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Discovering the Visual Legacy of *Ginevra degli Amieri*: From Chapbooks to Paul Richter's Assessment of Hans Schäufelein's *Scenes from the Tale of Ginevra Degli Almieri and Antonio Rondinelli*

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Abstract

Art historian Jean Paul Richter (1847–1937) is well known for his translations of Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks and his role in framing art historical connoisseurship in the nineteenth century. However, his attributing the title *Scenes from the Tale of Ginevra Degli Almieri and Antonio Rondinelli*, a fifteenth-century Florentine legend, to a fifteenth-century German painting is problematic. This essay argues that Jean Paul Richter's assessment of the panel is incorrect, offering, in conclusion, a field of further inquiry, Griselda, from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as the possible subject. To provide a visual comparison to the panel, this paper will examine woodcut prints included in sixteenth-century chapbooks of *La Historia di Ginevra degli Almieri*.[1]

The novella enjoyed a rediscovery among nineteenth-century British and American tourists, as the story's setting—the medieval quarter of Florence near the Mercato Vecchio—had disappeared mainly due to Florence's urban renewal programmes of the 1880s. For many, the destruction of this neighbourhood ripped out Florence's heart, creating a renewed interest in the history of Florence's medieval past. Ginevra's legend struck a powerful chord, and countless writers and artists would translate, reprint, and paint her tale.

The passion for Ginevra's story may have influenced Richter's assertion. Nonetheless, the panel's dating of 1470 and visual inconsistencies between the painting and the novella create doubt about Richter's assessment of the panel.

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Kewords: *cassoni*, woodcuts, Amieri, Almieri, Schäufelein, Richter, Griselda, Mercato Vecchio, Florence

[1] Please note that there are alternate versions of the title, though the changes are minor.

Introduction

The Italian novella, a literary style that blossomed from the pens of Plutarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, reflects a love for humanist tales and stories shared by the Florentines throughout the centuries. The novella of Ginevra Amieri, titled *La Historia di Ginevra degli Almieri*,[2] penned sometime around 1550, is a mix of romance, tragedy, and redemption, where a young woman, Ginevra Amieri (or Almieri), marries the man her family chooses, not her true love, and dies but comes back to life and is reunited with her true love.

This novella enjoyed a rediscovery among nineteenth-century British and American tourists who believed the legend to be true. It remains part of the Florentine street culture, as tour guides and troubadours still retell this fantastical legend under the shadow of Giotto's campanile. While the tale is most certainly a fabrication, the possible truth of the legend still intrigues us today. The passion for Ginevra's story may have swayed the respected art historian Jean Paul Richter (1847–1937) to see the Italian heroine in a German work (**Figure 1**). In the exhibit catalogue for London's Royal Academy of Arts' *Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters and Deceased Masters of the British School Winter Exhibition*, Richter lists the painting *Scenes from the Tale of Ginevra Degli Almieri and Antonio Rondinelli*, crediting it to the "German School" (Royal Academy, 1895, p. 40).

This essay argues that Jean Paul Richter's assessment of the panel needs to be corrected, offering, in conclusion, as a field of further inquiry, Griselda, from Boccaccio's *Decameron* as the possible subject. To provide a visual comparison to the panel, this paper will examine woodcut prints included in sixteenth-century chapbooks of *La Historia di Ginevra degli Almieri*. A discussion of the novella's publication history and its woodcuts will demonstrate the errors of Richter's assessment.

This article consists of four sections to provide a complete analysis of *Ginevra Degli Amieri*. The first section provides a synopsis of the story. The second section recounts the prior scholarship. The third section analyses the sixteenth-century woodcuts found in the earliest versions of the tale. The fourth section concludes the article with a brief discussion of the similarity between representations of Boccaccio's Griselda and Richter's supposed *Ginevra* painting.

Furthermore, while the paper questions Richter's evaluation of the German panel, it does not seek to discredit or malign Richter's legacy. Jean-Paul Richter, his teacher Gustav Morelli (1816–1891), and later his protégée Bernard Berenson (1869–1959) facilitated the formation of connoisseurship and collecting in the nineteenth century. Richter, a respected collector and art historian, catalogued several essential collections, such as London's National Gallery. Ludwig Mond hired Richter to advise him on purchases for his impressive art collection. Richter

[2] Please note that there are alternate versions of the title, though the changes are minor.

is best remembered for his work on translating the notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci. This paper fully respects Richter and his contributions to art history.

The painting, a 12" x 17" oil on wood panel, dates to the early sixteenth century. The wood is either Italian Poplar (Richter's assertion) or German Conifer, as described in the *Repertories fur Kunstsissenschaft* (Winterausstellung der Londonder Royal Academy, 1895). The painting depicts a young woman in the foreground, with her body cropped at the hips. Her torso and chest are bare. Heavy robes cover her hair, back, and arms. Raising her arms to her face, she appears to be removing or donning her clothes. The middle ground, framed in a lunette, possibly an arch, is a street scene. Three figures, elegantly dressed, engage in conversation. A second grouping of townsfolk mingle and point upwards. A man in an upper-story window looks out onto the action. The female in the foreground, possibly Ginevra, seems disconnected from the scene in both activity and location. Unfortunately, the panel's location is unknown. The last listing of the panel is in a 1943 catalogue for an exhibition held by the Galerie Fischer in Lucerne, Switzerland (see Gëmalde, 1901; Art and Literary Sales, 1918).

Richter describes the panel in the *Art Journal*, positing that "the painter of the picture is of the German, probably from the Swabian school of Holbein's period" (Richter, 1895, p. 90). A journalist for *The Magazine of Art* remarking on the painting's style and origin observes:

> Smooth, enamel-like execution and an unusual delicacy of color mark Dr. J. P. Richter's curious Scenes from the *Novella of Ginevra Degli Amieri*. A sixteenth-century work of the German school, to which it has not been possible up to the present time, to fit a name (Royal Academy Exhibit, 1985, p. 162).

By 1901, the painting was loosely attributed to Hans Schäufelein (Gemalde, 1910). Although a discussion of Hans Schäufelein is beyond this paper, it does seem odd that a German Renaissance artist would depict a local Florentine legend. A reviewer for *The Academy* was also a bit skeptical about the subject matter, commenting, "The selection of such a subject of pure Florentine romance as this by a German artist of the sixteenth century is in itself a singularity, to which it would be hard to produce a parallel" (Fine Art: Old Masters at the Royal Academy, 1895). Nonetheless, Schäufelein remained listed as the artist in the 1943 Galerie Fischer sale catalogue.

However, Richter's interest in the Florentine legend is understandable, as the story's setting, the medieval quarter of Florence near the Mercato Vecchio, due to neglect and urbanisation, had largely disappeared during the 1880s. For more than three hundred years, readers or listeners of the tale could visit the locations listed in the book, even the Torre Amieri, where Ginevra supposedly lived. However, this area was primarily demolished during Florence's urban revitalisation of the late nineteenth century. For many, the destruction of this neighbourhood ripped out Florence's heart, creating a renewed interest in the history of Florence's medieval past. Ginevra's legend struck a powerful chord, and countless writers and

artists would translate, reprint, and paint her tale.

The story inspired many versions, including John Addington Symonds's 1881 English adaptation, *The Story of Ginevra Degli Almieri, Who was Buried Alive in Florence*, and Percy Bysshe Shelley's unfinished poem "Ginevra" (1821). Additionally, while photographers captured the gritty reality of the neighbourhood before its demolitions, including the Torre Amieri **(Figure 2)**, Macchiaioli artists, such as Fabio Borbottoni (1820–1902), painted romanticised scenes of the neighbourhood (**Figure 3**) through the lens of nostalgic realism and sun-drenched patches of colour. The story found new life and audiences among those who longed to save the fading, eventually lost, beauty of the medieval towers, piazzas, and façades mentioned in the tale. While a complete understanding of the story is not necessary for the aim of this paper, a synopsis will be beneficial.

The synopsis is based on Alessandro D'Ancona's (1835–1914) version of *La Historia di Ginevra degli Almieri, che fu Sepolta Viva in Firenze* (1863).[3] D'Ancona republished the 1550 version without adding or altering the original text written in ottava rime using the Florentine vernacular.

Figure 1:Hans Schäufelein (loosely attributed), Scenes from the Tale of Ginevra Degli Almieri and Antonio Rondinelli, c.1470, poplar on panel. Unknown. Photo Credit: Galerie Fischer, 1943.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, the translations are by the author.

Figure 2: Torre Amieri, 1881, photograph. Alinari Photography in the Author's collection.

Figure 3: Fabio Borbottoni, Piazza Grande del Mercato Vecchio di Firenze, 1867, oil on canvas. Private collection. Photo Credit: Wikimedia.

The Legend of Ginevra Amieri

During the Plague of 1396, Florentine Ginevra Amieri falls in love with Antonio Rondinelli. Sadly, the Amieris, Ghibelline to the core, refuse to marry their daughter to a rival Guelph family like the Rondinellis. Instead, they prefer Francesco Agolanti, a fellow Ghibelline with the proper pedigree. Ginevra, dutiful and honourable, marries Agolanti. Four years later, amidst a surge in the Plague, Ginevra falls ill and collapses. By all indications, she is dead. Fearful of the plague, Agolanti hastily buries her in the family tomb at Santa Maria del Fiore. However, Ginevra, still alive, awakens. Fighting her way through the crypt, she emerges, reborn. Winding her way around the cathedral and Giotto's Campanile via the Via della Morte, Ginevra wanders, like a restless spirit, through the streets of the Mercato Vecchio, knocking on the door of her husband, then her parents, and lastly, her uncle. They all reject her, fearing a spectre.

Finally, she seeks out Antonio, who takes her near-frozen body into his arms and nurses her back to health. Ginevra and Antonio, hoping for marriage, seek guidance from the Ecclesiastical Court. The judge, moved by Ginevra's experiences, declares that since she was pronounced dead, Ginevra is released from all prior obligations and free to marry Antonio. In addition, the judge decrees that Agolanti must return Ginevra's dowry—a unique twist to an already happy ending.

The comparisons to *Romeo and Juliet* are inevitable. However, Ginevra's and Antontio's romance predates Shakespeare's play, though both works relate to the classical tale *Pyramis and Thisbe* and Masuccio's *Thirty-Third Novella.* Additionally, Boccaccio's "Tale of Cariseni and Cataliana," which includes a premature burial and a somewhat similar resolution, formed the basis for Ginevra. Another less-discussed literary source is *La Dote* (1550), written in verse by the Florentine playwright Giovanni Maria Cecchi. *La Dote*'s somewhat convoluted plot features mistaken identities, forced marriages, and a questionable dowry. Amieri, Agolanti, and a love interest named Ginevra appear in the play.

Ginevra's popularity (even today) rests on the tale's validity. The legend is sprinkled with just enough local sights and known names to make the story plausible. The Amieri (also spelled as Almieri), Agolanti, and Rondinelli all were once-powerful families and feature prominently in the history and architecture of Florence from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, especially during the wars between the Ghibellines and Guelphs. Ginevra's alleged Great-Uncle Foglio "Fig" Amieri, who built the tower where Ginevra lived, won the Golden Spurs at the battle of Monatperi. The history of the Amieri family is extensive (Becker, 2004; Passerini, 1845; Machiavelli, 1845), but as historian Guido Carroci, author of *Il Mercato Vecchio di Firenze*, remarks, "In the fourteenth century, the memories of the Amieri ceased" (Carocci, 1884, p. 166).

Although the earliest scholarship assures the story's validity, their anecdotes, and alleged documentation have proved untruthful or non-existent.

Scholarship began in 1630 with Antonio Rondinelli's (no relation) *Relazione del Contagio Stato in Firenze*, which denies the legend. Ferdinando Migliore's *Firenze Citta' Nobillisma Illustrata*, published in 1684, refutes Rondinelli. Domenico Maria Manni's *Le Veglie Piacevoli* (c.1757) continues Migliore's work. Manni's research does challenge Migliore's 1396 dating of the events. Citing the original text, Manni argues for 1400 as the time of Ginevra's first death. Manni also recalls a Florentine rumour "that Ginevra degli Amieri was painted by Ghirlandaio in the year 1490 in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella" (Manni, 1815, p. 45). Such a portrait would change the scholarship immensely, but the portrait in question is no doubt Ginevra Tournaboni's.

Later historians such as Placido Landini and Alessandro D'Ancona effectively argue against Manni's and Migliore's assertions. D'Ancona views the writer as someone from "a vast school of versers [*sic*], who more than art, aimed at usefulness, rather than true poetic praise sought an easy popularity" (D'Ancona, 1863, p. 14) and believes it began as a song. One of the more critical aspects of D'Ancona's research for this paper was his catalogue of the novella's publication history and its woodcuts. It is easy to get lost in the tangle of the history of the story and all the various claims of proof. Still, this paper hopes to move beyond the textual record to discuss the art historical legacy of the story, such as the woodcuts and the provenance of Richter's painting.

The history of the tale is humble. Ginevra's story, written in *ottava rima* using the Florentine vernacular, possibly began as a song or story told in the street by tour guides and troubadours. It is also possible that it started as a play, first performed in 1546 for Duke Cosimo I. Manni proposes:

In the Diary ms. by Antonio da Sangallo, it is said that on the Carnival Monday of the year 1546, a beautiful Commedia titled *Ginevra Morta dal Campanile, la Quale Essendo Morta, e Sotterrata, Resuscitò* was made in the residence of Duke Cosimo. And such was the fame, which remained from the time of the event" (Manni, 1815, p. 48).

This diary entry, which predates the first established printing of *Ginevra* by only four years, may indicate that it was created for Cosimo I and later published in the vernacular. It is a plausible assertion well worth more scrutiny. Christine Acidini notes in a discussion on Sangallo's theatrical spectacles performed at the Medici court that some performances were published and "the first pamphlet of that kind was produced in 1539 on the occasion of Cosimo Medici's wedding to Eleanor of Toledo" (Acidini, 2004, p. 124). If a version of *Ginevra* was performed at the Medici Court and subsequently published, this helps explain why such a popular legend took so long to appear in print. It simply did not exist until c.1540. Yet, as with this research, the documentation remains untraceable. In general, the scholarship on the novella's publication history is limited.

Originally printed as a chapbook, it lacks the caché of an illuminated text or bound book. Chapbooks, published in high volume, usually on a single sheet of

cheap paper and folded into small booklets, often contained rough woodcuts and were sold by peddlers and street merchants. publications of chapbooks in Florence started around 1470. Many vendors, according to Rosa Salzberg, sold them along the Via Calimala, near the Mercato Vecchio (Salzburg, 2011, pp. 737-738), Ginevra's neighbourhood, so it is surprising that we didn't find any earlier versions before 1550.

According to Rosa Salzburg's discussion on the social and historical value of the chapbook, the storylines of these cheap pamphlets "were familiar to the audiences from the corpus medieval oral in literate vernacular culture [and] included *cantari* or songs in the *ottava rima* of the street performers" (*ivi*, p. 737). Salzburg's discussion of what early chapbooks contained indicates that Ginevra Amieri's plight should have appeared earlier than 1550.

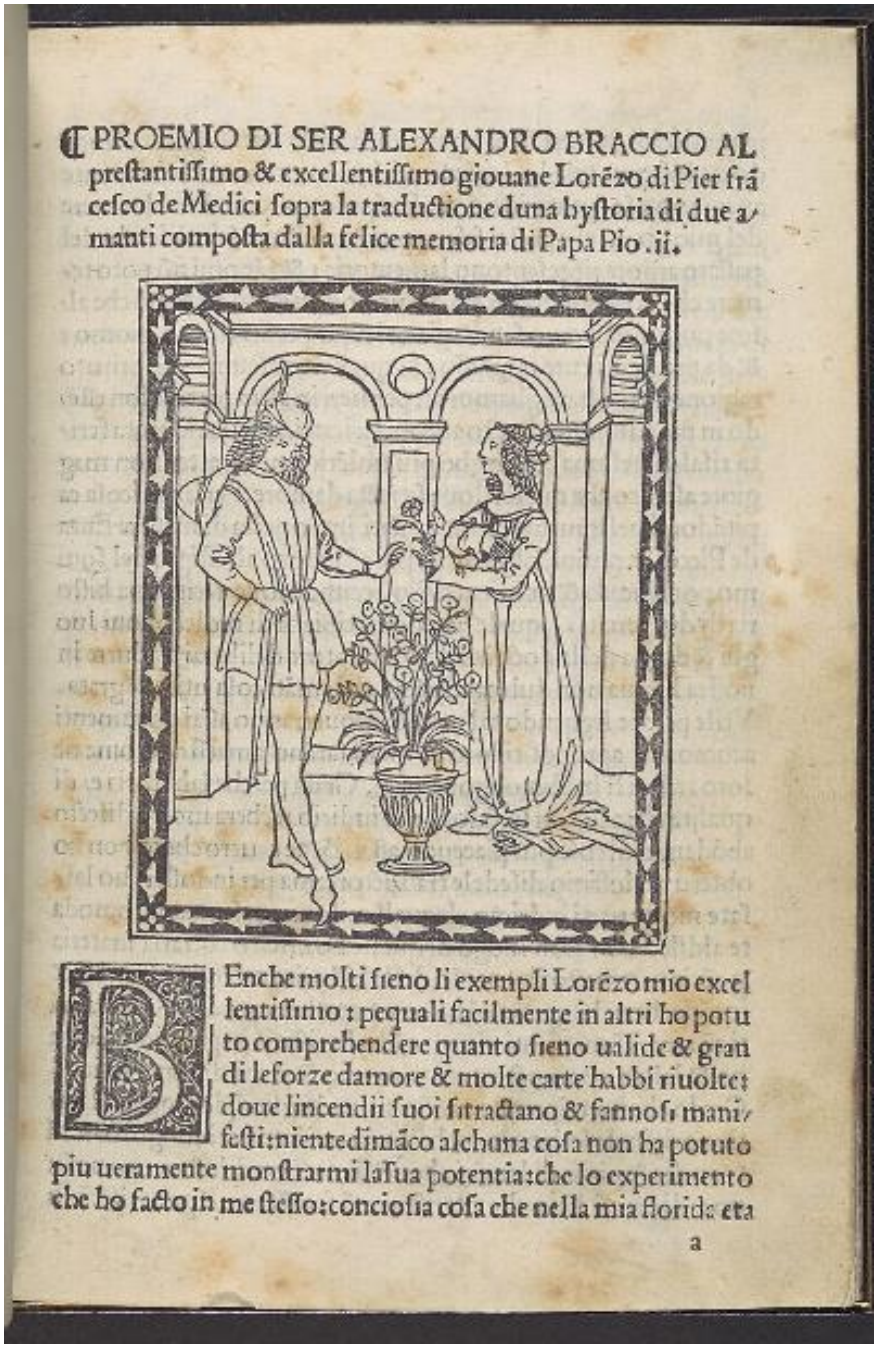
This gives more credence to the validity that story has not been around since the fifteenth century, which casts further doubt on Richter's painting being Ginevra. No known older manuscripts, woodblocks, cassoni, or other representations of the tale existed before circa 1550. This would mean that Richter's painting would be the earliest image of Ginevra degli Amieri. It is highly unlikely, as the story is a much later fabrication created for the Italian public. The earliest known image is the woodcut print on the cover of a c.1550 chapbook.

Woodcuts

Unfortunately, *Ginevra'*s woodcuts have received very little scholarly attention. They are not included in the *Illustrated Bartsch*, a thorough collection of more than 50,000 images. Additionally, A. M. Hind, Alfred William Pollard, and Dr. Friedrich Lippmann, though all are pioneers who founded the scholarship on woodcuts, do not include later sixteenth-century publications in their research. Only Paul Kristeller includes the story of Ginevra degli Amieri, listing three versions in his catalogue (Hind, 1933; Pollard, 1843; Lippman, 1888; Kristeller, 1897, pp. 8–9).

That is not to say they neglect all Florentine woodcuts; in fact, a fair amount was written on small, illustrated publications created between 1490 and 1508. Lippman explains that these "woodcuts of Florentine origin which appear during the short period […] are marked by a certain grace and charm peculiarly their own" (Lippman, 1888, p. 6). Publications of this kind include popular tales such as *Piramus et Thisbe*, *Novella di Gualtieri e Griselda*, *Novella di Due Presti*, and the *Due Amanti* (*ivi*, p. 128) (**Figure 4**). Additionally, Pollard discusses a series of publications known as *Rappresentazioni*, a series of stories based on plays both "sacred and secular, which enjoyed life extending over two centuries." Like *Ginevra*, these plays "are uniformly written in *ottava rima*, and poorly printed in double columns" (*ivi*, p. 133). The fact that *Ginevra* does not appear among these publications strongly indicates that the story only existed a little before 1550. Had the *Istoria degli Ginevra degli Almieri* already been part of an oral tradition it would

have been ideally suited for these earlier chapbooks devoted to short romances and plays told in the Florentine vernacular.



¶ PROEMIO DI SER ALEXANDRO BRACCIO AL prestantissimo & excellentissimo giouane Lorēzo di Pier frā cesco de Medici sopra la traductione duna hystoria di due a/ manti composta dalla felice memoria di Papa Pio .ii.

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Figura 4: Storia dei Due Amanti, c.1495, woodcut illustration. Metropolitan Museum, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1925.

The golden age of Florentine woodcuts is relatively short, lasting from 1490 to about 1508. At this point, as most scholars agree, the quality and originality sharply declined. Artistic expression became lost in the need for commercialism. Kristeller explains:

> The oldest examples of a technical style are often also artistically the most important since a new style of working attracts itself to men of real artistic individuality, afterwards denigrating when it falls into the hands of mere craftsmen. This is especially true in the case of Italy (Kristeller, 1897, p. 1).

Unfortunately, the woodcuts made for *Ginevra* lack the elegance and refinement of the *Due Amanti* and others. Ginevra's woodcuts fall beyond the time of the elevated Florentine woodcuts and are part of the later cruder era of mass production, adding to the validation of the story's date. Nonetheless, despite their low quality, the woodcuts provide a visual legacy that stayed in place for nearly seventy years.

This legacy is not present in Richter's assessed work in any way. If the German School painting represents the tale, it is a visual anomaly. The portrayal of a nearly naked woman, exposed in a town, does not relate to the legend—or any of its woodcuts. In general, the chapbooks contain similar depictions of Ginevra ascending from the grave, with the exterior of Santa Maria del Fiore[4] in the background (**Figure 5**), corresponding to the text that Ginevra "was buried with great tears between the two gates at Santa Reparata" (D'Ancona, 1863, p. 26). The second image (**Figure 6**) represents a ring exchange, based on the *Sposalizio* motif, and the third image (**Figure 7**) depicts an outdoor celebration. Other than the first image, which is very specific to the story, the other publications recycle woodblock illustrations from other texts.

The reuse of woodblocks became standard practice by the mid-1500s. Kristeller observes, "It was only at a later date, when the printers worked solely to produce great numbers of books, when they had at their disposal a large stock of earlier cuts" (Kristeller, 1897, p. 9). The different printings of *Ginevra* contain a hodge-podge of woodblock prints. Despite recycling images from other stories from various publishers, the images in these chapbooks (before 1600) follow the same visual pattern of escape, ring ceremony, and garden.

[4] The story uses the name Santa Reparata, but by 1396–1400, Santa Reparata had been replaced by Santa Maria del Fiore. Locals still used the name Santa Reparata well into the 1400s.

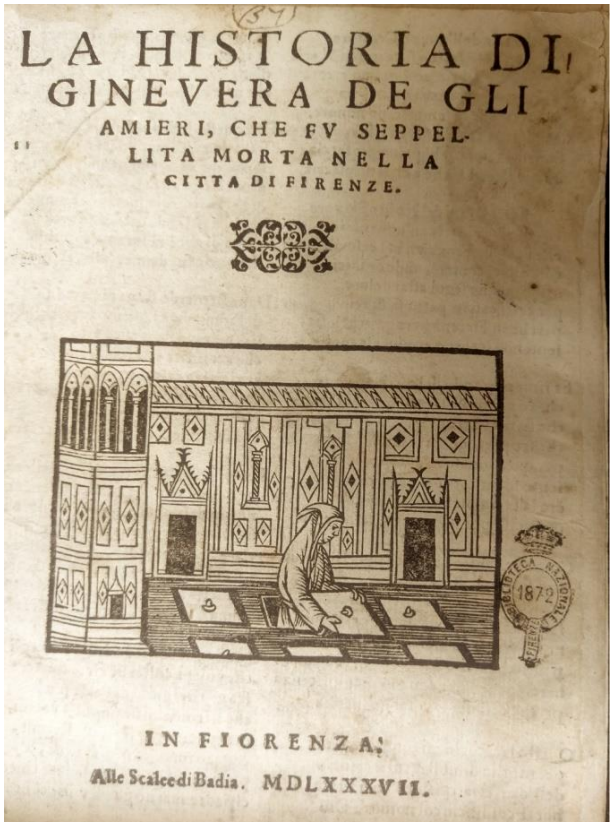

Figura 5: La Historia Di Ginevra degli Almieri chapbook, c.1550. Woodcut. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze. Photo credit: Author.

Figura 6: Anallemento or Wedding Scene (?) from Ginevra degli Almieri, 1575, woodcut illustration, published in Florence. British Library.

Figura 7: Outdoor Scene (?) from Ginevra degli Almieri, 1575, woodcut illustration, published in Florence. British Library.

One of the lovelier woodblock prints (**Figure 8**) found in a 1572 version, published by Alle Scale di Badia, portrays of the exchange of the rings and appears to be of a prior date. The print contains the qualities of a Florentine work. It meets all of Pollard's qualifications, which he lists as:

> They are, nearly always, small engravings of the character of vignettes. In which a design, boldly and firmly cut, is usually in outline, with the dense masses of shadow obtained principally by leaving portions of the surface of the block untouched (Pollard, 1843, p. 18).

Additionally, the leaf-like border is an entirely Florentine convention, and "it is of special importance to note that nearly all Florentine woodcuts are surrounded by a little border; this border is rarely found other than in Florentine work" (Kristeller, 1897, p. 9).

Figura 8: Anallemento or Wedding Scene(?), Ginevra degli Almieri, 1587, woodcut illustration, published by Alle Scale Badia in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze.

Although the source of the print's text has yet to be found, its imagery is well suited to the context of the story of Antonio and Ginevra. While today's audiences would see this as a wedding, it probably depicts the Florentine custom of the *anallemento* (the ring exchange), an important social ceremony separate from the wedding. Once accepted, a ring signified betrothal, and marital relations. Antonio Rondinelli witnesses the *anallemento* between Ginevra and Agolanti:

> Given that Francesco had the ring
>
> To his home, the beautiful bride was taken.
>
> That was a knife to Antonio's heart. (D'Ancona, 1863, p. 25).

This scene, although with different woodblock prints, appears in several versions. Visually, all relate to the iconography of the *Sposalizio*. A *Sposalizio*, or *Marriage*

of the Virgin, commemorates Mary's marriage to Joseph,[5] and as Christiane Klapsich-Zuber's writes, "at the same time, it reflects the gestures of general practice among Tuscans" (Klapisch-Zuber, 1987, p. 203). This theme filled canvases throughout the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Giotto's 1306 fresco set the foundation for other artists like Ghirlandaio and Raphael. Using Ghirlandio's fresco (1486–1490) (**Figure 9**) as a comparison, the woodcut's use of Ghirlandio's composition is clear. While the couple is reversed on the woodcut, the exchanging of the rings is performed in the centre. The triangular configuration of the figure of the man's legs on the lower right corner of Raphael's is repeated in the woodcut's musician. Both scenes take place in an enclosed courtyard. While not an exact replica, the creator of the woodcut certainly utilised iconography of the *Sposalizio*.

The third woodcut usually contains a garden or outdoor celebration. While D'Ancona lists these outdoor scenes as having "nothing to do with the story," (D'Ancona, 1863, p. 19) their repetition throughout several printings indicates importance. More than likely, they refer to Ginevra's and Antonio's wedding.

Figura 9: Domenico Ghirlandaio, Marriage of the Virgin (Lo Sposalizio), 1486–1490, fresco. Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence. Photo Credit: Wikimedia.

[5] For more discussion on the history of the Sposalizio and its connections to the Florentine ring ceremonies, see the chapter "Zacharias or the Ousted Father: Nuptial Rites in Tuscany between Giotto and the Council of Trent" in Klapisch-Zuber 1987 and Bayer 2008.

These sixteenth-century woodcuts, at times poorly reproduced or a hegemony of prior prints, carry a visual legacy revolving around Ginevra's escape and the two marriage celebrations. The painting, which Richter posits as representing scenes from the novella, is different from the woodcuts or the text itself. In truth, Richter's painting does not correlate to the woodcuts. It is difficult to understand why Richter would label the painting after the story, especially since the painting's provenance does not indicate any relation to the story other than to take advantage of its popularity. Additionally, the earliest depictions focus less on Ginevra's walk through Florence and more on her escape from the crypt, and the weddings. Images of Ginevra's wandering among the Florentine streets appear in the nineteenth century as well, probably brought on by renewed interest in Florence's precarious medieval neighbourhoods.

When Richter bought the painting, as this paper argues, it was called "German School." The naming of the painting is entirely an invention by Richter. Furthermore, Dietrich Seybold provides insight into Richter's purchase of the alleged *Ginevra* painting, noting that in July of 1893, Richter possibly bought two paintings at a Christie's auction with the moniker "German School" (Seybold, 2014, pp. 27–28).[6] In a diary entry dated 4 January 1895, Richter mentions "giving a 'German School' artwork to the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition" (*ivi*, p. 28). Seybold posits it could be the Giambono. Arguably, it is the alleged *Ginevra*, listed in the 1895 Academy Winter catalogue, with the attribution of "German School" followed by a description. Therefore, the assumption that Richter bought the painting unnamed and made up a title for the 1895 catalogue is valid.

Given the story's popularity at the time and the wealth of information available, it is challenging to understand Richter's assessment of the subject matter. Richter argues that the painting is a series of vignettes, describing the panel's narrative as:

> Ginevra, a daughter of the illustrious family of Almieri of Florence, having met with an accident and being supposed dead, was buried in a vault of the Duomo. On recovering her senses, a ray of light from the moon, which penetrated through a fissure in the stone above the tomb, enabled her to see where she might get out, and making use of her shroud, which she rolled up in the form of a cushion for her head, she was enabled to lift up the stone and make her escape.
>
> She immediately went to her own house, but her husband—who really believed in her death—would not receive her, and bade her depart in peace. It then occurred to her to fly to her first lover, Antonio Rondinelli, who received her with great joy, and having given her some refreshment and enabled her to put on a proper dress, reconducted her to her husband. As he, however, persisted

[6] Seybold's *Bernard Berenson* concentrates on Richter's relationship with the esteemed Bernard Berenson and their connoisseurship of Michele Giambono's (1400–1462) *St Michael Archangel Enthroned* (1440–1445).

> in his conviction of her death, and again rejected her, she remained with Antonio (Richter, 1895, p. 90).

Richter's storyline differs quite a bit from the original. The use of the shroud to explain the nudity and the sequence of events do not match the original. In the original and other versions, she goes first to Agolanti, then her family (mother, father, uncle), and Antonio last. Once she recovers, Rondinelli repurchases her clothes from Agolanti. Ginevra does not go with him. The sequence of events needs to be corrected in Richter's version.

Secondly, but most importantly, Ginevra does not bare her body. The texts recount that she roamed Florence in her burial shroud. John Addington Symonds describes the scene as "she arose, wrapped a shroud around her, and struggled from her marble chest into the silent Cathedral Square … like a ghost sheeted in her grave-clothes Ginevra ran through the streets (Symonds, 1881, p. 37). This description differs significantly from Richter's concept. Richter does explain the nudity in the *Winter Exhibition* as "having wrapped the grave-clothes around her head for a pad … Ginevra […] stands to the left in the picture, in the act of folding drapery round her head" (Richter, 1895). However, his explanation does not work with the better-known versions of the tale.

In fairness to Richter, it is possible he read a text that did relate the story in this way. By the 1890s, the story had undergone many changes and adaptations, though one would expect a scholar such as Richter to seek out and read the original. It is also possible that Richter was familiar with another woodcut print (**Figure 10**). The novella's cover represents three scenes in a single narrative, similar to the painting. The first scene depicts Ginevra standing before a coffin, indicating her escape. In the second, Ginevra knocks on a door, referencing her appeals to her family, and in the third, Rondinelli appears to be greeting her. Visually, the two correspond better regarding the use of vignettes, but with a publication date of 1621, it is doubtful that it correlates to the painting. However, Richter may have seen this edition, as it appears in several nineteenth-century book-collector catalogues.


LA HISTORIA
DI GINEVRA,
DE GL'ALMIERI.
Cittadina di Fiorenza, dove si narra come fu sepellita per morta, dubitando il marito, che lei fusse morta di sospetto, essendo il sospetto corso alla Città di Fiorenza, onde ella trovandosi sepolta uscì della sepoltura.
DI AGOSTINO VELLETTI FIORENTINO.
IN VENETIA, M.DC.XXI.
PRESSO GIO: BATTISTA BONFADINO.

Figura 10: Agostino Velletti, La Historia di Ginevra de gl'Almieri, Cittadina di Fiorenza, etc., 1621, published by G. B. Bonfadio, Venice. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Photo Credit: Author

Griselda

Regardless of Richter's reasons for his assessment, the painting does not depict Ginevra degli Amieri. In conclusion, this paper proposes that the painting portrays the folk-tale heroine Griselda, featured in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Griselda's husband Gualtieri, a rather cruel man, subjects his wife to many trials, to prove her loyalty. Like Psyche, she patiently endures these tasks and is rewarded with love and riches. Griselda's patience and honourable behaviour made her an admired figure. An anonymous German woodcut from 1480 (**Figure 11**) illustrates when Griselda's husband makes her strip before the town. Griselda, the central figure, removes her clothes amidst a crowd of elegantly dressed townspeople. While the painting and the woodcut offer two very different landscapes, they both depict young women disrobing in view of the public.

Figura 11: Anonymous, Griselda Being Stripped Naked, c.1480, woodcut illustration. The Illustrated Bartsch. Vol. 82: German Book Illustration before 1500: Anonymous Artists, 1478–1480. Photo Credit: Artstor.

Furthermore, Griselda, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, often appeared on *cassoni*. *Cassoni*, or marriage chests, held a bride's dowry, clothing, and textiles. *Cassoni* were paraded through the village or town as the bride moved house. Though decorative and joyful, these panels operated as learning tools about proper behaviour "which highlight the necessity of a woman's obedience, virtue and chastity."[7] While research has yet to locate a representation of Ginevra Amieri on a *cassone*, the story of Griselda frequently occurs. The Florentine painter Apollonio di Giovanni Tomaso (1414–1465) who specialised in *cassone* decoration, painted a Griselda scene (**Figure 12**), as did The Master of The Story of Griselda. Griselda's youthful beauty, piety, and devotion were admirable traits and, therefore, proper for a *cassone*.

[7] "Illustrations of the Griselda Novel," *Cassoni and the Decameron* (Feb. 15, 2010), np. Decameron web, https: www. Brown.edu.

Figura 12: Apollonio di Giovanni di Tomasso, Story of Griselda, c.1460, cassone panel. Galleria Estense, Modena. Photo Credit: Wikimedia.

Interestingly, the dimensions of Richter's panel match other *cassoni* panels. Therefore, its original location may have been a *cassone*. *Cassone* artists usually conveyed a narrative over a series of individual panels. While the Richter panel seems devoid of context, the narrative would make sense if viewed as part of a larger decoration scheme. Looking at the three images together, the German woodcut, the *cassone* panel,[8] and the correlation between Richter's painting and the story of Griselda appears more substantial than any correlation with Ginevra. Additionally, the date of the painting, which others have dated to the late 1400s, seems too early to represent the Florentine novella.

Why Richter gave the title of *Ginevra degli Amieri* to a German panel remains a puzzle. There is such little correlation between the legend and the panel that one wonders if Richter chose to see the Florentine heroine in the painting due to his nostalgia, like many, for the lost medieval heart of Florence. Or perhaps he was simply banking on the story's popularity to make the sale. One hopes it is the former and not the latter.

[8] For images of Griselda done by the Master of the Story of Griselda, see https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/master-of-the-story-of-griselda-the-story-of-griselda-part-i-marriage (accessed 15 August 2023).

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