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Correggio: Geografia e storia della fortuna (1528-1657)  
(review)

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cannot think of any such case, so it seems contrary to the social norms for commissions at the time.

The portrait on the cover, where the sitter takes the heroine Lucretia as her model, was identified in 1971 as a woman of that name from a patrician family in Venice, whose descendants owned the picture when it was first recorded in 1797. Her marriage date matches the style-date usually assigned to the painting. The family ownership in 1797 is most plausibly due to inheritance, and a market purchase by such people before that time is not plausible. Bertling Biaggini does not mention this study, but only, and then with approval, a recent one rejecting it and calling the record of 1797 maybe “fortuitous and irrelevant,” even while noting that “most scholars have accepted it” and one should “not necessarily reject it.” At least it should be cited.

The religious reading of the Trescore frescoes cites various texts, but not the Gospel’s basic one, “I am the vine.” Typographical errors are commendably few, but two may be cited that were both puzzling and difficult to set straight: in Lotto’s will “in aria” should be “in Maria” (153), and Dolce’s negative criticism, a rarity for the period, is on page 154 of the edition of his book cited, not 184 (note 156 in chapter 4).

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Maddalena Spagnolo. *Correggio: Geografia e storia della fortuna (1528–1657)*.

Quaderni 8. Milan: Fondazione Il Correggio, 2005. 312 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$47.50. ISBN: 88-8215-914-0.

Meaning is not permanently inscribed in works of art. It shifts from the moment of the images’ making to periods in which they are being copied as models, collected for their aesthetic features, and scrutinized in the art literature. Tracing the history of how certain works and artists have been looked at — the exchanges between art objects and their endless parade of viewers — means to reconstruct their fortune, or, in modern terms, their reception. Maddalena Spagnolo’s book considers the critical and figurative fortune of a great Italian Renaissance artist, Antonio Allegri, better known as Correggio. Methodologically Spagnolo’s volume falls into reception history, considering viewers’ responses to Correggio’s art not as a guarantor of truth or correctness but as an index of the painter and his production to generate meanings under specific circumstances.

Spagnolo’s volume is divided into ten chapters and is well illustrated by numerous color images (although some are unnecessarily duplicated). Each chapter offers a discussion of the perception and reception of Correggio’s work covering the period from 1528 — when the artist was still alive — to 1657. Quite interesting is the second chapter focusing on the interpretation that Ortensio Lando offers in his *Catalogi* (1552). Spagnolo argues that it is a genuine reading of

Allegri's art and his career based on firsthand information that Lando collected from friends in the artist's hometown, Correggio, thus marking Lando's independence from Giorgio Vasari's 1550 life of Allegri. Lando (and Vasari) report that Correggio did not go to Rome. Spagnolo's view is that Correggio's Roman sojourn did take place but is not documented and runs against what Correggio's early sources record. In the end, Correggio's possible Roman trip must remain an open question. It is an issue that had fundamental consequences in the way Correggio was viewed in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *Kunstliteratur*. Correggio was seen as the representative of the Lombard (or, in modern terms, Emilian) pictorial school because his modern manner epitomized a different artistic perfection than those of his peers, Raphael and Michelangelo. The foundation of Allegri's style, what made him a truly modern artist, rested on his imitation of nature and not on his absorption of the greatest Roman examples.

Chapter 8, which is dedicated to the Carracci and their absorption of Correggio, is also rich and interesting. Spagnolo's discussion begins with the two letters, published by Carlo Cesare Malvasia in his *Felsina Pittrice* (1678), which Annibale Carracci addressed to his cousin Ludovico Carracci from Parma in 1580, the authenticity of which has been disputed. After mentioning the fundamental reading offered by Giovanna Perini, who validated the letter's authenticity on historical, philological, and linguistic grounds, Spagnolo attempts to advance her own distinctive interpretation (203). The result is, however, an ensemble of hypotheses and suppositions with little new perspective. In her view, Annibale's reception of Correggio's art, his comparison between Correggio's soft style and Raphael's wood-like manner, resides more in Malvasia's editorial manipulation of the letters' content than in Annibale's perception of Correggio's true artistic values. Yet, was Correggio not already seen by the Carracci as the representative of Lombard artistic excellence when they were active in Bologna in the 1580s? The Carracci's reception of Correggio's art did not coincide with Annibale moving to Rome, as Spagnolo implies.

Spagnolo's book ends with Francesco Scannelli, who in his *Microcosmo della Pittura* (1657) celebrated Correggio as an equal to Apelles. Her discussion of Correggio's critical and artistic fortune might have come to a more satisfactory conclusion had she included Malvasia's viewpoint. It was Malvasia who provided a historical, critical, and epistemological foundation to the Bolognese (and largely Lombard) tradition of painting, which Correggio embodied and perfected. Spagnolo's book throws new light on an artist like Correggio whose achievements have been difficult to assimilate into the history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art. One will learn a lot from reading her volume, which enriches our perception of a great Renaissance master who, as John Shearman put it, is still "an undervalued artist."

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