

Guido Reni's *Infant Bacchus*: "In vino veritas"

Liana De Girolami Cheney

University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA., USA

"I would prefer two casks of wine rather than eight shirts."

Michelangelo made this statement in a 1549 letter to his nephew Leonardo.

This article delves into the significance of Guido Reni's *Infant Bacchus*, created during the Italian Baroque period. By examining historical and iconographic elements, the study aims to interpret the symbolism depicted in the painting. The historical aspects include the birth of Dionysus or Bacchus in classical and Italian Renaissance imagery and literary and visual sources that influenced Reni's solo painting. The iconographic components encompass the infant's nude body, the child's bodily functions, and the attributes associated with Bacchus, the God of Agriculture, Revelry, and Wine, such as the grapevines, grapes, ivy, glass flask, *kantharos* (wine cup), and wine barrel. The emblematic and cosmological associations of Bacchus's divinity are considered as well.

Keywords: Infant Bacchus, Greek-Roman mythology, emblems, optics, reflections, planetary symbolism, Giovanni Belli, Andrea Alciato, Vincenzo Cartari, Cesare Ripa, and Guido Reni

Part I. Historical Considerations

This section deals with a brief historical and visual background from classical and Italian Renaissance sources for the creation of Guido Reni's (1575-1642) painting. As an Italian Baroque painter, Reni used classical (Greek and Roman) sources and the Italian Renaissance artistic and humanistic tradition to create the solo image of the *Infant Bacchus*. He drew from the literary and visual conceits of Bacchus as a child. These conceits were prevalent in classical culture and assimilated into Italian Renaissance literature and paintings (Celenza, 2018, pp. 120-137, 200-227).

In the classical tradition, two dominant artistic practices incorporated culture and imagery of Dionysus or Bacchus as a pagan god. The first practice focused on depicting narrative events related to the birth and protection of the infant Bacchus. Meanwhile, the second tradition, much rarer, exclusively featured solo depictions of the infant Bacchus. Although this imagery was seen in classical art forms, such as mosaics and sculptures, it was not

Acknowledgment: A version of this article was presented at the Emblem Society Session of the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo on 8 May 2023. I want to thank Prof. Sabine Mödersheim, University of Wisconsin-Madison, for inviting me to participate in the conference and for her invaluable comments. My gratitude is extended to Dr. Giangiacomo Gandolfi, INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Roma, Prof. Damiano Acciarino, University of Ca' Foscari, Venice, Prof. Brian D. Steele, Texas Tech University, and Dr. Brendan Cole, British Scholar, Rhodes, South Africa for their insightful suggestions. An aspect of the birth of Bacchus was published in Liana De Girolami Cheney, "The Birth and Custody Infant Bacchus," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies* Vol. X (September 2023):387-406. I am grateful to JCRS for granting permission to reproduce my thoughts.

Liana De Girolami Cheney, Ph.D., Professor of Art History (emerita), University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA.

commonly found in Italian Renaissance art, only in small paintings. However, during the Italian Baroque era, representations of this imagery became increasingly rare, as visualized by Reni's *Infant Bacchus*.

Although there are at least two ancient visual traditions in depictions of the infant Bacchus, the most common is the narrative scene dealing with the dual birth of the child. This essay focuses on the less popular tradition which deals with the solo image of the infant (Reid, 1993, pp. 348-349, 360).

A. The Birth of Dionysus or Bacchus

In Antiquity, the accounts of the birth of Dionysus (Bacchus) are many and confusing from the time of Homer (*Iliad* 14.323 ff) to the writings of Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 6.78) (Otto, 1986, pp. 52-64). However, there is a joint agreement among ancient writers that Dionysus was known as the God of Agriculture, Divination, and Revelry during ancient times. These ascriptions continued in Roman Antiquity but used the name of Bacchus. He was born from the union of a female mortal, Semele, and the immortal male god, Zeus. The legendary accounts further narrate that the jealous wife of Zeus, Hera, knowing about Zeus's affair and wanting to destroy Semele, tricked the mortal maiden into suggesting that Zeus reveal himself (Otto, 1986, pp. 65-73). Acquiescing to Semele's request, Zeus, God of Thunder and Lightning, showed himself. His powerful divine light burnt alive the mortal Semele, pregnant with his son Dionysus. Knowing of his wife's ploys and to save his son, Zeus opened Semele's womb, rescued the fetus of his son, and then sewed him up to his thigh. The child gestated there until his full birth (Ovid, *Meta.*, bk. 3). In this atypical manner, Zeus prevented Hera from destroying his son, Dionysus.



Figure 1. Birth of Dionysus (Bacchus), Apulian red-figure volute krater, 4th century BCE. National Archeological Museum, Taranto.

The early visual depiction in classical art derives from the ancient accounts of Homer (*Iliad* 14.323ff) and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 6.78), about the birth of the infant Dionysus/Bacchus from the union of a female mortal Semele and the immortal male god Zeus, and its consequences requiring the carrying and protection of

infant by two gods, Silenus or Hermes. There are representations of these legendary narratives in fresco and vase paintings, mosaics, and sculptures. For example, the Apulian Red-Figure vase, a volute krater (bowl for mixing wine and water) of the 4th century BCE at the National Archaeological Museum in Taranto, shows the birth of Dionysus from Zeus's thigh (Figure 1). This krater represents Mount Olympus, the sacred residence of the pagan gods, where the infant Dionysus, crowned with ivy, emerges from Zeus's thigh. His written name, Dionysus, appears above his head, identifying him. The seated King of the Gods, Zeus, crowned with oak leaves, which are symbols of his power and wisdom (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. 1, l. 106), surrenders his son to Semele's sister for nurturing.

Among the gods on Mount Olympus, Zeus entrusted the care and protection of his son to two of them: Hermes, the Messenger of the Gods and the God of Eloquence and Wisdom, and Silenus, the God of the Forest, Divination, and Music. In the krater, these two gods stand by Zeus. Partially naked, Silenus is wearing a panther-skin cloak on his shoulders, carrying his favorite musical instrument, the fluted pipe, and holding a thyrsus. This wooden staff symbolizes fertility, divinity, and a force of individuation and transformation. Therefore, the various interpretations of the term *staff* revolve around its association with the tree trunk, symbolizing the connection between the divine and human realms (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, pp. 918-919, 1006). Hermes is also depicted as partially naked, wearing a himation cloak that covers his back and winged sandals known as *talaria* (Anderson, 1966, pp. 1-13). He is holding a caduceus, a unique (magic) wand with two snakes intertwined, symbolizing power and balance of contrasting cosmic forces (Cirlot, 1962, p. 36). Attentively, Hermes looks at the infant Dionysus.



Figure 2. Giulio Bonasone, *Birth of Bacchus*, engraving from Bonasone, *Loves of the Gods*, 1560. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Credit Line: Rogers Fund, 1962.

In the Italian Renaissance, artists were highly influenced by Greek and Roman artistic culture and traditions. This inspiration from classical literature led to the creation of some unique artistic depictions of the birth of Bacchus, as illustrated by the Bolognese painter and engraver Giulio Bonasone (1531-76) in *The Loves of the Gods* (*Amorosi diletti degli dei*, 1560) (Malvasia, 1678, pp. 64, 74, 185; Rossoni, 2008, pp. 27-44). The engraving represented the birth of Bacchus from the thigh of Jupiter in a landscape. A giant eagle, Jupiter's sacred bird, with his large wings, protects two maiden nurses, Semele's sister Ino and friend, who assist in the reception and carrying of the newborn. With his quiver and bow, nude-winged Cupid embraces Jupiter for support (Figure 2).

In classical narratives, Mercury and Silenus were also frequently portrayed as protectors of the youthful deity. This concept of custody was embraced in Italian Renaissance art, as evidenced by Bernard Salomon's woodcuts for *La Metamorphose d'Ovide Figurée* (Figure 3)¹ and by Francesco Colonna for the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Figure 4).² Salomon focuses on the horrifying moment when Semele's curiosity to see Zeus causes her to burn alive. Zeus watches his lover in flames because of his powerful lighting nature. He rescues his son from her womb. In contrast, in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Colonna visualizes a poignant moment when Mercury is charged with protecting and delivering the infant Bacchus to the land of the Nysaides nymphs in two vignettes.



Figure 3. Bernard Salomon, *Semele immolated by Zeus and Child Bacchus*, woodcut from Bernard Salomon, *La Metamorphose d'Ovide Figurée* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1557).

Credit Line: Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

¹ Published in Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1557, p. 40, see <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/Rosenwald.1060> (accessed 15 August 2023).

² Published in Venice: Aldus, 1499, p. 171.



Figure 4. Birth of Bacchus / Jupiter Has Mercury Deliver the Infant Bacchus to the Care of the Nymphs, woodcut from Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1499).

A significant *paragone* inherent in the duality of the birth of Dionysus was also associated with the origin of his name. In Greek, the word *Dionysus* has a twofold etymology. First, it derives from two words: “*do* or *dias*, referring to his father Zeus as the immortal pagan god” (Dragatakis, 2020). The second meaning acknowledges Dionysus’s metaphysical nature, being born from divinity. The word *dio* also alluded to Dionysus’s dual birth and original nature from mortal Semele’s womb and immortal Zeus’ thigh. The word *dio* also had two other significations. One was associated with the physical location, Mount Nysa, where Dionysus was raised and cared for as a child (Otto, 1986, pp. 59, 61-62). The other relates to the reference made by Hermes, Messenger of the Gods, to Zeus’s awkward walking as Zeus-limp (*Zeus-nysos*) (Beekes, 2009, p. 337), as the weight on his thigh from carrying his son prevented him from walking freely (Beekes, 2009, p. 337).

In Roman mythology, the etymology of the word *Bacchus* is also complex.³ Bacchus shares its roots with the ancient Greek word for Dionysus and carries a similar dual nature. The Greek word for Bacchus is *bakkhos* or *bakkheia*, meaning a state of ecstasy (Euripides, *Bacchae*, line 491, and Gaius Julius Hyginus, *Fabulae*, line 167), and the Latin word *bacca*, which means berry or fruit from a tree or vine, as grapes (Ovid’s *Meta.*, bk. 3). The sacred cult and rituals of Bacchus became essential in Roman religion during the third century BCE, integrating the Greek cult of Dionysus with the Roman ceremonies.

Only in the 6th century BCE did a new representation of Dionysus as a small child emerge in poetry (Kuivalainen, 2021, p. 73; Cole, 2007, pp. 327-341). In art, however, visual representations occurred a century later. Dionysus (Bacchus) is depicted as an infant or child held or cared for by adult figures, Nysiades nymphs, Silenus, and Hermes (Kuivalainen, 2021, pp. 189-197). The duality of the association and meaning of the name of the God of Wine continued through the visualization of his depictions in art of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque.

B. The Visual Tradition: The Solo Infant Bacchus

Although there are at least two ancient visual traditions in depictions of the infant Bacchus, the most common is the narrative scene dealing with the dual birth of the child; this essay focuses on the less popular tradition, which deals with the solo image of the infant (Reid, 1993, pp. 348-349, 360).

³ In Roman mythology, there is a switch from the Greek names Dionysus, Hermes, Silenus, Hera, and Zeus to Bacchus, Mercury, Silenus, Juno, and Jupiter, respectively.

Classical Sources

The infant Bacchus, a God of Wine in ancient Roman art, was depicted in various ways. For instance, a floor mosaic from the third century in Palazzo Massimo in Via Flaminia in Rome shows a portrait of a child with a crown of grapes and ivy leaves. Intricate curvilinear lines beautifully frame the picture (Figure 5). In sculpture, there are at least two small bronzes of the infant Bacchus known. The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles houses a bronze, silver, and copper statuette of *The Infant Bacchus* from 100 CE (Figures 6a and 6b). The statuette shows a nude child crowned with grapes and ivy leaves. He is standing with outstretched arms, suggesting that once he held a drinking or offering cup. Another example of an *Infant Bacchus* dated from 50 to 100 CE is displayed at the British Museum, originally from Pompeii (Figure 7).⁴ The statue portrays a chubby nude child standing in contrapposto, holding a thyrsus with his right hand. His long hair is held back with a ribbon decorated with the traditional attributes of grapes and large ivy leaves. The child's extended hand likely held a kylix, and the left shoulder and arm are covered by panther skin. The statue's smiling face suggests a happy child, and the exposed genital may have functioned as a fountain, an example of a *puer mingens* (a boy making water). In Florentine art of the fifteenth century, the gifted sculptor Donatello (1386-1466) beautifully and humorously captured these classical images in the bronze sculptures of the *spiritelli* or *amorini* (young children), which later was appropriated in Italian Baroque art (Caglioti, 2022).



Figure 5. Roman floor mosaic depicting Infant Bacchus, 3rd Century CE, from via Flaminia, Rome. Now Palazzo Massimo, Rome.

⁴ H. B. Walters, *Bronze / Catalogue of the Bronzes in the British Museum. Greek, Roman & Etruscan* (London: British Museum Press, 1899), item 1327. It was a gift by Sir William Temple. This sculpture has been restored, particularly the child's left hand. See Kuivalainen, *The Portrayal of Pompeian Bacchus*, pp. 221-22, for a discussion about the statue, originally located in the Casa del Gemmario (Casa della Gemma) at Herculaneum. Before the restoration, the infant wore boots decorated with ivy leaves.



Figures 6a and 6b. *Infant Bacchus*, Roman sculpture, 100 CE, bronze, silver, and copper.
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA.



Figure 7. Ancient Roman, *Infant Bacchus*, 50–100 CE, bronze. British Museum, London.
©The Trustees of the British Museum. Credit line: Donated by Sir William Temple.

Italian Renaissance Sources

During the Italian Renaissance, a few painters—such as the Venetian Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), the Veronese Giovanni Francesco Caroto (1480-1555), and the Florentine Alessandro Botticelli (1445-1510)—continued the classical tradition of depicting a solo Bacchus as an infant. They found this subject intriguing and painted small panels featuring this image.

A. Alessandro Botticelli's *Infant Bacchus*

Regrettably, Botticelli's *Infant Bacchus Drinking from a Barrel*, which was one of the residences of the Medici family, was either lost or destroyed during the fire in Palazzo Vecchio in 1690 (Lightbown, 1978, p. 216). There is evidence that this painting existed as it was listed in the Medicean Inventory of 1553. It was previously stored in Duke Cosimo I de' Medici's wardrobe room (Lightbown, 1978, p. 216). Giorgio Vasari described this painting in the *Vite* on the *Life of Botticelli* in 1568 as "Botticelli's *Infant Bacchus* drinking from a bottle or cask [barile] held with both hands. It is an adorable image" (Vasari, 1568, p. 474). Curiously, another Medicean Inventory of a later date, 1637, elaborates further on the imagery as "a nude [infant] Ancient Bacchus that drinks from a cask and urinates in a terracotta vase; [the painting includes] the traditional ornaments [attributes]" (Lightbown, 1978, p. 216). Botticelli's depiction of a solo infant Bacchus drinking from a cask and urinating was one of the earliest representations of this type of Bacchus in Florentine Renaissance painting. The other types of solo infant Bacchus are from Veneto.

B. Giovanni Bellini's *Infant Bacchus*



Figures 8a and 8b. Giovanni Bellini, *The Infant Bacchus*, 1505-10, oil on canvas.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Samuel H. Kress Collection.

This Bellini painting of 1550-10 beautifully captures the charm of Veneto's landscape by skillfully blending aerial perspective and the *sfumato* technique (Figures 8a and 8b). The distant blue mountains are impressive, and

the bright light evokes a soothing sunset effect. Additionally, the painting shows a charming village nestled at the foot of the hills, with farmhouses peeking through the dense and luscious green trees. The arboreal, including the field maple, sycamores, and ashes, are indigenous to the Veneto region and contribute to the overall beauty of the imagery. The foreground of the painting shows a young Bacchus sitting on a rocky structure, pouring water from a large, golden pitcher onto the plants around him. Bellini's landscape is expertly crafted, with two remarkable trees that are easily noticeable and stand out. In the painting, a tree trunk is displayed diagonally, and the infant Bacchus is seated with one leg extended to counterbalance it. The natural forms of humans and plants share a similar structure, indicating an analogous parallelism. The two diagonals form a V-shape, a metaphorical reference to the Italian word for wine, "vino"—one of Bacchus's creations, hence his attribute. Another metaphorical allusion to the V-shape is the name of Venice, *venetus*, meaning color sea-blue, like the Bacchus' toga. In the painting, a vine coils around this tree trunk, a standard agricultural device to hold up the grapevine while the grapes grow (Figures 9a and 9b). Given the tree's abrupt ending, the painting may have been cut on the right side at some point.



Figure 9a. Giovanni Bellini, Vine wrapped around a tree, det., from *The Infant Bacchus*, 1505-10, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Samuel H. Kress Collection.



Figure 9b. Twisted Vine tree. (Actual) Photograph.

Bellini's portrayal of the infant Bacchus is quite remarkable. The child is depicted with long curly hair and an ivy crown and is garbed in a blue chemise that matches the color of the mountains in the distance. The golden pitcher that Bacchus holds fits the golden light reflected in the fields. Behind him is a cluster of ivy bushes, which allude to the spring where he was bathed at birth. How Bacchus sits on the rocks reminds the viewer of the Apollo figure in Andrea Mantegna's *Parnassus*. In 1497, Isabella d'Este, the Marchioness of Mantua, who was passionate about collecting art, requested this painting in tempera on canvas for her studiolo in the Ducal Palace in Mantua (Campbell, 2006). Now, the image is at the Louvre Museum. Bellini was closely related to the artist Mantegna through his sister Nicolosia's marriage. Because of their close family relationship, he fully understood Mantegna's artistic style. As a result, they collaborated on several creative projects, and the artist's compositions inspired him.

Bellini's painting holds significant symbolic meaning, which portrays his affiliation with the Venetian humanistic circles and their patronage (Nalezty, 2009, pp. 745-768). Even though Bellini may not have directly referenced the writings of Andrea Alciato (1492-1550), his inspiration was drawn from classical literature, mythology, and the Italian humanistic tradition, which were commonly shared by the intellectual community of Venice, namely, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Virgil's *Georgics*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Dursteler, 2013, pp. 571-614; Carroll, 2013, pp. 615-649; Infelise, 2013, pp. 651-674).



Figure 10. Andrea Alciato, Emblem on *Amicitia Etiam Post Mortem Durans* ("True Friendship never dies" or "Friendship lasting even beyond death"), woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531, second edition). Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

Hence, Bellini's intertwined formation of the trees resembles one of Andrea Alciato's emblems from his book on *Emblematum liber* of 1531 (Figure 10) (Alciato, 1531). The Latin motto of the emblem states: "*Amicitia Etiam Post Mortem Durans*," which translates to "True Friendship Never Dies" or "Friendship lasting even beyond death" (Sebastián, 1993, pp. 201-202; Paton, 1927-1928). The picture of the emblem shows a blooming grapevine with large leaves encircling a dying elm tree on a hill. The epigram explains that the elm tree has

supported the grapevine through time.⁵ Metaphorically, the vine appreciates the elm tree's unwavering support. This comparison emphasizes the importance of enduring friendships in nature, both among humans and between trees. This type of parallelism is also visualized in Bellini's painting. The bond between the intertwined trees equals Bacchus's connection with the evergreen ivy.

Bellini's infant god is crowned with ivy leaves, a perennial plant that symbolizes eternal life, and his nature is the product of divine creation. It is noteworthy that Bacchus' iconography is associated with ivy, which is most poignant in his recollection of his birth. As a baby, he was bathed in the Spring of Kissousa, known as the Spring made of Ivy, by the nymph Nysa. She also protected him by covering his crib with large ivy leaves to hide him from the jealous treacheries of Hera/Juno, who vowed to destroy him (Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.767-370) (Levi D'Ancona, 1978, p. 189). The evergreen nature of the plant is also associated with endurance and aging; the older the vine gets, the stronger it becomes, like wine that tastes better with age (Ovid, *Meta.* 3.582-667) (Levi D'Ancona, 1978, p. 189). Thus, in Bellini's painting, the connection between Bacchus, ivy, and vine is reminiscent of the emblem of Alciato's interlocking trees. This symbolizes an enduring friendship and dependable support.

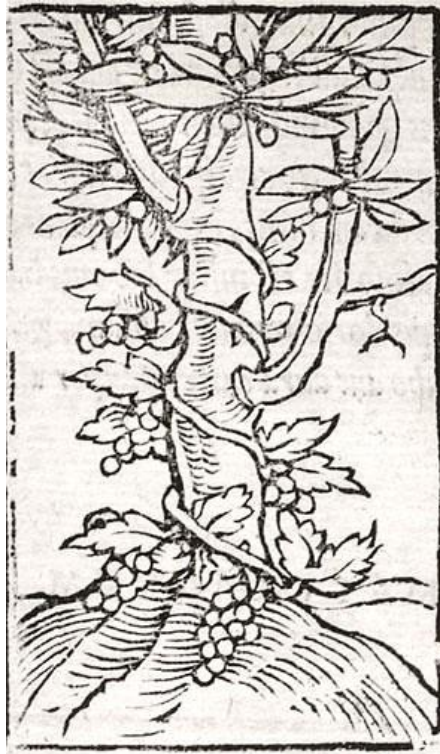


Figure 11. Andrea Alciato, Emblem on "Prudentes Vino Abstinēt" ("The wise abstain from wine"), woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531, second edition).

Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

Another emblem related to Bacchus as a God of Wine by Alciato contains a Latin motto that says "Prudentes Vino Abstinēt," which translates to "The wise refrain from drinking wine"—this duality is implied in Cartari's

⁵ Alciato is quoting Vergil's *Georgics* 1.2. See <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A31b012> (accessed 15 May 2023).

motto "In vino veritas." The emblem features an olive tree, considered sacred to Pallas [Minerva], the Goddess of Wisdom, and grapevines with large grapes, representing the attributes of her brother Bacchus, the God of Wine. The vines intertwined with the oak tree symbolize the connection and interactions between the siblings (Figure 11).⁶

In the epigram, Pallas reprimands Bacchus's behavior, and she compares her sturdy tree, a symbol of moral strength, with his clinging grapevine, a sign of moral weakness.⁷ Furthermore, Pallas shows her admiration for the olive tree and disdain for Bacchus's large grapevines. She honors the olive tree for its rich production of nutritious olives and its significant symbolic use of the branches representing peace and triumph. She also notes that the tree branches are used in making wreaths to honor poets, alluding to the power of intellect and wisdom. In contrast, Bacchus's large grapes, which, although producing delicious nectar—wine—are overgrown and, when overeaten, weaken the senses, becoming a source of indulgence. Olive trees provide a balanced benefit with oil, providing energy and health, unlike Bacchus's fruits, which produce joy and intoxication; hence, they symbolize folly.



Figure 10. Andrea Alciato, Emblem on Amicitia Etiam Post Mortem Durans ("True Friendship never dies" or "Friendship lasting even beyond death"), woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531, second edition).



Figure 11. Andrea Alciato, Emblem on "Prudentes Vino Abstinens" ("The wise abstain from wine"), woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531, second edition).

Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

⁶ Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, p. 159, on grapes, the grapevine an attribute of Bacchus, who invented the nectar; and p. 361, on the olive tree an attribute to Pallas (Minerva), a symbol of peace but especially of wisdom.

⁷ Alciato's epigram reads: "Branching vine, why do you trouble me? I am the tree of Pallas [olive tree]. Take your grapes away—this maiden shrinks from [Bacchus] Bromius." He is referring to a passage in Vergil, *Georgics* 1.2. See <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A31b051> (accessed 15 May 2023).

Both emblems feature two trees intertwined with a grapevine. However, the trees are different: an olive tree instead of an elm. Both trees support a clinging grapevine (compare Figures 10 and 11). However, in the first emblem, wrapping by the grapevine alludes to an expansive interaction—friendship—while in the second emblem, the action is burdensome and restrictive. The second emblem highlights the importance of moderation. The grapevine in the emblem requires a tree for support due to the weight of the large bunch of grapes. Similarly, excessive consumption of wine made from grapes can cloud one's judgment, prudence, or wisdom. This composed action provides the strength of character and not weakness.

In Bellini's painting, there is a metaphorical reference to the virtue of Temperance. Bacchus, portrayed as an infant, crowned with the evergreen plant of ivy and not grapevine with grapes, is shown holding a large pitcher and choosing water over wine. Hence, he is pouring water onto the surrounding meadow to fertilize the vegetation beside him. In representing Bacchus not filling the pitcher with wine and drinking from it, Bellini has alluded to an act of self-control and moderation and an attribute of the virtue of Temperance.⁸



Figure 12a. Giovanni Bellini, Maple tree, det., from *The Infant Bacchus*, 1505-10, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Samuel H. Kress Collection.



Figure 12b. Leaves of a Field Maple tree. (Actual) Photograph.

Bellini skillfully directs the viewer's attention from the painting's foreground to its background by strategically placing a blossoming maple tree in the middle ground of the field (Figures 12a and 12b). The maple

⁸ Cicero defined Temperance as the capacity to control one's desires and emotions through reason and prudence. This concept is discussed in works by W. Miller and John A. Oesterle. For example, see Miller's translation and edition of Cicero's *De inventione* in 2 volumes (London/New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1913), II.lviii, p. 159; and Oesterle's translation and edition of *Thomas Aquinas's Treatise on the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1993), pp. 74-76. Also, Rosemond Tuve explored the connection between Prudence and Wisdom in "Notes on the Virtues and Vices. Part I: Two Fifteenth-Century Lines of Dependence on the Thirteenth and Twelfth Centuries," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963): 246-47.

tree, known for its strength and durability, symbolizes endurance, like the elm, oak, and olive trees. Maple wood was commonly used during the Italian Renaissance to create musical instruments such as the viol, lute, harpsichord (including spinets and virginals), and aulos or recorders.⁹ Bellini connected the production of wooden instruments to Bacchus and his ability to play aulos during celebrations and festivals known as Bacchanals.

C. Giovanni Francesco Caroto's *Infant Bacchus*

Bellini's unique solo image of *Infant Bacchus* inspired its reproduction by Caroto, a Veronese painter residing in the Veneto (Figure 13).¹⁰ His *Infant Bacchus* of 1535, oil on canvas, now in the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Palazzo Barberini, in Rome (Inv. 1644), depicts the same Bellini infant with long hair crowned ivy. His body is covered with a simple classical chemise. Bacchus sits on a rock formation, pouring water from a golden pitcher onto the fields. Caroto's painting portrays farmhouses and buildings scattered throughout the meadow.

⁹ See

<https://www.thaliacapos.com/blogs/blog/know-your-tonewood-maple#:~:text=Historically%2C%20maple%20is%20synonymous%20with,the%20world%20of%20classical%20music> and <https://gtmusicalinstruments.com/#:~:text=They%20are%20produced%20from%20naturally,makers%20in%2016th%2F18th%20century> (accessed 15 May 2023).

¹⁰ The attribution of this painting has been questioned in a recent exhibition catalog. See Daniele Ferrara, "Pittore Bergamasco: *Bacco fanciullo*," in Sybille Ebert-Schifferer et al., *La donazione di Enrichetta Hertz 1913-2013* (Milan: Silvana, 2013), p. 110. This article does not discuss the various attributions. Here I have followed the consensus of scholars such as Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, p. 190, with the attribution to Caroto. For the life and art of Caroto, see Diego Zannadreis and Giuseppe Biadego, *Le vite dei pittori, scultori e architetti veronesi* (Verona: G. Franchini, Verona, 1891). It was digitized by Googlebooks from the University of California copy on Feb. 22, 2007, pp. 66-69, and a recent exhibition in Madrid.



Figure 13. Francesco Caroto, attr., a copy after Giovanni Bellini, *Infant Bacchus*, 1535, oil on canvas. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

There are some noticeable differences between Caroto's and Bellini's paintings. For instance, the background in Caroto's artwork displays a cloudy sky moving horizontally, while the mountains in the diagonal capture the beauty of the Veneto scenery. The farmhouses and buildings scattered throughout the meadow resemble the local vineyards, an architectural element does not present in Bellini's painting. Furthermore, the paintings by Caroto and Bellini have different color schemes. Caroto's painting has an overall greenish hue, while Bellini's has a harmonious mix of blue, green, and yellow shades. Bellini incorporates symbolic trees in his artwork, whereas Caroto's painting lacks them in the meadow. However, both paintings depict a beautiful and poetic landscape featuring the god Bacchus adorned with an ivy wreath representing his eternal essence in nature.

Part II. Italian Baroque: Guido Reni's *Infant Bacchus*

This second part of this article delves into the iconography and iconology of Reni's solo painting of the infant Bacchus. The Bolognese Guido Reni was widely recognized for his artistic talent, especially his innovative contributions to Italian Baroque art (Schaefer, 1988, pp. 1-16; Cappelletti, 2022, pp. 8-13; Aurenhanner, 2023, pp. 272-275; Cueto, 2023). Painters of this era incorporated classical and Italian Renaissance traditions into their art, adding dramatic elements and complex significations about literature, philosophy, and science to delight viewers with their sacred and profane paintings. Ancient rhetoric and poetical theory were connected to expressing emotions and the soul's movement, known as *affetti*. The term *affetti*, as the expression of the human soul, derives from Aristotle's *Poetics* and was appropriated in the Italian Renaissance by Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo

da Vinci in their theory on painting (Wittkower, 1973, pp. 39, 172, 364n; Lee, 1967, pp. 9, 23). At the same time, metaphysical concepts about thoughts and intellectual creativity were known as conceits (*concetti*). The term *concetto* can be interpreted as grasping the intellectual meaning within an image and visualizing a poignant moment in the narrative (Wittkower, 1973, p. 109); that is, passions were *affetti*, and thoughts were *concetti*. Reni's poetic and whimsical nature is evident in depicting the solo *Infant Bacchus* of 1620-22, oil on canvas, now seen in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden (Figures 14, a-c).



Figure 14a. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus* or *Drinking Bacchus*, det., 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.



Figure 6b. *Infant Bacchus*, Roman sculpture, 100 CE, bronze, silver, and copper. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA.



Figure 14b. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus* or *Drinking Bacchus*, det., 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.



Figure 14c. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus* or *Drinking Bacchus*, det., 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

Reni's painting of the *Infant Bacchus* may appear humorous due to its emphasis on the physical effects of drinking wine and the consequences of overindulgence. However, Reni's depiction of physical pleasure, also known as *affetti*, is connected to the expression of emotions and the movement of the soul, according to ancient

rhetoric and poetic theory (Lee, 1967, p. 1; Mendelsohn, 1982, pp. 109-142). Reni's painting combines Christian and pagan symbols to create a mythological composition that unites the healing power of art in connecting the body and mind. Conceits are drawn from the humanistic texts presented in Andrea Alciato's emblems, mythographies of Pierio Valeriano (1477-1588) and Vincenzo Cartari (1531-90), and iconology of Cesare Ripa (1550-1622). The first edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Rome: Gio Gilotti, 1593) was published without illustrations; the second edition (Rome: L. Facii, 1603) was published with illustrations, and the book became a significant compendium of emblematic figures (*figurazione*) for European artists and humanists during the seventeenth century (Ripa, 1593, 1603).

In the *Infant Bacchus* by Reni, he references moral messages filled with the meaning of Humor, Joy (*Allegrezza*), and Prudence (*Amor Domato* or *Prudenza*). These meanings are found in his *Iconologia*, where these *figurazione* symbolize physical and metaphysical conceits of fertility and fecundity from the emblematic and mythographic traditions of Alciato, Cartari, and Valeriano. Reni also adopted scientific studies on perspectival illusion, optics, and reflections of Matteo Zaccolini (1574-1630), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Jacopo Vignola (1507-73), and the illusionistic theories of Pietro Accolti (1579-1642).

In *The Life of Guido Reni*, recorded in *Felsina Pittrice* or *Lives of the Bolognese Painters* (1678), Carlo Cesare Malvasia described the painting as "A nude Infant Bacchus who passes what he is drinking... [the painting] can be seen in the ducal gallery of Modena" (Malvasia, 1980, p. 149; Baccheschi, 1971, p. 99). The patron of this painting is unknown. It was part of the Modenese ducal collection until 1744, when the Royal Gallery in Dresden acquired it.¹¹

¹¹ Citation in the Dresden online catalogue reads: "Baccarino ignudo che rende ciò che beve...e nella Galleria ducale di Modena," <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/378280> (accessed 24 April 2023).



Figure 14. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus or Drinking Bacchus*, 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

Like sixteenth-century Italian painters such as Lorenzo Lotto, Titian, and Tintoretto, and seventeenth-century Italian painters such as the Carracci Brothers, Caravaggio, Orazio Gentileschi, and Guercino,¹² Reni depicted the theme of Bacchus and his bacchanalia. He painted several versions of Bacchus as the Roman God of Wine, Fertility, and Revelry, as seen in the *Bacchus* of 1615–20, oil on canvas, at the Palatine Gallery in the Pitti Palace in Florence (Figure 15), and *Bacchus and Ariadne* of 1619, oil on canvas, at the Los Angeles County Museum (Figure 16). However, only one of his notable works (*Infant Bacchus or Drinking Bacchus*, Figure 14) portrays the god in a new and unprecedented way, showing the mythical scene of a nude infant drinking wine and urinating simultaneously. The image in this painting stands out as distinctive and an exceptional creation.

¹² The eighteenth-century Italian engraver Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815) composed an etching after a drawing of Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino (1591–1666), of an infant Bacchus. The etching in brown ink shows a nude child seated on a plinth, turning his body to drink from a large glass flask. Next to him is a large upright barrel containing bunches of grapes, <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/26774> (accessed 15 May 2023).



Figure 15. Guido Reni, *Bacchus*, 1615-20, oil on canvas. Galleria Palatina, Pitti Palace, Florence.



Figure 16. Guido Reni, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1619, oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum, CA.

In Italian Baroque art, Caravaggio, Gentileschi, and Guercino are lauded as skillful painters of tenebrism, a sharp contrast of light and dark, which is also marked using dark and dramatic colors. Reni's original pastel-chromatic style, however, is distinguished by the use of lighter and more vibrant hues, such as olive green, almond browns, golden yellows, celestial blue, lilac, and rose-pink hues, and softer shades like blood red and flesh tones.

In the *Infant Bacchus*, Reni's composition consists of cumulus clouds in a blue sky as the background for the scene. A nude young child, crowned with large grape leaves and grapes, rests his chubby body against a large wooden barrel, horizontally placed in a meadow. Twirling ivy embraces the barrel and the infant. The infant is happily engaged in drinking wine from a glass flask. While drinking, he sees the moon reflected in the glass container and his facial image. As a reaction to his enjoyment of drinking wine, he urinates, as young children do when intaking liquids. His urine pours into the meadow where he is residing. Artistically, Reni has paralleled the physical pouring of urine in the field with the barrel-dripping wine into a small kylix.

One way to fully comprehend the meaning behind Reni's painting is to consider emblematic sources. This involves analyzing some of the details in the painting, such as the ivy, vine, grape leaves, and grapes.

A. Emblematic Sources

During the humanistic period in Italy, the compendia of manuals and compilations of hieroglyphs, classical mythologies, medieval mythographies, and biblical and numismatic sources became a significant fountain of inspiration for humanists and artists.¹³ For example, the definitive emblematic manuals then available were Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (Venice, 1505), Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (Augsburg, 1531), Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (Basel/Florence, 1556), Boccaccio's *Geneologia degli Dei* (Florence, 1547), Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, 1499), Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* (Venice, 1551), Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's *De deis gentium* (Basel, 1548), Vincenzo Cartari's *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* (Venice 1550/1556), Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'Imprese Militari et Amoroze* (Lyons, 1574), and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Rome: Gio. Gigliotti, 1593, without illustrations; and Rome: Lepido Facii, 1603 with *figurazione*). These manuals were popular among artists and humanists in these centuries, who often copied information from them without crediting the sources (Seznec, 1953/1972, pp. 232, 246). This group of literati and painters found these books valuable historical, literary, and visual information sources, like encyclopedias and dictionaries. As a result, secular paintings often contained allegorical, mythological, or emblematic representations that were painted according to the information found in these books.

A talented painter, and poet, Reni seamlessly combined these contextual and visual styles into his creations. In addition, academic centers and the Bolognese intelligentsia greatly influenced his mythological paintings with a unique and inspired quality (van Gastel, 2014, pp. 189-211). When portraying the nude *Infant Bacchus*, he drew inspiration from emblematic and mythographic traditions, specifically from Alciato's emblems and Cartari's mythography.

The Latin translation of Cartari's *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* (*The Images of the Gods*) was first published in Italian without illustrations in Venice in 1556.¹⁴ This book was considered the "first encyclopedia of classical iconography... widely used by Renaissance and Baroque artists" (Arntzen & Rainwater, 1980, pp. 232, 246). It was a compendium of classical imagery of gods and heroes. The subsequent 1571 Venetian edition of Vincenzo Cartari's *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* was published by Vincentio Valgrisi and contained

¹³ See Bartłomiej Czarski's article

https://polishlibraries.bn.org.pl/upload/pdf/28989_Bartłomiej_Czarski_Coins_of_Alciato_Remarks_on_the_Reception_of_Classical_Numismatic_Iconography_in_the_16th-Century_Emblem_Books_89-244.pdf (accessed 15 May 2023).

¹⁴ John Mulryan, trans., *Vincenzo Cartari's Images of the Gods of the Ancients: The First Italian Mythography* (Tempe: ACMRS, 2012), p. 326. The Italian mythographer of the sixteenth century, Vincenzo Cartari (1531-90), published *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* in Venice by Francesco Marcolini 1550-59. The later version, 1571, by the Venetian publisher Giordano Ziletti, contained images designed by Giuseppe Porta Salviati (1520-75) and etched (engraved) for publication by Bolognino Zaltieri (active 1555-76).

engravings by Bolognino Zaltieri. Cartari's mythography was considered a treatise on the mythology of the ancients, explaining the gods' guises and attributes. The iconography was intended to aid artists, painters, and sculptors in understanding and visualizing mythological subjects. Zaltieri's illustrations pictured gods solely working from a textual description instead of drawing inspiration from antique representations. Hence Cartari's emblematic images became the iconographic handbook for painters, including Reni, for centuries.



Figures 17a and 17b. Vincenzo Cartari, *Infant Bacchus*, engraving from *The Imagini....* (Venice: Valgrisi, 1571).

Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

Reni recalled Cartari's writings about Bacchus in the Venetian edition of Italian of the *Imagini* of 1571 (Figures 17a and 17b). In the description of Bacchus, Cartari wrote that in Antiquity, not only was it believed that Bacchus had invented wine, but he was also depicted nude, alluding to the fact that when drinking wine, concealed feelings or thoughts often are revealed, hence the saying "In vino veritas" ("There is truth in wine" or "Wine speaks the truth")¹⁵. The infant Bacchus is nude, a natural form alluding to his humanity and divinity as a

¹⁵ Mulryan, *Vincenzo Cartari's Images*, p. 337. Perhaps the motto derives from the writings of the ancient art historian Pliny the Elder in *Natural History*, bk. 14, 28. See Silvia Malaguzzi, *Arte e Vino* (Milan: Giunti, Arte e Dossier, 2010), p. 13. In the Renaissance, painters and poets commented that truth is revealed through the nude body. Botticelli depicted the image of Truth in the *Calumny of Apelles*, 1494, now in the Gallery degli Uffizi in Florence. A year earlier, in the *Canzone* for the *Triumph of Calumny*, Bernardo Rucellai composed a poem for the painting in which chanted: "[I] see Truth that is nude and pure." (*Guardo la Verità ch'è nuda e pura*)" (Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence, ms. Barb. 3945, cc. 239 ss). In the Italian Baroque, Gian Lorenzo Bernini sculpted *Truth Unveiling Time*, 1645, in marble, now in the Galleria Borghese in Rome, where a nude young female personifies Truth.

beauty symbol (Lazzarini, 2010, pp. 11-13). He is crowned with large grape leaves and grapes, alluding to the attributes of the God of Wine and Joy. The growing plants and fruits form a wreath referring to his creation. Pliny the Elder wrote that Bacchus was the first to make a wreath of ivy for himself (*Natural History* 16.3.4; 16.3.9) (Mulryan, 2012, p. 337). Ancient writers argued why Bacchus selected the ivy as a plant to honor him, perhaps because the evergreen nature of the foliage was associated with Bacchus's infancy "forever young" (Festus, Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1513, on Hedra (Ivy) 8.100.74). The evergreen plant also recalls Bacchus's (Dionysus's) birthplace, where the nymphs bathed him in the Spring made of Ivy (*Homeric Hymn 1 To Dionysus*).



Figure 18. Andrea Alciato, Emblem on *In statuam Bacchi* (A statue of Bacchus) "Dialogismus" ("The Dialogue" or "Right Reasoner") On the statue of Bacchus, woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Lyons: Mac é Bonhomme for Guillaume Rouille, 1550). Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

Another emblematic source for Reni's *conceito* in his painting was Alciato's book of emblems, a familiar source for Italian Renaissance painters. The Milanese humanist, jurist, and academician Andrea Alciato (1492-1550) studied law at the University of Bologna in 1518 and later taught historical philology and law between 1537 and 1541 (Kelley, 1970, p. 93). His writing on this subject applied to emblematic conceits profoundly impacted the humanistic movement in Bologna and throughout Europe. Hence Reni knew the emblematic sources for his iconographical and visual metaphors. For example, Alciato's Emblem 25 (*Dialogismus* or Right Reasoner) of *Emblemata* demonstrates his familiarity with the ancient classic writers, such as Ovid's description of Bacchus in *Metamorphoses* (4.4ff) (Figure 18).¹⁶ The *pictura* (picture) shows a landscape with a tree of twirling vines and grapes. The nude infant Bacchus is seated in this natural outdoor setting crowned with ivy. He is imbibing wine from a hollow reed inserted into a cask shaped like a drum while also inserting another reed into the cask to extract more wine. A kylix or kantharos (drinking cup) is placed below this wine drum to receive the precious nectar—wine. In this emblem, Alciato implied an analogy between

¹⁶ In Alciato's emblem, there is a reference to an ancient Greek sculpture made by the famous sculptor Praxiteles made in bronze representing Bacchus/Dionysus with Drunkenness and a Satyr (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, bk. 34.19.69).

transforming the grapes into wine and then collected into a cask. It also suggests that those who drink wine alter their inhibitions and become loquacious, unveiling something hidden, perhaps the truth, "In vino veritas," like Cartari's motto.¹⁷

The action of pouring out a liquid as a symbol of offering is an ancient ritual, so-called *choai*, where libations (the act of pouring) of wine were offered for the gods of the underworld (Homer, *Iliad*, and Book IV); in a temple, large vessels containing wine were used to pour wine into a small bowl, *phiale* or *patera*, for a religious offering, the act of *pietas* as a sacred act reverence.¹⁸ Reni's *Infant Bacchus*, as the God of Agriculture and Wine, is alluding to the gift to his fellow gods by providing wine libations to them at their celestial celebrations and feasts and humans as well as by fertilizing the Earth with urine produced by the effects of his drinking, hence connecting the substance of wine with the heavenly and terrestrial realms.

Another of Alciato's emblems, Emblem 23, with the motto (*inscription*): "That foresight is improved by wine," shows the picture of the interior of a temple with two standing figures: the nude infant Bacchus with his clothed sister Pallas Athena (Figure 19). Bacchus is crowned with grapes and grapes leaves. The epigram (*subscription*) states that Bacchus was the first pagan god to discover wine. Thus, he is holding a drinking vessel for wine, a kylix. Alciato and Cartari see the young Bacchus as representing wisdom, truth, and prudent behavior. This can be inferred from Reni's depiction of the infant Bacchus, who metaphorically embodies these virtues through his nudity and consumption of wine.

The infant Bacchus is depicted as nude, representing the natural realm and his innocence. However, this nudity also serves as a symbol of the spiritual realm. Bacchus is shown drinking wine, a metaphor for seeking the Truth. This is supported by the emblems of Alciato and Cartari and Reni's painting, which suggests that wine intake leads to reflection and wisdom since its nectar has secret powers of alteration like the intake of wine clouding or exalting the person's mind (*Moralia*, "Table-Talk," 3.2).

¹⁷ In the Bible, the reference to truth is associated with the natural state of Adam and Eve, "they were both naked and unashamed" (Genesis 2:25). John Scheid, "Sacrifices for Gods and Ancestors," in Jörg Rüpke, ed., *A Companion to Roman Religion* (London: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 265 and 270-71, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470690970.ch19>. Although there are biblical references to nudity, I wonder if Reni, a devoted Christian, associated them with this painting. But in another painting, Reni depicts a nude child, *Cupid* of 1637, now at the Prado Museum, there is a paradoxical connection in composition and with Reni's *Infant Bacchus*. Reni's *Cupid* with his arrow touches a flying dove, perhaps an allusion to the sacred bird of Venus. See Hans Aurenhammer, "Catalogue Entry: Guido Reni, 118/19," in Eclercy, *The Guido Reni, The Divine*, pp. 272-75; and Lisa Beaven, "Entry: Guido Reni's *Cupid*, 64," in Cueto, *Guido Reni*, Exhibition catalog, for another interpretation. Perhaps in this depiction of Cupid, Reni is appropriating another moral message from Alciato's emblem, "Those who tend to human things often fall low," where a person impersonating Cupid with bow and arrow strikes at a flying bird. See Andrea Alciato, *Toutes les emblems* (Lyons: Mac é Bonhomme for Guillaume Rouille, 1558). For the image see <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A58a097> (accessed 15 August 2023).

¹⁸ Jacob pours out a liquid as an act of reverence (Genesis 35:14).



Figure 19. Andrea Alciato, *Emblem 23*, "Vino Prudentiam Augeri" ("Wisdom increased with vine" or "That foresight [prudence] is improved by wine"), woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Padua: Petro Paolo Tozzi, 1621).

Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.



Figure 20. Cesare Ripa, *Joy (Allegrezza)*, 1603, woodcut from Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Rome: L. Facii, 1603).

Credit line: With permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

Furthermore, the Italian emblemist from Perugia, Cesare Ripa (1555-1622), in his *Iconologia* of 1603, composed a *figurazione* (emblem) or personification of Joy (*Allegrezza*, Figure 20). The picture shows a cheerful young woman dancing in a meadow surrounded by beautiful flowers and plants. She wears a crown made of

grapevines and flowers, and her dress is adorned with ivy and flowers. While dancing, she holds a crystal flask of wine in one hand and a *kantharos* in the other, maintaining her balance effortlessly. When describing the *figurazione*, Ripa added to its significance by referencing "Solet Laetitia arcana mentis aperire," which translates into: "It is said that joy brings forth the secrets of the mind"—a phrase from Book 28 of *Moralia in Job* by Gregory the Great (540-604).

Ripa's *Joy* represents the core of Alciato's emblem of *Prudence*, also known as Wisdom. Both figures of Joy and Prudence stand gracefully in a contrapposto stance, symbolizing the balance between the physical and metaphysical realms. They represent a harmonious interplay between human existence's material and spiritual aspects to achieve equilibrium. Ripa's *Joy* is a beautifully poised figure in a serpentine stance, holding a flask and kangaroos and dancing effortlessly. Her pose is reminiscent of the turning motion of the infant Bacchus in Reni's painting, who is also depicted in a similar stance while raising his wine flask to the heavens and urinating with care.

During the Middle Ages, this text was highly valued and recognized. In 1351, Zanobi da Strada (1312-61), an Italian humanist, poet, and educator, translated this Latin text into Italian (Porta, 2005). According to Gregory the Great's Latin citation in Ripa's *figurazione*, "Solet Laetitia arcana mentis aperire," translates into "It is said that joy brings forth the secrets of the mind." This suggests that when the individual indulges in wine, the innermost thoughts and feelings are brought to light, and the dancing figure's sensations of happiness uplift the spirits. Ripa's distinctive analysis correlates with Cartari's statement, "In vino veritas." However, in his *figurazione* on Love of Virtue (*Amor de la Virtù*), Ripa alluded to Alciato's reference to Prudence as a symbol controlling the individual's passions through wisdom. Ripa's nude and winged child stands in contrapposto. He wears a crown of laurel leaves and holds three laurel wreaths. Because of its circular shape, the evergreen crown symbolizes eternity, and its green coloration alludes to endurance and wisdom. These are also attributes associated with the virtue of Prudence (Ripa, 1603, pp. 38, 559).

To better understand the symbolism in Reni's painting, further analysis of Bacchus's action of urination, contemplation of the moon's reflection, and his self-reflection in the glass flask are examined. Some items associated with Bacchus, such as his wine barrel and glass bottle, are separately considered to comprehend other meanings in the painting.

B. Symbolic Attributes

A wine barrel

The Romans started transporting wine in wooden barrels or casks instead of amphorae during the second century when they occupied Gaul and transported wine along rivers. Amphorae, ceramic containers, were not a practical method of transportation for wine due to their vulnerability to breakage and ability to alter the wine's taste. This is evident in Roman reliefs which depict their discarding as a transportation method in Cartari's *Bacchus Ship* (woodcut in his *Imagini*, Venice: Valgrisi, 1571, Figure 21). Also illustrated in an ancient Roman boat carrying barrels of wine; Bacchus leads the ship (Figure 22). Moreover, Italian decorative arts often featured the infant Bacchus adorned with a grapevine on Majolica plates during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Museo Correr in Venice proudly displays a Majolica plate whose center shows an infant Bacchus as a prominent figure (Figure 23). Around the borders of the plate are *grotteschi* decorations ornamenting the scene

where the nude infant Bacchus, crowned with grape leaves and grapes, is not portrayed holding a *kantharos* with wine but enjoying eating grapes in a landscape while riding on a wine barrel surrounded by grapes. Reni's depiction is more elegant than Bacchus in the Majolica plate, which shows Bacchus riding on a barrel rather than resting his body against it.

Familiar with this cultural tradition of the cask, Reni depicted the barrel of wine with two functions: one is to support the infant Bacchus's chubby body and precarious stance. The child is kneeling on one leg while extending the other leg and resting one bent arm while holding a flask of wine with the other hand. The second function is to provide a source of replenishment of wine for Bacchus's glass flask.



Figure 21. Vincenzo Cartari, *Bacchus Ship, God of Wine & Fertility with Sea Monsters*, colored woodcut from Vincenzo Cartari, *The Image...* (Venice: Valgrisi, 1571). Photo credit: Trillium Antique Prints & Rare Book.



Figure 22. Neumagen is in the shape of a rowing ship for transporting wine barrels on the Moselle River, 220 CE. Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, Germany.



Figure 23. *Infant Bacchus*, majolica plate, 16th Century. Museo Correr, Venice.

A puer mingens

Bacchus urinating in Reni's *Infant Bacchus* is based on a symbolic image from the classical tradition (Figures 14 and 14b). The euphemistic expression *to make water* derives from the Latin *a puer mingens*, referring to a prepubescent boy urinating. This type of image was commonly seen in ancient Roman Bacchic scenes and sarcophagi with children (Campbell & Boyington, 2019, pp. 110-127; Oettinger, 2015, pp. 230-263). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists assimilating the classical tradition also represented this theme in sculpture as waterspouts found in lavabos, fountain gardens, where nude male infants pour water from their genitals as a metaphor for urination (Figures 24). This marble visualization expanded to mediums such as wood in *deschi da parto* (childbirth tray) (Figure 25), drawings (Figure 26), fresco decorations (Figure 27), and oil paintings (Figure 28). This article intends to delve into something other than the visual historicity of this subject. Only a few remarks are made in connection to Reni's imagery.



Figure 24. Il Buggiano, *Children urinating*, 1445, marble, washbasin. Sagrestia dei Canonici, Florence Cathedral.



Figure 25. Bartolomeo di Fruosino, *Boy Urinating*, childbirth tray (verso), tempera on panel, 1428. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 26. Annibale Carracci, *Pissing Boy*, 1600, pen and ink drawing. St ädel Museum, Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.



Figure 27. Pietro Venale and assistants, *A puer mingens*, 1552-53, fresco on the ceiling of the Loggia (pergola). Villa Giulia, Rome.



Figure 28. Lorenzo Lotto, *Venus and Cupid*, c. 1540, oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Credit line: Donation by Mrs. Charles Wrightsman in honor of Marietta Tree, 1986.

In ancient times the image of a *puer mingens* was coupled with water and phallus, revealing two iconographical aspects: one is physical, creating a decorative and humorous image for public and private gardens and edifices; hence the art form functions as a conduit for pouring water like a fountain. The second signification is metaphysical, a conceit alluding to the symbolism of urine as an instrument of fertility (Armstrong, 2006, pp. 384-387), a meaning derived from ancient Egyptian culture through Roman times, where the celebratory Bacchic rites were associated with fertilization and fecundity. In an ancient Egyptian papyrus held at the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, an inscription notes that Egyptian women urinate on wheat and barley to find out if they are pregnant. If the plant grew, they were considered pregnant (Tyssowski, 2003; Ghalioungui et al., 2023; Daley, 2018). Urine is composed of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which are organic acids that nourish plants, grass, and other natural substances. As a result, urine serves as a fertilizer for the Earth, indirectly promoting fertility and revealing pregnancy.

Although these associations were not medically understood in the Middle Ages, they were visualized in manuscripts about uroscopies attesting to a person's health and the condition of fecundity (Armstrong, 2006, pp. 384-387). In sixteenth-century Italian art, this mythic allusion to fecundity was depicted in mythological paintings as seen in paintings by Lotto and Titian, e.g., Titian's *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* of 1523, oil on canvas, now at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, painted for the *studiolo* of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, the brother of Isabella d'Este,¹⁹ and Lorenzo Lotto's *Venus and Cupid* of 1540, oil on canvas, now at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City for the Venetian Mario d'Armano (Figure 28) (Simons, 2009, pp. 331-373; Oettinger, 2015, pp. 230-263).

¹⁹ For the image, see <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mbell1975/6687230261> (accessed 15 September 2023). See Harry Murutes, "Personifications of Laughter and Drunken Sleep in Titian's *Andrians*," *Burlington Magazine* 115 (1973), pp. 518-525, emphasizing fecundity with laughter. In the *Infant Bacchus*, Reni captures this duality by appropriating the symbolisms of Ripa's *Joy* and Alciato's *Prudence*. I thank Prof. Brian Steele for the reference and suggestion.

A glass flask

In *Padre Baccho*, Vincenzo Petitto and Fulvio Sellitto analyzed the vine's literary, poetical, and medical usages and traditions from Antiquity to the present (Petitto & Sellitto, 2012, pp. 21-31; Malaguzzi, 2010, pp. 7-13; Bartoletti, Mondanini & Montorsi, 2010; Varianno, 2011). They noted that wine was a source of medical healing and divination since its intake enhanced the senses, particularly the mind (Petitto & Sellitto, 2012, pp. 86-96). They noted that medical treatises considered urine, a liquid form, as part of the four humors of the body—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—and also as a fluid substance used to identify an individual's health condition. From Antiquity until the Baroque period, the four humors were visualized and associated with natural phenomena such as stages of life (childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age), temperaments of an individual (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic), seasons (fall, winter, spring, and summer), the elements of life (earth, fire, water, and air); also astronomical or celestial bodies such as the firmament, stars, and planets.²⁰ These natural and metaphysical correlations and causations have cyclical connections with planetary motions and oscillations, especially the moon's cyclical patterns and phases.

In his *Infant Bacchus*, Reni made a significant selection in choosing the type of wine flask held by the child. The shape of this glass bottle resembles an ancient medical instrument for apothecary uses. For one of the usages, the flask is called a *matula*, which doctors and alchemists (ancient chemists or scientists) employ to collect a sample of a patient's urine. The purpose of urinalysis was to diagnose the patient's medical condition according to the coloration of the urine sample, which would indicate diseases, infections, and pregnancy (Figures 29a and 29b) (Recorde, 1665). This type of glass bottle is often seen in Dutch Baroque paintings that depict physicians analyzing a patient's urine (Dixon, 1995). Reni continued his playfulness by visualizing the glass flask as a urine sample glass and with the traditional depiction of children urinating—a *puer mingens*—as shown in the painting where the figure of the infant Bacchus is drinking wine and urinating at the same time (Figures 14 and 14b). An amusing metaphor about a visual balance is implied by simultaneously pouring wine and urine.

²⁰ This article intends to delve into something other than such a complex and well-studied topic. It is alluded to in terms of Reni's painting.



Figure 29a. Robert Recorde, *Matula (Flask)*, woodcut in *The Urinal of Physick* (London: F.D. 1548, rep. 1665).



Figure 29b. Apothecary urinal, Glass Flask, *matula* or *jordan*. (Actual) Photograph.



Figure 14. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus or Drinking Bacchus*, 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemädegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.



Figure 14b. Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus or Drinking Bacchus*, det., 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemädegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

The other function of the apothecary flask was to hold ingredients—herbs, spices, plants, and liquids—for medicinal preparations (Figure 30). Because of its mineral components, wine was prescribed and employed as a therapeutic vehicle that assisted in dissolving medications to cure various illnesses such as arthritis, diuretics, expectorants, gastritis, and vermifuge, instead of using chamomile, mint, or sage (Petitto & Sellitto, 2012, pp. 85-86; Durante, 1586/1605, p. 317). For Alciato, Ripa, like for Reni, the glass flask symbolically carried a

restorative potion and well-being substance, wine, as seen in Alciato's Emblem 23 (Figure 19) and Ripa's *figurazione* on Joy (Figure 20). Hence, humorously, Reni depicted an infant drinking wine as a healthy child, as demonstrated by his chubby anatomical configuration.



Figure 30. Castelli family, Apothecary Flask for Wine, 1530–40, Maiolica ceramic, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Credit Line: Robert Lehman Collection, 1975.

Reni furthered his whimsicality by paralleling the chubby belly of the nude child with the robust barrel size, the child's genital with the barrel's spout, and the child's action of urinating in the meadow with the wine barrel pouring its contents into a cup. In this painting, Bacchus, as the God of Agriculture and Wine, is depicted as being associated with the cultivation of grapes, including the processes of fertilization, fermentation, and transformation into wine. The artist, Reni, used curved lines in the painting to accentuate these concepts. For example, he painted a visually striking curved line to represent the spout of wine from the barrel. The barrel is a container where grapes are transformed into wine. Infant Bacchus is depicted drinking wine, which is transformed into him pouring urine on the ground, represented by a curved line.

C. Reflections and Refractions

Reni's fascination with cosmic phenomena emerged in his earlier paintings, such as his *Aurora* of 1613, a fresco painting in soft and vivid pastel chroma for the ceiling fresco of the Casino dell'Aurora (Palazzo Pallavicini-Rospigliosi) in Rome (Figure 31).²¹ The frieze composition portrays Sol, the Sun God Apollo, whose chariot, with the personifications of the Hours, prepares to bring the new day as the sky shifts coloration from dusk to morning light. The divine rider watches closely at the transformation of his sister, Aurora, Goddess of Dawn, who fades away in the far-off clouds, indicating and paving the way for the impending arrival of the Sun

²¹ For the image, see

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurora_\(Reni\)#/media/File:Guido_Reni_-_L'Aurora_di_Guido_Reni_nelle_arti_decorative.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurora_(Reni)#/media/File:Guido_Reni_-_L'Aurora_di_Guido_Reni_nelle_arti_decorative.jpg) (accessed 15 May 2023).

God on his chariot to welcome the new day. This astronomical interest extended to his *Infant Bacchus* painting. In this artwork, Aurora's other sibling is depicted: Luna, the divine embodiment of the moon. While working in Rome, Reni probably visited the Farnese palaces, including the one at Caprarola, where ceiling decorations unveiled complex references to the patron's astrological associations with planetary decorations of constellations and stars derived from the ancient symbolic meaning about the nature and function of the cosmological system.²²



Figure 31. Guido Reni, *Aurora*, 1615, fresco. Ceiling, Casino dell'Aurora, Palazzo Pallavicini-Rospigliosi, Rome.

In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade explores Bacchus's mythology and planetary connections (Eliade, 1996, p. 162). The mythical tradition of Nonnos's *Dionysiaka* or *The Story of Dionysus* (500 CE) connects the grapevine and grapes with the snake. The legend recounts how Dionysus (Bacchus) learned to use grapes and make wine by following or trailing the snake, eating grapes, and hiding during ecdysis (Kerényi, 1996, p. 57; Wesley, 2020, pp. 446-454; Dalby, 2003), pp. 23, 147). Bacchus is traditionally represented with a vine, grape leaves, and a cup, establishing him as the deity of wine. In contrast, the twisting vine surrounding him represents his vegetative powers and resembles the winding movement of a snake. This parallel coiling for Eliade in *Patterns in Comparative Religion* links Bacchus's regenerative abilities with those of a serpent's transformations (Eliade, 1996, p. 162). The ivy and vine plants symbolize vitality for their evergreen nature, like the snake's molting skin that represents its rejuvenation and generative powers.

For Eliade, the dismemberment and rebirth of Bacchus is a lunar symbol linked to the moon's monthly cycles and renewals, similar to the serpent's mutations during ecdysis (Eliade, 1996, p. 163). Every month, the orbit of the moon plays a crucial role in the life rhythms and the transformative and rejuvenating processes of the Earth's natural formations (Eliade, 1996, pp. 162-163; Cattabiani, 1998, pp. 122-126). Hence, the connections to and influences of the moon are evident in the representations of Bacchus's ivy and vine, whose vegetative power is related to the lunar forces that govern seasonal cycles.

²² Fritz Saxl, *La fede astrologica di Agostino Chigi: interpretazione dei dipinti di Baldassare Peruzzi nella Sala di Galatea della Farnesina* (Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1934); Fritz Saxl, *La fede negli astri: dall'antichità al Rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985); Giangiacomo Gandolfi, "Two Illustrated Horoscopes of the Italian Renaissance," *Paragone: Past and Present* 4 (2023): 45-69; Kristen Lippincott, "Two Astrological Ceilings Reconsidered: The Sala di Galatea in the Villa Farnesina and the Sala del Mappamondo at Caprarola," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53 (1990): 185-207; Giuseppe Maria Sesti, *The Glorious Constellations: History and Mythology* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), pp. 121-213.

Reni depicted the infant Bacchus crowned with grape leaves and grapes and surrounded by twirling ivy while engaged in this drinking wine. Still, he curiously emphasized in the painting the intensity with which Bacchus looks at the reflected image in his glass flask, a moon (Figure 32). This reflection of a full moon is clearly shown (Cattabiani, 1998, p. 113; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, pp. 669-670). Like Bacchus, Luna, the Moon Goddess, also symbolizes fertility. The type of full moon depicted may be the moon seen as a winter moon at the solstice, associated with the birth of Bacchus. The infant's small size indicates that the winter solstice is the year's shortest day. Alternatively, Reni's moon could be a summer moon at the solstice, associating the summer season harvesting of grapes and vegetation and the harvest's rites (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 671) (Figure 32). Reni's artwork depicting the Infant Bacchus was a deliberate reference to the characteristics of various cosmic divinities. The Moon Goddess, Luna, was known for her fertility and protection of the Earth at night, while Ceres or Demeter was the Goddess of Agriculture and Harvesting, and Bacchus was the God of Agriculture and Wine. Reni aimed to highlight the contributions of these divinities to humanity by providing abundant harvests of grains, vegetation, and wine for joyous feasts. Bacchus was known for offering his fellow gods wine libations during their celebrations (Figure 15). Reni was captivated by the idea of using seasons as symbols of cultivation, growth, and life's natural and spiritual cycles. One of his works, Reni's *Seasons* of 1617, an oil painting on canvas, can now be found at the Museum di Capodimonte in Naples. Another copy of the painting is currently displayed at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and is dated between 1618 and 1620.



Figure 32. The Solstice moons and Guido Reni, *Infant Bacchus* or *Drinking Bacchus*, det., 1620–1622, oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

Bacchus's fellowship with the cyclical moon and the seasons may also derive from the Roman text of Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis Expositio*—*Saturnalia* (431 CE) (Kaster, 2011, p. 15; Stahl, 1990, pp. 110-111; Cornford, 1912, pp. 209-210; Harrison, 1922, pp. 489-490). This was a well-known source among humanists since its publication with commentaries in 1483 by the Boninus de Boninis publisher in Brescia and later editions were published in 1560 (Stahl, 1990, pp. 61-62). During Roman times, the winter solstice celebrations, the Bacchanalia, or festivities in honor of Bacchus, surpassed the Saturnalia festivities to Saturn, God of Time and Agriculture (Sesti, 1991, p. 287). In the planetary scheme, Bacchus became indirectly associated with the constellation of the Crater, a known shape of a *kantharos* (Figures 33a and 33b). The Crater

constellation depicts a vessel with snake handles, referencing the Hydra (water-snake) myth and the salubrious association of wine with serpents (Sesti 1991, p. 317). The serpent symbolizes wellness due to its regenerative powers, akin to the benefits of drinking wine (Alciato, 1615, Emblem 148, Ripa, 1630, Bk 3, p. 3, Petitto & Sellitto, 2012, pp. 21-31, Eliade, 1996, p. 162). The crater contained the nectar for the moon—wine—made by the grapes harvested during summer, hence the association of wine and Bacchus with the summer solstice (Sesti, 1991, p. 319). The solstice marks a time of significant change in nature, particularly in agriculture, where grapes are harvested and transformed into wine. Bacchus, the embodiment of this special time—as its name suggests—represents the connection between the natural world and the cosmos, offering a cosmic link with Earth.



Figures 33a and 33b. Giovanni de' Vecchi and assistants, *Planetary Ceiling*, det., and Crater with handles made of snakes, 1573, fresco. Sala del Mappamondo, Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola.

The ancient fascination with the reflection of light on surfaces such as water and mirrors or the planetary reflection of the moon in the sky or the sun on the moon continued to be investigated through the centuries. These intellectual investigations and scientific processes assimilated two significant marvels: physical or natural experiences and progressions and metaphysical and spiritual wonderments, including the exploration of divination (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 658-659). Artists also studied the reflections seen through instruments such as mirrors and glass or those experienced through natural and heavenly observations, as seen in the pools of water or in the luminous sky where the moon reflected light effects and radiance.

Although this topic about the nature of reflections in art history is vast, here are just a few brief observations about Reni's artistic familiarity with appropriating light, optics, and perspective from the artistic and scientific culture of the Baroque period. The natural light reflects into the glass and refracts the heavenly blue sky. The illusionistic play *Fool the Eye* (*inganno de gli'occhi*) demonstrates Reni's artistic skill in perspectival effects (Gilman, 1978, pp. 36-40; Shlain, 1991, pp. 77-78; Boyle, 2016; Zirpolo, 2016). Reni depicts another visual pun just as the child urinating parallels the barrel dripping wine, and the drinking flask resembles the urinal flask.

Reni incorporated various theories on reflection and refraction from known scientists and optical theorists, including Matteo Zaccolini and Galileo Galilei, and Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657), an encyclopedic art collector who supported the pursuit of comprehensive knowledge, playing a part in shaping these visual theories (Kemp, 1990, pp. 132-135). Reni probably also relied on ideas of artistic illusions presented earlier, for example, by the renowned architect Jacopo Vignola in his book on *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica* (Rome, 1583),

where he discussed the creation of visual puns such as "[how]to bring the Moon close [through or] in a perspective glass" (Gilman, 1978, p. 37; Vignola, 1583). In *Lo inganno de gl'occhi* (Florence, 1625) (Gilman, 1978, p. 39; Accolti, 1625), Pietro Accolti instructed on composing images to delight and enchant the viewer. In the *Infant Bacchus*, Reni, too, demonstrated his artistic ability to depict natural phenomena and artificial and fanciful conceptions.

In Reni's *Infant Bacchus* drinking wine, physical and metaphysical connotations are found. The painting is a solo depiction of an image: a visual poem (a *pictura poesis*), a term coined by the ancient philosopher and poet Horace, revealing Reni's whimsicality and humanistic knowledge (Van Gastel, 2014, pp. 189-211; Lee, 1967, p. 1; Mendelsohn, 1982, pp. 109-142). Thus, Reni's *Infant Bacchus* is a *dilettosa* painting with complex *affetti* and *concetti*.

Conclusion

The birth and the nature of Bacchus are twofold, as recounted by ancient writers such as Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (bk. 3): first from the womb of his mother, Semele, and then from the thigh of his father, Zeus. Reni visualizes this duality of Bacchus's birth by depicting the pouring of liquids from two different sources. Both beverages are substances that fertilize nature. The wine, a divine creation, when drunk and passed through the natural body of the god, transforms into a liquid: urine, comprised of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. These organic acids help nourish plants, grass, and natural forms; hence, the God of Wine fertilizes the earth. In the *Infant Bacchus*, Reni merged these historical, medical, and mythological traditions by depicting the child urinating while drinking wine. However, he adds another possible connection of the infant deity with cosmic powers, based on the ancient etymology of the name of the God of Wine, Dionysius.

In the *Infant Bacchus*, Reni delighted his viewers by composing a whimsical painting with *affetti* (human passions and feelings expressed through physical gestures and body movements) and *concetti* (concepts, human thoughts). This remarkable image can be considered a conversation piece or emblematic rebus for friends of the patron, who is unknown for now (Campbell & Boyington, 2019, pp. 11-127). As the viewers see this image of an instant double pouring of liquids (wine and urine) from the barrel and his genitalia, they are prompted to laugh and enjoy this artistic pun (Barolsky, 1978; Cast, 2009). But Reni's unique painting reveals other levels of pondering. The association of the figure of Bacchus—God of Agriculture, Wine, and Revelry—with drinking or pouring liquids and his viewing of the moon is more complex. Legendary tradition recounts that Bacchus invented wine, and the nectar created by a divinity provides insights for humans about the natural and spiritual cycles of life. While Ripa's *figurazione* for *Joy* reveals the pleasure of the spirit through dancing and drinking, Alciato's emblem, Emblem 23, recalls enjoyment and prudent behavior in "That foresight is improved by wine." This dictum is reinforced by Cartari's image with the adage "In vino veritas."

References

- Accolti, P. (1625). *Lo Inganno de gl'occhi*. Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli.
 Alciato, A. (1531). *Emblematum liber* (2nd ed.). Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner.
 Alciato, A. (1558). *Toutes les emblems*. Lyons: Mac éBonhomme for Guillaume Rouille.
 Alciato, A. (1615). *Declaracion magistral sobre las Emblemas de Andres Alciato*. Najera: Juan de Mongastón.

- Anderson, W. S. (1966). Talaria and Ovid Met. 10.591. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 97, 1-13, doi:10.2307/2935997. JSTOR 2935997.
- Armstrong, J. A. (2006). Urinalysis in Western culture: A brief history. *Kidney International*, 71, 384-387, <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.ki.5002057>.
- Arntzen, E., & Rainwater, R. (1980). *Guide of the literature of art history*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Aurenhanner, H. (2023). Catalogue entry: Guido Reni, 118/19. In B. Eclercy (Ed.), *Guido Reni: The divine* (pp. 272-275). Frankfurt am Main/Madrid: Hatje Cantz.
- Baccheschi, E. (1971). *L'opera completa di Guido Reni*. Milan: Rizzoli.
- Barolsky, P. (1978). *Infinite Jest: Wit and humor in Italian Renaissance Art*. Saint Louis: University of Missouri Press.
- Bartoletti, R., Mondanini, N., & Montorsi, F. (2010). *Vino e Eros: Vino rosso, sensualità e benessere*. Milan: Giunti.
- Beekes, R. (2009). *Etymological dictionary of Greek*. Leiden: Brill.
- Boyle, J. E. (2016). *Anamorphosis in early modern literature: Mediation and affect*. London: Routledge.
- Caglioti, F. (Ed.). (2022). *Donatello: The Renaissance*. Venice: Marsilio.
- Campbell, J. W. P., Boyington, A. (2019). The problems of meaning and use of the *puer mingens* motif in fountain design 1400-1700. *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 40(2), 110-127, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2019.1675987>.
- Campbell, S. J. (2006). *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance mythological painting and the studiolo of Isabella d'Este*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cappelletti, F. (Ed.). (2022). *Guido Reni and Rome: Nature and devotion*. Venice: Marsilio Arte.
- Cartari, V. (1550-59). *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi*. Venice: Francesco Marcolini.
- Cartari, V. (1571a). *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi*. Venice: Giordano Ziletti.
- Cartari, V. (1571b) *Le Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi*. Venice: V. Valgresi.
- Cast, D. (2009). *The delight of art: Giorgio Vasari and the tradition of humanist discourse*. University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Cattabiani, A. (1998). *Planetario. Simboli, miti e misteri di astri, pianeti e costellazioni*. Milan: Mondadori.
- Celenza, C. S. (2018). *The intellectual world of the Italian Renaissance: Language, philosophy, and the search for meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheney, L. D. (2023). The birth and custody of Infant Bacchus. *Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, X(September 2023), 387-406.
- Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A. (1994). *A dictionary of symbols* (pp. 918-919, 1006). London: Blackwell.
- Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A. (1994). *A dictionary of symbols*. London: Blackwell.
- Cirlot, J. E. (1962). *A dictionary of symbols*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Cole, S. G. (2007). Finding Dionysus. In D. Ogden (Ed.), *A companion to Greek religion* (pp. 327-341). Malden/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Colonna, F. (1499). *Hypnerotomachia poliphili*. Venice: Aldus Manutius.
- Cornford, F. M. (1912). *From religion to philosophy: A study in the origin of western speculation*. London: Arnold.
- Cueto, D. G. (Ed.). (2023). *Guido Reni*. Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado.
- Dalby, A. (2003). *Bacchus: A biography*. London: The British Museum Publications.
- Daley, J. (2018). Egyptian Papyrus Reveals Old Wives' Tale Is Very Old Indeed. *Smithsonian Magazine*, 20, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/egyptian-papyrus-reveals-old-wives-tale-very-very-old-indeed-180970066>.
- Dixon, L. S. (1995). *Perilous Chastity: Women and illness in pre-enlightenment art and medicine*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dragatakis, M. (2020). Bacchus (Dionysus) and the primeval forces of nature: 5 myths. *The Collector*. <https://www.thecollector.com/dionysus-bacchus-god/#>.
- Durante, C. (1596/1605). *Il tesoro della sanità*. Venice: Lucio Spineda.
- Dursteler, E. (Ed.). (2013). *A companion to Venetian history, 1400-1797*. Leiden: Brill.
- Eliade, M. (1996). *Patterns in comparative religion*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, Bison Books.
- Enggass, C., & Enggass, R. (Trans., Eds.). (1980). Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *The Life of Guido Reni*. University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Ferrara, D. (2013). Pittore Bergamasco: *Bacco fanciullo*. In S. Ebert-Schifferer et al., *La donazione di Enrichetta Hertz 1913-2013* (p. 110). Milan: Silvana.
- Festus, S. P. (1513). *De Verborum Significatione*. Venice: Aldus Manutius.

- Gandolfi, G. (2023). Two illustrated Horoscopes of the Italian Renaissance. *Paragone: Past and Present*, 4, 45-69.
- Ghalioungui, P. et al. (2023). On an ancient Egyptian method of diagnosing pregnancy and determining foetal sex. https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/14D30302A038355CB787358800D17D44/S0025727300028386a.pdf/on_an_ancient_egyptian_method_of_diagnosing_pregnancy_and_determining_foetal_sex.pdf.
- Gilman, E. B. (1978). *The curious perspective: Literary and pictorial Wit in the seventeenth century*. London: Yale University Press.
- Harrison, J. E. (1922). *Prolegomena to the study of Greek religion* (3rd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaster, R. A. (Ed. and Trans.). (2011). *Macrobius: Saturnalia* (3 Vols.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kelley, D. R. (1970). *Foundations of modern historical scholarship: Language, law, and history in the French Renaissance*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kemp, M. (1990). *The science of art: Optical themes in Western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*. London: Yale University Press.
- Kerényi, C. (1996). *Dionysos: Archetypal image of an indestructible life*, trans. R. Manheim. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kuivalainen, I. (2021). *The portrayal of Pompeian Bacchus*. Helsinki: The Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters.
- Lazzarini, E. (2010). *Nudo, arte e decoro: Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte nel Cinquecento*. Pisa: Pacini.
- Lee, R. W. (1967). *Ut pictura poesis: The humanist theory of painting*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.,
- Levi D'Ancona, M. (1978). *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical symbolism in Italian painting*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.
- Lightbown, R. (1978). *Botticelli: Life and work* (2 Vols.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lippincott, K. (1990). Two astrological ceilings reconsidered: The Sala di Galatea in the Villa Farnesina and the Sala del Mappamondo at Caprarola. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 53, 185-207.
- Malaguzzi, S. (2010). *Arte e Vino*. Milan: Giunti, Arte e Dossier.
- Malvasia, C. C. (1678). *Felsina Pittrice* (2 Vols). (p. 64, 74, 185). Bologna: Domenico Barbieri.
- Malvasia, C. C. (1980). *The life of Guido Reni* (Ed. and Trans.). *Catherine Enggass and Robert Enggass* (p. 149). University Park: Penn State University Press
- Mendelsohn, L. (1982). *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezioni and Cinquecento art theory*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- Miller, W., & Oesterle, J. A. (Trans.). (1913). *Cicero's De inventione* (2 Vols.). London/New York: Loeb Classical Library,
- Mulryan, J. (Trans.). (2012). *Vincenzo Cartari's images of the Gods of the ancients: The first Italian mythography*. Tempe: ACMRS.
- Murutes, H. (1973). Personifications of laughter and Drunken sleep in Titian's *Andrians*. *Burlington Magazine*, 115, 518-525.
- Nalezty, S. (2009). Giovanni Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* and Banquets of the ancient ritual calendar. *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 40(3)(Fall), 745-768.
- Oesterle, J. A. (Trans.). (1933). *Thomas Aquinas's treatise on the virtues*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Oettinger, A. (2015). Vision, Voluptas, and the poetics of water in Lorenzo Lotto's *Venus and Cupid*. In M. Rose and A. C. Poe (Eds.), *Reception of antiquity, constructions of gender in European art, 1300-1600* (pp. 230-263). Leiden: Brill.
- Otto, W. F. (1986). *Dionysus: Myth and cult*. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.
- Paton, W. R. (Ed.) (1927-28). *Greek anthology* (5 Vols.). London: William Heinemann/New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Petitto, V., Sellitto, F. (2012). *Padre Bacco. Il vino nella letteratura e nella medicina*. Naples: Iuppiter Group Publishers.
- Porta, G. (Ed.). (2005). *Zanobi da Strada and Giovanni da San Miniato. Morali di santo Gregorio papa sopra il libro di Iob*. Florence: Archivum Gregorium 5.
- Recorde, R. (1548/1665). *The Urinal of Physick*. London: F. D.
- Reid, J. D. (1993). *The Oxford guide to classical mythology in the arts, 1300-1900s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ripa, C. (1593). *Iconologia*. Rome: Gio Gilotti.
- Ripa, C. (1603). *Iconologia*. Rome: L. Facii.
- Ripa, C. (1630). *Iconologia*. Padua: D. Pasquardi.
- Rossoni, E. (2008). Stampe di Giulio Bonasoni pittore e intagliatore. Ricostruzione del primo volume della raccorlat di stampe della pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna. *Bolletino del Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe della Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna*, 1, 27-44.
- Salomon, B. (1557). *La Metamorphose d'Ovide Figurée*. Lyon: Jean de Tournes. <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/Rosenwald.1060>.
- Saxl, F. (1934). *La fede astrologica di Agostino Chigi: Interpretazione dei dipinti di Baldassare Peruzzi nella Sala di Galatea della Farnesina*. Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia.
- Saxl, F. (1985). *La fede negli astri: dall'antichità al Rinascimento*. Turin: Einaudi.

- Schaefer, S. (1988). Io Guido Reni Bologna, man and artist. In S. L. Caroselli (Ed.), *Guido Reni: 1575-1642* (pp. 1-16). Los Angeles, CA/Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale.
- Scheid, J. (2007). Sacrifices for Gods and ancestors. In J. Rüpke (Ed.), *A companion to Roman religion* (pp. 265, 270-271). London: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470690970.ch19>.
- Sebastián, S. (1993). *Alciato: Emblemas*. Madrid: Akal.
- Sesti, G. M. (1991). *The glorious constellations: History and mythology*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
- Seznec, J. (1953/1972). *The survival of the Pagan Gods. The mythological tradition and its place in Renaissance humanism and art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shlain, L. (1991). *Art and physics: Parallel visions in space, time and light*. New York: Quill William Morrow.
- Simons, P. (2009). Manliness and the visual semiotics of bodily fluids in early modern culture. *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39(2), 331-373, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-2008-025>.
- Stahl, W. H. (1990). *Commentary on the dream of Scipio by Macrobius*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Tuve, R. (1963). Notes on the virtues and vices. Part I: Two Fifteenth-Century lines of dependence on the Thirteenth and Twelfth Centuries. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26, 246-247.
- Tyssowski, K. (2003). Pee is for pregnant: The history and science of urine-based pregnancy tests. Retrieved from <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2018/pee-pregnant-history-science-urine-based-pregnancy-tests>.
- van Gastel, J. (2014). Guido Reni and the poets: Painting through a different Lens. *Fragmenta: Journal of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome*, 5, 189-211, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.FRAG.1.10351>.
- Varianno, J. (2011). *Wine: A cultural history*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Vasari, G. (1568). *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (3 Vols.). Florence: Giunti.
- Vignola, J. (1583). *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica*. Rome: Francesco Zanetti.
- Walters, H. B. (1899). *Bronze / Catalogue of the bronzes in the British Museum. Greek, Roman & Etruscan*. London: British Museum Press.
- Wesley, D. (2020). The divine bacchus. *Psychological Perspectives*, 62(4), 446-454, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332925.2019.1659069>.
- Wittkower, R. (1973). *Art and architecture in Italy, 1600-1750*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.
- Zannadreis, D., & Biadego, G. (1891). *Le vite dei pittori, scultori e architetti veronesi*. Verona: G. Franchini, Verona.
- Zirpolo, L. H. (Ed.). (2016). *"The most noble of the senses": Anamorphosis, trompe-l'oeil, and other optical illusions in early modern art*. Ramsey, NY: Zephyrus Scholarly Publications.