire over the minds of men, she had no reason to offer any objection to the revival which was taking place in art under the influence of the models of Antiquity, and the study of nature." (18)

Ursula's story is not only a tale from the Golden Legend being retold in picture form. We must recognize that such paintings were only one of the means through which that society helped sustain feminine positions as exclusively pertaining to women. As a female, Ursula is an ideal of womanhood that is constantly presented as the norm. And these paintings on the legend of St. Ursula can be viewed as part of that hidden coercion that is constantly defining woman's sexuality.

In Renaissance Venice, the Scuole belonged to the 10% upper classes (composed of Patricians and Citizens), who commissioned this painting. Within the narrative, their presence is the dominant one. Except for Ursula, women are absent. Through these religious paintings, they propagate ideas on morality and sexuality, but not for totally religious reasons. These divisive ideologies helped sustain their own privileged positions, and Carpaccio's paintings on the legend of St. Ursula can only be understood keeping such ideas in mind.

FOOTNOTES:

INTRODUCTION

(1) Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962. Page 228

(2) IBID. Page 8

(3) IBID. Page 9

(4) John Steer "A Concise History of Venetian Painting", Thames & Hudson Limited, London, 1979. Page 37.

(5) IBID. Page 68.

(6) James Beck, "Italian Renaissance Painting", Harber & Row, New York, 1981. Page 217.

(7) IBID. Page 217.

(8) There is some dispute over the dating of the altarpiece, "The Glory of St. Ursula", See p.p. ( ), of theisis on this matter.

(9) Jan Lauts, op. cit. Page 8.

(10) Roland Barthes, "Mythologies", Granada Publishing Limited, London, 1982. Page 82.

"Without speaking further on the myth of timelessness which is at the core of any appeal to an eternal 'culture' ('an art for all time'), I also find, in our Neither-Nor doctrine, two common expedients of bourgeois mythology. The first consists in a certain idea of freedom, conceived as 'the refusal of a priori judgements'. Now a literary judgement is always determined by the whole of which it is a part, and the very absence of a system-especially when it becomes a profession of faith - stems from a very definite system, which in this case is a very common variety of bourgeois ideology (or of culture, as our anonymous writer would say).

It can even be said it is when man proclaims his primal liberty that his subordination is least disputable. One can without fear defy anyone evey to practise an innocent criticism, free from any systematic determination: the Neither-Nor brigade themselves are committed to a system, which is not necessarily the one to which they proclaim their allegiance."

FOOTNOTES:

INTRODUCTION (Cont/d)

(11) Terisio Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1958, Page 10.

"Carpaccio was the last great poet of the century of Humanism, just as it was being eclipsed by the towering achievements of Cinquecento naturalism. As we shall see, an early familiarity with Ferrarese art lead him to practise an architectonic representation of space which enabled him to make the most of the crystalline colours of Antonello and his followers. This synthesis, though it sometimes resulted in works that have much in common with those of the great Venetians from Bellini to Giorgione, was the product of an entirely different cultural background. While the path opened up by those men lead directly to the naturalism of Titian, the poetic painting of Carpaccio diverged into a secret domain of its own where forms tended to develop into images abstract in meaning: symbols which the modern sensibility alone had understood and fully appreciated."

(12) Roland Barthes, op. cit. Page 151.

(13) IBID. Page 81.

"Criticism, must be'neither a parlour game nor a municipal service ' - which means that it must be neither reactionary nor communist, neither gratuitous nor political.

We are dealing here with a mechanism based on a double exclusion largely pertaining to this enumerative mania which we have already come across several times, and which I thought I could broadly define as a petit bourgeois trait. One reckons all the methods with scales one piles them up on each side as one thinks best, so as to appear oneself as an imponderable arbiter endowed with a spirituality which is ideal and thereby just like the beam which is the judge in the weighing.

The faults indispensable to this operation of accountancy consist in the morality of the terms used. According to an old terrorist device (one cannot escape terrorism at will), one judges at the same time as one names, and the word ballasted by a prior culpability, quite naturally comes to weigh down one of the scales. For instance culture will be opposed to ideologies. Culture is a noble, universal thing, placed outside social choices: culture has no weight. Ideologies, on the other hand, are partisan inventions: so, onto the scales, and out with them! Both sides are dismissed under the stern gaze of culture (without realizing that culture itself is, in the last analysis on ideology).

(14) IBID. Page 77.

(15) John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Beauty", Phaidon Press, Oxford, 1980. Page, 146.

(16) Terisio Pignatti, op. cit. (The title of the series to which this book belongs is in fact called, 'The Taste of Our Time'!) Page 9.

"Carpaccio is one of many artists who have been "resurrected" by modern criticism. If we are now in a position to appreciate the full savor of his characteristic style, this is due almost entirely to the discriminating reappraisal of the art of the past, that has been (and still is being) carried out by present-day art historians."

(17) Jacob Burkhardt, "The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy", Phaidon Press, London, 1944. Page 240.

(18) A. Leman, "The Church in Modern Times", 1447 - 1789, Sands & Company, Edinburgh, 1929. Page 2.

CHAPTER ONE:

A Brief Outline of The Venetian Scuole Grandi

> "Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you/For herein fortune shows herself more kind/Than is her custom:it is still her use/To let the wretched man outlive his wealth/ To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow/An age of poverty; from which with lingering penance/Of such misery doth she cut me off." (1)

Venice was a republic whose head of State was the doge. This position of doge was for life and could not be refused. The doge was elected through the Greater Council, a body wholly composed of Nobles. In Venice the Patricians, or Nobilii who formed about 5% of the population had total control of the running of the country. The Citizens, another wealthy group of people, also about 5% of the population, had no policital power. Both groups derived their money from the same sources, mainly trade, but to have power, one had to belong to the Patricians which had been a closed caste since 1381. (2) Then, a list of wealthy people who called themselves Nobles was drawn up, and no matter how much money a person had, he could not thereafter become a Noble. This ensured power remained within a small elite and that the economy could be run for the benefit for this Patrician class.

Nobles at the age of 25 inherited the right to enter the Greater Council, which body decided on Venetian policy. Below the Greater Council, was the Council of Ten and the Senate. Citizens could never hope to hold decision making positions on these bodies. Secretarial positions were reserved for the Citizens and these were generally held for life and passed on within the particular family.

Although the secretaries, themselves, did not have any say in the making of Venetian policy, because of their positions as secretaries they did have considerable influence over the policy makers. The position of secretary was a stable one, continuing for a lifetime and passed on within the family. This meant that a secretary accumulated a lot of information on the State, unlike the Nobles whom they served under whose positions were open to election annually, ensuring frequent changes, which meant that, in reality, the Noble policy makers were very dependant on the secretaries for information on State affairs. Thus the Citizens, although they had no real power identified themselves more with the Patricians than with the Plebians.

Outside the government, the Citizens did yield a certain amount of power within organisations called Scuole, which they had set up and administered themselves. The Scuole were associations which gave alms to poor citizens and performed charitable deeds. Although technically, no Nobles were allowed to join the Scuole, as full members, the government kept an eye on all Scuole private meetings and business transactions through those Nobles who had become honourary members.

The Scuole had been started up in the mid 13th century and many of them had their origins in flagellant movements. Many Scuole were connected to a particular trade or profession and often they were organisations formed by emigrants, living permanently in Venice. Each Scuole had a specialised form of charity, that is specifically for prisoners, or invalids or orphans. Most of these Scuole were devoted to a particular Saint, such as the Scuole di Sant'Orsola, whose patron Saints were, S.S. Dominic, Peter Martyr and Ursula.

In Venice, the five largest Scuole, were called the Scuole Grandi. These were the Scuole Santa Maria della Carita, San Giovanni Evangelista, Santa Maria Valverde della Misercordia, San Marco and San Rocco. These Scuole Grandi were known as the Scuole dei Battuti, 'of the beaten'. (3). Their members had to scourge themselves on public occasions and these Scuole were in effect, the modern versions of the 13th Century flagellant movements.

The Venetian Scuole, whether within the Scuole Grandi, or one of the smaller organisations did not all have the same set of rules or ideals. Basically, their intentions were to help the poor by charitable works and to promote religion by their own good example, with the view to saving souls. They saw life as :-

> "....a period of exile in a foreign land, it was a time of trial - for a man would be judged in the eternal on his conduct in the mortal world. Life on earth was seen in terms of its end - of the Day of Judgement, when the soul would hang in the balance....the Scuole existed to prepare for death and to maintain a bond with the dead: to commemorate them and through the celebration of Mass for the souls of the dead to speed their passage through purgotary. The founders of the Scuole set themselves to do as a congregation or fraternity, things which contributed to the salvation of the soul, to correct sins, to make peace, and to accumulate a fund of merit on which all could draw." (4)

Many Scuole did not want priests to be admitted to full membership, as, whereby each lay member of the Scuole could correct the behaviour of another member - a lay person was forbidden to correct a priest. Also, priests were not permitted to wash and lay out the dead bodies of members, which was part of the duties of a lay Scuole member. However, priests and clergy formed about 5% / 6% of the total membership of the Scuole.

But the Scuole were not in any way under the rule of the Roman Catholic Church. They were under the rule of the Council of Ten, who kept an eye on all their affairs. In fact, in 1360, a law was passed stating that no new Scuole could be founded unless first ratified by three quarters of the votes of the Council of Ten. It was also the policy of the government to try to prevent the clergy from joining as the government wanted to be the authority to which the Scuole gave its highest allegiances. If the Scuole had priests as members, these would obviously give their highest allegiances to the Pope, who as a neighbouring Prince had territorial interests at stake as had the Venetians. And so, in 1475, the clergy were formally banned from becoming members although they gradually edged their way back into the organisations as employees, saying Masses, as honourary rather than full members.

In the late 14th century, some nobles were allowed to join the Scuole by paying large sums of money. But this was only a honourary type membership and the Citizens ensured they retained their monolopy. The reasons why the Patricians were so anxious to join is that they wanted to share in the spiritual merits accumulated by the Scuole members to aid their passage to heaven when they died. Also being a member gave one pious overtones in Venetian society and it also ensured that at their death they were guaranteed a large attendance at their funeral, by the members of the Scuole.

Many nobles, on their death beds, started to request that they be allowed join, before they died, to benefit from the accumulated merits. This practise was soon forbidden, except in the cases of exceptionally powerful nobles as the Scuole felt that other members would follow suit and there would soon be a

decline in membership.

The Nobles because they came from a higher class than the Citizens, could not take orders from the Citizens. And they also refused to carry out the charitable works of the Scuole as they considered it was beneath them to do menial jobs, In lieu of such activities they started donating large annual sums of money to the organisation and this exempted them from all work. And through payment of their money, they expected to benefit equally from the pool of merits that had accumulated from the works of the other members.

At about this period, those Scuole members who were Citizens, and wealthy, started to copy the practise of the Nobles by exempting themselves from carrying out the unsavoury tasks by donating large sums of money to the organisation. This meant that gradually the poorer members were left doing all the hard work.

Citizens who gave money to exempt themselves from the more mundane tasks in the flagellant orders soon exempt themselves from the practise of flagellation itself. In such orders, it became the custom that it was the poor members who beat themselves while the rich ones walked behind carrying the candles and banners. Many Scuole, in fact, began to define precisely separate duties for rich and poor members. It was felt that as the poorer members had greater financial gain, through being a Scuole member, than had the richer Citizens, that they should have to work for these benefits. They said that this would prove if a person was poor through his own laziness or if it really was a case of misfortune.

As many a Scuole member was a rich merchant one day and a poor one the next, consideration was given to the hazards of having such an occupation. In such cases, if the member had been generous to the Scuole when he was wealthy, the Scuole alleviated his poverty by ensuring that he always had a roof over his head, food, clothes and dowries for his daughters. The Scuole also owned many properties in Venice and they often let these out at cheap rates to Scuole members in need.

But with the payment of money allowing exemption from charitable works, the original tenets of the Scuole had changed. A clear division between rich and poor members emerged with different rules for each group and at the end of the 15th Century, the Scuole, no longer corresponded to :-

> "The primitive ideal, of the religious fraternity uniting all men of different ranks as 'equal' sons of the patron saint....." (5)

.....instead the Scuole had become :-

> "...a transmission system whereby the rich passed a limited portion of their wealth down to the poor - doing so formally in the name of the brotherhood. But the name of 'brother' concealed a sharp division of functions." (6)

But such divisions helped elevate the standing of the rich, but power hungry Citizens, in a way which would help the Venetian Nobles retain their power at government level.

As has already been pointed out, the only persons entitled to become full Scuole members were the Citizens, people with good trades or professions whose fathers and grandfathers had been born in Venice. Only Citizens could hold any of the governing positions within the Scuole. It has been pointed out that

such positions assumed greater importance than their worth, for several reasons. They became places where the Citizens could wield power giving them a sense of involvement in the State from which as non Nobles, they were barred from having any authoritative position. Within the Scuole they could expend their ambitious drives and feel and act as honourable Citizens making decisions and giving orders.

This ensured that the Government positions which were held exclusively by the Nobles were safe guarded from any opposition. One 16th Century writer, Botero, pointed out, that this was where the true genius of Venice lay:-

> "....not in ability to exclude almost everyone from office and authority but skill in admitting so many subordinates to places of honour which in no way violated the monolopy of genuine political power enjoyed by the chosen Patricians." (7)

The Scuole although numerous and often powerful institutions were more of a benefit than a worry to the State. They satisfied the Citizens craving for a power equal to their wealth and ensured that they they thought themselves more on a par with the Patricians than with the Plebians. This prevented them from ever wishing to take greater power by becoming the leader of a Plebian revolt.:-

> "The Citizens did not serve Venetian society as an independant middle class creating its own institutions, but as a lesser aristocracy cast in the image of the greater...." (8)

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER ONE

1. William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978, Page 214.

2. D. S. Chambers, "The Imperial Age of Venice", Thames & Hudson Limited, London, 1970. Page 7.

3. Pullan, B. "Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice", Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1971. Page 33.

4. IBID. Page 42

5. IBID. Page 82

6. IBID. Page 83

7. IBID. Page 8

8. IBID. Page 131

NO. (1)

THE RECEPTION OF THE ENGLISH AMBASSADORS

by, Carpaccio - (9ft. X 19ft. 3ins.)
c. 1500

CHAPTER TWO:

The Reception of The English Ambassadors.

The painting (ill. no. 1), is called 'The Reception of The English Ambassadors.' On first glance, we are faced with what could be a 'stilled' scene from a play. There are no smiling faces to be seen. The atmosphere is dense with a sense of foreboding.

The action is taking place in a rectangular verandah-like space. Its marble walls are polished smooth and shining. Inlaid with marbles of contrasting colours, its simplicity belies the cost. But, beautiful though marble is to look at, it remains cold to the touch and surrounded with railings it is chillingly reminscent of a mausoleum.

In the foreground, outside the stage at either side, is a man and a woman. Psychologically we are caught between them as the man on the left catches our eye and the grim faced woman sitting at the right bars our escape. But a gate is opened into our space, and we are bid to enter into the spirit of the narrative. The man and woman remain outside, choric figures mediating between the viewer and the events portrayed. (1)

The painting is divided into three sections and the gateway leads into the middle one. The English Ambassadors have arrived with the message from the King of England. Their faces appear from behind the marble pillars. Silently they glide inwards, bowing low and taking up their positions. Their actions are reminscent of a type of bassa-danza (2), whose drama is accentuated in the silence of the room by the long, slow swish of their heavy garments across the

floor. The movement fastly flowing from the faces at the pillars down to the figures at railing level and then upwards slowly, up the steps to present the King with the letter. Every movement is controlled, performed with the eloquence of a pedant, (see ill. no. (2)), which will demonstrate the importance of movement.) As in the dance they perform, with 'Maniēra' :-

> "....a moderate movement, not too much and not too little, but so smooth that the figure is like a gondola oared by two oars, through the little waves of a calm sea, these waves rising slowly and falling quickly." (3)

The King of Brittany takes the letter from the English Ambassador. The man to the immediate right of the King makes eye contact with us. (see ill. no. (3)). Everybody knows that the letter contains bad news, but nobody displays any emotion. The faces of the Ambassadors remain discreet and unrevealing as they carry out their mission. Reserve in this society, is the mark of a gentleman. The King of England, requests that Ursula should become the wife of his son, Conon. But Ursula is a young Christian virgin and Conon is a pagan! Everybody wonders what will the King's answer be.

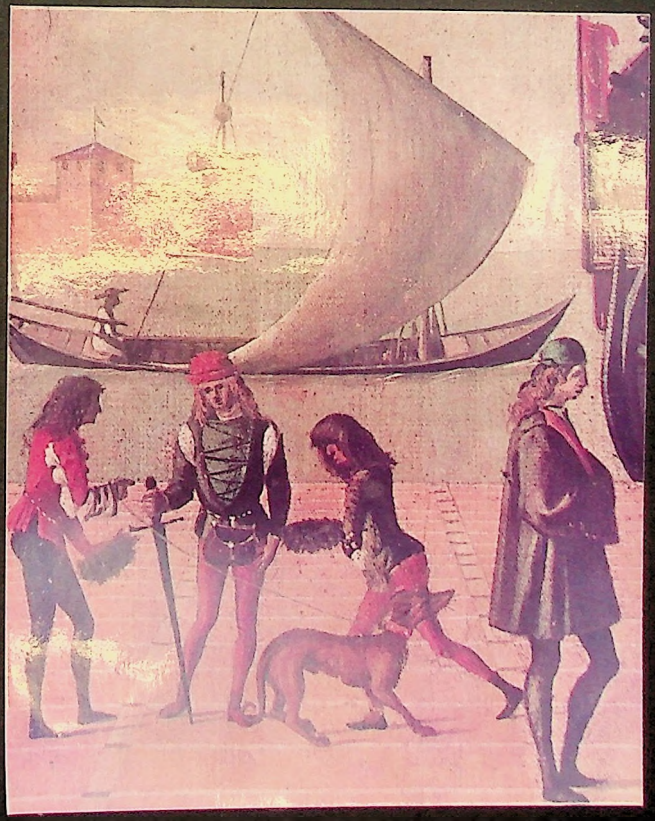
On the left hand side of the painting, and out of earshot, are some young men lounging on the balcony. One young man leans on the railings, his falcon on his wrist and gazes pensively out to sea. His friend is also subdued. He is a slim young man in gaily coloured hose of red and yellow. His hand is on his heart as he waits to hear if there will be war or not. The English King has threatened such an outcome,unless there is a bethrothal. And behind them are more young men wandering aimlessly about, waiting to hear the news.

NO. 3

THE KING AND THE ENGLISH AMBASSADORS

(detail of ill. no. 1)

NO. 5
GONDOLA ON THE LAGOON
(detail of ill. no. 1)



NO. 4
GROUP OF MEN AND A DOG
(detail of ill. no. 1)

In the square, in the distance some other people also stand about. No doubt, the news has spread and they want to be first to hear what the reply to the English King will be, as the content of the letter has already been whispered about. (see ill. no.(4)).

In the background are the boats, and gondolas of Venice, (see ills.no. (5)), although we are supposed to be in Brittany. But this painting is for the members of the Scuole whose portraits are probably among its faces.

Besides having great pride in themselves as Citizens and Patricians, they are proud of their city and its dominions. Lauts points out that at the time that Carpaccio was painting this work, he would have been visiting Padua to study Mantegna's frescoes. Padua was then a city state of Venice. (4) This is probably correct as Carpaccio has included a building very similar to the Clock Tower at Padua. (see ill. no.(11)). In this picture Carpaccio's building has a different style of roof and is not as high as the Paduan version. Also he has made the antique figures which are at either side of the clock much larger. The windows above the clock and the archway underneath are almost the same as in the Paduan Clock Tower. He could have painted his buildings from a quick sketch he made while in Padua, looking at the Mantegna frescoes and adjusted it to suit the painting.

As life goes on in the background, we move back to the narrative. At the right hand side the drama is slowly heightened. Ursula's father,(6), his head resting on his arm, listens to his daughter. She is in command. She is telling him what she has decided. (see ills. no.(6)).

NO. 6
URUSLA AND HER FATHER
(detail of ill. no. 1)

> "....Ursula, being inspired by God, proposed that he should yield to the King's demand, putting as a condition that the suitor should grant her ten virgins as companions and should assign to her and to each of her companions a thousand other virgins. He was also to prepare a fleet of triremes for her, and to allow her a delay of three years which she might devote to the practise of virginity; and his son was to be baptised and to be instructed in the faith during these three years. She counselled all this wisely in order that the King might be discouraged by the difficulty of the proposed conditions, or else that she might seize the occasion to consecreate the aforementioned virgins together with herself to God." (5)

We look down the step, at Ursula's old nurse. (see ill. no. (7). She is like an old soothsayer, looking into the future. Her face looks as if it knows what the English King's reply will be. In Ursula's room is a picture of the Virgin and Child. We are reminded that this virgin, Ursula,has been brought up to be a good Christian and is undertaking a Christian mission, which is to spread the faith. We are reminded of how much she values both her religion and her virginity.

****

> "If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will." Portia (Merchant of Venice)

In this painting, Ursula is telling her father, the King, what she proposes to do on the question of her marriage. Here is not a quiet and submissive Ursula, but an Ursula who appears to be quite determined to have her own way. (see ill. no.(6)) Rene de la Maulde speaks of how women in Italy, at this time, were questioning the social structures under which they lived, and the types of roles that were traditionally imposed on them. Women in the upper echelons of society began to look for education for themselves. That

this is was acceded to in some measure can be seen in the spate of women writers and poets of the period. But la Maulde speaks of an Italian caricature of 1450 which gives a satirical representation of women violently struggling to get into a pair of trunk-hose, (7). Because they wanted to receive an education, women were laughed at by men and accused of wanting to wear the trousers. In the introduction to the 1984 edition of Castiglione's 'The Book of The Courtier', the writer George Bull speaks of :-

> "....the famous Renaissance blue-stocking, Vittoria Colonna...." (8)

He does not use such terminology in describing Renaissance male academics. Blue stocking is an old derogatory term applied to women who displayed any intellectual ability and as Bull proves it has not yet been eliminated from our vocabulary. We need not feel smug yet, when talking of Renaissance cartoons, which mock at women's struggle for equality.

La Maulde speaks of this struggle of women from a man's point of view. He says that at this period women approximated more closely than men the chivalric ideals that were being revived by the middle classes. And the re-emergence of Chivalry:-

> "....was like the raising of a curtain, so sudden was the change; women hitherto shut up in their boudoirs, appeared in all their radience like goddesses." (9)

Men chose to see women as goddesses, and treat them in the gallant manner of chivalry. This meant that they could be idealised and thought of as essentially different. They were kept on a separate plane and admired for their beauty. If they were intelligent, they were treated as oddities. The chivalric approach served to defuse the threat that would have been posed by an educated

force of women in their upper-class grouping. On all sides women were being treated with respect and as goddesses in order that ideas on women should remain on an abstract, philosophical level. And Platonist women themselves, chose to keep their learning just for amusement :-

> "They aimed rather at moral and social influence. In no sense were they women of action....conforming to the aphorism, 'Woman is supreme only as a woman'.....they avoided all masculine modes - the rustic sort of sexless unattractive woman, most at home in the stables, strong minded creatures who looked for a love they never inspired; they studiously left to men the keen-edged activities of life - law, politics, military service...."(10)

...and these were the women of the Renaissance!

It was acceptable to be an intellectual so long as one was also a courtesan. The Humanists who supposedly had the highest admiration for women would not tolerate women teachers, and would allow no discussion on this subject for as Erasmus said :-

> " 'Tis against nature for a women to have rule over males." (11)

And if upper class women were not courtesans, they got married. Most of these marriages were arranged and in fact were really business transactions dealing with the accumulation of property. If a father had a sixteen old daughter on his hands, it was a catastrophe. Most girls were married at twelve or thirteen. In these transactions fathers wanted the matter dealt with as soon as possible in the interests of the girl. As the younger she was the sooner she would adapt to a new household.

> "...but since it was a woman's lot to belong to her

> husband and so it was well for her to enter upon her new life as soon as possible, before she had formed ideas of her own, and at an age when the paternal household would not have set its stamp indelibly upon her." (12)

Some fathers were in such a hurry to have the women off their hands that they handed over girls before marriage to the bethrothed on a mere promise of marriage and the girls had to submit passively to such arrangements.

And the Roman Catholic Church were all for such arrangements. They did not speak out against marriages being consummated with twelve year old girls,

> "...that was a favourite age with the husbands, though according to the best judges, fifteen was the age when the physical charms were at their best and the soul was most mouldable..." (13)

And in the backlash to Platonic ideals the Church published books on the lives of pious women, to be read instead of that 'Classical nonsense'. The 'Garden of Prayer' was a handbook for young girls to help them concentrate their minds on religious imagery. And in order to cool the adolescent ardours of young women, the Roman Catholic Church recommended a perpetual fast of cold water and vegetables. (15) And so, bound in on all sides women opted for the only routes available to them :-

> "St. Theresa, who was born in 1515 is an excellent of her contemporaries.....at six years, she was already to use her expression, - "swept away by a violent movement of love," and had to be prevented from hurrying to Africa in the hope of being massacred and winning heaven cheaply. What singular girls! The things that urge them on was the general fear in which the husband was held, depressing need of attaining 'ere it was too late, a good condition of defence and even of superiority. The rising spectre of marriage fascinated teachers and taught alike." (16)

And so, if we look at the legend of Ursula as written by Jacobus de Voraigne, we see that Ursula thought of this mission in terms of escaping from marriage.(17) Because of the bizarre nature of her request, she hoped the English King might reject her offer. And if he accepted, she would still escape marriage by dying as a martyr. In looking at this painting, we must realise that it was essentially marriage, in any form, that Ursula wanted to avoid. To speak only of her chastity and feminine, virtuous ideals helps shroud the real truth of an action which was in its own way revoluntionary. Through the only means available to her, she tried to assert her freedom. And that the painting portrays her father agreeing says nothing about the truth. It was not that she was a wilful daughter who got her way as all Renaissance 'emancipated' women supposedly did, but that he was only too glad to have the problem of an unmarried daughter quickly resolved.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER TWO

(1) Michael Baxandall, "Painting and Experience In Fifteenth Century Italy", Open University Press, Oxford, 1984. Page 72.
"I like there to be a figure which admonishes and instructs us about what is happening in the picture...The Quattrocento beholder would have perceived such choice figures thro' his experience of the festaiuolo.

For instance, the plays were introduced by a choric figure, the festaiuolo, often in the character of an angel, who remained on the stage during the action of the play as a mediator between the beholder and the events portrayed: similar choric figures catching our eyes and pointing to the central action are often used by the painters....."

(2) Michael Baxandall, IBID. Pages 71 - 78, Section 7.
Baxandall discusses the importance of dance in relation to Quattrocento painting. He shows how many painters were influenced by dance movements when dealing with the problems of the interaction of figures and how dance type movement can lead us to the centre of the action in a subtler way than a pointing finger. There is no doubt but that this was Carpaccio's intention as we were initially brought to this space as I have already pointed out, by psychological urgings of the man and the woman in the foreground.

"One fifteenth century activity like enough the painters' groupings to give us a little insight into this is dancing: specifically the popular 'bassa danza', the slow pacing dance that became popular in Italy during the first half of the century.
Several things make the 'bassa danza' a helpful parallel.....
In the first place it was an articulate art with its own treatises - the earliest is by Domenico da Piacenza, evidently written in the 1440's - and its own theoretical terminology: like the art of rhetoric, dancing had five parts - aere, maniera, misura, misura di terreno, memoria. Secondly, the dancers were conceived and recorded as groups of figures in patterns; unlike the French, the Italians did not use a dance notation but described the movements of the figures fully, as if they were being seen by a spectator. Third, the parallel between dancing and painting seems to have suggested itself to fifteenth-century people too. In 1442, Angelo Galli, a poet at Urbino, wrote a sonnet to the painter Pisanello with a list of his qualities:

Art, misura, aere and draughtsmanship,
Maniera, perspective, and a natural quality -
Heaven miraculously gave him these gifts."

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER TWO (Con/d)

(3) IBID. Page 78

(4) Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962. Page 23.

(5) Jacobus de Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 627.

(6) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare" (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 198.

(7) Rene de La Maulde, "The Women of The Renaissance: A Study of Feminism" G. P. Putnam & Sons, London & New York, 1901. Page 7.

(8) Castiglione, "The Book of The Courtier", Penguin Books Limited, England, 1984. Page 11.

(9) Rene de La Maulde, op. cit. Page 16.

(10) IBID. Page 311.

(11) IBID. Page 94.

(12) IBID. Page 25.

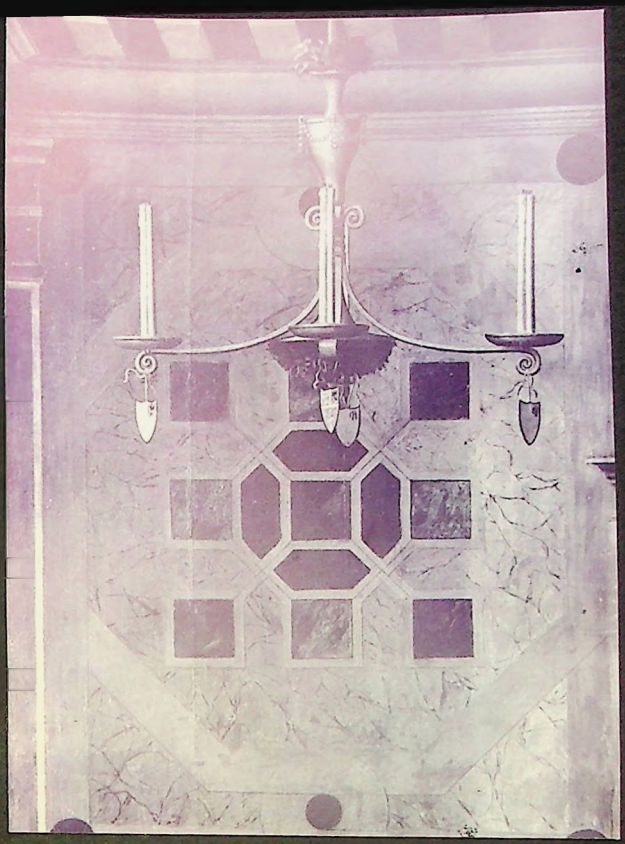
(13) IBID. Page 27.

(14) Michael Baxandall, op. cit. Page 46.

(15) R. La Maulde, op. cit. Page 92.

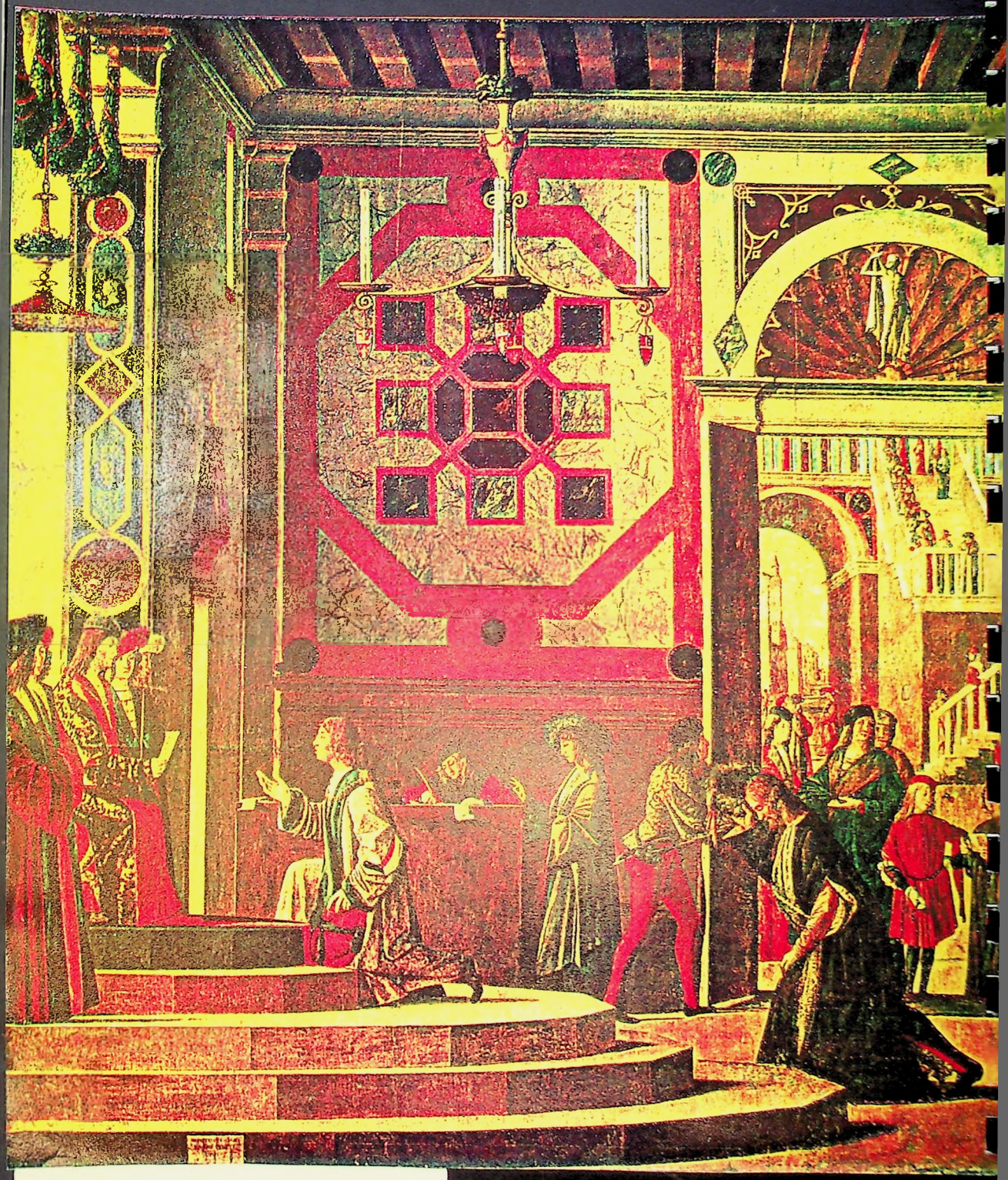
(16) IBID. Page 92.

(17) Jacobus de Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 627.
"She counselled all this wisely, in order that the King might be discouraged by the difficulty of the proposed condition, or else that she might seize the occasion to consecrate the aforementioned virgins, together with herself, to God."



NO. 8
CHANDELIER AND PENDANTS
(detail of ill. no. 9)

NO. 7
URSULA'S OLD NURSE
(detail of ill. no. 1)



NO. 9
THE ENGLISH AMBASADORS TAKING LEAVE
By Carpaccio, (9ft. 2in. X 8ft. 3in.)
c. 1500

CHAPTER THREE

The English Ambassadors Taking Leave. (1496-8).

In this painting, the first impression is of a decorative plane, bathed in a soft,mellow light. The painting is very large (ill. no (9)), and in reality it must be very impressive. Marble panelling covers almost the entire picture plane. The people appear dwarfed in this high ceilinged room which is lush with ornament. Pendants hang from the chandeliers which are suspended from wooden beams. (ill. no. (8)) These beams are as abstract stripings across the top of the picture. Formal organisation is sparce in invention. Symmetrical arrangement heightens the painting's beauty which relies on simplicity. Moving from the high ceiling down to the entrance, the door could have been made with one sure brush stroke. Above this door, a shell-alcove radiates outwards, and contains a classic type figurine . His arm is stretched out parallel with the lintel as he gracefully adjusts his cloak.

Framed in the doorway below, are a group of people waiting to be seen by the King. The young man beckons to one boy to read from a letter while a man inside the doorway listens to what he has to say. The simplicity of this group perhaps inspired the painting 'The Three Ages of Man' which is attributed to Giorgione (see ill. no.10). This scene makes a beautiful story in itself. The figures etch in reverse the rythmical fall of the arch behind them. They are placed against a background of bars and tiny figures who are wandering about, waiting, gossiping and watching.

Back inside the room, we are part of a more stilted atmosphere. The notary seated at his desk writes what is instructed. The standing man is not overtly demonstrative but gestures discreetly to emphasise the point. Both are bathed in weak light that filters from the window on the left.

Ursula's father, King Theonotus holds upright the letter of reply which the English Ambassador will then accept. The King's men stand at either side, arms folded inside their robes, inscrutable as Chinese mandarins. The formality appears to be emphasised by the five horizontal bars which radiate from the lower left. The ...

> "...polygonal stepped dias of the throne, constructed with mathematical accuracy, emphasizes the spatial composition." (1)

In fact, this throne is more of a lighthearted element designed as a geometrical problem for, perhaps the merchants. The mathematical skills with which Carpaccio has constructed this throne would have been taken up by the viewers as an invitation to gauge. (2) For the skills that Carpaccio is utilising here are geometrical skills that the male public would also have been equipped with. So the royal throne served two purposes. By calling on the viewer to solve the problem of its surface area it first made human contact, which when held would be diverted to the narrative. This painting is more like a delightful passage for the eyes than relating a detailed narrative. But it was not painted for that sole reason. As the throne shows in a mild way the elements of this painting are calculated and have purposes other than mere decoration. Ursula's agreement to the marriage is not straight-forward either. As Jacobus de Voraigne relates ;-

"She counselled all this wisely, in order that the King might be discouraged by the difficulty of the proposed condition or else she might seize the occasion to consecrate the aforementioned virgins, together with herself, to God." (3)

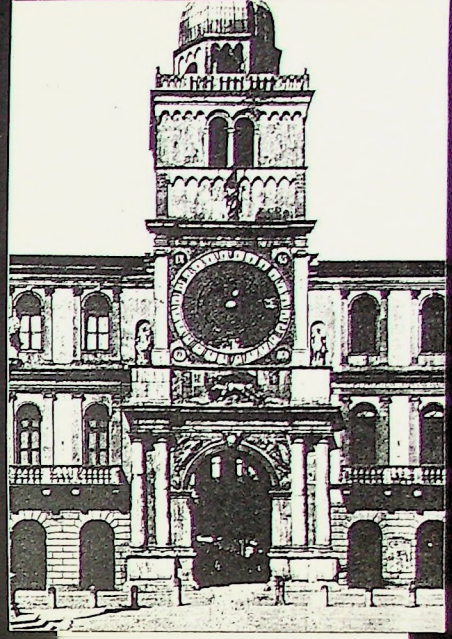
****

"Let none presume to wear an underserved dignity/O! that estates, degrees and offices/Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honour/Were purchased by the merit of the wearer./How many then should cover that stand bear/How many be commanded that command/How much low peasantry would then be gleaned/From the true seed of honour;and how much honour/Picked from the chaff and ruin of the times to be new varnished." (4)

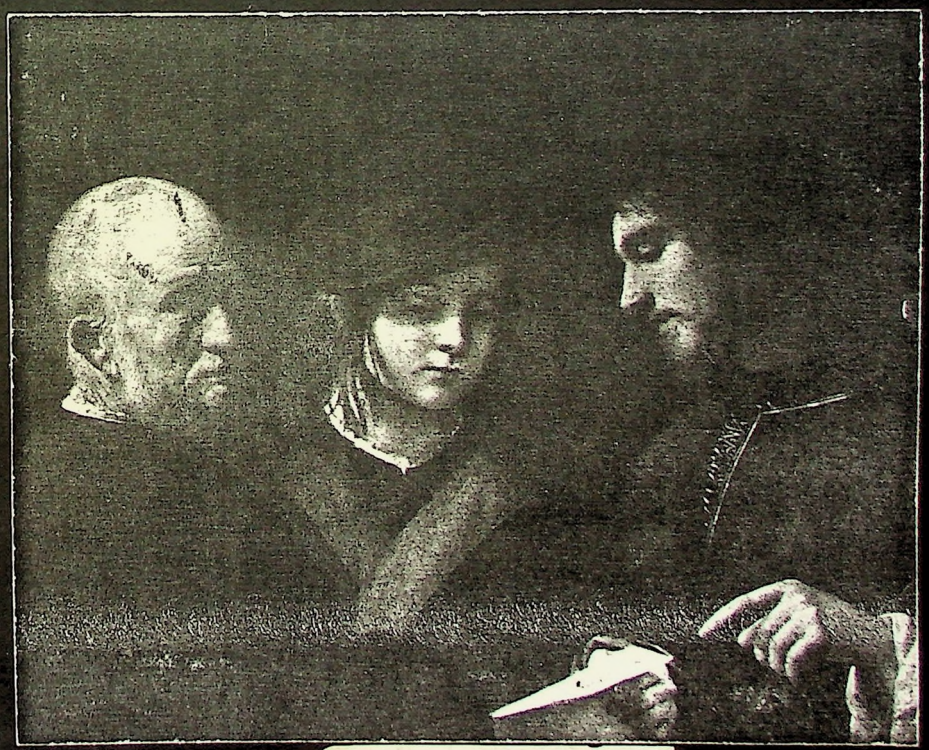
In all of these paintings you will notice that there are many coats of arms and heraldic devices. Around this period, the late 15th century, the art of the urban middle class and court societies became one. Those courtly elements of Gothic art which had survived, combined with the revival of chivalric ways of life were adopted by the Citizen classes to differentiate between themselves and the Plebians. They were no courts in Venice as it was a republic, but two of its city states, Vicenza and Padua had courts. Courtly elements filtered into these states from France and their influence was felt in Venice.

Vicenza was a great provincial centre and it had its own independent culture. Great international tournaments were held there regularily. One of the cities most distinguished humanists and writers Count Giangiorgio Tressino wrote a book called 'Italia Liberata dai Goti' which tried to give the history of Christian-Imperialist valour - in the form of the Homer Virgilian epic and Chambers says of it that it :-

NO. 12
SCENE AT A TOURNAMENT
by Carpaccio ($17\frac{1}{4}$ X 20)
c. 1490



NO. 11
CLOCK TOWER AT PADUA



NO. 10
THE THREE AGES OF MAN,
By Giorgione

> "... did perhaps unite some of the disparate strands of this extraordinary cultural tradition in which a highly-formalised classicism mingled with hankerings after chivalric display and an ideology of Messianic Imperialism." (5)

And such chivalric-courtly elements are very evident in these paintings by Carpaccio. There is, in fact, a painting by Carpaccio of a Tournament (see ill. no. (12)), in the National Gallery in London.

As I have said the Citizen class in Venice wanted to differentiate between themselves and the lower classes. Blocked since 1319 from becoming Patricians (with the publication of the Libro d'Oro,'a perpetual studbook of Venice's aristocracy') (6) Citizens had their own coats of arms devised and pedigrees which assumed wonderful proportions. Such vanities and pretence helped ensure they were treated as much better beings than the red blooded lower classes. If you look at the picture of the Virgin and Child behind Ursula in the last painting (see ill. no. (6)), you will see a heraldic device on it. This was because they now considered Jesus to be a gentleman as Dame Juliana Berners wrote in 1486 :-

> "Christ was a gentleman of his mothers behalf and bore cote-armure of aunseturis. The apostles were Jewys and of gentlemen come by the right line of that worthy conqueror Judas Machabus, but that by succession of tyme the kynrade fell to poverty, and they fell to labours and were called no gentlemen." (7)

The above quotation illustrates aptly the nonsensicality that being 'noble' or a 'gentleman' means either in this or any other era. In Venice, we see many of the Patricians claiming descent from famous Roman families because they had similar sounding names. This had its humourous side too as Chambers

points out :-

> "Others less fortunately named, such as the Moro or Barbaro families could not compete but had the comfort of jocose assurances that they were neither moors or barbarians." (8)

Veneto was another city state of Venice that was rich in antique remains. By the mid 15th century along with Padua, it was the main centre of the Italian trade in antique objects. This caused a new fashion among the Venetian intellegentsia of antiquarian-studies.

In this painting of the 'Departure of the English Ambassadors' (ill. no. (9)), we are faced with a room which has the appearance of the interior of a Roman villa, with its inlaid marble walls and portrait plaques. Swags of real foliage hang above the King's head. Above the Ambassadors are the chandeliers with their fluttering pendants, and in an alcove above the door, an antique statuette. The people are detached from each other as they watch one another move, stand and bow. This painting has really got nothing to do with the legend of St. Ursula. It is a stalling point at which we can admire the vanities and pretentiousness of the ruling class. It is a means by which they can reinforce and make us believe in their superiority. They present themselves as modern deities to be respected and feared.

FOOTNOTES;

CHAPTER THREE

(1) Jan Lauts , "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962. Page 23.

(2) Michael Baxandall, "Painting and Experience in 15th Century Italy", Open University Press, Oxford, 1984. Page 87.
"....the connection between gauging and painting is very real. On the one side, many of the painters, themselves business people, had gone through the mathematical secondary education of the lay schools; this was the geometry they knew and used. On the other side the literate public had those same geometrical skills to look at pictures with: it was a medium in which they were equipped to make discriminations and the painters knew this.

An obvious way for the painter to invoke the gauger's response was to make pointed use of the reperetory of stock objects used in the gauging exercises, the familiar things the beholder would have been made to learn his geography on - cisterns, columns, brick towers, paved floors and the rest."

(Also see, pages 86 - 93, for full details on the subject)

(3) Jacobus de Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 627.

(4) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 205.

(5) D. S. Chambers, "The Imperial Age of Venice", 1380-1580, T. & H. Ltd., London, 1970. Page 46.

(6) E. Prestage, "Chivalry", Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company Limited. London, 1928. Page 214.

(7) J. H. Plumb, "The Pelican Book of The Renaissance", Penguin Books Ltd., England, 1982. Page 232.

(8) D. S. Chambers, op. cit. Page 26.

NO. 13
THE RETURN OF THE AMBASSADORS,
by, Carpaccio (9ft 8½in X 17 ft 3 in)
circa 1500

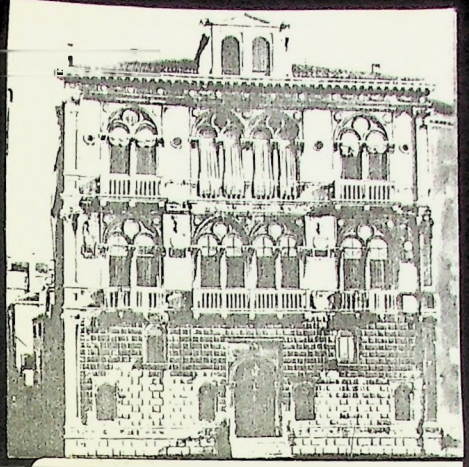
CHAPTER FOUR

The Return Of The Ambassadors

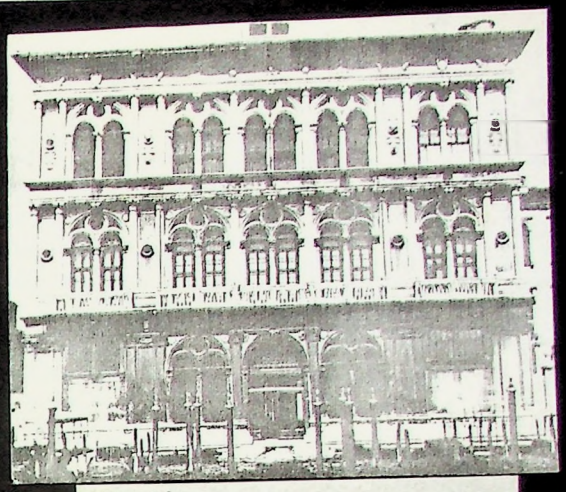
The name of this painting is 'The Return of The Ambassadors' (see ill. no.13). The Ambassadors have returned to England with Ursula's answer. The flags are waving in the wind, and onlookers press closer to the throne expectantly. A figure on the far right engages our eye and points discreetly to where the letter is being read. The King's face is stern on hearing its content. A lighthearted note is added by the monkey seated on the steps below. He is dressed for the English weather in his fur lined jacket and cap.

On the far left, (see ill. no. 14), a small boy plays a rebec, its soothing tones will perhaps soften the King's anger. He is dressed like a little dandy and is so small that should the official beside him stand up he would only come to above his knee. In the background the triremes are being prepared for the journey. The figure in the boat nearest to us will be among those manning the boat that Ursula will be taking. Conon has accepted Ursula's terms and will be baptised. His name will be changed to Etherius, which means 'pure in soul'. (1)

The bridge is crowded with figures who have come to hear the news, and to watch the boats being prepared for their strange mission. Their faces have looks more of disbelief than surprise. Nobody is quite sure yet what the real story is. More spectators crowd onto the balcony on either side of the building in the background. The building is once again of marble, beautifully proportioned, with hints of Byzantine decoration obscuring the low roof.



NO. 15
THE PALAZZO CORNARO-SPINELLI
(late 15th century)



NO. 16
THE PALAZZO LOREDAN
(early 16th century)

NO. 14
REBEC PLAYER, AN OFFICIAL AND SPECTATORS
(detail of ill. no. 13)

On the corners of the roof are classical type figurines with a larger figure in the middle. The light colour of the marble with its delicate veins is the perfect choice of material for this building. The delicately arching windows which have hints of the'Gothic'accentuate this exoticism which could only belong to fifteenth century Venice.

Pignatti, cites "...the Palazzo Vendramin Calergi (built by Mario Conducci) the Scuole di San Marco and the Chiesa dei Miracoli (built by Pietro Lombardo)"(2) as perhaps being either influenced by or influencing Carpaccio's building. The pictures on the left (ill. no. (15) & (16) are two Patrician palaces of this period. Illustration number 15 is the Palazzo Cornaro Spinelli which was build at the end of the 15th century and illustration number 16 is the Palazzo Loredan built in the early 16th century. These will give an idea of how closely Carpaccio's buildings do resemble the architecture of his day. The Loredan family were members of the Scuole di Sant Orsola, which perhaps influenced Carpaccio's architectural preferences.

This building of Carpaccios also betrays influences of Mantegna's, 'Trial of St. James Before Herod Agrippina', in the background of which is a triumphal arch decorated with portrait plaques and a square relief sculptural plaque very similar to the one on the right hand side of Carpaccio's building. But Carpaccio is not as embroiled as Mantegna in imitating Roman artefacts. Carpaccio's Roman elements harmonise perfectly with his modern day 15th century Venetian people and buildings.

Everything in the painting is well balanced and low key. Gracefulness and control is the mood of the setting and the people. The light is pure and

Alpine reflecting Carpaccio's clarity of intention. Nothing seems to be hidden, all seems clearly visible. But such is the cloak of the Venetians. High up in the main building, people are watching. In the densely packed crowds, people are watching; such is the business of the Venetian noble. And the light filled setting is part of this deception that nothing is hidden.

Even Carpaccio's paint is very thinly brushed on. The weave of the canvas is clearly visible through the paint (see ill. no. (17)). No details are lost in any dramatic or erratic 'painterly' outbursts. The thin paintwork hides a very complicated composition and a wealth of painted details which reverberate with colours, that have the jewel-like -brightness of tempera.

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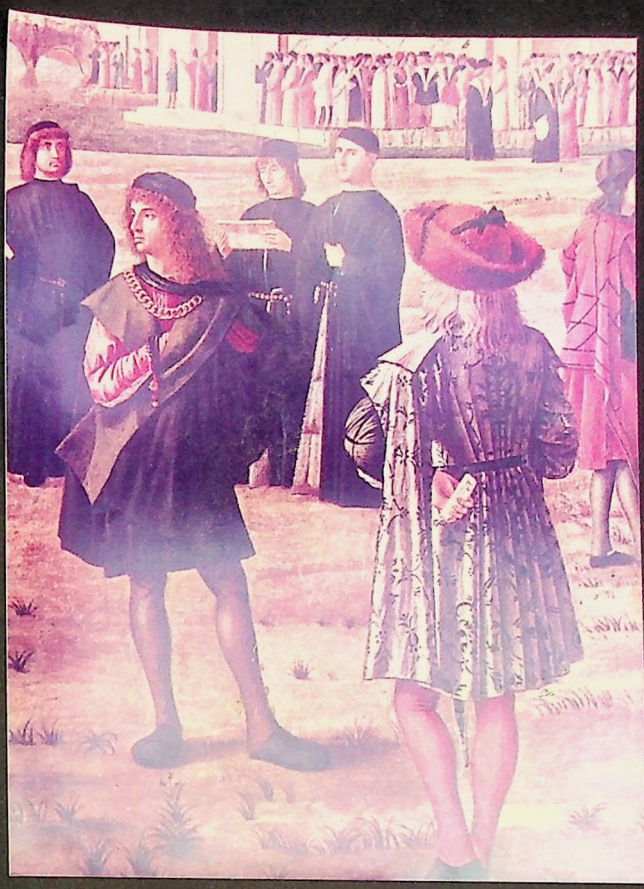
> "The Duke cannot deny the course of the law/For the commodity that strangers have/With us in Venice, if it be denied,/Will much impeach the justice of this state/Since, that the trade and profit of the city/Consisteth of all nations." (3)

By the close of the 15th century, Venice was a powerful, aristocratic state. It owned a string of dominions and naval bases all along the east coast of the Adriatic, round the Balkan peninsula, and into the Eastern Mediterranean. Those properties were occupied for reasons of security. The wealth of Venice depended on the import and export of goods and the dominions provided refuge both from inclement weather and hostile forces at sea. Situated at strategic points, all along the trade routes, these safe houses ensured the continuous financial success of Venice.



NO. 18
PEOPLE IN THE SQUARE
(detail of ill. no. 13)

NO. 17
MONKEY AND A PEACOCK
(detail of ill. number 13)

Venice was a city permanently filled with merchants from all over the world. Commerce was the principal source of Venetian power. Venice used to be part of the Byzantine empire and had close links with the East. Because of its geographical situation and with the renewal of trade and urban life in the 9th century, it was in a prime position to become a great port. And so Venice became the main trading centre between East and West. Its Byzantine connections helped it to become the leading market place where merchants from all over the world came to buy and sell goods. And through taxes on these goods being imported into and exported from Venice, the Venetian economy became very wealthy. It was very much a city full of merchants, as it was easily accessible overland along the rivers for the English and Germans, and by the sea for those from the African continent.

Many of the goods that would have been imported from the East would have been considered luxery goods. Venice was the placewhere Europeans bought goods like cotton, spices, mineral dyes or even peacock feathers. In the painting 'The Return of The Ambassadors', see detail of a monkey and a female peacock, (see ill. no. (17), even though the setting is supposed to be in England, it is really Venice as this reference shows. When it came to money the Venetians did not bother about religion, they would trade with Christians or Moslems, even though the latter were regarded as barbarians by the Catholic Church. For as Chambers says of these Venetian nobles :-

> "....the regime of the Venetian Patricians rested upon their own retention of the main opportunities for capital investment in long distance trade, its supervision and protection. No other state in the 14th or 15th centuries, reserved for its hereditary governors such commercial privilege or maintained such extensive powers of administration." (4)

Every trading boat in the country belonged to the Venetian Government, which was a closed shop to all but Patricians and as you can see, they had the whole economy running smoothly and with all of the profits lining their own pockets. Only Citizens of long standing might occasionally be allowed to engage in overseas trade. (5).

Goods such as timber and metals were brought to Venice from the Northern countries and Venice itself had an abundant supply of timber in the Alpine foothills which it used to build its ships. In illustration number 18, which is a detail from 'The Return Of The Ambassadors', can be seen a merchant with his back to us, richly dressed in a white silk coat. At this period, no country could rival the silks produced in Venice. Their splendour was renowned throughout the world. Along with silk, the manufacture of glass and lace were the main skills encouraged in Venice. Venice had a monopoly on glass making and people involved in its manufacture were forbidden to leave the city.

In illustration number (18), men are standing about, sometimes in pairs or groups but they are not talking to each other. They wear their long black gowns to show they are Citizens and Patricians and not of the lower classes. They wear no swords, they do not live by fighting but by their minds. The men in the background of this picture dressed in their black robes look as if they might belong to some religious order.

> ".....both classes wore a uniform garment they called a toga, it was not a white toga as in ancient Rome but a funeral looking black gown; in cold weather this garment was thickened with fur trimmings and tight fitting black caps were on the head. Considering, that

> there was also a great number of clergy, both secular and regular in Venice, and that black was the colour most of the women wore, the general effect must have been like a Swiss Sunday, Canon Cassola, declared he felt he had arrived in a city full of doctors of law, widows and Benedictine nuns." (6)

The simplicity of these garments in most cases belied their true cost. Made from the finest of wool cloth imported from Flanders, they were cut from the cloth's broad-side, the most expensive and wasteful way to cut material. Just as applies to-day, the quality of the material, the cut, and elegance of design were all engineered to present the person as being a certain type and of a certain class and having impeccable taste. There is no evidence in this painting of any other type of person other than noblemen. There are no women at all. Here are the ambassadors which only those of the Patrician class can become. The Citizens may become their secretaries, while those who do the work for them are largely hidden. It is only in the distance that we see any of the Plebians, (see ill. No. (14)), working on the ships. In the painting the men are gathered in the square, for their usual important business. The Ambassadors have come back from Brittany. To be an Ambassador besides being a Patrician, the man had to be extremely wealthy, in order to pay for his expenses travelling abroad. Often a man was appointed, on the votes of his enemies, to being an Ambassador, a position that was illegal to refuse, and which would likely cause him financial ruination. In the silence of the figures in the square, there are thousands of ever-watchful eyes, (see ill. no. (18).

Every evening between five and eight the Piazettas were full of nobles. In the square the higher nobility paid court to the lower, trying to solicit votes

for the council meeting the following Sunday :-

> "A political market place.....everything done with great ceremony and deep bows. If a noble did not bow low enough he was said to be 'stiff-backed' (Duro di Schiena) and had trouble getting what he wanted... Piazza S. Marco was an important part of the 'front' for the self preservation of the Venetian nobles. It was the stage on which they acted with the common people, and the foreign visitors as the spectators." (7)

And in this painting, the nobles are acting for the viewer. Acting out their charade of being 'noble' in order to keep control over the simple, uneducated lower classes. Just as the Indians painted themselves to frighten the enemy, the nobles in Venice, became 'refined' in dress and accent, to 'frighten' the lower classes. The Citizens and Patricians belonged to a minority of 10%, and such tactics were necessary in order to maintain their privileged positions and their wealth.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER FOUR

(1) Terisio Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1959. Page 21.

(2) IBID. Page 44.

(3) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page, 210.

(4) D. S. Chambers, "The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380-1580", Thames and Hudson Limited, London, 1970. Page 38.

(5) IBID, Page 77

(6) IBID, Page 144

(&) Peter Burke, "Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of 16th and 17th Century Elites", Temple Smith Limited, London, 1974. Page 68.

NO. 19
THE DEPARTURE OF URSULA & ETHERIUS
by, Carpaccio.
(9ft 2in. X 22ft. 4in.)
c. 1495

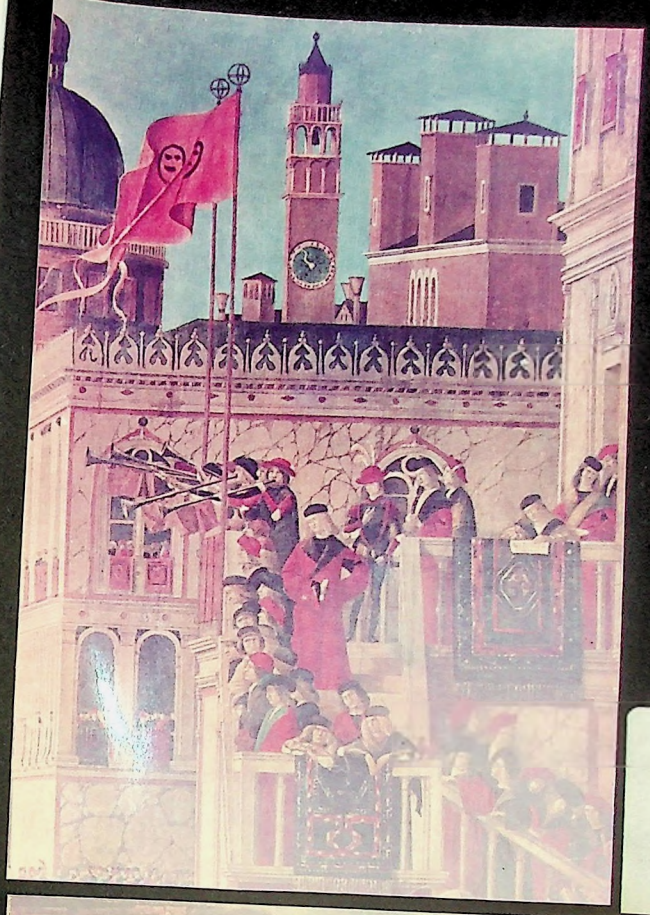
CHAPTER FIVE:

The Departure Of Ursula And Etherius. - 1495

This painting, (ill. no. (19)), deals with two separate incidents. On the left the English Prince is taking leave of his father, and on the right, Ursula and Etherius are embarking on their journey to Rome. A flagstaff, just off centre divides the two scenes. In this type of narrative painting, the viewer was assumed to be able to deal with such a formal organisation. For a medieval audience at a play, those players who scene was over did not have to leave the stage in order to be absent. They became absent in the minds of the audience. Such a way of thinking was also required of the Quattrocento viewer of narrative paintings.

In this painting, there is a subtle movement towards the left. The bugle players point their instruments, (ill. no. 20), at the other side of the harbour. A ship leans on its side, its long mast pointing back to the left. Its tip forms an apex shape with a hanging cliff which leans towards the right. And below the main protagonists are enclosed in this triangle.

And to ensure we start the story from here, the lower left hand corner is weighed with a crowd of official looking men. These are assumed to be members of the Scuola di Sant Orsola and some Patricians. Once again at their front is the choric type figure who points us away from the faces and towards the departing Etherius. His bowing figure forms part of a rhythmical movement which is softened by the figure behind him who has not yet reached the full bow, and the figure yet behind him, whose body is static, and whose arm



NO. 20

NO. 20

BUGLE PLAYERS

(detail of ill. no. 19)

NO. 21

TWO FASHIONABLE YOUNG MEN

(detail of ill. no. 19)

movement sounds the first note. All the figures form part of a measured rhythm, whose metre is co-ordinated across this low frontal plane.

Such refinement is in strange company, as their stage is nothing but an old wharf. This runs full across the painting and acts as a unifying element. But, the central area is suitably clothed in the luxery of Eastern looking rugs. This space is occupied by two very fashionably dressed young men (see ill. No. (21). These youths are thought to be members of the Loredan family who are wealthy patrons of the Scuole di Sant Orsola. One of the youths holds a scroll type banner with the letters N.L.D.W.G. VI, inscribed across it. This has been deciphered by the Italian historian Testi, to mean, 'Nicolaus Lauretanus Donum Dicavit Venerabili Gloriosis Virginitibus (que)'. (1) This in English reads,'Nicolaus Laurentanus decreed this is a present to the Venerable Ursula in her glorious virginity.' The banner is a token both of the holder's snobbery and vanity. Vanity in letting us know that it was the Loredan family who paid for the painting and intellectual snobbery for his creation for this obscure device in Roman lettering to allude to his Latin scholarship and perhaps ancestry.

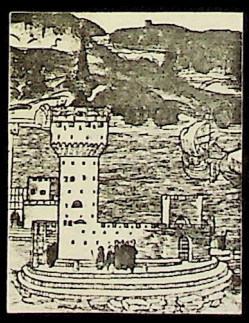
Behind the figures of these two young men lies the open sea. The Prince's ship is at anchor and its sail is full. The word 'malo' appears upside-down on the sail and forcasts an ill omened journey. (2) Another ship lies on its side about to be launched and added to the hundreds of other ships that are ready for the voyage. (3)

The stone fortress like buildings on the left add to the cold, gloomy atmosphere. They have been built to withstand the cold English weather. Pignatti points out

NO. 24

DRAWING OF A LANDSCAPE

by, Carpaccio



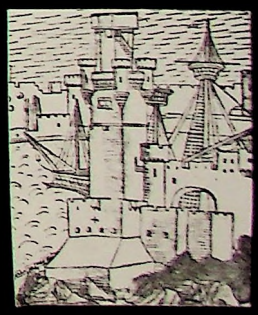
NO. 22 - (LEFT)

THE TOWER OF ST. MARK AT CANDIA

NO. 23 - (RIGHT)

THE TOWER OF THE CAVALIERA AT RHODES

(Woodcuts by Reeuwich, c. 1486)



that the two main buildings in this section were probably taken from a travel book by Bernhard Von Breydenbach called 'Opusculum Sanctarum Peregrinationum in Terram Sanctam', which was published in Maine in 1486. It was illustrated with wood cuts by Reeuwich, which show The Tower of St. Mark at Candia (ill. no. 22) and The Tower of the Cavalieri at Rhodes (ill. no. (23). (4) He placed these side by side at the bottom of a mountain before which they become the dominant elements, (see. ill. no. 24) . The positions of some of the figures in the woodcut of The Tower of St. Mark have even been included in the painting.

On the right, the buildings in Ursula's country are so delicate and light, they could have been carved from ivory. They are peopled with figures so delicate and slender themselves that the buildings can retain their importance, (see. ill. no. (20). People stand on every step, looking out at the departing couple. Their little figures are very refined and elegant. One man, at the top of the stairs, wears a jaunty scarlet hat, with three white feathery plumes. His doublet and hose are tight fitting, the height of that month's fashion. He stands in front of a Gothic style window whose delicate tracery is enhanced by the web like lines etched on the marble. Another man leans on a Turkish rug writing, perhaps he is an Ambassador noting in his report the important event taking place. In itself, this detail (ill. no. (20) would make a beautiful painting,but it is perhaps a detail, one of many,whose importance could only be picked out by the eye of the camera,which simplifies and enhances.

In the front plain, Ursula and Etherius say goodbye to her parents (5). A woman is crying, while Ursula determinedly sets out on her mission. Another young virgin looks out at the viewer. Her head is covered with a white veil,

and her face has a look of innocence. Sitting in the boat facing us, we meet once again, the young man who in the last picture was in a boat behind the rebus player. The young virgins are being helped aboard by a beautifully dressed young man. According to the legend, some men did in fact travel with the virgins ;-

> "....the maiden's father ordered that his daughter, whom he well loved, should have in her Company whatever number of men was needful for her safety and that of her companions." (6)

So these figures boarding the boat are not Etherius and Ursula as was once supposed. Lauts has already pointed out the difference both in their hair and clothes, (7) and the legend itself states that some men including bishops travelled with the women to protect them.

On the base of the flagpole is a Scorpion and Lauts says of this :-

> "The scorpion depicted on the flag is not, as Molmenti-Ludwig believed, a reference to imminent misfortune, but refers, as Perocco (1960) has suggested convincingly, to the Feast of St. Ursula on October, 21st, the day on which the sun enters the sign of the Scorpion." (8)

But either way, this sign, by referring to Ursula's feast day is foretelling of the day of her death. To the viewer, the Scorpion is a symbol of misfortune as to us, Ursula has as of yet no feast day because she is still alive. And as a symbol of doom it fits in with all the faces which appear to be harbouring premonitions of disaster. It is a very gloomy painting whose sweetest passage occurs among the Venetian architectural details. There the colours are so much lighter and purer than on the left side where they are murky and dull, and whose gloomy atmosphere dominates the rest of the painting.

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> "There are a sort of men whose visages/Do cream and mantle like a standing pond/And do a wilful stillness entertain/With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion/Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit/As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle/And, when I ope my lips let no dog bark!'/Oh! my Antonio, I do know of these,/That therefore only are reputed wise/For saying nothing;when, I am very sure/If they should speak would almost damn those ears/Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools." (9)

The banner of St. Mark flies on the top of the pole which divides the painting, 'The Departure of Ursula and Etherius', in two. The lion of St. Mark is a symbol of the affluent and Christian West and in this painting are all of the trappings that wealth brings - fine buildings, exotic decorations, beautiful clothes. And such things are most in evidence on the right hand side. Here the buildings are fine and delicate. And it is to this side of the painting that the women are confined.

Venice of the Quattrocento was the main centre for Italian Humanist studies. One of the most important members of this movement was Ermolao Barbaro. He was also a member of the Scuola di Sant Orsola. The group of men on the lower left corner of this painting is probably a tribute to Humanist scholars as well as Scuola members.

Barbaro, as a Humanist, was genuinely concerned with education. He edited out all distortions that had occurred through years of different translations in the writings of the Greek philosophers. He had no time for those works, modern or ancient, which hid a lack of content with empty eloquence. (10) Although, he did feel that a person should be able to express himself well if

he wanted to get his ideas across. Unfortunately, many of the so called Humanists, (11), were more concerned with style and rhetoric both in their writings and personal appearances. To find out why so many Humanists adopted such a narrow approach, we can take a look at Pietro Bembo, a pupil of Barbaro, said by Vittore Branca to be:-

> "....the ideal successor to Barbaro's phililogical approach: lucid, open to every feeling about language." (12)

In fact, the truth of the matter is quite the opposite. Bembo was only concerned with refining the Latin language. Bembo and other Patrician Humanists were very critical of a writer such as Dante, whose 'Divine Comedy', a very anti-clerical work was considered by them to be coarse and vulgar, and Dante himself to be :-

> "....a poet fit for cobblers." (13)

But their dislike for Dante went much deeper than the fact that their ears were too sensitive for his rough dialect:-

> "The anxieties have to do with the class or caste implications of a poetry that appears to operate a double betrayal by using a language which not only makes superior philosophical, scientific and doctrinal knowledge improperly available to a wide non-specialist audience, but also is inadequate to the dignity and nobility of the subject matter." (14)

Dante's biggest fault was that his writing was too easy for the lay man to understand. There was nothing obscure in his methods, he came directly to the point and was a popularly read author. The Humanist circle was not a

popular movement, but a narrow clique of Patricians who were determined to keep all their learning within their own class. (15). And so, their approach to Dante was the same as that taken by Vasari to the Quattrocento painters. Dante came to be viewed as a link in the linear chain of progression towards that ultimate goal of classicism.

Dante's works were examined not for their content and the type of language he used to express his ideas, but for the 'fact' that his style of writing preceded what the Humanists lauded as Classical-Latin. He was viewed as one of those struggling from the barbarism of the medieval period towards Classicism. Formally, at least, they could admire him for having laid the foundation stones of an elegant language. Dante was seen by the Humanists as progressing towards this ultimate refinement of the Latin language. This was the mode by which his works were appropriated by the Patricians for their exclusive use :-

> "In the view of Bembo (Prose della volgar lingua; 1525) Dante's language is too often base and lacking in decorum: Petrarch is the preferred model in Italian poetry. Bembo's judgement was important, not only because it fixed a canon of taste inside and outside Italy for several generations.....It was important above all because it was the first to ignore the power of the moral and intellectual world of the 'Comedy' in passing a purely aesthetic/ rhetorical judgement. This same delineation underlay almost all subsequent discussion of the poem in the Cinquecento. Drawing on the norms and categories distilled from Aristotelian poetics, specialist rhetoricians turned their attention particularly to questions of the genre, structure and verisimilitude of the poem. These discussions were higly technical necessarily enclosed and excluding..." (16)

Dante was now appreciated by the Humanists, but only on a formal level which defused the ideological implications of his work. All that was now discussed was 'style'. Pietro Bembo, Barbaro's pupil by denying discussion of Dante's ideas was

exactly the type of Humanist Barbaro deplored. Castiglione, the pupil of Barbaro's best friend, Giorgio Merula (17), was the epitomy of the courtilness and refinement that these Humanists wished to exhibit in their writings.

There was certainly nothing radical about the Humanists. Their concern was to preserve their privileged positions. They helped ensure this by keeping 'cultural' pursuits and their appreciation confined within their narrow elitist groupings. Their concern was to maintain control of the meanings of such works, and in this they succeeded by directing the course that nearly all subsequent analyses would take, into the cul-de-sac of formalism. (18)

And when they commissioned this painting from Carpaccio, its meanings would have been foremost in their minds. Looking back to the painting, we rest our eyes on the left hand side. Here the buildings are heavy and ponderous, as if they have to be really strong to hold the deep thoughts of the crowd of men below.

> "Carpaccio's visualizations, these figures, real and ideal at the same time, both 'portraits of inner life' and symbols, emblems as it were of a new culture and the new spiritual life, continued to live, to develop and to become charged- possibly also through subtle and ambiguous Neoplatonic influences - with spiritual and allusive meanings in the great decades of Venetian painting which bridge the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento. These were to be distinctive and characteristic elements of the most humanistic, most rinascimentale, most advanced art in Europe." (19)

The above quote from Vittore Branca, aptly describes the emblematic character of the left hand side of the painting. Here the air is heavy and mysterious, and the men's ascetic looking faces are lightly shadowed, giving them a refined intellectual air. And this is how they would have wanted to be seen. As the painting was paid for by Nicolaus Loredan, a Patrician, I am sure that the Scuola did not object to giving

the Humanists such prominance either at an ideological or iconographical level.

And Carpaccio would not have objected to listening to their ideas on painting. As Hauser (20), points out the Humanists were slowly creating a cultural monopoly as had the priests in the Middle Ages. Latin was their chosen language and it ensured that knowledge would be confined to the domain of the specialist. The Humanists had also started to take the place of the guilds on questions of a formal or technical nature, and the place of the Church on questions of an historical or iconographic nature. The Humanists were now thought of as the only people capable of judging art works.

And looking back to the painting, we can certainly feel the dominance of this intellectually charged left hand side of the painting. In the words of Vittore Branca, these figures certainly appear as, "figures of inner life and symbols, emblems, as it were of a new culture, and the spiritual life ....." And 'spiritual' here is the key word especially if one starts to examine their practise of Plato's ideas,

No doubt Plato's ideas on women's equality would have been discussed by these Humanists. (21), but as such they kept these ideas on a purely philosophical level. (22). The issue of the equality of women was treated in the same manner as Dante's 'comedy'. It was intellectualised about, until it became an abstract issue and rendered harmless.

If we look at the left hand side of the painting again, we see that it is completely dominated by men. There are no women there at all. The whole atmosphere of this side is designed to give an air of sobriety and intellectualism.

Just look at the men's clothes. One only has to read Castiglione's 'The Courtier' to see that even these are calculated to give a certain impression:-

> "I am also always pleased when clothes tend to be sober and restrained rather than foppish; so it seems to me that the most agreeable colour is black, and if not black, then at least something fairly dark....I would like the clothes our courtier wears to reflect the sobriety characteristic of the Spaniards, since external appearances often bear witness to what is within. " (23)

As I have said, the whole atmosphere of this left side of the painting is calculated to give an impression of rationalism and wisdom, which effect is intensified by the capriciousness and eccentricity of the right, the area of the painting to which the women are confined.

Here, the women are placed in a rarefied atmosphere. The buildings behind them are delicate and refined. Everything is bathed in an air of elegance and daintiness, designed to be aesthetically pleasing, and is.

Here the women are frail creatures unable to get into the boats themselves, but have to be helped in as if they were invalids. In the legend, Etherius does not set out on the journey with Ursula, the only men included are those that her father adds to the company for her protection. In the painting, Etherius is added for several reasons.

He is a character that we, the viewers, will recognise easily as we will see him throughout the narrative. He is there to remind us that Ursula is not travelling alone. We, the viewers, presumably already understand, that as a woman she would be incapable of undertaking such a journey. Also, as a woman she cannot be seen to be the sole leader of this crusade and her future husband

must be by her side. Thus the Ursula that we are presented with, does not deviate from 'normal' female behaviour and all parties (viewers and donors alike) are satisfied.

The right hand side of the painting is atmospherically the complete opposite of the left. On the left there is a feeling of strength and an intellectual intensity which is heightened by the frivolous nature of the right side. This occurs to serve purposes other than the aesthetic pleasures afforded by formal contrasts. If you would agree that the left side which is reserved totally for men, is there to reflect all that men are, great minds, strength, masculinity, then the right side must be calculated to affirm those qualities that exclusively and naturally pertain to women - their feminity, delicacy and foolhardiness!

This painting is an affirmation that women are different creatures to men, and must be depicted as being so. For :-

> "....who of us when sees a gentleman passing by wearing a gown quartered in various colours or covered with strings and ribbons and bows and cross lacings, does not take him for a fool or a clown?" (24)

.....but such clothes on a woman would presumably be normal? So much for the reality of the Humanists' debates on equality!

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER FIVE

(1) Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962, Page 229

(2) T. Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1958. Page 24.

(3) IBID. Page 34. Pignatti says that this is a galleon that has capsized, I think that it is more likely that is being launched having just been built. After all hundreds of boats would have been needed for the journey.

(4) IBID. Page 24.

(5) J. De Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. (In the legend of St. Ursula, Etherius remains in Brittany and does not join Ursula until the martyrdom.)

(6) IBID. Page 628

(7) Lauts, op. cit. Page 229

(8) IBID. Page 229

(9) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare" (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 196.

(10) J.R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1973, Page 229.

"As had Lorenzo Valla, he set up against the cult of a subject for its own sake, the aridness of a technical approach which claimed to package reality within a single discipline, the ideal of a truth which embraced human wisdom in its totality.

When he debated with Dal Medico and Pico and in lordly fashion reduced to caricature the abtruse calculations of the latest scholastic school, he affirmed the communication of ideas to be his overriding need, far transcending esotericism or purely technical competence.

He continued the Petrarchan and Albertian air of understanding every thing that was intelligible and translating it into a language that was fresh, clear and communicative, just as he deplored the mentality and the form of expression of certain of the Florentine Neoplatonist initiates.

He believed that language, the word constituted the supreme manifestation, the supreme dignity of man, for it allowed the highest exercise of his spirit, the communication of his thoughts....."

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER FIVE (Con/d)

(11) J.R. Hale, "A Concise Encyclopedia of the Italian Renaissance", Thames and Hudson, London, 1981, Page 171.
"Humanism, is a 19th Century coinage, invented to describe the programme of studies, and its conditioning of thought and expression, that was known from the late 15th Century, as the province of the humanista, the teacher of the studia humanitatis or arts syllabus in schools and universities."

(12) J.R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1973. Page 233.

(13) J.R. Hale, "A Concise Encyclopedia of the Italian Renaissance", Thames and Hudson, London, 1981. Page 111.

(15) IBID. Page 111.

(14) J. R. Hale, "A Concise Encyclopedia of the Italian Renaissance", Thames and Hudson, London, 1981. Page 111.

(15) Arnold Hauser, "The Social History of Art - Part II", Routledge, Kegan, Paul, London, 1968. Page 44.
"The Renaissance was not a civilization of small shop keepers and artisans, nor of well-to-do, half-educated middle-class, but rather, the jealously guarded possession of a highbrow and Latinized elite.
This consisted mainly of those classes of society which were associated with the humanistic and Neoplatonic movement - a uniform and, on the whole, like-minded intelligentsia,....The important works of art were intended for this circle. The broader masses either had no knowledge at all of them, or appreciated them inadequately and from a non-artistic point of view, finding their own aesthetic pleasure in inferior products. This was the origin of that unbridgeable gulf between an educated minority and an uneducated majority which had never been known before to this extent and which was to be such a decisive factor in the future development of art."

(16) J. R. Hale, "A Concise Encyclopedia of the Italian Renaissance", Thames and Hudson, London, 1981. Page 111.

(17) J. R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1981. PAGE 233.

(18) R. Barthes, "Mythologies", Granada Publishing Limited, London, 1982. Page 142.
"....bourgeois ideology is of the scientistic or the intuitive kind, it records facts or perceives values, but refuses explanations; the order of the world can be seen as sufficient and ineffable, it is never seen as significant."

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER FIVE (Cont/d)

(19) J.R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1981.

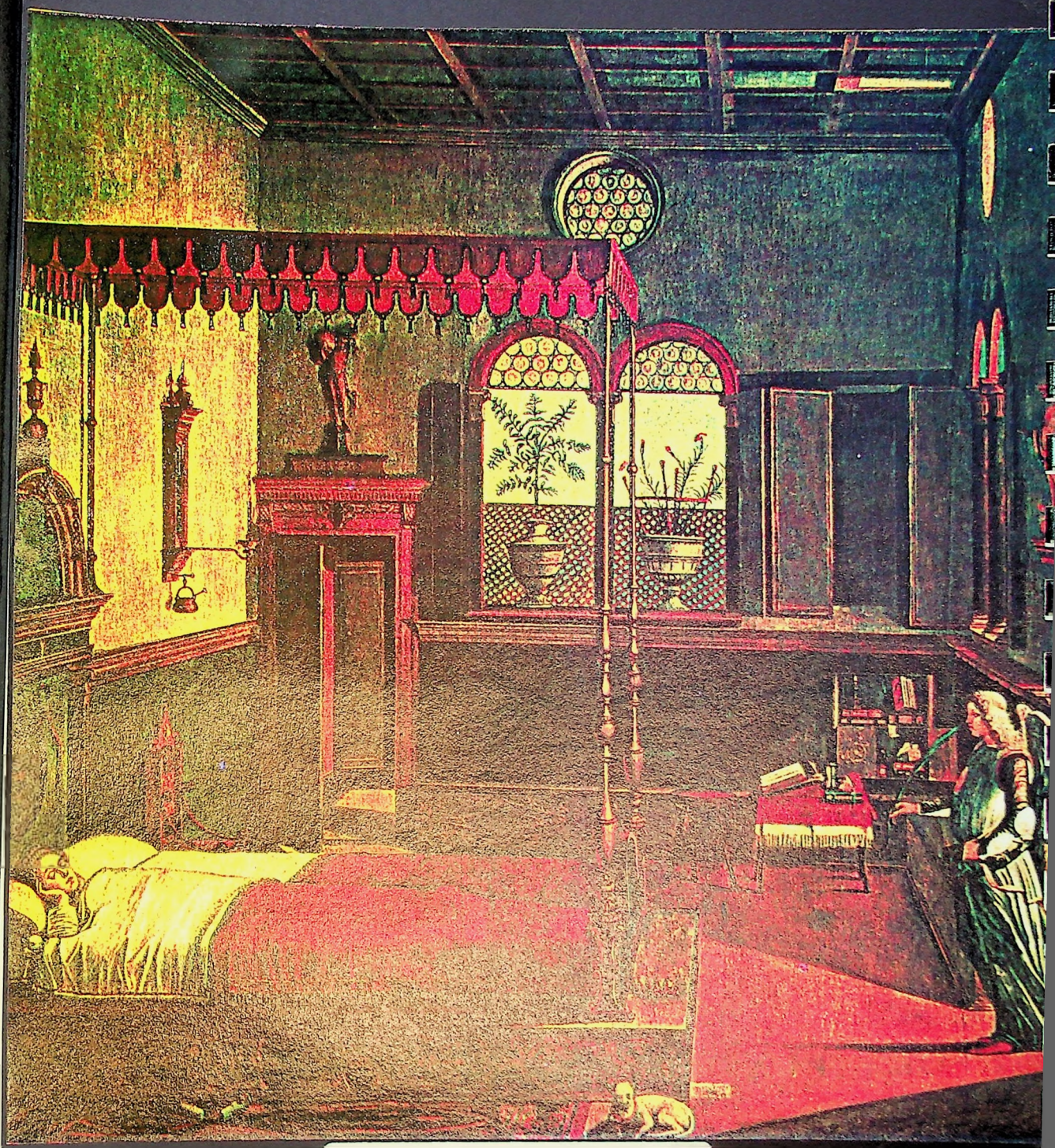
(20) Arnold Hauser, op. cit., Page 45.

(21) Plato, "The Republic", Penguin Books Limited, England, 1982. Page, 228.
"Ought female watchdogs to perform the same guard-duties as the male, and watch and hunt and so on with them? Or ought they to stay at home on the grounds that the bearing and rearing of their puppies incapacitates them, from other duties, so that the whole burden of the care of the flocks falls on the males?....So if we are going to use men and women for the same purposes, we must teach them the same things....We educated the men both physically and mentally... ....We shall have to train the women also, then, in both kinds of skill, and train them for war as well, and treat them in the same way as the men."

(22) Arnold Hauser, op. cit. Page 41.
"Although women participate in literary social life, from the very beginning, they are not the centre of the courtly salons, of the Renaissance....the cultural importance of women is only another expression of the rationalism of the Renaissance. They are regarded as the intellectual equals of men, but not as their superior....The Renaissance is a masculine age; women like Lucrezia Borgia, who kept court in Nepi, or even Isabella d'Este, who was the centre of the court in Ferrara and Mantua, and who not only had a stimulating influence on the poets of her entourage but also seems to have a connoisseur of the plastic arts, are exceptions. Nearly everywhere, the leading patrons and friends of art are men."

(23) Castiglione, "The Book of The Courtier", Penguin Books, England, 1984. Page, 135.

(24) IBID, Page 135.



NO.25

THE DREAM OF ST. URSULA

by, Carpaccio

(9ft. X 8ft. 9ins.)

c. 1495

CHAPTER SIX

The Dream of St. Ursula (1495)

According to the Legend, the ships stop at a port called Tiel in Gaul. The virgins disembark and walk to Cologne where they spend the night before continuing their voyage to Rome. This painting (see ill. no. 25), is about an angel who appears to the sleeping Ursula on the stop at Cologne, and not at Rome, as Lauts has stated, (1). According to the legend, this dream occurs in Cologne before the visit to Rome :-

> "At length, when Ursula had converted all the virgins to the faith in the space of one day, a favourable wind bore them to a port of Gaul called Tiel, whence they went to Cologne, where an angel of the Lord appeared to Ursula and foretold her that they would everyone return to Cologne, and there would win the crown of martyrdom. Thence, at the angel's command they set out for Rome." (2)

The high panelled ceiling of Ursula's room is reminiscent of that in the 'Departure of The Ambassadors', (see ill. no.9). Carpaccio is obviously making use again of an effective formal solution. The standing figure of an angel pauses at an open doorway, and allows a stream of light to enter. There appears to be an eternal stillness to this angel whose figure lacks that dramatic force one associates with angels of doom. This angel merely holds a palm of martyrdom in his hand and has a subdued contemplative expression. His presence avoids being either ethereal or dramatic, but appears as mortal and calm as Ursula.

Ursula lies in bed asleep. Her head rests on her arm, but an arm that is short by anatomical standards. Its function is not to display naturalistically a length of beautiful arm. It is there to show us that Ursula is in fact asleep

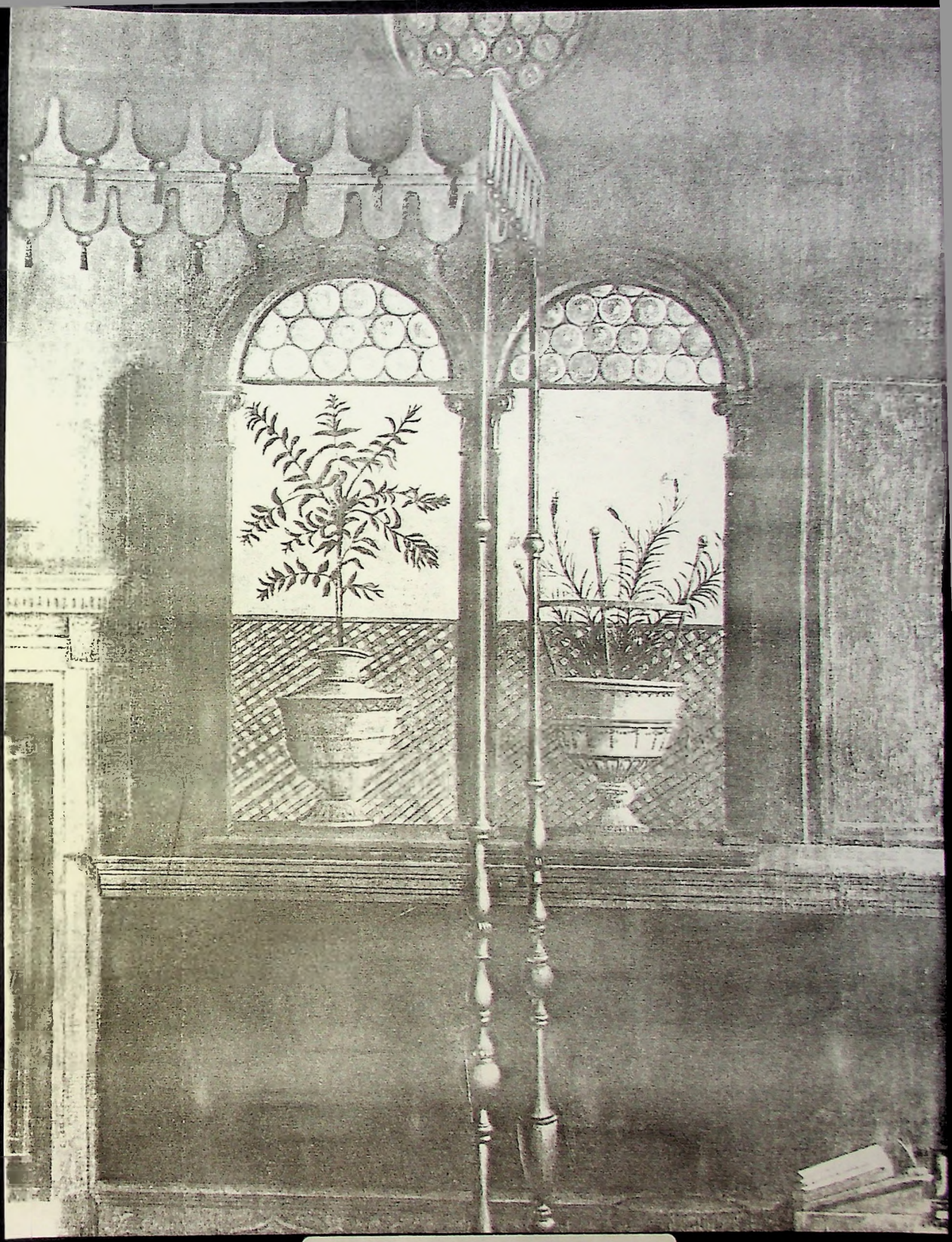
and not dead, which could easily seem the case if only her head were visible above the covers :-

> "The members of the dead whould be dead to the very nails; of live persons every member should be alive in the smallest part. The body is said to be live when it has certain voluntary movements.....Therefore the painter, wishing to express life in things will make every part in motion - but in motion he will keep loveliness and grace." (3)

Movements in Capraccio's works are never dramatic but always measured and low key, all of the marks of a Quattrocento painter. In this work there is a thin line between a 'living' stillness and hieratic inanimate stances displayed by the symbolic images of the Byzantine mosaics.

Above Ursula's bed is a scallop-edged canopy, reminiscent of medieval pageantry. Carpaccio treats this quite simply, in three shades of the one colour, carefully outlined in black, creating a rhythmical undulation in mid-air. His use of paint is linear and decorative rather than loose and impressionistic. At the foot of the bed lies a crown and at the side, a pair of wooden shoes and a small dog. This time the dog is the choric figure. He looks out at us, a humourous element added perhaps, like the besuited monkey in the 'Return of The Ambassadors', (ill. no. 13), on the advice of Alberti who wrote:-

> "The Istoria which merits both praise and admiration will be so agreeably and pleasantly attractive that it will capture the eye of whatever learned or unlearned person is looking at it and will move his soul. That which first gives pleasure in the Istoria comes from copiousness and variety of things .....I say that Istoria is most copious in which in their places are mixed old, young, maidens, women, youths, young boys, fowls, small dogs, birds, horses, sheep, buildings, landscapes and all similar things.....I prefer this copiousness to be embellished with a certain variety, yet moderate and grave with dignity." (4)



NO. 26

THE WINDOW

(detail of ill. no. 25)

On Ursula's headboard, and above the door are plates with heraldic symbols. These show us how important a family she comes from. Also above the doorways are two 'antique' type figurines. Lauts says that the figure over the back door was copied from a drawing by Mantequa of a water carrier. (5) These figures are ornamental touches which allude to Venetians and their Roman ancestors, the new interest in antiquities, and Humanist philosophy. Other allusions to learning are on the right, where on a table a book lies open and there is a quill and ink. A press behind, tidily displays some more books.

The lighting of the painting is softly subdued. Everything appears as if covered with a transluscent glowing veil, of umbers, rusty oranges and venetian-red. The brightest section is the window which is just off centre. Here, the lightest colour notes are introduced in a lagoon coloured aqua. According to a drawing that Carpaccio did for this painting there were two windows in this room. (see ill. no. 28) In the painting he has only used one.

This window blends harmoniously with the simplicity of the rest of the painting. The grid-like lower section is formed by sure, diagonal brush strokes, first in one direction then the other, (see ill. no. 26). Circular pieces of thick leaded glass fit compactly into the top section of the window. Below, on the window sill are two plants. On the left is Myrtle, a symbol of love and on the right Pinks, a symbol of marriage. This is a note of irony as both of these elements are missing from the relationship between Ursula and Etherius.

Speaking with a modern bias for simplicity, I think that in this painting have flowered those qualitative elements which were slightly swamped in the other paintings. (see ills. nos.1 & 13). Such simplicity and balance cannot be said

NO. 27
ST. JEROME AND THE LION
by, Carpaccio.
c. 1502

NO. 28
DRAWING OF A BEDROOM
by Carpaccio,
(sketch for ill. no. 25)

NO. 29
THE DREAM OF THE DEACON JUSTINIAN
by, Fra Angelico (c. 1440)

to have been achieved, just because this is not a narrative painting, as narrative painting does not lead itself to such a simple realization. One has only to look at Carpaccio's, 'St Jerome and The Lion' (see ill. no. 27), to prove that such a fusion and clarity is possible within the narrative tradition.

This painting has been called '...the first interior of modern painting....' by one historian. (6) Looking at the picture in a modernist sense, it is a justifiable description, having as it does, hints of that sparceness found in the interiors of Hopper,Wyeth or Hockney. But, such a minimalist, uncluttered approach is not only found in twentieth century art, but appears frequently through the Quattrocento. If an analogy need be drawn, 'The Dream of The Deacon Justinian' by Fra Angelico immediately springs to mind. (see ill. no. 29) Without giving an elaborate comparison, the similarity of these paintings may be found initially in the treatment of the space, the precise formal organisation that is decorative without lapsing into fussiness. Elements that occur in both paintings such as the three legged stool, the shoes at the end of the bed, the small window high up on the wall which gently lights the opposite wall, the half open door, or even the treatment of both figures in their beds. Add to these elements the almost monastic like bare walls, all executed with a linear precisionism whose edge blunted by a treatment which is imaginative rather than a mathematically or physically correct realism.

I think perhaps its powerfulness could only really be appreciated if seen in its real size of nine foot by eight foot nine inches. Areas which appear sparce and occupy much space in the small illustration, would be much larger and preponderant. The element of the windows would certainly play a more dominant role and in fact whe

using central point perspective, the vase on the left is in the exact centre of the painting. On a personal note, I find this painting the most formally satisfying and beautiful in the series.

****

> "The dearest friend to me,the kindest man,/The best conditioned and unwearied spiritIn doing courtesies, and one in whom/The ancient Roman honour more appears/ Than any that draws breath in Italy." (7)

Ursula is a princess, as we are reminded by the crown at the foot of her bed, her nobility is not made apparent by any ostentatious display of wealth. The crown is the only clue to her royality. There is nothing gaudy or showy about her bedroom. It is very simply decorated. The walls have expensive wooden panelling. Their value only appreciated by those who have a knowledge of such things. Like the Patrician nobles in the last painting, Ursula does not display her wealth. There is an air of conscious frugality to her room, which is relieved by the most striking note of the painting, the plants sitting on the window sill natural and unaffected.

Ursula is a Saint, a Virgin martyr. Here, the sleeping Ursula is dressed in white representing the ideals of virtue and chastity, according to the Christian ethos. She is a young sleeping virgin, the state of sleep itself, a symbol of her unawakened senses. Her slight figure through the covers shows her youth. She is not yet a 'woman'. She is presented as being beyond sexual desire as an unattainable ideal, the symbolic embodiment of virtue.

The concept of virginity which Ursula embodies had enormous power in her culture.

In the fifteenth century, the cult of the Virgin Mary was widespread. She was seen as a powerful force to pray to for help as had not she borne a child and still remained a virgin! This period was a very superstitious, or religious one, (depending on how you choose to see it) in Italy, with eighty six Saints being canonized between 1400 and 1520. (8) For the Citizens and Patricians of the Scuole di Sant Orsola, Ursula's prime importance lay in her chastity :

> "Belief in the virtuousness of women was bound together with....the authority of the Church, the sacred monarchy, the practise of chastity, the genuine learning and noble aspirations of the establishment." (9)

In Venice, Citizens could never hope to become Patricians, and Patricians however poor they might become would ever be classed as Patricians. Being a Patrician meant that a person was considered 'noble' and as Venetians they were very concerned to prove that they had this mysterious quality of nobility. (10)

One of the ways they did this was to claim direct descent from the Roman nobles who had fled Rome when it was being sacked. These Romans had supposedly set up a new Rome on the lagoon on the propitious date of 25th March, 421. Concidentally the 25th March, is also the anniversary of the Annunication of the Virgin Mary and astrological tables were devised to prove the implications of this connection which was one of chastity and nobility. After a fire in the records office in Padua in 1420, a decree was issued to replace the original document of the founding of Venice, which they conveniently said had perished in the fire! (1

Besides inventing history, the Venetian Patricians also furnished themselves with all sorts of paraphernalia to impress their difference on people's minds. They devised coats of arms, and all sorts of obscure Roman-type mottos to go with them.

Many changed their names to the Latin form, and as Humanists, became proficient in Latin, and Latin writings. And all of this was done by Patricians, determined to prove their nobility, but :-

> ".....in an age when the nature of nobility was a favourite topic of scholarly discussion, the Venetian Patricians'only hope lay in definitions depending on long standing respect, or in some cases riches and virtue. " (12)

Marina Warner in her book on 'Joan of Arc' points to a similar phenomenon which was occurring in France. During the religious wars, of the sixteenth century, many people were becoming more and more critical of the aristocracy and the special privileges such as tax exemption that they claimed was their due. The nobility, who had so much resting on this claim to 'nobility' quickly set about defining 'nobility', and proving that they inherently possessed those qualities the word itself implied. And in trying to define nobility, they had to resort to the ideal of 'virtue' as was already pointed out by Chambers. And to personify such an ideal they, of course, chose a woman, Joan of Arc:-

> "Through the efforts of a small group of self styled aristocrats who wanted to validate their titles, Joan of Arc was rescued from a minor place in the chronicle of France's medieval wars, and became cynosure in the history of ideas about virtue, about women and about heroism.
>
> Joan's first apologists and biographers were men who were caught up in the prevalent anxiety about nobleness and its meaning, who wanted to use her family's ancient ennoblement to vindicate themselves and retain their privileges...." (13)

.....and just as in the case of the Citizens and the Patricians....

> "....it was apparent that peasants, however virtuous their lives, were not able to be elevated to the ranks of the aristocracy and that noblemen, however vicious their behaviour, were not to be degraded either." (14)

....which besides proving the utter nonsense of all claims to being aristocratic or noble, points to the strange, but consistent usage of woman to personify virtue. (15). Chambers, points out how in Venice, female nudes were always used to signify strength, whereas Florence used the male. Venice itself was also personified as female, but that was a position that changed with the occasion,

> "This was no sign of indulgence to female power. Venice was the bridegroom, not the bride or daughter of the sea when the doge performed the ancient ritual of casting a ring overboard the state barge every Ascension Day." (16)

This idea of using women to represent virtue obviously has some roots in the idea of the 'Virgin Mary' the mother of the Christian God. It also has roots in the gnosticism of the Middle Ages, which taught about female figures of wisdom and a life of celibacy. (17)

In the first and last paintings of the legend of St. Ursula (see ills. nos. 7 & 36) the female character representing wisdom appears. In both paintings, the woman is old, and is the only woman in the scene. In each case she is there to represent wisdom, the wise woman who magically knows of the folly of Ursula's journey.

Many tracts written by gnostics took a mystical approach to the issue of the equality of women. Woman was presented as a different type of human-being to a man (just as men had done to women), and women were supposedly endowed with magical powers. This was purely an assertive move on behalf of women to reinsert

women into the history and life from which they had been more or less barred, as according to the Christian ethos, woman was the cause of the downfall of man.

The only way woman was acknowledged in Christianity was in the state of permanent virginity, as attributed to the Mother of their God, the 'Virgin Mary'. But this state of 'virtue' was then linked with manhood. St. Jerome said :-

> "As long as a woman is for birth and children, she is different from a man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, she will cease to be called a woman, and be called a man." (18)

Such ideas of women's equality infused with ideas of mysticism and virginity continued into the Renaissance where they were taken up by the Neo-platonists who kept before the eyes of the Christian world, images of virtue personified by woman, a type of woman :-

> "....closer to the angels than to mortal women..." (19)

But at the same time, such personifications of women as representing virtue were not linked totally to womanhood. Virtue was still seen as pertaining to men, although a woman was used to represent that state. This paradox was partly due to language and the gender of nouns, but also to the fact that the state of virginity was always of importance in Christian women. Cesare Ripa, in his handbook for painters, 'Iconology or a Description of the Universal Images', of 1602, speaks of the paradox of women representing strength while at the same time, referring to manhood :-

> "She should be a woman, not to declare that a strong man should emulate feminine ways, but to make the figure suit the way we speak; or because as every virtue is an image of the truth, the beautiful and the desirable , in which the intellect takes its delight, and as beauty is commonly attributed to women one can only use them to represent them conveniently; or, rather, because just as

> a woman, depriving themselves of those pleasures to which nature inclines them acquire and keep the reputation of special honour so should the strong man, with the risks to his own body, with the dangers of his life, and with his spirit on fire with virtue, give birth to reputation and fame of high esteem." (20)

In the painting of St. Ursula sleeping, Ursula refers to virtue and nobility as they pertain to men and as described by Ripa. The Citizens of Venice, no matter how virtuous, could never become nobles ; nobility was reserved for the Patricians, the aristocracy of Venice. Ursula, with her crown, her heraldic devices, and her virtuous life, symbolises 'true nobility'. For the Patricians she is a symbol of all they see themselves as being. And this painting can only be beneficial to them in their ideological definitions of the state of nobility.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER SIX

1. Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962. Page 32.
Lauts mistakenly puts the next painting, which is the visit to Rome, before the scene of Ursula's dream. This means that Ursula's dream would occur in Rome. He says:-

"In Rome,the holy band is received in state before the gates of the town by the pole and his dignitaries.... An angel appears to the Saintin her dream and tells her of her impending martyrdom at Cologne. Here too Carpaccio deviates from the literary tradition in that, there, the angel appears to the saint,during her first stay in Cologne, before her journey to Rome...."

I would not agree with Lauts that Carpaccio has deviated from the sequence of events as related in the legend. Lauts himself wrongly placed the Rome scene before the dream scene. Terisio Pignatti rightly put the 'Dream' before the 'Rome' scene in her book on Carpaccio (see pp. 26-30). And according to the legend this sequence is correct.

2. Jacobus De Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 628.

3. Leon Battista Alberti, "On Painting", Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. U.S.A., 1966, Page 74.

4. IBID. Page 75

5. Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1971, Page 229.

6. IBID. Page 19.

7. William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abbey Library, Romania, 1978, Page 209.

8. Marina Warner, "Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism", Penguin Books Limited, England, 1983. Page 286.

9. IBID. Page 220

10. D.S. Chambers, "The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580", Thames & Hudson, Limited, London, 1970. Page 25.

The writings of the historians became part of the general effort which sought to prove that the Patricians were different to other people for reasons other than money. The real difference lay in their 'nobility', a mysteriously indefinable state.

"Though Poggio in his essay 'On Nobility' (c.1440) had derided the Venetian Patricians as traders, who however dull or stupid, were esteemed as noble above the wisest of Citizens excluded from their rank, in about 1450 he wrote a treatise "In Praise of the Venetian Republic", and it described it as the perfect fusion of aristocracy and monarchy as imagined by Aristotle.....Marin Sanudo revealed the vanity of his caste in following Sabellicus. In the preface to his "Lives of the Doges", circa. 1520, for instance, he declared that even in its origins Venice was superior: not founded by sheperds (he presumably meant Romulus and Remus), but by the powerful and nobly born."

11. IBID. Page 13.

12. IBID. Page 76.

13. Marina Warner, "Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism", Penguin Books Limited, England, 1983, Page 196.

14. D.S. Chambers, op. cit. Page 166.

15. Marina Warner, op. cit. Page 219.
"....we are so accustomed to the convention of female personification of virtue that it has become largely invisible. Yet it is the principal that gives us to this day, Britannia on coinage or in song; liberty in the harbour of New York; justice on the Old Bailey, her eyes blindfold the balance and sword in her hands; the draped female symbols of mourning on tombstones; that makes it possible for girls to be called hope, faith, charity, prudence, liberty and unity, and impossible for boys...."

16. D. S. Chambers, op. cit. Page 316.

17. Marina Warner, op. cit. Page 223.
"....Wisdom retained a feminine aspect in the mystic Christian tradition fed by the Neo Platonist streams that flowed from Hellenistic Alexandria and its school of biblical exegetes in early Christian times."

18. IBID. Page 154.

19. IBID. Page 226.

20 IBID. Page 229.

NO. 30

THE ARRIVAL AT ROME

by, Carpaccio,

(9ft.2ins. X 10ft.)

c. 1495

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Arrival At Rome - 1495

> "....at the angels command, they set out for Rome;
> and making port at the city of Basel, they left their
> ships there, and continued their journey on foot.
> Pope Cyriacus was overjoyed at their arrival in Rome,
> for he too was a native of Britain, and found many kinswomen
> among their number, wherefore he and his clergy received
> them with the highest honours. And in the night it was
> revealed to the Pope that he was to gain the palm of martyrdom
> with the Virgins." (1)

Ursula kneels with Etherius before Pope Cyriacus, at Rome (see ill. no. 30). The Castel Sant Angelo in the background is a Roman building and it adds a note of authenticity to the scene. (see ill. no. 31). The building at this period had just been redecorated and restored. Pignatti says Carpaccio may have seen the building in reality or else taken it from an image on a medal which was struck in 1495 to commemorate the repairs. (2) But in fact, a drawing of the building was made in 1491 for the Codex Escorialensis and so I think it is more likely that Carpaccio saw the drawing of the building in this book or else perhaps a print copied from the book. Remember, Carpaccio was in close contact with the Venetian Humanists, and as Venice was the main printing centre it is likely that one of the Humanists, who was also a member of the Scuola may have had a copy of the book in his library and showed it to Carpaccio to include in the painting.

Like the last painting, there is a very compact and balanced feeling to this painting but here the painters concerns with perspective are more overtly displayed. Just above Ursula's head and behind the bishops stands a boy, who

is differentiated from the other boys by his brown jacket and black cap. He is the central point of this painting. The bishops' hats form the apex of a triangle as does the head of the boy standing with his back to the viewer to the right of the central point. These triangles bisect to form a third triangle, which encloses Ursula and Etherius. The viewer could spend hours analysing this picture, playing perspectival games. Such elements are included more for amusement than for their relevance to the story. That the perspective is there to amuse is verified by the fact that Carpaccio does not naively have the main character, Ursula, the victim of single point perspective! If Ursula had been at such a point, it could have looked very contrived. Here she is directly below the central point and contained within a triangle in a very hidden and subtle manner.

Carpaccio makes great formal play with the bishops' hats. They are the most dominant and memorable elements in the painting. They lean to the right and emphasise the winding path the virgins are taking, and, to the left they clear a space which compliments the path in the negative, creating an S shape, behind which stand all the religious dignitaries. Each path is cut off in the foreground. On the right by the line of bishops, and on the left by the young man with a consciously adopted pose,barring the way. This keeps the viewers' eyes on the main group at the front.

Ursula and Etherius kneel in front of Pope Cyriacus. Behind them two other virgins hold their crowns of martyrdom and the row of virgins approaches from the distance, kneeling where they stop. One virgin holds a banner with a crusading flag, while other young men to the right hold flags with heraldic designs on them. Beside the Pope, a man holds the triple-barred Papal cross.

The Pope is the well known Venetian Humanist, Ambassador, and member of the Scuola di Sant Orsola, Ermolao Barbaro. (3) In 1491, he had been given the Patriarchate of Aquilea by Innocent VIII, and he accepted this position without getting the permission of the Serenissima. The Venetian government retaliated by stripping him of his Ambassadorship and he remained an exile in Rome where he died in 1493.

This painting of Barbaro was done posthumously, probably at the request of the Scuole, when all of the government's anger had died down. Vittore Branca points out that other Venetian Humanists are probably in this painting. He also says that the date of this painting would roughly coincide with the republication of Ermolao Barbaros philological masterpiece the, 'Castigationes Pliniae'. (4) It is probably true that the Scuole wished to honour one of their members Barbaro and make up for their rejection of him when he was banished, an action of repentence which would have pleased the State, as it is always safe to praise a hero when he is dead.

The fate of the Pope in the legend is somewhat similar to the treatment Barbaro himself received from the Venetian Government who exiled him to Rome when he accepted the Patriarchate of Aquileia which was awarded him by Innocent VIII. When told by the angel that he was to join the virgins in martyrdom, Pope Cyriacus at first told nobody even though he had decided to follow Ursula and when he told the other cardinals, they thought he was mad to give up all the benefits that being a Pope would bring. And,

> ".....Since he relinquished the apostolic see against the wishes of his clergy, they erased his name from the role of the Pope's; and the holy company fo the virgins thereafter lost all the favour which previously they had enjoyed with the Roman Curia." (5)

One could say that Barbaro was almost type-cast, when Carpaccio used him for the figure of the Pope. In a sense, the idea to honour him backfired on the Venetian government, who would always be remembered through this painting not for honouring him but for having exiled Barbaro from Venice.

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> "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose./An evil soul, producing holy witness,/Is like a villian with a smiling cheek,/A goodly apple rotten at the heart,/O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath." (6)

The date of this painting conincides with the 500th anniversary of the first crusade, which took place in 1095. (7) Prestage points out that the early Christian church had been persecuted by the Roman government, because its ideology was anti-war. But, with the collapse of Rome, and the ensuing Moslem threat, the church began to arm itself. Theologians began to speak in praise of war, saying that warfare was a natural part of being a Christian. Popes, bishops and priests donned armour, to defend the faith and expound the new ideals of Christian chivalry. The feudal knighthood and the Church militant became one.

When the church began to practise war, it called on the knighthoods to join up with it in defence of Christiandom. And out of this unification, the Crusading Orders were founded, and practised what was known as Christian chivalry. Of these orders some were, The Templars, The Teutonic Knights, and the Hospitallers who combined charitable deeds with warfare. (8)

> "The military marks were devoted to adoration of the Virgin Mary, and to veneration for the holy women of the calendar, but in respect of the mundane and mortal members of their sex,

> they were restricted by their vows to the rendering of such assistance as might be necessary, owing to female feebleness, in the face of violence and villany of the bandits, giant ogres, dragons and other vermin who at that period, infested this terrifying and insanitary earth." (12)

All of the virgins then belonged to both the knighthood and their Christian religion. Ursula is a princess, and all of her entourage are of noble birth, queens, princesses, etc. We are presented with this innocent 'noble' young virgin, setting out to defend Christianity. She is supposedly defending 'us' from the mad barbarians. In fact, Christian chivalry represents the defender of private property, an army of the rich classes who are composed of the aristocracy of the Roman Catholic Church, and the various lay aristocracies.

> "....in the 14th and 15th centuries, Chivalry was marked by the following vices. First it was glorified war for its own sake; exalted fighting as the only occupation worthy of a gentleman, instilled a love of bloodshed, and a contempt for human suffering....Secondly it was an exclusive class institution; it placed a gulf between the Knightly order and the commonality, and restricted its code of honour and courtesy to members of its own caste; it generated a contempt for social inferiors and a disregard for their feelings. Thirdly, its religion was at once formal and obscurantist. On the one hand it was engrossed in ceremonies and external observances; on the other hand it was merciless in waging war on so called infidels, in carrying through crusades against heretics, in persecuting and suppressing freedom of thought. The Inquisition found in the Knighthood a ready instrument of its worst atrocities..." (13)

Ursula here, is a symbol for the Church militant. She is not what she appears to be, i.e., a strong woman leading a peaceful crusade, letting whoever wishes join the Christian religion. We see her, the leader of the crusade, bowing to the Pope. She herself, is a defenceless, feeble woman, seeking the approval of the Church before continuing on her journey. But we are never under the

impression that Ursula is the real leader of this crusade.

Ursula and her virgins, represent 'nobility' and 'virtue' a thousandfold. But, as in the last painting, these terms can only be applied to men and strength. This purity is what Crusading is about. The painting is not here to show that women lead or have lead Crusades, but that the purpose of Crusading is a gallant and noble one as personified by women, and carried out by the men. Here, Ursula is a facade of feminity, innocence and goodness representing Christian Crusading. But behind this facade lies the truth of the matter, hypocracy and murder as a way of life in the protection of the property of the Church and aristocracy.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER SEVEN

(1) Jacobus de Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 628.

(2) T. Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1958. Page 31.

(3) J.R. Hale, (ed.), "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1973. Page 236.

(4) Jacobus de Voraigne, op. cit. Page 629.

(5) J.R. Hale, (ed.), op.cit. Page 238. (Vittore Branca, Ermolao Barbaro, and late Quattrocento Venetian Humanism.)

(6) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Libary, Romania, 1978. Page 199.

(7) E. Prestage, "Chivalry", Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company Limited, London, 1928. Page 8.

(8) IBID. Page 11.

(9) IBID. Page 15.

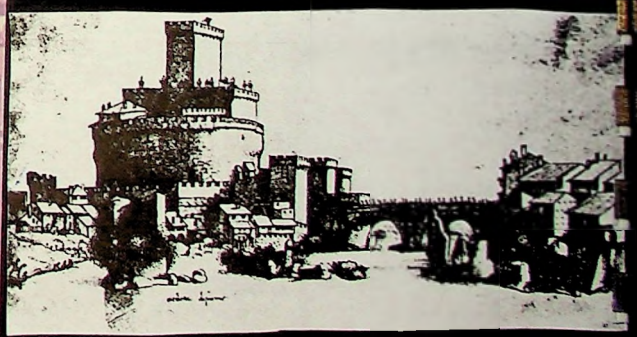
(10) IBID. Page 2.
"It was...a body of sentiment and practise of law and custom which prevailed among the dominant classes in a great part of Europe, between the 11th and 16th centuries."

(11) IBID. Page 8.

(12) Jacobus de Voraigne, op. cit. Page 628

(13) E. Prestage. op. cit. Page 31.

NO. 33 - (Above)
VENETIAN COGS IN THE ARSENAL
(Woodcut - c. 1490)



NO. 31. - (Above)
CASTEL SANT'ANGELO
(from the Codex Escorialensis)
c. 1491.

NO. 32. - (Left)
BRIDGE AND BOATS
(detail of ill. no. 34)

NO. 34

THE ARRIVAL AT COLOGNE

By, Carpaccio,

(9ft 2in. X 8ft. 4ins.)

c. 1490

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Arrival At Cologne - 1490

The Virgins have left Rome and set sail for Cologne. Two Roman soldiers, Maximus and Africanus seeing the thousands of virgins and companions setting out for Cologne, send ahead messengers to warn Julian a Roman who was also the Prince of the Huns. They told him of the threat these people posed should they start preaching Christianity and advised him to prepare to slaughter them. In this painting, which is called 'The Arrival at Cologne',(ill. no. 34), the Huns have taken over the city and are waiting for the virgins to disembark.

At the lower right hand side, a warrior has been given the letter telling of their proposed journey. He is dressed in a suit of armour, and is very like the other fashionable young Venetian men, with long hair, in the other paintings. To his right, are some other knights armed with an assortment of vicious looking weapons. One soldier at the left rests on his shield. Were he to stand up, he would be much taller than any of the others. His face which is looking up at us is not a very successful attempt at foreshortening. A hound is resting on a landing wharf; once again Carpaccio heeds the advice of Alberti in including a variety of people and animals.

Behind the men, at the front, are the tents of the Huns. A soldier aims at a bird sitting in a tree, a defenceless victim of a barbaric act, a symbol of the Virgins fate. Another knight lifts his helmet off and bows to the Prince Julian who is galloping by on his horse. He waves at the man with his sceptre, which lets us know that he is the Prince. He has flowing golden ringleted hair and wears a white feather in his head band. He is riding back

to the camp which is outside the city walls.

Behind the walls of the city, the people of Cologne look out at the boats. They are trapped and unable to help the Virgins. The walls of this city are violently foreshortened at the harbour front. The depth that this implies makes the scale of the boat which is supposed to be behind the bridge, much too large. It appears to be sitting on top of the bridge. This bridge with its reflection forms a circle which is the central point of the painting,(ill. no. 32). As in the 'Dream of St. Ursula' (ill. no. 25), and the 'Arrival At Rome' (ill. no. 30), Carpaccio is once again experimenting with perspective.

This circle at the centre point, is enclosed in the letter 'H' which is formed by the reflection of the bridge in the water. The sails of the boat directly above the bridge are reflected in this circle as a cast shadow on its left hand side, giving the appearance of a crescent moon, the symbol of the Turks. I find that having noticed this central point, everytime, I look at the painting it is the first thing that I see. And perhaps this was the intention of the painter. The painting while overtly dealing with a seige of the Huns, in the central point symbolically links the Huns and Turks, the latter being the ever present Italian threat. And it was the Huns who were the cause of the break-up of Rome, a city and a nobility, close to the hearts of the Venetian Patricians!

If one looks at Memlings interpretation of the same scene which would have been painted around 1480, one is immediately aware that Memlings approach is that of a Gothic painter. (see ill. no. 35), Where Carpaccio makes the bridge into a central point with a symbolic purpose, the bridges in Memlings work remain essentially scenic. Carpaccio's whole composition is approached from an intellectual viewpoint, while with Memling, the soul purpose is to tell the story.

NO. 35

THE ARRIVAL AT COLOGNE

By, Memling

In Carpaccio's painting, there are also elements, which could be called Medieval. For instance, look at his treatment of the people in the boats in comparison to Memlings. The solutions of both are essentially the same. Carpaccio paints the heads in lines, one behind the other. In both paintings, the people appear to be too big for the boats. Carpacccio places the Pope's head directly above Ursulas, both have to be totally visible, (in the early 16th Century, it will be no problem for Giorgione to hide half of the right leg of his Sleeping Venus). But now, such solutions are not an acceptable way of work ing. Crowded on the boats are rows and rows of round heads, women and bishops and elders. But alongside this more 'Medieval' approach, Carpaccio deals with the formal organisation in a 'scientific' or 'rational' manner. While his use of perspective is not operative on both sides of the painting, and the size of some of his figures are not always relative to each other or their surroundings, the overall approach is different to that of Memling.

Memling's paintings are small devotional pictures whose exclusive concern is with the subject matter. Carpaccio's paintings are large (this painting is nine feet, two inches X eight feet, four inches), decorative, and striving to be modernist that is to be classical. The word 'modernist' in this context is in need of some definition. Memling is using a style, which is too easily accepted as being exclusively Northern European (that is either Dutch or German), because of its tiny figures and the concern with details. But it is also a Gothic style belonging to a Medieval society that was European in the geographical sense. The paintings have an awkwardness of composition and the main event is not laid out for us in a concise easily readable fashion. The form is open and expansive with no fixed point of interest. And this Medieval style was as much at home in Italy as in Northern Europe.

When we think of the Renaissance, and Italy, we think of a more monumental approach, but as Hauser points out, by the time that this has occurred, such forms are no longer exclusively Italian. (1) The period when the Renaissance can be said to be an exclusively Italian phenomenon is in the Quattrocento, a time when the figures were still slim, lithe and graceful.

Carpaccio's works belong to this period, the 15th Century, a time when the Renaissance was confined to Italy. When we look at Carpaccio's work in comparison to Memling, we can see this conscious structuring of the plane, and how he tries to emphasise the main characters by differentiating them from the rest. Although, many of the links Carpaccio makes in crowded scenes may not be very clear, the fact that he is structuring the space is very much evident. The Quattrocento is a period that is concerned with organisation, rationalism, and reality in the materialist sense. In Italy, art was advancing to keep pace with the changing economy which placed :-

> "...an emphasis on planning expediency and calculability; they are creations of the same spirit which makes its way in the organisation of labour in trading methods, the credit system and double-entry book-keeping, in methods of government, in diplomacy and warfare. The whole development of art becomes part of the total process of rationalization." (2)

Carpaccio's paintings are produced at the beginning stages of these social changes. This work has certainly not got the rationalism of a Mantegna. It retains the Gothic love of delicacy and detail while keeping subdued a tendency to over decorativeness which would not be inkeeping with the new ideals then being propounded.

Carpaccio's painting has a very lyrical quality which is perhaps due to his discerning choice of detail. The delicate figures in their knightly attire

and the boats which are faithful reproductions of the freight carrying round ships of Venice (see ill. no. 33). The town buildings safely collected within the town wall. The edge of the river bank that gently meanders into the distance and the boats ineffectually try to echo this movement but are not successful.

The tree on the right and the mast on the left both lean inwards towards each other which has a very unifying effect on the composition. They help to frame the most important details for the viewer, who on entering from the lower left hand corner comes under the fixed stare of the seated knight. In the Memling painting, the viewer chooses whether to look or not, whereas in the Carpaccio painting, our attention is constantly sought. By psychological or scientific means, we are compelled to examine the painting.

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> "You have among you many a purchased slave/Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules/You use in abject and slavish parts/Because you bought them; shall I say to you/Let them be free, marry them to your heirs/Why sweat they under burdens? let their beds/ Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates/Be seasoned with such viands. You will answer/'The slaves are ours'; so do I answer you." (3)

In this painting, Ursula has arrived at the city of Cologne to find it besieged by the Huns. Her mission is the spreading of the 'word', the Christian faith. And in this painting, we can see how barbaric the non Christians are. At the front of the painting, they are armed and ready for battle. In the background, we can see a troop of men with shields and spears ready for attack. When we look to the boats, there are no weapons visible. All they seem to possess are

crusading flags. These boats are filled with unarmed, and innocent women.

The boats the women have arrived in are typical of the boats in the Venetian fleets, (see ill. no. 33). These boats were used for freight carrying, and also transporting Crusaders or pilgrims to foreign lands.

> "Decade after decade, century after century, in peace or in war, rich and devote Christians won their way to heaven via the Holy Places, to the great profit of the Venetians. For centuries, the Crusaders warredinthe Eastern lands, and the Crusaders paid; paid for themselves, their armies, their horses, their necessities - and Venetians did not believe in bargains." (4)

Most of the world's pilgrims set out on their Crusades from Venice which had the nearest and best equipped port to Africa. Venice became very wealthy from this, as pilgrims had to spend money in the city while waiting for their ships to be equipped. But besides transporting pilgrims to Africa, to preach or fight, the Venetian government, was heavily involved in the slave trade.

> "Slavery was an accepted institution in the Mediterranean regions in the 15th Century, and the sale of Tartars, Moors Turks, Russians, Circassians or even Greeks, was a familiar sight in the markets of Aragon, Italy and Southern France. These 'domestic enemies' femmine bestiali (as one of their mistresses called them) were common in Italian households..." (5)

Christian ideology was obviously forgotten when it came to the pursuit of money making. And it is ironic that the ships used to bring the pilgrims to foreign lands to tell of the good news of Christianity, were at other times used to capture people to barbarically enslave them.

In this painting, of 'Arrival At Cologne', we see that the town has been laid under siege by the barbarians. If the barbarians can break through the walls, no doubt, they will slaughter everybody. This is the type of behaviour we have

been taught to expect of non Christians. Because, non Christians are not yet civilized!

The purpose of this painting is to reinforce the above ideas. The fact that the Church is a wealthy business organisation and unchristian both in its wishes to be wealthy and the methods it uses to amass such wealth, is hidden. The Venetian government and its ruling Patricians, who also make great financial gains from the Church's military policies and ideological stances, are also absent. Instead we are shown, the young virgin, Ursula, herocially setting out to become a martyr for the Christian God and the Roman Catholic Church. And who would be so heartless, as to question such a display of the true Christian spirit as we are presented with in the feeblest of the sexes, a woman.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER EIGHT

(1) Arnold Hauser, "The Social History of Art" - Part II, Routledge, Kegan, Paul. London, 1968. Page 9. :-
"For the new conception of art, the work forms an indivisible unity; the spectator wants to be able to take in the whole range of the stage with a single glance, just as he grasps the whole space of a painting organised on the principals of central perspective with a single glance.....With the principals of unity which inspire its art, Italy anticipates the classicism of the Renaissance, just as it anticipated the capitalistic development of the West with its economic rationalism. For the early Renaissance is an essentially Italian movement, as opposed to the High Renaissance and mannerism, which are universal European movements."

(2) IBID. Page 12.

(3) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 212.

(4) J. H. Plumb, "The Pelican Book of The Renaissance", Penguin Books Ltd., England, 1982. Page 233.

(5) Margaret Aston, "The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe", T & H. Ltd., London, 1968. Page 60.

NO. 36.

THE MARTYRDOM AND FUNERAL OF ST. URSULA

By, Carpaccio,
(8ft. 10½ins. X 18ft. 4½ins)
c. 1493

CHAPTER NINE

The Martyrdom And Funeral of St. Ursula - 1493

> "Thus, all the virgins, with the aforementioned bishops, returned to Cologne and found the city besieged by Huns. And when the barbarians saw them, they fell upon them with a tremendous shout and, like wolves raging among the sheep, put the whole multitude to death." (1)

In this painting, (ill. no. 36), the martyrdom and funeral scene are separated by a Roman pillar. The left hand side deals with the martyrdom, the right with the funeral. The city is under seige and outside in the countryside, the virgins are trapped. The soldiers rush in and attack the unarmed virgins and their followers. Blood streams from split heads and gashed necks. The virgins are being literally'butchered' in a scene reminiscent of the medieval horror of a Bosch painting.

Just below the horizon line, a diagonal line of trees emerges from the left hand side of the canvas and last in its line is the Prince. Once again, we can not see his face, but he is recognisable by his clothes and hair. Ursula has refused to marry him and now he will kill her. She accepts her fate without any display of emotion. Behind her two other virgins kneel, imploring to heaven and tears streaming down their faces. Another soldier removes his sword from his sheath as he keeps his eye on them. They are his to kill.

In the background, are the tents of the Huns. Soldiers are all overy the place. The Huns flag is hoisted while the Crusading flag and Latin cross are put lying against a tree. Another soldier gallops around on horseback, blowing a bugle, his turban adding an exotic element, and hinting of the Eastern origins of the

enemy..

The funeral scene is a composed and solemn affair. Ursula is carried high in the air by four bishops. An old woman kneels on the steps, reminiscent of the old woman in 'Reception of the English Ambassadors' (ill. no. 7). Lauts says this may be a posthumous portrait of Eugenia Caotorta, the wife of Nicolo Loredan. On the base of the pillar are the coat of arms of the Lordan family, and those of the Caotorta may be below it. (2) An official dressed in his long black gown edged with fur, looks out at us.

Slowly the bishops move up the steps following the corpse. The funeral is a grand ceremonious occasion with plenty of bishops and other official looking people. Ursula, is a martyred 'Princess', who is being honoured. She is carried into her tomb, which is like a Roman temple. The ruins in the background symbolise decay, the old Roman Empire, and perhaps a new Roman Empire. Ursula's name is carved above the entrance to the tomb and the letters are gilded. She has no shortage of mourners at her funeral:-

> "....the leading figures are representative of that Venetian middle class which found in Carpaccio its most authentic poet." (3)

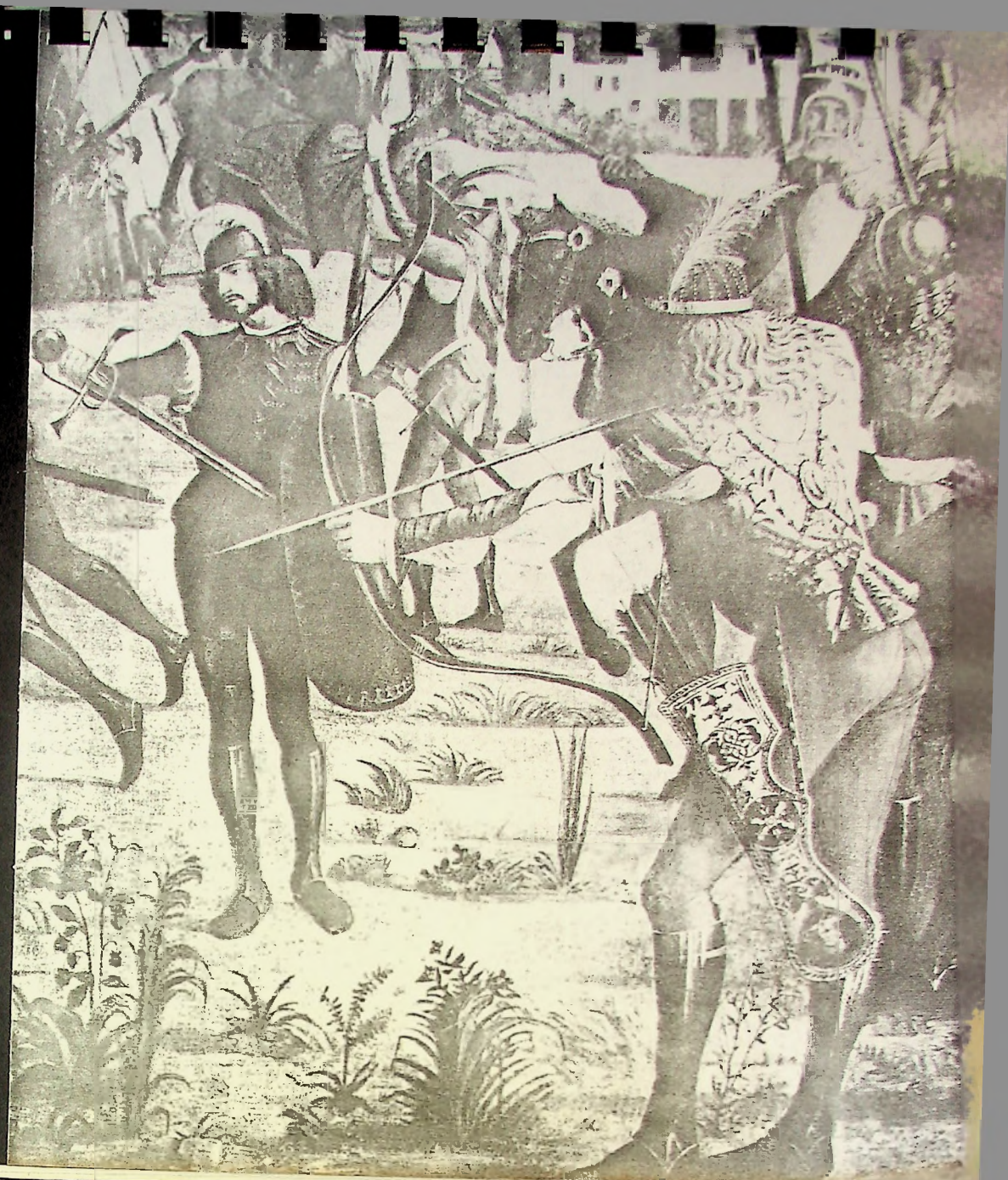
For Lauts, this painting reveals the mature Carpaccio :-

> "....one feels for the first time a gently undulating rythm of the figure grouping so characteristic of the artist's later work." (4)

These elements are perhaps the only elements of his maturity that are revealed here. True, there is a new gracefulness that is lacking in the last painting,

NO. 37 - (Above)
THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA
By, Memling,

NO. 38 - (Right)
PRINCE JULIAN
(detail of ill. no. 36)



which was painted in 1490. The figures are more freely moving and rhythmical. For example, see the two soldiers walking together behind Ursula. This is not a walking movement or even a running movement. It is the first of that almost slow dancing movement that is visible in the later paintings. This difference is clearly visible if one compares Memling's 'Prince Julian', (ill. no. 37), to Carpaccio's (ill. no. 38). Memling is concerned to show a soldier in full suit of armour, a ruthless warrior. For Carpaccio, the graceful lines of the body are all important. He gives all his attention to displaying the Prince's figure at its best, and in clothes that will compliment its attractiveness. For Memling, such sensuality has no part in the telling of the story.

But for my tastes, this is not yet the mature Carpaccio. This painting contains too many confused and restless elements. On the left hand side, there is mayhem and killing which ideally should serve to heighten the silence of the scene on the right. But this does not happen. I think that Carpaccio's later maturity is more revealed in 'The Dream of St. Ursula' (ills. no. 25) and the 'Meeting With The Pope In Rome', (ill. no. 30), which in fact are thought to have been once the one painting. This painting lacks the formal structuring and simplicity which is their strength and which he comes close to in 'The Departure of Ursula and Etherius' (ill. no. 19), but does not attain until 'St. Jerome and the Lion', of 1502 (ill. no. 27).

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"If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility?, Revenge/If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?/Why revenge./The villany you teach me I will execute/And it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction." (5)

In this painting, the young virgins are slaughtered by the Huns. Such is the fate that awaits the brave who choose to be Christians. Throughout the ages, the Church tells that Christians have been tortured and martyred for their faith. The Christians have always been the innocent party, merely wishing to have the freedom to practise a religion - or so we are told.

Chambers, points out that the artworks of the period 'taught civic as well as religious doctrine'. (6) In the years, 1499 - 1503, Venice was not at war with the Turks. The Turks had always traded with the Venetians who didn't bother about their religion. But in the late 15th century when the Turks started to build fleets of ships superior to the Venetians, the Turks were seen as a threat. The Venetians saw themselves as the soldiers of the seas. But now the Turks were capturing major sea ports on the Venetians, they had become the enemy. Venice saw itself as the innocent virgin state, being ravished by the barbarians.

And yet as we saw in the last chapter, the Christianity of the Venetians was a facade. Money was of more value to them. (7) Of course, the Venetians preferred peace to war, as peace was good for trade but if their own interests were at stake they were not adverse to fighting. They were also not against equipping ships to transport Crusaders, armed and ready to fight for Christianity in times of peace, as such trips meant business. On the exterior, as Scuole members, they were very religious people, but at the same time, this was also a business move. It was all part of the propaganda, that they said they were a really Christian people.

In this painting, Carpaccio shows us the throat slitting and head slicings the

barbarians use against the Christians. Christianity in the person of Ursula, is unarmed and defenceless. But such is not the truth of how the Christians act in such cases. It would seem that the Christians were more adept at barbaric acts than the 'barbarians' .

> "In spite of the sacredness of their cause, their progress through Constantinople to the Holy Land, was marked by orgies and excesses, murders and debaucheries, which were a disgrace not merely to their religion but to humanity itself. The fact that they were assured of a plenary indulgence on the completion of their enterprise no doubt incited them to enlarge indefinitely the list of the transgressions which, according to contract were to be washed away....And as to the cruelties exercised on helpless prisoners, we hear of nothing more absolutely wanton than the cruxifition of the captives at Edessa, of the sending to the Greek Emperor by Bohemund of Antioch of a whole cargo of sliced off noses and thumbs. " (8)

In this painting, the Bishops and women, unarmed, are being mercilessly slaughtered. On the right hand side of the painting we have the representatives of the stable, Christian society, whose respectability and nobility depends on the money they make from warfare. But such warfare, cannot be condemned, for are they not trying to save the world from being overrun by the barbarians such as portrayed on the right.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER NINE

(1) Jacobus da Voraigne, "The Golden Legend", New York and London, 1948. Page 630.

(2) Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962. Page 228

(3) T. Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1958. Page 33.

(4) Jan Lauts, op. cit. Page 19

(5) William Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (The Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 206.

(6) D. S. Chambers, "The Imperial Age of Venice", 1380-1580, T. & H. Ltd., London, 1970. Page 109.

(7) IBID. Page 112.
Pius II, said of the Venetians.....
"They wish to appear Christians before the world, but in reality, they never think of God, except for the State, which they regard as a deity, they hold nothing sacred, nothing holy. To a Venetian, that is just, which is for the good of the State; that is pious which increases the Empire.....What the senate approves is holy even though it is opposed to the Gospel."

(8) E. Prestage, "Chivalry", Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company Limited, London, 1928.

NO. 39

THE GLORY OF ST. URSULA

By, Carpaccio,
(11ft X 16ft.)
c. 1491

CHAPTER TEN

The Glory Of St. Ursula
1491

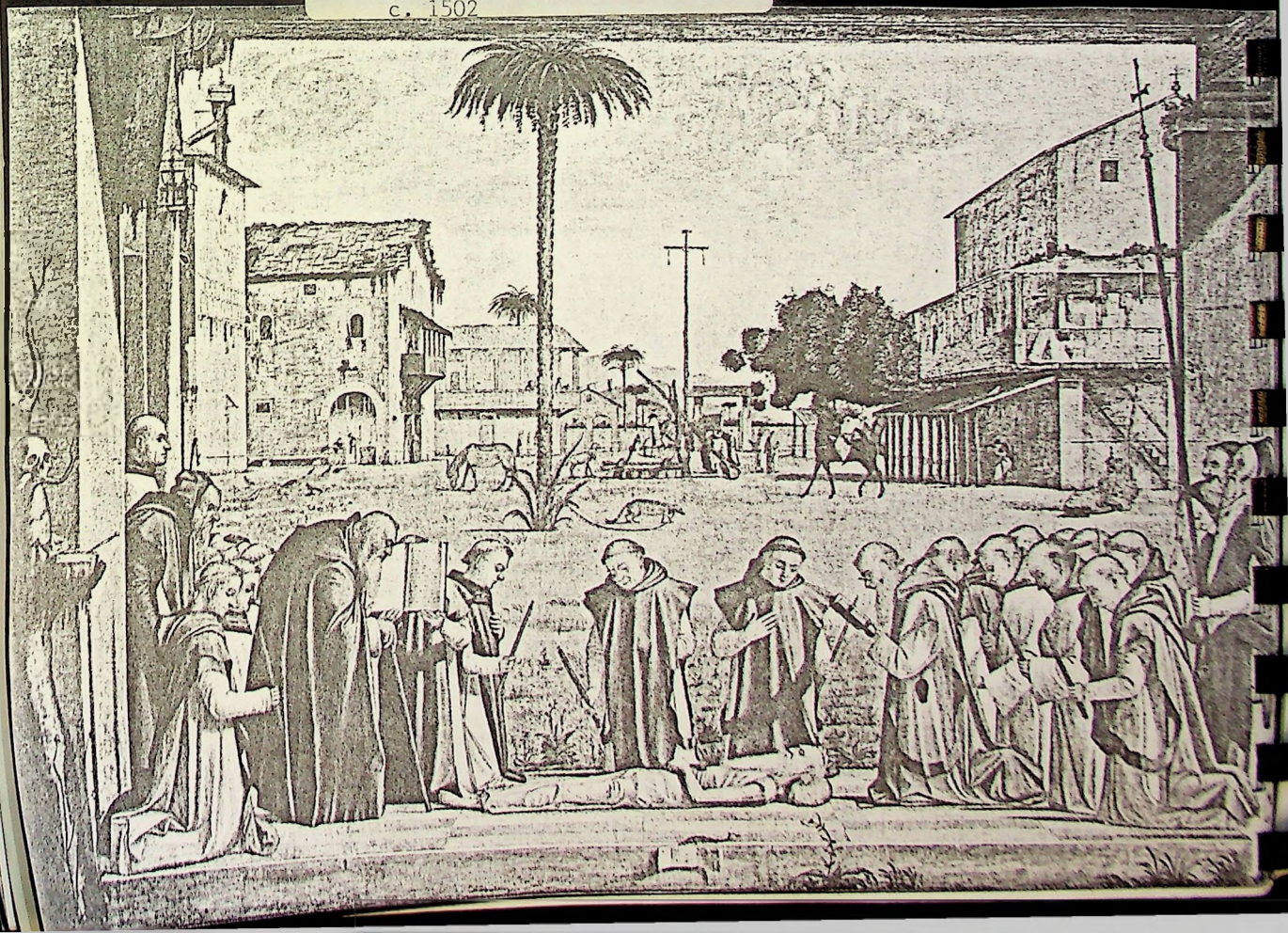
Ursula occupies an area in the exact centre of the painting. The lower section of the canvas is literally a sea of faces. The 11,000 Virgins kneel in a solid mass, in adoration of Ursula, who is ascending to heaven but she is not 'ascending' in the Cinquecento sense of the term (ill. no. 39), as her feet are standing firmly on solid material, on palms, the symbol of martyrdom. These have been gathered together in a bunch and are tied together by two rows of cherubic faces, painted in glowing red. At the top, the palms ripple outwards, as in waves, echoing the undulating lines made by the tops of the heads of the virgins. This pillar of palms, if translated into stone, would become a Corinthian-style column.

Ursula is surrounded by a halo of cherubic angels and two of them hold the crown of martyrdom over her head. A yellow glow radiates from her body. Her head is at a slight angle, her eyes look upwards and her hands point upwards. This is stopped by the downward movement of God the Father, whose outstretched arms wait to receive her. A yellow glow also radiates from him and paired heads of cherubs occur at equal intervals in the feathery clouds which surround him. Above his head are three more cherubs, leaning into the roof and peeping over. There is nothing ethereal about their grinning faces.

Nor is there anything etheral about the clothes of Ursula. She is a very fashionably dressed young woman. Her long blond hair cascades in waves over the most

NO. 40 - (Above)
VIRGINS AT FEET OF ST.URSULA
(detail of ill. no. 39)

NO. 41 - (Below)
THE DEATH OF ST. JEROME
By, Carpaccio,
c. 1502



luxurious and finest of silks. The Virgins below her are similarly dressed, their silks lovingly rendered by Carpaccio. His silks are expertly painted and have a softness both in the rendering of their folds and in their subtle sheen. One has only to think of the blue and white dress in 'The Letter' by the 17th century dutch painter Gerard Ter Borch, which appears to be made of aluminium foil, to realise the high quality of craftmanship which Carpaccio is capable of achieving. The silkiness of the dresses is apparent, but not so intrusive as to dominate the painting.

Two of the Virgins at the front are the standard bearers. They are both wearing gloves made from a very delicate and transparent material. (ill. no. (40). The gloves are obviously for ornament and not just to protect their hands. They wear plain silk dresses with a more exotic length of patterned silk loosely wrapped about them. The woman on the right is wearing a length of silk exactly like Ursula's. Many of the women are wearing jewels on their clothes, in their hair or around their necks and their hair is dressed in a variety of fashionable styles. Well groomed and well fed, they belong in the upper echelons of society.

This painting is so symmetrically arranged that it becomes very abstract, especially in the lower half, with the organisation of the thousands of Virgins. The chief stress is not laid on any individual head or psychological relationship but Carpaccio is concerned with the figures as a whole in relation to the picture plane. Although individually a head may have charm, it does not emerge as 'the' important element, above the value of the rest.

An equal number of Virgins occupy each side of Ursula. The two women who hold

NO. 42 - (Above)
ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN
By, Titian
1516 - 1518

NO. 45 - (Above)
MADONNA OF HUMILITY
By, Giovanni Da Bologna (c.1395)

NO. 44 - (Below)
BAPTISM OF CHIRST
By Giovanni Bellini (c.1501)

NO. 43 - (Left)
GOD HOVERING OVER THE WATERS
By, Michaelangelo (Sistine Chapel)

> "That century, unembarrassed by ecclestical conceptions, preferred the Madonna to be seated on a solid throne rather than floating in the air, but the changed emotional climate of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which tended toward a sharper separation between earthly and heavenly things, preferred this idealised scheme for alterpieces." (2)

The Assumption was a theme which was not often painted in the Quattrocento and so Titian as a Venetian would probably have referred to Carpaccio's treatment of such a theme. In their general formal arrangement, the works do have certain similarities but Titian's subject is truly of the Cinquecento. It is a much more monumental and also spiritualistic conception. His image of God has more movement than Carpaccio's and is reminiscent of the figure of 'God Hovering Over The Waters' (ill. no. (43), from the Sistine Chapel. Carpaccio's work is of the Quattrocento and the realism of the palm fronds on which Ursula is standing, hark back to that firescreen which could also be a halo, in Richard Campin's 'Virgin and Child Before a Firescreen'. I think that Berenson is wrong to say that this painting was done around 1516, and I would agree with Lauts that it was completed at a much earlier date.

Structurally, Carpaccio's 'Glory' is very similar to Giovanni Bellini's 'Baptism of Christ' of 1501. (ill. no. (44). Both paintings are enclosed within Roman looking architectural framework with landscapes in the background and the horizon point starts just where the pillar begins to arch. Carpaccio's archway is three dimensional while Giovanni Bellini's is flat against the picture plane. The God figure of Carpaccio is slightly foreshortened while the God of Bellini is on the same plane as his other figures and merely has the lower half of his body removed and is surrounded by clouds.

But Carpaccio's figure grouping in a landscape is less satisfactory than Giovanni's treatment of his small group. Carpaccio's treatment is essential linear. In this painting, the background remains separate from the frontal grouping. In the Bellini painting, however, background and foreground appear to merge with each other. Similar colour tones are applied to figures and landscape until a formal unity is achieved. Giovanni Bellini in a sense, anticipates the methods which both Giorgione and Titian will later exploit. And it is in the light of these methods being used by Bellini, in 1501, that one could easily conclude that Carpaccio's 'St. Ursula in Glory' was painted in 1491, especially when one recalls the similar solution he reached when dealing with the crowds of people in the boats in 'The Arrival at Cologne', (ill. no. 34), which was his first painting in the series. These lower figures in the Glory are a more modern solution to that reached by Giovanni da Bologna in his "Madonna of Humility" (ill. no. 44), the altar piece in the Scuola di S. Giovanni Evangelista, but the structural idea is essentially the same. Jan Lauts says that :-

> ".....the composition of the glory being comparatively constrained and awkward which shows it to be a considerably earlier work." (3)

Lauts points to two more factors which would mean that the painting could certainly not have been executed around 1510-16. He says that the coiled plait worn by the woman in the far right, is in a style typical of 1490-1500, but that in 1510 it would have been unthinkable to dress her hair like that. He also says that the signature on the painting 'Carpatio' was not used by

Carpaccio after 1502. And I think, that this painting was perhaps executed around 1502 rather than earlier.

At that time, Carpaccio was working in the Scuola Degli Schiavoni and he had just painted the'Death of St. Jerome', (ill. no.41). The figures are treated much the same as in the 'Glory' except that they are separated from each other by the length of the body of St. Jerome which gives them a less cramped appearance. In the 'Glory', Carpaccio had to give the impression of thousands of people kneeling and looking upwards and I find his solution to be very pleasing although many would think it to be awkward and old fashioned in comparision to a Titian or Giorgione whose solutions would give the impression that most of the figures were hidden in shadow. But this painting was specifically an altar piece. Its function was to hold the rest of the paintings together as one cycle. It had to serve as the unifying element of the narrative. It is a closed, tight composition which keeps to the style of the other paintings, drawing them inwards from both sides towards the altar. I would say that the 'Glory of St. Ursula' was painted around 1502. Carpaccio would have seen Bellini's, 'Baptism of Christ' of 1501, (ill. no. 44), which perhaps influenced the structure of the glory. And the figures in Carpaccio's 'Death of St. Jerome' 1502, (ill. no. 45), are so similar to the solution employed here that I believe they must have been painted around the same time. Add to this the clues Lauts gives, of the plait and the signature.

But if the glory of St. Ursula was painted in 1502, there are some more questions to be answered. Lauts speaks of the wonderful silk fabric of the women's clothes, which he says has :-

"....a breadth and boldness which is usually found in works painted after the turn of the century."

And if one looks at the silks worn by the bishops in 'The Arrival At Rome' of 1495, (ill. no.30), the silks painted in the 'Glory of St. Ursula' are really far superior. Now, Pignatti says that the silks were either touched up in 1504 when the altar was being enlarged or that the work was completely repainted in 1510 - 20. (5) I would say that the painting was probably touched up, rather than repainted, because as Lauts points, there are three donor figures on the left whose heads jut out rather awkwardly and they look as if they were a later edition. Now if the painting had been completely repainted, I don't think that Carpaccio would have left those heads in such a graceless position. Although I would agree with Lauts, and Pignatti that this painting was touched up, rather than completely repainted, I would say that it was repainted around 1507 rather 1504 for the following reasons.

The two items now under question are firstly those heads that look as if they have been just added onto the painting, and then the painting of the silks which seem to indicate a touch-up job, by the hand of an older and more expert Carpaccio. The first issue, I will deal with is the problem of the heads. To do this I will deal with one head in particular. Look at the painting, at the two women who are holding the banners and note how, directly above their heads and just touching the red lines of the flag pole, are the heads of a man and a woman looking away from the main point of interest. Their heads are placed at exactly the same angle, looking away from each other. Such audacious symmetry is not without reason . Its purpose is to hold our attention.

NO. 46
THE WARRIOR
By, Carpaccio (c. 1507)

The face of the man on the left is identical with a face in another painting by Carpaccio, the so called 'Warrior' of 1507 (ill. no. 46). This painting was originally attributed to Dürer because of its concern with plant and animal detail. It has now been attributed to Carpaccio and it is recognised that Dürer may certainly have influenced Carpaccio's style, as he was in Venice from 1506-7. Pignatti says that it is now impossible to identify the person depicted. (6) But the clue to the identity of the warrior lies in the plant and animal details, which leads me to say that the face in both the paintings must be that of the young 'Ermolao Barbaro.

Barbaro, who was born in 1453 was a leading member of the Venetian Humanist movement, which was the most influential Humanist movement in Italy in the late Quattrocento. He was a professor of Aristotelian philosophy, a Venetian Ambassador and the founder of the world's first botanic garden, hence the plant and animal details in the 'Warrior'. (7) The Barbaro family along with the Loredan, were the most influential and generous of patrons to the Scuole di Sant Orsola, which would be a good enough reason for his portrait to have been included in the glory and the question of when this portrait was included belongs to the debate over dating that surrounds the painting.

Ermolao Barbaro's portrait, in the 'Warrior' of 1507 and in 'The Arrival At Rome' of 1495, where he is the Pope were both done posthumously, as he had died as an exile in Rome in 1493 of the plague. The Venetian government to salve their conscience and assured of his powerlessness now that he was dead, would have allowed these portraits to have been painted to commemorate this renowned scholar whom they had treated so badly in his own life time.

If the glory of St. Ursula was painted in 1491, it would have been painted when Barbaro was alive and I doubt that his portrait would have been included then, in blatant disregard for the anger of the powerful Venetian State which had just exiled him.

If one looks at the portrait of Barbaro, in both the 'Warrior and 'The Glory of St. Ursula', the faces are identical except that they are looking in opposite directions. In the 'Arrival at Rome', we are shown a side view of a much older Barbaro (he was only 39 when he died), which gives very little details and makes it hard to make facial comparisons. In the Warrior, Barbaro is a young chivalric knight, portrayed perhaps as he would have seen himself, a refined young gentleman. (Barbaro's closest friend was Giorgio Merula, whose pupil was the 'ideal' gentleman, Castiglione!) (8) However, on looking at the portraits of Barbaro in the warrior and in the 'Glory of St. Ursula', I would say that his face was added into the Glory when it was being repainted around 1507.

Between 1502 and 1507, Carpaccio was working on the St. Jerome and St. George cycle. And it is in 'The Baptism of the King' of 1507, from the St. George cycle that his treatment of materials reaches a peak. (9) In 'The Baptism of the King', an old man is kneeling on the end step at the left, and he is wearing a silk gown with a pattern identical to that worn by the young virgin with the old fashioned plait in the Glory. Carpaccio was working on the St. George cycle in 1507, and he also painted the 'Warrior' in 1507, and I think that it was then that he repainted the 'Glory of St. Ursula'.

The question of when the Glory was initially painted is still a bit of a

mystery. But taking into account the structure of the Bellini painting of 1501, (ill. no. 44), and its obvious influence on this painting (10), I would say that the Glory was painted after 1501. And looking at Carpaccio's 'Death of St. Jerome', (ill. no. 41), there is once again the repeated use of a structural solution which would not have dated back ten years, but which had only been applied in 'The Glory of St. Ursula', the altarpiece and final painting in the St. Ursula narrative cycle.

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> "I am glad't is night, you do not look on/For I am much ashamed of my exchange/But love is blind, and lovers cannot see/The pretty follies that themselves commit, For if they could, Cupid himself would blush/To see me thus transformed to a boy." (11)

In the 'Glory of St. Ursula', (ill. no. 39), Ursula and her virgin followers are sumptuously dressed in silks and jewels. Ursula is in the middle, a resplendent shining example of the ultimate in femininity. There can be no doubt, but that she is also virtuous. We can see that she is, from her radient loveliness and passivity. She is an everlasting symbol of the feminine adored by both men and women who kneel at her feet.

Ursula epitomizes the feminine woman. But there is no need to add woman, as the feminine is always linked to women, just as the masculine is to men. Ursula represents the complete opposit of masculine, and that is how Venetian society chose to represent women.

Girolamo Priuli was a Venetian Patrician and merchant who kept a diary between the years 1494-1512, a period that almost coincides with the dates of the

St. Ursula series. His diary relates all Venetian wars and losses, including his own personal financial difficulties to God's wrath with Venetian decadence. The Venetian doge, Loredan (doge 1501-1521), was another person who in his public speeches regularly linked Venetian economic difficulties to God's anger at the 'immoral' Venetians. Felix Gilbert, gives us an idea of how Priuli and most likely other Venetians thought at that period :-

> "Another sign of moral turpitude was the openness with which homosexuality was practised in Venice. Young men made themselves look like women: they wore jewels; they perfumed themselves; and their clothes exposed most of their naked bodies. Parents did not dare to discipline their sons, but let them go their own ways. Again, the reason was that high officials, members of the Senate, were practitioners of this vice." (12)

Wearing perfume and jewels will make men look like women not because of some inherent quality in these objects but because culturally our society has designated them as feminine and has linked femininity exclusively to women.

Ursula is a Saint who has been used to represent virtue in the noble and manly sense. In this painting she is the ultimate feminine and chaste woman. As a feminine martyr she is the complete opposite to what Joan of Arc had chosen to be 70 years previously. Joan of Arc donned men's clothes when going to war, and for this act of'transvestism', she was burned as a heretic. (13)

With Ursula we are presented with the Italian version of a woman who also went to battle. But when Ursula led the Crusade for Christianity, her purpose was

not to make war but to preach by example. As a leader, she retained an ultra feminine position, which in fact negated her leadership. Throughout the narrative, Ursula is never a real leader urging her followers on to self-defence, an action that would ultimately be called unfeminine. She is always dressed in clothes that signify her femininity and that assign her to a more or less negative role throughout the narrative. And the ultimate feminine stance she takes is that of martyrdom, which negates her completely.

Joan never renounces that she is a woman but merely adopts male designated clothing, which in one sense was an act of self- protection. By doing this she upset the social hierarchy and caused confusion as they allow her usurp men's social privileges and assert leadership qualities and survive. But, although she survives the battle, through casting off the female clothes assigned to her sex, society subsequently has her burned as a heretic. Joan of Arc disobeyed the Church's teachings on clothes, for does not St. Paul in the I Corinthians II: 14-15, condemn such such sexual ambiguity:-

> "Does not nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame onto him? But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her:for her hair is given her for a covering." (14)

Such a statement contradicts another passage from St. Paul where he expounds how sexual difference is abolished through Christianity. (15) The statement above speaks of hair styles in terms of nature, and that men's and women's hair is 'naturally' a certain way. Unfortunately, in Venice laws had to be introduced to enforce 'nature':-

> "Men were forbidden attire which would increase physical attractiveness. Shirts should cover the entire upper part of the body and close neatly around the neck. " (16)

Under these 'Sumptuary Laws', women were not so strictly dealt with. All that was done to women was to reduce the value of the jewels that they adorned themselves with to a certain limit. After all it was expected of women to make themselves look attractive. And laws, both religious and law were enforced on moralistic pretextsto ensure that how women should look and how men should look, was precisely defined:-

> "Bourgeois ideology continuously transforms the products of history into essential types.....everyday and everywhere man is stopped by myths, referred by them to this motionless prototype which lives in his place, stifles him in the manner of a huge internal parasite and assigns to his activity the narrow limits within which he is allowed to suffer without upsetting the world: bourgeois pseudo-physis is in the fullest sense a prohibition for man against inventing himself. Myths are nothing but this ceaseless untiring solicitation, this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them, one day as if for all time." (17)

In this painting, Ursula as the ideal of the feminine woman, corresponds perfectly with the wishes of her culture. She is the feminine virgin, martyr, which Joan of Arc was not. What Ursula is, is easily recognized catalogued and accepted. Ursula can be knelt before by men as well as women, because what she stands for is not threatening. She is an impotent caricature of womanhood, of powerlessness. She belongs totally within the cultural constraints of the ideal, feminine woman, the ideal figure of martyrdom.

FOOTNOTES;

CHAPTER TEN

1. Jan Lauts, "Carpaccio", Phaidon Press, London, 1962, Page 228. (note 2)

2. Heinrich Wölfflin, "Classic Art", Phaidon Press Limited, Oxford, 1980, Page 129.

3. Jan Lauts, op. cit. Page 228. (note 2)

4. IBID. Page 19.

5. IBID. Page 228.

6. T. Pignatti, "Carpaccio", Skira, London, 1958. Page 90.

7. J. R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1973 Page 218.

8. IBID. Page 233.

9. T. Pignatti, op. cit. Page 81.

10. I would say that this painting is later than the Bellini painting. Carpaccio's figure of God is more advanced (use of foreshortening), as is his archway under which this scene takes place.

11. W. Shakespeare, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare", (Merchant of Venice), Abbey Library, Romania, 1978. Page 203.

12. J. R. Hale, op. cit. Page 275.

13. Marina Warner, "Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism", Penguin Books Limited, England, 1983. Page 146.

"Joan went to the stake because she refused to yield to the authority of the Church, as represented by the Inquisition that tried her. That defiance, focussed on two counts: first, the truth of her voices; second, her male dress. Standing up to authority has cost many a life but to lose one's life for one's dress, to express one's separateness, one's inalienable self through one's clothes is unusual. Yet, Joan's transvestism was taken very seriously indeed by the assessors of Rouen, who condemned her for it...."

FOOTNOTES;

CHAPTER TEN (Con/d.)

14. IBID. Page 152.

15. IBID. Page 154.
"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ...wrote St. Paul in a text (Galantians 3:28) that is at the heart of the Christian philosophy. The democracy of souls is the central tenet of the faith. But historically, the Church has hardly borne it out...."

16. J. R. Hale, op. cit. Page 279.

17. Roland Barthes, "Mythologies", Granada Publishing Limited, London 1982. Page. 155.

NO. 47

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

By, Carpaccio,
(c. 1507)

CONCLUSION

Throughout the narrative series, Ursula has never been presented as the hero. She has never emerged as the main character, a leader apart from the rest. This cannot be put down to that Quattrocento indifference that Wölfflin feels characterises all fifteenth century art. (1) The fact is that Ursula was never meant to be a hero as is Carpaccio's St. George (ill. no. 47). Ursula is cast more in the mould of the vulnerable female he is saving, except that she is certainly never cowering or frightened, but accepts her death quite calmly.

Ursula as the leader is always present, but absent, weighted down with representations of Venetian society, the world and ideas of the Patricians, where nobility, virtue, Humanism and Christianity are so important. Bound up in a Christian wrapping of crosses and bishops, she emerges as the conventional female martyr. Her Sainthood was acquired through martyrdom in order to maintain a consistent sexual history. Male martyrs are never made like this! For the Roman Catholic Church, Ursula is a welcome polarity to the recently killed Joan of Arc. Ursula points out the correct path to be taken by women. And as her history is scanty, she can easily be presented as a pristine example of one young woman's life.

In the light of Venetian Humanisms puritanical slant, one can understand Ermolao Barbaro emerging as a prominant figure throughout the narrative series. As one who consistently advocated the celibate life, Ursula is an ideal figurehead. (2) Ursula was celibate in spite of her beauty and youth, attributes which would have been the cause of many a young Venetian's 'downfall',

to the sins of the flesh. Ursula is also presented as the feminine woman, and yet she is all of the former and non of the latter. Her attributes have confined her to a sphere of non action, where the people who pray to her can admire and revere her, because she never threatens their status quo.

Ursula is the martyred Princess whose nobility of spirit is reflected in the virtuous character of the Patricians. She is a symbol of the Christian Crusading spirit, against which the barbarians have always done their worst, but never won. She is the unquestioned ideal of feminine womanhood to which chivalric manhood owes its existence. Ursula is the instrument used to define all of these things and if left undeciphered remains but a beautifully painted Medieval legend.

FOOTNOTES:

CONCLUSION

1. Heinrich Wolfflin, "Classic Art, Phaidon Press, Oxford, 1980, Page 260.

".....sixteenth century pictures have a higher degree of readableness and perception is made extremely easy for the spectator. The essentials emerge at once,there is a decisive division into important and subordinate, and the eye is led along specific paths...our imagination boggles at the thought of the way in which a Quattrocento painter, given such a service to work on would have pressed on the spectator, a number of things all of equal importance and all obtruding themselves equally, on the eye."

2. J. R. Hale, "Renaissance Venice", Faber & Faber, London, 1973. Page 232.

"From his first treaties, Ermolao had looked towards a life detached from all family ties as an ideal....in Venice, where the State lay at the centre of things, where the omnipresence of the Republic dominated even family life, and where the new culture flourished, and had its fulcrum among the policital elite of an oligarchic patriciate, celibacy could be seen as an ideal, a state that could be identified with the highest wisdom, the most solid realism."

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