FEMALE DUALITY AND PETRARCHAN IDEALS IN TITIAN'S SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2009

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ABSTRACT

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Painted around 1514 in Venice, Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* has long been the subject of debate in Art History. Building on previous scholarship, including work from Charles Hope, Walter Friedläender, and Rona Goffen, this essay looks into the triangulated relationship created between the two women and the viewer through real and implied gazes, and how this relationship addresses a specific patron’s desire to self-fashion an identity that would be projected for a specific audience. Where previous scholars have argued that Niccolò Aurelio commissioned this painting as a wedding gift, this paper suggests a new reading of the commissioning in light of the female patron, Laura Bagarotto, and her desire to self-fashion an identity not only to her new husband, but also to the society in which she newly found herself a part. In addition to the discussion on patronage, this paper will use Petrarch’s writings and influence as a frame for the examination of Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* by exploring Petrarchan conceptions of the ideal woman and connecting the double figuration in the painting to Laura Bagarotto’s dual roles as bride and widow. In so doing, this essay provides a new interpretation of the idealized renaissance female by drawing attention to the inherent duality of women, identified by Petrarch, as conflicting yet necessary female characteristics. Approaching this painting multi-dimensionally—looking at the influence of Petrarch, the social circumstances surrounding the commissioning, and examining other artistic representations of idealized women—it will be possible to question the assumed male patronage of the piece.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Allie Terry for her unwavering dedication to the development of my research, as well as my own personal growth and maturity within the field of Art History. It was her enthusiasm and intensity that pushed me forward in my studies, causing me to discover and pursue Italian Renaissance Art as a specialty. Without her commitment to her students, many would fail to recognize their true potential, and I want to thank her for helping me find my own. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Rebecca Green for her ability to step in quickly where needed and her support in this process. It is her insistence on perfection that pushed me in the final days to settle for nothing less than the best. Both women have made lasting impacts on who I am and who I will become. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Hershberger for his guidance as Department Chair. He was able to set me in the right direction many times when procedures and policies became unclear. Many others have contributed to my education that led to the development and actualization of this paper, and to them I would also like to say, “Thank You”.
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Female Duality and Petrarchan Ideals in
Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*

Painted around 1514 in Venice, Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* (Fig. 1) represents a scene of idyllic female beauties in a landscape rich in symbolism, exemplifying sixteenth-century Venetian paintings and the revival of courtly love. In the foreground of the horizontal panel, two women sit on opposite sides of a stone chest. The women appear to be twins, or the same female portrayed in two different guises. Both figures are mirror images of the other’s physical characteristics: each has reddish-blonde hair, snow-white skin, rosy complexion, arched eyebrows, and blue-green almond-shaped eyes. The figure on the viewer’s left, however, wears a sixteenth-century Venetian bridal gown and dress gloves: she grasps a bowl with her left hand and flora with her right as she stares out of the painting, apparently acknowledging the presence of the viewer (Fig. 2). The figure on the viewer’s right is unclothed, with only a red silk draped over her left arm and a white linen folded across her lap (Fig. 3). She turns her gaze away from the viewer and toward the clothed woman on the left side of the panel. In so doing, she effectively creates a triangulated relationship between the two women and the viewer.

This essay will argue that this triangulated relationship between the viewer and the two women in the painting originally was meant to implicate the viewer in the process of fashioning the identity of the painting’s patron, Laura Bagarotto. By creating a formal relationship between the two women in the panel, and a visual relationship between the two women and the viewer through real and implied gazes, Titian addresses a specific patron’s desire to self-fashion an identity that would be projected for a specific audience. Bagarotto would have been particularly interested in projecting an image of chastity and purity, important characteristics for a bride, especially considering this image commemorates her second marriage. One critical viewer for the painting has been identified as Niccolò Aurelio, Laura Bagarotto’s second husband and the
Venetian Secretary to the Council of Ten. As often is the case with marriage portraits or paintings, in which the coat of arms of both the bride and the groom are included, Niccolò’s escutcheon has been discovered on the chest upon which the two women sit (Fig. 4), while Laura’s coat of arms are found within the silver bowl resting upon the same chest (Fig. 5). Rona Goffen, in her seminal article “Sacred and Profane Love and Marriage” from 1992, made the critical connection between the couple’s coat of arms and the circumstances for the painting’s commission: Titian’s painting was made to honor or celebrate their wedding. In this context, the bridal gown of the figure on the viewer’s left connects to the real marriage between Niccolò and Laura, and the nude figure on the right connects to the mythological figure of Venus, the goddess of Love.

Previous scholarship, including work from Eugene Cantelupe, August Mayer, Charles Hope, Walter Friedläender, and Rona Goffen, has argued that Niccolò Aurelio commissioned this painting as a wedding gift. Often, a man would commemorate his marriage by purchasing

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2 Ibid., 112.

3 Traditionally, a nude female has represented the goddess Venus. The inclusion of the colors red and white support the allegorical identity of the figure in this particular painting by calling upon the myth of Venus and Adonis. See Geoffrey Miles, ed., Classical mythology in English literature: a critical anthology (New York: Routledge, 1999) 211-328. Chapter 5 of this book provides multiple interpretations and readings of the Venus and Adonis myth. The use of red and white as identifying colors of Venus can be seen in images such as Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Primavera. The connection of the nude to Venus will also be explained through analysis of the relief etchings found on the chest in the central foreground.

either a portrait of the newly married couple together or a portrait of his new bride as not only a
gift for the household, but also as a way to visually consummate the marriage. However, the
documents remain silent as to the particular circumstances of the patronage of this painting.
What has yet to be considered is the notion of Laura Bagarotto as patron. As recent scholarship
has revealed, females with financial means—means that were sometimes larger than their male
counterparts—also played the active role in the patron-artist relationship on the occasion of a
wedding. This paper suggests a new reading of the commissioning in light of the female patron
and her desire to self-fashion an identity not only to her new husband, but also to the Venetian
society in which she newly found herself a part.

The choice of the dual representation of the female in Titian’s wedding portrait stems
from the tradition of poetry established by Petrarch in the early 1300’s, and revived in Venice in
the early 1500s. Petrarch’s own relationship with Laura—Laura de Noves—brought about his
personal discovery of female duality: that is, the woman is both physical and celestial, the object
of lust and the object of love. It also initiated the tradition of the idealized female portrait.

Vol. 20, No. 3 (Sep., 1938): 320-324, esp. 323. All articles state Niccolò Aurelio was the patron
of the piece, without definitive evidence to support their arguments. These statements are made
under the assumption that men were solely capable and responsible for such a commissioning.
16, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989): 55-86. See p. 68 for a discussion on the notarizing of this image as a
way to confirm the marriage arrangement prior to the physical consummation that happens after
the ceremony.
6 Linda Seidel, Arnolfini Portrait, 60. This is where Seidel’s argument begins by looking at the
financial and economic records of the two families involved in the Arnolfini marriage
arrangement. She finds evidence that favors Giovanna, the bride, as the wealthier of the two and
thus stating that it was possible, and in fact more understandable, that it was her family’s money
that paid for the wedding portrait by Jan van Eyck. See also, Julius Kirshner and Anthony
Molho, “The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence,” Journal of
Modern History, 50 (Sept., 1978): 403-438. This article examines the importance of a mature
and wealthy dowry for a bride in Renaissance Florence. The dowry provided funds that would
be used by both the bride’s family and the husband to fill the house with the appropriate
accoutrements.
Using Petrarch’s writings and influence as a frame for the examination of Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*, this essay explores Petrarchan conceptions of the ideal woman and connects it to the double figuration in the painting in relation to Laura Bagarotto’s dual roles as bride and widow. In so doing, this essay provides a new interpretation of the idealized renaissance female by drawing attention to the inherent duality of women, identified by Petrarch, as conflicting yet necessary female characteristics. It also challenges the existing acceptance of Niccolò as the patron of Titian’s painting, and provides a re-evaluation of the female position within public and private realms, her contribution to the arts, and awareness of her own dualistic identity.

**THE POET: HIS LIFE, HIS LOVE, HIS LEGACY**

Petrarch’s relationship with his idealized love, Laura de Noves, provides a critical frame for the understanding of Titian’s image as the depiction of two women representing one ideal female. The passion that Petrarch felt for Laura de Noves, combined with the impossibility of a physical relationship with her, put Petrarch in a predicament. He was unable to act upon his feelings of desire, but, at the same time, could not repress those feelings. It was this specific situation that contributed to the realization that there exists a sexual duality in women, fueling the poetry that would influence artists for centuries. This realization continued to evade artists, leaving the genre of idealized female portraits incomplete without an accurate recognition of Petrarch’s position on female duality until Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* presented two idealized women as one in the same.
Petrarch first encountered his Laura in 1327.\textsuperscript{7} He was 22 years old and immediately captivated by her indefinable beauty and enigmatic presence. Quickly his poetic writings donned a new subject and she appeared in his *Rime Sparse* and, later, his *Secretum*.\textsuperscript{8} As inspired as he was, however, he confesses:

```plaintext
...I still seem to pass  
Over your beauty in my rhyme...  
But the burden I find crushes my frame  
The work cannot be polished by my file.  
And my talent which knows its strength and style  
In this attempt becomes frozen and lame.\textsuperscript{9}
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Although Laura’s beauty was the source for Petrarch’s greatest lyrics, he rarely discussed her physical characteristics in specific terms. At most the reader is given lines such as “the hands so white and slender, and the arms pure and tender,” “the serene eyes, the lashes’ starry curls, the lovely mouth of angel, full of pearls, and of roses and sweet words, and the voice, that make all others tremble and rejoice, and the forehead, the hair, that if someone sees in summer, at noon, glows more than sun,” and “the gentle aura that from that clear face moves with the sound of her words full of grace” that attempt to describe her beauty.\textsuperscript{10} While these are somewhat generalized poetic descriptions of Laura de Noves, Petrarch reveals enough information for the reader to imagine the characteristics of both her body and spirit; indeed, artists such as Titian drew on

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\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., XXXI-XXXVIII. The date of Petrarch’s first encounter with Laura is not recorded in either the book of sonnets, the *Rime Sparse*, or he letters to St. Augustine, the *Secretum*. In fact this information is recorded on the fyleaf of a book of Virgil’s writings in his library. No direct passage exists that describes Petrarch’s initial reaction to Laura de Noves’ beauty. Instead, the *Rime* immediately and clearly reflects Petrarch’s love for a woman, identified by capital letters in the poems, as Laura. See sonnet V as an example.  
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., XXXVI-XXXVII for direct passage. See also, Francesco Petrarca, *English and Italian Sonnets & Songs* (New York : Grosset & Dunlap, 1968), *Rime* No. 20.  
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 63, 169, and 293 for direct quotes from Petrarch’s *Canzoniere/Rime*.
\end{flushleft}
Petrarch’s lyrics for idealized female portraits in the sixteenth century. As will be discussed below, the list of qualities described by Petrarch of his Laura are directly related to the qualities of the represented females in Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*, as well as in other portraits of idealized women throughout the Renaissance.

Scholars find evidence in Petrarch’s writings regarding the dual nature of his love for Laura.\(^{11}\) In 1342 he began to write his *Secretum* in which he confesses to Augustine that he understands and respects the limitations of their relationship since he and Laura are beings of separate realms. Where he viewed himself as human, flawed by passion and desire of the flesh, he saw Laura as removed from such earthly obsessions, as a divine or celestial being.\(^{12}\) By this recognition, Petrarch raised the figure of Laura above the level of divinity associated with a mortal female. He claimed that she was simultaneously human and divine, profane and sacred, sexual and chaste.\(^{13}\) In doing so, Petrarch acknowledged that there exists a duality in women, the expectation that a female should embody conflicting roles of sexuality, that is, confronted and personified in Titian’s later painting of *Sacred and Profane Love*.\(^{14}\)

Petrarch’s works were widely revitalized and disseminated throughout sixteenth-century Venice. Pietro Bembo popularized Petrarch’s love poetry in Venetian culture with his publication of a new edition of Petrarch’s sonnets, in the form of the *Canzoniere* or *Petrarchino*, in 1501.\(^{15}\) Aldus Manutius published his own version in 1504 and made it widely accessible to

\(^{11}\) Theodor Mommsen, *Introduction*, XV-XLII.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., XXXV-XXXVI. Mommsen makes this interpretation of the dual existence of Laura without citing the lines in the *Secretum*.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., XXXV-XXXVI.

\(^{14}\) Petrarch might not have been the first poet or scholar to acknowledge the duality of women, but it was the combination of his words and popularity that created the awareness that such a divide exists in the roles of women.

\(^{15}\)David Alan Brown and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006) 196. This passage
the friends and patrons of Titian, if not the artist himself.\textsuperscript{16} The poet’s writings were extremely popular in the city, due in part to a high literacy rate and the increasing trend to emulate courtly love. To Italians, Petrarch was not only a literary genius for writing and establishing a common vernacular, but also for writing poetry that captured the essence of love, admiration, and goodness desired by all.\textsuperscript{17}

The intense revival of Petrarch’s writings in the early 1500s corresponded to an increasing interest by artists and scholars in the presentation of idealized, yet individualized, beauty. Petrarch’s literature became a common source for the physical characteristics of ideal beauty. Since Venice was one of the leading printing capitals at this time, Venetians had access to many forms of literary genres, including poetry, that described and praised female beauty. Yet, Petrarch’s sonnets assumed a privileged position among them.

The wide acclaim of his love for Laura had spread far beyond Italy by this time, and became a universal aide in the portrayal of the physical characterizations of idealized female portraits.\textsuperscript{18} Many artists used Petrarch’s writings as a foundation for female portraits, including those by Parmigianino, Bronzino, and Giorgione. Parmigianino’s \textit{Madonna with the Long Neck},

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\textsuperscript{16}Martin Lowry, \textit{The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979) 158 for a list of publications during this time.
\textsuperscript{17} Theodor Mommsen, \textit{Introduction}, XV-XVI for his contribution to the Italian language. See pp. XXXVII-XXXVIII for a description by Mommsen on the ideality of Laura de Noves. Petrarch’s poetic writings about Laura were so beautifully written and his love and admiration for her was so eloquently recorded, readers would mimic Petrarch to attempt to convey the same feelings towards their ideal woman.
\textsuperscript{18} Ugo Dotti, “Petrarch in Bohemia: Culture and Civil Life in the Correspondence between Petrarch and Johann von Nuemarkt,” \textit{Petrarch and His Readers in the Renaissance}, eds. Karl A.E. Enenkel and Jan Papy (Netherlands: Brill, 2006) 73-87. “One thing may be certain: in the middle of the Trecento the poet singing the praises of Laura was not only known in Italy and France, but also under the German sky and in ‘barbaric’ lands. In Prague, where Emperor Charles IV resided, a ‘Prague circle’ of admirers had just been formed, as in Italy where intellectuals and literators had gathered in Florence and Naples.” pp. 73-74.
\end{flushright}
for example, has been analyzed in direct comparison with Petrarch’s records of the physical characteristics of Laura de Noves, and is said to have incorporated all of them in the rendition of the Madonna.\textsuperscript{19} Other artists, such as Bronzino and Giorgione used iconographic references to Petrarch’s Laura, such as a laurel branch or the inclusion of a book with Petrarch’s sonnets, to place their paintings within a Petrarchan love context.\textsuperscript{20} Each artist applied a personalized reading of Petrarch’s work to their paintings, creating visually different portraits unified by context.

Although Petrarch’s writings were visually translated into individual female portraits, a double portrait of a single woman arguably better exemplifies his complicated and compromised love for Laura. Titian’s \textit{Sacred and Profane Love} can be read as such a double portrait, displaying nearly identical women in two different female roles. What is crucial to the reading of Titian’s painting as a double portrait, however, is not a disruption of the established symbolic analyses of imagery and context, but a layering of contributory influences upon each other to question the, as yet, still inconclusive patronage. Bringing previous scholarship on the function of the painting together with Petrarchan influences on physical idealization and female sexual duality, this essay will uncover new ways to consider the patronage of the painting and the self-fashioning of the patron through it. By re-examining \textit{Sacred and Profane Love} in this way, it is possible to begin to make connections between the writings of Petrarch, the symbolically

charged dual representation of the female seen in Titian’s painting, and the actual woman that the painting represents.

THE PAINTING AND THE PATRON

Laura Bagarotto’s mutual roles as widow of a Venetian traitor and new bride of a Venetian official positioned her as an unusual patron in the early sixteenth century. Before her marriage to Niccolò Aurelio, Laura was married to the Paduan nobleman Francesco Borromeo. 21 Although few details are available concerning this marriage, Goffen has calculated that it was a short-lived. By looking at Laura’s childlessness in 1509 after her first marriage ended and fertility in 1527 in her second marriage, along with Borromeo’s tax registration as still living at home, she was able to discover Bagarotto and Borromeo were both young and only married a short while. 22 The marriage lasted only a few years until it was cut short by means of a highly public political controversy that resulted in the death of her husband, Borromeo. Her uncle, cousins, and brother-in-law, in addition to her husband, supported the imperial forces in 1509 and were thus declared traitors to the Venetian Republic and subsequently imprisoned. 23 While some members were released from prison, others, including her father, Bertuccio Bagarotto, and her husband, were held responsible for their acts against Venice and were executed, leaving Laura orphaned and a widow. 24 Alone and without her dowry, she had to rely on her brother to take her in. 25

22 Ibid., 122, esp. footnote 13. Young for Bagarotto refers to her early- to mid-teens. For Borromeo, young would imply late-twenties to early-thirties.
23 Ibid., 112-113.
24 Ibid., 112-113. Specifically see Goffen’s footnotes on her calculation of Bagarotto’s age, her husband, and his death.
25 Ibid., 116.
However, as has been discussed by Goffen, at some point between Borromeo’s death in 1509 and 1514, Niccolò Aurelio chose Bagarotto as his bride. While the widow of a Venetian traitor is an extremely unlikely and untraditional choice for the bride of a Venetian secretary to the Council of Ten, Aurelio nonetheless used his position of persuasion to gain approval for this marriage. This position, however, did not reflect his meager financial circumstances at the time of his marriage to Bagarotto. The reason for his marriage to Laura is unknown, but one may speculate that he sought her for her dowry. As Secretary to the Council, Aurelio would have been aware of the new law that would restored dowries to the Paduan widows of the 1509 uprising. Hopes of an improved in financial standing would help to explain his motivation to marry a woman who was married previously to a Venetian traitor. However, the marriage was beneficial to Bagarotto as well, since it would remove her as a financial burden to her remaining family.

The recovery of Bagarotto’s dowry immediately prior to her marriage to Aurelio may provide the context for the couple’s commission of *Sacred and Profane Love*. As Goffen argued, Aurelio’s modest financial situation would not have allowed for the independent commissioning of such a large painting by the then notable Titian. Laura’s dowry, however,

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26 August Mayer, *Commissioner*, 89. Mayer and Goffen both state Aurelio’s position as secretary to the Council at the time of his wedding and the commissioning of this painting.
28 Ibid., 124, esp. footnote 45 and 47.
29 Rona Goffen, *Love and Marriage*, 120. Titian’s life was poorly documented between 1511 and 1516. While he was a notable artist, he had not yet gained many large-scale commissions. The fee for *Sacred and Profane Love* would corresponded accordingly to Titians fame at his time. Goffen does note Bagarotto’s claim on her father’s estate was worth 2,100 ducats. The fee for the painting would have been less than this, considering it was her money that would have paid for it.
would have provided sufficient funds for the portrait.\(^{30}\) If Bagarotto was in fact the acting patron for the commission, as opposed to merely the recipient of the painting from her new husband, then one may read the imagery, symbolism, and double female representation in light of Bagarotto’s desire to project a new identity to her husband and the larger Venetian community. Without a father, uncle, or older male family member to attest to her virtue, Laura was left only with her word and honor to protect her name.\(^{31}\) Without this verbal testimony, one may read the visual portrayal of Laura as a bride in this wedding portrait as a visual reinforcement of her virtue and purity. Laura and Niccolò, like most betrothed couples, used the liminal period before their marriage to renegotiate their individual identities and to project their newly formed alliance to others through material transfers and the commissioning of visual imagery. The commissioning of *Sacred and Profane Love* would have been an important step in this self-fashioning, especially given Laura Bagarotto’s notorious past. The imagery chosen for the painting would have to reflect Laura in a positive light, while staying true to her previous identity as widow.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{30}\) Ibid., 118. Goffen indicates the widow herself petitioned for its return. See also Federico Zeri, *Titian: Sacred and Profane Love* (Milan: RCS Libri S.p.A., 1998): 6. Zeri, however, believes Aurelio used his position to get the dress, household items, and finances returned. For an analogous situation, see Linda Seidel, *Arnolfini Portrait*, 60. Seidel’s argument explains how the wealthier of the couple, the bride, and her family would have control over the use of dowry funds and were key figures in the commissioning of this wedding portrait. Where Laura Bagarotto was left without a family to bargain her funds, by law the dowry was returned to her. Her father and husband were dead, thus placing her in full authority over the funds. Niccolò may have suggested the use of her monies, but could not legally take them.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 116. However, as Goffen sates, “The Renaissance bride is chaste by definition, this virtue being foremost in any contemporary recitation of her desired qualities.”

\(^{32}\) Rona Goffen suggests if Niccolò were in fact the patron of the painting, he would have had some influence on the symbolic themes and imagery chosen for the piece. What I argue is that Laura, as patron, would have had an equal opportunity to influence Titian and his inclusion of specific literary references.
The choice of symbolism embedded within the painting holds many clues to the identity of the patron as Laura Bagarotto. The white and crimson colors of Profane Love’s dress on the viewer’s left were typical colors worn by Venetian and Paduan brides, representing both Niccolò and Laura’s heritage. The white gown, the belt, gloves, roses, myrtle, and loose hair were all standard components of contemporary Northern Italian bridal wear. Each item of clothing and accessory was chosen to symbolically represent the virtue of the bride or serve as a way to fashion her identity as a member of a specific social class and her new husband’s household. Titian’s depiction, therefore, corresponds to upheld conventions, and alludes to Laura’s own role as Niccolò’s bride.

It is possible, however, that Titian was also recalling Petrarchan ideals by clothing this maiden in red and white. The documented familiarity with Petrarch’s writings in Venice at this time lends further nuance to Titian’s choice of attributes, and this connection may have been evocative of the idealized female characteristics found in Petrarch’s sonnets. For example, in Sonnet 323, Petrarch describes Laura de Noves as “dressed with a gown white and rare, so woven that it seemed of snow and gold, … (and) the upper part shrouded in dark lure.” The color of white symbolizes female purity, while the red represents the passion and sexual desire felt by Petrarch for his Laura. By using similar color symbolism in Sacred and Profane Love, 

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33 Rona Goffen, *Love and Marriage*, 111-125. See also Andrea Bayer, ed. *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy* (New York : Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008) for more examples of Italian brides and the goddess Venus. Also see the recent catalogue edited by Cristelle Baskins, *The Triumph of Marriage*, (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2008), esp. Adrian Randolph, “Unpacking Cassoni: Marriage, Ritual, Memory.” pp. 15-30. Randolph and Baskins cover the imagery of cassone lids, specifically processional imagery that recognizes the identity of the bride based on idealized renderings of the body to the specific dress she wears.

34 Petrarch’s popularity is discussed later and is supported in documents that record the publications of printer Aldus Manutius.

Titian created subtle references to Petrarchan ideals, which served as a reflection of the real bride, Laura Bagarotto.

The repeated motif of red and white colors in the clothing and drapery of two women in the painting allows the viewer to identify the nude and the bride as the same person. The red and white sashes around the nude’s body link her visually to the bride, as does the rendering of the nearly exact physical characteristics of hair, eye, and skin color, body size and shape, and complimenting mirrored poses. The two women were meant to be viewed as one in the same, that is, they represented the same woman in different guises. This fluidity of identity establishes an interchangeable relationship of much the symbolism and imagery found within the painting’s foreground. The unified identity of the women also positions the image within the context of a Petrarchan dialogue on female duality. By recognizing that these two figures do in fact represent the same woman, they coalesce to embody the two conflicting roles of a female: human and divine, sexual and chaste, earthly and heavenly.

The recognition that these two women in the painting are representations of two sides of the same woman, in a Petrarchan sense, creates the need to identify each woman in her individual role. Beyond the issue of dress versus nudity, the bodily positions of the two women contribute to the analysis of their assigned sexual roles. The right figure’s pose, a frontal body view with a half facial profile indicates a sense of modesty not conveyed by the clothed figure. Her gaze avoids the viewer’s. Her head is slightly down-turned and her closed legs prevent the viewing of her genitalia whereas the left figure’s gaze confronts the viewer with a direct stare. Her legs, while hidden beneath her dress, are separated and outstretched, drawing attention to her fecundity and purpose as a wife to bear children. However opposite, both figures may be viewed in light of the sonnets of Petrarch and his notion of the duality of women: the figure on the left,
as a woman of the material world, serves as the target of his physical and earthly desires while the figure on the right, as a divine goddess, is associated with the purity of his Laura, never to be violated with such physical urges. Placing these painted women in the context of a wedding portrait, both representations serve to underscore Laura Bagarotto’s position as a new bride. As part of her self-fashioning it would have been necessary to address the obvious fact that she was previously married, yet worthy of her new marriage to Niccolò Aurelio. In this way, Venus represents Bagarotto as a pure, virginal woman, worthy of the marriage, and the clothed figure references Laura’s position as bride, ready to perform her wifely duties.

Iconographic details in the central foreground of the image further contribute to a reading of *Sacred and Profane Love* in terms of Laura Bagarotto’s past and present positions on the eve of her second marriage. The stone chest, in addition to Niccolò Aurelio’s coat of arms, holds two significant reliefs that correspond to the figures seated upon it and to the patron herself. First, the frieze located to the viewer’s right displays the mythological story of Venus and her lover Adonis, which ends in heartbreak and sadness (Fig. 6). According to Walter Friedläender, the outstretched naked boy in the relief is a figuration of Adonis being whipped by a towering Mars. The two figures to the right of the drama possibly represent two stages of Venus’ reaction to the event: she runs to Adonis’ aid and protests the scourging by Mars. According to the myth, Venus runs to the aid of Adonis who is flogged, and in some versions, slain, by a

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36 The landscape and background imagery of the painting hold symbolic clues as to the function of the painting as wedding portrait, yet they do not contribute to this paper’s discovery of the patron or positioning it within a Petrarchan dialogue. All symbolism and corresponding analyses can be found in Rona Goffen, *Love and Marriage*, 116 or through individual analyses of each item through a text such as James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1994)

37 Walter Friedläender, *Rose*, 320-324. However, Friedläender also has suggested that the closer figure is a nymph with up stretched arms and the figure in motion if Venus: see p. 320. A nymph is a logical interpretation of the additional figure as they were Venus’ agents. She would have sent one to warn Adonis of Mars’ plan.
jealous Mars. In doing so she pricks her calf on the thorn of a white rose, resulting in a red bloodstained rose.\textsuperscript{38} The red rose then becomes a symbol of love, referencing Venus’ love for Adonis.

The inclusion of this relief contributes to the understanding of Laura Bagarotto as patron of the painting. Transferring identity from the patron to the nude figure in the painting, the grieving Venus may be read as the grieving Laura since both are women who have lost lovers and thus identify as widows. Out of respect for her past identity, and without intention to hide this from her new husband, Bagarotto used the subtle imagery of the chest to serve as a reminder to all that she was a widow. Her new marriage to Niccolò Aurelio would have been a highly public affair, especially considering Niccolò’s position in the Venetian government. Laura’s first marriage would have been common knowledge. Instead of trying to hide her past, the narrative relief embraced it in a dignified way.

The second relief (Fig. 7), found on the chest just right of the bride’s leg, references a story of love regained, a second chance at life, one similar to that given to Laura through her marriage to Niccolò. Walter Friedläender also recovered the literary reference for this relief, from the turn-of-the-sixteenth century book \textit{Hypnerotomachia Poliphili}.\textsuperscript{39} In the second section of this story, the young woman Polia takes a vow of chastity under the guidance of the goddess Diana. After Polia takes her pledge, her friend Poliphilo attempts, without success, to win over her heart. Following Polia’s cold and harsh rejection of Poliphilo’s advances, she leaves her

\textsuperscript{38} Geoffrey Miles, ed., \textit{Classical mythology in English literature: a critical anthology} (New York: Routledge, 1999) 211-328. Chapter 5 of this book provides multiple interpretations and readings of the Venus and Adonis myth. Basic details remain consistent across these and other examples, which are presented here for basic understanding of how the relief represents the myth.

\textsuperscript{39} Walter Friedläender, \textit{Rose}, 320 states this book was published in Venice in 1499. It would have been well known and the depicted scene would have been as easily identifiable to a contemporary audience, just as Petrarchan references were.
friend to die in a temple. A storm then sweeps her up into a dream-like realm that shows her the punishment felt from self-deprivation of pleasure. During this experience, two men drag Polia from her bed, determined to show her the pain and anguish caused by her vow of celibacy. This event brought about a change of heart and Polia returns to Poliphilo, realizing her true feelings for him. The goddess Venus brings Poliphilo back to life, reuniting the couple in paradise. Polia was offered a second chance at life, one full of love and happiness under the guidance of the goddess Venus. The inclusion of this scene in Titian’s painting, like the scene of Venus and Adonis, directly referenced Bagarotto’s situation. Like Polia, she too was offered a second chance at life, love, and happiness through her remarriage to Niccolò Aurelio.

In *Sacred and Profane Love*, the allegorical Venus, on the right, looks at the bride, an allegory of Bagarotto on the occasion of her marriage to Niccolò Aurelio, on the left. Venus’ body position, slightly higher, turned, and leaning toward the bride suggests an unspoken dialogue between the two figures. Venus’ downward gaze hints at her superiority as a divinity and her ability to watch over the bride. Her approving glance implies a blessing of the new marriage. Under the guidance and approval of the goddess of love, Bagarotto is now ready to become a wife, again.

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41 Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 118 and on. This work on women and family in Renaissance Italy reveals more details on the position of women and their purpose and function in the household. A woman was referred to either through her father’s name or, after marriage, her husband’s name. Her identity was established through her relationship to men. Since Bagarotto was a widow and left without family members, her identity was essentially ripped away from her in 1509. By remarrying Niccolò, Laura would have a new identity established and a new purpose in life (raising a family).
42 Charles Hope, *Titian*, 36. “Her approving glance suggests that she is giving the bride her blessing.”
In addition to the narrative reliefs, the actual stone chest upon which they appear also underscores Bagarotto’s position as widow and wife. Scholars refer to the chest alternatively as a fountain, sarcophagus, or cassone.43 If it is a fountain, as argued by Charles Hope, Eugene Cantelupe, and partly Rona Goffen, then the presence of water explains its function. If it is in fact a sarcophagus, as suggested by Goffen, then it could be in reference to Adonis, Venus’ dead love. If a cassone, or dowry chest, also supported by Goffen, then it would correlate to Polia the bride and her dowry gifts. The ambiguity of the chest’s specific function heightens its power to connect to Laura Bagarotto’s unusual circumstance and contributes to the understanding that Bagarotto used this painting to represent the different positions of bride and widow in which she found herself. The inclusion of the story of Venus and Adonis allows for the assumption that it is a sarcophagus, and through transference of character identity, the tomb shifts from Adonis’ burial chest to that of Laura’s first husband, Borromeo. The story of Polia and Poliphilo opens interpretation to the possibility that it is the cassone, or dowry chest given by brides, specifically, Bagarotto as the new bride, to Aurelio. The flexibility of meaning of the chest, along with the narrative reliefs embrace Laura’s past, present, and future positions, and work with the rest of the image to present an image of herself to the viewer.

Looking at Titian’s Sacred and Profane Love and its allegorical references and symbolism in the social context of Laura Bagarotto’s life, clear connections can be drawn between Bagarotto and the portrayed women in the painting. The images and details directly and indirectly address Bagarotto’s position as widow and new bride, identifying her as both

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43Rona Goffen, Love and Marriage, 112 indicates it might be a silver dowry chest, a sarcophagus, and a fountain. Eugene Cantelupe, Titian, 219 refers to it as a fountain along with Charles Hope, Titian, 34. All use these terms without much direct intention or explanation. The function of the piece is in fact indeterminable, which allows for such interchangeability. Cristelle Baskins, Triumph. The entire book thoroughly explains the purpose and function of cassone chests and how they pertain to the dowry and household.
characters. The two women are also directly and indirectly linked to each other through mirrored physical characteristics, reflection of dress, and subtle literary references, uniting them as one woman represented in two guises. The figures, through these characteristics and the recognition of their two-in-one identity may be read as representations of the dual female identity uncovered by Petrarch. In this manner, Laura Bagarotto’s self-fashioned identity emerges as the two women and thus a Petrarchan idealized female.

SHIFTING IDEAS AND IDEALS: PETRARCH’S LAURA TO TITIAN’S LAURA

Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* built on a long tradition of artistic attempts to portray the beauty described by Petrarch’s lyrical sonnets. The first portrait of the ideal Laura was painted by Simone Martini around 1372.44 Created for the poet at Avignon, and described in Petrarch’s words as “look[ing] as humble as a dove, and promis[ing] comfort with her eyes,” this now lost portrait of Laura de Noves is believed to be the only image created of the poet’s beloved lady.45 Giorgio Vasari considered Martini’s portrait as an allegory of the ascent of the soul toward paradise. By viewing her in this way, Vasari played with and reinforced Petrarch’s claim that in order to paint her, Simone would have been in paradise for only in paradise is where her image could be conceived.46 Other artists followed Martini’s example, the original idealized portrait of a Renaissance women, directly attributing characteristics found in Petrarch’s

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Canzoniere to their sitters, or referencing these ideas through strategic placement of a laurel branch or Petrarchino (a pocket-sized version of the Canzoniere carried by women).

One of the most notable sixteenth-century portraits of Laura to follow Martini’s example, was Giorgione’s Portrait of a Woman, more widely known as Laura (Fig. 8). This painting portrays a woman in three-quarter view framed by a laurel branch behind her. She looks off to the right and coyly plays with the right lapel of a man’s housecoat, either in the act of exposing or covering her right breast. In doing so, the sitter takes control of her exposure, determining how much of her body is visible and how much is concealed. Although the sitter’s breast is still available for the visual consumption of the viewer, Junkerman has suggested that the ambiguity of the action and intention of the woman is what empowers her, placing herself in control of her own sexuality. The movement of her hand in either direction still indicates that the exposure is of her own doing. In this image it can be seen how the female sitter is portrayed in a position of power, or choice, over her exposure not seen before in portraiture, and, while her identity might be concealed, it is that lack of identity that permits such an image. As will be seen through the use of allegorical figures and idealized, less naturalistic physical characteristics in the work of Titian, the lack of identity of the sitter contributes to the reading of the painting through the transference and interchangeability of symbolism.

Giorgione’s painting is particularly important, not only because it broke with traditional female representation in which the body was covered as a sign of modesty, but it also reinvigorated the paragone between painting and poetry at the turn of the sixteenth century. The laurel leaves reference and draw upon the literary tradition of Petrarch in the late thirteenth and

47 See Anne Christine Junkerman, Lady and the Laurel, 51 and Elizabeth Cropper, On Beautiful Women, 385 for discussions on the laurel branch and Petrarchinos.
early fourteenth centuries. Not only is the laurel leaf affiliated directly with the poet, but also Petrarch himself often refers to Laura de Noves as a laurel tree. Giorgione’s *Laura* is established within the mythological foundations of poetry meant to praise beautiful women such as her through the inclusion of the laurel. If an association with Petrarch and idealized beauty is one of the goals of a painting, then a deliberate play on the name Laura, the use of idealized physical characteristics, or the addition of a laurel branch would accomplish this.

Unlike Giorgione’s *Laura*, Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* does not rely upon laurel leaves to reference Petrarch, Laura de Noves, or her idealized beauty. Beyond the play between the patron’s name, Laura Bagarotto, and Petrarch’s beloved’s name, Laura de Noves, to connect the two women, the painting includes the physical characteristics referenced in the poet’s writings to give form to the two females of Titian’s painting. The women in the painting have Laura de Noves’ “white and slender arms,” “hair…that glows more than [the] sun,” and “serene eyes [with] lashes [of] starry curls.”49 The use of ideal and not necessarily the accurate physical attributes of Laura Bagarotto allowed Titian to portray her as a perfect bride and woman through the inclusion of symbolism and allegorical references to associate herself with the women in the painting.50 By doing so, Laura Bagarotto allegorically became the ideal dualistic woman, when, in reality, it would be impossible to outwardly embody both roles.

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49 Francesco Petrarca, *Sonnets*, 63, 169, and 293.
50 Patricia Simons, “Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture,” in *History Workshop*, No. 25 (Spring, 1988): 4-30. This essay describes the position of female sitter in the Renaissance and the objectification of her body by the male-dominant viewership. Bagarotto would have tried to avoid this objectification by not using her body as the model for the figures in *Sacred and Profane Love* and instead, recognizable symbols and allegorical references. It is the lack of physical correlation, however, that incites the question of who the model was for Titian’s painting. The absence of physical likeness between Bagarotto and the figures is a main reason some scholars might contest the painting as being made of and for Bagarotto and Aurelio. It can be speculated that the sitter was in fact a Venetian prostitute. Patricia Brown’s examination of the private lives of Venetians reveals the household
Painting the ideal “Laura” developed and changed greatly from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century. Originally described as “dove-like” and “comforting,” the Laura portrait became a genre in which female sexuality was exposed and explored, as seen in Giorgione’s *Laura) feelings of love and admiration were conveyed for the sitter, as will be seen in Bronzino’s *Laura, and female duality was confronted, as in Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*. Each portrait brought a new and interesting interpretation of Petrarch’s sonnets and his ideas on the ideal woman. Where many portraits of a Laura may arguably be the best figure of Petrarch’s writings, Titian’s painting was the first to connect the unique circumstances of the patron with not only the physical attributes of Laura de Noves, but also her own unique position of duality as described by the poet.

**THE POETRY AND THE PAINTING**

Petrarch never listed the specific physical characteristics of Laura de Noves that he considered to be the embodiment of ideal beauty. Instead, scholars from the sixteenth century had to search for specific passages in his poetry that addressed all features, and, eventually descriptions were found for every body part except for her nose. By piecing together lines from Petrarch’s sonnets, these scholars created a list of Laura de Noves’ basic physical arrangements of the Venetian courtesan, indicating that not only were these women known and active, but their lives were as carefully documented as any other Venetians in the sixteenth century. (See Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives*, 159-187). The availability of courtesans, in addition to the fact that proper women did not sit for nude portraits, makes it possible that one did in fact sit for Titian, allowing for the creation of the allegorical Venus that serves as a representation of Bagarotto as the nude, celestial, virginal figure necessary to complete her dual characterization.

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Elizabeth Cropper, *On Beautiful Women*, 385-386. No one knows why Petrarch never directly addresses all of Laura’s features at once, or completely. The dedication by scholars to finding the passages that put together a list of idealized physical features allows for multiple opinions to be expressed, but also leaves the idealized woman open to multiple interpretations.
characteristics; a list that can be used to identify these ideal qualities in portraiture. Artists, however, interpreted these characteristics to produce a wide visual commentary on Laura’s “ideal beauty.” Some artists used Petrarch’s words and attributed reddish-blond hair, fair skin, or rouged lips to their sitters. Others, instead, represented ideal beauty through an ideal mind.

Related to the search for the perfect female features in Petrarch, a new portraiture tradition developed of women holding the Canzoniere during this period. In these portraits, a woman not necessarily endowed with physical beauty would use the inclusion of Petrarch’s literature to point to inner beauty instead. Artists, such as Bronzino in his individual portraits of females explicitly referenced the notion of Renaissance ideal beauty through the depiction of women of modest beauty with an open book of Petrarch’s sonnets. These women, while visually lacking beauty, have inner beauty through the contemplation of Petrarch’s lyrics, a virtue just as necessary as physical perfection. These artists and women drew upon what would have been highly recognizable iconography and understood ideals to portray a beautiful and poetic nature about them.

A good friend of Titian and a poet himself, Pietro Aretino, often commented on and mocked the practice of painting women holding Petrarch’s book of sonnets. Lending evidence to the argument that even the least likely citizens of Venice knew the importance of Petrarch’s Canzoniere and its affiliation with female idealization, Goffen discovered that sixteenth-century Venetians sometimes lamented that the lady was indistinguishable from a courtesan who dressed like her, since the courtesan often carried a copy of Petrarch’s Sonnets, and mimicked lady-like

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52 Ibid., 374 describes the necessary physical characteristics to create a Petrarchan portrait.
53 Carol Plazzotta, Bronzino’s Laura, 255, 262 note xii.
54 Carol Plazzotta, Bronzino’s Laura, 262 note xii.
55 Typically, these portraits were done for “the courtesan who lost her beauty [and who] was surely one of those who never went abroad without her Petrarchino in hand.” Ibid., 385.
While the practice of painting women explicitly holding their *Petrarchino* may not have been a widely appreciated genre, it is clear the impact Petrarch has on Venetian literacy and painting. The newly popular love sonnets and the need to project courtly ideals of beauty saturated Venetian culture so much that art would naturally mimic everyday life and reflect such a genre.

While Giorgione was one of the first to assimilate the new societal ideals into his paintings, Titian continued to portray the idealized female who embodied the poetic beauty. Many of his images, such as *Isabella d’Este, Woman with Mirror*, and *Woman in a Fur Coat* portray beautiful women that reference Petrarchan ideals. However, it was not until *Sacred and Profane Love* that he addressed the Petrarchan dilemma of female duality. Petrarch desired Laura as a physical woman until the end of his life, but he also respected her as a celestial, or holy woman, one not to be defiled by a physical weakness such as lust. He understood that the ideal woman was both sexual and celestial, profane and sacred. The characterization of a woman in both roles demonstrates an understanding of Petrarch’s writings and openly addresses the duality of females. Titian’s portrayal of Laura Bagarotto as two women in *Sacred and Profane Love* exemplifies the dual Petrarchan roles she was to possess, by becoming the wife of Niccolò Aurelio.

By portraying an allegory of Laura Bagarotto, Titian was able to use artistic license in his portrayal of the bride and thus allowed him to draw on the visual rhetoric of the female ideal. In his portrayal of another idealized female, Isabella d’Este (Fig. 9), Titian represented the artist’s

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56 Rona Goffen, *Titian’s Women*, 79.
57 The title of the painting, *Sacred and Profane Love*, is a fairly recent construction, resulting from the undeniable similarities and reflected likeness of the two figures and the symbolic association with Venus, the Goddess of Love. It references the Neoplatonic thoughts on courtly love, where women were expected to emulate the goddess Venus through chastity and virtue until her wedding day.
ideal beauty, and the lack of specific physical characteristics allowed the figure to be interpreted by its viewers as allegorical or metaphorical. The painting shows a woman in three-quarter view dressed sumptuously in a regal gown with fur accents. She has reddish-blonde hair, fair skin, slightly rouged lips and cheeks, and almond-shaped blue-green eyes. Isabella d’Este’s portrait reflects the writings of Petrarch through the portrayal of the same physical characteristics as Laura de Noves, and, like Titian’s other images, her ambiguity sanctions personalized projections by the viewer to represent a specific beloved.58

Through the appropriation of Petrarchan idealized characteristics, artists created portraits of ambiguous females that either embodied physical beauty or inner, spiritual beauty. Where Titian relied heavily upon the physical characteristics of Laura de Noves in *Sacred and Profane Love*, he also based his descriptions on the Petrarchan notion of female duality. However, artists other than Titian solely appropriated physical idealization in portraiture, adapting and reworking Petrarch’s original description of ideal beauty to accommodate the ever-changing viewer, yet continuing to ignore the dualistic nature of female existence.

**OTHER ARTISTS AND THEIR WOMEN**

While many scholars have approached female portraiture within a Petrarchan framework, most analyses focus on the physical characteristics of the women, and not the inherent problem of female duality at the root of Petrarch’s relationship with Laura. Elizabeth Cropper has argued

58 Rona Goffen, *Titian’s Women*, 92. “Like the women in *Sacred and Profane Love*, the figure in the *Isabella d’Este* may be interpreted as an allegorical or metaphoric representation of the subject. Alternately, she may be seen as a Petrarchan portrait, in the sense of being a general idealization of the female, and more, because, like Laura of the *Canzoniere*, Titian’s Isabella is the artist’s ideal, his construct, and not reality.” This is not to say Titian was himself projecting desire upon Isabella, but the viewer could project feelings of love upon her as a representation of the idealized female and not one woman in particular.
that Parmigianino’s *Madonna with the Long Neck* (Fig. 10) represents the idealized beauty described in Petrarch’s sonnets, from her hair, eyes, and skin color, all the way to the ideal elongation of the neck.\(^{59}\) Many other artists painted women of ideal perfection, from Botticelli to Leonardo. Some focused on every detail put forth by Petrarch concerning the beauty of Laura, while others focused on the beauty within and the amorous connection between sitter and viewer. Some portraits of these *belle donne* were exhibited in 2001 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., revolving around Leonardo da Vinci’s *Ginevra de’ Benci* (Fig. 11) as the ideal female depiction.\(^{60}\) Other portraits, such as one by Bronzino (Fig. 12), which was produced for Laura Battiferri, addressed the intellectual beauty of the sitter, rather than specifically referencing her idealized physical beauty. Others consider Giorgione’s *Laura* as the beginning of the idealization of the woman due to her ambiguity and sexuality.\(^{61}\) All these women—the Madonna, Flora, and Mona Lisa—can be viewed as artistic representations and interpretations of the Petrarchan idea of womanly perfection.\(^{62}\) Despite these attempts to identify the “Petrarchan portrait,” Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* represents Petrarch’s sonnets in a different way, not just through the physical characteristics of Laura, but also through the manifestation of two women, the celestial and earthly, that is the ideal.

\(^{59}\)Elizabeth Cropper, *On Beautiful Women*, 374-394. The whole essay addresses the application of the features of Petrarch’s Laura, through Firenzuola’s revitalization of his lyrics, to the *Madonna with the Long Neck*, addressing along the way other Renaissance artists who attempted to do the same. This article, however, claims Parmigianino’s painting is the perfect rendering of ideal beauty.


\(^{61}\)Anne Christine Junkerman, *Lady and the Laurel*, 51. This page begins the discussion on the sitter’s morality, sexuality, and her position within the discourse of ideal women, wives.

\(^{62}\)Ibid., 51. The whole article has further elaborations and examples.
For example, in Bronzino’s portrait of Laura Battiferri, there is a connection between the writings of Petrarch, the patron of the portrait, and the sitter, which is also realized in Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*. Painted between 1555-1560, Bronzino portrays Battiferri seated in a three-quarter view, with Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* prominently displayed. Her face remains in profile, subverting her gaze from the viewer, with the book opened to a page with two sonnets written for the poet’s own love Laura fully visible (Fig. 13). By deliberately drawing upon reference of Petrarch and Laura de Noves, the patron, Varchi, desired to make a similar connection between himself and the pictured Laura Battiferri. Evidence of Varchi’s affection for Laura Battiferri can be found in Bronzino’s poems and letters to both Varchi and Laura.\(^{63}\) Much like Petrarch, Varchi wrote about his love, and, since his literary skills probably lacked in comparison, he relied on Bronzino to capture his ideal lady perfectly.

The characteristics of idealized beauty described in Petrarch’s poems were adopted by artists in order to not only impose a standardized ideal beauty upon the sitter, but also to suggest the intense love Petrarch held for his Laura upon the woman portrayed. Because Petrarch’s poems for Laura were so widely popular, and men and women alike knew of her beauty and his love for her, a painted portrait such as Laura Battiferri’s would portray similar connotations.\(^{64}\) Thus there is great reason for Varchi to have commissioned the piece; it was a way of displaying his somewhat restricted or forbidden love for Laura Battiferri through the association of Petrarch and his own restricted and forbidden love for Laura de Noves.

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\(^{63}\) Carol Plazzotta, *Bronzino’s Laura*, 254-255 is where he discusses Bronzino’s writings to Laura Battiferri and the “love” of Varchi for her.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 254-255. It appears Laura Battiferri’s portrait was highly demanded by Varchi, portraying Petrarch’s idealized beauty and his writings that would reference a secret love. Also see Elizabeth Cropper, *On Beautiful Women*, 385 where she describes how men and women who have lost their beauty would carry *Petrarchinos* and often get portraits of themselves holding the little books, a practice highly mocked by Aretino.
This theme of conveying a love for the sitter is repeated in Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love*. Petrarch’s sonnets, through the idealization of Laura, made it possible for many others to see in the image of Laura an image of their own lover, and in the lyrical lines to hear their own thoughts of passion resound. The idea of channeling Petrarchan love through an image not only enhanced the private meaning of the painting, but also heightened the experience of an informed viewer by revealing the deeper, more amorous intention of the patron. This understanding lends further support to the claim that Laura Bagarotto commissioned *Sacred and Profane Love*. Laura, as a widow, would have been grateful for the opportunity to remarry and regain an identity within society. In her position as the active patron of the painting, she would have used the occasion of their marriage to convey to her new husband how appreciative she was for her second chance at life. Knowing the money for the painting most likely came from her newly returned dowry only strengthens her position as patron. Laura Bagarotto had the opportunity to choose the symbolism and literary sources for the imagery of this painting and influence Titian prior to completion. Her patronage may be explained through such inclusions, and serves as a testament to her awareness and familiarity with Venetian literature, contemporary wedding portraiture symbolism, and the inherent problem of female duality as presented by Petrarch.

**CONCLUSION**

Approaching Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* multi-dimensionally—by looking closely at the influence of Petrarch, the social circumstances that surrounded the commissioning of the

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painting, and how this rather popular genre varies from artist to artist—it is now possible to question the assumed male patronage of the piece. Where actual evidence is lacking, historical fact, societal clues, and symbolic readings fill in. Niccolò Aurelio may have commissioned the painting as a way to commemorate his marriage to Laura Bagaorotto. Laura could have done the same as well. What is important to note is not necessarily a definitive answer to the patronage question, but a realization that the female’s position within society and the arts was shifting, making the argument for Laura’s patronage just as plausible as Niccolò’s.

By looking at Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* through the poetry of Petrarch and discovering the existence of a duality in women, scholars may now be able to approach the readings of double female portraiture differently. As an established influence, Petrarch’s writings and their interpretation, can be used to fuel further research on dual representations of the female, possibly connecting artworks together in a way never before considered. The use of the double female by artists, and specifically female patrons, will also encourage research to delve further into the historical and social contexts of art commissions, looking more personally into the situations of the patrons to discover perhaps a different intent for their patronage.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Figures

Figure 1. Titian. *Sacred and Profane Love*. 1514. Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.

Figure 2. 
Titian. 
*Sacred and Profane Love* 
(detail). 
c. 1514. 
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.
Figure 3.  
Titian.  
_Sacred and Profane Love_ (detail).  
c. 1514.  
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.

Figure 4.  
Titian.  
_Sacred and Profane Love_ (detail).  
c. 1514.  
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.
Figure 5.
Titian.
*Sacred and Profane Love* (detail).
c. 1514.
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.

Figure 6.
Titian.
*Sacred and Profane Love* (detail).
c. 1514.
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.
Figure 7.
Titian.
*Sacred and Profane Love* (detail).
c. 1514.
Rome, Italy, Borghese Gallery.

Figure 8.
Giorgione.
*Portrait of a Young Woman (Laura).*
1506.
Vienna, Austria, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.
Figure 9.
Titian.
*Isabella d’Este.*
1534.
Vienna, Austria, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

Figure 10.
Parmigianino.
*Madonna of the Long Neck.*
1533-1540.
Florence, Italy, Uffizi Gallery.
Figure 11.
Leonardo da Vinci.
*Ginevra de’ Benci.*
c. 1474.
Washington D.C., United States, National Gallery of Art.

Figure 12.
Angelo Bronzino.
*Portrait of Laura Battiferri.*
c. 1555-1560.
Florence, Italy, Palazzo Vecchio.
Figure 13.
Angelo Bronzino.

*Portrait of Laura Battiferri*
(detail).

c. 1555-60.

Florence, Italy, Palazzo Vecchio.