

Neurological disorder? No, Mannerism

We read with great interest the Correspondence¹ by Alla A Vein and Alexander Mouret about the Renaissance painter, Agnolo Bronzino (1503–72), depicting a claw hand in the portrait of a 16th century notable. The history of art shows that similar pictorial representations are associated with Mannerism, a new artistic style that emerged in the later years of the Italian High Renaissance (around 1520). In Italy, Mannerism lasted until about the end of the 16th century and Agnolo Bronzino was one of its most eminent representants. Northern Mannerism in Europe, especially in Flanders, continued into the early 17th century. Mannerism broke all

previous codes of anatomical accuracy, proportion, balance, and ideal beauty—all canons that had characterised the High Renaissance. Hence, human figures were often depicted in asymmetrical positions with elongated proportions (eg, in *Madonna with Long Neck*, 1534–40, by Parmigianino) or in unnatural body positions (eg, in *Noli me tangere*, 1561, by Agnolo Bronzino). A brief examination of the hands painted in more than a dozen of Bronzino's paintings (figure) shows that the painter always depicted the hands in the same way, with an excessive spacing of the fingers and the folding of two or three fingers.^{2,3} So, is this an epidemic of neurological disorders? No, only Mannerism. These representations reveal the artist's endeavor to show the grace of the subjects he depicted,

highlighting that they belonged to the aristocracy. It is, therefore, important that iconodiagnosis is made by putting the paintings or other works of art in their proper artistic context, thus, reducing the risk of erroneous diagnoses and over-interpretation of pathological conditions.⁴

We declare no competing interests.

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- 1 Vein AA, Mouret A. Claw hand in a Renaissance portrait. *Lancet Neurology* 2018; **17**: 742.
- 2 Falciani C, Natali A. Bronzino Pittore e Poeta alla Corte dei Medici, Firenze: Madragora, 2010.
- 3 Weisz GM, Albury WR, Lippi D, Matucci-Cerinic M. Right or left hand: is this the real problem of Pontormo's Halberdier? *Rheumatol Int* 2013; **33**: 2177–217.
- 4 Karenberg A. Retrospective diagnosis: use and abuse in medical historiography. *Prague Med Rep* 2009; **110**: 140–45.

Openness, inclusion, and respect in dementia research

In biomedical contexts, capacity is defined as the ability to understand information, appreciate consequences, weigh alternatives, and communicate a decision.¹ Research involving people with dementia and diminishing decisional capacity raises unique consent challenges. Regulatory frameworks aim to protect people with limited decisional capacity from harm and

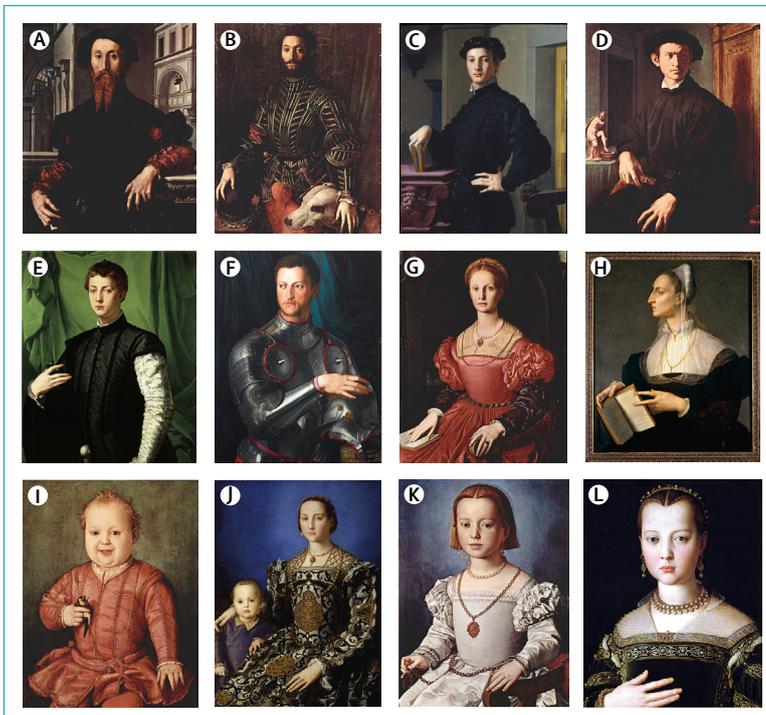


Figure: Bronzino's hands and Mannerism

A series of portraits by Agnolo Bronzino show that the artist painted the hands of the Florentine notables in the same way. Bartolomeo Panciatichi, circa 1540, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (A); Guidobaldo II della Rovere, 1530–32, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy (B); Young Man, circa 1540 (C); Young Man with a Lute, 1532–34 (D); Ludovico Capponi, circa 1550, Frick Collection, New York, USA (E); Cosimo I de Medici in armour, 1543, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (F); Lucrezia Panciatichi, circa 1540, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (G); Laura Battiferri, 1555–60, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy (H); Giovanni de Medici as a child, circa 1545, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (I); Eleonora di Toledo with her son Giovanni, circa 1545, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (J); Bia de Medici, circa 1542, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (K); and Maria de Medici, 1553, Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy (L). Reproduced with permission from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA, and the Galleria Uffizi, Florence, Italy.